

Keprecon Quarterly

Securing the future of newborns, children and adolescents by promoting preventive care, healthy lifestyles and timely access to quality healthcare



CHAMPIONING EVIDENCE
BASED ADVOCACY for
PHC/RMNCAH-N

A Healthy BABY starts with a Healthy PREGNANCY

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Karibu – Word from Chief Executive Director



Prof. Fred Were
Chief Executive Director - Keprecon

About Fred Were

Prof Fredrick Were is Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health specializing in Newborn Medicine, Head of Research at University of Nairobi Department of Paediatrics, and member of Faculty at Aga Khan University School of Medicine. Fred is also the Chief Executive Director of Keprecon, CEBA Project Principal Investigator, and Keprecon Quarterly newsletter Editorial Advisor.

The year 2024 was tumultuous in many ways – social, political and economic – but it has similarly been fruitful in small meaningful ways particularly regarding the health of women and children. Out-of-pocket expenditure on basic commodities of food, shelter and clothing declined in the course of the year, so was the expenditure on education and health. What did not change, however, was the ability by the population of Kenya to get quality reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health services. This is because these services are well catered for by both government and development partners.

At Keprecon, we strive to contribute to improvement in these critical services through policy and programmatic interventions. Our project on Championing Evidence-Based Advocacy for PHC and RMNCAH+N, otherwise known as the CEBA project, has been a driving force in this endeavour. Indeed, maternal and child health indicators in the 20 counties where the CEBA project is being implemented have improved tremendously. To us, these improvements speak volumes about the project’s successful implementation strategies, leadership and fidelity. As such, through our programming Kenyans will continue having improved access to health care services down to the village level.

In this second issue of Keprecon Quarterly, we celebrate the way we have successfully utilized social media to champion for evidence-based advocacy for reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health as well as nutrition and primary health care at both national and county levels. We continue to highlight key CEBA project activities that have been undertaken from May 2024 to date under the Tumetenda segment. Under the Tunashirikiana caption, we share our collaborative experience gained during participation in the 1st Nairobi Health Scientific Conference in November 2024. The conference whose theme was “Advancing Health Equity: Towards Resilient and Sustainable People-Centered Primary Healthcare Systems for Nairobi” brought together health professionals, policy makers, researchers and like-minded organizations to champion innovative solutions for overcoming current health challenges.

We also feature a project beneficiary testimonial. In this segment, Dr. Vitalis Juma – the Vihiga County Public Health Coordinator and project focal person - shares the County’s success story in CEBA project implementation. In November 2024, Keprecon was awarded the 2024 Government Partnership of the Year Award in a lavish gala organized by the Public Benefits Organizations Regulatory Authority at Emara ole Sereni Hotel in Nairobi. We bring you the story of our journey to winning this award under the Tumeshinda banner. Lastly, Clicks by Juliet features footage and short descriptions of what we have been up to lately as captured by our Communications team.

Karibu to the second edition of Keprecon Quarterly. As always, we welcome your feedback via our various social media handles to enable us to improve.

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Uhamasisho Mitandaoni: Our Advocacy through Best Use of Social Media



by Irene Amadi

Irene is the Director of Projects and Operations at Keprecon. Trained in management, organizational development and strategic leadership, she has over 15 years extensive experience in overseeing day-to-day implementation of projects, documentation, financial management, health advocacy, organizational policy development, strategic communication and systems strengthening. Irene ensures that projects are implemented in line with donor approved contracts and the organization's changing needs.

Background

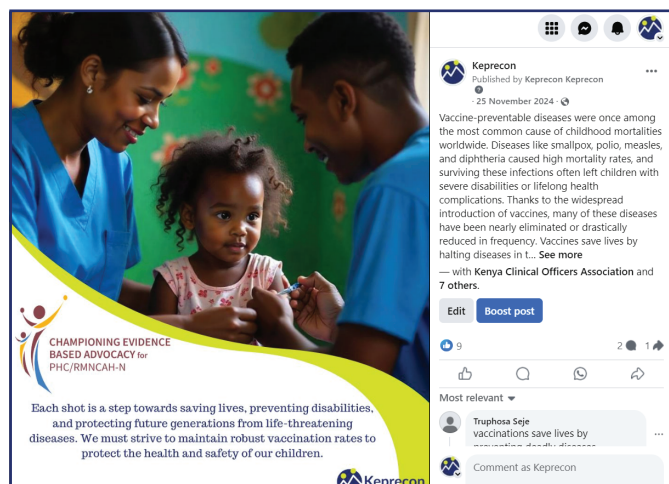
Social media helps amplify advocacy efforts by potentially reaching more people, in more places, faster than ever before. It is the art of tapping into the social connections of those who appreciate, and those interested or are invested in your brand. At Keprecon, we are quite intentional in our choice of social media platforms as a means of advocating and reaching the largest possible audience. We exploit our website and popular platforms particularly X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn and YouTube to inform, educate and create awareness on our on-going program work in PHC, RMNCAH, nutrition and immunization. We use the platforms also to engage with our partners, supporters and diverse audiences who do keep abreast of our corporate activities. The impact is evident with our awareness creation and advocacy efforts. Indeed, our CEBA project has seen massive deployment of social media for both advocacy and awareness creation purposes, and will form the basis of my disposition on uhamasisho mitandaoni - the power of social media in advocacy.

In the Championing Evidence-Based Advocacy (CEBA) project, we have used social media as a major advocacy promotional tool for Primary Health Care (PHC) and RMNCAH+N in more than 20 counties in Kenya. For instance, advocacy workshops, work in progress pictures, and advocacy for the use of health data in policy making posts were made on the X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn accounts. Specifically, social media was used to reach out to advocacy partners, influencers and decision makers at the community level with the key messages emanating from the capacity enhancement workshops for PHC and RMNCAH. We also used social media to promote awareness of the project in conducting advocacy training, webinars, and connected with more influencers and health professionals on professional platforms such as LinkedIn.

Weekly Updates

Keprecon disseminates regular weekly updates published on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X to support the CEBA project's advocacy on PHC and RMNCAH+N. These updates include awareness creation through poster displays of important health events and facts, prevalence rates and current activities. Every post is thoroughly thought out with great visuals and simple instructions on what to do, accompanied by relevant hashtags.

From these weekly updates, we created consciousness on the important health services, educated the population on preventive health, and advocated for various health causes. For instance, the X conversation revolving around the hashtag #HumanlyPossible created awareness concerning child immunization. We have been able to create health advocates who engage with the posts via likes, shares as well as comments across all platforms.



Events

To build awareness on CEBA project activities, we actively participate in celebrating national and international health days, both physically and mostly via social media. To do this, call campaigns corresponding to the theme of the year are conducted together with an information drive to reach out to the community. For instance, in 2024 we conducted social media campaigns to increase visibility and engagement of the World Immunization Week, World Hunger Day, Malezi Bora Week and World Breastfeeding Week commemorations. In doing so, we engaged with both national and county level stakeholders to coordinate outreach strategies and amplify our messaging through healthcare providers and community leaders. These collaborations ensured that our campaigns are consistent with the national and county health priorities and effectively reach underserved populations, thus fostering enhanced community engagement and participation in health initiatives.

Whenever we organize and physically participate in these commemorative events, social media hype goes along. For instance, we celebrated 2024 World Breastfeeding Week in West Pokot County. The event brought together county government officials, including the CEC for Health, as well as Members of County Assembly, CHMT and community leaders. The West Pokot event was used to emphasize the importance of breastfeeding, with local leadership actively supporting and participating in discussions to promote better maternal and child health outcomes. On the other hand, we organized the commemoration of the World Contraception Day in Vihiga County. Themed Contraception Choices: The Power is in Your Hands, the event was graced by the Chief Officer for Health and Medical Services Vihiga County, County Executive team and the Community Health Promoters. The Ekwanda community in Luanda Sub-County received various medical services, including obstetric ultrasounds, cervical cancer screenings, diabetes and hypertension assessments, HIV testing and counselling, as well as BMI evaluations and nutritional guidance. The plenary session at the commemoration included insightful discussions on the importance of making informed contraceptive choices and their influence on family planning, maternal, and reproductive health. Health experts highlighted the importance of consulting medical professionals to determine the most appropriate contraceptive method suited to each person's unique needs.

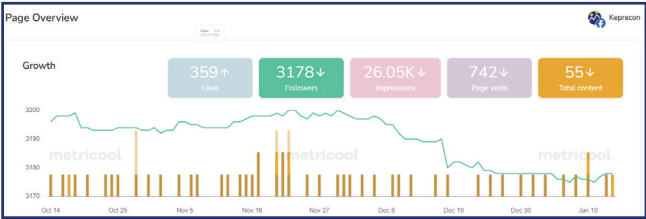
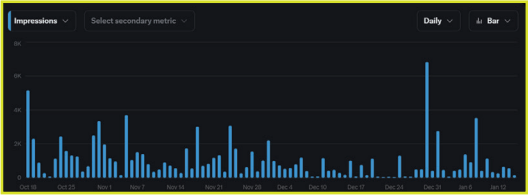
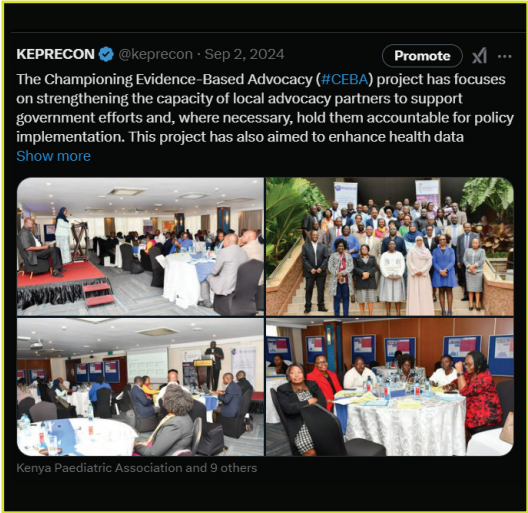
Capacity building initiatives

As part of CEBA project target, we have implemented effective social media capacity-building activities, enabling several Health Professionals Associations (HPAs) to advocate for health causes through their platforms. The Kenya Paediatric Association, Kenya Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society, Kenya Clinical Officers Association, National Nurses Association of Kenya, Kenya Medical Association, and the Nutrition Association of Kenya, have been the main beneficiaries of our social media capacity building strategy. We have equipped members of the HPAs with advocacy skills, empowering them to raise awareness about reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health on their own social media platforms. These professionals have been actively engaging with our content by liking, sharing, reposting, and commenting, further amplifying our message and expanding our reach within the healthcare community.

Reach and Engagement

By strategically utilizing X, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, we have not only increased awareness but also fostered community engagement and established partnerships that have advanced the CEBA project initiatives. A few examples will suffice here to illustrate reach and engagement.

Through the X platform, we publish an average of 16 posts monthly, with a focus on critical health issues such as maternal, neonatal and child health, reproductive health, adolescent health, nutrition and immunization. These posts encompass informative threads, health tips, and timely updates regarding current campaigns, leading to heightened public engagement, enhanced community interaction, and strengthened collaboration with health stakeholders throughout the region. During World Contraception Day, we hosted an X Space discussion on the importance of contraceptive choices and their impact on reproductive health. The session aimed to educate and empower individuals by addressing common myths and providing accurate information about different contraceptive methods. Alongside the discussion, we shared a series of informative videos on contraception. Dr. Nelly Bosire, an obstetrician-gynaecologist, explained various contraceptive methods in detail, highlighting their benefits, effectiveness, and possible side effects. She also emphasized the importance of consulting healthcare professionals before choosing a contraceptive method to ensure it is the right fit for an individual's health and lifestyle. Through these conversations, we promote informed decision-making, encouraged open discussions about family planning, and supported better access to reproductive health information. These posts attracted an average of 30,000 organic impressions per month.



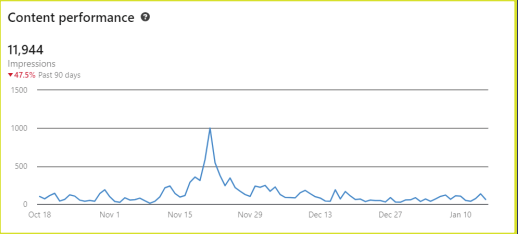
Facebook and Instagram are essential tools for our communication efforts. They allow us to share not only longer posts but also videos, which has enabled us to engage directly with communities by offering in-depth content, facilitating discussions, and sharing valuable resources. These platforms are crucial for interaction among families, caregivers, and community organizations seeking practical insights and information on health. Additionally, we

regularly share videos and reels, adding a visual element that helps the audience connect with our message. We have effectively utilized Instagram reels for advocacy. For instance, the reels helped raise awareness about vaccine shortage in late 2024, calling for action to ensure vaccine availability and emphasizing the shared responsibility in safeguarding children's well-being. Through these reels, we highlighted the risks that the lack of vaccines poses to children, driving a stronger call to action.

We have embraced the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in making relevant videos and reels for advocacy. These videos are shared on both Facebook and Instagram as reels and convey the organization's purpose and health initiatives. The use of AI

boosts engagement by having high visibility that can attract more users. On average, we garner around 14,000 organic impressions per month on Facebook and on Instagram 1,000 impressions per month.

Lastly, LinkedIn has served as our primary platform for connecting with healthcare professionals, donors and prospective partners. By sharing thought articles and providing updates on our projects, we have cultivated a network of supporters and collaborators dedicated to promoting health in Kenya and beyond. By consistently sharing health updates, we have built connections with a large number of healthcare professionals who have also embraced advocacy, using the platform to share their own experiences. On this platform we generate an average of 11,000 organic impressions per month.



Conclusion
I can confidently say that through online digital platforms, Keprecon has been able to influence awareness and advocacy on critical health issues in Kenya, particularly PHC, RMNCAH, nutrition and immunization. Through practice with webinars, AI ramped up videos and question and answer sessions, we have not only cultivated an online following and partnership with health care practitioners but also government officials.

Keprecon has leveraged social media and integrated it in reaching out for partnerships and ensuring that vital health and advocacy information targets the intended groups in Kenya. We have creatively utilized social media to mobilize support, increase reach and engagement with various target audiences in support of its core mission and mandate.

Tumetenda: Highlights of CEBA Project Activities

The CEBA project recorded significant achievements between May and September 2024 emanating from advocacy and stakeholder engagements to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH+N). In my Tumetenda segment, I highlight key activities undertaken during the reporting period under four main categories. These are: County Visits, Caucus Meetings, Technical Meetings, and World Breastfeeding Week. I will also mention the CEBA project dissemination activities that made a mark on the project portfolio.

County Visits

The CEBA project team conducted several county visits to address RMNCAH+N issues, engage stakeholders, and advance health advocacy efforts. In May, a visit to West Pokot County included an advocacy stakeholders' workshop to disseminate policy briefs and fact sheets that contain the project's advocacy interventions package. The stakeholder workshop highlighted areas of continuous improvement in PHC and RMNCAH+N indicators, including reducing teenage pregnancies, enhancing perinatal care to improve newborn survival, and promoting data-driven decision-making in health services. Stakeholders at the workshop emphasized community health education and improving nutrition to address generational undernutrition.

On June 24th, the project team visited and held a meeting with the Mandera County Health Management Team (CHMT), the County Executive Committee Member (CECM) for Health, representatives of Health Professional Associations, and other local stakeholders. Discussions during the visit revolved around enhancing resource allocation through program-based budgeting, promoting culturally acceptable health terminology, and conducting community-based research to identify barriers to service utilization in the County.

Later in August 2024, we visited Busia, Taita Taveta and Mombasa counties to assess progress in project implementation. Discussions at the 12th August 2024 visit to Busia focused on health financing, particularly advocating for operationalizing the Facilities Improvement Financing Act 2023. The Taita Taveta County visit on 19th August 2024 involved discussions with county health leadership on increasing the use of community health promoters and advocating for more significant budgetary



by Dr. Nelly Bosire

About Nelly Bosire

Dr. Nelly Bosire is a consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist with a special interest in Health Policy and Advocacy. She chairs the Health Advisory Board of St. Francis Community Hospital and is the CEBA technical lead for Outcome 3. Dr. Bosire also serves as a co-opted member of the Medical Practitioners and Dentists' Council of Kenya and writes as a columnist for the Daily Nation newspaper.



allocations to health. On 20th August 2024, the project team visited Mombasa County where it reviewed health indicators, addressed gaps in service delivery, and explored strategies to strengthen health advocacy.

Caucus Meetings

The CEBA project caucus is the multi-agency decision-making and implementation monitoring mechanism. During the reporting period, the caucus held meetings that played a vital role in strengthening RMNCAH+N advocacy. The meetings brought together key stakeholders, including CHMT members in project counties, advocacy partners and local leaders, to deliberate on health strategies. The Vihiga County caucus held its quarterly meeting on 22nd May 2024 in which discussions focused on social media advocacy, community outreach through radio talk shows, and disseminating policy tools to drive health awareness.

The month of June 2024 featured numerous caucus meetings. On 5th June 2024, the Mombasa County caucus meeting explored strategies to sustain human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccination campaigns and collaboration with local childcare initiatives. The Migori County caucus, held the same day, celebrated the launch of a lactation room at the County Referral Hospital and addressed pressing neonatal health concerns. The lactation room is an invaluable resource that supports the health and wellbeing of nursing mothers, enhances workplace productivity, and fosters an inclusive corporate culture. The Wajir County caucus meeting was held on 11th June 2024, with deliberations focusing on addressing health staff shortages and improving health facility operations.

In July 2024, the West Pokot caucus convened on the 9th to plan community events for health advocacy including a planned sports' day. On 12th July 2024, Nyandarua County held its caucus meeting. Participants focused on utilizing social media and collaborating with community health workers to promote health education. Meru County held its caucus meeting on 26th July 2024 in which the significance of digital advocacy and teamwork were emphasized.

Technical Meetings

Technical meetings provided a platform for strategic planning and monitoring the progress attained so far in CEBA project activities. On 29th May 2024, the project team held a technical review meeting to discuss publishing of manuscripts prepared by project personnel to document CEBA project implementation experience and learnings. The meeting also prepared for the project lead's upcoming presentation to funders that was scheduled for June 2024. Further, a technical review meeting was held on 19th June 2024 that resolved to engage national and county health leadership to ensure the sustainability of project gains. The team reviewed strategies for aligning project milestones with Government of Kenya policies ending in 2027. Another technical meeting was held on 25th July 2024. The meeting discussed the selection of 15 focus counties for national-level policy advocacy and improving collaboration with government offices.

World Breastfeeding Week

World Breastfeeding Week is an annual event marked worldwide in the first week of August. The goal of the commemoration is to raise awareness and support breastfeeding, promote breastfeeding, and improve the health outcomes of both mothers and babies. According to the World Health Organization, the 2024 theme was 'closing the gap - breastfeeding support for all.' As has been the normal over time, Keprecon participated in commemorating the event, this time as part of CEBA project activities.

On 5th August 2024, the project team joined stakeholders in West Pokot County to mark the event while highlighting breastfeeding as essential for child health. The event was marked with a vibrant launch involving community performances and male partner engagement. Key messages included the importance of antenatal care, exclusive breastfeeding for six months, and continued breastfeeding after weaning. On 7th August 2024, Migori County celebrated the week with exhibitions and skits highlighting local nutritional solutions. The County First Lady launched a lactation room at Rongo Sub-County Hospital and advocated for timely remuneration of community health promoters.

CEBA Dissemination Meeting

On 2nd September 2024, the CEBA team hosted the annual dissemination meeting at the Sarova Panafric Hotel in Nairobi. The event brought together national and county health policy makers, program managers, project team leads and other stakeholders to share implementation experience, achievements, project findings and lessons learnt, and plan for the next

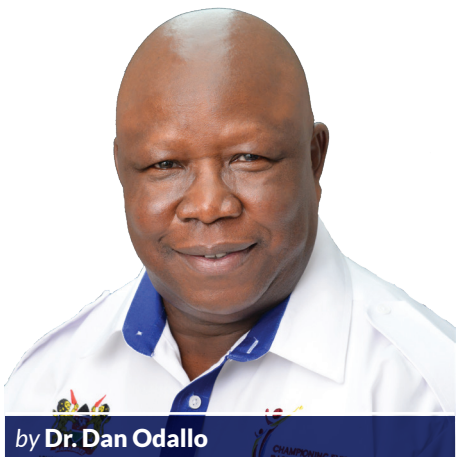


steps. Key focus areas included advocating for local investments in PHC/RMNCAH+N and integrating CHMT members into caucus groups to strengthen county-level policy implementation.

Additionally, from September 2nd to 6th, the Nutrition Association of Kenya organized a webinar on advancing neonatal nutrition guidelines. Key discussions centered on exclusive breastfeeding, early nutrition interventions, and community-based nutrition education. On the other hand, the National Nurses Association of Kenya commemorated World Contraception Day on 25th September 2024 with an educational webinar. Panel discussions emphasized empowering women through informed contraceptive choices, promoting male engagement in family planning, and leveraging social media to reach youth populations. Through these engagements, the CEBA project continued to drive impactful advocacy, building capacity, and promoting evidence-based health practices across Kenya.



Tunashirikiana: Lessons from Partnership with HPAs in CEBA Project Implementation



by Dr. Dan Odallo

About Dan O. Odallo

Dr. Dan O. Odallo is a Senior Program Advisor with Keprecon, with specializations in program management, advocacy and social science research. He has academic and practical background in Demography, Public Health (Epidemiology), Development Communication, and Peace and Conflict Studies. Dan is the CEBA project Technical Lead for Advocacy Capacity Strengthening.

The inaugural Nairobi Health Scientific Conference took place from 20th to 22nd November 2024, at the Emara Ole Sereni Hotel in Nairobi. This landmark three-day event brought together health professionals, policymakers, researchers, and organizations not only from Nairobi County but from across Kenya. Under the theme “Advancing Health Equity: Towards Resilient and Sustainable People-Centered Primary Healthcare Systems for Nairobi,” the conference emphasized the critical importance of equitable and sustainable healthcare systems in transforming lives.

Grand Opening by Deputy President

The conference was officially opened by the Deputy President of Kenya, Professor Kithure Kindiki, whose presence underscored the government’s commitment to advancing health equity. Also in attendance were Nairobi County Governor Sakaja Johnson and Deputy Governor Njoroge Muchiri, alongside the Nairobi County Health Department team led by CECM for Health, Suzzane Silanto.

On the first day, the Deputy President, accompanied by the Governor and other County officials present, toured the exhibitor booths, engaging with various organizations to learn about their work in advancing healthcare. Keprecon was honored to be among the featured exhibitors and had the privilege of showcasing our efforts in primary healthcare (PHC), maternal, neonatal, child, and adolescent health (RMNCAH), nutrition and immunization. The Deputy President led the other leaders in commending Keprecon for its long-standing and impactful contribution to strengthening Kenya’s health systems.

Interactive Engagements at the Booth

At our booth, the Keprecon team enthusiastically shared our vision, mission, programs and success stories with visitors. We distributed branded materials, including books, pens and brochures highlighting Keprecon’s work and the Championing

Evidence-Based Advocacy (CEBA) project initiative. This provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about our advocacy and capacity-building initiatives in PHC and RMNCAH+N. Throughout the event, we engaged health professionals and stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. These interactions fostered knowledge exchange and provided a platform to discuss the shared challenges facing the RMNCAH+N sector in various counties. Key topics included funding constraints, healthcare workforce gaps, and the need for robust data systems to inform policy and practice.

Highlights of the Conference

Beyond the exhibition, the conference featured a rich array of activities, including:

- **Keynote addresses:** Renowned health experts and policymakers delivered insightful presentations on health equity, resilience, and sustainability in primary healthcare.
- **Panel discussions:** These sessions addressed critical issues such as universal health coverage, innovation in health delivery, and strategies for tackling maternal and child mortality.
- **Research presentations:** Participants showcased groundbreaking research on health systems strengthening, implementation science, and public health interventions.
- **Networking opportunities:** The event created a vibrant space for professionals and organizations to build connections, share expertise, and explore potential collaborations.

Keprecon at the Plenary Session

On the third day, we facilitated in the plenary session where our team members, Dr. Nelly Bosire was a speaker while Conrad Wanyama led the plenary session themed *“Transforming Primary Health Care and RMNCAH Service Delivery: Innovative Solutions for Overcoming Current Challenges and Constraints.”*

One of the key takeaways from the plenary session was the critical role of health financing and the need to effectively utilize existing policies while ensuring their dissemination to drive impactful change. This includes the transformation of Primary Healthcare (PHC) through innovative health financing models that ensure sustainable and equitable access to care for all communities. The session also emphasized the importance of data-driven decision-making to promote health equity, enabling more informed strategies that address disparities and optimize healthcare outcomes.

Community engagement plays a pivotal role in driving success. This is so because involving local populations in healthcare initiatives ensures better service uptake and health outcomes. Policy and advocacy are essential for creating an enabling environment that supports these initiatives, advocating for resources and frameworks that prioritize health as a fundamental human right. The integration of PHC services, ensuring seamless delivery across sectors, is vital in achieving a comprehensive, accessible healthcare system. Looking ahead, future directions and innovations will continue to build on these foundations, creating transformative solutions that improve health systems, empower communities, and drive sustainable health outcomes for all.

Amplifying Keprecon's Vision and Mission

Through our participation in this 1st Nairobi Health Scientific Conference, Keprecon reinforced its position as a leader in health advocacy, research and systems strengthening. The conference allowed us to:

- Highlight our impactful partnerships with national and county governments.
- Showcase our on-going flagship projects, particularly the CEBA project, which has driven significant improvements in policy advocacy and service delivery; and
- Build new networks that will help us expand our reach and deepen our impact in advancing PHC, RMNCAH, nutrition and immunization programming.

Looking Ahead

As argued in my article in the previous edition of Keprecon Quarterly, strategic partnerships and collaborations are entered into to create joint value by leveraging each other's strengths to accomplish shared objectives. With this in mind, I can confidently state that the 1st Nairobi Health Scientific Conference was more than an event - it was a call to action for all stakeholders to work together in building equitable, sustainable and people-centered health systems. As Keprecon, we are proud to have contributed to this vision and look forward to continuing our work in collaboration with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of all Kenyans.



Keprecon's team with Nairobi County Health Officials at the Keprecon Booth during the Nairobi Health Scientific Conference 2024



Dr. Nelly Bosire and Conrad Wanyama in a plenary session on Transforming Primary Health Care and RMNCAH Service Delivery: Innovative Solutions for Overcoming Current Challenges and Constraints during the Nairobi Scientific Conference

Project Beneficiary Testimonial: Vihiga County Success Story in CEBA Implementation



by Dr. Vitalis Juma

About Vitalis Juma

Vitalis is a Consultant Family Physician working in the Paediatric Department at Vihiga County Referral Hospital. He is also the County Primary Health Care Coordinator and CEBA project focal person in the County.

One-on-One with Dr Vitalis Juma, Vihiga County PHC Coordinator

The Championing Evidence-Based Advocacy (CEBA) for Primary Health Care (PHC) and Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAH+N) is a 3-year project that commenced in November 2021. The project aims to increase the capacity of local advocacy partners to support both national and county governments and where necessary hold them accountable for policy implementation and to improve utilization of health data for effective advocacy and decision-making in Kenya. The CEBA project is being undertaken in 20 counties in Kenya, one of the beneficiaries being Vihiga County.

We sat down with the CEBA project focal person for Vihiga County, Dr. Vitalis Juma, to compare notes on implementation experience this far. We took stock of the project's benefits to Vihiga County and drawbacks if any, policy and programmatic changes in service delivery, key learnings, and the next steps for sustaining gains made. Here are excerpts from the interview between Keprecon Quarterly's **Juliet Munuhe (JM)** and **Dr. Vitalis Juma (VJ)**.

JM: Briefly introduce yourself and your role in the CEBA project.

VJ: My name is Vitalis Juma. I am a Family Physician and head of the Department of Pediatrics and Child Health at Vihiga County Referral Hospital. I also coordinate Primary Health Care activities in the County. For the purpose of this interview, I am the CEBA project focal person for Vihiga County.

JM: What motivated you to become an advocate of PHC, RMNCAH and nutrition in Vihiga County?

VJ: Implementation of public health services requires minimal resources but the same needs to ensure excellent quality and high impact. By focusing on the health of the mother and the child, we are assured of a ripple effect on the improvement of all other health indicators. This is my main motivation. Being the coordinator of public health services in the County, I am aware that the PHC-RMNCAH+N package of services and interventions is comprehensive enough to address almost all aspects of healthcare for the people of Vihiga County. I do encourage that the interventions be implemented at household and community levels first, and then escalated to primary and tertiary health facility levels when need arises. The integration of all levels of care results in optimal quality of care.

JM: As the County Focal for CEBA project, how did you coordinate meetings with county officials, including the Governor? How did you involve the community health promoters? What challenges did you face?

VJ: CEBA project meetings were coordinated using existing county government health management structures, that is from the office of the County Director of Health and Chief Officer for Health. Various program officers at the Health Department played a crucial role in ensuring the success of the activities. Some of the offices we collaborated with in coordinating meetings and project activities including the participation of community health promoters, Head of Family Health, County Nutrition Coordinator, County Community Health Services Coordinator, County Reproductive Health Coordinator, and County Health Records and Information Officer. Challenges can never be missed in any endeavour. Our main challenge during PHC and RMNCAH+N activity coordination is that we had various activities planned in a year, but only a few had budgetary support, which was at times seen as bias. For instance, more support was available from development partners towards nutrition than immunization activities.

JM: Describe any significant policy adoption or changes that resulted from these meetings with county health officials.

VJ: Yes, we have made some strides on the policy scene through advocacy with county health leadership. Some of the policy frameworks that have emanated from these efforts include the County Adolescent, Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) Action Plan, the Nutrition Policy and even the draft Nutrition Bill that is currently being drafted.



Dr. Vitalis coordinating the World Contraception Day in Vihiga County

The Adolescent, Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH) Action Plan is a multisectoral plan to reduce teenage pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Launched in June 2023, the Plan also aims to improve nutrition for adolescents and reduce gender-based violence. The Nutrition Policy (2022-2032) aims to promote accessible, equitable, efficient and high-quality nutrition services that are sustainable for the people of Vihiga County, and has informed development of the draft County Nutrition bill.

JM: How did you ensure that the budget submissions aligned with the health-related days and the goals of the project?

VJ: The CEBA project provided a guideline that was quite helpful in aligning my day-to-day work in the county including capacity building activities, commemoration of health days, interviews with local radio stations, as well as social media engagements with the project goals and financing structures. I also utilized the guideline during the process of proposal writing and budget request.

JM: How did you engage the community and other stakeholders in these advocacy efforts?

VJ: Community and other stakeholder engagement was a continuous process during CEBA activity implementation at county and sub-county levels in Vihiga. Indeed, the involvement of community stakeholders ensured buy-in and improved uptake of health services, while stakeholder consultations facilitated smooth policy making, as provided for in the Constitution. Further, stakeholders were engaged during commemoration of international health days, and they also participated as panelists during the town hall meeting where we voiced areas that needed county and national interventions.

JM: What measurable outcomes have you seen as a result of the project's implementation in Vihiga County?

VJ: Three outcomes stand out for me. One, the population of Vihiga County is now well informed on their rights to quality health services, and the uptake or utilization of these services has therefore greatly improved. Our community health promoters and village dispensaries are now busy because of increased demand. Two, there is a robust, pro-active and pro-health civil society presence in the County. The civil and religious organizations are vocal and active in advocating for PHC, RMNCAH and nutrition services for county residents. Three, as a result of successful advocacy with Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) and the County Executive, there is tremendous improvement in investment towards improving neonatal outcomes by both the county government and partners.

JM: What are the success stories or feedback you can share from this project?

VJ: To start with, let me report that the CEBA project has been able to develop a team that is able to articulate advocacy agenda within Vihiga County. To me this is a huge success. Another milestone has been the equipping of the newborn unit at the county hospital and capacity building of healthcare providers on Maternal and Newborn Health (MNH) service provision. As I mentioned earlier, investment in MNH has a large ripple effect on the entire populace. The fact that the infrastructure investment and capacity building was undertaken by the County Government through partner engagement, including with the CEBA project, is in itself a success story. We now boast of a County Assembly that understands the health agenda quite well and is able to advocate for program-based budgeting. Last but not least, the relationship between the legislature, executive and administrative policy makers in Vihiga has been strengthened such that they currently speak the same language regarding PHC and RMNCAH+N programming.



JM: Describe two or three lessons you learned throughout this project.

VJ: Allow me to share three lessons that I feel need to be highlighted. These are:

1. That community sensitization needs to be matched with adequate infrastructural improvement at the facility level in order to improve key health indicators. For instance, we have learnt that the community is well sensitized on the importance of facility delivery. However, most of the deliveries are conducted in the nearby counties resulting in a decline in our skilled birth indicators when we look at the Kenya Health Information System (KHIS) data.
2. That advocacy needs to be sustained, since health is associated with high rate of personnel turnover both at the service delivery level and at the leadership level.
3. That there is need to strengthen the County Health Management Team (CHMT) on preparation of policy briefs, concept writing, and grant writing for purposes of resource mobilization.



Dr. Vitalis is presenting Vihiga County's PHC and RMNCAH+N indicators during the 2nd Annual Stakeholders' Feedback Meeting.

JM: If you could change one thing about the project based on your experience, what would it be?

VJ: Adherence to the planned caucus activities.

JM: What do you think are the next steps for sustaining the gains made in Vihiga County?

VJ: Continuous engagement with the County Executive and County Assembly to have increased budgetary allocation to health services to at least 30% of the County budget. There is a general need to have county allocation from the national government increased in order to meet the growing needs of the county government.

JM: How can the community continue to be involved in advocating for PHC/RMNCAH+N moving forward?

VJ: My opinion is that there is need to establish and strengthen community-based stakeholder engagements through the primary care network (PCN) model. I feel that this approach would increase and sustain community involvement in advocating for PHC and RMNCAH+N beyond the project lifecycle.

JM: What has been the most rewarding aspect of your involvement in this project?

VJ: The CEBA project was opportune. Given my passion for public health, the project afforded me the opportunity to advocate for the health agenda for the County in various forums.

JM: How do you envision the future of paediatric healthcare in Vihiga County in light of the changes made?

VJ: Child health services are on the positive trajectory. We are looking forward to more stakeholder collaboration in order to meet the county budgetary deficit. The commitment of the healthcare providers and all other players is key in the delivery of positive impact for the child of Vihiga.

Tumeshinda: Keprecon Awarded Government Partnership of the Year Award



by Juliet Munuhe

About Juliet Munuhe

Juliet is the Project Communication Officer at Keprecon. She has over 5 years' experience in digital, print and mainstream media. With an academic background in Journalism and Mass Communication, Juliet ensures that Keprecon's communication strategies are effectively implemented to amplify the organization's impact. She crafts compelling narratives, manages social media campaigns, and develops communication materials that engage diverse audiences

On 29th November 2024, we had the honor of attending the inaugural NGO Awards 2024 gala, a prestigious event held at the Emara Ole Sereni Hotel in Nairobi. The gala dinner gathered a diverse range of NGO's personnel from all corners of Kenya, providing a unique platform to celebrate the exceptional contributions, dedication, and impact made by public benefit organizations working to improve the lives of people in various geographies across the country.

The night was a powerful reminder of the pivotal role that NGOs play in shaping Kenya's future. As a part of this inspiring gathering, the Keprecon family was both humbled and excited to receive the 2024 Government Partnership of the Year Award. This recognition is a testament to the tireless efforts of our team, as well as the strong partnerships we've built with both national and county governments. It highlights the work we've done collectively to bring about lasting and meaningful change, particularly in the areas of reproductive, maternal, neonatal, child and adolescent health. The award serves as a reflection of Keprecon's commitment to driving forward health reforms that reach every corner of the country and touch the lives of those in need.

The awards ceremony, organized by the Public Benefits Organizations Regulatory Authority (PBORA), marked a pivotal moment for NGOs in Kenya. It was the first event of its kind to be spearheaded by PBORA, and its successful execution underscored the growing recognition of the vital role played by NGOs in the development and wellbeing of Kenyan society. Mr. Lindon Otieno, the Ag. Executive Director of PBORA, was among the distinguished guests at the event. In her address, she emphasized the importance of a strong regulatory framework to facilitate the smooth operation of NGOs, stating: "The Public Benefits Organizations Regulatory Authority exists to facilitate the smooth running and operation of NGOs in undertaking their activities in the country." Her words reinforced the critical role PBORA plays in supporting NGOs in their efforts to contribute positively to Kenyan society.

In his speech, Leonard Ndung'u, the Director of the 2024 NGO Awards, eloquently captured the essence of the evening. He described the awards as "a platform to celebrate the outstanding changemakers who are driving vital impact in our societies." His remarks highlighted the evening's purpose: to honor organizations that, through dedication and innovative solutions, have made remarkable strides in improving communities and advancing the national development agenda.

In agreement with the award organizers, it is also my conviction that Keprecon deserved the 2024 Government Partnership of the Year Award. Allow me to expound on my conviction. Keprecon has over the years forged excellent working partnerships with the national government, particularly the National Assembly, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance and other government agencies. We also have a close working partnership with devolved governments through the Council of Governors as well as all the 47 county governments. Through these partnerships, Keprecon works in all geographies in Kenya - rural, urban, marginalized and hard to reach - and has influenced health policies, standards, protocols, curricula and manuals. Our partnership with both the national and county governments, anchored on our strategic objectives, has facilitated the delivery of accessible, quality and cost-effective health services to Kenyans in various ways.

For instance, between 2019 and 2021, Keprecon partnered with the Ministry of Health and National Vaccine and Immunization Program (NVIP) to implement the Immunization Advocacy Initiative that resulted in both increased budgetary allocation to immunization programs at national and county levels as well as development of the Kenya Policy Guidelines on Immunisation 2021-2025 and vaccine distribution matrix. Between 2017 and 2021, Keprecon partnered with the Ministry of Health in implementing the Ponya Mtoto project in Turkana, Bungoma, Kilifi and Mombasa counties. This project aimed to reduce deaths of young infants from possible severe bacterial infections by building the capacity, skills and confidence of frontline health providers to successfully manage sick young infants at dispensary and health centre levels. This partnership resulted in development and dissemination of the Policy and Guidelines on Management of Possible Serious Bacterial Infection (PSBI) in Kenya as well as revision of the Newborn and Child Health Strategy 2021-2025.



In line with this objective, Keprecon has in place a robust stakeholder collaboration and coordination mechanism that ensures effectiveness and quality output led by the Projects and Operations Directorate. The Directorate organizes quarterly roundtables, stakeholder engagement and monthly project appraisal meetings with key decision makers at national and county government levels including with the Parliamentary Health Committee, Council of Governors Health Committee, and County Health Management Teams in project counties. At all times, project inception forums are held to brief the decision-makers, obtain their buy-in and leverage policy level support for the intended interventions. Through this mechanism, all projects carried out by Keprecon have policy level steering committees that often comprise of heads of departments from relevant national and county government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs). For instance, the CEBA project undertaken by Keprecon between November 2021 and October 2024 had a Technical Working Group (TWG) comprising of Key decision makers from Ministry of Health, Council of Governors, Health Professional Associations, and Academic institutions that met on a quarterly basis to provide strategic oversight by ensuring the CEBA project activities were implemented in line with the approved outcomes and within the expected timeline.



Our resolve to partner with the national and county governments in our work is premised on the need for sustainability and replicability of the interventions that we jointly plan, implement, monitor and evaluate. One of the key strategies we employ is health system strengthening and capacity development. Products of our health system strengthening and capacity building partnership with national and county governments such as health policy and strategies, standards and guidelines, and skilled workforce form the bedrock of sustainable and replicable health services across the country. Keprecon's partnership with both national and county government structures have over the years facilitated conducting of capacity building, developing and disseminating in-service training curricula, policies, guidelines, job aids, factsheets, IEC materials, and policy briefs. In addition, Keprecon's partnership with the Kenya Government has enabled more effective delivery of services to existing and new beneficiaries and has influenced the development of national policies, strategies and evidence-based practices as well as deepening the involvement of local communities in health promotion, prevention and care initiatives.

For us, this recognition is not just a milestone but also a motivation to continue pushing boundaries in our work. It encourages us to deepen our collaborations, enhance our advocacy efforts, and expand our impact on the health sector and beyond. We are proud of the partnerships we have cultivated and are inspired by the incredible work being done by other NGOs in Kenya. As we look forward to the future, we are excited about the possibilities for continued collaboration and collective progress in our shared mission of improving the health and lives of all Kenyans.



Deputy President H.E. Kithure Kindiki, Nairobi County Governor H.E. Johnson Sakaja and the Nairobi County Health CECM Ms. Suzanne Silantoi at Keprecon's booth during the Nairobi Health Scientific Conference 2024



Prof. Fred Were together with the Keprecon team during the NGO Awards 2024 Gala



Taita Taveta CHMT members together with the CEBA Project team during a knowledge sharing meeting



CEBA Project team during the 2nd Annual stakeholders feedback meeting



CEBA Project team in collaboration with Vihiga County during the World Contraception Day 2024



CEBA Project team in collaboration with West Pokot County during the World Breastfeeding Week 2024

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