

Community Probation Volunteers: Valuable component of probation system in Kenya

By Clement Okech OGW: A Presentation at the 2nd World Congress on
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Introduction: Probation and Volunteerism

- Volunteerism has been part of Probation system: From the streets of Boston where John Augustus practices or even the London police Courts where church missionaries ‘saved souls’ of errant young men brought to court.
- Since 2005, the Community probation volunteer (CPV) formerly Volunteer probation officers (VPO) in Kenya has since morphed into an necessary arm of service delivery in some areas.
- Not all parts of the country has the CVP programme
- 5,300 CPVs have been recruited up from 312 in 2016. However, not all are actively involved at all times but only when work arises from their respective locations

Original Aim of the CPV Programme

- Expanding the reach of the department including creating public awareness to change attitudes towards non-custodial measures
- Intensify client supervision and reintegration
- Increase the capacity and speed within which PO can provide services to courts and other penal release organs including reliable social inquiry reports.
- Demystify and embed probation work in society
- Involve the community directly in offender supervision

Selection Criteria

- Is over 30 years old and reasonably educated & possess a passionate attitude for social services
- A respectable member of community, able to keep information private and confidential
- Considered as socially reliable in his/her character and conduct
- Willing to create time for volunteer work
- Willing to provide free service but with facilitation
- A stable person who is not looking for volunteer work as a way of looking for a job
- A good role model with good virtues and with integrity

Modular Training of CPVs

- The modular training is contained on one training manual
- 1. **Module one:** Introduction to probation work and the criminal justice system covering definition of terms, probation background, basic laws,
- 2. **Module two:** Community probation volunteer programme with topics such as understanding volunteerism, volunteer tasks, working with women and child, and other special categories.
- They also learn about support systems and, networking and collaboration.

Modular Training Cont'd

- 3. **Module Three:** Practice Skills and Ethics including basic skills in relation building, communication, problem solving and role modelling.
 - Also touches on Public officers ethics Act, Integrity, National values. Accountability and Confidentiality among others
 - Also learned are rights of clients, Do's and Don'ts

CPV Tasks

CPVs work closely with professional POs in the following areas.

- Information gathering
- Supervision of clients (Probation order and CSO supervisees)
- Reintegration of clients exiting from correctional institutions
- Identifying clients needs and discussing with PO.
- Crime prevention
- Records and reporting
- Networking, resource mobilisation, linkages and referrals to local community service providers

Some Challenges

1. Inadequate funding for selection, training and facilitation
2. Lack of clear legal mandate
3. Threat posed by rising number of probation officers (now standing at over 2000)
4. Poor recognition and reward practices

Into the Future

- Need for clear legal mandate, to set clear framework of work, expectations and requirements for the CPVs.
- Need to develop institutional character and identification of CPVs as part and parcel of probation system.
- Need ensure fairness and consistency in practice through careful selection, training and support.
- Need for regulated recognition and reward system by government
- Need for resources and timely disbursement of reimbursable and other facilitations.

End

•Thank You