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COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KERICHO



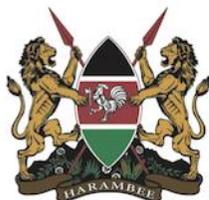
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Sharing Kenya's Devolution Solutions

Kericho County Partners with Unilever to Provide Dedicated Medical Care for its Health Workers and their Families during the COVID-19 Period

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Introduction (Context and Challenge)

Since the Coronavirus hit Kenya in March 2020, the country has been alarmed and aggrieved by statistics from the Ministry of Health on positive cases, admissions, deaths and recoveries. Kenya has lost some of its top specialists among the tens of health workers who have succumbed to COVID-19 having contracted it while on duty trying to save fellow Kenyans from the ravaging virus. Citing [these deaths](#) caused by the inadequate or poor quality personal protective equipment in most health facilities and the lack of medical cover against COVID-19, the health workers' associations severally issued strike notices accusing both the National Government and County Governments of displaying a total lack of regard for the welfare of their members who are at the frontline of fighting



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COVID-19 with a high of risk contracting it. They demanded a safer working environment and medical cover against the virus. On several occasions, doctors, clinical officers and nurses went on strike, and each time calling off their strike after talks with the government. Countrywide, the health workers who attend to COVID-19 patients are at high risk of contracting the virus or dying from it if they do not receive timely and quality medical care. Also, the fear for most of them is that there is no medical insurance cover for it, and with their pay being delayed for months, they may not be able to cater for their medical expenses. Already, several health workers have died. Besides the risk of contracting the virus, the psychological trauma and stigma associated with taking care of the patients or contracting the virus, and the long hours of work take a toll on the workers who need psychotherapy to cope.

Implementation of the Practice (Solution Path)

Recognising that COVID-19 is a serious disease that requires concerted efforts, and in a deliberate effort to ensure that no health worker succumbs to the coronavirus due to poor medical attention, and to give its health workers high-quality medical care in a dignified environment, the top management of the County Government of Kericho identified and approached the management of Unilever's Kericho Tea Estate Health facility which offers quality healthcare requesting that its County health workers and their families are treated there for COVID-19 as a form of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The request was granted, and so far, the County does COVID-19 testing at its state-of-the-art KEMRI/Walter Reed Clinical Research Center and refers positive cases to Unilever for admission and/or treatment. This arrangement ensures that the County health workers are given better care for free while being afforded privacy. The facility has 73 beds and 17 COVID-19 beds. It also has a mini-ICU ward with a ventilator and oxygen.

The Unilever facility is recognised and respected for having excellent facilities and providing the best care and also helps to train health workers as well as sharing intelligence useful for contact tracing.

Besides addressing the health workers' medical needs, the County Government of Kericho ensured the health workers were trained well to ably protect themselves while working. In partnership with the National Government, the County Government has been enforcing the WHO COVID-19 protocols. All patients seeking medical attention at any of their medical facilities must wear masks to access the services.

To motivate the health workers, the County Government recognises their importance and releases them to go for training when they ask. Their issues are also attended to efficiently. Those deserving promotions are given and in case of delays, they are engaged in dialogue.



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All this has been happening since March when COVID-19 hit Kenya. Testing is being done at the KEMRI/Walter Reed Clinical Research Center situated within the Kericho County Referral Hospital while the admission is done at Unilever's Kericho Tea Estate Health facility. The County is responsible for the testing infrastructure and its health workers conduct the testing while Unilever is responsible for admitting and treating Coronavirus positive cases.

Results of the Practice (outputs and outcomes)

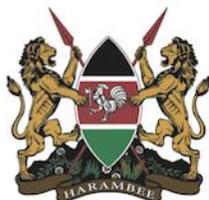
Since March 2020, no health worker from Kericho County has died of COVID-19. So far, 115 health care workers have tested positive for COVID-19 cumulatively. Those admitted and treated at the Unilever facility are 18, while 97 were trained on home-based care and released to go recuperate at home in self-isolation.

With the announcement of the virus, the Walter Reed Research Center quickly developed protocols for testing the virus. This state-of-the-art facility set up by the US government to research deadly diseases such as the pandemic can test up to 8,000 samples a day. The testing machine can test 96 samples in one go.

Also, due to inadequate supplies of reagents, the county health workers innovated testing using a CT scan of the lungs.

Lessons Learnt

- The partnership with private hospitals which have excellent facilities has enabled the County to manage the numbers turning up for testing and treatment of the virus.
- The County's hospitals deal with patient screening, treatment and contact tracing.
- Jointly building the capacity of the health workers at both the public and private hospitals.
- Supplementing DNA polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing with CT scan ensured that treatment of patients started early before the DNA PCR test results were out (normally in 4 days). Case management started immediately after the CT scan as the swab test results were being processed.
- The willingness of the County Government to listen to the health workers and address their issues with the importance they deserve, including allowing those who needed further training to go for the training has motivated them to keep working since they feel valued and dignified.
- Kericho County is surrounded by multinational companies that are always willing to share their resources.
- Working in partnership with private companies and the national government has enabled the sharing of resources and staff, joint training and enforcement of the COVID-19 protocols while saving the lives of those affected by the virus.
- Training of health workers on new diseases and how to use new equipment. The medical equipment donated by the national government to Kericho hospital is all being utilised, thanks to training and creativity.



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Recommendations (Conclusion)

- It is important to strictly follow the WHO protocols. Work with the National Government to enforce them.
- Encourage exchange programmes for Counties for capacity building and benchmarking to maximise the limited resources while avoiding reinventing the wheel.
- Enter into partnerships with the private sector to take advantage of their support/resources.
- Doctors and other health workers must be motivated to work by recognising and appreciating their work.
- Training of health workers, especially on new conditions, is critical.
- Innovation to mitigate the lack of resources could save lives as was done with CT scan when reagents for PCR tests were lacking. CT scan picks the early stages of COVID-19 better than X-ray though not as accurately as reagents.
- Complying with scientifically proven protocols is essential.
- Plan well in advance before recording the index case.
- Adopt a multisectoral approach by working with the National Government and the private sector.
- Adhere to the WHO and Ministry of Health COVID-19 protocols by working with the National Government (the Office of the County Commissioner) to enforce adherence, e.g. arresting those who do not wear masks or restricting the numbers of people attending funerals, etc.
- Avoid politicising the pandemic by laying blame on others, rather than working with them to find solutions.



Unilever Health Care facility in Kericho County