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ISIOLO COUNTY YOUTH INNOVATION CENTRE

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| County: | Isiolo | | |
| Sector/s: | Gender, Youth | Sub-sector/Theme: | |
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| Target Audience: | Counties Young innovators Development Partners | | |
| Authors (contacts and their institutions can be included as well) | Clemency Dorah- PO. CoG Maarifa Centre Sharon Nzei- CoG Maarifa Centre Mohamed Gololcha- UNV, Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre | | |
| Resource Persons (include their designations) | Abdinasir Daud - CEC for Youth, Culture, Sports and Gender Shamsa Sheikh - Youth and Gender Officer at Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Eric Chweya - Isiolo Hub Manager at Kenya Climate Innovation Centre Jennifer Leakono - Admin Assistant at Kenya Climate Innovation Centre Obed Mugusu - Regional Wash Officer (Engineer) at Kenya Red Cross Society Maureen Kananu - Youth Chairperson Upper Eastern Region at Kenya Red Cross Society Sadia Hassan - Volunteer and Sign language interpreter at Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre Diram Abdirashid - Volunteer at Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre Nur Juma – Ward Leader and Youth Beneficiary at the Centre Gideon Ekamais - Ward Coordinator Ngaremara Ward Jabir Hassan – Ward Coordinator and Football Coach Harun Alinur - Youth Beneficiary Emmanuel Ng'olia- Ward Coordinator, Ngaremara Ward Kamal Ibrahim – Youth Leader and Content Creator Ahmed Maalim - Team Leader Peoples Development Consultancy | | |



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Introduction

The study curriculum authorized by the government of Kenya allows young people to take a short break before joining both high school and college. This break compels the youth to take months away from the strict school life which contributes to how one's life is shaped before moving to the next stage. Youth in Isiolo County have previously engaged in harmful habits during these short and long breaks like using drugs, criminal activities during the short breaks.

Parents opt to send these young people to short course training which involve basic training in computer packages. The training in most cases is offered by few schools which are usually private institutions with few computers and expensive school fee. This has caused the poor to remain at home while those who can afford the computer packages to proceed with school. With free time and less to do, most teenage girls suffer cases of early pregnancies.

Communities in Isiolo County being among the marginalized groups in Kenya have also had the need to empower the young leaders through talent and business support to engage in County issues and become active citizens who not only participate in selection of leaders but also can become leaders at both the local and national level. This challenge of having a platform that brings together youth to have discussions on governance and leadership and the need to empower the youth in Isiolo led to the establishment of the Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre (IYIC).

Isiolo Youth innovation Centre is an initiative of the County Government of Isiolo, Kenya School of Government and UNDP. The idea was birthed in 2017 when Isiolo County Governor, approached UNDP for support in capacity building initiatives under the devolution programme. Discussions with KSG pointed to a gap in youth capacity building since World Bank and USAID Ahadi were undertaking training programmes in a wide-range of courses targeting the County Governments' executives and assemblies.

Implementation of the Isiolo County Youth Innovation Centre

The UK Government through FCDO (DFID then) provided UNDP with funding to support devolution activities in FDCDC Counties where Isiolo County was a beneficiary. The Government of Sweden, Finland and Norway also supported this initiative. To establish the Youth Innovation Centre, the County Government provided space which was refurbished by KSG and UNDP provided the ICT equipment and furniture and the Centre's branding. The Centre was formally launched in October 2020.

The vision of the Centre is "Innovative inclusive and sustainable Centre for an empowered youth," while its mission is, "To provide a safe and supportive environment by nurturing talent, developing skills and competencies for improved livelihoods." The IYIC aims to build competence of young



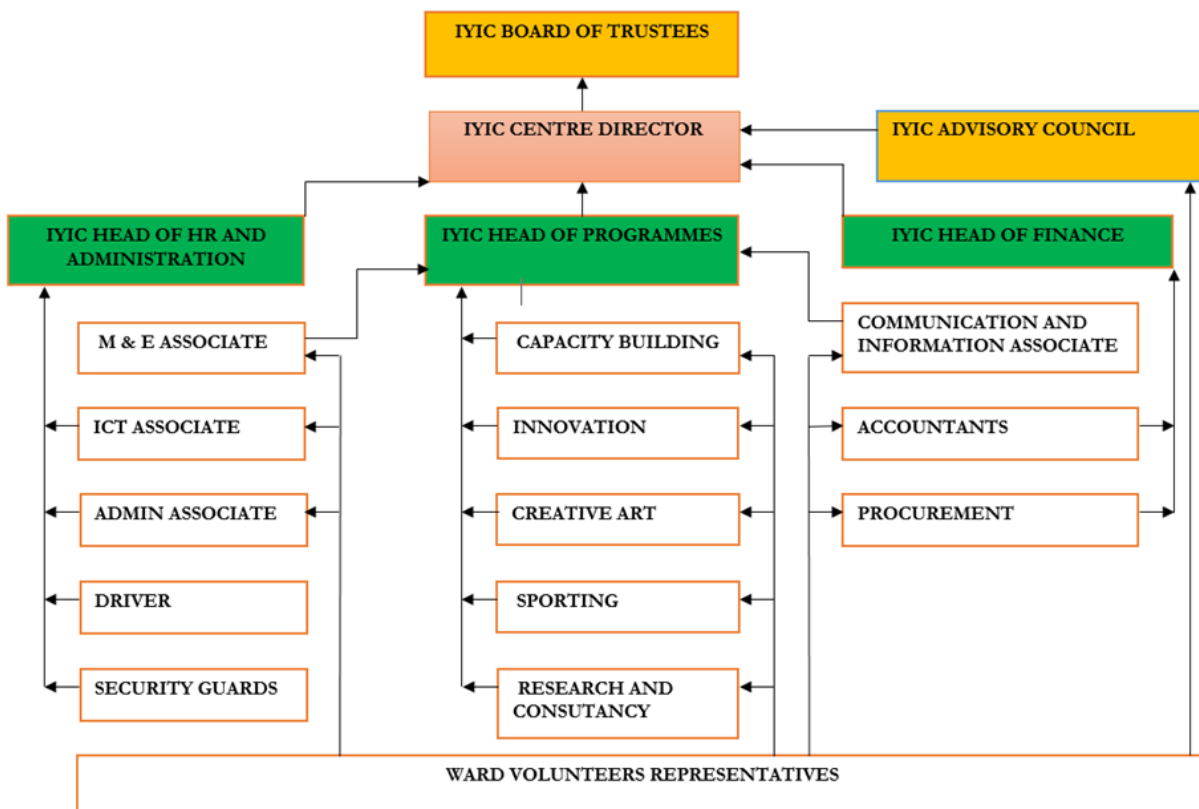
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women and men to take on jobs and start their own businesses in the markets, while also working with local institutions to adopt new business models and expand the number of jobs available for youths.

Structure Isiolo County Youth Innovation Centre

Following the launch of the Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre in October 2020, a team of youth volunteers was selected to spearhead the process of identifying the appropriate draft structure to operationalize the Centre. 30 youth selected from the wards participated in development of the structure, work plan and thematic areas for the Centre. Fig. 1 shows the structure adopted for the Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre.

To operationalize the Centre, in December 2020 the IYIC Volunteers sensitized all the 10 Wards of Isiolo County on the Centre's structure. The next step was formation of the ward structure in each ward headed by Coordinator who is a member of the IYIC advisory Council according to the Centre's structure. All wards had selected their Coordinator's from the 10 wards by May 2021. An additional 11th Ward was created for PLWD's with their Coordinator and officials.





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Fig. 1

Main activities carried out at the Isiolo County Youth Innovation Centre

1. Essential Computer Literacy Course- Parents who cannot afford to pay the exaggerated private institution school fees can now pay a cheaper amount at the Isiolo Youth Centre for the same training.
2. County Sports/Football Club- The youth Centre has established a football club where the youth interested in sports can train with a qualified coach and better their skills.
3. Coffee talks- The Centre provides space for young people to participate in discussions about County governance and leadership.
4. Film production classes- Isiolo Youth Centre offers short film training on production, acting and even scripting.
5. Agriculture (Certified Hydroponic Farming Training) -Training on how to use technology in agriculture and embracing the climate change in Isiolo is provided by the Centre.
6. Personal development, CV writing and Cover letter writing training
7. Entrepreneurship Training
8. Computer Networking and Security Training
9. Ajira Digital Courses Training
10. Martial Arts Class

Key partners, implementers and collaborators in the establishment and operationalization of the Centre.

Several partners have come on board to support the Centre:

Huawei is providing wifi for the Centre, and has already trained 60 youths on the basics of computer networking and system security, FCDC and Miramar International College are offering Certified hydroponic Farming Training, Information and Communication Technology Authority (ICTA) are also providing vital NOFP high speed internet, Ajira Digital are also onboard providing training on content writing, digital marketing and transcription among other digital skills tailored for the online work space .

Other partners who are also involved with the Centre include Kenya Film Classification Board (KFCB) on licensing and training local content producers, Catholic Relief Services under their Nawiri project have also supported programmes at the Centre and Kenya Red Cross Society on provision of basic life skills training to the youths. Peoples Development Consultancy has trained youths on curriculum vitae



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(CV) writing and personal development, and the Ministry of Housing has provided training on sustainable interlocking blocks making. From this initiatives, there's a greater number of youth CBO's partnering with the Centre on preventing and countering violent extremism (PCVE), training and also empowerment.

Sustainability

The Youth Innovation Centre was part of the Governor's manifesto and was captured in the 2017-2022 County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The County mentioned that they will deliberately allocate resources toward the Youth Innovation Centre to facilitate youth initiatives in the County.

The County is also in the process of developing the Youth Inclusion Bill, which is an effort to anchor the Centre in legislation for its sustainability while also ensuring representation of young people at all levels of governance and decision making.

Results of the Youth Innovation Centre

1. Empowered youths to participate in leadership
Young people in Isiolo County have been empowered through the coffee talks to participate in leadership programmes and activities with confidence and awareness.
2. Job opportunities
The visibility and experienced from the Centre has assisted youths who have who have trained in the Youth Centre secure employment in both County and private sectors.
3. Reduced rates of drug abuse
Previously, the number of youths affected by substance abuse was high compared to now that the Centre provides a youth friendly space to engage on various aspects of personal development. A youth friendly peer counselling unit also provides a space for youths to face their fears, and find a way to cope with their situations
4. Computer literacy among the youths
With affordable computer classes, more youth in the County have been able to access basic computer skills which have improved access to technology and use of it.
5. Talent support
Youth with different talents like dancing, football and even acting have been allocated with coaches and trainers who support their talents.
6. Disciplined and empowered youths
The coffee talks have empowered the youth to have a focused life through guidance on pursuit of visions and how to avoid destructions from peer pressure.
7. Agri- business ventures
Youth training on how to earn money from agricultural influenced business has led to growth of self-employed group who practice fish and bee keeping as a source of income.

Lessons learnt



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The Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre has had a great impact to a lot of youths in Isiolo County, Eg. The Entrepreneurship training has changed the lives of some youths.

1. The youths who benefitted from the training were able to translate the knowledge gained to practice with a great level of success. For instance, Josephine Kendi, a resident of Bullapesa Ward attended a training on Entrepreneurship at the Isiolo Youth Innovation Centre. With knowledge gained from the training, she was able to undertake a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis of her business. As a result, she transformed her business, from hawking her beauty products to opening her own shop. Jabir Hassan also implemented the business plan formulated in his group discussion during the training to start his own camel milk supply business.
2. The safe space provided to the youths has been monumental in helping the youths avoid pitfalls like drug abuse while also giving them an opportunity to use the Centre to gain skills. Harun, like many youths in Isiolo have found a refuge where they can express themselves and also get to learn new skills. Harun is a beneficiary of the Essential Computer Literacy Course and continues to utilize the Centre to produce content on his You Tube page. Yasmin after benefitting from the computer literacy classes decided to volunteer her time at the Centre to impact more youths. Kamal Ibrahim, is a self-taught content producer, editor and director. He regularly produces contents for clients and also for his You Tube page, **Da Prince Unit**.
3. The Isiolo County Public Participation platform dubbed “Sema Usikike” has also played a role in engaging the youth on different projects being implemented as well informing the youth about training opportunities available at the Centre. Through this platform, the youths have shared their opinion on different issues that they feel need to be addressed as well as feedback from training conducted at the Centre.

Recommendations

1. The Innovation Centre should have a strategy in place to monitor and document lessons from established projects to avoid repeating previous failures while implementing projects. This should include having a secretariat and a board of Management to ensure there is staffing, proper oversight and also reliable funding to sustain the programmes
2. There is need to decentralize the Youth Innovation Centre to the Sub-counties and eventually up to the ward level to ensure it has reach and relevance across the County
3. Other Counties should consider establishing similar Centres with customized programmes for youth within those Counties to ensure that the Centre fits in the context of specific County needs.