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KAKAMEGA COUNTY’S ASSISTIVE DEVICES SUPPORT INITIATIVE ENHANCES INDEPENDENCE AND PARTICIPATION IN SOCIETY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITY

County:	Kakamega		
Sector/s:	Social Services	Sub-sector/Theme:	PWD support
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Target Audience:	County Governments, local and international development partners in the PWD space, researchers and students		
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Introduction

Generally, PWDs are usually among the most vulnerable people as they face considerable barriers to education, employment, social protection, health care, social and community engagement, information, and other opportunities and services. Because of this inequality of opportunity, most PWDs have lower educational attainment, worse health outcomes, fewer economic opportunities, and less access to public services compared to people without disabilities. The barriers to accessing formal employment push PWDs to work in the informal sector, especially in hawking businesses, shoe mending and such like businesses. Additionally, the caregivers of PWDs are particularly vulnerable due to caring responsibilities, costs of care, and lower workforce participation, and it gets worse if such households are headed by single parents, mostly women.



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The rights of PWDs are enshrined in the Kenyan Constitution but the isolation and discrimination experienced by PWDs push some families to confine them to their homes to shield them from negative perceptions and sociocultural beliefs, meaning that children cannot access schools and the adults cannot participate in meaningful activities in society.

A baseline survey done in FY 2018/2019 by Kakamega County's Department of Economic Planning to establish the population and socio-economic status of persons living with disability (PWDs) put it at 19,000 PWDs, with 18,000 households having at least one person with a disability. The survey identified gaps in PWD support, which led to the

The survey not only helped in identifying persons with varying impairments such as hearing, visual, physical, albinism, and cerebral palsy but also in guiding the County in making mainstream and targeted provisions in the budget to address PWD needs as guided by the social protection policies in Kenya.

Majority of the most vulnerable PWDs were in rural areas where poverty levels are high and the terrain poses a challenge for the physically-challenged PWDs, and they could not afford therapy. Persons with albinism could not afford to see a dermatologist or buy sunscreen lotions. Equally, the hearing-impaired could not afford to pay for hearing aids.

Implementation of the practice

- An analysis of the survey results led the County Government of Kakamega through the Department of Social Services in establishing the *Support to PWDs Programme* which prioritised the provision of assistive devices to PWDs and economic empowerment by way of grants to PWD groups to enhance their income-generating activities (IGA). However, because of limited financial allocation, the County Government decided to first implement the assistive devices project as it mobilises resources for the grants.
- The Department established a Coordination Committee and a Secretariat which coordinated with the National Government's National Council for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), and the National Office of Social Development. They held



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meetings with technical officers from the National Government and partners to determine suitable types of devices for the beneficiaries. A list of the needed devices was compiled and procurement was done by the County Government of Kakamega as per the procurement laws.

- Through a letter, the Department of Social Services requested the community to propose names of the most vulnerable PWD to benefit from the assistive devices support. The Community is usually represented by the Community Area Administrators, County Ward Administrators, County Sub-County Administrators, Social Development Officers, and representatives from Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs).
- Professionals in the PWD space (occupational therapists, orthopaedic technicians, physiotherapists, dermatologists, etc.) were involved in the assessment of the PWDs in the 12 sub-counties to identify the most vulnerable ones among those proposed, who would be prioritised.
- In the Financial Year 2021/22, the County Government of Kakamega kicked off the Programme by providing persons with varying impairments (hearing, visual, physical, albinism, cerebral palsy) with assistive devices, including standard/commodore/paediatric/cerebral palsy wheelchairs, upper/below/elbow prostheses and sunscreen lotions and hats for those with albinism. They were also provided with lower/upper limb machines and static bicycles for exercises. Every ward had a beneficiary. So far, 402 most vulnerable PWDs have benefited, and do community representatives routinely follow up on the beneficiaries.
- . The County Assembly enacted the *Kakamega County Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022* to give effect to Article 54 of the Constitution and to mainstream the rights of persons with disabilities within Kakamega County. A PWD policy is being developed.

Key implementers and collaborators and their roles

- The Department of Social Services is the main implementer of the PWD Support Programme but works closely with the Department of Health Services, the NCPWD, and the Education Assessment Resource Centre (EARC) to comprehensively cater to the needs of the PWDs.
- The County Government is the sole financier at the moment.



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Resource implications

- The County Government of Kakamega annually allocates funds for PWD support, and in the last financial year 2021/22, it allocated and disbursed KSh 20 million. The current allocation for FY 2022/2023 is KSh 17 million but is yet to be disbursed. Mobilisation of additional resources is ongoing.

Sustainability

- The County is aggressively mobilizing resources, especially from development partners, to ensure continued support to PWDs. So far, the County has only received technical assistance from the National Government's Educational Assessment Resource Centre which screens to help identify the nature and severity of the disability that a child might be having and recommend placement in an appropriate educational institution depending on the child's special educational needs.

EARCs have been established across the country to equalize education opportunities for children with special needs and facilitate their full integration into the school system and their community.

- With adequate funding, the County Government of Kakamega will implement the shelved economic empowerment initiative to provide grants to PWD groups to boost their income-generating activities.

Results of the practice

- The beneficiaries of the assistive devices are now more independent and can better engage in their income-generating activities. For example, those who had mobility challenges are now able to move to and from their businesses easily. Those who benefited from hearing aids can now engage in conversation with other members of the community.
- The beneficiaries can now go about their life with dignity and respect.



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- School-going beneficiaries can now access schools for learning. A case in point is that of a young adult with cerebral palsy who had never stepped out of their house and only did so after getting a wheelchair.
- The caregivers of PWDs have less stress regarding caring responsibilities and the costs of care with the improvement of the PWDs' lives through the devices. The caregivers also receive training on how to best handle the PWDs.

Key activity undertaken that ultimately led to positive results

- Working with partners for technical (capacity building and training; assisting and advising) and financial support (free distribution of assistive devices) has positively impacted the initiative.

Lessons learnt:

What worked really well

- Leveraging the knowledge and expertise of partners, including different departments in the County, the NCPWD, EARC and other PWD-focused organisations.

What did not work well

- The planned economic empowerment where PWD groups would be given grants to enhance their income-generating activities did not take off due to the limited allocation to the PWD Support Programme.
- Delayed disbursement of funds affects implementation of the initiative.

What to do differently

- Extensive resource mobilization to supplement the limited budgetary allocation by the County Government of Kakamega.

Recommendations

- Counties facing similar PWD challenges and wish to replicate the Kakamega model should consider leveraging all sources of finance and technical expertise such as local and international development partners and the national government and PWD organisations for knowledge and policy strengthening.



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- County Governments should allocate adequate funds because the assistive devices are costly.

What to avoid

- Those implementing a similar initiative should avoid late or hurried planning which might affect implementation.

Further reading:

1. [The Kakamega County Persons with Disabilities Act, 2022](#)

Gallery



Kakamega PWDs receiving assistive devices from then Kakamega Governor, H.E. Wycliffe Oparanya