

Information access by Urban Social Workers in Kenya: A Case of Nakuru City

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Abstract The study was set to identify how Urban Social Workers in Kenya accessed information and how they used it. The objectives of the study were to determine accessibility to information by Urban Social Workers; find out the challenges they experienced in accessing information; and propose solutions to the same. The study found that Social Workers have been for long perceived as non formal information users, but today there is a growing inclination towards use of information from print and electronic media particularly among community based Social Workers, without necessarily impacting on their dependence on oral communication. The paper recommends that the government take greater responsibility in ensuring that Social Workers have access to relevant data and information through disseminating it to the County Information Documentation Centres. The researchers also propose collaboration with information providers drawn from both the electronic and print media.

Keywords Information Access by Urban Social Workers, Information Use by Urban Social Workers, Information Access by Social Workers, Information Needs of Social Workers, Information Use by Social Workers

1. Introduction

In the last two decades there has been a massive expansion in numbers and types of professional Social Workers in Kenya. These have been necessitated by the increase of socially excluded persons. Social exclusion shows a variety of traits mainly social and economic deprivation which undermines basic human dignity [1]. The term Social Work can be defined as the professional activity of helping individuals, groups, or communities to enhance their capacity for social functioning and creating societal conditions favourable to this goal. It is organized work intended to advance the social conditions of a person, family, group, or community, especially of the disadvantaged by providing counseling, guidance and facilitating financial and capital resources. Social work is the purposeful and ethical application of personal skills in interpersonal relationships directed towards enhancing the personal and social functioning of an individual, family, group or neighbourhood, which in most cases involves using evidence obtained from practice to help create a social environment conducive to the well being of all [6].

A Social Worker may therefore be defined as a person employed to provide social services, particularly, to the

disadvantaged.

In this context, the need for an informed pool of Social Workers has been equally on the increase. Hence the objectives of the study were to identify the information needs of the Urban Social Workers; ascertain the extent of access to relevant information by the Urban Social Workers involved; identify problems and challenges experienced by the Urban Social Workers in accessing information; and propose solutions to the problems identified in pursuit of information access by the Social Workers. This study covered the areas of Child Welfare, Community Welfare, Education Related Social Work, Elderly Welfare, Family Welfare, and Medical and Psychiatric Social Work.

The study was conducted in Nakuru Municipality. It is the fourth most populous city in Kenya after Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu and the fastest growing city in Kenya. It is located 160 kilometers northwest of Nairobi the capital city. It has peoples from diverse backgrounds who have migrated from the rural areas in search of employment and access to social facilities such hospitals, schools, entertainment, and others comforts offered by urban infrastructures. The population of Nakuru Municipality rose sharply in the 1990s and immediately after the 2008 post-election violence. By 2009, the population had risen to 307,990. Nakuru has a population density of 974/km² [3, 4]. This has compounded the challenges it faces as a growing urban center in a developing country such as inadequate infrastructure and unemployment with social challenges rising out of poverty, land clashes and the prevalent HIV/AIDS crisis. In turn, this

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has bred a host of challenges that include growth of informal settlements inevitably leading to lack of essential services such as water and sanitation, insecurity, environmental degradation, and deteriorating health standards. To support the creation of sustainable livelihoods, several community based organizations have cropped up [4].

The mandate of Social Workers is mainly to address social challenges that arise from the fore mentioned challenges by providing material assistance to the needy and dependent; assisting those with challenges that arise out of poverty, illness, conflict, family or social disorganization; and participating in the formulation of social welfare policies and preventive programs thus enhancing social functioning and preventing breakdown [2]. Vulnerable groups in Nakuru Municipality include street children, beggars, the physically challenged, the aged, the jobless and those skilled but lack capital for investment.

The County Development Office in collaboration with the Municipal Council coordinates social work within the municipality. However, most social work groups have developed as private and non-governmental organisations. The County Development Office runs the County Information Documentation Centre (CIDC) which was established for use by Social Workers for rural development in the early 1990's. CIDC is the only available public information resource that can be utilized by the Urban Social Workers in Nakuru Municipality.

Information behavior is comprised of information access, seeking and use while information seeking has been used to mean information searching and use.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Social Workers

Vickery and Vickery (2004) are of the view that Social work is characterized by brevity and variety and that it draws heavily on information of local interest. They further observe that the factors favouring the use of oral, personal, informal sources of information among practitioners is influenced by: complexity of information sought relative to the existing knowledge of the seeker; unfamiliarity of information sought; time pressure; lack of accessible and usable written sources; lack of experience in using such sources and ready accessibility of personal contacts. Social Workers transmit and acquire information all the time informally and without an intermediary.

They will most probably seek information from definite trusted sources at the initial stages of dealing with an issue which then builds on their knowledge. This information will then be re-used over and over again in similar situations. They have a preference for interpersonal sources that are known as these are perceived to be more credible [13].

In summary, sources of information that can be used by Social Workers are many and varied. These include data filled by clients, interviews with clients, observation of

non-verbal behaviour, information provided by sources related to the client, tests or assessment and personal experiences of the practitioners based on direct interaction with clients [15]. Channels of information used include the web which has the advantage of least effort and is seamless with information seeking [10].

2.2. General Overview of Information Seeking Behaviour of Social Workers

Information seeking as a process involves searching for and retrieving information and is always a result of an information need. It refers to those activities a person may engage in through the process of identifying their own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information [7, 8].

In a study done in Ireland to find out the information needs of Social Workers, Flanagan (2013) described their behavior as pragmatic, fast paced and truncated, relying on familiar accessible sources. Some Social Workers were shown to engage in considerable information searches especially those dealing in casework. This was for the need for information to inform a case. Case related information searches are characterized by a high level of specific, known item searches targeted at familiar sources, successfully resolved and applied to practice. Social Workers in children and family welfare read less formal literature, conducted less research, encountered more information barriers and accessed fewer information exchange events. Social Workers in counseling showed information need emphasis on training, training notes and conducting research. Membership to a professional association also influenced their information seeking behavior. Social Workers in the medical field accessed more local level policy and procedures and education related resource opportunities.

Principal heads were more likely to research, read and attend information sharing sessions. Social Workers in the field relied more on the internet, colleagues and supervisors. In general, emails, the internet, and colleagues were identified as the main channels of information by Social Workers. A cross cutting information behavior among Social Workers was sharing of both solicited and unsolicited information. However, there were differences in the degree and frequency of sharing information since some departments had more formalized and active systems for information sharing than others. Social Workers information searching was highly effective with much sought information successfully acquired and applied directly to practice. The Ireland study noted the low usage of dedicated websites and identified the need to increase awareness of accessible, useful and quality electronic resources to these workers as paramount.

2.3. Information Seeking Behaviour of Social Workers in East Africa

Information needs have similar triggers world over as they are basically determined by work related issues. A study

done in Uganda showed that health workers actively sought for information from a variety of sources and then passed the same information to other health workers who in turn passed it to their clients via seminars and documents. These in turn passed the information to others and on and on through domino effect to as many as may find the information useful. For the health workers, face to face interaction emerged as a preferred source of information though they reported that print information was their most important source. Education levels were found to influence their ability and effort put in seeking information in that the more educated a health worker was, the more they sought information [16]. In short, information seeking was made to enhance quality of decisions made in policy making, allocation of resources and in monitoring the quality of health services provided.

In another research done by Nalumaga [17] on the information use and access by Ugandan legislators, the tendency to use personal assistants in acquiring information was found to be rampant, information was also accessed through emails and the Internet. A few legislators also subscribed to literature of their interest which was mainly on political activities and in relation to parliamentary committees they served in. Government and international information of diverse types was also found to be relevant. The legislators are reported to have been dissatisfied with the library stock terming it inadequate, inadequate research staff and inadequate information communication technology (ICT) infrastructure in their library. The same research found out that huge amounts of information was received from the media thereby leading to information overload hence a need to for monitoring the information received. Nalumaga's [17] final observation was that there was need to improve the structures of information at various levels of access in order to improve on decision making.

3. Statement of the Problem

Information systems in Kenya and world over have been designed for various categories of users. These systems may be enhanced or completely redesigned as new information access methods evolve. Users cannot be effectively served unless the information systems are designed with their needs in mind. Well conceptualized information systems demand detailed research of the communication process of intended users [5]. Hence the need for an overall assessment of Urban Social Workers information needs.

Information has been used in different ways by this category of professionals. Not many user studies have been conducted in Kenya for use by social work groups in general. The County Information Documentation Centre (CIDC) which is most strategically placed at the district headquarters and run by the County Development Office is hardly used by the urban Social Workers. This is because the documents stocked in the resource centre are too refined and lacking in depth required by the Social Workers whose main interests involve client details.

It was the aim of this study to understand what information is used by Social Workers with the intent of ensuring that the same information is made accessible for their use. Information access should also be enhanced to minimize on the Social Workers working with limited or no information.

4. Methodology

The study was conducted as a Case-Study of Nakuru Municipality. This allows for the use of qualitative data collection that is reputed to be most appropriate in studies seeking to unveil information seeking behavior of individual professional groups. This is because the main concern is with uncovering the facts of everyday life of the people under study in order to create a better understanding of the needs that exist which press the individual towards information seeking. In understanding of those needs, the meaning of information in everyday life of the people is also derived; hence designing more effective information systems is made possible [18].

4.1. Sampling Procedure

The physical addresses of the Social Workers were collected from the County Development Office where the social working groups were registered. The target population comprised of 72 Social Workers from 12 organizations within the Municipality. These were stratified on the basis of work involved such as Child Welfare, Community Welfare, Education, Elderly Welfare, Family Welfare and Medical and Psychiatric welfare. There were 36 respondents identified for interviewing through stratified random sampling. This is a method recommended for generalizations of findings within individual strata [19]. Most of the organizations were involved in more than one type of social work as is shown in the Table 1. The Social Workers sampled were not strictly limited to handling of one category of social work but were familiar with the range of services provided by their respective organizations.

Table 1. Number of Organizations and Respondents Involved in Each Category

| Type of Social Work | No of organizations | No of Respondents |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Child welfare | 5 | 12 |
| Community service | 9 | 27 |
| Education welfare | 2 | 6 |
| Elderly welfare | 1 | 1 |
| Family welfare | 4 | 12 |
| Medical and Psychiatric welfare | 3 | 9 |

4.2. Research Method

Face-to-face interviews were conducted and answers to questions on employment tasks, duties, daily activities, their

sources and modes of seeking information solicited. Well planned interviews and carefully worded questions usually produce the most information as well as insightful observations and opinions from respondents as well as allow for probing [20]. Interviews were opted for as these elicit significantly more complete answers to questions than a printed survey instrument and have a high response rate. The interview schedules had semi-structured, structured and open-ended questions.

4.3. Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using qualitative techniques. To achieve the study objectives, the researchers opted for methods prescribed by Tesch (1990) and as informed by the Grounded Theory [22] for qualitative analysis in types of research where the interest is in the 'discovery of regularities' as in the identification and categorization of elements and the identification of their patterns. The following order was maintained in the data collection and analysis:

- Data collection and analysis were conducted side by side by way of sorting along the research questions with each informing and focusing on the other throughout the research process. This was as informed by the Grounded Theory that begins analysis early to help focus on further data collection which in turn is used to refine emerging analysis [22].
- The results of the ultimate analysis provided the identification of the factors that influenced accessibility of information by Social Workers through the mechanisms of the Grounded Theory. This enabled data collected to be interpreted through emerging identified patterns [22].

Data collection was guided by the following research questions:

1. What needs press the Social Workers to seek information?
2. From which sources do they seek information?
3. How do they ultimately use the information?

5. Results

5.1. Services Offered by Social Workers

An understanding of services offered by the Social Workers was important as it informed on the possible information access channels that they use. All six categories of Social Workers had distinct services that they offered.

5.1.1. Child Welfare

These were involved in: rescuing deserted children who included orphans and/or abandoned babies; coordinating and identifying potential adoptive parents; taking care of HIV/AIDS orphans; rehabilitating street children; providing counseling services to children in Children Homes; intervening in reported cases of child abuse; coordinating

visits to children homes; coordinating programs on child welfare by organized charity organizations; coordinating and soliciting for donations towards children welfare and Children Homes.

5.1.2. Community Welfare

These were involved in: training and counseling of organized groups of low income earners on running small businesses / entrepreneurship; assessing small businesses with a view to providing credit facilities; providing communities with health care education; educating communities on food security measures and control such as in kitchen gardening; in-house training of group representatives on various aspects of life; developing water resources; protecting the environment through tree planting; micro-financing of small business undertakings; counseling on community initiated projects; interacting with the society with the aim of educating and encouraging harmonious living; mobilizing the community in social needs such as blood donation, food distribution, relief services, cleaning of estates; dealing with emerging issues in the community such as HIV/AIDS, poverty, drought intervention and settling/rehabilitation of clash victims; and promoting gender sensitivity within the community by ensuring that only projects having a minimum of 50% female membership received support from the organizations.

5.1.3. Education Related Services

Social Workers in Education related services were involved in: supporting programs for children from poor families or orphaned in primary and secondary schools and continuing college students; evaluating needy cases for school fees, bursaries and other miscellaneous educational expenses; training teachers for nursery and elementary education; offering teaching and learning materials to identified primary schools; offering first aid kits to schools; offering credit facilities to Parents-Teachers Associations; and networking with Children's Homes, County Administration and other related organizations.

5.1.4. Social Workers for the Elderly

These were involved in: identifying neglected old persons for care through screening and interviews; coordinating funds with donors; organizing annual functions for the elderly people of over 60 years of age such as luncheons and dinners from Christmas Tree Funds.

5.1.5. Family Welfare Services

Social Workers in these services were involved in: providing services to the extremely poor people with proven inability to fend for themselves; offering counseling services to families under various kinds of stresses such as domestic violence, unemployment and drug abuse.

5.1.6. Medical and Psychiatric Services

Social Workers targeted people affected by diverse kinds

of traumas. They offered services such as: guidance and counseling to those in various kinds of pains including mental rehabilitation of clash victims; counseling on the prevention and management of transmittable diseases; training of organized groups of volunteers involved in social work such as priests and teachers; lectures to schools, churches and organized groups on mental health including arising problems such as prevention of drug abuse, adolescent management, prevention and management of psychological violence; training of traditional birth attendants; training on general preventive health; counseling on the management of the terminally ill such as epileptics, and tuberculosis patients; counseling on referred cases from the doctors and dealing with cases of the mentally ill.

5.2. Information Needs of Urban Social Workers

The Social Workers' basic need, as determined by their seeking behaviour, was baseline information. This included data on local communities, demographic trends, and disease vulnerability. This meant that most of the Social Workers did their own baseline surveys before they ventured into offering services. In general, Social Workers also required information on the political climate of an area in order to ensure the goodwill of the people and to avoid suspicion on the purposes of their programs/ projects. Information on fluid issues, such as land and religious inclinations, and security measures were crucial because the workers were vulnerable to attacks, violence and non-acceptance. Information sought for by specific categories of Social Workers was identified as follows:

Child Welfare Social Workers sought information on questions such as the leading causes of children to the streets. Information on the backgrounds of the street children was considered helpful in identifying the genuine cases from created situations. Information likely to be helpful to the welfare of street children was also considered relevant. These included information on potential donors and on potential adoptive parents. Other areas of relevance were on child rights and child abuse. These type of information was sought by 18% of Social Workers.

Community Welfare Social Workers comprised of Social Workers from micro-financing organizations and those committed to the general welfare of the community. Those involved in micro-financing required information on the operations of their competitors so that they could market their services more effectively. This involved offering better credit facilities and being available for business advisory services. Information on the business proposals of their potential clients gave them the requisite material for service delivery. Community welfare Social Workers involved in building communal projects required information on issues affecting the community they dealt with or were to deal with. These included the social and economic activities the people were involved in. All community workers needed an understanding of the community they are to work with before offering their services. Of importance to them were the different cultures of the people they dealt with, how

people from differing communities related with each other and the social needs of the people. They were also interested in efforts that may have been used in the past to tackle the issues intended to address. Other information areas of interest to them included possible alternative ways of handling recurrent issues such as drug abuse among the youth, root causes of the problems they hoped to eradicate, solve or minimize, and knowledge on the kind of impact they expected to achieve among such people. Organizations concerned with community welfare attached a lot of value on information and were willing to invest in terms of getting the right equipment/forums for effective information acquisition and communication by sponsoring their Social Workers to seminars and through purchase of information sources deemed necessary such as newspapers and relevant government publications. These information was sought by the highest numbers of Social Workers at 40%.

Those involved in education were preoccupied with seeking to serve the community in areas disadvantaged in education through identifying children in need of bursary support. This formed 9% of Social Workers. They were also involved in identifying schools that required educational support in terms of facilities, teaching and learning equipment. Information on potential sponsors to needy schools and/or needy students was also relevant to this category of Social Workers who also acted as intermediaries between sponsors and the beneficiaries.

Social Workers involved in the welfare of the elderly sought information on the elderly who were unwanted by their relatives and the reasons they were unwanted. The Social Workers worked towards rehabilitating and enabling the victims to be reunited with their relatives where possible. The Social Workers also worked towards coordinating donations of food, clothing and medicine to the elderly under their custody. Information required by these category was 2% of Social Workers interviewed.

Social Workers involved with Family Welfare used information on families that were in need of supportive intervention in cases of extreme inability to cater for themselves because of various reasons. Some were incapable of providing to their families because of illness and /or lack of resources, income generation or where their sources of livelihood had been terminated. They were also involved in determining the families and communities in need of external assistance as in the case of communal disasters such as fires or disease breakouts particularly in slum areas. These information needs comprised of 18% of all Social Workers interviewed.

Medical and psychiatric Social Workers needed information to enable them give services to affected people and their families. This was mainly in the areas of terminal illnesses. They offered counseling on diseases management and on issues that arose on a daily basis with different clients. They also assessed individual cases and offered hospital fee waivers where patients were unable to meet their own medical costs. The Social Workers also visited community utilities/centers such as schools and churches to educate the

people on prevalent diseases and on basic precautions to observe in maintaining a healthy living. These comprised 13% of Social Workers who had the above information needs.

When asked what their information needs were, it was realized that information was their main driving ingredient as they used it in every level. They used information in monitoring and evaluation of their clients, used information in delivering their services and in determining the nature of services to offer.

5.3. Sources of Information Used

The study revealed that Social Workers required adequate formal and informal information to perform their work. Their performance was influenced by access to information. It was found that this information was self-generated and self-solicited. They generated information and used the same information in their work. Their work also involved a lot of oral communication. The findings of the study revealed that there was substantial oral information exchange in the areas of casework, interviews and counselling. Streatfield and Wilson (1982) and Sabelli (2012) observed that Social Workers have an overwhelming preference for oral communication compared to the print and electronic media. Social Workers involved with project management relied heavily on the Internet for information. 25% of the respondents found the Internet very useful.

The Social Workers interviewed were diverse and functioned with differing levels of information resource environments. 33% had access to well-organized information resources including the Internet while 22% operated with inadequate information resources. Differences in the use of information were glaring among various information environments despite the fact that they were involved in the same category of social work. These were influenced by the different information environments existing in the organizations sampled.

Social work groups with *Internet Facilities* cited well-equipped information facilities including access to the Internet and some small book/periodical collections. This formed 33.35 of the respondents. At least 8.3% respondents from this group of Social Workers reported to be frequent users of some resource center.

Social work groups that had *Book Facilities* required and generated moderate supplies of information and comprised 44.4% of respondents. These had computers, a few books, periodical and audio-visual collections.

Social work groups with *No Facilities* hardly had any information resources and comprised 22.2% of respondents. These were mainly Social Workers in the Elderly and the Family Welfare with information sources comprising of colleagues and clients. Print information was limited to local daily newspapers. Other sources of information used by Social Workers in Nakuru Municipality included:

Colleagues: Colleagues were found resourceful and were the easiest way of finding a solution to a problem. This approach was used in seeking ways of handling different

issues arising. Colleagues were the most easily accessible for all categories of Social Workers. These were accessed by 94.4% of the Social Workers.

Clients: Clients supplied much of the information that determined the way services were offered to them. This took the form of interviews and narrations. Social Workers in family welfare and medical and psychiatric services were heavily dependent on this type of information provision.

Personal Investigation: Personal investigations and observations were undertaken by the Social Workers in the course of their work. The two approaches were used by Social Workers from the child welfare services, education services, medical and psychiatric services, the elderly services and family services. Investigations were carried out into the causes of the problems at hand and genuineness of cases claiming for support. The two were used to supplement information received from other sources such as the clients themselves.

Related Organisations / Departments: Related organisations within the Municipality and elsewhere were able to provide the needed information. Social Workers rarely handled any work independently or on their own as individual departments or organisations. Different organisations/departments constituted important sources of information. The proper and free flow of information in such cases was crucial. This was particularly visibly so in child welfare services.

Meetings: The study observed that departmental/organisational meetings were important in updating Social Workers with their workings, direction, and expectations. These were held on regular basis.

Reports: Reports compiled previously provided guidelines as well as insight into the direction current work should take. Different organisations compiled their reports in different formats and frequencies depending on the nature of their work. Reports on every case handled were made to ensure an element of continuity. Frequent use of these reports was done as most cases were recurrent.

Official Letters: These were considered as sources of information mainly by Social Workers in community welfare services.

Workshops and Seminars: These were used in the dissemination of knowledge and skills in the profession. New issues arising in the profession were discussed in these workshops.

Periodicals: These included all local dailies in English and Kiswahili languages. These were considered important in highlighting current affairs, financial and product market trends, advertisements, regional affairs and information on occurrences of interest. All organisations subscribed to at least one daily newspaper.

Books: Books on physical and mental health care and project management were found relevant. These were organised independently by individual organisations.

Newsletters and Pamphlets: These were obtained from relevant organisations and had dual purposes of distribution to clients as well as for ease of their own operations as Social

Workers.

The Internet: The Internet was heavily relied on by Social Workers involved in project writing and in community services in relevant issues within their areas of operations.

The study concurred with much of the literature reviewed. It revealed that a majority (70%) of Social Workers were not ardent information seekers and that they do not; in general, use libraries (Slater 1989). The few collections in a few organizations were found to stock very little literature and sometimes there was no reading literature except newspapers.

However, it was also observed that there was a growing tendency towards the use of published information. The 30% of Social Workers who were regular and other occasional readers (25%) would welcome better information services based on published information. This is necessary to strengthen their professional expertise, broaden their knowledge and help with specific client problems.

The study observed that in nine of the twelve (75%) working groups that were involved in some form of community welfare; there were small library collections. The Social Workers in this category were ardent information seekers. These organizations attached a lot of value to information and were willing to invest in its acquisition and dissemination. They made investments in getting the right equipment and in forums for effective information acquisition and communication through the purchase of information sources deemed necessary such as periodicals and relevant government publications. To these, the availability of usable, relevant and timely information would enhance effectiveness in their workings and business at hand.

5.4. Channels of Information Used

Information technology as used by Social Workers in communication may be defined as electronic means by which information is handled. Aspects of information communication technology used were the computers, Internet, telecommunications, and e-mail services. However, only 28% of the respondents were found to be active users of the Internet. A further 11% were found to use computers in information and documentation management while 100% of the respondents had telephone facilities. But the most effective mode of communication remains to be personal visits. Telephones were used most frequently by Social Workers in child and community welfare services. Sabelli (2012) observed that written communication is commonly used amongst Social Workers expressed through billboards, posters and brochures. According to her findings, internet usage was non-existent.

6. Conclusions

Recommendations towards ensuring greater access to information by Social Workers have been made as follows:

Information required was simple and did not require complex information systems. Local publications were

considered most relevant as they related directly to the needs of the local communities. This was similar to Vickery and Vickery's (2004) observations that the work of Social Workers is characterized by fragmentation, brevity and variety and it draws heavily on information of local interest. They have a tendency to want access and information quickly and easily [13]. Their routine formal information sources were periodicals and magazines. Information acquired needed to be reliable, consistent and easily assimilated. Information should, therefore, be drawn from reliable sources that will allow the user to have confidence to act on its supply. It should also have the right level of details to suffice the need by the user.

Social Workers generated information at work or obtained it from government publications or local sources such as newspapers and the electronic media. Alongside the traditional methods of information management, there were areas where computers could be used such as in the creation of files. This would inevitably result in making information retrieval easier. The creation of relevant files and indexes in the areas of interest would also enhance access to information. These were already in use in 28% of organizations.

Data on the local communities was found to be insufficient and this required that every social work group conduct its own base-line surveys. To ensure that there is confidence, uniformity, reliability and consistency in the data collected, it is the recommendation of this study that raw data generated by the government during census be ploughed back to the County Information Documentation Centres. Social Working groups can also be encouraged to share data that they have collected with their colleagues. These would also ensure that excessive duplication in data collection is avoided and thereby plough back gains made in savings on resources that would otherwise have been used.

The study revealed the Social Workers basically generated and used local data. So what is most important for their use is the availability and access to local data.

Social Workers information needs were largely on local communities which they dealt with. It was important to have as much data on the people they work for, which included data on the peoples' culture, religion, beliefs, traditions, way of life, education, economic levels, demographic trends, disease vulnerability and political inclinations. It was also established that Social Workers generated information they used and that oral communication was the most popular mode of communication for all categories of social workers. Information was sought from government publications and local media. Huuskonen (2008) observed that the daily life of the social worker is intertwined with client data hence an effective information system for Social Workers may also need to take into account the people served.

Respondents hardly used any of the information systems within the municipality since the systems were too general in coverage to meet specific needs of Social Workers. Social Workers certainly require to be innovative in their way of accessing and retaining information with ease by use of

technology. They need to cultivate sufficient trust to work in collaboration with each other and avoid duplication and resource wastage in information searching. Information systems librarians on the other hand also need to remain relevant by working in collaboration with other information providers in order to consolidate on the best practices in information management for access by Social Workers.

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