



COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS

A COMPENDIUM OF COUNTY INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES ON SERVICE DELIVERY

6TH EDITION

JULY - DECEMBER
2023



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Maarifa Centre

Sharing Kenya's Devolution Solutions

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Maarifa Centre is the premier subnational knowledge hub established to serve as Kenya's knowledge sharing and learning platform to support effective governance and service delivery at the County level. The vision of the Centre is "To be Kenya's Premier Knowledge Sharing and Learning Platform for Effective Governance and Service Delivery for Sustainable Development".



CoG Vision

Prosperous Counties that are drivers of socio-economic growth and development and quality service delivery.



CoG Mission

To deepen devolution through coordination, consultation, information sharing, capacity building, performance management and dispute resolution.



CoG Values

Collaboration and Partnership; Integrity; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Innovation; Professionalism



CoG Motto

48 Governments, 1 Nation

Maarifa Centre Motto

Sharing Kenya's Devolution Solutions

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABDP	Aquaculture Business Development Program
CHS	Community Health Services
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
DEK	Deaf Empowerment Kenya
DJ	Disc Jockey
DW	Deutsche Welle
ECDE	Early Childhood Development Education
FIF	Facility Improvement Financing
FIGO	Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GIS	Geospatial Information System
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
KIPI	Kenya Industrial Property Institute
KIRDI	Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute
KITI	Kenya Industrial Training Institute
KM	Knowledge Management
KNH	Kenya National Hospital
NARIGP	National Agricultural Rural Inclusive Growth Project
NCD	Noncommunicable Diseases
NITA	National Industrial Training Authority
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment

PWD	Persons with Disability
NCPWD	National Council for Persons with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SWO	Social Welfare Officer
TBA	Traditional Birth Attendant
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TVETA	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority
UHC	Universal Health Coverage
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
WFP	World Food Programme

FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR



I am delighted to introduce the Sixth Edition of the Compendium of County Innovations and Best Practices on Service Delivery. The Maarifa Centre has continually worked with nominated County Knowledge Management (KM) Champions to identify, document and disseminate success stories and devolution knowledge assets. Through the website @<https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/>, the Centre has uploaded over 250 County best practices and innovations and over 1000 devolution knowledge assets including reports, success stories, County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and policy briefs to name a few. The zeal to share knowledge and highlight timely County success stories has made the Maarifa Centre a one-stop-shop for devolution related knowledge.

Success stories from the previous five editions of the compendium have been a reference point to Counties, partners and devolution scholars influencing decision making.

The sixth edition of the compendium highlights success stories from eight (8) Counties namely Makueni, Nyeri, Machakos Wajir, Kajiado, Kitui, Murang'a and Tharaka Nithi. Focusing on five (5) sectors including Health, Education, Agriculture, Transport, Infrastructure and Energy, Gender, Youth, Sports, Culture and Social Services, this edition celebrates (12) impactful success stories.

I would like to appreciate all Counties highlighted in this compendium for nominating their KM champions, who worked with the Maarifa Centre team to compile this edition. This clearly demonstrates your endorsement of



The zeal to share knowledge and highlight timely County success stories has made the Maarifa Centre a one-stop-shop for devolution related knowledge.

devolution and reflects your pride and confidence in showcasing these diverse innovations, exemplary practices and their impact on service delivery. Your dedication to your Counties is truly commendable! With this team in place, the proposed County Knowledge Management Model Office document having been disseminated to Counties and the Handbook for County Governments on Knowledge Capturing and Sharing being available for capacity building, KM is on take-off at the County level. To my fellow Governors- I urge all of you to ensure that you have a committed County KM champion who can spearhead institutionalization of KM in your respective Counties.

To all our partners and stakeholders, we sincerely appreciate you for your constant support over the last decade of implementing devolved governance. My hope is that we can all continue to work together for the success of devolution. I am convinced that whatever challenges we may face in service delivery, we can overcome them by collaboratively generating local sustainable solutions that have tangible impacts in our communities.

All the editions of the Compendium series are testament that devolution is slowly, but surely, transforming lives and livelihoods of millions of Kenyans. Grab a physical copy of any of the editions when you can or visit the website for a soft copy! I am convicted that these good works in the Counties will continue and that every Kenyan will feel the positive impacts of devolution. Enjoy the read!

H.E. Anne Waiguru, EGH
Chair, Council of Governors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



“

This achievement would not have been attainable without your unwavering dedication and assistance in providing information to the Maarifa Centre team either through virtual, physical or telephone interviews.

I would like to start by acknowledging all the County officers and the nominated KM champions who contributed to the successful publication of this edition. This achievement would not have been attainable without your unwavering dedication and assistance in providing information to the Maarifa Centre team either through virtual, physical or telephone interviews. Your willingness to sacrifice time during fieldwork documentation, accompanying CoG officers to verify and witness the impacts of these initiatives in your Counties, is truly commendable.

The Maarifa Centre has consistently distinguished itself as the primary devolution knowledge hub, fostering learning through the dissemination of these bi-annual editions of the compendium and facilitating of peer-to-peer learning events. I want to commend Sharon Nzei for authoring and compiling this edition and Rosemary Njaramba for her work in editing and proofreading the book. Well done! I also say thank you to all the technical staff at the CoG who assisted in finding information and helping the Maarifa team reach relevant officers in the Counties. I recognize the CoG drivers who adeptly navigated challenging terrains to enable the Maarifa team document the initiatives in this edition. Truly, you are the winning team!

To all partners who have supported the Maarifa Centre to undertake its work, receive my sincere gratitude. Your

efforts demonstrate your genuine commitment to devolution, showcasing that you are indeed steadfast allies. I urge you to persist in endorsing the knowledge management agenda within the CoG and the Counties.

Stories highlighted in this edition are evidence that devolution is working! Keep visiting the Maarifa Centre to see the wonderful County initiatives in service delivery!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary Mwit'.

Mary Mwit
Chief Executive Officer
Council of Governors

INTRODUCTION

This Compendium is the fifth edition of a bi-annual publication pioneered in 2021 by the Council of Governors' knowledge hub, the Maarifa Centre. The inaugural edition was a collection of County success stories in the fight against COVID-19. The second edition featured service delivery good practices and innovations in 7 sectors from 13 Counties. The third edition focused on service delivery in 5 sectors and featured 9 Counties, with some contributing more than one best practice/innovation. The fourth edition focused on only 2 themes — Facilities Improvement Financing (FIF) and Community Health Services (CHS).

The fifth edition features good practices and innovations from 7 Counties in 4 sectors, including Health (5 stories); Agriculture, Livestock & Cooperatives (3 stories); Land, Housing & Urban Development (3 story); and Gender, Youth, Sports, Culture and Social Services (2 stories).

This Sixth edition has highlighted a total of 12 success stories from 8 Counties on Agriculture (2 stories), Health (2 stories), Education (1 story), Transport, Infrastructure

and Energy (1 story), Gender, Youth, Sports, Culture and Social Services (6 stories).

The Maarifa Centre welcomes contributions from all Counties and actively encourages those not yet featured to reach out with their success stories for documentation.

This compendium, available both on the Maarifa portal and in hard copy, is designed to facilitate inter-County learning by promoting knowledge sharing and the timely adoption of best practices and innovations derived from diverse experiences. Additionally, various stakeholders in devolution, including the National Government, development partners, civil society, community-based organizations, the private sector, researchers, university students, and citizens themselves, will find valuable insights within its pages.

Should you wish to connect with the County resource persons highlighted in this compendium, Maarifa staff can facilitate the process.



Maarifa Centre

SECTOR: GENDER, YOUTH, SPORTS, CULTURE & SOCIAL SERVICES

Promoting Youth-Led Innovation and Sustainable Development: The Role of the Makueni Technology and Innovation Hub and the Ajiry Centre.

Introduction

Technology gaps, also known as the digital divide refer to disparities in access to and use of technology, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and the internet. These gaps exist on various levels and have social, economic and educational implications. Some of the key aspects of technology gaps include:

1. **Access to Hardware and Infrastructure:** This is brought about by geographic disparities, especially in regions with inadequate technological infrastructure, such as broadband internet access or mobile networks leading to limited access to technology. In some areas individuals and communities lack access to essential devices like computers, smartphones and tablets.

2. **Internet Connectivity:** This includes affordable broadband access and high-speed internet for various online activities especially in rural areas.
3. **Digital Literacy:** Lack of digital literacy or computer skills can create a significant gap as those with inadequate knowledge may struggle to use technology effectively.

Covering an area of 8,008.9 square kilometers (3,092.3 square miles) and housing a population of 987,653 residents, Makueni County, like numerous rural regions in Kenya, faces ongoing challenges with limited network connectivity and internet access. Further, a significant portion of the population encounters challenges related to the affordability of Internet services and the acquisition of computer-related skills.

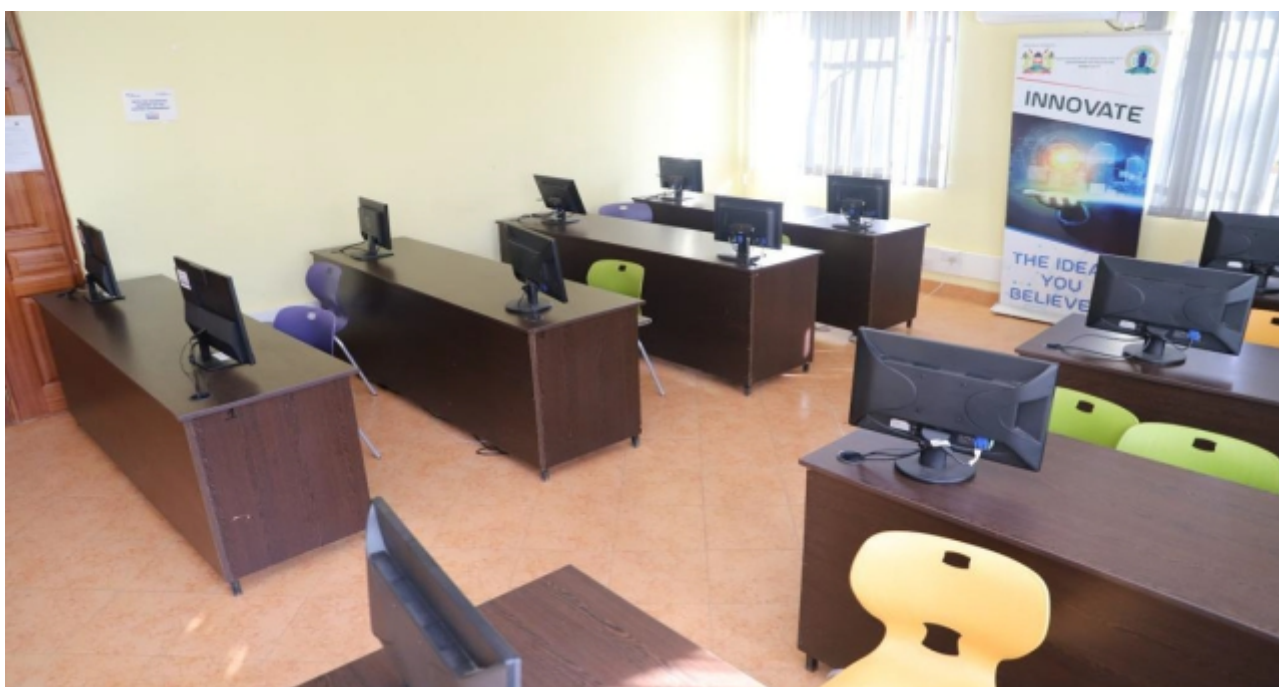
To address this digital divide, the County Government has established the Makueni Technology and Innovation Hub within Wote Green Public Park. This hub offers a range of services, including free Wi-Fi coverage throughout the park, free computer classes, and hosts various innovation challenges to inspire young individuals to become innovators.



A photo of the Makueni ICT and Innovation Hub

Implementation of the Practice

- In 2017, the County Government of Makueni convened a stakeholder workshop, engaging more than 500 ICT professionals, including 258 university lecturers. During this meeting, they collaboratively formulated a roadmap outlining steps for implementing the innovation center.
- In the financial year 2020/2021, the County collaborated with World Bank to construct the youth innovation Centre within the Wote Green Public Park.
- The same financial year the County equipped the Centre with modern furniture and classroom materials.
- On 2nd September 2021, the County launched the Centre allowing people from the park to walk in and access different services.
- In the same year, the Center initiated innovative challenges, as an activity to inspire young individuals to harness their creative abilities.
- From 2021 to 2023 the Centre has hosted the following innovation challenges.
 1. The Economic Recovery Amidst Covid-19: This innovation challenge had 15 innovators but only three proceeded to finals with innovations like E-fundi where drivers can access the nearest mechanic in case of a car breakdown anywhere in the County.
 2. The second innovation challenge centered on the theme of Harnessing Digital Transformation for Climate Action and drew 30 innovative submissions, ultimately recognizing and awarding the top five entries.
 3. The third innovation challenge, centered around Building Economic Resilience Through Innovation. In this challenge, 18 innovations were considered, with the top three receiving seed capital awards.
 4. The fourth innovation challenge was dedicated to health innovations, and the top three contestants introduced various innovations, including "VACCI BOX," a system designed to facilitate timely vaccine deliveries.
- The County Government of Makueni budgeted Ksh4 million in purchasing equipment and furniture for the innovation hub.
- The Centre has trained over 1000 young people in computer packages and different skills.
- Through a collaborative partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, the County has established the Ajiry Centre at Wote Green Public Park. This Center serves as a dedicated workspace for young entrepreneurs who run online businesses and lack suitable working facilities.
- The Ajiry Centre offers additional services such as nurturing talent, a music recording studio and providing DJ classes.



A photo of a fully furnished and equipped computer classroom in the Makueni Tech and Innovation Hub

- Since its inception in March 2023, the Ajiry Centre has significantly contributed to the development of 76 artists by facilitating music recording and has imparted life skills, particularly in financial management to more than 200 young individuals.
 - Housing the Ajiry Centre and Innovation Hub at Wote Green Public's Park is a strategic idea to transition youth who undergo training at the Makueni Innovation Hub to a practical space that empowers them to express and cultivate their talents.
 - The County is in the process of formulating a policy to secure the long-term sustainability of these initiatives targeting the youth.
3. Research and Innovation: Through the Innovation challenges, the County has generated new knowledge and innovative ideas including E-fundi, which serve as a solution to local community challenges.
 4. Networking and Collaboration: Having both Centres at the Wote Green Public Park has promoted networking and collaboration among young people, mentors and organizations leading to new partnerships and joint initiatives.
 5. Global Connectivity: Internet connectivity in Makueni County has fostered global awareness among the youth, enabling them to explore various emerging global challenges and craft solutions tailored to their local context.

Results of the practice

1. Knowledge and Skill Development: Both Ajiry and the Makueni Innovation Hub Centres have trained over 1200 youth in different skills.
2. Talent Nurturing: Both Centres have helped discover and nurture talent and other creative abilities.

Lessons learnt:

1. Community Involvement key: Engaging residents and stakeholders ensures that projects align with community needs and values.



A photo of the Wote Green Public Park

2. Establishing youth-related facilities within the Wote Green Public Park: This makes access to various resources and services more convenient.
3. Introducing innovation challenges can help in bringing forth new solutions to existing challenges.

Internet accessibility helps the youth to connect and understand different global emerging issues and become teach-survey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, establishing youth centres, such as the Makueni County Ajiry Centre and the Innovation Hub has significant importance. These centres serve as vital catalysts for community development and empowerment with a particular focus on the youth. Further, careful planning, stakeholder engagement, adaptability and effective resource management are essential for success. By actively involving communities, providing youth-friendly infrastructure, collaborating with various stakeholders, promoting innovation and facilitating access to information, Counties can pave the way for a more prosperous and interconnected future.



Students recording music at the Ajiry Centre



A photo of the Wote Green Public Park



Student during a DJ class session

The Impact of the Machakos Youth Drop-In Centre on Mental Health and Well-Being.

Introduction

World Health Organization defines mental health as a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn, work and contribute to their community. It encompasses our emotional, psychological and social well-being and affects how we think, feel, and act. Despite frequent discussions on this subject across diverse social platforms, the translation of discourse into tangible actions within family, workplace and governance contexts remains a challenge. This challenge affects individuals across all age groups and diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing societal issues, notably witnessing an increase in both Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and adolescent pregnancies across numerous Counties. Machakos County, located 39 miles from Nairobi with a resident population of 63,767 as of the 2019 census, recorded 4,000 cases of teenage pregnancies during the pandemic period. This substantial figure posed a significant threat to the mental well-being of numerous adolescents, leading to heightened risks of suicidal thoughts, abortion-seeking behavior and increased demand for counseling services.

Machakos County lacked a dedicated space for youth to convene, share experiences, and receive guidance from qualified psychiatrists and counselors. Moreover, many youths exhibited reluctance to visit hospital drop-in centers for HIV testing, expressing a preference for locations outside the hospital compound where such services could be accessed.

For GBV survivors, particularly those in early marriages, there was a lack of awareness regarding locations where they could seek help and counseling.

To tackle this challenge, the Machakos County Government, in collaboration with the Red Cross, has established a Youth Drop-In Centre within the Machakos Youth Centre. This facility provides counseling sessions, HIV testing, cancer screening and a range of structured conversation-oriented events, including coffee talks. The strategic placement of the Drop-In Centre within the Machakos Youth Centre aims to create an environment where young individuals can access a variety of services conveniently in one location.

The Machakos Youth Centre offers complimentary computer classes to students, with mandatory attendance at coffee talks, where youth engage in discussions on various topics affecting them. To support the mental health of the youth, the County has deployed two medical professionals, a doctor and a level 5 psychiatrist to provide free counseling sessions for those unable to afford such services.



Machakos Youth Drop-In Centre

Further, the Youth Drop-In Centre is staffed with a social welfare officer who addresses GBV-related cases.

In response to the growing demand from both youth seeking counseling and the community at large, the County has taken a proactive step by establishing a GBV shelter. This Centre serves as a referral point for victims, offering additional care and protection alongside counseling services.

Implementation of the practice

In 2018, the County Government of Machakos collaborated with Red Cross to conduct a survey targeting youth in colleges and public areas.

The survey aimed to understand the youths' perspectives on their utilization of local hospital drop-in centers for HIV testing as well as their preferred locations and support networks for counseling when needed.

The insights gathered from the survey prompted the County to renovate a previously overlooked three-room office area. This revamped space now functions as a space for cancer screening, HIV testing, counseling and reception services within the Machakos Youth Centre.

In 2019, the County collaborated with Deaf Empowerment Kenya (DEK), known for evidence-based interventions in HIV prevention, to furnish the Centre with office chairs, cancer screening equipment, beds, and various materials, transforming it into a fully equipped facility.

Amid the COVID-19 lockdown, the County's efforts to initiate activities at the facility such as deploying officers were delayed. However, by October 2021, the Centre was officially launched with staff and resources fully in place, geared to address the rising issue of increased teenage pregnancies.

Following its launch in 2022, the Centre has been receiving over 15 daily visits, particularly during its weekly Thursday coffee talks. In the last year, the facility has provided services to over 2000 youth in Machakos County.

The Machakos County Youth Drop-In Centre operates within a monthly budget ranging from Ksh5,000 to Ksh10,000 allocated for the purchase of coffee, sugar and biscuits specifically for the coffee talk sessions.

The Center has introduced games such as darts, pool and card games, providing a covert opportunity for teenagers to discreetly undergo HIV testing while engaging in play without others being aware.



Students attending a computer class in the Machakos Youth Centre

To ensure continuous discussions on mental health, the facility conducts frequent Facebook Live sessions, especially during public holidays and weekends. These sessions cover a wide range of subjects, including mental health issues and financial empowerment hence encouraging open and informative conversations.

The sustainability of the center is guaranteed through the County's CIDP, which focuses on empowering the Machakos Youth Centre.

Results of the practice

1. Increased HIV testing rates by 35% among teenagers through discreet gaming opportunities.
2. Regular engagement in mental health discussions, both in-person and via online sessions has fostered awareness and open dialogues.
3. The cancer screening facility has facilitated early detection of cervical cancer signs among teenage girls.
4. Under the supervision of the Social Welfare County Officer, teenagers facing GBV cases receive comprehensive care, including hospital referrals and protection measures.

5. The Thursday coffee talks have been instrumental in raising awareness among a larger number of youths about the presence and purpose of the facility.

Lessons learnt

- **Innovative Approaches:** Creative strategies, such as using games as a means for discreet HIV testing have proven effective in engaging and encouraging participation especially among teenagers.
- **Community Engagement:** Regular discussions, both in-person and through online platforms, have been crucial in promoting mental health awareness and addressing various concerns among the youth.
- **Multi-Purpose Centres:** Creating multifunctional spaces that cater to diverse needs, such as combining cancer screening, counseling services and community engagement activities, has shown the effectiveness and importance of such integrated centres.



Picture of the Machakos GBV Centre

Conclusion

In conclusion, the initiatives undertaken by Machakos County, in collaboration with various organizations, have yielded substantial and positive results. These efforts have significantly impacted the community by facilitating early cancer detection, empowering teenagers

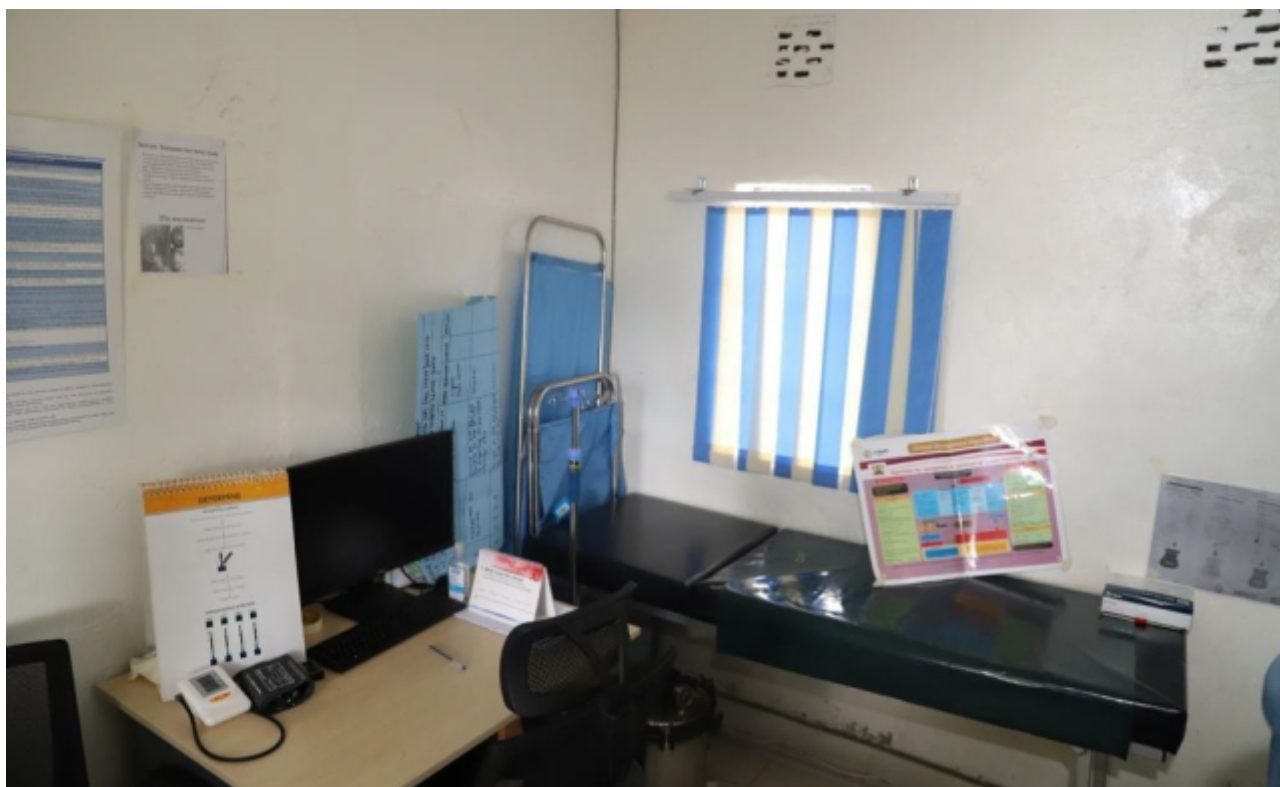
to openly address their concerns and providing comprehensive care for those affected by gender-based violence. The consistent engagement through activities like the Thursday coffee talks has notably increased awareness and participation among the youth, contributing to the success and sustainability of the Centre.



A photo of a fully furnished room in the Machakos GBV Centre



A picture of an ongoing coffee talk



Photos of the Youth Drop-in Centre in Machakos

Nyeri County Empowers Youth Through Leather Production and Skill-Based Initiatives

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) centers play a vital role in providing a wide range of educational and training programs that offer practical knowledge and skills applicable to various industries and sectors. These programs encompass both formal and informal learning approaches, taking place within educational institutions as well as real-world work settings.

The main objective of TVET is to equip individuals with the necessary competencies and expertise relevant to specific occupations, thereby preparing them for diverse roles within the economic and social spheres. The increasing demand for a skilled workforce has led to a growing recognition of the significance of a skill-based curriculum in educational institutions worldwide. Such a curriculum emphasizes hands-on learning, critical thinking, problem-solving, and the acquisition of industry-specific knowledge.

To align with this approach, the County Government of Nyeri is prioritizing the transformation of all TVET

centres into vibrant business hubs, where the skill-based curriculum is implemented. One of the reasons behind the transformation of polytechnics into business hubs was to foster self-sustainability. For instance, polytechnics offering hair and beauty programs would establish salons where clients could visit to have their hair styled by professional students, hence generating income to support the institution's expenses.

Guided by this vision, the County Government of Nyeri established a leather production unit at Rukira Technical Training Centre to provide skills in shoemaking to the students. Following the structured curriculum provided by the National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), the Centre educates the students and subsequently administers examinations for them to obtain certifications.

In a bid to assist students undertaking this course, the County Government has waived all school fees, ensuring it is accessible to interested individuals without any financial burden. Further, the County has acquired state-of-the-art shoe-making equipment, constructed a specialized facility, and recruited competent instructors to offer training to the students. While the County Government presently donates the shoes manufactured by the production unit to underprivileged students in primary and high schools, the unit has the capacity to produce 900 shoes within a 24-hour shift with a team of 20 personnel.

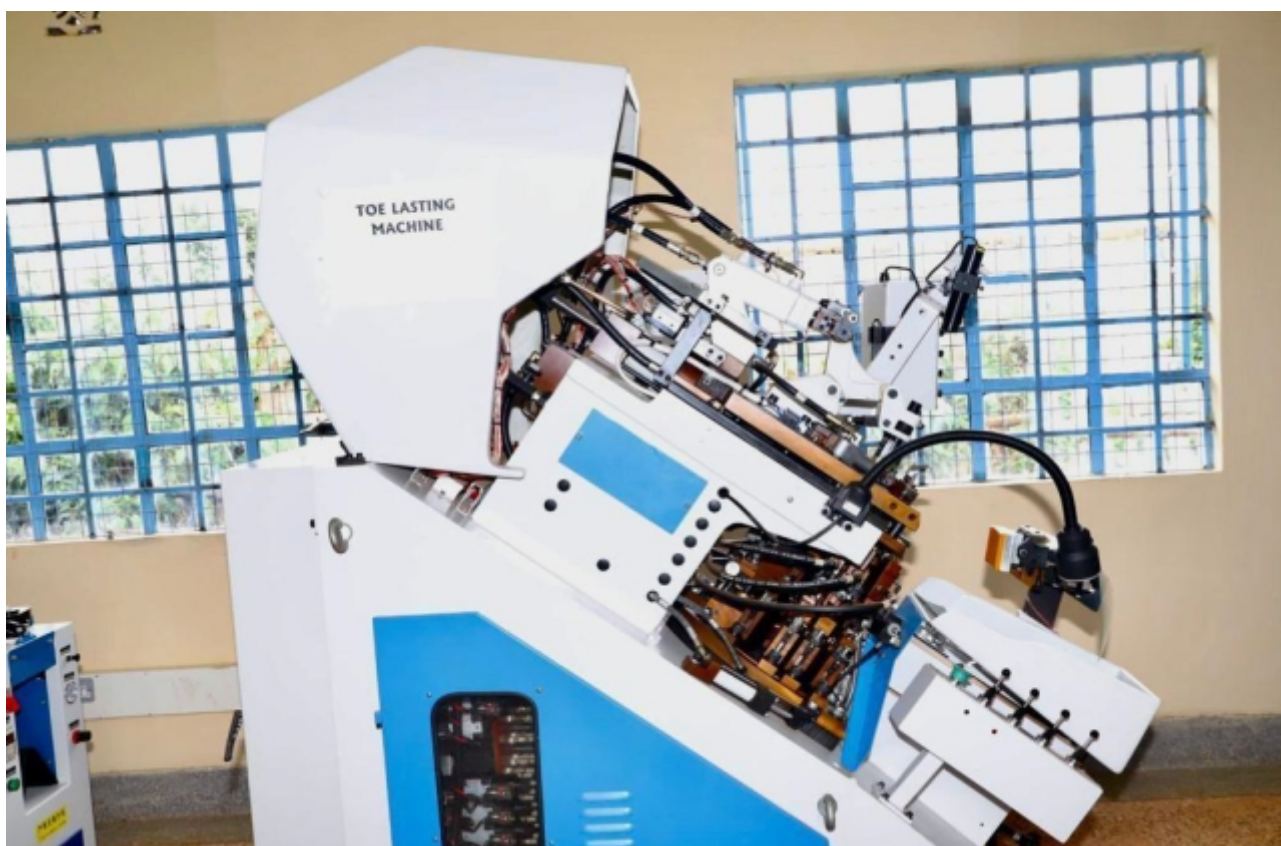


A trainer demonstrating on shoemaking at Rukira Technical Training Centre

The following were the procured equipment.

On August 4th, 2022, the machines purchased for the leather unit facility were successfully installed. Following that, school admissions began in March 2023 and a total of 12 students were enrolled.

NO	DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE(KES)	TOTAL AMOUNT(KES)
1	Clicking Machine 370mm	1	663,320.00	663,320.00
2	Skiving Machine(Heavy Duty)	1	95,996.00	95,996.00
3	Single Needle, lockstitch, flatbed sewing machine	1	91,876.00	91,876.00
4	Flat Bed Single Needle (Standard-Roller Feed)	1	130,192.00	130,192.00
5	Post Bed Single Needle Sewing Machine(standard)	1	118,450.00	118,450.00
6	Cylinder Arm Machine (Single Needle)	1	99,704.00	99,704.00
8	Labelling and Numbering Machine (pneumatic)	1	133,900.00	133,900.00
9	Plating and Embossing Machine	1	53,045.00	53,045.00
10	Toe Puff Steaming Machine	1	61,388.00	61,388.00
12	Toe Lasting Machine	1	3,553,500.00	3,553,500.00
13	Side And Heel Lasting Machine	1	2,703,750.00	2,703,750.00
15	Hydraulic De-Lasting Machine	1	267,800.00	267,800.00
			SUB TOTAL	6,993,790.35
			VAT 14%	979,130.65
			TOTAL INCL. VAT	7,972,921.00



Toe lasting Machine at Rukira Leather Production Unit

Implementation of the practice

On Wednesday, April 12, 2017, Rukira Vocational Training Centre received official registration from the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA). In 2019, the concept of establishing a leather production unit at the Centre originated from the Department of Gender, Youth and Social Services to support the youth.

In that same year, the County arranged for the trainers to participate in a six-week training program at the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) to enhance their skills in crafting a wide range of leather products. Additionally, to acquire proficiency in utilizing modern shoe-making equipment, the County invited the Kenya Industrial Training Institute (KITI) for a ten-day training session specifically tailored for the teachers.

Due to the unpredictable COVID-19 pandemic, the implementation of the project was suspended throughout the entire year of 2020. However, in 2022, as curfews were lifted and people resumed their normal routines, the equipment was successfully imported from China to Kenya.

For the sustainability of this initiative, the trained students will become ambassadors for this skill in their respective sub-counties. The County plans to expand the unit and hire more trainers to enhance production. Further, commercializing the unit secures its long-term sustainability.

Results of the practice

- As a result of free education, young individuals have relinquished the usage of drugs and redirected their focus towards acquiring skills.
- Through enrolling the teachers in Kenya Industrial Property Institute (KIPI) for training on the utilization of modern machines, the institution is now able to provide training that aligns with the current market demands, facilitated by the acquisition of new equipment.
- Parents have had a mindset shift towards Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) and embraced curricula that prioritize skill-based education
- The Centre has created job opportunities for the teachers who instruct the students and granted them the opportunity to pursue further studies.
- The shoes manufactured at the Centre are generously donated to underprivileged students in primary and high schools, which has greatly benefitted society. This initiative not only provides necessary footwear to those in need but also contributes to enhancing their overall well-being and educational experience. The donations help improve the students' self-esteem, health, and overall access to education by addressing the challenges they may face due to lack of proper



A photo of students attending a practical class session in the leather production unit

shoes. Further, it fosters a sense of community support and solidarity, promoting inclusivity and equal opportunities for all, shorten and use professional vocabulary.

Lessons learnt:

- Strict adherence to occupational safety requirements is crucial, necessitating the utilization of personal protective equipment (PPE). This measure serves to prevent injuries and mitigate the potential risk of substance dependency that may arise from handling specific products, such as adhesive substances utilized in the shoe manufacturing process.
- It is essential to have local mechanics available for the repair and servicing of the machines. Currently, in case of any repairs, the leather unit trainers have to wait for a technician from Nairobi to go to Rukira to repair a broken machine.
- To ensure a healthy working environment for trainers and teachers, the facility requires fume and noise extraction machines. These machines are essential in removing harmful fumes and reducing noise levels, safeguarding the well-being of the staff.
- To address potential electricity outages, it is necessary to have a power backup system in place for the facility. This ensures uninterrupted operations and allows for continued productivity even during periods of power failure.

- Expanding the facility's space, particularly by adding an outdoor shade, is crucial to provide a designated area for teachers and students to apply glue without compromising their health. The open space outside can serve as a suitable location for this activity, ensuring proper ventilation and minimizing potential health risks associated with glue application.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the establishment of the leather production unit at Rukira Vocational Training Centre, supported by the County Government of Nyeri, has been a significant stride towards promoting technical and vocational education. This initiative, accompanied by the procurement of modern equipment and the enrollment of trainers in specialized training programs, has ensured the provision of relevant and market-driven skills to the students. The Centre's commitment to offering free education, along with the donation of shoes to underprivileged students, has positively impacted society by enhancing access to education, improving well-being, and fostering inclusivity. However, there remains a need for continued efforts in developing a legal framework, ensuring occupational safety measures, and addressing logistical challenges such as the availability of local mechanics and power backup. By addressing these aspects, the Centre can further strengthen its role as a catalyst for skill development, community support, and the empowerment of youth in the region.

Promoting Economic Development and Sustainable Livelihoods: The Nyeri Youth, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Programme

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The first five SDG goals share important similarities as they collectively address fundamental aspects of human development and well-being. The goals of No Poverty and Good Health and Well-being are intertwined, as poverty often leads to poor health outcomes.

The goals of Zero Hunger and Good Health and Well-being are closely related, as malnutrition and hunger have adverse effects on health, making individuals more vulnerable to diseases and impeding well-being. The goals of No Poverty and Quality Education are interconnected, recognizing education as a powerful tool for poverty reduction while Zero Hunger and No Poverty are closely linked, as limited access to sufficient and nutri-

tious food is caused by poverty and lastly, quality Education and Gender Equality intersect significantly, emphasizing the importance of providing equal educational opportunities to all, regardless of gender. Promoting gender equality in education empowers women and girls and has broader societal benefits such as reducing poverty, improving health outcomes, and fostering economic growth.

To achieve the stated goals, the County Government of Nyeri, under the Nyeri Youth, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Programme, has provided support to more than 360 registered groups from the 30 wards and facilitated the establishment of businesses to improve livelihoods within the community. The inception of this initiative stemmed from the recognition of various societal challenges, including youth unemployment and poverty among families where a person with disability (PWD) serves as the primary breadwinner. Additionally, there was a need to empower women, particularly those without formal education, to initiate small-scale businesses. This strategy was also formulated with the aim of combating drug abuse and reducing alcoholism among the youth. It achieves this by engaging them in various projects such as carpentry, car wash businesses, cooking and baking, hairdressing, and other activities that keep them occupied and productive.



Youth beneficiaries in car wash business

The Kirmukuyu Community Based Organization in Karatina has received support from the County. Their primary focus is on producing animal feed. This organization consists of 417 members who have joined forces and submitted a business proposal to the County's Department of Gender, Youth, Sports, and Social Services. Their goal was to acquire feed-making equipment utilized in the production of livestock and dairy feed. While the group does not generate substantial profits, the funds earned are utilized for warehouse maintenance and employing staff to run the operations of the store. Additionally, group members have the advantage of purchasing animal feeds at a discounted price. Farmers in the area can also access the feeds at a better price than in conventional stores.

Implementation of the practice

In 2019, the County Government of Nyeri allocated Ksh 30 million from the Ward Specific Fund to every ward, aiming to facilitate projects across different departments. The County Department of Gender, Youth, Sports, and Social Services requested each ward to identify specific projects for collective interest support through the Nyeri Youth,



The County Government of Nyeri under the leadership of H.E Governor Edward Mutahi Kahiga in conjunction with County Ward MCAs, is pleased to announce that, the County Government is now rolling out;

"The Nyeri Youth, Women and Persons With Disabilities Empowerment Programme."

This programme aims to boost organized group's Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and transform them into viable economic ventures by supporting the youth, women and persons living with disability with equipment tools & machinery. This is hoped to promote the IGAS into formal established businesses.

This is therefore a **CALL FOR PROPOSALS** from such groups that require such support and have met certain conditions by filling the prescribed form which can be obtained from Social Welfare Officer in your Sub-County or through the area MCA.

The forms and guidelines can also be downloaded from the County website; www.nyeri.go.ke

The fully filled form with supporting documents should be returned to the **Chief Officer, Social Welfare Officer at your Sub-County or the area MCA's office or via email to nyerigenderyouthss@gmail.com on or before 7th February, 2022.**

WARDS FOR SPECIFIC PROJECTS FY 2021-22		
Koruyu	Kamakawa/Mukaro	Thegu River
Aguthi-Gaaki	Mweiga	Irialni Othaya
Chinga	Kirmukuyu	Gatitu/Muruguru
Iria-Ini Mathira	Buring'u	Mahiga
Gakawa	Karima	Wamagana

Women, and Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Programme. Subsequently, the project underwent a sensitization phase conducted by social welfare officers, which was followed by a call for registered groups to submit business proposals for funding consideration. The County Government collaborated with the Social Development Office at the national government to verify the registration status of groups that submitted applications. The groups are required to fill out a specific form obtained from both the sub-county Social Welfare Office and the Office of the Chief Officer in the Department of Gender, Youth and Social Services.

Following the submission of proposals, the Department evaluates them and proceeds with procuring the necessary equipment for the supported groups.

To foster financial intelligence, the County offers the groups comprehensive training in savings, digital literacy, and marketing strategies, empowering them to proficiently promote and showcase their products. Despite the possibility of having up to 400 members in a single group, the profits generated from the designated projects are deposited in a bank account and subsequently distributed equitably among all members at the end of each month.

Beneficiary summary in years and the amount allocated to the programme

Year	Amount in Ksh
2019-2020	1.5M
2020-2021	7M
2021-2022	42,050 M
2022-2023	25M
Total	75.550M

This amount has benefited 361 registered groups across all sub-counties in Nyeri County.

The County collaborates with the Social Welfare Officer (SWO) to diligently monitor the progress and achievements of the activities. Further, there is a set of guidelines that group leaders are required to sign, ensuring adherence to regulations such as prohibiting members from selling the provided equipment.

To ensure sustainability, the Nyeri County Youth Development Policy has successfully completed executive validation and is currently being reviewed by the County Assembly. Additionally, the program is firmly established within the 2023-2027 County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP).

Results of the practice

- **Economic Empowerment:** By funding projects and providing training in financial skills, the initiative has enhanced the financial independence of the participating groups.
- **Job Creation:** The projects supported by the initiative have generated employment opportunities like hairdressing and barbering hence reducing unemployment rates and improving livelihoods within the community.
- **Skill Development:** The training and capacity-building efforts have equipped group members with valuable skills in areas such as savings, digital literacy, marketing, and project management.
- **Social Inclusion:** By focusing on collective interest and marginalized groups, the initiative promotes social inclusion and equality. It creates opportunities for under represented groups like Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to participate actively in economic and social development.

Sustainable Growth: By incorporating the Youth Development Policy within the County Integrated Development Plan, the initiative aims to ensure long-term sustainability. This integration has facilitated better coordination, planning, and resource allocation, fostering continuous progress and positive impact.

Lessons learnt:

- **Diversify funding sources:** County Governments can explore multiple funding avenues, such as partnerships with private sector entities, seeking grants or donor support, and exploring innovative financing mechanisms.
- **Prioritize budget allocation:** Allocating a specific portion of the County budget for economic

empowerment programs can ensure sustained financing and demonstrate a commitment to the initiative.

- **Establish interagency collaboration:** County Governments can establish formal coordination mechanisms, such as interagency task forces or committees, to facilitate effective communication, collaboration, and resource sharing among relevant stakeholders.
- **Engage community leaders and organizations:** Involving community leaders and organizations in the coordination process can help ensure grassroots participation, local ownership, and effective implementation of economic empowerment programs.
- **Invest in capacity building:** County Governments can invest in training and development programs for personnel involved in implementing economic empowerment initiatives. This can enhance their skills, knowledge, and capacity to effectively manage and monitor the programs.

Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems: County Governments can establish robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to collect, analyze, and use data to assess the impact and effectiveness of economic empowerment programs.

Conclusion

The Nyeri Youth, Women, and Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Programme has made significant progress in promoting sustainable development and addressing societal challenges. Through funding and support to registered groups, the initiative has empowered individuals economically, created jobs, and developed valuable skills. It has also prioritized social inclusion by engaging marginalized groups and promoting their participation in community development.



Feed-making machines for the Kirimukuyu Community Based Organization

Gender Mainstreaming in Trade: Impacts of the Chuka Market Creche on Traders and Children

Introduction

A creche is a facility, within a building, that provides supervised care and early education for infants and young children, typically between the ages of three months to three years old. It is designed to offer a safe and nurturing environment where children can engage in age-appropriate activities, receive proper nutrition, and receive attention from trained caregivers or teachers. Creches operate during regular working hours to support working parents by allowing them to leave their children in a supervised setting while they attend to their work or other responsibilities.

In Kenya, limited access to affordable and quality childcare is a primary challenge faced by working mothers. Additionally, the high cost of childcare services makes them unaffordable for many families, forcing some mothers to resort to informal and potentially substandard arrangements such as leaving their children in the care of younger siblings who are often underage. The quality of services offered in daycare facilities is also a concern, as some facilities may not meet safety, hygiene, and developmental standards. This is a challenge for working mothers who strive to provide a nurturing environment for their children while managing the costs.

Acknowledging the mentioned challenges encountered by working parents, the Tharaka Nithi County Government has demonstrated proactive measures by introducing a creche within the Chuka Market. The Chuka Market accommodates approximately 2,000 traders, with an estimated majority of 1,300 traders being women.

The creche initiative aims to assist and empower working parents, particularly mothers who are engaged in market trading, by providing a safe and nurturing environment where they can entrust their children with trained teachers and caregivers while they actively participate in income-generating activities. This initiative also provides support to working parents by reducing the financial burden of hiring house help and offering a high-quality and easily accessible space where they can visit and care for their children within the market.

Implementation of the practice

In 2019, the Tharaka Nithi County Government through the Department of Education, Vocational Training, Gender, Children and Social Services in collaboration with the Department of Infrastructure conducted a comprehensive survey to identify opportunities for empowerment of women. During this assessment, it became apparent that a significant number of women faced a common challenge of caring for their children while attending to their businesses in the market. Without caregivers, most parents were compelled to prioritize their children's care, resulting in business inconsistency and subsequent negative effects on household income.



Tharaka Nithi County Creche in Chuka Market

In March 2019, the Department of Education, Vocational Training, Gender, Children and Social Services organized a public participation event aimed at notifying traders that a segment of the market space would be allocated for the construction of a creche. This was also aimed at gathering their input and suggestions regarding the creche idea. In July 2019, the County initiated a four-month project involving renovation of the Chuka market and the construction of the creche within the designated area of the market space. During this period, the County Government concurrently started developing a curriculum and employed two skilled teachers, three caregivers and a cleaner to ensure the provision of care and support for the children.

The County allocated a budget of Ksh 1,343,358 Million to establish the creche. This funding covered various aspects including the procurement of construction materials, sleeping mattresses for the children, playing tools, a television set, children's sitting area, and design work. In December 2019, the County Government operationalized the creche.

To ensure safety measures, the County Government of Tharaka Nithi maintains a registration book where parents can record their names and contact details, including their store numbers. This information is used for emergency purposes and facilitates effective communication with parents when necessary. With the children gathered in a centralized location, Health Department officials, accompanied by medical professionals, regularly visit the daycare facility to assess the health status and overall well-being of the children.

With the current capacity to cater to 15-30 children below the age of three, the County Government aims to implement a supportive policy that permits the

establishment of similar daycare centers within public schools. This initiative is intended to assist a larger number of mothers by extending childcare assistance and support.

Though the County doesn't have an existing policy, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, engaged in researching the influence of the creche on women in the County, is actively collaborating with the County to establish a policy framework. Through the implementation of a comprehensive legal framework, the County strives to ensure the long-term sustainability of the initiative.

Results of the practice

Enhanced child development: Children have benefited from a structured and nurturing environment provided in the creche. They have opportunities for social interaction, early learning experiences, and cognitive development, setting a solid foundation for their future growth and education.

Increased income and maternal empowerment: the reliable childcare services provided by the creche have enabled more mothers to actively participate in their businesses, leading to increased income and overall financial independence and well-being.

Smooth reintegration after maternity break: With the creche, mothers returning to work after their maternity break experience a smooth transition. The supportive environment provided by the facility allows them to resume their professional responsibilities with confidence, knowing their children are well-cared for.



Photo of the Chuka Market Creche

Enhanced economic participation: Entrepreneurial women have benefitted from the flexibility offered by the creche, enabling them to engage in economic activities while ensuring their children receive proper care. This has empowered them to contribute to the local economy and pursue their business goals.

Emotional well-being and reduced stress: The creche initiative has provided emotional security for both mothers and children. Knowing their children are in a supportive environment has reduced stress levels for mothers, allowing them to focus on their work.

With children gathered in one location, healthcare professionals have been able to efficiently conduct medical examinations and administer immunizations to multiple children simultaneously. This streamlined process has improved efficiency and effectiveness, making healthcare provision more convenient and accessible for the children.

Lessons learnt

Engaging the community in the planning and decision-making process enhances the effectiveness and acceptance of such initiatives. It fosters a sense of ownership and collective responsibility, ensuring the sustainability and success of the program.

There is a need for a comprehensive policy framework to guide the establishment and operation of such daycare centres. Having clear guidelines and regulations ensures the quality, safety and sustainability of the initiative while addressing the specific needs of the community.

To further enhance safety measures, it is crucial to implement additional protocols that prevent parents from abandoning their children at the daycare center. This includes implementing procedures that require parents to provide detailed contact information and emergency contacts who can be reached in case of any unforeseen circumstances. These measures ensure a secure and responsible environment for the children and maintain effective communication channels with parents or guardians in case of emergencies.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the establishment of the creche in Chuka town has had positive effects on working mothers, improving their productivity and empowering them economically. Lessons learned include the importance of childcare support, its impact on women's empowerment, the value of community engagement, and integrating healthcare services within daycare facilities. The initiative has demonstrated scalability potential, with the opportunity to expand to public schools. Overall, the Chuka Market creche serves as a successful model for achieving work-life balance, empowering women, and fostering community development.



Photo of the Chuka Market Creche

The Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities: The Role of the Wajir County Persons with Disabilities Act

Introduction

A person with a disability is an individual who has physical, sensory, intellectual, or mental impairments that substantially limit one or more major life activities. Disabilities can vary in type and severity, and they may affect a person's mobility, hearing, vision, communication, cognition, or mental health. People with disabilities often face numerous challenges in their daily lives, including barriers to education, employment, transportation and accessibility. According to an article published by Deutsche Welle (DW) on Why Africa's Physically Challenged Remain Invisible, millions of African people living with disabilities remain invisible despite laws that call for inclusion and equality.

In certain communities, individuals with disabilities are unfortunately often perceived as bringing curses, bad luck, or seen as a form of divine punishment directed at their parents and relatives who may be deemed unjust. To shield their children from the stigma associated with disability, many parents choose to isolate them from the outside world, depriving them of educational opportunities and social interactions.

The County Government of Wajir has 1,780 registered people living with a disability. Amongst these individuals are parents who were either born with disabilities or faced circumstances such as accidents that resulted in immobility and loss of jobs. However, despite these challenges, they continue to bear the responsibility of providing for their families. Individuals with disabilities encounter shared obstacles, including the absence of necessary assistive equipment and devices that would enable them to lead normal lives.

To empower individuals with disabilities, the County Government of Wajir has established a disability fund aimed at providing financial support to the disabled community. Through this initiative, a cash transfer of Ksh 4,000 is made to individuals with disabilities, enabling them to address their daily challenges. Additionally, the program also facilitates the provision of assistive devices to assist them in overcoming various obstacles they may encounter in their daily lives.

Implementation of the practice

The County Government initiated the cash transfer program, in the 2014/15 financial year, initially benefiting 175 individuals. During that period, a total of 300 persons with disabilities were registered. However, the selection process for the cash transfer program was based on the level of vulnerability. To prioritize those in greater need, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds were given precedence over those from more affluent backgrounds. As a result, six members were chosen from each ward, ensuring representation from various areas while focusing on supporting the most vulnerable individuals with disabilities.

In 2019 the number of beneficiaries had increased to 208 members. Under the program, a monthly transfer of Ksh 4,000 per person was provided, directly deposited into their bank accounts. To facilitate this, the County Government collaborated with Equity Bank to ensure that accounts were opened for all beneficiaries. Additionally, to make the withdrawal process more convenient, agents were stationed in every ward, enabling beneficiaries to access their funds without having to travel to the main bank branch.

Furthermore, recognizing the diverse preferences and geographical challenges faced by some individuals, the County introduced a direct mobile transfer option. This allows beneficiaries who prefer Mpesa or reside in remote areas to receive their funds directly on their mobile. This program was established based solely on the political goodwill of the County leadership and no legislative backing.

However, in the subsequent three fiscal years (2017/18 to 2019/20), the program faced stagnation, prompting the need for formal legislation. In response, the County Government of Wajir collaborated with the World Food Programme (WFP) to engage experts and develop a Bill in 2019. Due to delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bill was eventually passed as the Wajir County Disability Act in 2021.

To comply with the Act, the County Government has taken significant measures. The funding allocated to the cash transfer program has been increased from Ksh 14 million to Ksh 40 million. For sustainability, a regulation to operationalize the Act was passed and officially gazetted in January 2023. Currently, the County Government is conducting a comprehensive registration process with the aim of recording all People with Disabilities (PWDs) in the County.

Results of the practice

The impact of the cash transfer funds allocated to disabled individuals has been substantial in the following ways.

The County Government has supported 630 registered Persons with Disabilities with the monthly cash transfer program. The project has significantly improved the beneficiaries' livelihoods by boosting household purchasing power, promoting increased savings and acquisition of household assets, reducing poverty levels amongst the PWDs, and enhancing food expenditures.

- Over 500 individuals have been beneficiaries of support through the provision of assistive devices, including but not limited to hearing aids, wheel-chairs, and other essential equipment. This crucial assistance has empowered them to enhance their mobility, enabling them to carry out various activities and even resume their businesses.
- The monthly cash transfer has boosted income security and improved the well-being of people with disabilities and their families.
- By enacting the Wajir County Disability Fund Act, the long-term sustainability of this practice is ensured.

The County Government has supported moderately disabled individuals to engage in small business ventures for economic empowerment.

Lessons learnt:

- There is a need to ensure an adequate budget allocation to cater to individuals with severe disabilities while also empowering moderately disabled individuals to engage in small business ventures for economic empowerment. Collaborate with NGOs to provide support for specific programs.

- Equitably distribute beneficiaries across sub-counties and rely on existing data and assessments from doctors to justify the final selection of beneficiaries.
- There is a need to implement continuous registration processes to ensure that registration is not a one-time exercise, allowing for the inclusion of new individuals with disabilities who may require assistance in the future.
- Coordinating with the National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) and the Hospital Assessment Committee to effectively plan and streamline the registration process is key to ensuring convenience and accessibility for all relevant agencies involved.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the nomadic lifestyle in Wajir County presents unique challenges in tracing and reaching disabled individuals. The constant movement of these individuals, as they search for pasture and water for their animals, makes it difficult to locate and identify them for support and assistance. However, the County Government remains dedicated to improving the lives of disabled individuals and ensuring their integration into society. Through the disability fund and ongoing efforts, steps are being taken to overcome the obstacles posed by the nomadic lifestyle and provide the necessary support to enhance their livelihoods. By recognizing and addressing these challenges, Wajir County is paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive environment for disabled individuals, ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a better quality of life.



H.E FCPA, Amed Abdullahi, EGH, Governor of Wajir County launching the Wajir County Mobility Fund

SECTOR: HEALTH

Empowering Women and Transforming Healthcare: Dignity Restoration for Obstetric Fistula Patients in Makueni County

Introduction

A fistula is an abnormal connection or passageway between two organs or vessels in the body. These connections can occur in various body parts, such as the digestive tract, urinary system, or even between blood vessels. Fistulas can develop due to various medical conditions, infections, trauma, or surgery. Though fistula is mostly associated with giving birth, there are different types of fistulas including Gastrointestinal Fistula, Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF), Rectovaginal Fistula (RVF) and Obstetric Fistula. Patients with fistula require surgery to correct the abnormal connection of body organs for improved quality of life.

In most African settings, fistula is often associated with witchcraft and is perceived as a divine punishment for involvement in morally unacceptable activities. Those affected by this condition often face stigmatization and discrimination, leading some to endure significant hardships.

Fistula surgeries in Kenya are very expensive, ranging from Ksh100,000 to 150,000. Further, the number of qualified surgeons is less than 15 with only three authorized to tackle complex surgeries. Consequently, there is always a backlog of patients waiting for surgical procedures. Makueni County, located in the former Eastern Province, shares a common challenge with other Counties in Kenya, dealing with the backlog issue, which results in many women leading lives marked by stigma and hardship.

Fistula cases are extremely sensitive and frequently concealed. Women afflicted with birth-related fistulas often tend to withdraw from social gatherings and employment, resulting in depression and isolation. Some even neglect basic bodily needs like drinking water and eating, fearing uncontrollable soiling of their clothing.

Previously, due to the absence of records regarding the number of women suffering from fistula, especially those who choose home deliveries with Traditional Birth Attendants, the County lacked the necessary data to advocate for any action. The County only permitted willing medical donors, such as Amref, to establish temporary tent camps for treating such cases. As these medical camps were highly unsustainable, typically operating for only a few months, the data collected from them motivated the County to implement strategic initiatives.



A patient undergoing obstetric fistula surgery in Makueni County Referral Hospital level 5 hospital.



Makueni County Mother and child Hospital in Wote

These initiatives included establishing a walk-in clinic at Makueni County Referral Hospital Level 5 Hospital, raising awareness, providing counseling for stigmatized women, offering free surgeries and conducting home visits to check on the affected women.

Implementation of the practice

Following a medical camp organized in 2019 by Amref Flying Doctors and Safaricom, the County acknowledged the imperative need to formulate a sustainable strategy for the resolution of the fistula challenge.

In May 2022, the County Department of Health convened a series of meetings involving different stakeholders, including Jhpiego, to deliberate on and devise multiple strategies aimed at reinstating the dignity of mothers and helping women suffering from fistula.

The shortage of trained medical professionals posed a significant challenge that demanded attention. To address this issue, in February 2023, the County enlisted a surgeon, an anesthetist, a counselor, and other medical experts for training at Gynocare Women's and Fistula Hospital in Eldoret.

Given the absence of a tailored Kenyan curriculum for training such medical professionals, the County opted to have them trained using the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) curriculum. Simultaneously, they embarked on a mission to develop a Kenyan curriculum in collaboration with the Ministry of Health

(MoH), seven other fistula surgeons, Amref Flying Doctors, the Fistula Foundation, UNFPA, Kenyatta National Hospital (KNH), and the University of Nairobi.

From July 31st to August 2nd 2023, the team conducted a workshop to create an Obstetric Fistula repair curriculum. Jhpiego assisted in the curriculum development by proposing two supplementary modules, "Advanced" and "Expert," to enhance the curriculum. Currently, the curriculum is undergoing the submission process for approval by the medical board.

As a result of this training, Makueni County has gained an additional Obstetric Fistula-qualified surgeon who can repair simple fistulas (Level 1) and refer complex cases for support from expert surgeons.

On March 27, 2023, the County Government initiated routine fistula services at the hospital, as part of the Gynecology Department. During the inaugural week of the program, the team performed successful free surgeries on 27 women. From March to October 2023, the County has extended its services to more than 120 women in need of fistula-related repairs. Further, the County provides a weekly screening program each Tuesday as a strategy to fight Obstetric Fistula.

To ensure comprehensive care for patients after their hospital discharge, the County dispatches teams to conduct home visits and monitor the patient's progress. This proactive approach enables the medical team to promptly address any potential recurrence of fistula by arranging for immediate hospital visits if necessary.

Further, the County has implemented a continuous campaign strategy to enhance awareness, which includes engaging journalists to cover success stories associated with fistula and educating the local community to reduce stigma. The County has created a database of 38 fistula champions who have received counseling and are willing to speak openly about fistula-related issues, to motivate others to seek medical assistance.

This initiative is aligned with the County's prospects to enhance the health sector articulated in the CIDP.

Results of the practice

1. **Reduced Stigma:** Open discussions and testimonials from champions have helped reduce the stigma associated with fistula, encouraging affected individuals to seek medical help without fear of judgment.
2. **Improved Health Outcomes:** With more individuals seeking treatment and support, there is an improvement in the health outcomes of those affected by fistula. The County has provided services to more than 120 women suffering from obstetric fistula.
3. **Increased awareness:** The champions' efforts have led to greater awareness of fistula hence reducing stigma and motivating more people to seek treatment.

Lessons learnt:

1. **Awareness creation is Key:** Raising awareness about a sensitive and stigmatized health issue like fistula is crucial. When people have information, they are more likely to seek help and support.
2. **Community Engagement:** Involving the community, including champions who have overcome fistula, fosters a sense of belonging and support.
3. **Stigma Reduction:** Open discussions and testimonials from champions can help reduce the stigma associated with fistula. This demonstrates the power of personal stories and advocacy in challenging societal norms.

4. **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regular home visits to supervise patients' post-hospital discharge are essential to ensure their continued recovery and wellbeing.
5. **Data Collection and Analysis:** Maintaining a database of champions can serve as a valuable resource for future planning, research and program evaluation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the efforts and initiatives undertaken by the County Government of Makueni in addressing fistula-related issues have proven to be crucial in raising awareness, reducing stigma and improving the health-care and support available to women affected by fistula.

The establishment of a database of fistula champions, implementation of community engagement strategies and emphasis on monitoring and evaluation through home visits have all played pivotal roles in advancing the cause.



Makueni County Officers Conducting Home Visits

Promoting Hospital-Based Childbirth and Maternal Health among the Maasai Community in Kajiado County

Introduction

Kajiado County, situated in the former Rift Valley province, spans an area of 21,292.7 square kilometers. As of the 2019 census, the County is inhabited by a population of 1,117,840 residents, with the majority belonging to the Maasai community. Kajiado County shares its borders with Nairobi, Makueni, Narok, Nakuru, Kiambu, Machakos, Taita Taveta, and Arusha (Tanzania).

The Maasai, who are Plain Nilotes and traditionally nomadic, are renowned for their pastoral way of life and unique cultural practices that incorporate indigenous knowledge to address everyday challenges. Their preference for traditional herbal remedies and characteristic cow-dug huts, known as manyattas, reflect their distinct lifestyle. However, the nomadic nature of the Maasai presents challenges in establishing essential social infrastructure such as hospitals. Consequently, expectant mothers often opt for home births, which come with inherent difficulties, including the risk of disabilities, infections, health complications, and even fatalities. Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) are prominent in promoting home deliveries in Kajiado.

To address this challenge, the Department of Health has formulated innovative and distinctive approaches to pro-

mote hospital deliveries within the County. These initiatives involve the transformation of TBAs into advocates for hospital births, alongside the construction of manyatta maternal shelters within hospital premises to encourage expectant mothers to opt for hospital deliveries.

Implementation of the practice

Engaging traditional birth attendants for home deliveries is common in various African settings. However, with the advent of modernization and the emergence of new diseases and infections, this practice has become less recommended. Many women are now afflicted by Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), including different forms of cancer, hypertension and heart conditions.

To address these challenges, in February 2023 the Kajiado County Government initiated a series of training workshops for TBAs, emphasizing the importance of hospital-based childbirth to reduce complications and the risk of maternal or infant mortality. Subsequently, from February to May the County constructed eco-manyattas within hospital compounds to accommodate Maasai women who prefer giving birth in a manyatta setting. To construct and equip the eco-manyatta facilities the County allocated Ksh5.6 million.

The County maintains a database of experienced TBA who are well-recognized within their communities. Further, it provides an incentive of Ksh 500 for each hospital referral made by these TBAs to expectant mothers.

Table 1.

Month	Bissil Health Centre	Ngataak Health Centre	Enkorika Health Centre	Meto Dispensary	Mashuru Health Centre	Simba Health Centre	Mosiro Dispensary (Kajiado West)	Torosei Dispensary	Imbirikani Sub County Hospital	Risa	Total
April 2023	36	11	6	0	25	0	17	5	11	0	111
May 2023	59	18	7	3	24	3	12	3	16	3	148
June 2023	43	24	8	7	44	0	11	4	19	6	166

To ensure the long-term viability of this program, the County has incorporated it into the County Integrated Development Plan. This strategic move allows for the ongoing construction of additional facilities in various regions to further expand the initiative's reach.

- Effectively linking re-oriented TBAs with skilled birth attendants in existing health system through community-based collaborative models has the potential to increase the number of women accessing skilled care and thus increase facility-based deliveries.

Results of the practice

There has been an increase of 40% in the number of hospital deliveries due to the joint strategy of embracing the TBAs and the eco-manyattas in the County as shown in the table below a comparison from April to June 2023.

Lessons learnt

- Trained TBAs have the capacity to disseminate knowledge of beneficial maternal practices to the community and have the potential to influence the uptake of primary health care services during pregnancy and after delivery.
- As TBAs are re-oriented to become birth companions, their complementary capacity for nutrition advocacy should also be strengthened to maximize the opportunity provided through their close associations with mothers.

Conclusion

- The collaboration between the County Government and trained TBAs has played a crucial role in encouraging expectant women to consider giving birth in eco-manyatta facilities within hospitals. By providing financial incentives to TBAs for referrals and facilitating their presence during hospital visits, this initiative has not only made childbirth safer for mothers but has also fostered trust in the medical professionals responsible for their care. This partnership stands as a testament to the positive impact that community engagement and support can have on improving maternal healthcare outcomes in the region. It underscores the importance of innovative approaches in addressing healthcare challenges and ensuring the wellbeing of expectant mothers and their babies.



A photo of the Manyatta hospital in Kajiado



Manyatta hospital in Kajiado County

SECTOR: AGRICULTURE

The Impact of Strategic Initiatives and Community Engagement on the Success and Failure of Apiculture Projects in Kitui County.

Introduction

Apiculture is the scientific term for beekeeping which involves the management and cultivation of bees to harvest honey, beeswax, pollen and other bee-related products.

Kenya has an annual honey production rate of 100,000 metric tons. This thriving industry not only contributes substantially to the agricultural sector but also sustains the well-being of numerous farmers who depend on beekeeping for their livelihood.

Situated in the former Eastern Province, Kitui County spans an area of 30,496 square kilometers and is home to 1,136,187 people. Capitalizing on its extensive land resource and climatic condition, the County has demonstrated notable success in beekeeping. Initially, the practice was geared towards domestic consumption as a cost-effective alternative to purchasing sugar, substituting it with locally produced honey.

With the advent of devolution, Kitui County is now strategically harnessing the potential of beekeeping and apiculture. This shift aims to transform the perception of apiculture, positioning it as a viable contributor to the County's economy and a means of enhancing the livelihoods of farmers.

The County Government has strategically intensified its efforts by actively supporting beekeepers through comprehensive training programs, provision of essential equipment and establishment of diverse marketing strategies. In the 2015/2016 financial year, the County strategically cushioned farmers to focus on the business aspect of apiculture by inaugurating 16 honey processing plants. Among these, the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative Society stands out as the only facility that has prospered and experienced significant advancement, thanks to robust community support and the effective leadership demonstrated by its managers.

Annually, the County produces 30% of its honey through the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative Society. With over 940 members, this cooperative society has significantly improved the lives of women and youth residing in these wards.

Implementation of the practice

- Prior to devolution, farmers experienced challenges in honey marketing, with a kilogram of honey selling at Ksh50. Lack of awareness regarding the quality of honey for external consumption led to issues such as harvesting unripe honey and blending it with sweeteners to enhance marketability.
- In response to these challenges, farmers from Mwangeni, Tiva River and Athi collaborated to establish a Community-Based Organization (CBO) called Mwangeni Rural Development, with a primary goal to collectively market and sell all their agricultural produce as a group.
- With the onset of devolution in 2014, the County Government of Kitui initiated the construction of 16 Honey Processing Plants. However, due to effective leadership skills and community ownership of the project, only the Kamaki Cooperative Society plant in Ikutha has managed to sustain itself.
- By 2018, the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative had 248 registered members, aggregating 1.2 tons of honey.
- The same year the County, through the National Agricultural Rural Inclusive Growth Project (NARIGP) supported farmers from the Kamaki Cooperation with an inclusion grant of Ksh999,000. This support covered expenses in the processing plant including marketing, buying of machines and training of farmers on honey harvesting.
- Subsequent years witnessed significant growth, with honey aggregation reaching 8.7 tons by 2020. The County provided support in various forms, including buying more equipment to encourage apiculture as a sustainable source of income and business.
- In 2021, the County aggregated 28.6 tons of raw honey while providing training on bee management, honey harvesting and candle making.
- In 2022, there was a drop in honey aggregation to 12.4 tons, but membership increased to 855.
- In 2023, climate change has impacted production, causing a decline to 5.6 tons due to factors such as drought and deforestation.

- The implementation of a collective marketing strategy, which involves ensuring the availability of Kitui honey in all supermarkets in the County and select supermarkets such as Carrefour, Naivas, and Quickmart, has resulted in a threefold increase in the selling price from Ksh50 to Ksh250 after the establishment of the processing plant.
- At the end of every financial year the cooperative shares dividends with the members.

Though the other 15 cooperatives did not pick up as desired, the County is in the process of drafting a policy for the sustainability of the Kamaki Cooperative Society Plant.

The County has established various inspection measures at the processing plant to verify the quality of honey submitted by farmers, ensuring it meets both local and international standards. The processing plant conducts assessments of water and sucrose content in any honey submitted, mandating a sucrose content of 80%. Honey falling below this threshold is deemed unripe. Additionally, strict guidelines prohibit the mixing of honey with varying sucrose percentages within the processing plant.

Results of the practice

1. The growth in honey production is apparent in the implementation of the practice from 2018 to 2022.
2. The improved quality of honey production has resulted in increased market demand for Kitui honey.
3. The honey processing plant has improved the livelihood of farmers and members of the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative Society
4. The assurance steps and guidelines at the Kamaki Cooperative Society has instilled trust in both local and external consumers, affirming the high standards of honey produced in the processing plant.
5. The processing plant has provided employment opportunities to youth working as cleaners, watchmen and other duties including branding and tagging of the packages.



The Kamaki honey processing plant



Apiculture in Kitui County, Kamaki Farmer's Cooperative Society

Lessons learnt:

1. Inadequate management leads to the failure of projects - Though Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative Society was commissioned together with the other 15 processing plants, the management and leadership has impacted on the sustainability.
2. Standards are upheld through adherence to guidelines - The outlined guidelines including the percentage of sucrose acceptable at the processing plant have ensured good quality honey
3. The success of any County project relies heavily on community support - Through the support from the local farmers who are members of the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative, the processing plant has stood the taste of time

Climate change is a universal concern affecting all living beings - Climate change caused by various aspects including deforestation has led to drought and the death of living things including bees.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the initiative undertaken by Kitui County in the field of apiculture has yielded commendable results and presented valuable lessons. The transition from a Community-Based Organization (CBO) to the Kamaki Farmers' Cooperative focusing honey, reflects a strategic shift towards a more business-oriented approach. The success of the Kamaki Farmers Cooperative Society, amid challenges faced by other processing plants, underscores the importance of effective leadership and robust community support. Quality assurance measures implemented at the processing plant have not only enhanced the marketability of Kitui honey but have also instilled trust in consumers. This, in turn, has contributed to increased market demand for locally produced honey.



A photo of honey processing machines at the Kamaki farmers' Co-operative Society



A photo of a county officer explaining steps of obtaining and packaging honey at Kamaki Processing Plant



A photo of an officer at Kamaki Cooperative society demonstrating the final steps of packaging the products

Harnessing the Potential of Blue Economy: Nyeri County Supports Sustainable Fish Farming in Kieni East Sub-County.

Introduction

Blue Economy is the sustainable utilization of aquatic resources to promote economic growth, improve livelihoods, and preserve the health of marine ecosystems. It encompasses various sectors such as fisheries and aquaculture, marine renewable energy, tourism and marine biotechnology. Aquaculture is a rapidly growing sector in Kenya. The country's numerous water bodies, including lakes, rivers, and ponds, provide ideal conditions for fish farming. Fish farming in Kenya offers significant economic opportunities and food security. The thriving of different fish species is dependent on specific environmental conditions. For example, tilapia shows optimal growth in warm climates, whereas trout fish thrives in colder regions. This highlights the significance of providing suitable habitats for the survival of each species.

Situated in the foothills of Mount Kenya, Nyeri County shares a geographical connection with the mountain, as its boundaries extend towards the lower slopes. This close proximity fosters a significant ecological impact,

influencing the County's climate, natural resources and overall terrain. To enhance food security, farmers in Nyeri County have embraced diversification in fish farming, capitalizing on the favorable conditions for trout fish farming in the cold weather. This has prompted them to expand their aquaculture activities beyond trout and explore the cultivation of various other fish species.

Farmers in Kabaru Ward, located within Kieni East sub-county, have embraced greenhouse fish farming as a method to rear diverse fish species, placing a particular emphasis on those that flourish in warm climates. By embracing greenhouses, farmers have created a controlled environment that effectively facilitates the cultivation and nurturing of various fish types including tilapia and catfish. This innovative approach empowers them to expand their aquaculture activities beyond the limitations imposed by weather conditions and traditional farming methods, promoting greater diversification and sustainability.

The County's substantial burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) presents a notable challenge, leading residents to rethink their dietary choices. A crucial aspect of addressing this challenge involves emphasizing the incorporation of fish and other protein sources into their meals, aiming to reduce excessive carbohydrate consumption. The County Government of Nyeri is actively supporting fish farmers by providing a range of inputs, including fingerlings and essential equipment,



Greenhouse fish-farming in Nyeri County

and availing comprehensive training sessions. These initiatives are designed to empower fish farmers and enable them to achieve sustained growth and development in their operations. By offering these professional resources and knowledge, the County Government aims to enhance the productivity and profitability of the local fish farming sector thus contributing to the overall economic and social well-being of the region.

Implementation of the practice

In 2019, the County Government of Nyeri applied a series of strategic measures to grow the fishing sector. One of these measures involved strengthening the workforce by recruiting an additional eight officers, bringing the total number of specialized personnel dedicated to the fishing sector to 21. This proactive approach was carefully implemented to enhance the capacity and operational efficiency of the fishing sector, ensuring they can provide comprehensive support and capacity to fish farmers in the region.

The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Aquaculture Development took proactive steps to ensure that every sub-county had two dedicated fisheries officers. These officers are responsible for regularly visiting fish farmers and facilitating communication through various platforms, including WhatsApp groups established at the sub-county level. By serving as a direct channel of communication between the department and local farmers, these officers play a crucial role in managing effective and efficient information exchange.

The subsequent phase entailed conducting capacity-building programs for County officers, aimed at enhancing their understanding of innovative fish farming methods and broader industry practices. Additionally, a comprehensive training strategy was devised to ensure that farmers continuously benefitted from their trade. Through this strategy, farmers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to improve their fish farming techniques, leading to increased productivity and sustainable growth in the sector.



Fish ponds in Kabaru Ward Kieni East Sub-County

The County Government of Nyeri has actively extended support to fish farmers through various channels-providing fingerlings, feeds, dam liners and training. The County Government has facilitated the restocking of 266,000 fingerlings and supplied 16,825 Kg of feed to 3,000 farmers to enhance their operations. Further, these farmers have been equipped with 287 liners, which serve as essential equipment for their fish farming activities. These comprehensive interventions are carefully designed to empower fish farmers, enabling them to significantly improve their productivity and achieve greater success in the sector.

The Nyeri County Government is among the Counties that have beneficiaries of the Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP), which is an IFAD project. The ABDP program seeks to promote and market fish from the region and increase the visibility and demand for local fish.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the program, the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Aqua-

culture Development has taken proactive measures. One such step is the development of a comprehensive fisheries policy, which has been drafted and is currently awaiting review by the Executive and thereafter approval by the Assembly. This policy will serve as a guiding framework for the management and regulation of fisheries within the County. By establishing clear guidelines and strategies, the Department aims to promote sustainable practices, the conservation of aquatic resources, and the overall growth and development of the fish farming sector.

Results of the practice

- The comprehensive support extended to the 3,000 fish farmers in Kabaru Ward has yielded positive outcomes. Through training, restocking of fingerlings, supply of feed, and provision of necessary equipment, the farmers have experienced an increase in income from fish farming.



Greenhouse fish farming in Nyeri County

This has translated into improved standards of living, as they are now able to sell their fish locally and to neighboring Counties.

- Food security has been significantly enhanced as fish farmers now have the means to afford better nutrition and access a diverse range of food options, including the fish they rear. This improved access to nutritious food has not only directly benefited the farmers and their families but has also played a crucial role in promoting overall food security within the community.
- Through the provision of training programs, the County Government has contributed to enhanced productivity, increased profitability, and improved sustainability within the sector.
- The Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP) has facilitated marketing initiatives, promoted the products of fish farmers and expanding market access. This has resulted in improved market opportunities and economic growth for the fish farming community.
- The fishing sector has experienced a substantial boost in both capacity and operational efficiency. This positive outcome can be directly attributed to the deliberate expansion of a specialized workforce. By providing enhanced support and empowerment to fish farmers in the region, this proactive approach has successfully propelled the County to secure its position as the third-ranked region in fish farming, as highlighted in the 2021/22 Aquaculture Business Development Program report.

Lessons learnt:

- Collaboration and partnerships: The importance of collaborative efforts between the County Government, agricultural programs, and other stakeholders cannot be overstated. Working together allows for the pooling of resources, knowledge, and expertise, resulting in more effective and impactful outcomes.
- Capacity building: Investing in capacity-building programs and training for both farmers and County officers is crucial. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills and knowledge, they are better prepared to adopt new practices, improve productivity, and contribute to the overall growth of the sector.

- Diversification and adaptation: Recognizing the diverse environmental conditions and market demands, fish farmers in Nyeri County have diversified fish farming by embracing green houses. This approach enables them to cater to different fish species and adapt to changing market dynamics, ultimately enhancing their resilience and profitability.
- Need for sustainable policies and regulations: Establishing clear policies and regulations helps guide the sector, promotes responsible resource management, and ensures the long-term viability of fish farming operations.
- Monitoring and evaluation: Regular monitoring and evaluation of initiatives and practices is essential for assessing their effectiveness and making necessary adjustments. Continuous monitoring allows for the identification of challenges, successes, and areas for improvement, enabling the refinement of strategies and the achievement of better outcomes.

Conclusion

Nyeri County has made significant progress in the development of its fish farming sector through various initiatives and practices. The County Government's commitment to empowering fish farmers, providing training, restocking fingerlings, supplying feeds and equipment, and collaborating with organizations like the Aquaculture Business Development Program (ABDP) has yielded positive results.

SECTOR: EDUCATION

Murang'a County Amplifies ECDE Feeding Programme to Increase Class Enrollment.

Introduction

In Kenya, Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is an education system designed for children aged between three and six years old. This is the foundation of education, offered in both private and public schools to promote cognitive development through a curriculum that provides play-based learning, socialization, and an exploration environment.

In Murang'a County, there are 676 public ECDE centres with 42,000 learners from diverse backgrounds. Though most parents can afford three meals a day to feed their children, there are those who still struggle to provide food. With escalating cases of drought in some places like in Ithanga constituency, most parents are unable to keep their children in school. To encourage school attendance and support parents, the County Government of Murang'a started the ECDE feeding programme.

Through this programme, the County partnered with Food for Education to provide nutritious porridge to all ECDE learners in public schools. Previously, during the onboarding stage of the programme there were questions about the safety of the porridge with some parents choosing to pack home-cooked food for their children.

To address these challenges, the County Government embraced cooking of porridge in one ECDE centre then distributing it to other areas by Bodaboda bikes. Each ECDE centre has a Uji champion, a parent to one of the pupils responsible for tasting the porridge to ensure safety for consumption.

Implementation of the practice

- The County Government of Murang'a first started by advertising tenders, a call for submission of documents from any organization that qualified to facilitate the ECDE feeding programme.
- Food for Education Organization (the Organization) submitted their documents for vetting and evaluation by the team of selected members from the Education and Procurement Department at the County.

- The Organization won the bid and proceeded to conduct a pilot project from 2nd October 2022 to 19th February 2023 in Mt Olive ECDE, Kakuzi Mitumbiri Ward.
- The pilot project included cooking porridge for the school and identifying a specific ECDE Centre at a central position in every ward where the cooking and packaging of the porridge would be happening during the County project roll-out.
- The Members of County Assembly proposed bodaboda riders and cooks while the school parents were requested to identify a fellow parent, an uji champion to ensure the seals on the delivery buckets are not tampered with. This was strategized for quality assurance.
- After the success of the piloting stage, the County disbursed Ksh 130 million for the project to cover the following expenses: porridge flour, payment of Uji champion, bodaboda delivery, cooks and cooking expenses. Food for Education also provides metallic buckets for transporting porridge, cups for drinking porridge in all ECDE Centres and uniforms for the cooks.
- The project was rolled out to the rest of the ECDE Centres on 20th February 2023.

To sustain this project, the County Department of Education shared the Murang'a County ECDE feeding program draft policy for discussion and approval at the cabinet. The draft was approved by the cabinet and forwarded to the Assembly for approval. The County awaits this approval from the County Assembly.

Results of the practice

- There was a 4% increase in class enrollment of the ECDE learners.²
- The project provided job opportunities for the bodaboda delivery persons, cooks and uji champions.

With the uji champion, parents were more comfortable and assured of the porridge quality hence reducing the financial burden involved with budgeting for tea break home-cooked porridge.

Lessons learnt

- Involving parents as uji champions and the community in the feeding project is important for creating ownership and for quality assurance.
- Conducting a pilot project before the final launch of the programme is important to identify gaps and work on improving the implementation of the project.
- School feeding programmes increase class enrolment.

Conclusion

County Governments should consider pilot projects and involve the community in the implementation of similar projects for ownership.



Murang'a County Governor H.E Irungu Kangata serving ECDE children the nutritious uji

SECTOR: TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY SECTOR

Community-Led Road Maintenance Initiative: Lessons and Successes from Tharaka Nithi County Road Marshals Initiative

Introduction

Tharaka Nithi County, spanning 2609 km² and home to a population of 393,177 residents, is blessed with fertile lands due to its abundant rainfall. However, this blessing also comes with the challenge of maintaining clear roads and drainage systems, as fallen tree logs often obstruct them, rendering them impassable.

In response to this ongoing issue, the Tharaka Nithi County Government has taken proactive measures through the Tharaka Nithi Road Marshal initiative, which involves the community in road maintenance. Specifically, the Department of Roads collaborates with residents to clear roads, especially after rainfalls, and to unclog drainage systems. Annually, the County allocates more than Ksh200 million to road maintenance, a costly endeavor.

Recognizing that this problem is recurrent due to the County's geographical location, mountainous- hilly-valley terrain, which experiences heavy rainfall, the County devised a strategy to train local youth in various

road maintenance techniques, including log removal and drainage clearance. This initiative has significantly reduced the number of complaints to County offices regarding blocked roads.

Now, residents contact their respective road marshal leaders in each area, who coordinate efforts to keep the roads clean. To ensure consistent cleanliness, road marshals are required to work twice a week, regardless of the weather conditions. To further motivate their involvement, the County provides each road marshal with a stipend of Ksh 3,000 as an incentive for their efforts.

Implementation of the practice

The implementation of this practice began with the Tharaka Nithi County Government's efforts to engage the public in September 2021, seeking input on ways to address community needs. Among the various concerns raised during this public participation, road maintenance and drainage issues emerged as the most pressing. Tharaka Nithi County comprises 15 wards, each interconnected by roads leading to schools, towns, markets and facilitating trade between sub-counties. While not all roads were tarmacked, they all faced similar challenges during rainy seasons.



Road marshals in Tharaka Nithi County

In April 2023, the County Government initiated a comprehensive training program for local youth on drainage cleaning and road maintenance. This training was conducted across all sub-counties, with the aim of empowering these road marshals to become environmental stewards within their communities.

The County provided essential equipment, such as wheelbarrows, safety gear, cleaning tools, and brooms to enable road marshals to carry out their responsibilities effectively.

In July 2023, the County officially launched the Road Marshal initiative, establishing a database comprising 700 trained road marshals. To sustain this initiative, the County allocates a monthly budget of Ksh2.5 million, ensuring that resources are available to support the program. Additionally, the County outlined its road maintenance strategy in compliance with the Tharaka Nithi County Assessment Act of 2021, ensuring consistency in road upkeep across the entire County.

To further ensure the long-term viability of this initiative, Tharaka Nithi County has incorporated it into the County Integrated Development Plan, emphasizing its commitment to ongoing road maintenance and environmental stewardship.

Results of the practice

Youth Empowerment: The initiative provides local youth with training and employment opportunities. The stipends offered to road marshals serve as an incentive for their participation and contribute to their financial well-being.

Improved Road Maintenance: The initiative has led to better road maintenance practices across the County, making it easier for residents to travel between different sub-counties, schools, markets and towns.

Enhanced Environmental Stewardship: By involving local youth as road marshals, the initiative has promoted environmental consciousness within the community. This not only keeps the roads clean but also contributes to a cleaner and healthier local environment.

Community Engagement: The program has fostered a sense of community engagement and ownership. Residents actively participate in maintaining their infrastructure, leading to a greater sense of responsibility and pride in their surroundings.



A photo of Tharaka Nithi County road marshals during induction

Lessons learnt

Community Engagement is Key: Involving the community in identifying and addressing local issues is essential. Conducting Public participation in 2021 helped identify road maintenance and drainage as top priorities.

Local Empowerment: Empowering residents, especially youth, by providing them with training and tools can lead to more sustainable solutions to community challenges.

Environmental Stewardship: Promoting environmental consciousness within the community not only benefits the roads but also contributes to a cleaner and healthier local environment.

Cost-Efficient Solutions: Investing in training and equipping local road marshals proved to be a cost-effective approach compared to solely relying on county government resources for road maintenance.

Conclusion

The Tharaka Nithi County Road Marshal initiative serves as a shining example of how community engagement, empowerment, and innovative approaches to local challenges can yield significant benefits. By involving residents in the maintenance of roads and drainage systems, the initiative has not only improved infrastructure but also fostered environmental stewardship, economic growth, and community ownership.

The lessons learned from this initiative underscore the importance of collaboration between local governments and their communities in addressing pressing issues. It demonstrates that investing in the training and empowerment of local youth can result in cost-effective and sustainable solutions.



Photos of H.E Hon. Muthomi Njuki, EGH during induction of the Tharaka Nithi road marshals



A photo of Tharaka Nithi County road marshals with wheelbarrows and other equipment ready to work

APPENDIX 1: COUNTY LOGOS



Makueni 017



Nyeri 019



Machakos 016



Wajir 008



Kajiado 034



Kitui 015



Murang'a 021



Tharaka Nithi 013

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