

The Regional HIV and Harm Reduction Project Transition

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Group photo of the attendees of the closeout meeting for the Regional Global Fund HIV and Harm Reduction Project

KANCO held a harm reduction stakeholders forum on 29th March 2019 at the Double Tree Hotel Nairobi. The meeting brought together stakeholders across the country to reflect and discuss the way forward as they marked the close out of the Regional HIV and Harm Reduction project. From the discussions, the stakeholders unanimously agreed that it was not the end of the project, rather a transition as the gains made needed to be sustained, while the new policy legislation for harm reduction in the region facilitated a new frontier to carry out the harm reduction discussion.

Further, the stakeholders shared their experiences and plans to take the discussion forward. The voices of the drug users and the recovering drug users were also clear as they reiterated that ‘Harm reduction saves lives’ with a clear call to sustain and build on the gains made. The meeting was attended by cross sector representative including, the Deputy Governor Kwale County Hon. Abdul Hakim Aboud, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, the Judiciary, CSOs, and representatives of people who use drugs.

Opening the forum the KANCO Executive Director, Allan Ragi underscored that ‘we are motivated by the change we see, and we are happy to have impacted even just one life’. We have continued to value integrity and respect as we implement harm reduction, and we are grateful to the government for having provided a conducive environment to implement the project’ calling on the stake holders to continue to carry on with the work of the movement created towards addressing harm reduction issues. Mr Allan ,stated that the current shift towards an integrated people centered health care approach should be embraced even in harm reduction programming.



Deputy Governor of Lamu County: Hon. Hassan Aboud

The Deputy Governor Lamu County Hon. Hassan Aboud, reiterated on the need to look at drugs beyond elective politics, challenging on the need to implement harm reduction with honor, looking at drug use like any other disease. He informed the stakeholder that Lamu County was looking at sustainability, and had initiated discussion with the NHIF to support drug treatment by contributing KES. 60,000 to drug users seeking rehabilitative services and had instituted a vocational center that is accessible and free for all drug users wishing to be rehabilitated. He added that the china visit organized by KANCO was an eye opener in the sense that the taken home doses would reso-

nate well with the county as a strategy.

Mr. Taib, the Director of Reachout Center reiterated on the difficulty of introducing harm reduction interventions and the journey that KANCO had walked with the stakeholder in creating the current environment. He stated that, “The zeal and passion to end the persistent deaths from overdose and drug related complications pushed us to take the first steps and want to do more for our people, and this is what has brought us this far”

Hussein Manji of UNODC appreciated KANCO’s partnerships that have yielded greater benefit for the target population. Ludfine Bunde UNODC, further added that UNODC would link harm reduction with its panel of judges who sit in the different HIV panels ensuring that issues of harm reduction continue to be addressed.

Sharing on the findings of their project evaluation, Prof. Alloys Orago, stated that from their findings, the project had achieved its intended objectives and that all eight countries statistics indicated harm reduction as a concept embodied within their structures. He further added that sustainability mechanism had been instituted with the Ministries of Health, County Coordinating Mechanisms (CCMs) and other bodies taking up tasks to ensure the continuity and sustenance of the gains made.

Updating the stakeholders on the regional project documentation, the lead consultant Mr. Eric Wafukho stated that the booklet and the documentary would be out by the end of the week. He collaborated Dr. Orago’s findings saying they were similar to the to what his team got on the ground, reflecting themes around; increased access to information, empowering communities, influencing policies, the drive for change; competence, effectiveness, thought leadership on KANCOs part; harm reduction and champions driving change that must further be instituted in culture and practice and cemented by policy legislation.



Documentation Consultant Eric Wafukho

Senior assistant Director Probation and After service Department, State department of correctional facilities, Ms. Linet Vunoro Okwara, expressed that what they would be in touch with KANCO to help develop a case for decriminalization of small offenders especially for drug related offences.

Helgar Musyoki-NASCOP, presenting on the East African Community Regional Policy on Alcohol, Drugs and Substance use stated that the regional grant was a catalytic grant building on the structures than had been established by the government guided by the World Health Organization guidelines. She stated that the regional policy envisioned demand reduction for alcohol and substance use guided by equity, respect for human rights, meaningful engagement and involvement, equality and non-discrimination.

Director NACADA Mr. Victor Okioma expressed that, 'The government was in support of harm reduction evidenced by the creation of a conducive environment to implement harm reduction'. He further reiterated that prevention and treatment efforts must work hand in hand for more outcomes that are effective. He stated that counties around Kenya are grappling with huge drug issues which requires them to have a policy that brings together stakeholders together to address the drug problem, adding that the big four agenda would fail unless the government invested in and addressed drug issues. He added that Kenya was a signatory to the treaty to end hepatitis and they were keen to implement it. He further added that NACADA was about to launch the national policy which would be helpful in implementing these efforts. The head NACSOP Dr. Bartilol Kigen stated that he was happy with the progress, reiterating that the clients were best placed to judge the value of the harm reduction programs implemented as the end users.

In the closing remarks, KANCO Executive Director shared on the next steps informing that KANCO was planning to carry out some high level engagements, with one of the scheduled meetings being one with the Parliamentary Health Committee. He further expressed KANCO's readiness to continue providing leadership in a movement focused on carrying on the harm reduction work.

A win for the CHVs in Nairobi County

Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) have traditionally been the first contact of the health care cascade, facilitating linkage with formal health facilities. CHVs form the acting as an alarm for disease outbreaks, follow up on interrupters/defaulters of care and provide health education. The CHVs were neither paid nor remunerated across many African countries including Kenya for many years, despite their crucial role in the health sector.



Makadara Grassroots Group after a sensitization forum

The push and advocacy for the CHV remuneration picked pace in 2018, where KANCO created a county grassroots movement in Nairobi County. From the team, connectors were selected from the pool of opinion Leaders, CHVs leaders

ABOUT KANCO

KANCO is a membership organization established in the early 1990s in Kenya with operations in the eastern Africa region. Its membership comprises of Non- Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), Network organizations and learning institutions that have a focus on health advocacy and or implementing health programs.

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To improve Health and well- being among communities through capacity building and promotion of innovative leadership

and Religious leaders from the informal settlements in Nairobi. In total, 30 connectors were trained on the grassroots advocacy model of engagement and together drew an action plan with quarterly review meetings focused on three items: *CHV's Bill in the County Assembly of Nairobi; Improvement of immunization services in Nairobi and Increased county funding towards support of immunization services.*

For continuous updates and follow-ups, KANCO set up a WhatsApp group with all the members who were sensitized and through the group continued to mentor and support the formation of grassroots groups in nine different informal settlements in Nairobi. The groups continued to actively engage in the Nairobi County Budget forum. On February 20th and 21st members from the 9 different groups were identified to attend and represent the CHV at the 6th Annual County Dialogue, Nairobi County which held at the Town Hall where the County Fiscal Strategy was read stating:

Clause 188: Efforts will be made to enhance monitoring and evaluation services with an aim to improve service delivery at the same time providing supportive function to the county health sector. Improvement of working conditions for the staff and skills development will also be undertaken to boost morale of the health providers.

Clause 189: To achieve the sector priorities for FY 2019/20, the sector will be allocated total budget of KES. 7.295 Billion. The allocation for recurrent expenditure will be KES. 6.8 Billion (93.4% of the sector budget). This expenditure will comprise KES 5 Billion for compensation to employees and 100 Million set aside for Community Health Volunteers and 700 Million for drugs and non-pharmaceuticals. Development expenditure will be KES 484 million (6.6% of sector allocation).

These wins are a steps in the right direction to achieving the national UHC goals and KANCO looks forward to keep engaging through the grassroots in other counties for CHVs legislation.

Kenya Stakeholders' Coalition on the Universal Periodic Review

KANCO participated in the Universal Periodic Review meeting convened by the United Nations Universal Period Review Office, Nairobi Kenya. The meeting objectives were to share the history of the human rights and the UPR, deepen the participants understanding of the advocacy in the UPR, especially in the different intervention points as well as promote understanding of the Kenya's UPR from the 1st and 2nd cycle. The meeting also discussed the roadmap and developed a consensus on next steps and approaches for UPR3 submissions.



Esther Kagure KANCO representative participating in the workshop

The UPR is a political process, which seeks to find solutions from a variety of sources ranging from local communities to the government, with UN member states acting as the main bridge. It is a mechanism through which the Human Rights Council assesses the human rights situation in each UN member states through a peer review mechanism meaning, through an interactive dialogue between UN member and the observer state (Recommending State) about the human rights situation in the state under review. The dialogue is based on information provided by the state, UN agencies, NHRI and Civil Society.

The State Under Review (SUR) receives recommendations from the other members and observer states.. After which an Outcome document is produced after the dialogue in a 5-year cycle.

The meeting provided an opportunity for the conveners to share on the progress made and make recommendations moving forward. The Regional Director for Africa Mr. Gilbert Onyango shared on Kenya's UPR in the 1st and the 2nd cycle noting that there has been a great improvement in the process considering the 1st cycle. All UN member states have undertaken the 1st and 2nd UPR cycle except for South Sudan.

The meeting further made recommendations stating that CSOs need to be independent, organized and in charge of their own agenda, should continue meeting and working to develop and finalize the report under the coordination of the steering committee, and will print and publish the mid- term report. KANCO will be convening the CSOs meetings.

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