

Mentorship and Internship Program

Success of the program

The program began and went on well in the county. We thank Ford Foundation through the Council of Governors for giving us opportunity to engage in mentorship program of twenty interns in our county through our late able Governor Dr Joyce Laboso.

During the mentorship period, Mentees acquired skills, knowledge, positive attitude and experience in their relevant department that will expose them to working environment in the county and even elsewhere in future. They were exposed to working environment and collaboration with other employees in various department.

They were able to learn code of conduct, code of ethic and were able to use them during the period of internships. This has formed the basis of their future employment. They were able to manage time well by being in their respective department on time as contained in their appointment letters.

The mentees were exposed to various activities such as the participation in budget making process, procurement plan preparation for the financial year 2019-2020 in various departments within the county such as Education (ECDs), Social Service Department, Procurement Department, Administration and others.

The mentees were equipped with techniques on how to prepare monthly report required to submit to Ford Foundation. Initially it was challenge but with time they were able to handle them effectively through the guidance of the project coordinator and mentor.

The mentees gained enormous skills on social interaction, cohesion, interpersonal skills of relating with everyone irrespective of their status quo or those with disabilities in fact some interns offered themselves to assist the physically challenged, visually impaired and hearing impaired to prepare report and even guiding them wherever there was meeting.

The mentor, project coordinator, secretary of the interns created a social forum where they were would communicate effectively when they have needs, challenges and comments to enhance social communication and effective coordination.

This programmed has been a great milestone in our county since persons with disabilities were and other disadvantaged groups were included in the programmed hence promoting inclusivity enshrined in our constitution 2010.

It was the dream of our Late Governor Dr. Joyce Laboso to bring on board all person with disabilities to participate in the development since disabilities is not inability. They chance was extended to them. The project included nine persons with disabilities where two were visually impaired, one hearing impaired, four physically impaired and two low versioned. Initially, we had a challenge for an interpreter of sign language but through collaboration we got assistance from the county who assisted us enormously.

Jackline Chebet is an example of has a successful story. She was born normal but acquired visual impairment after severe sickness was bitter, frustrated and disappointed after loosing sight as if that was not enough, she lost her father to cruel death which shatter her hopes/dreams. It was not until she was identified through the programme that she was ignited, thanks to the Late Excellence Dr. Joyce Laboso for having the community who are often forgotten. Indeed, this programme had given her hopes beyond the circumstances that her future will change had the programmed continued

Challenges encountered by the mentees during the programme

The mentees had various challenges especially in the first month when they were mixed with up on who was to do what, because they did not understand clearly their roles and roles of their supervisors.

The persons with disabilities (PWDs) especially those with visual and hearing impairments had a lot of challenges associating with other interns, supervisors and customers and this caused them to repeatedly isolate themselves and withdraw from interactive spaces.

The visually impaired and those with physical impairments had a challenge in mobility and accessibility to sanitation facilities such as toilets which are not PWD friendly.

The delay of their stipends proved a challenge because most of them have families and various needs which must be met on daily basis.

It was also a challenge for person with disability to move from their homes to place of work especially visually impaired persons who often needed caregivers to support them to reach their destinations.

Most of the mentees are youth and inexperienced and therefore working with them is a challenge since they do not understand some challenges/ structure of counties and the Ford Foundation.

Challenges encountered by the mentor in working with the youth

Most of the mentees are youths therefore working with them is a challenge since they still young and do not understand some challenges/structure of counties and the Ford Foundation

Some of the mentees had no other source of finance and they solely relied on the stipends so sometimes they would complain of not having transport or food for lunch.

Persons with disabilities required more attention, assistance and more time to do their activities, therefore, they had a delayed start in the internship programme.

The youth required maximum supervision for the first month it was not easy because they had to be present in their respective departments during the stipulated working hours.

Challenges encountered by the mentor in working with county officials

It was not easy to understand the structure of the county in the first place. With time this challenge was reduced as I visited different departments where the mentees were attached regularly.

The county officials were suspicious on the “new” person “mentor” who came on board yet not an employee of the county. This was sorted with time when they understood this was collaboration with the Council of Governors.

It was not clear who to report to because the departments were many under different supervisors. The mentees were diverse attached to various departments in the county. This was sorted by arranging and holding the meeting with mentees.

Recommendations

Since the interns had been trained and mentored, I recommend that the programme can be extended up to a year to enable them fully participate in budget preparation process, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. If they participate in the whole process then no doubt, they can be absorbed in the future to serve in the county of their enormous experiences.

The mentorship programme had become a light and a hope to many. A case in point is Jackline Chebet visually impaired, Johnstone Koech visually impaired who refused to go back home after end of internship project and insisted to continue working. Thanks for the intervention by some good Samaritan county officials who guided to wait as the project coordinator consult the Ford Foundation.

I also recommend that person with disabilities should be given first priority should employment vacancies be available in the county and even other organizations.

More county staff should train sign language interpretation skills to be able to meaningfully engage persons with hearing impairment during forums such as public participation meeting, capacity building trainings etc.

More donors should support the county especially marginalized groups from Bomet East , Chepalungu, Sotik so that youths should be trained on entrepreneurial skills to be independent and self-reliant.

I recommend that the project team coordinator, project procurement officer, account and the mentor be given a certificate of participation from Ford Foundation to motivate them for the work done.

Since Bomet County elected a Woman Governor though not here now, I strongly recommend that the project should be continued in order to achieve the dreams of the departed Her Excellency Hon. Dr. Joyce Laboso.

The mentorship and internship program should include training on social audits so that more people are brought on board who can be a watchdog of government procurement process, projects initiated by the county and their completion.

The mentees, mentor and project team should have letters of recommendation from the County Government to enhance their employment in future.

The stipends for the Persons with Disabilities should be increased to cater for their enormous challenges and extra costs incurred.

Generally, we appreciate the County Government of Bomet through the Ford Foundation and Council of Governors for this golden opportunity whose time has come as an answered prayer to woes of many youth and people with disability and unemployment crisis in Bomet County which is a disaster.

Future Plans of the Mentees after the Programme

We requested the mentees to volunteer and work in their various departments especially those who can sustain themselves. We also requested the County Government to consider them to be given first priority in employment if any opportunity will be available.

During the exit meeting of the mentorship and internship programme, the mentees were challenged by the mentor to engage themselves in meaningful and entrepreneurial activities that will sustain them.

The mentees were guided and advised not to lose hope but to be optimistic in life because our hope cannot be thwarted in life.

Finally, may I take this golden opportunity to thank the County Government of Bomet through her Excellency the Governor, the late Hon. Dr. Joyce Laboso for granting me the opportunity to serve as a mentor for the 20 mentees. Their lives are ignited and hopeful for the better after a worthy selection.

May I also thank my supervisor Chief of Staff, Mrs. Jayne Sigilai for the cordial working relationship I had with her during this period together with other Directors of Social Service and Public Participation Departments and the Departmental Supervisors.

The Project Coordinator and the Project Procurement Officer have done awesome and worthy work and bringing all of us together. I sincerely thank them for the work we did together to empower the interns and alleviate their woes.