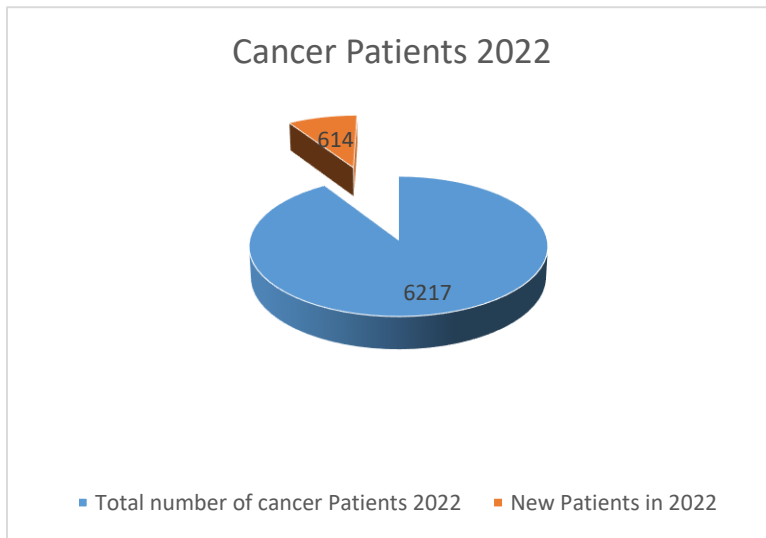


## FLAGSHIP PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

**Introduction:** The County government holds the primary responsibility for delivering health services in Meru County. The county is dedicated to ensuring that its residents have access to affordable and high quality healthcare services. Nevertheless, the increasing budgetary strain due to a rise in disease incidence and global health threats like Covid-19 has emphasized the importance of collaboration. By working together with various stakeholders, the county aims to enhance service coverage, improve efficiency and innovation, and leverage additional resources.

S/NO	Key Priority	Intervention Strategy
1.	Cancer Prevention and Management  Primary Health Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a <b>regional cancer center</b> and <b>Cancer Institute</b></li> <li>• Increased screening campaigns</li> <li>• Upgrade of <b>4 regional level 4 hospitals</b> to act as referral Hospitals and upgrading of level 3 health facilities</li> <li>• Payment of NHIF premiums for 20,000 indigents</li> <li>• Construction of a Mother and Child Center</li> <li>• Establishment and expansion of <b>ultramodern morgues</b> at the regional level 4 hospitals.</li> </ul>
2.	Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of a <b>wellness center</b> and support of mental health screenings at the community level. Recruitment of at least one Psychologist per Sub-County</li> </ul>
3.	TB Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of <b>TB Isolation wards.</b></li> </ul>
4.	Accidents and Injuries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a trauma center of excellence</li> <li>• Construction of an orthopedic center of excellence</li> </ul>
5.	Blood Transfusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction of a regional blood transfusion center</li> <li>• Procurement of a utility vehicle for blood mobilization</li> </ul>
6.	Eye Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upgrading of the eye unit at MeTRH into a Regional Eye center of excellence</li> </ul>

## Cancer Prevention and Management



Meru County faces a significant health challenge with cancer persisting as a major concern. In 2022, a total of 614 new cancer patients were diagnosed and put on treatment, while an additional 5,603 revisits were recorded at the cancer unit. This resulted in a sum of 6,217 cancer patients seeking services throughout the year. Unfortunately, the cancer unit is currently grappling with inadequate personnel, limited space, and insufficient equipment to

effectively manage the various types of cancers.

To address this pressing issue, Meru County has devised a comprehensive plan to enhance cancer screening and management. The proposed strategy includes the construction of a regional cancer center and a dedicated cancer institute. Alongside this, the county intends to implement community-level screening initiatives and bolster its human resources to better handle the burden of cancer cases.

Through these proactive measures, Meru County aims to improve the overall cancer care and support available to its residents, ultimately striving for a healthier and better-equipped future in the fight against cancer.

## Mental Health and Wellness:

Mental health and wellness have become a pressing concern in Meru County, with a noticeable increase in cases related to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. Annually, around 7,000 patients seek treatment at Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital for these conditions. Unfortunately, the situation is exacerbated by a lack of awareness about mental health issues, limited treatment options, a shortage of qualified mental health professionals, and the stigma surrounding those seeking help.

In response to this growing crisis, the county has put forth a proposal to establish a dedicated Mental Health and Wellness



Center. The primary objective is to offer support and care for healthcare workers who are experiencing mental health challenges. Part of this initiative involves upgrading the existing psychiatric unit to accommodate more patients in a compassionate and nurturing environment while providing the appropriate care they need.

Furthermore, the county intends to address the scarcity of mental health resources at the community level by recruiting Counselling Psychologists. These professionals, at least one for each Sub-County, will collaborate closely with the Level 1 healthcare workforce to conduct screenings and manage mental health issues within the community.

By implementing these measures, Meru County aims to take significant steps towards enhancing mental health services, reducing stigma, and creating a more supportive environment for those struggling with mental health concerns.

### **Community Health Strategy:**



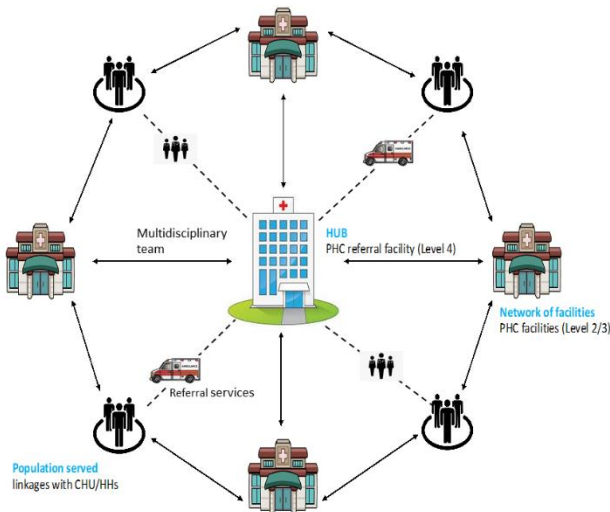
The Community Health Strategy plays a vital role in delivering primary healthcare services to underserved communities in Meru County. Its primary objective is to enhance health outcomes and promote health equity by empowering communities to take ownership of their health. Currently, there are 268 Community Health

Units (CHUs) comprising 3,914 Community Health Volunteers (CHVs). However, the CHVs face challenges such as inadequate reporting tools, irregular incentives, resulting in high dropout rates and low morale, despite their critical role in health service delivery.

To strengthen level 1 healthcare service delivery, the county intends to take several measures. Firstly, they plan to acquire 3,000 smartphones for the CHVs to enable them to utilize digital data capture through customized reporting tools. This upgrade will significantly improve data collection efficiency. Secondly, the county will provide seed capital for CHUs to establish table banking, fostering sustainability and financial independence. Thirdly, they will supply CHV kits to better equip the volunteers for their duties. Lastly, the county will support monthly meetings for CHVs, facilitating data sharing and reviews, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange.

By implementing these measures, Meru County aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Community Health Strategy, ensuring better healthcare service delivery, and ultimately improving the well-being of its communities.

## Primary Health Care:



The backbone of the healthcare system in Meru County lies in primary health care, offering vital health services to the population. Ensuring access to high-quality primary healthcare is paramount to enhancing health outcomes and lessening the burden of preventable diseases.

Regrettably, the health infrastructure was previously in a state of disrepair, disorganization, and lacked

adequate resources to deliver comprehensive, quality healthcare to the people of Meru County. To address this, the county is proposing the implementation of the Primary Care Network model. This model involves bolstering four regional level 4 hospitals to serve as central referral hubs for lower facilities and offer specialized services. The plan includes renovating and equipping the targeted health facilities, providing training for healthcare workers, and ensuring sufficient health products and technologies are available. Additionally, there will be an emphasis on adopting technologies that can boost revenue generation and efficiently manage facility revenue from various sources, including NHIF. This approach aims to ease the workload and congestion at Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital while strengthening other levels of care to operate optimally, providing the best possible care for the people of Meru and its neighboring areas.

## Mama Care:

Access to healthcare services is considered a fundamental right for all citizens, regardless of their vulnerability. However, in Meru County, many people still cannot afford healthcare due to its high cost, which limits their access to essential services. In response to this challenge, the county has developed the "Mama Care" program, aimed at reducing financial barriers to healthcare for indigent individuals, particularly pregnant mothers, with the goal of improving overall health outcomes.



Despite efforts to improve access to healthcare, Meru County faces challenges in health financing, leading to limited accessibility of health services and contributing to high mortality rates. To tackle

this issue, the county plans to implement the "Mama Care" program, which aims to support 20,000 indigents by covering their NHIF expenses. This initiative will enable them to access healthcare services without financial obstacles. The program's focus is on enhancing access to health services, reducing mortality rates, and promoting community health. To ensure its effectiveness and sustainability, collaboration with NHIF and other stakeholders will be crucial in developing a robust monitoring and evaluation framework. Additionally, leveraging technology will be explored to improve the program's efficiency and reach more beneficiaries. The ultimate goal is to achieve equitable access to healthcare services for all citizens, especially the most vulnerable members of society.

Furthermore, as part of the efforts to address maternal and infant mortality, Meru County will construct a state-of-the-art Mother and Child Center to improve healthcare facilities and services dedicated to maternal and infant care. The current rates of maternal and infant mortality in the region are unacceptably high, and this initiative aims to make significant strides in reducing these numbers.

### **Triple Threat:**



The Triple Threat program is a comprehensive initiative designed to tackle three critical health and social issues affecting Meru County: new HIV infections, gender-based violence, and teenage pregnancy.

The current situation and gap assessment reveal significant challenges in addressing these issues. Recent national survey data on teenage pregnancies highlights Meru County as having a high number of cases. Among 100 pregnant mothers attending ANC clinics, 24 are teenagers. Additionally, the county faces a high

prevalence of new HIV infections, particularly among adolescents and young adults. Moreover, gender-based violence remains a prevalent problem, with many cases going unreported and unaddressed. These issues are exacerbated by limited access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, inadequate HIV testing and treatment services, and weaknesses in addressing gender-based violence within the health system.

In response to this situation, our proposed scenario involves collaboration with relevant organizations to enhance service delivery and foster behavior change. We aim to increase access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, expand the availability of HIV testing and treatment services, and strengthen health systems to address gender-based violence effectively. Additionally, empowering women and girls, promoting gender equality, and involving youth in leadership and decision-making processes will be integral to our approach. Partnering with local leaders, communities, schools, and higher education institutions, we will raise awareness and



promote positive behavioral changes towards gender-based violence and teenage pregnancy. By implementing these efforts, we seek to reduce new HIV infections, eliminate gender-based violence, and decrease teenage pregnancy rates in Meru County, ultimately improving the overall health and social well-being of its citizens.

**Arthritis:**

Meru County			
Cause of Morbidity	2022	Percentage (%)	Rank
Upper Respiratory Tract Infections	405002	19.7	1
Arthritis, Joint pains etc.	109675	5.3	2
Intestinal worms	85675	4.2	3
Urinary Tract Infection	82770	4.0	4
Disease of the skin	72988	3.6	5
Amoebiasis	56617	2.8	6
Hypertension	44824	2.2	7
Other Dis. Of Respiratory System	39323	1.9	8
Eye Infections	30741	1.5	9
Other injuries	27446	1.3	10

Arthritis, a chronic and incapacitating condition affecting joints and bones, poses a significant health challenge in Meru County. Accounting for 5.3% of the county's morbidity, it resulted in treatment for over 109,675 patients in 2022. Unfortunately, the current system lacks adequacy and understanding to effectively manage the growing burden of arthritis, leading to reduced quality of life for those impacted.

To address this issue, the county authorities propose conducting a comprehensive study to gain insights into the nature of arthritis and recommend appropriate interventions. Simultaneously, healthcare worker training will be implemented to enhance their capacity in handling arthritis cases. Through these initiatives, Meru County aims to alleviate the impact of arthritis and improve the well-being of affected individuals.



**Accidents and Trauma Centre:**

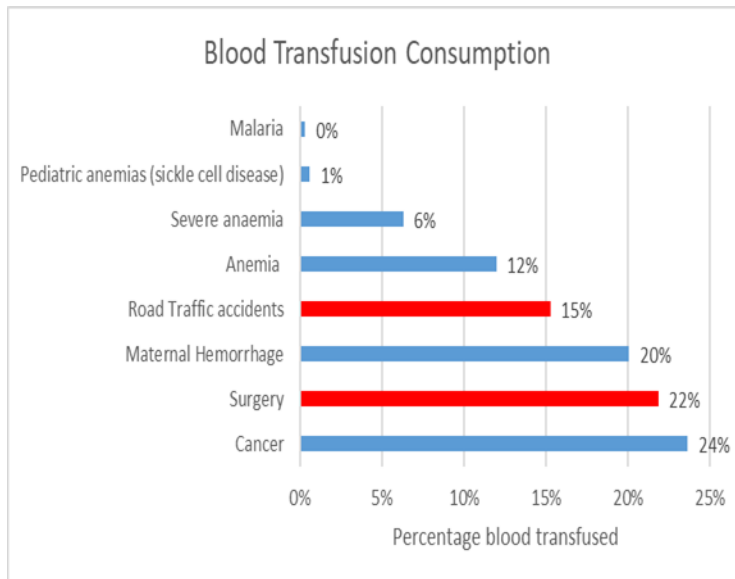
Meru County is grappling with a concerning rise in injuries and fatalities, predominantly caused by road traffic accidents. Shockingly, road traffic accidents were the fourth leading cause of mortality in 2022, contributing to approximately 3.6% of the overall death rate. To combat this alarming trend, Meru County has formulated a proactive plan to establish an Accident and Trauma Centre of excellence at Subuiga Dispensary. This location has been identified as a notorious black

spot responsible for claiming numerous lives due to its treacherous steep stretch.

The proposed center will be outfitted with cutting-edge medical equipment, including emergency rooms, intensive care units, and operating theaters, aiming to deliver swift and top-notch medical

attention. Additionally, the center will be closely connected to a well-organized emergency and ambulance coordination system, ensuring prompt and life-saving responses during critical situations.

Recognizing the need for comprehensive injury management, the county is also considering the construction of an orthopedic center of excellence. This facility will cater to the specialized treatment and care of injuries arising from accidents, thus providing a comprehensive solution to address the growing health challenges posed by road traffic accidents in the region.



### **Blood Transfusion**

Meru County, in partnership with the Kenya National Blood Transfusion Service (KNBTS), has successfully established a 1,000-unit capacity blood bank at the Meru Teaching and Referral Hospital. This initiative was undertaken to address the increasing demand for blood transfusions in both Meru County and the wider Upper Eastern region. However, due to the growing demand surpassing the current supply, there is a pressing need to expand the capacity of the blood

bank to efficiently collect, process, and manage a larger volume of blood.

To achieve this goal and ensure that blood and blood products are readily available to patients requiring transfusions in the Upper Eastern region, the county plans to construct a state of the art regional blood bank, well equipped to meet the rising demand. As part of the efforts to bolster blood mobilization, Meru County intends to acquire a utility vehicle that will facilitate the efficient transport of blood throughout the county. This move is crucial in optimizing the availability and accessibility of blood for patients in need, ultimately saving more lives in the region.

### **Regional Eye Center:**

Eye problems are prevalent in Meru County, with approximately 8,000 individuals suffering from blindness and over 270,000 others experiencing various eye issues. Among the common conditions are cataracts, glaucoma, trachoma, refractive errors, and diabetic retinopathy. To address this growing concern, the county government and its partners have undertaken several initiatives to enhance eye care services. However, the current



However, the current

infrastructure and equipment are insufficient to cope with the rising number of cases. As a solution, the county aims to transform the existing eye unit into a state-of-the-art ophthalmic center, capable of providing comprehensive eye care not only to the people of Meru but also to those from neighboring regions.

### **TB Isolation centers:**

Meru County holds the second-highest national ranking in terms of the burden of TB. The primary reason for this is the insufficient capacity and safe facilities to accommodate TB patients, particularly those facing challenges in adhering to their drug regimen, especially during the highly infectious stage. To address this pressing issue and combat the increasing burden of TB, the county has proposed the construction of separate ward blocks with a capacity of 50 beds each for male and female TB isolation. Apart from catering to TB patients, these isolation centers will also serve as facilities to handle other infectious diseases within the county.

### **Health Financing:**

Meru County's public health facilities are facing challenges in delivering essential services to patients due to insufficient resources and limited finances. To address this issue and promote sustainability without relying solely on government funding, the county intends to utilize NHIF rebates by assisting health facilities (specifically level 2s & 3s) in claiming these resources. This support will involve providing the necessary technological infrastructure, such as computers, scanners, and printers, to facilitate the claiming process. Additionally, the county plans to aid in the installation of Electronic Medical Record (EMR) systems across all health facilities to improve efficiency and enhance patient care.