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## KENYA MEDICAL TRAINING COLLEGE INVOLVEMENT IN THE ACHIEVEMENT OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

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### INTRODUCTION

*Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a fundamental goal for many countries globally, including Kenya. To realize the government's UHC agenda, it is imperative to strengthen the healthcare workforce. Kenya Medical Training College (KMTc) plays a crucial role in this endeavor as a leading institution for competent health professionals training. This paper presented a strategic framework for involving KMTc in driving and achieving the government's UHC agenda through comprehensive strategies, curriculum implementation, expanding infrastructure, fostering research and consultancy and promoting active community engagement.*

**Key Words:** *KMTc, Universal Health Care, Training, Community Engagement*

### BACKGROUND

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 was an important milestone in the area of community health in the twentieth century, and it highlighted primary health care (PHC) as the key to achieving the objective of Health for All (WHO, 2023a). Countries appreciated that existing gross inequalities within countries contributed to political, economic and social underdevelopment and hence was an issue of concern to them. It is important to note that everyone has the right and duty to partake individually and collectively in the planning and implementation of their health care. All countries have tried to live this goal by tailoring their activities to it with minimum success.

In 2015, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) was identified as one of the targets countries in the world set when they identified the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. UHC was born out of PHC and aims at ensuring that all people have total access to quality health services that they need regardless of the place, time, social and financial statuses. UHC covers a full range of essential health services that include promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care in all ages (WHO, 2023b). WHO envisages that the delivery of these services needs competent healthcare workers with blended skills at all tiers of care. These workers should be adequately trained and supported with quality medical products to achieve this goal.

Kenya has made significant strides towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as outlined in the former government's Big Four Agenda. The current government continues to revisit the UHC agenda and has identified key areas of concern to ensure success in it. However, the success of UHC depends on an adequately skilled and well-equipped healthcare workforce. Training institutions play an important role in the development of any nation and their role in the implementation of governments' agenda remains unquestionable. The Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) is a critical institution responsible for training healthcare professionals across various disciplines. Its inclusion in actualizing governments strategic goals in the health sector is key.

### **Need for this Framework**

The government of Kenya, through the relentless efforts of His Excellency the President, has been in the forefront in championing for UHC. This has seen the call for the mass employment of skilled caregivers, development UHC policy frameworks, strengthening of community health systems and the establishment of the Kenya Primary Health Care Networks with the aim of delivering primary health care services, reducing fragmentation and providing advanced care when required. The role of training institutions does not come out clear in the governments push for UHC and they therefore need to realign and develop informed strategies to achieve this vision.

The aim of this paper is to propose a strategic framework for involving KMTC in the achievement of the government's UHC agenda. The framework encompasses key strategies to enhance active community engagement through Health education, Health promotion, Community Diagnosis, Health communication, Mobile medical camps for screening and Health literacy.

### **Key Strategies:**

#### *a. Strengthening Healthcare Training*

Curriculum enhancement and implementation to meet the evolving healthcare needs of Kenyan citizens. KMTC should promptly call for a review and update various program curricula to integrate UHC principles, such as primary healthcare, health promotion and disease prevention, into the training programs of various professionals. Community Health and Development is the backbone of many programs offered at KMTC. Students proceed for community diagnosis at various levels of their studies during which they engage communities on several health aspects as they collect data to inform policy making and behavior change communication. For instance;

1. Clinical Medicine students undergo training in community health and development for three years. The students engage in community diagnosis activities targeting top priority health needs of the community through health promotion and health education to bring about behavior change towards healthy living. These programs are offered in over thirty-six campuses nationwide. Revamping the program will support the paradigm shift from curative to preventive health care hence reducing the financial burden the government faces in supporting curative services.
2. Public health and Environmental health sciences students equally engage communities on promotive, preventive and rehabilitative health services. They educate communities on good housing, environmental sanitation, Water quality and hygiene, food safety, pollution and pollution control, school health, conservancy, communicable and non-communicable disease prevention among others.
3. The latest KMTC program i.e., Community Health Assistants (Community health) and Health Promotion are important programs in driving the Kenya Community Health Strategic policy framework (2020-2025) to which the president has committed his support to. Continuous involvement of these students in the community is a key driver towards achieving UHC targets. It is notable that these programs are offered in selected KMTC campuses.

4. Health Counselling is a vital program in the rehabilitative and palliative care services. In the contemporary world, everyone is facing mental health challenges. Through supported corporate social responsibility (CSR) students can reach out to communities and reduce the negative and sustained impacts of mental ill-health. Equally, active engagement of these students will help reduce drug use and substances abuse, discrimination and stigmatization of people living with HIV (PLWH), thus fastening the efforts towards the eradication of this pandemic and promoting wellness.
5. Nutrition and Dietetics is a very important program in matters nutrition and food security. The engagement of the students in educating the community on food production, preparation and proper consumption will go a long way in promoting healthy living.

All other programs offered at the KMTC are equally important and stand to be counted towards the achievement of the UHC target.

*b. Expanding Student Enrolment*

KMTC should continue to seek government's support to expand student enrolment in line with the growing demand for healthcare professionals. Providing scholarships and financial incentives to top students need to be considered to attract more students to healthcare-related courses, especially in marginalized areas.

*c. Infrastructure Development*

1. Establishing Regional Campuses: To ensure equal access to quality healthcare training, KMTC should establish regional campuses in marginalized underserved areas. These campuses can help train healthcare professionals who are more likely to serve in these regions upon graduation.
2. Modernizing Facilities: Upgrading and modernizing KMTC's facilities, including laboratories, libraries, and classrooms, is essential for providing students with the best possible training experience. Public-private partnerships can be explored to fund infrastructure improvements.

*d. Fostering Research and Innovation*

1. Research Centers of Excellence: KMTC should create research centers of excellence focused on addressing Kenya's healthcare challenges. These centers can collaborate with other institutions and international partners to conduct cutting-edge and evidence-based UHC research.
2. Innovation Incubators: Encouraging innovation among healthcare professionals is crucial. KMTC can establish innovation incubators to support students and faculty in developing and implementing creative solutions to healthcare problems.

*e. Monitoring and Evaluation*

1. Performance Metrics: This concept proposes the establishment of clear metrics to measure KMTC's contribution to the UHC agenda. These metrics should track the number of graduates, their placement in underserved areas, research output, and community engagement activities.
2. Feedback Mechanisms: Regularly gather feedback from students, faculty, healthcare providers and other partners to assess the effectiveness of KMTC's initiatives and make necessary adjustments.
3. Consultancy: KMTC through this department will engage communities, collect and collate epidemiological data, share information with partners, strengthen UHC system, enhance the utilization of the curriculum, and support staff capacity building in relation to the goal of Universal Health Coverage.

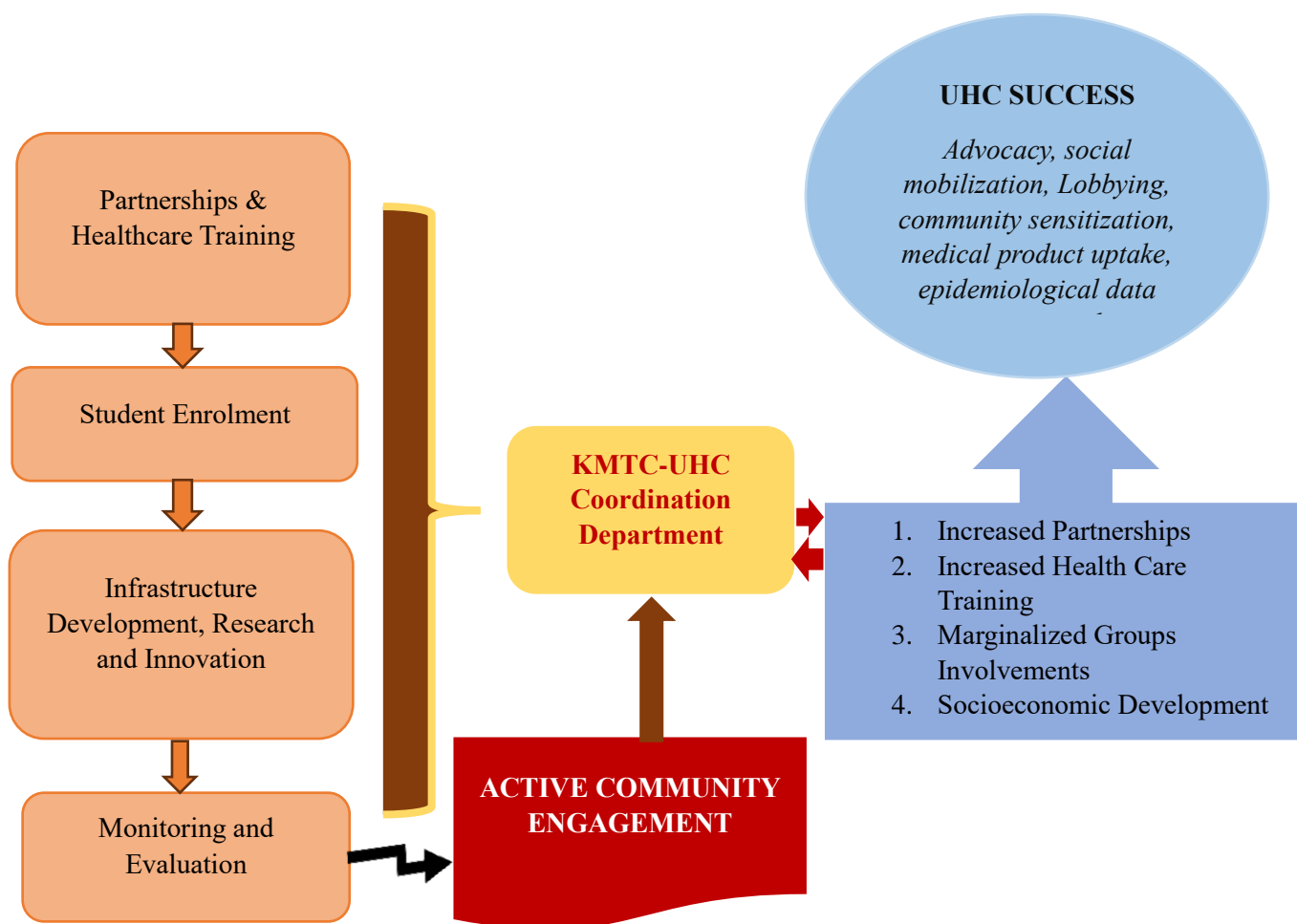


Figure 1: UHC-KMTC Involvement Conceptual Framework

#### Potential outcomes of involving KMTC in UHC

- a. Place the government in the global picture for UHC achievers
- b. Reduction of healthcare inequalities
- c. Improved health literacy and behavior change
- d. Enhanced skill development and capacity building for healthcare workers
- e. Continue strengthening and achievement of KMTC's vision and mission
- f. Creation of relevance and employment for CHAs graduates

#### CONCLUSION

Achieving Universal Health Coverage is a multifaceted goal that requires the collaboration of various stakeholders, including educational institutions like the Kenya Medical Training College. By strategically involving KMTC in the government's UHC agenda through Health education, Health promotion, Community Diagnosis, Health communication, mobile medical camps for screening and Health literacy.

Kenya can bolster its healthcare workforce and take significant steps towards ensuring quality healthcare for all its citizens. The government's support and investment in KMTC's development are vital success factors in this endeavor.

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