



Council of Governors



Nairobi City County opens the first public rehabilitation centre for substance abuse victims in informal settlements

County	Nairobi City County		
Sector	Business and Hustler Opportunities.	Sub-sector/Theme:	Liquor Board
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Target Audience	Nairobi residents, other Counties		
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Context and Challenge

Drug and substance abuse are becoming a pandemic worldwide with the global number of people who will use illicit drugs predicted to increase by 11% by 2030, reaching 299 million people (Bonfiglio, Mascia, & Penna, 2022). Due to its negative consequences on every element of life and development, substance and drug abuse has drawn the attention of different sectors within nations. To stop this menace, prevention, efficient treatment, and rehabilitation are consequently necessary.

In Kenya, alcohol and drug addiction poses a serious threat to security, the economy, and the public health. Among the health consequences of drug and substance abuse are psychological problems, liver cirrhosis, tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). According to the 2022 *National Survey on the Status of Drugs and Substance Use in Kenya* by NACADA, about 2,137,223 youth were using at least one drug or substance abuse in Kenya. The 25-35 years age group representing youth out-of-school was identified as a vulnerable group for drugs and substance use and dependence. The five-year survey reported the highest prevalence of at least one drug or substance-of-abuse in Nairobi at 19.1%. The region had the highest prevalence of alcohol use disorders (18.4%) and the highest prevalence of manufactured legal alcohol (10.3%) (NACADA, 2022).

In Nairobi City County, drug and substance abuse is very prevalent in the informal settlements due to the high level of idleness and unemployment, ease of access and low cost of illicit substances. As a result, many people in these areas end up being drug dependent. Though part of the affected population may be willing to change their behaviours through rehabilitation, this has proved to be impossible due to the high cost of rehabilitation services. One of the factors hindering the rehabilitation of drug addicts in low-income areas is the lack of a public facility where the services can be obtained since rehabilitation services in the private sector are very expensive.

Response and Actions (Solution Path)

The most important strategy to deal with drug and substance abuse is prevention, effective treatment and rehabilitation. Here, the major focus was on treatment and rehabilitation, because the challenge was already there and the main remedy was to help the affected population recover from the menace.

To implement the programme, the Nairobi City County Liquor Board utilised one of the County health facilities. The Board identified the Sinai Health Centre in Viwandani Ward, Embakasi South Sub-County, because it is located near several informal settlements like Viwandani, Mukuru kwa Njenga and Mukuru kwa Reuben, where rehabilitation services are highly needed.

As a new rehabilitation centre for outpatient services, infrastructure and critical amenities were put in place and medical personnel deployed. The County used KSh 39 million for equipment and operationalization. Other infrastructure was in place. Being the first Nairobi City County-owned rehabilitation centre, Standard

Operating Procedures (SOPs) were set to guide the operation of the facility, which was operationalised in 2023. The services at the rehabilitation centre also include counselling, and are offered free of charge, which has enabled access for all affected people irrespective of their financial situation. This is unlike before because 95% of rehabilitation services in the country are offered by private entities which charge up to KSh 100,000 for a three-month session, hence many people from low-income areas cannot afford it.

After the operationalisation of the facility, public sensitisation was conducted throughout the County. The main aim was to inform and enlighten the people on the existence of a County-owned rehabilitation facility and the services offered. The public sensitisation also focused on enlightening people on various drug and substance abuse-related issues, such as depression, lung and heart diseases, cancers, etc.

Sustainability measures for the Sinai Rehabilitation Centre

1. The facility is currently registered and licensed by the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentist Council (KMPDC).
2. Professional protocols developed by the public health sector for optimal operationalization and running of the facility.
3. There's a Facility Management Committee to oversee the effective running of the facility for the long run.
4. Recruitment of staff and partnering with other departments and organizations to second human resources to the facility.
5. Partnerships with other government agencies for continuous support of the facility activities, as well as in reintegration of the patients back into society.
6. Giving priority to the local community so they feel engaged and involved in the facility's activities.
7. The Rehabilitation Centre is managed by the Health, Wellness, and Nutrition sector, which has the expertise and necessary infrastructure to run the facility, maximizing its impact on the community

Results of the practice (Outputs and Outcomes)

The programme has achieved its intended purpose, and the impact is being felt in the entire County. First, the facility is currently registered and licensed by the Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council (KMPDC) and can now offer services. There is a reduction in drug dependency within Viwandani Ward and other parts of the County, as evidenced by the high number of patients the facility is receiving daily. About 455 patients have visited the facility since its inception.

Additionally, there is increased security and reduced crime in the area because there is a high correlation between drug abuse and crimes. It implies that establishment and operationalisation of the rehabilitation centre has helped to solve two challenges which are very rampant in urban areas, and especially in informal settlements. Mental illness cases have reduced since implementation of the programme. Increasing the number of people accessing affordable rehabilitation services has helped deal with mental illness, which is one of the primary negative effects of drug and substance abuse.

Another key outcome is the reintegration of drug addicts with their families and society at large. In most cases, such people are perceived as failures in society. However, with rehabilitation, such individuals can take part in community activities and also engage in income-generating activities. Guidance and counselling sessions are also offered to the families of the affected people. This is a very critical step which helps the families of the affected people to accept them back and deal with the challenges of broken families.

Lessons Learned

Response to the problem of drug and substance abuse requires a multisectoral approach. For example, in Nairobi County, the Liquor Board partnered with the County health facilities subsector to make the programme a success.

Since the charges for boarding rehabilitation services may be unaffordable to many drug dependents from informal settlements, implementing day services was the best starting point in helping the affected people.

Another lesson learned is that the Liquor Board can do more than just licensing and regulating but can also offer other services like rehabilitation and psychosocial services to consumers of their services. Dealing with drug and substance abuse through curative, psychotherapy and preventive services enhances economic vibrance, lowers crime rates, and restores **order, hope, dignity** and **opportunity** for all city residents.

The use of the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) approach led to the establishment of the Sinai Rehabilitation Centre within 100 days exceeding expectations. RRI helped efficiently solve strategic challenges within a short period because it focused on results, and also encouraged stakeholder contribution, all of which are important to the successful completion of projects. Both internal and external stakeholder engagements are very critical in dealing with perennial issues, such as drugs and substance abuse.

Recommendations

Since drug and substance abuse is a perennial issue, Counties should put in place both preventive and curative strategies for dealing with it. Although rehabilitation is one way of dealing with it, it is important to focus more on prevention, because it is cheaper. Thus, Counties must organise public sensitisation to enlighten people on the dangers of drug abuse, which range from poor physical health and mental illness, to negative economic impacts.

Incorporating counselling services related to drug and substance abuse in County facilities will help in the prevention of drug addiction and the reintegration of affected people into society. Working with other stakeholders, like non-governmental organisations, helps to solve the challenge through capacity building, and financial and in-kind donations. Introducing day rehabilitation services which are affordable and accessible to many people is a game-changer.

Basic costs associated with setting up a rehabilitation centre include infrastructure, operational, medical and security costs, among others.

Counties should consider institutionalising the Rapid Results Initiative Approach in their operations to optimise service delivery.

References

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Pictorial Evidence



Nairobi City County Chief Officer for Business and Hustler Opportunities, Zipporah Njeri Mwangi, destroying local brew in informal settlements



The County Chief Officer with the medical personnel deployed to the Rehabilitation Centre



Pharmacy Room at the Rehabilitation Centre