



Effectiveness of community based interventions to mitigate harmful use of alcohol in Murang'a East District

Policy Brief

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Introduction

Alcohol abuse is a major social and public health problem due to its far reaching impacts on the individuals, families and communities. Among the efforts put in place by the Government to address the problem of alcohol use has been the enactment and enforcement of laws that control alcohol abuse. However, enforcement agencies are often overstretched by the limited resources available and therefore, legislation and policy measures alone cannot fully address the reduction of harm related to alcohol use. Thus, family and community empowerment and involvement programs become important strategies to reduce harm from alcohol use in the community. A notable community response in Murang'a East District has been the participation of women groups in demonstrations against the sale and consumption of alcohol in localized areas. The impact of these and similar movements have not been adequately evaluated either in terms of the broader parameters related to alcohol consumption or the long-term sustainability.

The survey was conducted in the year 2012. The main objective was to determine the effectiveness of the prevention efforts of *Maendeleo ya Wanawake*, a group that mobilized fellow women to demonstrate in

support of full implementation of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act, 2010.

Methodology

A cross-sectional study design was used where both quantitative and qualitative data were generated. Murang'a East District was purposively selected because it has been a hotspot for alcohol related problems and *Maendeleo ya wanawake* initiative had attempted to mitigate the harmful use of alcohol by supporting enforcement of the Alcoholic Drinks Control Act, 2010.

Both probability and non-probability sampling methods were used to identify potential respondents. A total of 591 respondents were interviewed.

Findings

- 46.7 % of the respondents had used alcohol at least once in their lifetime.
- 21% of the respondents had used alcohol in the last 30 days prior to the survey
- Community prevention efforts used by *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* and other organizations include demonstrations against excessive use, strict enforcement of alcohol related laws, organizing information dissemination barazas, encouraging prosecution of offenders of alcohol related laws

and supporting treatment of persons with alcohol related problems.

- It was reported that community prevention efforts had greatly reduced the production, sale and consumption of illicit alcohol, reduced school drop outs, reduced alcohol related illnesses and improved performance in national examinations among other effects.
- The community was on the preparation stage (stage five) of readiness indicating that community members had general information about alcohol abuse, pro and cons of prevention activities, policies and actions.
- The community leadership offered modest support of the prevention efforts. The major challenge reported was that efforts were sporadic in nature. It was therefore noted that there was need for structured long term and sustainable strategies such that this community could move to the next advanced stages of readiness to implement feasible and effective prevention measures.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following:

- There is need to strengthen existing community prevention efforts by ensuring strict enforcement of laws regulating production, sale and consumption of alcohol.
- There is need to empower community groups involved in prevention efforts by providing capacity building and financial assistance to facilitate them to

implement alcohol and drug abuse related programs.

- Having noted that the youth were at an increased risk to alcohol abuse, there is need to put in place interventions that are more sensitive and responsive to their needs. Prevention efforts that could be considered include alternative alcohol free entertainment facilities. Further, they should be encouraged to access youth economic empowerment programs like the youth enterprise fund and uwezo fund.
- Having identified other organizations involved in the campaign against alcohol and drug abuse in the community, there is need to form coalitions or partnerships to minimize duplication of their efforts and coordinate a multi-faceted and comprehensive prevention approach to get a wider public support.

For more information on the survey findings, please visit the NACADA's Website: www.nacada.go.ke