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FACT SHEET

Supporting the justice sector's COVID-19 pandemic response

Kenya's justice sector is determined to innovate in delivering vital services safely amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is supporting the sector's response with new and fast-tracked activities through the European Union-funded Programme for Legal Empowerment and Aid Delivery in Kenya (PLEAD).

RESPONSE COORDINATION

The coordination role of the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ) is pivotal to realizing an effective, ongoing COVID-19 response by the justice sector. UNODC is scaling up its technical assistance for the NCAJ Secretariat, including strengthening response coordination mechanisms and supporting virtual planning and coordination meetings. Two Council members, the National Police Service (NPS) and Kenya Prisons Service, are benefitting through PLEAD for the first time, given their respective frontline roles in the national response.

ICT EQUIPMENT

UNODC is conducting a major assessment of the equipment needed for fully-effective field offices of the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Probation and Aftercare Service and Witness Protection Agency. Meanwhile, UNODC is fast-tracking the procurement of computers and other ICT equipment, primarily to enable wide participation in virtual court proceedings.

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

Many in the criminal justice sector continue to perform vital frontline roles, including judicial officers, prosecutors, probation officers, police and staff in places of custody. UNODC is procuring gloves, face masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as well as soap, hand sanitizers, disinfectant, thermometers and mattresses for distribution to Council members, including the NPS and Kenya Prisons Service.

TRAINING

The NPS has welcomed the opportunity to develop and roll-out online training for police officers in conjunction with NCAJ and UNODC. This includes refresher training for police on human rights approaches to crowd control and public order management, and bail and bond administration. Ongoing training and sensitization of justice officers is even more crucial due to crime trends identified by ODPF in March, such as fraud and domestic violence heightened during the curfew. PLEAD-supported training is continuing to support wider use of active case management and of diversion and plea bargaining as alternatives to imprisonment to help decongest the prisons, regarded as high-risk environments for virus outbreaks.

COMMUNICATIONS

UNODC is supporting NCAJ to coordinate a proactive and consistent approach by Council members to communicating the sector's pandemic response. Additionally, agencies are being assisted to produce public information to improve understanding of changed arrangements as justice service delivery continues.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL SUPPORT

The pandemic is taking a toll on the emotional and physical wellbeing of many frontline workers, and criminal justice officers are no exception. UNODC is arranging psycho-social support through online therapy and telephone counselling services.

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Programme for Legal Empowerment and Aid Delivery in Kenya – PLEAD