Use of Social Accountability for Improved Health Service Delivery at Kombewa Referral Hospital in Kisumu County

Kisumu County Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) Network

Background

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present an ambitious agenda for building a better world. Health and well-being are addressed through SDG 3, which calls for efforts to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. Providing access to Primary Health Care (PHC) is fundamental to achieving SDG 3. Health service providers increasingly have to contend with citizens demanding answers on the quality and access to health care services. Previously, service delivery in health care was supply-driven with little or no input from the service users (patients). Kombewa County Referral Hospital, located in Central Seme Ward of Seme Sub-County in Kisumu County, is no exception. The facility serves a catchment of approximately 150,000 people, predominantly a rural population.

Before March 2022, the health service delivery at the facility faced various challenges, ranging from poor handling of patients, inadequate essential drugs, insufficient staffing, poor medic-patient interaction, and long queues, leading to a long wait time to get treatment. The facility needed more wards, beds, medicines and supplies. The pharmacy also lacked essential medicine such as malaria drugs, which is the most commonly dispensed drug at the facility due to the high prevalence of malaria. The result was that the delivery of quality health services as envisaged in Vision 2030 and the Kenya Health Policy 2013-2030 was compromised.

Implementation of the Community Score Card

The Kenya Devolution Programme (KDP) - Timiza Ugatuzi with funding from the UK Government supported the Kisumu CSO Governance Network to resolve some of these problems through a sub-grant and technical support on social accountability. The approach adopted by the network focused on strengthening and increasing the citizens 'voice and capacity to demand greater accountability from health service providers at the facility for improvement and responsiveness of the services. The network used Community Score Card (CSC), a form of social accountability, to advance this course. The approach was centred on accountability that relies on civic engagement while ensuring the citizens' direct and indirect participation, mainly using the services. The CSC entailed a two-way, participatory approach in assessing, monitoring and evaluating the quality of health services and building consensus on areas for improvement. This approach created a platform for the service users and providers at the facility level and the County Health Management Team to analyse the quality of health services and jointly develop an action plan for resolving the issues and gaps that affected access to satisfactory services.

Commitments in the action plan, which was implemented jointly with the government, included:

Improve the time taken by patients by reducing the long queues and delays at the lab

Improve reception services by the security and at the registration desk

Ensure the availability of drugs at the pharmacy

Commitments

Improve the poor interaction between patients and medics

Clarity in the patient charges not specified in the service charter

Improve privacy at the triage area

Results of Intervention

The Score Card led to improved quality of the services offered. Some of the areas that the hospital has acted on include;

The positive reception of the patients at the facility following the change of the security personel. This change was significant because there were previous cases of service users being mishandled and turned away by the security guards at the gate.

Reduction in cases of illegal charges at the facility due to enhanced disciplinary actions by the management. The hospital set up a disciplinary committee to deal with unlawful charges, which, among others, reprimanded the staff involved in such practices and required them to pay three times the inducements received from the clients.

The hospital has improved sensitisation to patients and community members on illegal fees requested. This includes putting up signs to warn clients and directing them to where they can channel their complaints.

The facility's Management Committee sensitised the staff members on the various gaps in the scorecard, which has improved patient/medic interactions. It set up a committee to cater for staff matters and follow up on implementing the scorecard action areas.

The facility adopted a digital health records management system, launched on 14th November 2022, as a result of the scorecard. This has made it easy to monitor the time taken by the patients while seeking services at the facility and assist the staff in managing the long queues.

The hospital management also introduced a clocking system, which has led to improved time management by the staff members.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The main goal of the Community Score Card was to positively influence the quality, efficiency, and accountability of health services provided at Kombewa County Referral Hospital. The process led to the following lessons and recommendation;

01

Collaboration and synergy between the county government, health facility management team and community members in implementing the scorecard is critical in improving service delivery. The collaboration promoted dialogue and enhanced the relationships, which created the impetus for sustainability in similar processes

02

The facility adopted collaborative planning in developing duty rosters between the hospital management and the staff members, improving performance. This is because the staff are now being placed within shifts that they are comfortable in

03

The process required skills in participatory training and delivery. The outcome led to co-creating solutions and generated a shared understanding of issues and solutions to health service delivery problems

05

CSO Networks should work collaboratively with the county Community Health Volunteers/Workers for broader dissemination of information and sensitisation of community members

06

There is a need for continuous civic education for community members by the scorecard committee for the sustainability of the actions undertaken by the hospital management and to ensure that the pending issues are addressed

The old general wards

The new general wards under construction

Better managed queues in the waiting bays

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2021 - 2025

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