



HORN OF AFRICA
RESILIENCE NETWORK



Resilient Voices from the Horn of Africa



Resilience Learning Activity | RLA

Acknowledgement: The Development and publication of this booklet has been made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); through the Resilience Learning Activity (RLA). RLA appreciates the efforts by all the USAID Partners across the Horn of Africa to share their best practices and promote cross-country learning through this publication.

About RLA: The Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) is a five-year program funded by USAID Kenya and East Africa, USAID Somalia, and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. RLA undertakes analyses and builds the capability of local, regional, and national institutions to better support resilience learning through four approaches including (1) analytics for capturing and analyzing evidence, (2) learning for adaptive management, (3) knowledge management and communication and (4) systems and networks for continuous improvement. The program supports the learning capabilities of organizations across all sectors and ensures that people and institutions can manage conflict, mitigate the impact of natural disasters, and foster economic growth more creatively and effectively. At the country level, RLA, through the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and South Eastern Kenya (SEK) coordination mechanisms, supports learning among local actors in Northeastern Counties (Samburu, Garissa, Marsabit, Wajir, Turkana, and Isiolo) and Southeastern (Kitui, Makueni, and Taita Taveta). At the regional level, RLA supports Horn of Africa countries (Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo) to strengthen cross-border collaboration and improve evidence-based learning for resilience programming.

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ABOUT THE HORN OF AFRICA RESILIENCE NETWORK (HoRN)

Background

The Horn of Africa Resilience Network (HoRN), formerly known as the Horn of Africa Joint Planning Cell, was established by USAID in late 2011. It focuses on building resilience in areas of recurrent crisis in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) across the Horn of Africa countries, based on the resilience focus countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The objective of the HoRN is to strengthen regional and crossborder collaboration and improve evidencebased learning.

Future Vision of the HoRN

- Established strong national resilience networks in each bilateral missions and countries bring together all the main actors in resilience programming for collective impact, while also being connected to the HoRN.
- National networks in each country implement sequencing, layering, and integration, and Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation approaches to promote the Journey to Self-Reliance.
- Research in resilience is disseminated and shared through the HoRN.
- Continued backbone support is provided for knowledge sharing, peer-to-peer learning in-country and across the region, and to support the adoption of Collaboration Learning and Adaptation (CLA) practices.
- Developed network of facilitators in each geographic region support HoRN initiatives and resilience learning to provide facilitation and technical assistance.



OUR REACH





Tujenge amani juu ya
maendeleo Yetu



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



GREEN HILLS APPROACH TO SECURE SOIL



Photo : FSP, 2023, Chibalonza in her cassava field

For years, the steep slopes of South Kivu have been prone to erosion, making much of the hilly landscape difficult to cultivate and worsening the situation of the already poor populations who must farm to survive. In addition to this geographical barrier, there are also the land access issues for those with little means.

Chibalonza Ngwabaluka, is a 63-year-old widow farmer living in Tchibanja village in Kalehe territory. Her only source of income is agriculture, and she has to deal with the farming of sloping land despite the deterioration of the soil. And yet, to find a piece of land to cultivate, she had to pay money and commit to working for the hill owner two days a month.

“For a field of 50m by 25m, I paid 50 dollars but I had poor yields”, she

recalls.

To address this, Mercy Corps’ FSP program has developed the Green Hills approach, which stabilizes soil, improves fertility, and facilitates access to land for vulnerable farmers in Kalehe and Kabare territories.

In 2020, Chibalonza joined Mercy Corps USAID/BHA-funded program together with the more than 2,100 farmers grouped on the 18 hills that FSP is supporting.

“The trainings on the hill approach and the resilient agriculture techniques, allowed me to set up a field with devices that are an opportunity for me for the future of my farming activities” says Chibalonza.

FSP program facilitated the connection between the land

concessionaires and the tenant farmers, allowing access to land for the most vulnerable families who would not otherwise have had access to it, while improving their production capacities. As Chibalonza recalls, “last season, on a field of 25m x 50m I harvested 90kgs of beans and 400kgs of cassava, which I could not do in the past”.

This harvest allowed Chibalonza to buy a plot of land in her village and build a tin house where she lives with her children, in addition to being able to better nourish herself.

“My children’s health has improved and the current productions encourage me to work for the well-being of my household”, concludes Chibalonza.



FRUIT TREES ARE BRINGING BUHORO KABARHUZA OUT OF THE ABYSS



Photo: Mercy Corps, 2021, Buhoro in her garden

Buhoro Kabarhuza, 30 years old, an inhabitant of the village Muhongoza, 3 km from Kalehe center, maintains her fruit trees planted next to her house.

From now on, thanks to the sale of the fruit, she can slowly support her family of five children. “My children were not as healthy as they are today, but the regular consumption of fruits has considerably improved their health. Currently, my fruit trees are a safe way for me to earn money to meet my needs,” she exclaims bravely to her husband.

Since the end of 2018, FSP has disseminated seedlings and fruit seeds to leading mothers and neighborhood mothers.

Being a neighborhood woman supported by a Care Group Mother Leader, Mrs. BUHORO has benefited from orange, plum, papaya, mandarin, passionflower, moringa

seedlings, and training on perma-garden development techniques, planting fruit trees and agroforestry. “This encouraged me to follow my seedlings well,” says Mrs. Buhoro K.

Courageous and ambitious, Mrs. Buhoro is making a difference and putting the techniques she learned into practice. Her first harvest is of papaya, plum, and passionflower. “For the first time, I earned 30000 FC (or \$15) and the second time 40000FC (\$20), which allowed me to pay the school fees for my child and to save in the VSLA,” she says.

Since 2019, Mrs. Buhoro maintains a regular rhythm of seasonal production of fruits with the help of her husband. “Beyond the good health recovered by my children, our income increases little by little with the sale of fruits.” her husband testifies.

Concerned about the well-being of their community, Mrs. Buhoro and her husband have managed to develop other gardens and set up their sprouter to compensate for the lack of seedlings in their village. “Some of the neighborhood women who had given up on this good practice decided to start again when they saw my production and my sprouter,” she says.

She also organizes demonstration sessions of the agricultural practices she learned and implemented for other mothers in her village. “Often, they ask me for advice on how to ensure good seedling maintenance to obtain a good production,” explains Mrs. Buhoro.

The production of fruit is not enough to meet the needs of her village, so her goal is to increase her production sufficiently, flood the Kanjuki market with fruit, and increase awareness of the importance of consuming fruit because of its nutritional value.

FSP has distributed 217,720 seedlings to the Mother Leaders and Neighborhood Women. Buhoro KABARHUZA is one of 10,669 participants who received fruit trees and agroforestry trees by FSP-Enyanya from the year 2018 in Kalehe territory. The objective is to reduce the malnutrition rate and have access to adequate food diversification and bring vitamins, mineral salts within households, and restoration of soil fertility, fight against erosion and improve environmental conditions.



WOMAN LEADER SUSTAINS WATER SERVICE PROVISION IN CILUNDU

Married and mother of four children, Mukundi Hélène lives in Buana Mayi (Cijiba, Cilundu HZ), a village of 448 inhabitants. This literate woman is well respected in her community. In 2018, she was elected president of the water management committee (WMC) of her village and is now leading a group of 7 persons (including 2 female) in charge of protecting the improved spring source catchment constructed by the USAID-funded Budikadidi project. Helene's leadership has produced satisfactory results, for the greater benefit of the entire community.

Hélène and her collaborators succeeded in educating villagers on how to protect the ecosystem and the catchment areas. No one farms around the water point, nor defecates or has animals wandering around the catchment. Children respect the rule of not playing on top of the construction chambers. The fences built by Helene's team efficiently protect the water point from small animals roaming around. The Buana Mayi water point never failed to provide sufficient water for all villagers, thanks to the Salongo (clean day) work, organized by the WMC weekly.

In April 2022, some parts of the cemented canal and wall started to deteriorate, eroded by torrential rains and too much sun heat. Helene and the WMC decided to fix it before it deteriorates further. They sent someone to Mbuji Mayi, 127 km from Buana Mayi, to purchase 1 cement bag (35,000 CDF or \$17.5) and some



Helene Mukundi, WMC president, explaining her role to visitors in June 2022. / T. Tshitaya

iron wires (70,000 CDF, \$35). They also paid the labor of the village mason up to 10,000 Fc (\$5). After all these expenses and with 24,000 CDF (\$12) remaining in their account, the WMC could not definitively correct the technical failure of the water source. An additional 90,000 CDF (\$45) had to be mobilized. Never short of ideas, Helene once again showed dynamism. She went to propose to the village chief a community fundraising strategy, based on a minimum contribution of 500 CDF (\$0.25) per household. The village chief and the Committee of wise men (a kind of board of directors) approved and promoted the initiative to the villagers. In one month, the village collected

105,000Fc (\$52.5); enabling the WMC to rehabilitate the water point.

Successful initiatives like this positively influence the perception of the role of women within the community, as much as they reinforce Helene's leadership and her motivation to continue giving the best of herself leading the WMC. She is confident when she said "I can read a little, I can write a little, but I can lead meetings. The three women in my team do not know how to write, even signing the meeting minute is difficult for them. But we all believe that the role of women in protecting the water source is so important, so we remain in this committee

as needed. I am so happy because no woman played such a role in our village development before. We have the chance to start that. Most importantly, we can save lives by providing safe water to the village."

Hélène is one of the 30% of women in leadership positions in the 474 rural villages targeted by the Budikadidi project. In the region, men increasingly support women's leadership position. During field surveys, some claim that women are effective in leadership positions. Women are seen as patient, accommodating and willing to make efforts to inform everyone in the group; which is a main ingredient to prevent conflicts.



PILOTING A HILL APPROACH FOR RESILIENT AGRICULTURE IN SOUTH KIVU

Why a Hill Approach?

Smallholder farmers in South Kivu experience high levels of food insecurity and poverty, with low agricultural productivity and few off-farm income opportunities. Much of the farmland on the hills that are nestled between Lake Kivu and Kahuzi Biega National Park suffers from soil erosion and low soil fertility, resulting in low crop yields. Many of these hills are owned by absentee landlords who rent out plots to smallholder farmers. The lack of tenure security discourages farmers from investing in soil and water conservation measures that could reduce erosion and increase agricultural productivity. By working jointly with landowners, tenant farmers and local authorities, the USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)-funded, Mercy Corps-led Food Security Project (FSP) supported the rehabilitation and improvement of farmland on 18 hills on a pilot basis between 2017 and 2022.

The Hill Approach has improved the livelihoods of tenure farmers on the hill:



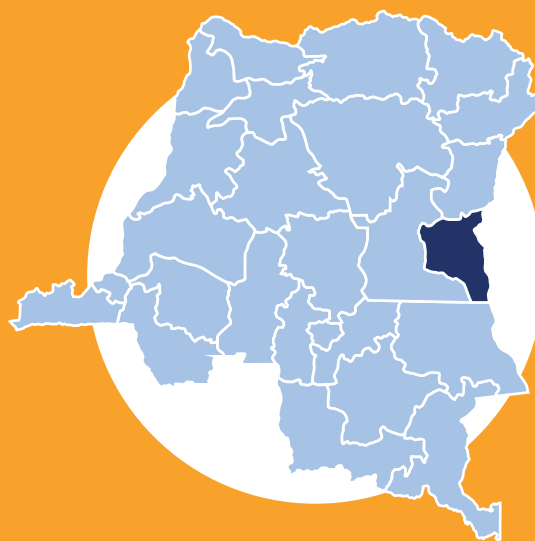
Crop production and crop sales have increased. Farmers increased their crop yields by adopting improved agricultural practices, in particular the use of organic soil amendments and improved seed. They also increased

their overall production by cultivating more land, which became available because of land reclamation. Some farmers were able to sell surplus production and thus increase their household income. The improved land quality also enabled farmers to diversify their crop production, where before only cassava could be grown.



Tenure security has improved. More than 2,500 farmers on the 18 pilot hills have obtained written tenure contracts that specify the location and size of the plot they

ABOUT THE HILL APPROACH IN FSP



Goal: Proof of concept of an integrated “Hill Approach”

Objectives: Increased agricultural production, increased land quality, and increased duration of tenure contracts for smallholder farmers

Timeframe: October 2018 – September 2023

Donor: USAID

Location: 18 hills in the Health Zones of Miti Murhesa and Katana (Kabare territory) and Kalehe (Kalehe territory) of South Kivu, DRC

Partners:

- Mercy Corps (lead)
- World Vision
- Harvest Plus
- Université Evangélique de l’Afrique (UEA)
- Action pour la Paix et la Concorde (APC)
- Réseau Inter-Organisationnel (RIO)



are renting, the rent and its mode of payment, and any restrictions to usage (such as growing coffee or other perennial crops). In many cases, the contracts are for two or more years, giving farmers the assurance that they will benefit from any investments (soil conservation, fertilization) made to the plot.



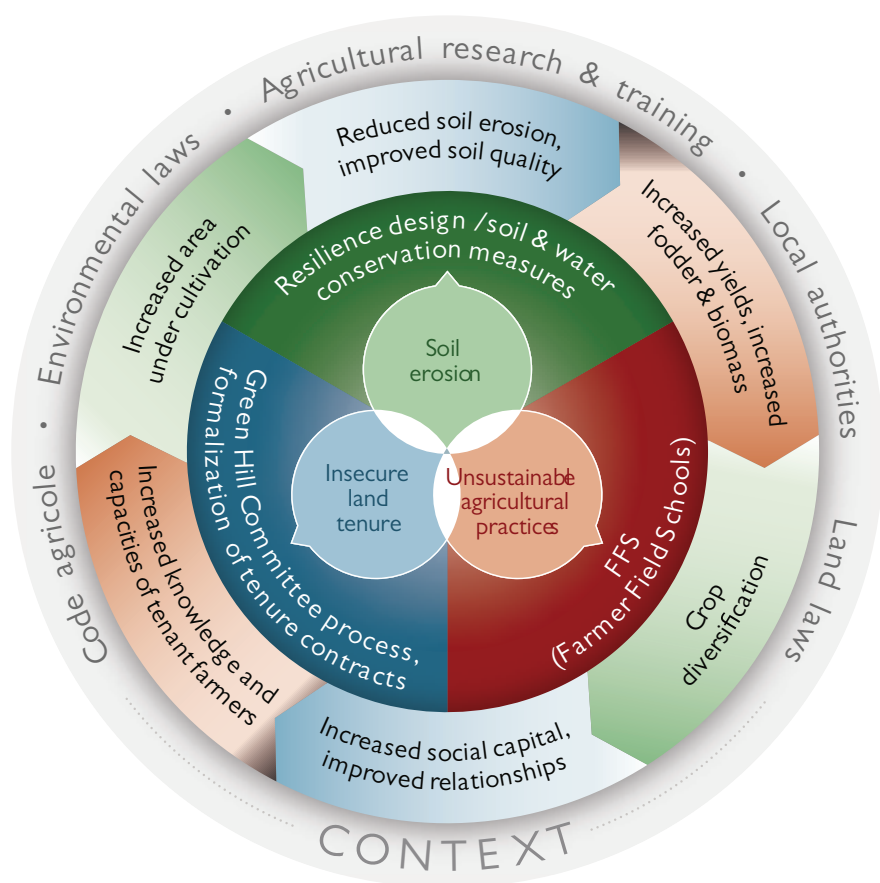
Soil erosion has reduced significantly on the hills. The soil and water conservation

measures introduced by FSP have had the desired effect to stabilize the hillsides and increase soil depth. As a result, there are now few, if any, crop losses due to soil erosion. Tenure farmers are now willing to invest in organic soil amendments, compost, manure and improved seed and planting material. The area of cultivation has increased by reclaiming degraded land. There is now more farmland on the hills for both existing or new tenants, in a context where the demand for farmland from local communities and internally displaced people is high.

The Hill Approach tackled the three inter-related challenges of soil erosion, unsustainable agricultural practices, and insecure land tenure in an integrated manner, through mutually reinforcing interventions:

Resilience Design (RD) aims to strengthen the resilience of smallholder farmers and their farming systems to environmental and economic shocks and stresses through improved farm design. It focuses on improving soil health and water management, using an integrated design process that is site- and context-specific. It seeks regenerative ways to invest in farming, relying largely on local resources. The Hill Approach used RD elements and principles such as starting at the top of the hills to reforest degraded hilltops; adding large-scale and small-scale water harvesting structures (such as check dams, berms, and infiltration pits) to slow, spread and sink water into the soil; planting multi-purpose trees; and improving soil quality through mulching and using local amendments such as manure and natural fertilizers. The implementation of some of these measures required collective action by farmers on each hillside.

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) originated in Southeast Asia as a participatory agricultural extension approach that emphasized farmer-led experimentation. The initial focus was on Integrated Pest Management (IPM), soon widening out to include soil and water conservation and other agronomic practices. The approach weaves together elements of adult education, agroecology and local organizational development.



The Hill Approach





The Hill Approach used elements of FFS to implement a comprehensive training program for farmers on soil and water conservation, use of improved crop varieties, agronomic practices, pest and disease control, post-harvest handling and marketing. A cascade training approach was used, with Green Hill Committee members receiving training and then in turn training other farmers.

Green Hill Committee process, formalization of tenure contracts:

In South Kivu, the predominantly unequal power balance between landowners and tenants has resulted in a situation whereby tenants typically have no formal rights to the land they cultivate and can be evicted at any time. While actual eviction has been rare, the FSP team was aware that the lack of tenure security had historically discouraged farmers from making the investments needed to protect

plots from soil erosion and from using organic soil amendments that would improve soil quality and productivity over time. Social mobilization and organization of tenant farmers is therefore a key element of the Hill Approach. Following an initial scoping, FSP identified hills suitable for rehabilitation and engaged with the landowner to convince him (all landowners were men) to collaborate with the project. The project then established Green Hill Committees as a governance, advocacy and management mechanism for activities on the hill.

THE ROLES OF GREEN HILL COMMITTEES

The COCOVE (Comités de Colline Verte or Green Hill Committees) are an essential part of the Hill Approach. Most of the members of the committee are elected from amongst the tenant farmers on

the hill. In addition, the committee includes the landowner (or land manager) of the hill, as well as the local village chief. The role of the COCOVE is to:

- Provide a link between the landowners, the tenant farmers, and all other stakeholders
- Prevent and resolve conflicts on the hill
- Negotiate and promote long-term, sustainable, win-win contracts, and advocate with the landowners and other partners for tenant farmers' rights
- Organize regular stakeholder meetings and ensure that the rights and duties of all stakeholders are respected
- Plan and supervise the soil and water conservation work on the hill and coordinate their maintenance



Changes observed on the Pilot Hills include:

ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGES

- Reduced soil erosion and increased soil quality on the hill due to the adoption of soil and water conservation measures and an increase in use of organic matter
- Increased vegetation cover and biodiversity on the hill through the planting of trees, hedges, and grasses and natural revegetation
- Reduced number of bush fires though awareness raising via Farmer Field Schools and sanctions from the Green Hill Committees and local authorities

ECONOMIC CHANGES

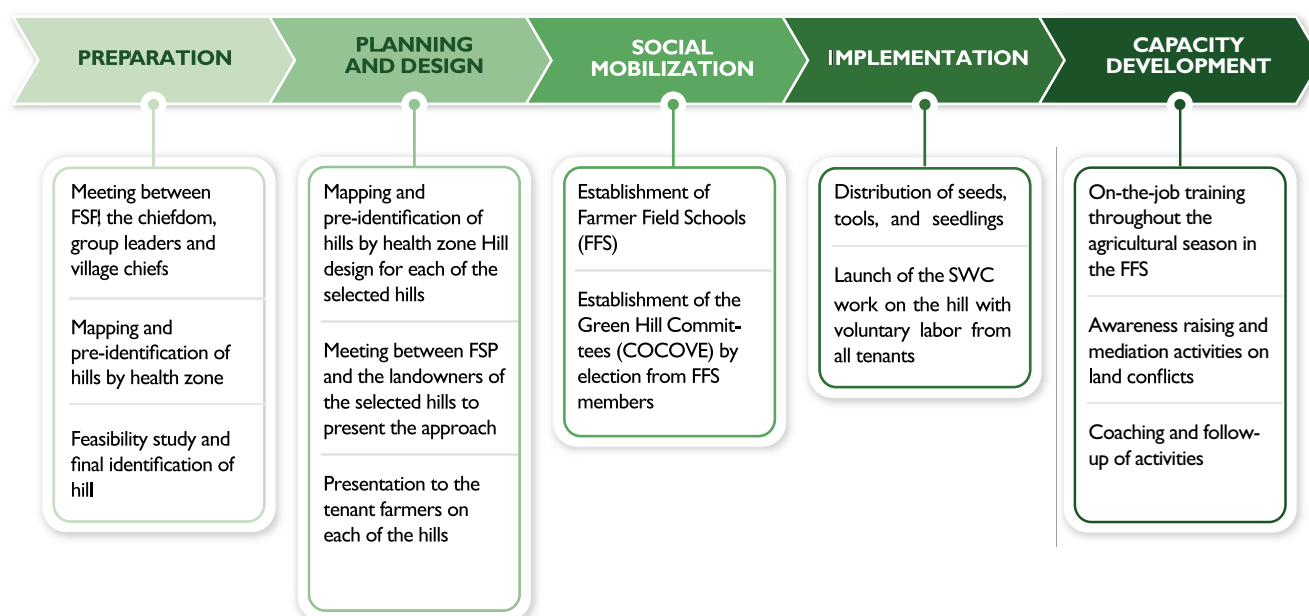
- Increased yields due to improved farming practices, including use of organic manures
- Increased incomes from crop sales for tenants due to increased production and training on post-harvest handling and marketing

- Access to emergency cash from a social cash fund made up of tenant farmers' contributions and managed by the Green Hill Committees
- Increased demand for land on the FSP hills, contributing to increased area under crop cultivation
- Increased number of tenants due to increase quality and availability of farmland on the hill, resulting in increased income from tenure fees for the landowner and increased availability of tenant labor
- Increased value of land on the hill and increased availability of timber and fodder on the hill, resulting in an increased income to the landowner
- Changes in tenure fees for plots (both increases and decreases, benefiting either the landowner or the tenants).
- Reduced crop theft and reduced livestock damage due to increased social mobilization and collective action
- Crop diversification, contributing to improved diets of tenants and their families and increased

quantity and range of produce available in local market

HUMAN, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

- Increased knowledge and understanding by tenant farmers of soil and water practices, the establishment and use of agroforestry trees and fodder grasses, good farming practices, farming as a business, and crop processing and marketing.
- Increased ability to negotiate, mediate and address conflicts between Green Hill Committee members
- Increased awareness of the role of women in agriculture and women leadership among Green Hill Committee members
- Increased social capital between farmers, and between farmers and landowners, and changes in attitudes, confidence, and other intangible attributes as a result of the FFS process
- Increased tenure security due to written tenure contracts



Lessons From the Pilot on How to Further Improve the Hill Approach

- A more systematic tracking of key outcome parameters could demonstrate impact and convince stakeholders to invest in the approach.
- The Farmer Field School could focus more on farmer-led experimentation and adaptation to support farmers' innovations.
- Landowners should make a larger contribution to the costs of the Hill Approach to achieve a fairer distribution of benefits and costs / investments between landowners and tenant farmers.

- Linking tenure farmers on the hills to markets for surplus produce could further increase their revenue and thus enhance their motivation to maintain the soil and water conservation measures on the hill.
- The approach could first be replicated on areas adjacent to the original pilot hills with tenant farmers and COCOVE members from the pilot hills serving as trainers / facilitators.
- An exit strategy for community-based organizations (FFS, COCOVE) is required to ensure sustainability of the approach.

FSP has demonstrated that the Hill Approach is a viable strategy to tackle the interrelated challenges of soil erosion, low productivity, and insecure tenure for smallholder

farmers in South Kivu. There is scope for scaling out this approach by working closely with local authorities, landowners and some of the farmers already trained during the pilot. This would contribute to strengthening the capacities and self-reliance of local communities and take a step toward diminishing their dependency on humanitarian aid. However, it will require political will to incentivize absentee landowners, as well as investments in materials (tools, seed) and additional capacity strengthening support for tenure farmers and their organizations. Initial discussions with provincial and local government representatives in June 2022 indicate there is interest in promoting the wider adoption of the Hill Approach.





ETHIOPIA



ADVISORY AND MENTORING SUPPORT HELPING BUSINESSES CREATE SOUND PRACTICES AND AIM FOR HIGHER GOALS



Ifrah makes biscuits at the verandah of her small shop, March 2023/Mercy Corps

When Ifrah Ibrahim, 27 and a single mother of three, got into business three years ago, her first line of business was making potato chips and selling them on the roadside of her small town of Gursum district in Somali Region of Ethiopia. Business was good. The profit helped her open a small shop that sells beverages and consumables.

“My business covered costs, and it

run for the past two years. I was able to feed my children and send them to school. My business journey was just that and no more,” said Ifrah.

“I always had the knack for business, but I somehow lacked on following on the small details that kept my income just meager,” notes Ifrah.

But that changed when she started receiving business advice through

Mercy Corps trained volunteers advising her on managing and growing her business.

“I have been in regular contact with my advisor for over four months now. I must say I am a more focused businesswoman now,” said Ifrah.

The business advisory and mentoring support that Ifrah receives is part of efforts by the Resilience in



Pastoral Areas (RIPA) program aimed at improving the economic opportunities landscape and growth of businesses for youth and women.

Since starting to receive the business advisory services, Ifrah is focusing on the little details of her business and aiming higher business goals.

“I learnt that every expense needs to be recorded daily, so that I know exactly where my money goes and if I am making profit or losing. I also know what my actual profit is,” said Ifrah.

Ifrah has started saving regularly in the past four months, with a total of 6,000 Birr already saved in the bank. This is in contrast to her practice of spending whatever is generated from her business in the past. She notes that the advisory service has helped her realize that having a solid saving will put her in a better position of borrowing money to grow her business.

Building on her previous experience of making potato chips, Ifrah started making dough biscuits right at the front of her small shop and selling them on spot. It takes her 20 minutes to make 100 pieces of dough biscuits, each selling for five Birr.

Ifrah is also starting diversification of her income by engaging in production of onions, lentils and groundnuts using the plot of land that her parents offered.

Ifrah says the advice and mentoring she receives is helping her to develop a bigger vision. She notes that being one’s own boss and the freedom to decide on how to spend earnings is what she enjoys about owning a business. Having something that her children can build on is a pride for her.

“My daughter now goes to 9th grade. She helps me run the shop and wants to study business in college. I want this to be a family business once she has the right knowledge and skills for

running a successful business,” said Ifrah.

Ifrah’s mentor, Saadi Maalin Ibrahim is a business owner who runs a photography studio next to Ifrah’s shop. “I knew Ifrah and her small business, but we never really talked. I started providing her with business advice and support after I received training by Mercy Corps. Mercy Corps helped us to connect and explore growth opportunities,” he said.

Ifrah’s shop is one of the 154 businesses which received advisory services from the local business development service providers in the past four months alone. 43 % of the businesses supported with advice are female owned.

“This support [business advisory] is something I needed to have right from the start of my business three years ago. But I think it’s no too late now, either” said Ifrah.

PERSPECTIVE



While the business development service providers give the services in a pro bono arrangement as an outreach and marketing drive when they start their support. The service providers eventually are called in for a tailored advisory service and ask for fees for their insights.

52 small and medium-scale businesses paid for the BDS services. Revenue data for the businesses has shown that the businesses continued generating more revenues. The revenue generated in the past three months stood at 144,000 Birr, showing a 62% jump, compared to the previous quarter (October – December 2022). The business development provisions contribute to improved business enabling environment and help businesses flourish to their full potential in RIPA program areas, thriving and resilient to challenges.



HEALTHIER LIVESTOCK - ONE CLINIC AWAY



Photo: Seno poses for a photo in her backyard with her recuperated cow. Medhanit Mulugeta/Mercy Corps

For residents of Gende Meskida village in Gursum Village of West Hararghe, ensuring the health of their livestock is a daunting task and it has been affecting the income and health of each of their families. The nearest veterinary clinic is two hours away from this village.

When cattle get sick, residents get help from their neighbors to borrow other oxen and plough their farm. The problems get worse when the villagers have two lives to think of when their pregnant cows get sick. Seno Ismael, a mother of nine, who owns an expecting cow, faced such a problem.

“I was doing the normal check of my goats and cow. I saw something unusual on the udder of my cow. The cow’s udder was swollen, and it was making an unusual sound of pain,” says Seno.

Seno rushed the cow to the new veterinary clinic nearby to get it checked.

“At first, I was frustrated that I was going to lose my cow. But I then remembered seeing a poster on my way to the market about the clinic and I went there with the cow,” she notes.

The animal health worker checked

the health of the cow and provided injections and tablets for the disease, with the cow showing quick recovery. The cow soon gave birth, but it took few days to see her get back to normal condition. It soon started to give milk, an average of two liters per day.

Seno says this was impossible in the past. “I probably would not have gone to the previous clinic and the cow may have died, along with her baby. I would have lost both the benefit of the milk for my children and the calf as well,” said Seno.

Ibrahim Ziyad is the veterinary



technician at Gursum Veterinary Clinic that Seno speaks highly of. Seno said the expert saved the life of her cow and helped continue receiving the benefits off her animal.

“I was happy to help,” said Ibrahim.

Ibrahim and his team were providing treatment for the cow for five days, during which the cow gave birth. The quality of the milk however was of poor quality having a red color, which was of no use both for the calf and Seno’s family. The treatment changed

that and, in few days, the quality of the milk improved with normal color and taste. Seno was happy.

“Seno was happy with the treatment of her cow. So was I. She even brought me a bottle of milk as a thank you note. Witnessing a happy face of my client was a great joy. It is this satisfaction that motivates me to stay in the village and serve my fellow community members,” said Ibrahim.

The veterinary clinic set up in Seno’s village is one of the many animal

health improvement activities supported by Mercy Corps’ Resilience in Pastoral Areas (RIPA – North) Project, with funding from USAID under the Feed the Future Initiative.

“I am hoping to own more goats and fatten them for a profitable sale in a few weeks. I can earn more money, more milk to my children and sustained income. I no longer worry about losing my cattle or goats for diseases,” said Seno.

PERSPECTIVE

The RIPA project has been supporting animal health initiatives in Afar, Oromia and Somali Region by implementing innovative market-based solutions including setting up of private veterinary pharmacies (PVP)s and veterinary clinics in a cost sharing modality with the private sector, among others.

To date, RIPA has supported 15 PVPs to expand their reach and services to more community members, investing over \$ 63,620, a contribution to enhanced productivity and resilience of livestock and livelihoods.

The presence of a veterinary clinic nearby their village has given hope to Seno and her neighbors that they can maintain a healthier livestock with better productivity.



YOUNG DREAMS GET A MORAL BOOST AS ACCESS TO FINANCE GETS EASIER FOR BUSINESSES



Gudon hopes for bigger share of beauty and cosmetics business in Somali Region in the future. March 2023/Mercy Corps

Starting a business is a rather difficult feat for young people across Ethiopia, as start up capital is not easy to come by, and systemic issues derail dreams and efforts. Gudon Ahmed, 20, was lucky enough to start her own business using her own savings and a bit of support from family members in Jigjiga city, Somali Region. Her savings were earned from the pocket money she used to receive while helping her mother in the family business.

“I love taking care of myself. Getting my hair done, getting pedicures and so on. That gave me an idea of starting a beauty and cosmetics business,” says Gudon.

While starting a business was a step in a positive direction, the capital she had was not strong enough to have enough stocks and buy supplies that are frequently asked for by customers.

“With some information from my

brother who is a tech geek and my online research, I heard about the Rays Mico Finance Sharia Compliant products that I can make use of to fill my financial gaps,” said Gudon.

Gudon is talking about the financial service offered by Rays to small businesses that uses the concept of e – commerce and digitally structured sharia – compliant loan system. The system is built to receive online applications of loan seekers, connect them to an e – commerce



provider that has partnered with Rays MFI, choose the loan method as a payment method and facilitate delivery of the items to the applicant.

“I didn’t go to college and my online experience is not much. But, with the help of my brother, I completed an online application, chose the financial service I was looking for and started getting the beauty products in about two weeks,” said Gudon.

Gudon was required to upload her legal documents, trade license, photos of her cosmetics shop and similar documents to the online system, along with her application.

Ray’s partner selling cosmetics products is integrated to the system which has given Gudon the access to pick the cosmetics products she wants for the shop. Rays MFI pays for the products, and she gets the delivery to her shop, with Rays getting a markup benefit of about 2% for its services, in compliant with Sharia based financial service codes.

Gudon received products worth 200,000 Birr in two installments in such a process. She is hoping to pay back the loan for these services shortly, as business is showing a steady growth for the past five

months.

“I cover my costs, support extended family members for household expenses, and save about 5,000 Birr per month. It’s not bad as a start up business,” says Gudon.

“My long-term goal is to grow my business into the biggest beauty and cosmetics company in Somali Region,” says Gudon.

“I still have a lot to learn in running a successful business, but with support like Rays MFI, I think I can make it big,” said Gudon.



PERSPECTIVE

Rays MFI is one of the financial institutions in Somali Region of Ethiopia expanding access to to finance to businesses, agro – pastoralists and livestock traders. Mercy Corps has a partnership agreement with Rays MFI to help it build its footprint and improve access to finance for businesses like Gudon’s cosmetics shop. Mercy Corps is providing support to Rays MFI in the areas of expanding branches, and improving digital infrastructure, among others. Between January and March 2023, 977 customers accessed 18,681,698 Birr financing through Rays/Huhud express uncollateralized digital e-Murabaha financing product. The partnership between Mercy Corps and the financial institutions has so far helped 1,813 clients to get a financing access of close to 29.5 million Birr without collateral as a digital e-Murabaha product.





KENYA



VULNERABLE GIRLS EMPOWERED TO TRANSFORM LIVES THROUGH SAVINGS AND LOANS IN ISIOLO



Diana Camilla, the Shiners Group Chairperson sharing their experiences with local community media teams

They have been victims of early forced marriages, early pregnancies, gender-based violence, alcohol and drug abuse. Some were forced to drop out schools due to poverty and low levels of economic development. Others opted to serve as sex workers to earn something for a living.

If they are mothers, they would have children they can't support alone. If they are girls, they have nowhere to go, no way to support themselves.

But, the USAID-funded Kenya Livestock Market Systems Associate Award 2 (LMS AA2) that is being implemented by Mercy Corps has empowered adolescent girls to improve their livelihoods in Isiolo County.

The international non-governmental organisation has trained more than 2,250 girls aged between 15 to 19 years old who are in 90 groups. A group has at least 25 members who make money through small business and saving profits.



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aged 15–19 years
old in 90 groups
trained by LMS AA2

GIRLS IMPROVING RESILIENCE

The Shiners Girls Improving Resilience through Livelihoods (GIRL) group is among the 90 groups that has been financially empowered at Shambani village, Burati ward in Isiolo. The USAID-funded LMS AA2 program partnered with World Food Program (WFP) who trained this group on the concept of Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)

Diana Camilla, 22, and a mother of one, is the chairperson of the Shiners Village Savings and Loan Association Group.



Camilla says the group consists of 25 girls aged between 18-24 years old who meet regularly to save together and take small loans from those savings.

“The majority of the girls are school dropouts and others illiterate. The association emphasizes accountable governance, standardized procedures, and simple accounting that even the least literate, least influential member of the group can understand and trust,” she said.

Camilla said the activities of the group run in cycles of one year, after which the accumulated savings and the loan profits are distributed back to the members.

“The members save money every week through contributions. At the onset in 2018, members would contribute Ksh 50 per week, but this has since increased to between Ksh 100-500 per week, depending on each person’s income generation ability,” Camilla said.

She said loans are provided to members after every four weeks, while share-outs are offered after six months. Share-outs are where group members come together to receive a total of what they have each saved.

She said the highest amount saved by Shiners group was Ksh 552, 000

The programme aims to increase the food security and adaptive capacity of their households through food security, financial literacy, and basic education interventions.



Loans are provided to members after every four weeks, while share-outs are offered after six months

between the months of January and June in 2021.

She also noted that the highest amount of money received by a member during the June 2021 share-out was Ksh 85,000.

Sora Bitacha, County project coordinator of Livestock Market System-Mercy Corps said the VSLA group has a transparent, democratic, and structured way of operations.

He said it has a chairperson who oversees its daily operations, a treasurer who keeps the financial records, and a mentor who guides the members and offers strategic advice on diverse issues.

He said they have trained more than 2,250 girls aged between 15 to 19 years old which are in 90 groups.

“The programme aims to increase the food security and adaptive

capacity of their households through food security, financial literacy, and basic education interventions,”

“This is through the Girls Improving Resilience through Livelihood (GIRL) model that is currently being implemented in three wards including Burati, Oldonyiro, and Cherab,” Bitacha said. The GIRL model provides adolescent girls with skills on numeracy and literacy, financial management, negotiating their ways out of difficult situations and taking up leadership in the community. They use the skills to plan how to achieve their aspirations. Shiners GIRL group used the skills to begin a VSLA and support one another on their journey towards self-reliance.

He said the project started in March 2018, when LMS-MercyCorps selected 25 girls in the Burati ward from vulnerable backgrounds.



He said the girls had been faced with diverse socio-economic challenges, including unemployment, excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse, serving as sex workers, and domestic violence.

“Access to credit for the youth from the pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya is a significant challenge because most financial institutions lack innovative products that conveniently fit these underserved groups at the county level,” he said.

He said many financial institutions also consider the agriculture and livestock sectors as risky.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and poor climate change instigated by unpredictable weather patterns add to the challenges of these vulnerable groups. Therefore, the purpose of the Village Savings and Loan Association is to provide simple savings and loan facilities to vulnerable girls who do not have easy access to formal financial services.

VSLA TRANSFORMING LIVES

With loans from the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA), four members have built their permanent stone houses and shifted from their mud houses.

Rachel Aspital, 23, mother of one, through the village loans and saving association is pursuing her studies.

Aspital has enrolled for a certificate course in community health nursing at the Isiolo Kenya Medical Training College (KMTC) since March 2021.

“I have always desired to go back to school and pursue my college education. After the last loans share out from the group, I received sh33, 000 and used that to pay my admission fee at the KMTC, so through this group, I am a self-sponsored student at the college,”

“I decided to just start off as I hope for any other support from well-wishers that will enable me complete my education as the medical course is

quite expensive,” Aspital noted.

The mentorship and training provided by LMS-MercyCorps have equipped the girls with technical knowledge and critical business and life skills needed to overcome life challenges.

“The girls are now courageous and confident. We know our rights as the Youth of Isiolo, and we have even made moves to engage the County Government to support us with agri-business loans through the County Youth Development funds,”

“Our knowledge and skills have massively improved, and now we want to be involved in the County’s public engagement forums and civic education sessions,” Camilla, the chairperson of the group said.

She has since been nominated as a board member of a local school as the representative of class seven pupils.

Camilla says the Participants (beneficiaries) have reported improved awareness and preparedness in dealing with future shocks and stresses attributed by the training and mentorship.

For the girls who have ventured into business such as green groceries, hair and beauty services, their most immediate clients are also the members of the groups and their families.

Participants have been able to sell their produce and services to their friends and other members of the Burati community.

She said the Shiners group members have the policy to share a kid once a goat delivers, a trend that has seen most of them become goat owners.



Rael Aspital, a member of the group that has used her savings to enrol at the Isiolo KMTC



She said a few others ventured into poultry farming but have since sold the chicken and eggs during a disease outbreak.

Bitacha the project coordinator says through the mentorship and capacity building for the girls, members have strengthened their social cohesion networks and can trust and share their other family issues.

He said members have been able to save one of them from domestic violence.

These market-based livelihoods and the village savings and loan association approach provide the space for economic information exchange and a sense of comradeship and friendship/sisterhood among the girls.

He said the interventions help to strengthen and diversify social connections, catalyse economic activity, and promote psychosocial well-being.

Bitacha said members of the Shiners groups reported great transformation in their lives since the program engagement and the continuous mentorship process.

Maria Goretti, the group mentor, reports that they now have increased self-esteem and dignity because they are no longer idle and loiter in the streets.

She said during the day, most members are very engaged in their various income-generating activities.

The girls can now access finances to

sort their immediate financial needs without depending on their husbands.

“I used to depend on my husband for money to buy even the cheapest commodities like salt in my house. This brought about quarrels and fights every time I lent him money. But now, through the village savings and loan association, I can sort myself and my husband finds the items already bought. He now appreciates me and compliments my effort to chip in financially to support our two children.” She said.

The interventions have transformed men’s perceptions of women’s role and capacity within the household and the economic sphere.



PROMOTING COUNTY LED COORDINATION TO BUILD RESILIENCE OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN KENYA



BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

County Governments have a unique responsibility to lead development at the local level. Their efforts cannot be successful without the inclusive and equitable participation of all actors. Recognizing this, the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) call for collective action by stakeholders to implement long-lasting development solutions. These includes the efforts by national and county governments, development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, local media stakeholders, and communities who all have different and complementary roles to play in the collective impact of sustainable development.

Inclusive engagement is essential in all aspects of the development process, beginning with planning and continuing through implementing and monitoring national development strategies.

Development partners play an important role in the socio-economic development of many developing countries. This may be through budgetary support, projects/programs and technical assistance. As one of the largest bilateral donors to Samburu County Government, USAID/Kenya and East Africa Mission, is funding a dynamic portfolio spanning maternal and child health, family planning, infectious diseases, health financing, health governance, Human Resources for

Health, agriculture, education, water, sanitation and hygiene interventions. Such an extensive portfolio elevates the importance of coordination and timely information-sharing across projects, to reduce duplication of partners' effort and leveraging resources.

Through its five-year funded Resilience Learning Activity (RLA), USAID has been at the forefront of collaborating with the County Government of Samburu, to create a joint work plan (JWP), and think collaboratively to discover points of intersection within the development activities. The County Government of Samburu spearheads this process through the Department of Economic Planning. RLA serves as the





secretariate of all the other USAID funded programs that operate under the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG).

This learning brief summarizes the Joint Work Planning process mechanisms, including the lessons learned, challenges and recommendations to improve future sessions. The methodology of developing this brief was through an extensive desk review of the 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 JWP documents and interviewing the RLA technical team that led the process.

OBJECTIVES OF THE JWP PROCESS

- Provides a dialogue platform to review progress and agree on strategic areas for improvement.
- Provide multi-sectorial opportunities for leveraging on what other partners are doing, hence helping to eliminate duplication.
- Jointly examine data, evidence, and past progress to identify priority areas for the next fiscal year.
- Provide an agreement platform on a joint process of measuring progress and performance.

BENEFITS OF THE JOINT WORK PLANNING

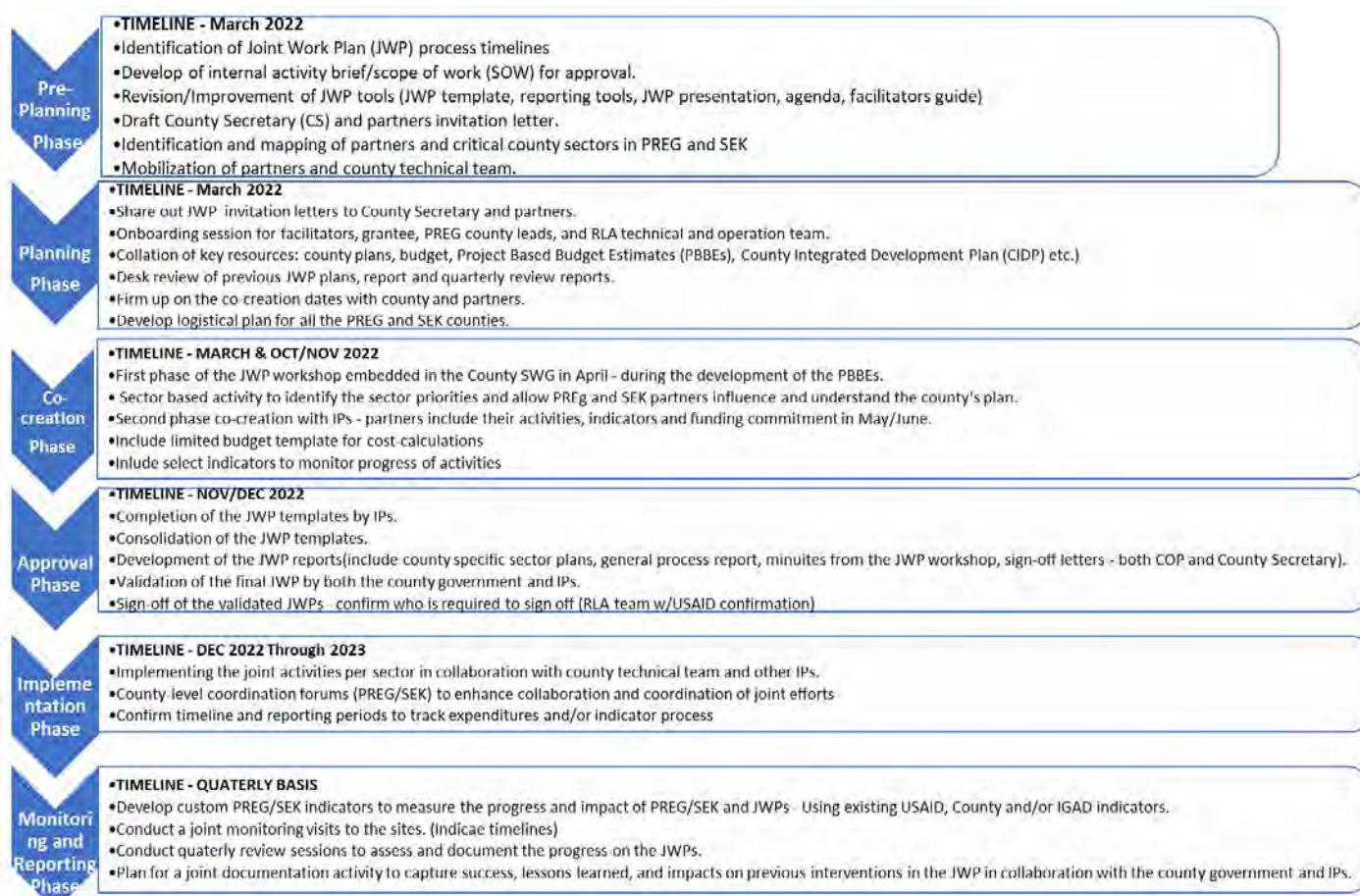
Process Joint work planning and budgeting activities help to achieve greater coherence that supports county governments' development priorities and needs. They also:

- Generate integrated responses to complex and multifaceted development challenges. By working together, the County Government and USAID implementing partners across agriculture, environmental, health, education and trade sectors find sustainable solutions to economic challenges.
- Generate platforms for dialogue. The process promotes intersectoral dialogue where county governments and development partners debate common challenges facing local communities.
- Help counties to own, lead, and coordinate development programs themselves.

HOW IT WORKS-LOCALLY LED-LOCALLY OWNED JOINT WORK PLANNING PROCESS

USAID-RLA convened all stakeholders, including all USAID-funded implementing partners in the county and County Governments, to a series of joint work planning sessions. These were led by skilled facilitators and agenda that included a review of the county technical documents. The process has six phases with specific activities under each phase. Depending on each phase and activity, several methods, tools, techniques, and expertise are required and used.





LESSONS LEARNED

Backbone organizations play a critical role in the joint work planning process: USAID-Resilience Learning Activity served as the backbone organization in this process. RLA did more than just convene all stakeholders to the JWP meetings. RLA worked to ensure mutually reinforcing activities occurred. The team facilitated communications between partners, provided technical assistance and coaching or mentoring to partners, incubated new collaborations, and recruited new PREG partners to JWP processes. RLA guided the vision and strategy, supported aligned activities, established shared measurement practices, built political goodwill with the counties, and mobilized teams

to take part. For all stakeholders to come together, one organization must be tasked with this specific coordination role.

Involvement of the top county leadership in the JWP process improves participation and engagement of all the relevant department: While there was no involvement of a senior county official in the JWP process in Financial Year (FY) 20/21, the involvement of the Chief Executive Committee (CECs) members in Samburu and Turkana Counties in the FY 21/22 JWP process propelled the mobilization and participation of county government officials. These officials served as county champions and mobilized their colleagues.

Engaging personnel with the relevant technical qualifications improves planning, mobilization, and execution of the JWP: County economists and development partners experts added value to the process by guiding participants based on data, analytics, and evidence for decision making. This improved the quality of the JWP process output. The introduction of dedicated technical personnel to serve as liaison officers for PREG at the county level improved planning, mobilization, and execution of the JWP.

Constant communication and proper planning improved participation of stakeholders: Timely communication from RLA to all stakeholders about the meeting



dates, venue, and timelines supported individual participation and planning. Activities of the joint work plan process were well planned to improve the quality of the outputs. This was visible through the good turnout rates of participants and ownership and commitment to the processes by actively engaging in dialogues. Creativity and innovations were highly encouraged to adopt new management approaches. Clear and open communication fostered buy-in and incorporated feedback from partners.

Alignment of the USAID implementing partners JWP process sector thematic areas to those of the Samburu County government improves ownership by the county:

The realignment of the PREG sector thematic areas with the county government departments and thematic areas brought ownership of the programs by the county governments department.

Collaboration and adapting comes at a cost to the participants:

whether in time spent to try something new, opportunities foregone by adapting to a counterpart's schedule and a shared agenda, or the compromises that are an inevitable part of coming to an agreement on a shared path forward with another party. Therefore, to be successful, the collaborative effort must yield specific, tangible results and benefits for the parties involved. Collaboration that does not lead to a "win-win" for both sides will not be sustainable or effective.

Incentivizing and motivating participants is key to the success of the JWP process:

RLA provided data bundles to County government officials, thus enabled their effective engagement in the virtual meetings. In-person meetings yield better outcomes in JWP than in virtual sessions. JWP is a technical process that involves prolonged discussions guided by sector-specific themes. The previous sessions lasted for full days. It was difficult to uphold the virtual delivery approach during the COVID-19 period as participants experienced virtual fatigue. Some participants also struggled to adapt to the new online meeting tools and software, thus affected participation.

Aligning and integrating the JWP process calendar with the County government's gazetted planning, budgeting, and implementation calendars would increase participation, provide linkages at the SWG level, and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the JWP development process and implementation outputs.

Although the JWP process has been on for two consecutive years, a conflict in the planning and budgeting calendar of the county government and USAID programs has been a challenge. The county government planning budgeting cycle begins in August to June of the subsequent year. On the contrary, USAID's program planning starts in October and ends in September

of the subsequent year and

implementation starts in October. Harmonization with the county Government processes calendars will improve the effectiveness of the JWP process.

Skilled facilitation of collective action is key:

the JWP process presents scenarios with conflicting interests and high sensitivities, thus requires a skilled facilitator whose leadership enables adapting depending on the situation the team is facing. When the coordinator is directive, he or she initiates action, structures activities, motivates others, and gives feedback to participants. The influencing style is assertive, using advocacy rather than threatening and demanding. The collaborative style gets results by leading discussions, asking questions that involve others, encouraging others to volunteer for responsibilities, confirming commitments, and asking for a vote to get a consensus decision or a majority decision.

Monitoring and Evaluation of JWP implementation is key in delivering the intended purpose:

Despite two consecutive years of joint work plan developments by the County Government of Samburu and USAID IPs, there is little information on the monitoring and evaluation process to track progress. Generating learning from M&E and sharing for adaptive management in the earliest time possible would have improved program implementation and performance.



CHALLENGES

COVID-19: The pandemic orchestrated global restrictions on physical meetings, thus limited the JWP sessions through virtual meetings. Adapting to the use of new technologies and internet connectivity in remote areas of the county affected stakeholders' engagement.

Competing priorities affected implementing partners

commitment: Participation and budget committee of the IP was not immediate. This was because some of the team members who participated needed to consult with their seniors before making any budgetary commitment. This didn't just delay the process but also demoralized the participation of county government teams.

CONCLUSION

County-led, county-owned joint work planning process is evolving and becoming more inclusive of other sector players, like civil society organizations and other donors and the private sector partners. However, more systematic and meaningful engagement of diverse stakeholders throughout development processes is needed. While consultations are extensively done, more must be done to ensure these consultations are conducted in a way that provides the collective action, collective impact approach for the benefit of local communities at the county level by shaping priorities and tracking implementation. All stakeholders need to focus on areas of mutual interest and have the JWP sessions, inclusive of all partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Need to align the County Government vs the USAID IPs joint work planning and budget cycle processes to achieve effectiveness and efficiency:

Process and conversation should begin at the development of the County Fiscal Strategic Paper (CFSP) stage.

Financial and technical resources are needed to address capacity constraints that limit participation in the JWP process.

The most notable progress from the desk review was the increased participation by the County governments in this process in the previous years. The review also indicates that development partners have sometimes been non-committal in terms of budgets and other resources. In order to increase stakeholders' readiness and ability to engage with one another, there is a need to strengthen county governments and development partners' internal co-ordination and access to financial and technical resources. For development partners, such resources are required to strengthen capacity to co-ordinate and assess the collective needs and views of the sectors. For county governments, such resources are required to strengthen the capacity to analyze and formulate policy proposals and communicate effectively with relevant stakeholders.

Continuous communication:

Openness, trust and mutual respect, as well as a recognition of these different and complementary roles of different stakeholders, are equally crucial to ensuring that all stakeholders are willing and able to

work together to facilitate the joint work planning process.

Formation of the County Joint Work Planning Review Committee (CJWPC):

To reinforce county ownership of local development strategies, county governments and development partners led by USAID should make progress reports on implementation publicly available, bolstering transparency and accountability through accessible information. To achieve this, there is a need to establish a fully functional County Joint Work Planning Review Committee as a senior-level advisory group that provides strategic advice and policy guidance, to ensure that the principles for effective JWP through development co-operation address the concerns and ambitions of all partners. This should be financed to undertake quarterly review progress.

Providing grants to local organization to drive this process:

While RLA provided the backbone support that facilitated the successful engagements, the JWP is elaborate and requires consistent engagements with all stakeholders. USAID-RLA should provide financial grants to local organizations that are within the Counties to drive the JWP process. This will improve the monitoring and evaluation process. This requires human personnel and resources available at the local level to keep the process operational.

Providing standardized incentives for coordination by establishing buy-in from the partners:

The joint work plan had to result in win-win opportunities that created value for all USAID projects



and the County team, or there would not have been sufficient buy-in from the projects to succeed. Projects were involved in supporting logistics coordination to make the session successful during the 2019/2020 JWP process that had physical sessions. Some projects faced pressure to provide higher per diems to participants in trainings or activities. It is recommended that the donor and county government can direct all partners to develop a common travel and per diem policy that would be consistent across projects, and would provide a fixed reimbursement rate for any participant traveling from one point to another point. This may require extensive work and coordination among the IP home offices in the U.S. to agree on a common rate structure. Yet, once established, this action will eliminate significant headache for the projects, by having a common reimbursement policy.

The project directors/program leadership teams (USAID-funded projects) highly recommended to attend the JWP sessions: The inclusion of the Chiefs of Party in the second phase of the JWP and exploring ways to

While consultations are extensively done, more must be done to ensure these consultations are conducted in a way that provides the collective action, collective impact approach for the benefit of local communities at the county level by shaping priorities and tracking implementation.

empower county leads in making decisions through the CoPs should be explored.

PAUSE AND REFLECT JWP LEARNING QUESTIONS

- What systems changes are occurring within and across IP organizations and the region as a result of the JWP process?
- How is the JWP being implemented on the ground?
 - Role of various partners and County Government
 - Plans and actions of key working groups
 - Supports provided by the backbone organization (RLA)
- How can development agencies support county governments to adapt effectively?
- What can be done to align the timelines between the County and National Governments vs the development partners budgeting cycles to improve efficiency in the joint work planning process?
- How can the County Governments bring all development agencies under one platform to cohesively and effectively undertake the joint work planning process?

JOINT WORK PLANNING GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Inclusive country ownership: Strengthening coordination, alignment and capacity building at the country level- County Government leadership, inclusive and coordinated processes and capacity at local levels impact the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the JWP.

2. Results and targeted impact:

Realizing sustainable development outcomes through mutual benefits- The effectiveness of Joint Work Planning process in achieving significant, sustained and sustainable development impact requires a focus on maximizing clearly identified, well defined and measurable, sustainable development outcomes, predicting, avoiding and remedying unintended negative impact and ensuring that partnerships recognize and respect the needs and incentives of all partners.

3. Inclusive partnership:

Fostering trust through inclusive dialogue and consultation- County Government technical teams, members of the county assemblies (MCAs), the private sector, business associations, civil society and trade unions all play roles and have valuable contributions to make in the county-level economic growth to improve the lives and livelihoods of the local communities. The County Steering Groups or the Joint Work Planning Review Caucus should work to promote processes for regular and ongoing dialogue, as well as targeted consultation in the development of specific partnerships and programmes.

4. Transparency and accountability:

Measuring and disseminating sustainable development results for learning and scaling up of successes- Timely information, evidence and data related to performing partnerships to achieve sustainable development are lacking. This needs to be improved through the creation and use of frameworks that identify and measure results in terms of county and national level defined



sustainable development targets. Such results frameworks provide a transparent and mutual understanding of what is expected of the partners and of what constitutes success for the partnership. They should set out roles and responsibilities for data collection, and provisions for information disclosure, communication of results, and independent evaluation.

5. Leave no one behind: Recognizing, sharing and mitigating risks for all partners:

Targeting the furthest behind requires greater risk-taking by all partners engaged. It is essential to recognize,

share and mitigate such increased risk. This is necessary as diverse actors engage in partnerships, make investments to deliver development results, and to incentivize greater private sector contributions to sustainable development. This endeavor requires comprehensive and inclusive approaches that involve private investors, governments, civil society, and in particular local communities that are excluded from competitive markets, employment opportunities and key economic and social services, or those operating in areas and economic sectors where market failures, poor infrastructure, difficult access and weak governance

make both private and public investment costly, difficult and risky. Private investment in these contexts is essential for addressing income poverty, food security, decent employment, inequality and economic inclusion.



PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN COUNTY AND USAID KENYA BRINGS CLEAN WATER TO ISIOLO RESIDENTS



Isiolo County's Aroo Ngaremare ward is a growing community in Northern Kenya made up mostly of pastoralists from the Turkana, Meru, Somali, and Borana ethnic groups. Unfortunately, Aroo is also a hotspot for drought, acute malnutrition, and resource-based conflict.

"The drought has really affected us," said Regina Napeyok, a longtime Aroo resident. "As a pastoralist community, we mainly depend on livestock for food and income, but, because of the drought, our livestock died as they migrated far in search of pasture and water. We also used to travel long distance in search of

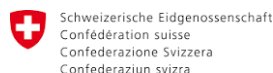
water for livestock and household consumption, but the water would make us sick as it was contaminated by the animals. "

Isiolo is one of the counties affected by the recent drought in Kenya. After four consecutive failed rainy seasons, the depletion of pastures and loss of livestock pose significant threats to pastoralists' livelihoods. The failure of crops only exacerbates the problem. The drought, which is the worst in the last 40 years, has led to hunger, conflict, and malnutrition, affecting the lives of millions of Kenyans in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs).

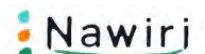
A MULTI-PARTNER APPROACH

To resolve these challenges, the county government and several USAID and non-USAID partners implemented the Aroo water project. They developed the project in partnership with USAID's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) coordination mechanism, which aims to coordinate efforts among USAID implementing partners in six ASAL counties to better integrate humanitarian and development assistance.

The USAID Resilience Learning Activity (RLA), a learning partner that



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supports PREG, provides a platform for USAID implementing partners and County Governments to jointly plan, implement, and monitor activities. With RLA support, the joint workplanning process allowed Isiolo County representatives to easily coordinate multi-sectoral discussions. Ultimately, the goal of RLA is to strengthen the collaborative framework toward more locally led development efforts.

“The county identifies opportunities for leveraging with other partners to eliminate duplication among partners, assess past progress, and jointly examine data and evidence to identify priority areas for the next fiscal year,” said Mohammed Boru, Isiolo Deputy County Secretary.

The joint process also allows partners and county governments to identify areas for sequencing, layering, and integration of activities, such as the Aroo water project. This allows partners with a shared goal to address a broader range of community challenges and maximize their impact.

PARTNERS DIVIDE AND CONQUER ON WATER PROJECT

With support from RLA, Isiolo County’s government began co-leading several activities, including the Aroo water project. USAID and non-USAID partners identified the site for the water project collaboratively. The county initiated the drilling of boreholes and test pumping, with USAID Nawiri supporting the development of water infrastructure, including a solar pumping system, water distribution lines (2.2 kilometers), two community watering



points, three cattle troughs, farms, an elevated steel tank, and a sanitation block at the watering point.

The World Food Programme supported water resource management and capacity strengthening of water management institutions, including the Water Management Committee, as well as irrigated agriculture within the site and provision of a reservoir tank and shade nets to targeted youth groups.

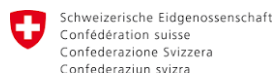
The Feed the Future Kenya Livestock Market Systems Activity supported the strengthening of the Ward Planning Committee and the Northern Rangeland Trust, which, in turn, supported the Nakuprat Gotu Conservancy in water strategy development, peacebuilding, and conflict management. The activity also supported the Water Resources Authority, the Centre for Training and Integrated Research in ASAL Development (CETRAD), and the Kenya Resilient Arid Lands Partnership for Integrated Development Plus (RAPID+) program, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The RAPID+ program is supporting the installation of four prepaid water meters, four water kiosks, and the installation of borehole sensors.

“We are happy now,” said Regina an Aroo resident. “I do not have to walk a long distance in search of clean water for my livestock and for drinking and cooking.”

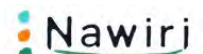
Because of these efforts, cases of waterborne diseases drastically reduced, and the community began sharing water resources without conflict.

“We have trained water committee members on how to best manage the available water resources among the communities,” said Josephine Ekiru, of the Northern Rangeland Trust. “They have schedules on when the different communities can come to the watering point, and this has greatly improved the management of the water resources.”

Aroo’s new water system will provide water not only for domestic use, but also for livestock and micro-irrigation purposes. Aroo is an up-and-coming settlement with a population of about 300 people and a livestock population of about 5,000 cattle, 10,000 shoats, and 200 camels. It is just one example of how USAID’s integration of humanitarian and development assistance helps address recurrent stressors, such as drought.



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TRANSFORMING HOW USAID IS TELLING ITS SUCCESS STORIES AT THE COUNTY LEVEL IN KENYA

The USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) funded five-year Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) in Kenya, Nawiri is a project implemented in the ASAL counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana and Samburu. The project’s goal is to sustainably reduce levels of acute malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Isiolo and Marsabit counties.

More than 50 stakeholders in Isiolo County, comprising the County Government technical officers, local media journalists, and the USAID implementing partners within the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth Network (PREG), participated in the joint documentation initiative from September 13th-17th, 2021. The event, dubbed measuring impact and value of the development Interventions in Isiolo County, was organized by the County Government of Isiolo with support from the USAID-Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) and the USAID Nawiri program.

The purpose of the one-week joint documentation initiative was to;

1. Identify and profile USAID implementing partners’ (led by Nawiri) approaches, innovations, best practices, and tools in implementing integrated multi-sectoral interventions within disaster risk communities in Isiolo County.



Media expert Yussuf Ibrahim leading a session on working with the media and amplifying community voices.

2. Increase awareness of the local media journalists on the interventions of the USAID implementing partners’ interventions and programs in Isiolo County.
3. Capture and disseminate through the community and mainstream national media channels the lessons learned and promising practices for optimizing the integration of multisectoral interventions among county governments and development partners to benefit local communities.
4. Promote peer-to-peer learning and collaboration across County Governments, USAID implementers partners, local/ community media, and the communities.

“A major challenge we have had as local media journalists is the lack of collaboration with development partners in this County. Most implementing partners are not very responsive to us when we reach out, and some only take keen interest from national mainstream media outlets. Today’s session has made us all appreciate that local/ community media journalists are key custodians of information sharing with the local communities. We have also learned that the development partners have very good content that can sustain our community programs on air if we work together.”

Ibrahim Yaro, Journalist - Angaf Radio Isiolo County



The joint documentation initiative presented an opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders to gather stories and images that tell compelling stories of community resilience – stories that encourage prevention of and prepare for climate/human-made-related extreme events in local communities at the county level. This aimed to encourage county-owned, country-led documentation through the trained local journalists and county communications teams. This promoted cross-county learnings as the Turkana team shared their collaboration experiences. The five-day event was structured into;

- Two days of rigorous writeshop sessions to create awareness among stakeholders on identifying and documenting best practices
- Two days of participatory story telling and capturing with local communities.
- A final day of reviewing the stories and best practices gathered from the field by the various teams.

The training provided an opportunity to discuss critical issues that affect both the media and implementing partners, including; low levels of awareness of the USAID programs and development implementation processes within the media, limited technical skills among local journalists to report on economic development, and sectoral specific issues, poor relationships between local implementing partners and the media, media outlets increasingly demanding payment for coverage of development-related issues, and innovative strategies of utilizing digital platforms to share information.

Through the learning by doing



Bruno Mutunga(K24/KBC), Isiolo County journalist, during field work and content sourcing for fodder farming story.

approach, participants were grouped into five teams. Each team comprised a print, TV, radio, and a digital platform journalist, a photographer, an implementing partner, and a county communications officer. The teams visited communities where the USAID implementing partners executed their interventions for real-time interactions and interviews with the local people. Stories covered through various formats, including print, broadcast (radio and TV), and digital platforms, were reviewed on the last day for partners' clarification and clearance.

THE COLLABORATION MATRIX DURING THE JOINT DOCUMENTATION INITIATIVE

- USAID-Resilience Learning Activity supported the training of local media journalists, USAID implementing partners and County government officers through key Communications and Knowledge management experts. Given the Resilience secretariat mandate, RLA also coordinated and led the overall initiative from conception

to execution.

- USAID-Nawiri supported the five days convention of all stakeholders
- The county government conducted the mobilization of the local media partners and the county officers. The government also guides on security and safety issues to the selected field sites selected by implementing partners and provided required permits/clearances on a need-by-need basis.
- USAID Implementing partners including MercyCorps, the World Food Program, Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), identified the appropriate field sites with potential best practice stories to be covered, provided logistics support to the local media teams to the sites for actual story coverage and conducted the technical review of the content generated by the journalists.
- The local media teams conducted the actual story/best practice coverage through print media, television, radio, and digital platforms.



Lessons learned

LOCAL/COMMUNITY MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS

- Investing in local media outlets as key local organizations/partners in ASAL counties to tell their own stories and influence decision making is critical for USAID implementing partners and the County Governments. These local outlets speak the language of the people, and the audience can identify and connect with, rather than the voices of distant experts telling them what to do.
- The local media could be used to push for intersectoral implementation of interventions based on the community demands.
- Recognizing the importance of media and communication as central to disaster, risk, and emergency responses from the onset at County level improves the outcomes of these shocks and stresses because communications/information is aid in times of disaster.
- Media and communication can build resilience by making technical information more accessible, addressing social norms and perceptions, supporting people to evaluate their choices, facilitating dialogue, prompting positive decisions, and influencing power. The community that has smart and thoughtful media is prepared to deal with all kinds of crisis more conscious that other communities and they also acts smarter against disasters.
- Strengthening the relationships and links between local media outlets and USAID implementing partners

will eventually enhance information flow with local communities. Catalyzing this collaboration may open opportunities for interdisciplinary and innovative work among or between institutions.

- Capacity building with active participation and collaboration between project implementing partners and local media outlets enables stakeholders to form strategic alliances, increasing community ownership over the interventions and effectiveness.

COLLABORATION

- To maintain the support and momentum of planned activities by USAID implementing partners, county governments and local media teams should be engaged early enough, comprehensively, and continuously with the involvement of local communities. This is key to the success of the interventions. The opportunities acted to dispel communication mistrust, interests, misconceptions, fears and existing tensions between media and other stakeholders.
- The ongoing county level multistakeholder forums through PREG monthly meetings and County Steering Groups are effective in ensuring that existing initiatives are monitored, supported, and discussed at the local level. Implementing partners may need to consider quarterly joint dissemination forums with local media teams to share impact

and progress with wider audiences at community level. Implementing partners will benefit from bringing together the perspectives, knowledge, and expertise of different stakeholders through an iterative process of consultation and planning.

- A multi-sectoral approach to planning is recommended for sectors such as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, education, health, and nutrition that is beyond the reach of a single institution.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- To promote gender empowerment, it is important to ensure that gender considerations are explicitly spelled out in the project document where women are active members of the project with well defined livelihood opportunities and roles. This was well demonstrated through the Nawiri program presentations to the media in Isiolo.
- To ensure meaningful participation and encourage empowerment, a project can benefit from tailoring activities to the economic needs of women, involving them in all committees, improving their skills in business planning and designing assessments to understand how women view themselves in intra-household gender relationships.

Implementing partners should consider supporting their communications teams to disseminate information rapidly and effectively at the community level to encourage behavior change.

Key Achievements

Below are the key achievements from the joint documentation initiative.



10 best practices from implementing partners captured and documented for wider dissemination and learning in Isiolo County.

The joint documentation process showcased USAID's investments in Isiolo County, though its partners in several successful resilient sectoral support strategies across different thematic sectors such as health, nutrition, livelihood and security education, water and sanitation. Strong partnership and collaborations have been established as basis of self-reliance and lasting impact but limited information, knowledge and appreciation across local political, social-economic, and cultural landscape exist due to gaps in strategic communication using lens development.



Shared learnings among USAID implementing partners, the local communities, County stakeholders, and local media outlets on the best practices in resilience programming.

The joint documentation activity provided an innovative participatory platform that allowed partners, journalist, government, and experts to identify common strengths, gaps and opportunities for progressive partnership, collaboration and engagement in documenting and

disseminating resilience success for diverse audiences and stakeholders. The platform allowed the actors to identify processes, both systemic and structural that had limited ability of journalist to access and report on their project interventions, successes, and breakthroughs.



Strengthened relationships and linkages between local media outlets,

County Government communications teams, and USAID implementing partners to enhance information sharing with local communities.

The platform established lasting partnership and collaboration breakthroughs for journalist, government and implementing partners to objectively work together in documenting and disseminating successes in their resilient activities.



Strengthened the capacity of local media outlets as critical local organizations/ partners in Arid and Semi Arid (ASAL) counties to tell their own stories and influence the decision-making by policymakers and communities at household levels. (Locally owned, locally led information sharing model)



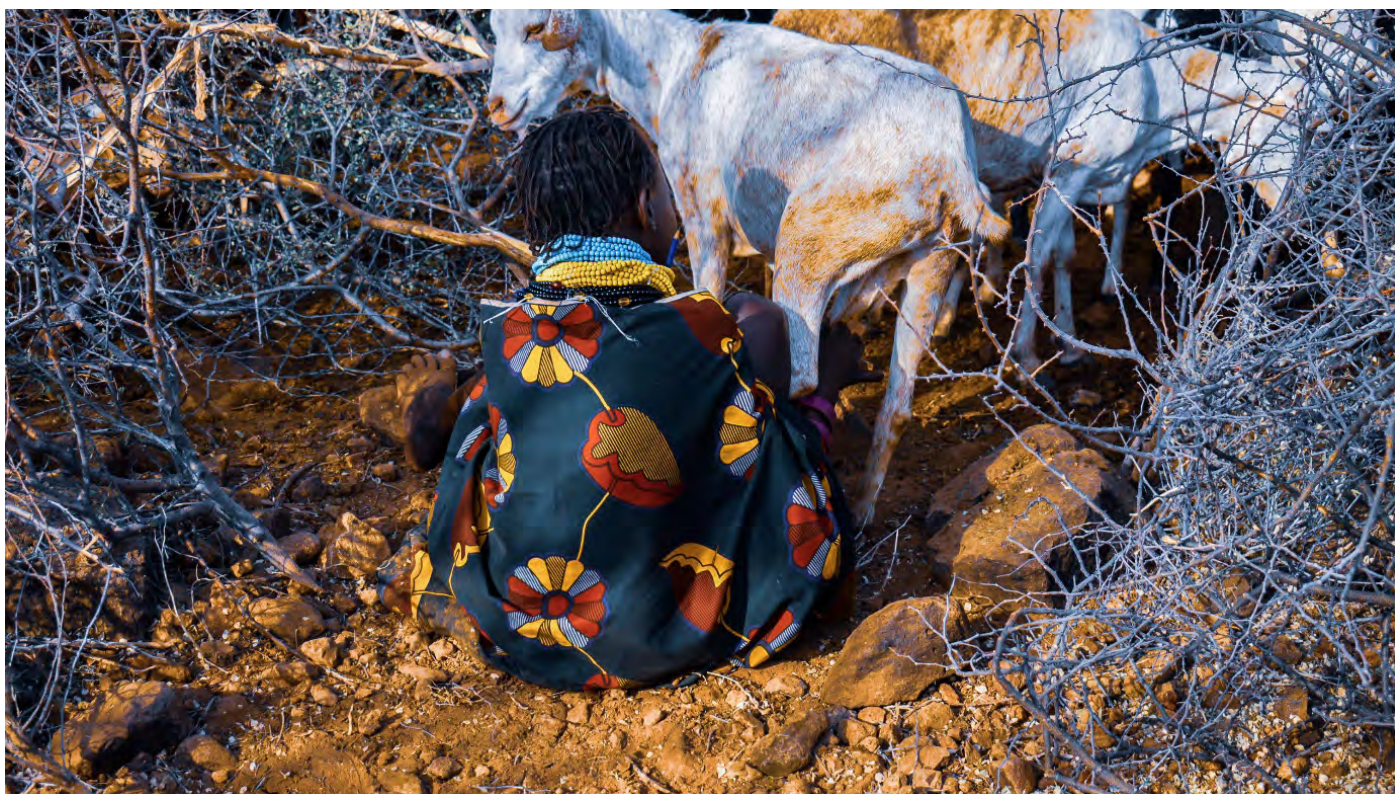
Reinforced strategic communications and knowledge management as central to disaster, risk, and emergency responses from the outset at the County level for improved outcomes of these shocks and stresses because communications/information is aid in times of disaster.



USAID Nawiri Deputy Chief of Party opening the Nawiri Joint Documentation session.



THE MOVING BLACKBOARD: INCREASING EDUCATION ACCESS, RETENTION, AND TRANSITION AMONG CHILDREN FROM NOMADIC COMMUNITIES IN TURKANA



Jane Akaru, a 9-year-old student from Loruth area in Turkana West, milking their goats before going to school.

In a contemporary school setting, Jane Akaru, 9 years of age, from the remote Loruth in Turkana West, should have been in grade three (3), but the effervescent girl is now in grade one (1). Luckily, unlike many other girls in the nomadic pastoralist community, Jane can read and write thanks to a mobile school that she attends. Unlike ten years ago when children her age walked tens or even hundreds of kilometers from one kraal to the other with their parents searching for pasture and water for their livestock, Jane's schedule

revolves around the burdensome balance between nomadism and education. It is a few minutes to 7 am, and she begins the day with her first assignment. Like other children of mobile pastoralists, she is involved in economic production from an early age to contribute to her family's livelihood. Pastoralist families must stay on the move to find suitable grasslands and water points, and there is hardly any time for the children to attend fixed schools in settlements regularly. She gets out of their makeshift house, and as routine,

she effortlessly takes a herd of about 40 goats to the foot of Mogila hills, a kilometre from their temporary home. After about ten minutes, she returns for a cup of tea, and in less than 30 minutes, she is ready for school, located one kilometre away. Jane takes another walk to St. Elizabeth Kaselem Primary school, a mobile institution where children from nomadic pastoralist parents are taught under tree-shades. Residents say perennial droughts that have occasioned acute shortage of pasture and water have been forcing them



Here, the teachers have been moving the blackboard from a pasture-rich area to another, utilizing the available tree-shades as local classrooms. The teachers have done this for the last ten years after it became difficult to increase enrolment in the school as pastoralist communities stuck with their way of life.

to migrate and making it impossible to take children to school. Here, the teachers have been moving the blackboard from a pasture-rich area to another, utilizing the available tree-shades as local classrooms. The teachers have done this for the last ten years after it became difficult to increase enrolment in the school as pastoralist communities stuck with their way of life. Just like the community it serves, St. Elizabeth Kaselem primary school is a makeshift, but teachers and learners never use the temporary structures because of their nomadic nature. Kapetadie is less than 20 kilometres from the border of Kenya and South Sudan. The moving from one place to another has been exacerbated Akitela by perennial attacks perpetrated by their hostile neighbours. Residents of Kapetadie migrated to Loruth, which is 50km away from the border after they were raided by members of their hostile community. “We migrate with our children, and we are alive to their education needs, but we cannot leave them behind. The children help us to herd goats and sheep as we take care of cattle and camels because livestock is our only source of livelihood,” Loteni Ekatorot, a resident in Loruth, said in an interview. The structures are temporary and materials portable, so they can be easily transported as communities travel, searching for water and pasture. Another resident Ebulon Ekeno said: “I didn’t go to

school, and we take them (children) to school so that they help us to read and interpret written materials. We recently temporarily settled in Loruth due to the availability of spring water. But we are likely to migrate again because the spring water here is salty. We hope our children will get another school when we move out of this place. We hope to get a consistent supply of clean water in the future to settle in one place for a longer period. This will help us educate our children in one school.” Akitela Ewoi, a parent in the mobile institution, said she has been allowing her boys to attend school, arguing that the girls were likely to get married at a young age and drop out. Enrollment of children from these communities stands at

only 2% and drop-out rates are high. Girls are particularly affected by early marriages as opposed to being sent to school. “I prefer taking our boys to school as compared to girls because the latter normally drops out of school after being lured to pregnancy. We want them to stay at home then exchange them for dowry.” Joseph Logil, a teacher at the mobile school, says they chose to follow the nomads and their children to boost literacy in the area. Mr. Logil noted that teachers move their blackboards, books, and chalk to pasture-rich areas. The pastoralists move in batches; thus, teachers strike a balance between the leaving batch and the one to be left behind. Teachers are attached to the bigger batch of the two. ‘At times, we split ourselves, and one set of teachers would follow one group of herders as the rest remain. It is challenging, but that is our responsibility,’ Mr. Logil explains. Reports indicate that despite the challenges, Turkana County has recorded some creditable improvements in education



Students in Turkana West, Loruth village carrying the blackboard





Teachers in Turkana West, Loruth village, supporting students to access education through mobile schools.

since introducing mobile schools. Collaboration and partnerships between the development partners and government agencies have primarily contributed to this outcome as they enhance community entry, school-based support, and quality assurance. Logil notes that Tusome, an instructional methodology program funded by USAID and implemented through the National Government's Ministry of Education, has helped the ever-migrating children learn how to read and write early. Tusome focuses on four key interventions developed and proven to improve literacy outcomes: enhancing classroom instruction, improving access to learning materials, enhancing support, and enhancing collaboration with other literacy actors. Tusome supports literacy development throughout Kenya and fosters a reading culture among early-grade pupils, including children with visual and hearing impairments. Tusome has trained every public-school teacher in

grades 1-3 and provided textbooks to every student. He says teachers were trained on the program, which he describes as a successful model of learning. "Tusome education program has been of great assistance to both pupils and teachers since it is practical and elaborates contents decisively for the easier learning process, as the same provides training sessions to teachers, provides learning materials at 1:1 ratio which makes the learning process a walk in the park," Logil says. St Elizabeth Loruth Primary School's headteacher added that the Tusome program supplies materials to the moving students, saying it boosts literacy among pastoralist communities. "We get materials from the Ministry of Education, and we share the moving blackboards. It is our joy that it is helping pastoralist children who are always on the move," says Mr. Logil. According to David Kerich, Tusome's education program officer in Turkana County, the model's increased ratio of learning materials,

classroom observation support, and cluster meetings helped improve reading and writing among learners from the pastoralist community. The ministry of education and the County Government of Turkana have also played an instrumental role in providing school meals for the students, thus contributing to increased school enrolment rates. The multi-sectoral collaboration among stakeholders including development partners like USAID and the national government agencies is essential because the issues affecting nomadic communities are cross-cutting. Multi-sectoral partnerships are key to building resilience by increasing access, retention, and transition among children from nomadic communities. Collaborations also improve the quality of teaching and learning in mobile schools. For Jane and other children, the mobile schools' approach considers the mobile lifestyle of nomadic communities and integrates their cultural values.



VILLAGE ‘DOCTORS’ SAVING “YOUNG” LIVES IN TURKANA AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



John Epeta (left), the ‘village doctor’, is an accomplished Community Health Volunteer (CHV) transforming health services delivery in Turkana County.

Its daybreak at Lobang’a village in Lopur, Turkana West. John Epeta, 57, begins his walking ritual from house to house, on a mission to save lives and improve the health and well-being of women and children. Although he does not have formal education, Epeta is fondly referred to as ‘the village doctor’. He is an accomplished Community Health Volunteer (CHV) transforming health services delivery in this marginalized, sun scorched, hard-to reach region.

In the past few years, the Ministry of Health at national level and department of Health and Sanitation, Turkana County and development partners have been piloting

programmes to empower semi-illiterate community health workers to deliver a package of health and nutrition services at household level. In July 2020, the Cabinet Secretary, ministry of health launched the Kenya Community Health Policy 2020-2030, whose goal is to empower individuals, families, and communities to attain the highest possible standard of health by focusing on strengthening community health services.

Turkana county passed the Community Health Services Act-2018 that outlines the recruitment and remuneration of community level health-care workers, the package of health and nutrition services they can

offer among other issues. Through this initiative, currently, almost 2,000 CHVs have been deployed to nearly every village within the county to offer these services. To sustain their work, the CHVs receive a regular stipend, equipment, supplies and mentorship from the county government.

The County Government of Turkana, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through its funded programs including UNICEF, Save the Children International (SCI), Nawiri and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) are implementing simplified protocols for identifying



A Community Health Volunteer demonstrating to mothers how to measure the circumference of a baby's hand using the simplified color coded Mid Upper Arm Circumference tape (MUAC)

and treating preventable diseases at household level using Community Health volunteers.

Dubbed Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM), this program involves equipping the community health volunteers with basic and technical modular training, supplies and equipment used to manage childhood ailments such as malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition, which account for the highest number of hospitalization and deaths among young children in Turkana.

As a beneficiary of this innovative approach, Epeta is now able to offer these services at the doorstep of clients in the village he covers.

“It is my responsibility to give services to my people”, he says, adding, “I serve my people with the knowledge and skills that I have acquired which

helps me to save lives of our children in the community,”

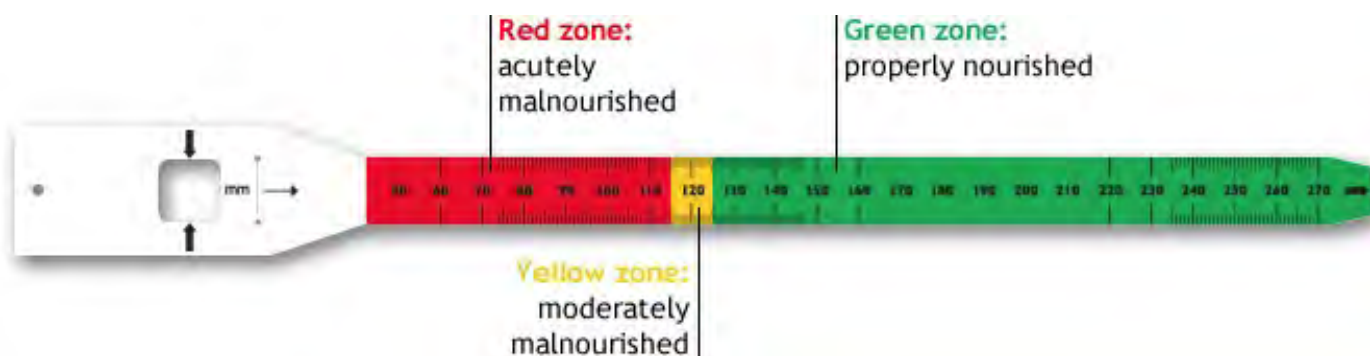
After completing training on ICCM, Epeta adds, they were given tools of work and drugs.

The tools and drugs include, thermometer, color coded beads for detecting pneumonia, oral rehydration salts and zinc sulphate for managing diarrhea, Mid Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) tape for detecting wasted (too thin for height) children.

He says, “We are also given drugs for treating malaria which include coartem thus boosting the health services we offer to the community,”

On a typical day Epeta visits five to ten households, sharing messages of prevention, screening and treating these diseases, while referring the serious cases of child illnesses to the nearest health facilities. He also monitors pregnant and lactating mothers to ensure they demand for and utilize available health services.

On a typical day Epeta visits five to ten households, sharing messages of prevention, screening and treating these diseases, while referring the serious cases of child illnesses to the nearest health facilities. He also monitors pregnant and lactating mothers to ensure they demand for and utilize available health services.



Family/mother led MUAC; a color-coded MUAC tape is an essential tool used by caregivers



1 Family/mother led MUAC; a color-coded MUAC tape is an essential tool used by caregivers to screen children at household level to detect malnutrition to facilitate timely self-referral to the health facilities. It has been rolled out to 106/187(56%) of community units where close to half of all children admitted at health facilities with malnutrition can be attributed to the strategy.

2 Roll out of ICCM and ICCM –SAM: use of simplified tools by community health volunteers to screen and treat uncomplicated common ailments and malnutrition at community level with prompt referral of complicated cases. Eight community units are implementing the strategy for improved outcomes.

3 Rapid Pro: An open-source communications platform that supports two-way communications. It is used for social behavior change communication and feed back to the community hence reducing physical contact between health workers and community.

4 Family/mother led MUAC; An approach which builds resilience of health systems to better deliver services for treatment of acute malnutrition over time, particularly during high demand when the potential to save lives is greatest, without undermining the capacity and accountability of government health actors. Currently, 144/192 (75%) of health facilities in Turkana are implementing the approach.

Like Epeta, Dalmas Lomeju, is a community health volunteer at Nabwelpus village in Turkana Central. He attends to 87 households in his village. However, when the pandemic struck Lomeju had to minimize his number of visits.

To minimize contact with his clients, he said he had to train caregivers on how to use a simplified color coded Mid Upper Arm Circumference tape, also called Family or Mother MUAC, for detecting and monitoring malnutrition among young children by mothers or caregivers themselves.

Mothers can now monitor their own children at home and refer those found to be malnourished to a CHV or healthcare facility for treatment as necessary. Margret Atabo, a resident of Nabwelpus and a mother of six, says through the help of a CHV, she has mastered the use of Mid Upper Arm Circumference to timely avert

the negative impacts of malnutrition among her children.

“When I measure the arm of my child and it shows green it means my child is well nourished, while yellow means the child is moderately malnourished and red shows the child is severely malnourished,” she said.

The communication materials used to educate locals on various health services were translated into their dialect, local communities were able to embrace the use of Mid Upper Arm Circumference. They seek for assistance when there is emergency.

“The Covid19 pandemic caused us fear against taking children to health facilities. But with the help of our CHV, we are able to get health services at the doorstep,” said Margaret.

She said they have also been educated about feeding young

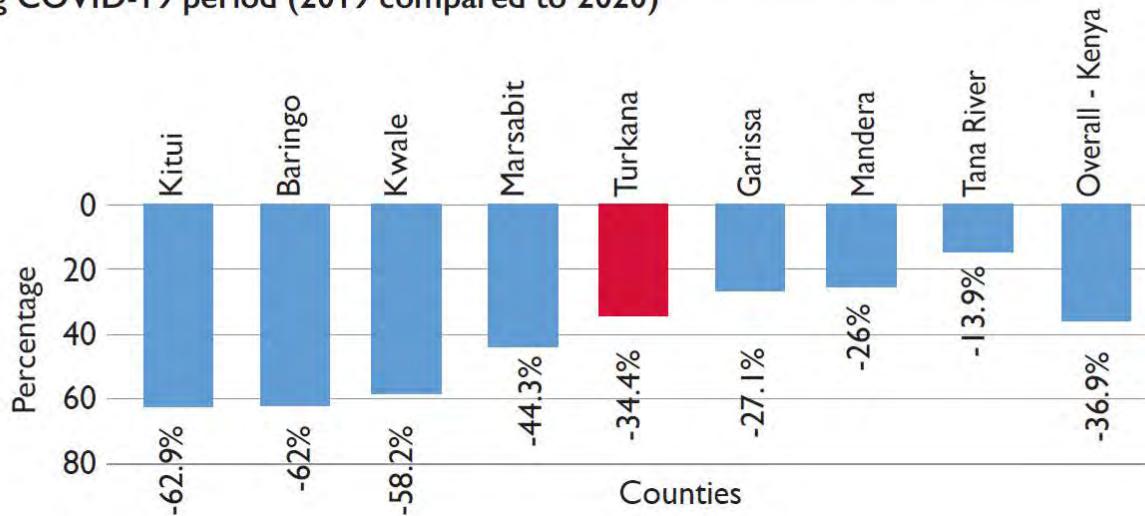
children, the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and gradual introduction of appropriate foods alongside breast milk up to two years of age and beyond.

Turkana Central Sub County Medical Officer Joel Lochor said that jointly with humanitarian partners funded by USAID County Government has managed to sustain delivery of health services to children under the age of five years even during this pandemic.

“Since Turkana government and development partners introduced the concept of ICCM, many international and local stakeholders have come to document and learn about the great work we are doing in Turkana County,” he said, adding, “Before this program was introduced, we were recording high number of infant and maternal deaths due to preventable and treatable diseases”



Proportion of decline in total admissions of severely malnourished children in Kenya during COVID-19 period (2019 compared to 2020)



“They have trained a good number of health workers, extension workers and community health volunteers and harmonized all the process of identification, treatment, referral of severe cases and accountability of commodities and equipment used,”

Lochor hailed USAID partners for being instrumental in implementing and supporting the department of health in actualizing the concept of ICCM.

“They have trained a good number of health workers, extension workers and community health volunteers and harmonized all the process of identification, treatment, referral of severe cases and accountability of commodities and equipment used,” Lochor added.

Lominito Lomoru, the Health

System Strengthening Advisor for USAID Nawiri program noted that, in collaboration with the Turkana County Government, they rolled out training and upskilling of 82 health workers and 328 CHVs in Turkana Central and Turkana West sub counties. The training has led to increase in the pool of community health volunteers previously trained by government, UNICEF, and other partners in Turkana County using ICCM tools designed to the local context.

The current COVID-19 pandemic and severe acute malnutrition continue to underscore the urgent need to build health resilience. These outbreaks pose a threat to families and local communities thus are national security and public health concerns. Health resilience requires public health services such

as community mobilization, disease surveillance, and water, sanitation, and hygiene services as well as private sector collaboration. At its root, health resilience is based upon good governance and sufficient financing. USAID strengthens health resilience by promoting care continuity through an integrated network, including the public sector, the private sector, faith-based organizations, civil society, local and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and communities. Health resilience increases when the entire health sector, together with its partners, operate in a coordinated and collaborative manner to optimize resources, are shock-responsive, and adapt as necessary to enable the whole population access to quality health services when and where they are needed.





SOMALIA



SCENARIO PLANNING: A STRATEGIC TOOL FOR RESILIENCE PROGRAMING IN COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS-LESSONS FROM SOMALIA

As a part of the Somali Resilience Partnership (SRP), the Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) facilitated a panel discussion on ‘scenario planning in a complex humanitarian and development space. The United Nation Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS) Consortium, and World Vision International (WVI), who are SRP partners with significant experience in scenario planning, deliberated the why scenario planning is becoming more critical in areas with protracted crises and fragile contexts. The panelists provided context on their operating environment, described challenges faced, and provided context on their operating environment and the capacity to respond at the community and organizational level.

LEARNING QUESTIONS

- What does scenario planning look like at the individual (household?), community, and organizational level?
- Why is it essential in a fragile context like Somalia?
- What are the practical steps to execute scenario planning?
- What are the organizational capacities to respond?

WHAT DOES SCENARIO PLANNING LOOK LIKE AT DIFFERENT LEVELS?

Most panelists based their remarks on the organizational, operational focus and their approach and constraints. FAO highlighted the critical steps to scenario planning to protect food security, while BRICS provided insights on its participatory community approach.

Scenario planning is about us using evidence from the past like trends, shocks, and any other eventuality and making assumptions about what will happen in the future, and then making decisions about how this will affect our program's projects. Due to such a definition provided by one panelist, another panelist called it ‘futuurologist.’

According to the FAO representative in the discussion, scenario planning is absolutely core to food security and resilience programming. We

“Planning is key in the sense that it forces us to do things differently. Makes us question our beliefs in how we do business.”

Andrew Mugubo, Livelihood Specialists, World Vision International

are looking at how communities withstand shocks and stress, which are future events. It is also critical because understanding the type of shock, stress, intensity, and frequency affects our households. This is key to designing and implementing resilience programming. It is also based on context analysis and evidence generated from the qualitative and quantitative data we use.

An excellent example of this is the Food Security and Nutrition Analysis Unit’s (FSNAU’S) seasonal analysis and Early Warning Early Action, which predicts the likelihood of having a good food security situation or a good harvest, water, or pasture. This analysis is used to trigger early warning not only for FAO but also to the entire humanitarian community and the Somali government. The analysis is used to predict the likelihood of

Scenario Planning: A Strategic Tool for Resilience Programing in Complex Humanitarian Settings-Lessons from Somalia drought and flood events. It also considers the severity and magnitude of such shocks in specific locations. Such analysis has been benefited by most of the humanitarian organizations, if not all.



LESSONS FROM WORLD VISION INTERNATIONAL

The WVI has vast experience of scenario planning from an operational perspective as it emphasizes the need to ask second questions when implementing programs in a fragile environment. Failing to ask those second questions will expose resources unattended to a likely shock and risk.

Scenario 1: WVI built big offices in Wajid, Bakool, in 2010, and shortly after that, Al-Shabaab terror insurgents booted them out abruptly. The organization was forced to leave behind massive resources and records worth thousands of dollars investment.

Scenario 2: WVI built big offices in Tiyeeglow-Bakool, where Al-Shabaab currently controls. They are no longer able to operate there. In this case, the management had failed in asking the second question on whether Wajid or Tiyeeglow was worth such investments in terms of building offices given the nature of the fragile context of the environment.

Based on those incidents and evidence from the past, the WVI in Somalia no longer build their own offices anymore but instead opted for rental spaces. The second question constantly challenges organizations to think critically beyond the need of the day in a fragile context where shocks are always possible.

WHY IS SCENARIO PLANNING IMPORTANT IN A FRAGILE CONTEXT LIKE SOMALIA?

Scenario planning is essential in the context of Somalia because sheer trends and shocks keep looming in our working environment, from COVID-19, migration, conflict, to floods and pests.

According to the BRICS Consortium, community participation in scenario planning is crucial in building resilience. Participatory scenario enables communities to explore potential future changes, their associated impacts and develop a locally relevant action plan. The process allows them to effectively manage both the opportunities and risks of change, thereby increasing their resilience. Incorporating scenario planning into action planning within programs would mean that development planning would be based on likely (rather than ideal) scenarios and vulnerabilities. BRICs applies the bottom-up approach using an area-based approach. The communities are well versed with their context and understand specific needs based on the prevailing condition, e.g., the communities decide when to start doing early planting due to anticipated insufficient rainfall. Traditionally, the communities did scenario planning if crops failed, herds died, and pasture was lost.

Co-planning strategies to enable communities to withstand shocks

that are no longer bearable in the traditional way of life is pivotal to resilience building. To achieve the community participation objective, the BRICS consortium;

- Develops yearly action plans with their target communities; if changes of context occur, for example, flood, drought, or pest arises in the year, they take those changes into account because the project was designed with a degree of flexibility to respond immediately. This is a lesson learned from past experiences.
- Allocates internal relief funds ('risk fund'), which is a pull of cash intended to respond to any eventuality that may compromise the resilience-building journey, for example, an influx of displaced persons from

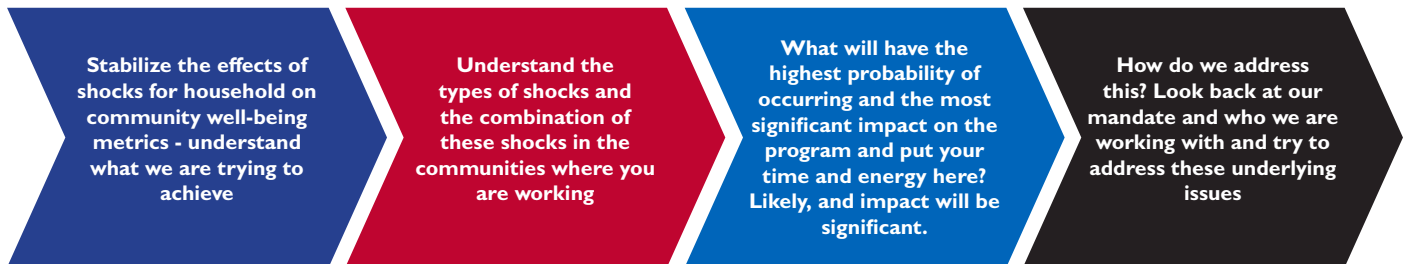
“Ask communities about their priorities; In Somalia we have challenges; designing programs that address these is important; if priorities change, we need to be flexible to change our programs; need to understand the context.”

Kassim Mohamed, BRICS Consortium focal point, SWS



WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL STEPS OF SCENARIO PLANNING?

The FAO representative provided four critical steps to the scenario planning process as highlighted below:



WHAT ABOUT ORGANIZATIONS' ABILITY TO RESPOND?

When developing different scenarios on what is likely to happen, a pertinent learning question is whether organizations can respond to the identified scenarios. Capacity looks at different elements, including the financial, capital, or human capacity. At the organizational level, the WVI;

- Have a rapid response team comprising a pool of people with different capacities and specialties who can be tasked with an evolving scenario that needs a response.
- Consider that the human capacity to respond does not only lie in the number of specialists of the organization but also collaborative and strategic relationships. It

is a question of understanding organizational capacities and the resources and those of the counterparts.

- Analyzes the communities and their capacity to absorb and respond to likely scenarios. For example, under its Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) programs, the WVI conducts community vulnerability and capacity assessment. This process identifies the gaps in capacities and who has those capacities around the area. The response demands collaboration with all stakeholders' whether external or internal, as they are considered critical in building the capacity to respond.

Finally, all panelists agreed that flexibility in program implementation is critical for successful scenario planning.

ABOUT THE SOMALI RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP (SRP)

Somalia Resilience Partnership (SRP) is a collaboration, Learning, and adaptation (CLA) platform for USAID implementing partners and critical resilience Consortiums in Somalia's Bay and Bakool regions. SRP provides a platform for activities to Sequence, Layer, and Integrate at a granular level. It SRP also provides a structure for field-level staff to powerfully communicate and influence higher-level decision-makers.



SEQUENCING, LAYERING, AND INTEGRATING (SLI): HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE IN PROTRACTED CONFLICT SETTINGS: LESSONS FROM THE SOMALIA RESILIENCE PARTNERSHIP



Construction of 4km feeder road, a primary school with WASH facilities by the multi-donors resilience actors in Baidoa, Somalia for relocated IDPs under the leadership of SRP.

Somalia is a fragile state characterized by frequent clan conflict, recurrent drought, and protracted wars. The nascent government institutions and the fragmented regional administrations have little capacity to provide services to meet basic needs. In the wake of these crises, USAID recognized that new and innovative ways must be found to enhance the ability of individuals, households, and communities to withstand recurrent shocks and stresses and to adapt to a changing environment. USAID established the Somalia Resilience Partnership (SRP) platform to build resilience among households, communities, and systems in Somalia, especially in the Bay and Bakol Region and the Banadir Region.

The SRP platform contributes to resilience-building by providing a platform for humanitarian and development partners to collaborate, learn, and adapt activities, emphasizing opportunities to sequence, layer, and integrate activities to advance the collective impact and strengthen the resilience of vulnerable communities in Somalia. This learning brief aims to share experiences and lessons from the SRP's perspective in a fragile and protracted conflict setting. The evidence is drawn from a literature review and interviews with SRP representatives who are familiar with SLI.

SLI DEFINITION AND APPLICATION

In this report, sequencing refers to timing programs or interventions in a single program to occur sequentially to build on one another to address shocks and stresses and build resilience capacities. Layering involves strategically and deliberately implementing multiple interventions that represent different sectors and scales in the same target area or with the same target group to address shocks and stresses and build resilience. Integrating approaches or interventions refer to deliberately designing interventions or activities to be implemented jointly and in an integrated fashion, usually through combining multiple components or sectors.

THE CHALLENGE

However, the challenge has been the struggle to connect the dots and apply SLI from the designing to the implementation phases of programs. Partners often cite that integration is more applicable compared to sequencing and layering. In a protracted fragile setting like Somalia, it is challenging for sequencing to happen without the push and pull factors given the challenging environment. SLI in Action: Examples from implementing partners Building Resilience in Community Somalia (BRCiS)



Two resilience consortia partners by led Norwegian refugee council (BRCiS) World Vision International (SomRep) and GEEL seed partners, collaborated to expand access to certified seeds. This past year WVI provided the good agricultural practices that was layered with the procurement and distribution of improved seed varieties which allowed for an integrated approach to support.

LAND RIGHTS AND ROAD ACCESS FOR IDPS

Through a sequencing approach, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) supported the relocation, issuance of title deeds, rehabilitation of a shallowwell, solar lighting of the new settlement, and constructions of six permanent classrooms. ACTED supported the rehabilitation of 400m feeder road through cash formwork. Through AVORD, UNHCR contributed to the build-up of shelters.

These collaborations highlight that jointly, USAID and non-USAID funded activities lead to new dynamic of interventions involving a diversity of expertise and resources to make a collective impact.

LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS

- To institutionalize SLI in a fragile context like Somalia with NGOs' competing priorities, donors should be forthright about the SLI implementation mechanism at a programmatic level to incentivize SLI achievements. This can be institutionalized at the proposal



design level, allowing USAID to support coordination immediately in highly complex environments, while simultaneously, over a longer time frame, continue to strengthen individual, household, and community capacity to withstand shocks.

- USAID's learning agenda has facilitated integration across programs. While this is the case, implementation of sequencing and layering approaches is challenging given the limited understanding of what the concept entails and how best it can be approached. A common understanding of SLI should be developed through the development of course curricula and SLI in practice toolkits. There is a need to generate enough evidence across all regions that highlights both the economic and social impact of this approach when compared to silo implementation.
- Peer-peer learning should be promoted because organizations are at different levels of understanding and implementation of SLI. Engagement in the Humanitarian Development Peace networks member organizations have a wealth of experience in the institutionalization of SLI, while others may have limited experience. Because of the difference in levels, there should be peer-to-peer learning among SRP members.
- RLA should be at the center of evidence generation exercise as the backbone support organization by guiding partners in the appropriate direction for learning.
- There should be accountability, monitoring, and evaluation mechanisms for both donors and partners.





SOUTH SUDAN



RESTORING HOUSEHOLD RESILIENCE THROUGH RESTOCKING IN UPPER NILE STATE, SOUTH SUDAN



Ms. Nyajack's grandson holding kid (young goat) at Rirnyang Village Ulang Payam. Photo taken by Kulang Khor WVI FSL staff

The local population of Ulang County have always strived to exploit various means of livelihoods given the fact that the County like most parts of Upper Nile State is perennially prone to prolonged spells of drought. In Ulang County, nearly 80% of the inhabitants are agro-pastoralists with cattle rearing being the most dominant economic activity. Fishing and seasonal crop production are also undertaken along the Sobat River. Other means of survival employed by locals include selling of firewood, wild game hunting and fruit gathering.

In general, life in Ulang, was normal and the local communities lived happily with the little resources they

had not until the outbreak of the 2013 civil war in South Sudan which led to depletion of most traditionally relied upon sources of livelihoods. Furthermore, the recent devastating floods experienced between 2019 to 2021 further led to near complete deletion of existing alternative sources of livelihoods. These further compounded the livelihood challenges faced by hundreds of families.

Amongst the persons who witnessed the degeneration of the livelihood situation in Ulang County is 68-year-old Ms. Nyajack Nyaboth an inhabitant of Rirnyang Boma, an area whose livelihood base has been eroded by persistent sequences

of inter-tribal conflicts – although normalcy has been restored in recent months, thanks to peace building efforts by World Vision, the County government and other humanitarian actors. Ms. Nyajack is amongst the few older generation who survived the endless episodes of conflict in Ulang County. She takes care of four orphaned children left behind following the demise of her son whose death was orchestrated by acts of revenge killings - a common occurrence in the wider Sobat corridor.

In late 2020, World Vision with funding from USAID/BHA initiated a multi-year Emergency Food Security Project in the Upper Nile Counties



of Ulang, Nasir, Baliet and Melut with an overarching aim of accelerating recovery and bolstering resilience. It's through this grant and partnership with the local government and the communities that saw Ms. Nyajack selected amongst the first cohort of project participants. She also happens to be included in the first lot of farmers who benefitted from the animal restocking initiative under the project. The project selected and provided each poor and under-resourced farmer with three small ruminants (shoats) that included a he-goat and two she-goats. This was aimed at facilitating reproduction and enabling farmers who had lost livestock due to raiding and conflicts to recover and replenish their stock.

This initiative of restocking has started to shine a ray of hope in the lives of poor and vulnerable families like Nyajack, and this are vivid in her submission, "before I received the goats, there was no hope for living as I had lost all my animals to raiding, I collected and sold firewood in the local market from which I earned nearly nothing" laments Ms, Nyajack. Ms. Nyajack is amongst the 150 farmers who have since benefited from the livestock restocking in the Sobat Counties of Ulang and Nasir.

Supported households in Rirnyang Boma have indeed started showcasing improved livelihood as shared by Ms. Nyajack, "I was lucky enough to have received a goat

which was already pregnant. In late December 2021, one female goat gave birth to 2 kids. As I speak now, my grandchildren take a cup of fresh milk every morning which has greatly boosted their health and immunity" asserts Ms. Nyajack. The provision of fresh milk has in effect reduced her frequency of seeking health care at Ulang Health Facility, situated nearly 5 kilometers away from her homestead - this was her major predicament before the intervention as she often trekked the lengthy distance to seek health care as her grandchildren often fell ill due to undernourishment. The distribution of the small livestock has also bolstered income levels for Ms. Nyajack as ingrained in her submission, "I sell 2.5 liters of milk daily at a cost 1,100 SSP in the local market which earns me 7,700 SSP weekly (approximately \$19)- this has boosted my household income level and I am now able to access other non-food related household needs".

"I was lucky enough to have received a goat which was already pregnant. In late December 2021, one female goat gave birth to 2 kids. As I speak now, my grandchildren take a cup of fresh milk every morning which has greatly boosted their health and immunity"

Ms. Nyajack Nyaboth, an inhabitant of Rirnyang Boma

Under the same project, World Vision also strengthened farmers' knowledge and skills in animal husbandry and care practices. Previously, most of the farmers who reared livestock lacked modern and improved animal management skills and this formerly contributed to common incidences of animal deaths. To address these gaps, the project partnered with the County extension workers and provided a 3-day training on animal feeding, parasites and disease management to all targeted households and this preceded the distributions of the livestock. This training added joy to the targeted households and since then, none of them has lost any small livestock to disease. Ms. Nyajack had this to add, "the trainings offered by World Vision equipped me with a lot of knowledge on how to manage the shoats distributed hence it has been the pillar in the success I have witnessed today". In a bid to ensure sustainability, the project also trained 15 Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWS) in Ulang County who conduct regular household visits and have ably assisted farmers in better management of the distributed small livestock. The CAHWS also provide extension and management practices such as animal vaccination and treatment in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and other agencies partners implementing veterinary related services.



REFLECTIONS ON FACILITATING AND STRENGTHENING A COMMUNITY-LED RESILIENCE AGENDA



In September 2021, USAID South Sudan requested Policy LINK to channel its resources in support of the USAID South Sudan Strategic Framework¹ through facilitating effective collaboration between USAID implementing partners (IPs) and local communities in five of the 13 target counties - Akobo, Budi, Jur River, Kapoeta North, and Wau. Policy LINK undertook five participatory steps to help facilitate communities' capacity building and autonomy to identify and implement a community-led resilience agenda. In the implementation of its five-step approach, Policy LINK adopted a bottom-up approach that involved robust community engagement that served as the foundation for all activities. Policy LINK captured lessons learned from its South Sudan activity that can support future adaptations and potential replication

in similar country contexts.

To understand the effectiveness of its five-step approach, Policy LINK conducted an Outcome Harvesting evaluation to identify the intended and unintended outcomes of its interventions in Jur River and Wau counties². This approach allowed the communities' voices and perspectives on what most impacted them from participating in the interventions. The team identified 13 positive expected and unexpected outcomes that occurred in connection with Policy LINK's five-step approach. Some of the key outcomes include:

- Communities have an improved understanding of shocks, potential contributions to solutions, and experiments with more resilient practices

- Communities' mindsets have shifted to be more self-reliant
- Communities enhance agency through prioritizing and sharing their needs with others
- Improved coordination among communities, government, and development partners

I. SHIFTING MINDSETS FOR OWNERSHIP

Policy LINK organized its activities in various steps conducive to community empowerment and capacity building. Each activity/workshop built upon the last, culminating in a new perspective on community members' roles and responsibilities to their community, which was shown through actionable change wherein community members shifted their behavior to be more involved in their household and

¹ The USAID South Sudan Strategy uses a community-focused approach to help targeted households and communities move beyond a critical need for humanitarian aid and assume greater responsibility in shaping their own future.

² Although Policy LINK undertook the five-step approach in the five USAID target counties, all five steps were only completed in Jur River and Wau Counties. As a result, the evaluation team felt that stakeholders from these two counties were the most suited to speak to the effectiveness and efficacy of the five-step approach.



community development.

LINK did an initial community mapping, returned to the same community to verify information, received additional input, and then initiated workshop sessions wherein self-reliance and capacity building were the focus. Due to this engagement with the community and through facilitated activities, the community began to shift their mindset and look at themselves as project owners rather than just recipients. There was a deliberate session to spark agency called "shifting mindset", which helped communities to think about how they can come together, identify issues, and plan to address them by themselves, especially at the household/individual level.

"In the workshops I realized that local communities are at the center of their development, they only need external support to complement the capacity they are lacking." – Community delegate

Example: In the Besselia payam, communities' attitudes changed since community delegates participating in Policy LINK's activities started sharing information and giving feedback and regular updates to the entire community. As a Besselia youth delegate stated, "I learned how to take responsibility of my household. We had a misconception that organizations and the government will do everything to address shocks and stressors affecting us, but we now realize this is not the case."

2. CHAMPIONS FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE

Policy LINK facilitated a transparent and inclusive process by intentionally designing workshops that allowed for community feedback loops. Starting at payam level, communities selected delegates to participate in workshops, to review and validate data, and provide feedback that would inform current and future programming. These community "champions" were central to the dissemination of resilience messages and their action plans within their communities. For example, community delegates

from Wau County disseminated messages on what they had learned on community-led resilience with the larger community on the radio station Voice of Hope. Community champions play a key role in catalyzing behavior change and helping to champion action among community members. They also motivate their communities to take part in decision-making, planning, monitoring, implementation, and evaluation of development activities to promote ownership and sustainability.

Example: Health service providers stated that, in the past, many community members favored traditional practices over utilizing modern health services. Often, they only turned to health centers as a last resort, contributing to individuals dying from treatable diseases. In both Jur River and Wau counties, community delegates returned to their communities and led awareness-raising meetings encouraging them to utilize modern medicine and treatments. As a result, there was a shift in community member's behavior to accessing health services earlier and more often than before.



3. ACTIVATING UNTAPPED HUMAN CAPITAL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Policy LINK created opportunity and space for historically marginalized groups such as women, youth, and persons with disabilities at every step of all community engagement approaches. Community discussions were held on roles and responsibilities of women as well as the need for collaboration and participation of women and girls in community development initiatives to overcome shocks and stresses that affect the community.

"We feel empowered and valued when NGOs involve us in the planning and implementation of their interventions, because we can provide some inputs that will add value to their work due to our local knowledge and expertise." - Jur River government representative

Changes in perception around the roles of women resulted in women's inclusion in decision-making positions such as election of two women to the customary court and they, in turn, encouraged other women to take more initiative in their own development. Additionally, women's groups and youth leaders were central figures in the resolution of conflict between youth in Jur River's Udici and Kangi payams. With enhanced capacity in creating and implementing action plans, and collaboration with IPs and local government authorities, the community leaders initiated peace dialogues and disseminated information to the broader community to introduce solutions and reconciliation tactics.

4. ACCELERATING COORDINATION, COLLABORATION, AND JOINT ACTION

Policy LINK brought communities, local government authorities, and implementing partners together

through the local action planning and joint work planning workshops. The workshops provided the opportunity for transparency and accountability as they allowed for all stakeholders to agree on principles of collaboration and outline specific roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder.

Communities and local government authorities shared their input on priority areas and implementing partners shared their activities and how they could address community priorities.

The discussions also provided the different implementing partners the opportunity to observe community decision-making, listen to communities share their priority action plans, discuss opportunities for collaboration, and determine areas where local government authorities could help with implementation. Implementation is now community-centered resulting in more effective, efficient, and relevant programming.

CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION THROUGH USE OF LOW-COST FUEL EFFICIENT STOVES



Training of women on making of energy saving stoves using locally available materials

Baliet County is amongst the thirteen Counties that comprise Upper Nile State. It's located North of the Sobat River and 30 kilometers, South-east of Malakal town, the capital of Upper Nile State. Baliet County just like any other part of Upper Nile shares an unpleasant history marred with conflicts and untold suffering as far back as 2013. These successive periods of conflict led to massive displacement of the local population to the neighboring County of Melut where they settled into IDPs camps.

The impact of conflicts on the environment in Baliet has been underrated with the County suffering from inter-communal violence orchestrated by her neighbours i.e. the Lou Nuer of Jonglei State that borders the County from the South

and Ulang and Maiwut Counties to the East. These conflicts were often linked to cattle raiding as the County is blessed with plenty of natural resources such as grazing land suitable for livestock rearing. Over the years, the perpetual influx of Lou Nuer herdsmen with thousands of cattle into Baliet has led to extensive deforestation and significant reduction in pastures, tree cover and firewood.

In a bid to rebuild the environment and eco-system of the County, World Vision through the USAID/ BHA funded Accelerating Recovery and Resilience Project is supporting communities in conservation of the environment through utilization of energy-saving stoves. This initiative targets especially women and imparts

to them skills on how to fabricate these stoves using locally available materials. Amongst the women trained as trainer of trainees (ToT) by the project is Mrs. Ayen Miyen, a 55-year-old woman who also doubles as a leader of Mijok Payam Peace Committee and she had to say "I was trained and in turn entrusted to train my fellow women in the group on fuel efficient stoves as an alternative fuel source that is reliable, cheap and also low charcoal consuming".

The introduction of the use of the fuel-efficient stove has been very beneficial to the community as it has reduced the daily burden of girls and women trekking to the bush to collect firewood for cooking. These stoves are low-cost and requires much less energy to mould, it only



needs expertise. This is further captured in a testimony stated by Mrs. Ayen “Since I was trained, I have been able to move from house to house training other peace committee women members on how to build their own fuel efficient stoves. The training has been so good and much appreciated by many people in my community”.

The facilitation of the ToT training on fuel-efficient stove as an alternative fuel source and the concurrent involvement of women from Mijok Payam Peace Committees has

created double impact as further asserted by Mrs. Miyen, “Empowering women through peace building as well as training on fuel efficient has had greater impact in our community, I am happy that now women’s’ voices

can be heard and our wellbeing is getting better”. Mrs Miyen made these remarks while addressing a gathering during awareness raising on women and youth empowerment in Mijok Payam, Baliet County.

“Since I was trained, I have been able to move from house to house training other peace committee women members on how to build their own fuel efficient stoves. The training has been so good and much appreciated by many people in my community”.

Mrs. Ayen Miyen, Mijok Payam Peace Committee Leader



FOSTERING PEACEFUL CO-EXISTENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY DIALOGUES



A group photo taken at the closure of the Yomding peace conference in Ulang County with the Ulang County Commissioner (C) Hon. Riek Gach Gatluak, flanked by faith leaders and chiefs.

Over the past 28 months, World Vision with USAID/BHA funding has been implementing the Accelerating Recovery and Resilience Project in South Sudan (ACCESS). ACCESS is a multi-year Emergency Food Security Project that supports vulnerable communities to promote and sustain their resilience to acute shocks and chronic stresses by building their absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. The project aims to accelerate recovery and bolster resilience while providing essential complementary services leveraged from existing Food and Agriculture Organization, World Food Program, UNICEF and other USAID assisted humanitarian assistance programming.

For the past decade, conflict has blighted many communities in South Sudan with Upper Nile State being

disproportionately affected. The effects of these conflicts has largely affected women, youths, children and the elderly persons. Another critical issue which has affected especially the Sobat corridor is occurrence of revenge killings – some dating as far back as twenty years and making children born long after such feuds occurred to pay for crimes they never committed.

Within the Sobat corridor, lies Ulang County, an area which has been the centerpiece of inter-clan and communal revenge killings that has affected communities, curtailed movements of certain targeted persons and in some instances led to halting of normal community activities such as fishing, fruit gathering, grazing and hunting due to fears of retaliatory attacks.

Under its second purpose, the ACCESS project engages with various stakeholders to promote peace and social cohesion through regular meetings and trainings on peace building and conflict resolution. The project also facilitates inter and intra-community dialogues aimed at reinforcing behavior changes and fostering mindset change towards embracing forgiveness.

One person who has come face to face with threats of revenge killing is Thijin Solomon, a 32-year-old man who hails from Kurmuot Payam which for years had an unresolved dispute with Yomding Payam. For the past fifteen years, Thijin's Chiereanglony clan was accused to have orchestrated the killing of a person from Chibeach clan from Yomding Payam and the issue was never resolved let alone being discussed.



The aggrieved clan was hinged on retaliation as the only means to settle the score with the perpetrators and the offenders were also resolute and ready to defend themselves with all it would take. In late 2016, unbeknown to Thijin, while then working for a local NGO called TADO in Yomding, he became a prime target by the Yomding clan. He was cited as educated, responsible and a perfect fit on which to inflict the revenge.

Knowing that he was a target of revenge killing by the Yomding clan was the worst nightmare for Thijin. All attempts to restore peace and arrive at truce between the two warring clans never came to fruition. The anguish suffered by Thijin can still be recollected from his words, “I felt as if life had deserted my body, I resigned my job and went back to Kurmuot for the sake of my safety and that of my wife and son. I wondered whether killing me would resolve the hatred and prevent all future problems”. This issue of conflict between Yomding and Kurmuot was particularly raised by the County Commissioner

“I am extremely happy for all the peace building efforts done by World Vision and other actors within my community. I have gotten a new job with GOAL as FSL Officer based in Ulang and I’m currently able to move in all Payams within the County without any fear of attack. I am happy and now able to provide for my family.”

Thijin Solomon, FSL Officer, GOAL

and brought to the attention of the ACCESS Project by the Ulang County Commissioner, Hon. Riek Gach Gatluack. This was one of the issues highlighted for urgent redress. In late 2022, World Vision with other humanitarian peace actors under the guidance of the County Commissioner facilitated a 6-day peace dialogue in Yomding Payam which ran from October 6-10. This event created a forum for truth-telling, reconciliation and forgiveness between these two communities. Local chiefs, headmen, women and youth leaders, perpetrators and aggrieved persons were able to meet face to face, talk, mend differences and for once, give peace a chance.

Following the peace dialogue, harmony and peaceful co-existence between the hitherto warring communities was finally achieved. Through this dialogue, most people who were affected and previously unable to move beyond their communities felt finally given a green card to do so unhindered. One person who bore the greatest sigh of relief was Thijin as his life was once again worth living and was able to continue with normal activities, these are clearly etched in his words, “I am extremely happy for all the peace building efforts done by World Vision and other actors within my community. I have gotten a new job with

GOAL as FSL Officer based in Ulang and am currently able to move in all Payams within the County without any fear of attack. I am happy and now able to provide for my family”. The story of Kurmuot and Yomding is just one of the many impacts that peace dialogues have contributed to within the Sobat corridor and the fruits of such initiatives can no better be described than by the words of the County Commissioner, Hon Riek Gach Gatluack, “World Vision through the ACCESS project has given us a timely lifeline, like a torch, it has brightened the potential of Ulang County, restored meaningful co-existence between previously warring communities – some of which had existed for over twenty years. We remain forever grateful to the ACCESS Project” says the County Commissioner.



Thijin Solomon visiting a Maize garden of a farmer in Yomding Payam, Ulang Payam – an area that for years he could never visit.



KEEPING VULNERABLE FAMILIES AFLOAT AMIDST DISASTERS AND UNCERTAINTIES THROUGH CASH TRANSFERS



Ms. Achol, 3rd left flanked by Payam Administrator (extreme left with red wrap) receiving cash during Rapid Response Activity in Nyongkuach Payam, Ulang County

Its February 20, 2022; and it's the middle of the dry season with sun heat sweltering and vegetative cover entirely dried up, except along the Sobat river that has for times immemorial influenced the socio-economic well-being of Nyongkuach – an area that serves as the administrative seat of Baliet County. Baliet is one of the areas that have not been spared by the relentless conflicts that has marred South Sudan. Nyongkuach Payam, the largest and the most populous in the County is situated along the Malakal – Ulang road that stretches upto the international border with Ethiopia. The area is predominantly inhabited by the Dinka tribe and has in recent months been receiving hundreds of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are returning to their cradle land following years of conflict that

resulted into mass displacement of the local populace to the neighboring Melut County – situated nearly 150 kilometers north of Baliet.

Amongst the returnees, is 45 year-old Achol Akoch Buk, a widow with five children. She recollects with anguish how she was helped by her neighbors to flee Nyongkuach when marauding fighters from the neighbouring Jonglei State raided their village, "It was a very horrible situation as I saw my kinsmen being murdered in the conflict, I along with my neighbors trekked for 4 days through the wilderness and marshes and arrived in Paloich Payam, Melut County, a place that became my home for nearly eight years" reminisces Achol. Achol was amongst the first batch of returnees who returned to Baliet in late 2020 following relative

improvement of peace in the area.

The returnees had been kept afloat by monthly food assistance rations provided by the UN WFP and it was such rations that kept vulnerable families like that of Achol and folks alike to survive. The support rendered from WFP can be clearly captured in Achol's statement, "When I returned, I was unable to grow any food crops due to lack of seeds and farm tools, we survived mainly on food assistance provided by WFP. Before I had fled to Melut, I used to grow Dura – an early maturing and drought tolerant Sorghum that is highly favored by our environment. I also planted Cowpeas and Tobacco and used to generate cash to support myself and my family". Annually, WFP provides food assistance through general food



distribution from March to August.

The 2021 cropping season was flawed by extremely harsh climatic conditions that included late onset of rains coupled with subsequent months of protracted flooding that led to large scale destruction of crops and resulted into below average yields. This further worsened the already fragile food security situation of vulnerable households like that of Achol, “the situation was awful and we could at times survive on only one meal a day. We often relied on well-wishers who sometimes provided us with food”, states Achol. Amongst the Dinka tribe, there is a time-long traditional practice where a family can borrow food supplies from another on loan and repay when they are able to in the near future. Its such societal ties that additionally provided relative safety nets – especially to extremely vulnerable persons during instances of extreme scarcity. In the dawn of 2020, World Vision South Sudan with funding from USAID/BHA initiated implementation of a grant called Accelerating Recovery and Resilience that aims to rebuild livelihoods and enable vulnerable households stay along the resilience trajectory. The intervention embedded in it a component of Rapid Response Activity (RRA) that enables households to access nutritious foods whenever any man-made or natural disaster strikes. Under the RRA, Achol was amongst the 1,700 households who were selected through a community-based targeting procedure in Baliet County. Through the RRA, the project provided a one-off \$98 (38,450 SSP) to targeted households to enable them purchase nutritious food commodities. “I was selected by the community due to my extreme fragility as a widow and

vulnerability and I didn’t pay or gave anything to be considered”, asserts Achol.

I received a total of 38,450 SSP. And I purchased 50Kgs of Sorghum grains worth and 15kgs of split cow peas at 24,500. I used 5,100 to repay debtors whom I had previously borrowed

only one relishing the benefits of the cash assistance as submissions from Ms. Mayong Malik Malual, an octogenarian and RRA participant further corroborates the benefits realized, “before the cash assistance I used to pound fruits of desert dates (*Balanitis aegyptica*) a shrub tree that commonly grows across Upper Nile



Ms. Achol spreading cowpeas to dry in the sun and prevent mold growth. Photo taken from Nyongkuach Payam, Ulang County

food stuff from and I kept the balance of 8,850 to buy sauce like vegetables and occasionally fish to consume with Sorghum” further affirms Achol.

Across many families that were supported through the Rapid Response Activity, the cash provided came as a lifeline as it enabled restoration of food consumption which had somewhat plummeted due to the dismal harvests realized in the 2021 main cropping season. Families are now able to consume more meals as reflected by statements obtained from Achol, ““now I feel more empowered and I have enough food, even now my children eat 3 times a day and our health condition has also improved”. Achol is not the

State and survived on its bitter seeds as food for a whole day, this is no more and am now able to consume a decent meal” confirms Ms. Mayong.

Through the cash assistance provided by the Rapid Response Activity, the ACCESS project partnered with Equity commercial bank and in effect delivered cash assistance to 4,096 households that included 1,700 in Baliet and 2,396 households in Ulang county. This has greatly improved the general food consumption situation of vulnerable households and enabled them to stay afloat during the lean season and additionally overcome the challenges that had been imposed by the poor crop yields realized in 2021.



KEEPING VULNERABLE FAMILIES AFLOAT AMIDST DISASTERS AND UNCERTAINTIES THROUGH CASH TRANSFERS



“Nyak’s condition has greatly improved, and he has become so supportive now in the family and contributes a lot at home and can now even take good care of himself.”

Nyak and other group members attend a psychotherapy meeting together.

Ulang County, like many other parts of the Sobat corridor in the Upper Nile State, has not been spared by the lengthy years of wars. The impacts of the conflicts have seen the erosion of social fabric and pushed hundreds of vulnerable persons, especially youth, children, and women, into extreme depression, seclusion, and despondency. In some instances, the conflicts have forced women to become household breadwinners and yet without any regular income sources and economic opportunities. In Jioke Boma, Ulang Payam, Ulang County, lives 34-years-old Nyak James, who like many others was greatly impacted by the conflict and live with extended periods of extreme depression.

Through regular field engagements by local chiefs trained by the ACCESS project on psychosocial first aid,

Nyak was identified as having irregular psychopros and was subjected to a psychological assessment. His assessment result showed that he was undergoing serious emotional distress with vivid expression of symptoms of perpetual sadness, poor appetite, dejection, hopelessness, and self-blame. It also was determined that these were linked to the protracted years of conflict that had afflicted Nyak’s community, loss of his parents, and the displacement he suffered when the armed rebellion took over this area. His woes started in 2013 when the crisis forced him to migrate from Doma Payam to Ulang township, which was considered relatively safe. “The 2013 conflict was the start of all my problems, as I lost my parents, all my assets, animals in Doma and had to relocate to Ulang – life became extremely unbearable, and I hardly earned any cash to

support my living,” says Nyak.

Thousands of others have similar conditions to Nyak, where youths have lost assets, missed out on life’s opportunities, and lost hope in ever attaining anything positive in life.

In early March 2022, after completion of the psychological assessment by World Vision and a locally trained faith leader, Nyak was enrolled into a group with nine other youths facing similar problems. This group was formed under the initiative of the project and underwent weekly interpersonal counseling sessions held every Thursday. When Nyak joined the group, his symptoms were severe and often faced memory losses and wore a face always laden with sadness. Through the weekly group sessions, members shared ideas and encouraged each other on how to





Tut Pal, group IPTG facilitator (left), and Nyak James (right) meet to discuss an assessment.

cope with personal problems. Nyak slowly acquired the ability to be able to deal with his personal problems and was further supported by the guidance of project-trained IPTG facilitator and the project's social worker.

By end of the fiscal year, the group had completed all eight interpersonal therapy sessions. Each member underwent an individual post-therapy assessment, in which all 10 members were determined to have recovered and were able to resume normal lives in the community. These interpersonal therapy sessions were very useful to Nyak's recovery. "I received great support and learnt a lot from fellow group members who often shared their own experiences on how they were dealing with their own problems, some of which were similar to mine," says Nyak. "We also kept learning from each other with the support of the facilitator through each session. I began to see a better version of myself and appreciated life better than before."

Towards the seventh therapy session, Nyak's condition had greatly

improved, and he was livelier and more active both in group activities and in his personal life. "I started relating easily with people around me," he says. "I also got my appetite back and I slept normally, and eventually I got more engaged in some activities that I used not to like before." The Ulang Payam IPTG facilitator, Tut Pal also noted that Nyak had started to embrace himself more, participated in role playing activities during group sessions, and often discussed more positive aspects of life compared to four months ago.



The IPT group also was supported with sessions around opportunities for growth, social and life skills, and mechanisms of breaking social isolation.

Upon completion of the therapy sessions, Nyak joined his uncle, a local businessman, and assisted him with vending of airtime (sale of mobile phone recharge units) within Ulang Market. Working with his uncle helped Nyak move forward in his life. "Nyak's condition has greatly improved, and he has become so supportive now in the family and contributes a lot at home and can now even take good care of himself," says Nyak's uncle. "He is supporting me in my shop where I have entrusted him with my airtime business in the market."

Across Ulang, Nasir, Baliet and Melut counties, the project has worked with and trained local staff members, including healthcare workers, faith leaders, and local chiefs, and completed 364 sessions across 23 Payams in the four counties, in which 117 IPTG clients have been assisted and have recovered from a range of post-traumatic stress disorders.





UGANDA



GRADUATING TO RESILIENCE : GRADUATION APPROACH

Background

Rwamwanja refugee settlement, located within Kamwenge District, is home to more than 81,000 refugees, most of whom arrived in or after 2012 from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and who receive some food and cash assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP). While benefiting from social services provided to refugees, the non-refugee population in the area faces similar development challenges; up to two thirds of the local population in the sub-region experience some level of food insecurity.

The Graduating to Resilience Activity employs a Graduation Approach that consists of a holistic set of services provided to targeted extremely poor or ultra-poor households (HH), designed to help recipients construct new livelihoods while building skills and confidence, along with an asset base to diversify income, protect against shocks, and sustain well-being.

The Activity's locally adapted Graduation Approach has produced positive outcomes in key areas, including household income and consumption, assets and savings, food security and nutrition, physical and mental health, and women's empowerment. The Activity uses a woman-plus household approach, engaging a woman and/or youth as the primary participant and entry point to each household.

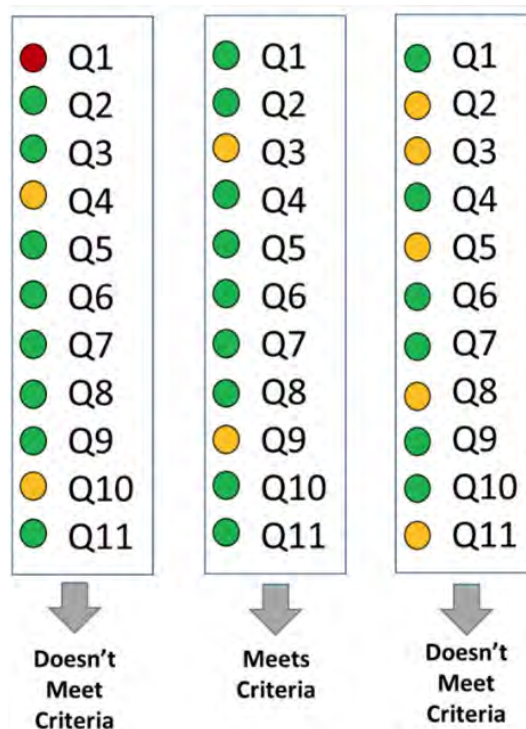
Graduation Criteria

Graduation is achieved when a participant and her/his household are assessed to have met the necessary conditions of self-reliance supported by sustainable livelihoods, and awareness of and access to safety nets. Graduation criteria are assessed quarterly by coaches and validated using monitoring and context data for triangulation.

To consider a household as having met the Graduation Criteria, a household must meet the minimum criteria at least three quarters consecutively. A household that meets the criteria registers the following responses from a self-assessment regarding food security and nutrition, economic activity, basic needs, savings, social capital, and self-efficacy:

NO RED ANSWERS In this sense, every question of the Graduation Criteria vector is equally important, being able on its own to "veto" the household's graduation, and

AT LEAST 8 GREEN ANSWERS To promote the holistic concept of resilience adopted by the Activity.



The **Graduating to Resilience Activity** is a USAID/Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSa) led by AVSI Foundation in partnership with Trickle Up and AIR, which seeks to test the Graduation Approach's ability to graduate ultra-poor refugee and host community households in Kamwenge District from food insecurity and fragile livelihoods to self-reliance and resilience. This seven-year Activity will engage 13,200 households that are economically active, but chronically unable to meet their basic needs without some form of assistance, in two cohort periods.



Participants and households are assessed using the following questions:

#	Section / Question
	FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION
Q1	In the last 1 month, was there a time when you (or a member of your household) reduced meal size or skipped a meal <u>because of lack of money or other resources</u> ?
Q2	In the last week, did all your household's meals contain foods from the 3 food groups GO, GRO, and GLO?
	ECONOMIC ACTIVITY
Q3	How many sources of income does your HH have?
	BASIC NEEDS
Q4	Do you live in an improved structure?
Q5a.	Are your school-aged children <u>are</u> going to school?
Q5b.	If you answered your child has missed more than 12 days of school please explain.
Q6	In the last 3 months, were you able to get healthcare services for you and your household when you needed them?
Q7	Does your HH treat water prior to consumption?
Q8	Do you have access to a hand washing facility and is there soap and water at the hand washing facility?
	SAVINGS
Q9a.	How much do you have in savings?
Q9b.	What is the value of your current productive assets?
	SOCIAL CAPITAL
Q10	If you or a member of your household had a problem <u>that your household cannot solve on its own</u> , who could you turn to for support?
	SELF-EFFICACY
Q11	I can set goals to improve the well-being of my household and achieve them.

What we Did

To support households to graduate from extreme poverty, the Activity provided comprehensive and reinforcing forms of support, including:

- **Consumption Support:** All beneficiary households received a monthly consumption support cash transfer during their first year of participation to facilitate households meeting their food and nutritional needs. Refugee households received \$5.00 each per member per month and Ugandan households received \$4.00 each per member per month. The average household had five members.
- **VSLA:** The Activity supported the formation of new village savings

and loan association (VSLA) groups comprising an average of 25 members each. Groups were trained and supported to meet, save and borrow weekly. 100 pilot groups were supported to digitize their records on an online platform.

- **Asset Transfer:** When beneficiaries completed core technical skills training and developed a business plan, the Activity provided a cash lump sum asset transfer equivalent to \$300 per household.
- **Coaching:** A graduation coach regularly engaged with households to work on a set of contextualized messages on relevant topics, especially those related to nutrition and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) practices, gender, savings, and life skills.

Additionally, households received the following support:

- Nutrition education, WASH, and health interventions
- HHs linked to quality and affordable agricultural inputs dealers
- Referrals to nutrition, WASH, and health services
- HH enrolled in Farmer Field Business Schools and trained in selected value chains
- HH linked to formal financial services
- HH trained in core market-based business and technical skills
- Production and marketing groups created and supported
- HHs provided with support to use market information



Finally, households were randomly assigned to three different treatment arms and a control group.

The treatment arms consisted of the following interventions:

Program Component	ARM 1 Standard Graduation	ARM 2 Group Coaching	ARM 3 Empowerment Model
Consumption support	●	●	●
Savings and financial inclusion	●	●	●
Coaching	Individual	Group	Individual

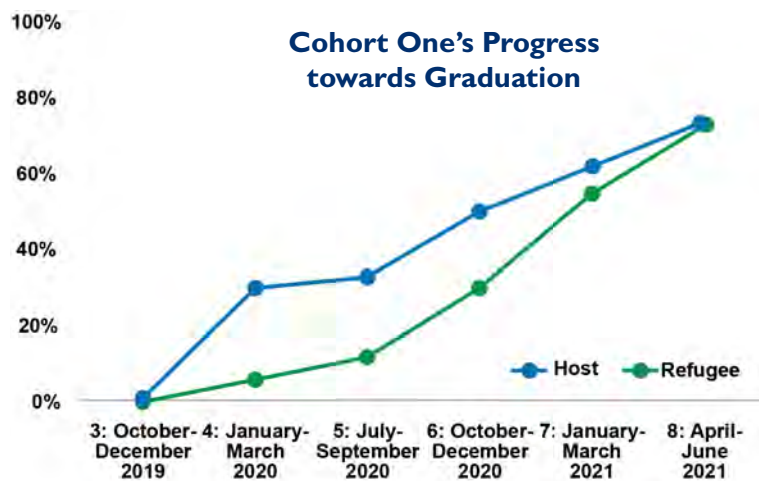
What we Learned

Host community households reached graduation status faster than refugee households initially, but by the end of Cohort One, both host and refugee communities reached 73%.

A household that met the criteria four times or more consecutively (96%) was significantly more likely to achieve graduation compared to one that met the criteria just three times (94%) during implementation.

Additionally, the more quarters a household achieved the graduation criteria, the more likely they were to graduate in June 2021.

In Cohort One, 83% of households met the graduation criteria three times non-consecutively, indicating that households developed coping strategies such as savings or livelihood diversification, used these coping strategies in times of shock, and could rebound once adapted to the shock or the shock had subsided. The table below shows results overall:



Graduation Results for Cohort One, by Community

Stage	Definition	Host		Refugee		Total	
		# HHs	% HHs	# HHs	% HHs	# HHs	% HHs
Graduation	Met the criteria at least three times consecutively	1,758	73%	1,746	73%	3,504	73%
Progression							
Never Met	Never met grad criteria	126	5%	91	4%	217	5%
Total							



Treatment Arm 1 was the fastest on average to reach graduation (in 6.0 quarters), which was significantly ($p < 0.01$) faster than treatment Arm 2 (6.2 quarters) and 3 (6.3 quarters). However, treatment Arm 2 closed the gap and ended with nearly the same number of households achieving graduation criteria consecutively without retrogressing. Table 2 shows the same results, differentiated by treatment arm.

Graduation Results for Cohort One, by Treatment Arm

Stage	Definition	Arm 1		Arm 2		Arm 3		Total	
		# HHs	% HHs	# HHs	% HHs	# HHs	% HHs	# HHs	% HHs
Graduation	Met the criteria at least three times consecutively	1,244	76%	1,160	74%	1,100	69%	3,504	73%
Progression									
Never Met	Never met grad criteria	78	5%	46	4%	93	6%	217	5%
Total									

Success Story

Zipora Uzamukunda and her household of ten settled in Rwamwanja Refugee Settlement in early 2013 after fleeing the Democratic Republic of the Congo due to social and political atrocities. Her household survived on maize and beans grown on a small piece of land allocated to her by the Ugandan government. She owned a cow, but it contracted a disease and because she lacked the knowledge to treat it, Zipora decided to sell the cow and focus on agriculture. Her crops failed to yield a good harvest, however, leaving her with no savings or alternative source of income.

By participating in Graduating to Resilience, Zipora gained knowledge in modern agronomic practices and animal husbandry and received business coaching and coaching in nutrition, savings, self-efficacy, and financial literacy.

As a result, Zipora expanded her business; she started rearing sheep that have since multiplied to a flock of 46, and she sells cooking oil. Her businesses generate a monthly profit of UGX 550,000 (~ USD 147). Confident in her skills in animal husbandry, Zipora plans to start rearing cows to support her children's education.

A portion of households dropped out of the Activity early, some after meeting graduation criteria at least once, and some after graduating, though not all attained these results. Overall, 756 (52.9%) of the households that dropped out were refugee households, compared to 674 (47.1%) among the host community. Dropout rates were consistent across the three treatment arms; Arm 3 registered the highest overall dropouts of 35.3%, followed by Arm 2 (32.4%) and Arm 1 (32.3%). The main reasons for dropping out include:

1. Relocation to another village, sub-county and district: 46% (Host 44.7%, Refugee 48.1%);
2. Lack of need to continue participating in project activities (after asset transfer and consumption support/the project no longer met my needs): 18% (Host 17.9%, Refugee 18.1%);
3. Inadequate time to participate: 7% (Host 6.2%, Refugee 6.9%);
4. Went back to Congo: 7% (Refugee);
5. Sickness/disability/old age: 6% (Host 9.6%, Refugee 2.5%).

Despite the possibilities for material improvement these graduation results show, in a separate AVSI Foundation study of refugee mental health experiences, conducted in Palabek refugee settlement in Northern Uganda, 35% of respondents indicated that they were experiencing depression at the time and 64% of these individuals reported that their depression was interfering with their daily lives. These insights provided important context to consider along with the graduation results.





Based on evidence from Cohort I, the Activity also adjusted the minimum savings graduation criterion from greater than or equal to three months' expenses per household in Cohort One, to two months' per household in Cohort Two. This change was motivated by assessment findings indicating the high savings threshold was the limiting factor among 5% of households that did not graduate, and in light of evidence from other graduation programs showing savings minimum requirements were, in general, lower than the Activity's. Finally, the Activity shortened the implementation timeline for Cohort Two from 30 months to 24. Given the dropout rate accelerated in the last six months of Cohort One and one of the main reasons cited for dropout was completion of activities and training, this time frame is anticipated to be sufficient to yield similar results, while improving the cost effectiveness of the interventions.

How We Adapted

The consortium chose to incorporate group interpersonal therapy (G-IPT) for a subset of Cohort Two participants. This therapeutic approach is participatory and groupbased, empowering vulnerable individuals to improve relationships, develop communication and conflict resolution skills, and foster lasting support networks. Within these groups, participants share their own challenges, discuss actions they have taken to manage these challenges, and provide support to one another.

Cohort Two will scale up the most cost-effective approach of the three arms tested in Cohort One and will test two treatment arms:

- Treatment Arm 1: Standard group coaching with all interventions
- Treatment Arm 2: Standard group coaching with all interventions plus mental health support

IPA will conduct a long-term ex-post survey of 6,000 households about three years after the end of Cohort One to evaluate the long-term impact of the graduation approach and activity results.



USAID'S SECURING PEACE AND PROMOTING PROSPERITY IN KARAMOJA ACTIVITY (EKISIL)



Photo: Ms. Esther Ayoo sitting in front of her hut in Nyakwae sub-county, Abim district in Karamoja sub region Photo credit: Mercy Corps

This case study was prepared by Mercy Corps for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Securing Peace and Promoting Prosperity in Karamoja activity (EKISIL).

EKISIL is a two-year Conflict Mitigation and Management project made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development. It is implemented in Kaabong, Kotido, Abim and Moroto Districts of Karamoja, Uganda, and runs from November

15, 2017 to April 15, 2023. The Activity is implemented by Mercy Corps, Dodoth Agro Pastoralists Development Organization (DADO), and Abim Women Together in Development (AWOTID).

INTRODUCTION

“I ran away from home because my father used to mistreat us. We could spend days without food and at the age of 15, I was forced to drop out of school because my parents could not afford to educate me. Life became tougher after I got abducted by the Lords Resistance Army. The

rebels trained me how to steal and kill. In the community, I was full of anger and hated everything about myself and all I wanted was revenge,” said Esther.

In Abim district, (Karamoja sub region), people suffer from different forms of violence arising from, amongst others, torture, loss of family or livestock, inter-communal conflicts, drought, unemployment, rape, domestic violence and segregation from the community. I

I (2016), Mercy Corps Narrative: Securing Peace and Promoting Prosperity in Karamoja (SP3).

Ms. Esther Ayoo, is one of the four (4) facilitators who have benefitted from the USAID- supported project to deal with trauma in the district. The project brings communities from Karamoja together across lines-of-conflict to address the social, economic, environmental, and political issues at risk of fueling violence.

SITUATION

Esther, a single mother of two boys (17 years and 10 years), was born and brought up in Abim where she lived with her parents and her four (4) siblings. Even though the family was poor, Esther enjoyed their company. At 21 years old, Esther was abducted by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) and taken to the bush where she stayed for about twelve (12) months.

“I can remember very well. It was



the 5th of November 1998 when the rebels came in the middle of the night while we were all asleep. They took us by force. We were about 2,000 girls and boys and we were very frightened. The rebels forced us to carry everything they had looted from the shops. These included mostly foodstuffs and medicines,” said Esther sadly.

While in the bush, Esther suffered immensely. There was shortage of food and water. Despite this, they were forced to often work without rest. In addition, the rebels trained them to be soldiers and they were given guns. In 1999, Esther was rescued and taken to Juba (the capital city of South Sudan). While there, she was raped and forcefully married to a South Sudanese man and bore two (2) children with him. Esther had no hope of ever seeing her family again.

“The man was very aggressive. He used to beat us up and even threatened to kill us. I felt weak and scared. I hated myself so much and wanted to die,” said Esther.

Out of determination that was mainly from the pain and suffering she had endured, she made her way back to Uganda (Abim) in November 2010. Upon her arrival, she found out that her parents had separated but the rest of the family members were very happy to see her. The community, however, was shocked and scared. Many people had believed that she was dead. They immediately hated her and together with the children, were nicknamed “rebels”. The treatment from the community made her feel rejected. She became very aggressive towards everyone and on numerous occasions, she got

arrested for fighting with community members. In all these, the only source of support and comfort was her mother who, in June 2017, fell sick and died. This left Esther traumatized.

PROJECT’S INTERVENTION

In November 2017, Mercy Corps in partnership with AWOTID (a non-governmental organization in Abim) began implementing the USAID’s supported project: Securing Peace and Promoting Prosperity in Karamoja Activity (EKISIL) in Moroto, Kotido, Kaabong, and Abim districts. Through the project, Esther, together with three other community members, were selected and trained as Trauma Healing Facilitators. The trainings were conducted in the local language and comprised of conflict management skills, understanding of trauma and the journey to social reconciliation. They were also supported to provide trauma healing sessions and advance reconciliation to community members in various sub-

counties within Abim.

“Through the training, I was able to rediscover myself. I also found inner peace and comfort and was able to change my aggressive behaviors especially fighting with people,” she said.

As a Facilitator, Esther conducted eight trauma-healing sessions to one of the groups in Nyakwae sub county, RAFIKI, which translates to “a friend”. Ever since, community members go to her for advice and counseling and this has strengthened relationships within the community.

Esther’s change in behavior was witnessed by community members when, in December 2018, raiders from a neighboring district (Kotido) attacked Nyakwae sub county and stole four cows that belonged to her. One of the raiders was arrested by the youths in Kotido and brought to Nyakwae. A normal practice would have involved killing the raider but Esther decided to forgive him and



Youth Peace Committee, Rogom Parish, Nyakwae sub county, together with the youth from Kotido district Photo Credit: Mercy Corps



also urged the community to be calm. The man was handed over to the police and the youth, from both districts, sat together and enjoyed “Ekwete” (traditional brew made of maize or sorghum).

Talking about the general changes in the community, Mr. Paul Ogira the Vice Chairperson of RAFIKI said, “Before the project, there was moral decay in this community. Men and women would fight in public. Children lacked respect towards their parents and towards the elderly. All the community members would drink together and eventually abuse each other, which often led to societal disputes. Through the trainings given by Esther, the project has helped the community members realize respect and forgiveness for each other and now, levels of communal and family disputes have dropped.”

In order to sustain herself and her two children, Esther practices farming and runs small businesses

in the community. During our visit, she appeared very happy and openly spoke about her story and the progress she has made. “I am very thankful to the support given by USAID. Without this project, I don’t know where I would be. The project came at the right time and I hope it can continue,” she said, while smiling.

LESSONS LEARNED

Need for forgiveness in achieving lasting peace: Through Esther’s story, it is clear that, recovery from trauma is a process and takes time especially when there are recurring activities that continue to take place like cattle raiding. However, with the necessary support, people can change, learn and recover. Hence, there is need for emphasis on forgiveness, which plays a great role in promoting individual as well as societal transformation.

Offer trauma healing sessions to the entire community: It is interesting to note all the positive individual

changes in the community - through the trauma healing sessions - but there is still a gap if other community members are left out. That is, it might be a challenge in pushing and obtaining sustainable peace.

Promote and support activities to prevent traumatization: Considering that community members often have so much time on their hands, it is important to consider engaging them in activities that could keep their minds engaged as well as promote a system of networking between the members undergoing healing.

NEXT STEPS

The EKISIL project is planning to review and evaluate the trauma healing groups and facilitators in order to document changes as part of the learning process.



HOW APOLOU'S WASH, GENDER, AND SBC TEAMS ARE IMPROVING LATRINE QUALITY AND USE IN KARAMOJA



The Karamoja region faces complex challenges related to improved sanitation and hygiene practices. Despite significant investments, basic Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) indicators are either slow to improve or stagnant. Prevailing cultural and social norms are often cited as barriers to improved WASH practices in the region. The July 2021 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Analysis for Karamoja found that open bush and air defecation stands at 60%, with only 12% able to use a pit latrine with slab, 20% are using latrines without a slab while another 8% use open pits. Apolou's cross-sectoral approach seeks to improve uptake of improved WASH practices. It addresses inequitable gender norms, attitudes and behaviors around WASH by

tackling the division of labor around WASH responsibilities within households and promoting a more gender-equitable provision of WASH products and services.

Implemented in the Eastern Districts of Karenga, Kotido, Kaabong, Moroto, and Amudat, Apolou is comprised of an innovative set of interventions, structured under four interwoven objectives: 1) inclusive and effective governance contribute to food and nutrition security; 2) adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women, and children under five-years-old are nutritionally secure; 3) reduced incidences of water and sanitation (WASH)-related diseases; and 4) improved livelihoods and income support household food security. In all its interventions, Apolou emphasizes four cross-

cutting themes: Social and Behavior Change (SBC), resilience, a focus on youth and adolescents, and gender mainstreaming.

This Collaboration, Learning and Adaptation (CLA) case study highlights how Apolou's Gender, WASH and SBC teams worked together in a cross-sectoral way to address negative cultural and inequitable gender norms leading to improved quality and utilization of pit latrines.

Low latrine coverage and utilization rates

The Apolou WASH team adopted the community-led total sanitation (CLTS)¹, Follow-Up Mandona (FUM)², Save the Children's Clean

¹ CLTS is an approach that focuses on igniting a change in sanitation behavior through community participation. Communities are facilitated to conduct their own appraisal and analysis of open defecation and take their own action to become ODF (open defecation free).

² FUM is an action-oriented approach to accelerate the achievement of ODF status after the initial CLTS triggering session. It involves a series of facilitated sessions with the entire community to reinforce behavior change and collectively undertake small, immediate and doable actions to become ODF in the shortest time possible.



Household Approach (CHA)³, and sanitation marketing to improve hygiene and sanitation behaviors in Apolou communities. Through these approaches, Apolou has, in the first three years, reached over 69,000 households with its handwashing behavior change intervention.

Coverage and utilization of latrines remains low in Apolou intervention areas despite the increased knowledge and skills on improved WASH practices. The number of people gaining access to basic sanitation service⁴ in the first three years of the Activity is 8,358 across intervention districts.

Based on the low coverage and utilization, the Apolou WASH team decided to intentionally engage the SBC and Gender team to tackle prevailing cultural and social norms that are often cited as key barriers to improved WASH practices in the region.

Cross-sectoral activity design and implementation

Recognizing that increased utilization of open latrines was not only tied to coverage but behavior, the WASH team initiated a collaboration between sectors, namely the SBC and Gender teams to understand specific barriers that were limiting construction and utilization of latrines in the area and how they could work together to address them. Using localized knowledge through engaging with team members embedded in these communities, the teams were

able to base the discussion on the daily experiences, observations and interactions with the community members.

The teams identified two main challenges; firstly, some community members still believed in WASH taboos like fecal matters (ngacin) from different individuals is not mixed together and in-laws do not share pit latrines. Secondly, latrine construction projects were being left to women which meant that the WASH practices in the households were seen as women's responsibility. Based on this knowledge, the WASH team decided to invite the SBC and Gender teams to accompany them to the field during triggering (the initial meeting with the community) to engage the community and figure out the best interventions that would address the challenges.

The SBC team doubled down on key messages promoting the uptake of positive WASH practices which were delivered by the cross-sectoral teams to the community through trigger videos and experiential manyatta wagon shows. The shows engaged the community in behavior demonstrations, learning, rehearsals and practice. Through the Eyok Kiyani/Kengalanena ("our discussion") Apolou's SBC campaign, Male Change Agents (MCAs) and Natural Leaders, identified role models in the community, encouraged adoption of behaviors that promote gender equality and male involvement.

The Gender team focused on reviewing the different stages of latrine construction with community

members. Together with the SBC and WASH teams, they analyzed the workload sharing among men and women and realized that women were taking up most of the work including fetching water, pit excavation, building and plastering the walls. To help the community increase male engagement and reduce the women's workload, the team supported households to make commitment plans where men were responsible for some of the key tasks notably pit excavation and building the latrine walls.

During community meetings, the three sectoral teams, MCAs, Natural Leaders and Local District Government leaders, delivered an integrated message to the community promoting the uptake of positive WASH behaviors and male involvement in the latrine construction process.

To ensure successful monitoring and follow up, the WASH team received a tailored SBC training in interpersonal communication (IPC) and participatory group facilitation skills to empower them to continue supporting the communities on behavior change. The team also does joint follow up visits with the Gender team to review the workload sharing commitment plans with households.

While latrine coverage needs to be increased, Apolou has also realized that some households that have latrines continue to experience open defecation behavior calling for other interventions to increase the utilization of latrines.

3 CHA is an approach that allows households to achieve 'clean household status' by working in four principle areas; Demand Creation, Behaviors, WASH product and Service Supply and Enabling Environment

4 Apolou defines a basic sanitation service as a sanitation facility that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact, and is not shared with other households; these are pit latrines with a slab

Effects of the internal collaboration

The results of internal collaboration in Apolou Activity will take time to show significant changes to the WASH indicators. On a positive note, there has been observable changes in the communities where the cross-sectoral design and implementation has been applied as well as testimonies from community leaders on key behavior changes so far.

Prior to the internal collaboration, women took up most of the latrine construction work load ranging from fetching water, pit excavation, putting up the roof, building and plastering the walls. The resulting construction had shallow pits and low walls that required one to crawl to enter the latrine. There is a cultural belief in the intervention area that men should not crawl so the low walls limited the utilization of latrines by both men

and women. The latrines constructed post the collaboration among the cross sectoral teams have deeper holes which has improved the quality of the latrines and higher walls which has largely improved latrine utilization by both men and women. These changes are attributed to the higher involvement of men in the latrine construction process.

According to the Local Council (LCI) of Kokuwam Village in Kotido District, the collaboration has made this village a model village in the district, “men and women work together as one due to the gender messages men received, which is why you see each homestead with functional latrines and handwashing facilities.”

Apolou is scaling up this cross sectoral approach to more intervention areas as well as across different sectors to maximize the impact of the Activity.



Latrine constructed by men and women post the collaboration design. Photo: Apolou Mercy Corps



A MALE CHANGE AGENT'S TRANSFORMATION IN UGANDA



Robert and his wife cleaning utensils after a meal, Omuru Village, Abim District, Uganda, 30 July 2020 / Chrysestom Kato, CRS

At the end of one of the dusty roads in Abim district of Uganda, a seemingly quiet house stands with a neatly kept compound surrounded with an equally organized garden. Robert Achila, the head of this household located in Omuru village is a Male Change Agent (MCA). Robert, a 33-year-old father of five can't hide his smile talking about how much his life has changed for the better ever since he undertook a gender training organized by the Nuyok project in the area.

Life's struggles and the desire to make ends meet pushed Robert into part-time mining in order to earn a living. But because this kind of work

was not well paying, he resorted to alcohol, and every evening he would team up with his peers to drink their troubles away. "Previously my home was a war zone; I looked at my wife as an enemy and every evening after my drinking sprees, I would return ready to battle." A rather remorseful Robert recalls: "I spent the little money I earned on myself and I left the running of the home to my wife. I do not even know how she could make ends meet but I never really cared about that because I believed that the home was the woman's business" he adds.

During one of his evening drinking sprees, Robert and his peers were

introduced to a new project in the area by one of the Local Council (LC) members. "The LC told us that the project was looking for change agents to train them on gender roles and in turn these agents will train their peers" he says.

From the MCA training, Robert confesses that he got more than he bargained for. He received life changing lessons and he has since, not looked at life

the same way. "The MCA training taught me that we are all equal human beings, and we all deserve equal opportunities. I now treat my wife as a fellow adult and above all a human being and not as my property (because that is what I had been seeing in my culture.). I learnt about the importance of sharing roles and dividing labor in a home and this has brought harmony back into our lives."

Robert, who previously looked at his home as a war zone, now acknowledges that his home is his safe haven. He realized the importance of living in a clean and hygienic environment and he has since adopted these good hygiene practices. He has constructed





Robert Achilla and his wife Mary share a light moment. / Chrysestom Kato/ CRS

a latrine and a tippy tap for his household. Robert has also influenced most of his peers into adopting this way of life and, continues to pass on this knowledge to different groups of people whenever he gets the opportunity. “I would like these lessons to reach everyone so they can look at life from a different perspective. I have shared my experience even on radio programs and I hope I change more lives out there” he says.

Mary, Robert’s wife, cannot hide her joy talking about her husband’s new behavior. “He never treated me as a wife. He never helped with anything here at home. We lived together but we were enemies. And now, to see how affectionate he is towards me after the training amazes me. He holds my hand when we are walking, he helps with household chores, we plan for all our incomes together and we also solve all problems as a couple. I am now a happy wife” she says.

The Nuyok project funded by USAID/BHA and implemented by Catholic Relief Services and its partners, rolled out the Male Change Agents training model to help bridge the gender gap in four districts of the Karamoja subregion including Napak, Abim, Nabilatuk and Nakapiripirit.



“I AM SETTING AN EXAMPLE FOR MY SONS” ONGOM RICHARD OKIDI, UGANDA



Richard Ongom and his family pose in front of their house in Gangming Southwest Village, Abim District, Uganda, 30 July 2020 / Chrysestom Kato, CRS

“My name is Ongom Richard Okidi from Lotuke subcounty, Gangming Southwest Village in Abim district of Uganda. I am a father of four and husband to one wife. Farming is my source of income.

I was raised with the old tradition and outlook of life, as a result, I believed that a married man does not have to do any household chore at home, and this relegated all the burden of housework to the woman. Because of how I was raised, I think I was a dictator in my home. I listened to no one because I thought I was always right. This really damaged my home; there was no peace and no cohesion between us as a family.”

In July 2019, Ongom was enrolled in the USAID/BHA funded Nuyok Program that aims to build resilience to shocks, enhance livelihoods, and improve food and nutrition security for vulnerable rural families in Karamoja region of Uganda. The program uses an integrated approach to address food and nutrition security in Karamoja through the implementation of activities guided by four purpose areas including: community capacity, resilience, livelihood improvement, and nutritional enhancement. He states: “I was selected to be one of the Male Change Agents in my community; a role I took up with

a lot of enthusiasm. I was taken through trainings which covered different aspects and modules. Module one covered topics such as; Successful families and communities, gender and power, division of labor, healthy and unhealthy relationships, effective communication – a way to healthier and happier families, men and women as partners in decision making, thinking about partnership in decision making, personal changes and fatherhood. While module two covered topics related to Maternal Child Health and Nutrition and Water Sanitation and Hygiene including: Men involvement in pregnancy and Antenatal Care, dietary diversity for women before, during and after pregnancy, understanding child nutrition, dietary diversity for children 6-23 months, caring for my child, hand washing and safe disposal of feces.

This is when I realized that I was doing things the wrong way. I realized that I can not be solving new problems with old solutions and I had to adjust and adapt with the changes in society today. I learnt that I have to be helping out my wife with some household chores and I am already seeing results with this. She does not get so fatigued and, doing things together means we bond even better. I have two sons and I want them to be respectable husbands and fathers when they grow up. I am using myself as an example because I believe that if I can’t reach out to the whole world, let me at least reach out to my sons.” Ongom Richard Okidi.

FROM A STREET BEGGAR TO A BUSINESS OWNER



Maria Lopusa poses for a photo outside her business premises (the retail fashion store) in Napak district, Uganda. Chrysestom Kato/ CRS Uganda.

My name is Maria Lopuwa, I am 39 years old, married with 8 children (4 boys and 4 girls). I am a resident of Lorengocora sub county in Napak district, Uganda. I am a primary school dropout and because of that I could hardly find decent work for myself, except for farming which was often hindered by the climate issues in this area (Karamoja).

I therefore chose to go to Kampala with the hope that I shall find better employment opportunities but all in vain. I ended up a street beggar in Kampala and this exposed me to so many dangers, but this was the only way I could earn a living.

I received several phone calls

from my family and friends back home; they told me that I had been registered as one of the vulnerable people in Nuyok's Rural Entrepreneurship Access Program (REAP) which was aimed at helping vulnerable women in Napak district. At first, I was not convinced, having tasted city life; compared to the life I had back home, I could not think about coming back. When they mentioned that the program was to train us about businesses and give us a start up grant, I was impressed because, I had so many business ideas from Kampala but had no money to implement them. I therefore came back and joined several other women. We were trained in business

and at the end of the training we were divided into groups of three and each group given a startup of UGX 750,000. I advised my group members to venture into three business areas for the start to see how they were all performing and then, if need be, zero down onto one. We therefore invested in animal slaughtering (where we buy animals, slaughter them, and sell the meat), green gram trade (where we buy green gram in bulk, and resell it) as well as a retail fashion store. We quickly discontinued the produce business because we realized it needed a huge sum

of money and it was also seasonal. The slaughtering business was also often affected by the local animal quarantines. As a result, we decided to focus on the retail fashion store.

The business is doing very well because there are not many retail fashion stores. We often get our stock from Soroti and on market days we carry our merchandise to the markets and sell it there too. We have been able to double to business value in this period and we hope that we shall soon expand to other villages of Napak district.

We can assist each other as we can borrow from our savings at a good rate. This has helped us cater for our children's' school needs and our family needs too.



“I WISH I HAD KNOWN ABOUT THE REAP PROGRAM EARLIER, MY LIFE WOULD BE MUCH BETTER.”



Hellen Lotukei attends to her business in Napak district, Uganda. Kato Chrysestom, CRS

Twenty-three-year-old Lotukei Hellen is the second of 7 children born to peasant parents in Napak district. The peasant nature of the family meant that there was not enough money to cater for the whole family and as a result she dropped out of school in primary 6. “When I dropped out of school, I was devastated because I had wanted to further my education. I chose to go to Eastern Uganda (Busia district) and look for work as a house help; I eventually found some work. I would earn little money which I would send back home to take care of our family. The work was, however, so hectic for me and after a few years, I chose to return home.” says Hellen.

Hellen was then pressured into marriage, with her family hoping that the bride price would be a steppingstone to help the family. “I

hoped that marriage would solve my problems, but it instead made life worse for me.” Hellen remarks. Hellen stepped out of the abusive marriage with two children and chose to give herself a fresh start.

During the mapping of the Rural Entrepreneurship Access Program (REAP) and the identification of participants, the community named Hellen as one of the most vulnerable women given her past troubles and together with other identified women, they were taken through a business training. “In the training, they taught us about business identification, business management and business sustainability.” Hellen recalls.

At the end of the business training, Hellen was teamed up with two other women to form a group of

three and together they were given a start-up grant of UGX 750,000. Hellen went on to say: “we put our business training to use, we took time watching what other people were doing and identified business gaps. Initially we wanted to venture into livestock, but there was an animal quarantine at the time. We therefore chose the produce business because most groups had ventured into retail business” explained Hellen when asked why they chose the produce business.

Hellen and the team can buy produce from bigger whole sellers in Soroti town and they distribute this produce to different retailers and buyers. They have been able to grow their business up to UGX 2,160,000 and they are looking at expanding it even further. “Our plan is to have our own structure (store) in the next 5 years and to also be able to venture into the livestock business.” Says Hellen.

Their business has been challenged by the COVID 19 pandemic which included a lockdown put in place and as a result their business stalled.

“I am eternally grateful to the Nuyok project and the REAP program. I am now able to support my family and I have interested my parents into business. I am now supporting my younger siblings in school so that they attain the education which I couldn’t, and I am also able to support my two children. I wish I had known about the REAP project earlier, my life would be much better.” Hellen concludes.



RESTORING HOPE TO VULNERABLE WOMEN IN NAPAK DISTRICT, UGANDA



Cecilia Itae (middle) poses for a photo with her group members. Napak District, Uganda/ Kato Chrysestom, CRS

Cecilia Itae is a handicapped mother from Ngoleriet Sub County in Napak district. She always had difficulties expressing herself in the community because of her physical handicap that made her feel less of a part of the community: “I was often marginalized, and I could not fully benefit from some opportunities because I am blind.” I therefore always kept to myself, and this had left me depressed and lonely.” Cecilia remarks at the start of our conversation.

Cecilia had lived her life through hardships, surviving on collecting and selling firewood in her community a business that was quite risky for her

given her physical disability.

She heard about and joined the Nuyok-REAP program after a community engagement activity where the community participants were tasked to identify the most vulnerable women to be supported by the project. Cecilia was one of the community members identified and she joined a group of others to be trained and sensitized about business management.

After the selection by the community, Cecilia and the group were taken through a rigorous business training that saw them equipped with business knowledge and skills

before a grant of UGX 750,000 was given to them to set up their own business. “We chose to start up a retail business with the grant given to us because it was manageable for us given my incapacitation and there were no retail shops in our village.” It was an opportunity for us to bring goods closer to our community and to earn from it. We buy our merchandise from Kangole in Napak during market days and use a boda boda (local transportation) to transport our merchandise to the stall” says Cecilia.

Cecilia is part of a group of 3 women who have since been able to grow their business from a grant to UGX 750,000 to UGX 1,480,000 between November 2019 when they received the grant to August 2021 when this story was documented.

Cecilia Itae (middle) poses for a photo with her group members. Napak District, Uganda/ Kato Chrysestom, CRS

“I now feel part of this group and together we have bought a cow which we intend to grow and multiply. We are not dependent on our husbands, but we are also contributors to our families’ wellbeing” she concludes.

The Nuyok project, implemented by CRS, CARITAS and BOMA have rolled out a REAP program which aims at helping the most vulnerable women in the communities of Napak district. To date the program has benefitted 1,335 direct participants across the district.

RESILIENCE LEARNING ACTIVITY FACT SHEET



Women harvest hay at Mlima Chui fodder demonstration site Isiolo County. Photo USAID Kenya

Following large-scale droughts that devastated the Horn of Africa in 2011 and 2012, USAID and other development partners support efforts to build resilience against future shocks to the region. Coordinated resilience programming has seen positive results in the arid and semi-arid lands, including an overall drop in households living below the poverty line and an increase in perceived resiliency among local communities. Constant evidence-based learning to inform this programming and promote adaptive management is necessary for progress to continue.

The Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) is in year three of a five-year program funded by USAID Kenya and East Africa, USAID Somalia, and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. RLA, operating both a secretariat and evidence-based learning initiative, works with regional, national, and local organizations and institutions in Northern and Southeastern Kenya, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa to support entities to apply collaboration, learning, and adapting (CLA) principles to build their capacities for analytics, adaptive management, improving knowledge management, and communications

to advance USAID's objectives that support a pathway to sustainability for resiliency actors.

OUR WORK

RLA works with the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG), the Southeastern Kenya coordination mechanism (SEK), the HoRN of Africa network (HoRN) and the Somalia Resilience Partnership (SRP) to strengthen each entity's ability to lead, manage, and advance CLA principles.



OBJECTIVES

Through partnerships within the HoRN, Somalia, and in Kenya, RLA works with regional entities (e.g., Intergovernmental Authority on Development and National Drought Management Administration), sub-national, national, and regional governments through coordination platforms (PREG, SEK), development organizations, and community and other resiliency actors to meet the following objectives:

- Increase local analytic capacity,
- Facilitate learning for adaptive management,
- Improve knowledge management and strategic communication for local and host county organizations and
- Establish and strengthen systems and networks for CLA.

APPLYING CLA PRINCIPLES

Using CLA to apply these objective RLA's work with regional and local governments has led to the ongoing develop of initiatives, such as:

Creation of GIS Training Curriculum:

PREG and SEK county officials used GIS training to inform evidence-based decision making for county investments into resiliency initiatives based on maps generated. This initiative was also shared during the RLA-facilitated annual HoRN learning event to further include more GIS investment across the HoRN.

Co-Creation and Co-Facilitation:

County officials in the PREG, SEK, and RLA Somalia program are working to co-design, co- create, and co-finance activities between county governments, local organizations, USAID programs, and other donors to optimize resiliency program investments.

The ability for county officials to leverage RLA support by continuing to apply CLA principles will further PREG, SEK, and HoRN initiatives as local, national, and resiliency actors continue to forge their own pathway to sustainability.

RLA Snapshot

BUDGET: USD \$19.5 Million

DURATION: 2019-2024

ACTIVITY LOCATIONS

Northern Kenya, Southeastern Kenya, Somalia, and other HoRN countries (DRC, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda)

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

ACDI/VOCA (Northern Kenya and the Horn of Africa)

Mercy Corps (Somalia)

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