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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Five Years of Progress

Joint Work Planning Snapshot: Experiences from Kenya

RESULTS THROUGH 2024





Evidence of Progress and Collaboration in Resilience Building

A SNAPSHOT REPRESENTING JWP IN ACTION

Resilience is formally defined at USAID as “the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.”

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Photo Captions

Front Cover: Women harvest hay at Mlima Chui fodder demonstration site - as part of the USAID's program "Partnering to Promote Resilience and Economic Growth in Arid and Semi-arid Lands" in Isiolo County Credits : Ranelle Sykes

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Foreword

The Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) of Kenya are areas of remarkable potential and resilience, yet they continue to face significant challenges. The ASAL regions in Kenya confront recurring adversities—from the sweeping impacts of climate change and drought to socio-economic challenges that affect health, education, and infrastructure. These challenges underscore the importance of a collaborative approach to development and resilience building, bringing together government agencies, development partners, private sector and community stakeholders in a united effort to address and mitigate these pressing issues.

This publication on Joint Work Planning success stories offers an inspiring look at the collective strides made through a partnership that involves the Ministry of East African Community (EAC), The ASALs and Regional Development, Council of Governors County Governments, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and numerous other partners. The Joint Work Planning (JWP) framework exemplifies an inclusive model for integrated development, showcasing how multi-sectoral and multi-agency collaboration can drive long-lasting solutions tailored to local priorities.

At the heart of the JWP's success lies the collaborative effort among key stakeholders to create a model for coordinated action across multiple counties. This publication represents a shared commitment to deliver sustainable development outcomes by leveraging each partner's unique strengths and resources. It is a testament to the power of collective action in achieving impact, ensuring that every invested effort contributes to the broader vision of resilient, empowered communities. Through the JWP framework, we see enhanced cooperation across critical sectors—health, agriculture, climate-smart environmental practices, water, sanitation, and hygiene interventions—demonstrating the benefits of co-planning, co-implementation, and co-monitoring for the efficient use of resources and maximization of impact.

The State Department for the ASALs and Regional Development is mandated to drive transformative development in Kenya's ASAL regions, and partnerships are central to achieving this goal. Through initiatives like the ASALs Partnership Coordination Framework (ASALs PCF), and ASALs Resilience Programming Framework (ASALS RPF) we are working to align efforts and create synergies amongst the National Government, County Governments, and partners in key areas, including policy and strategy development, planning and resource mobilization, implementation and robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems. Anchoring projects within this framework is essential for sustaining the impact of development efforts, with each partner playing a vital role in ensuring that these initiatives are both impactful and sustainable.

In recent years, ASAL communities have seen critical advancements. We have increased resilience through community-driven projects, provided humanitarian assistance to vulnerable households, enhanced rangeland rehabilitation, and strengthened early warning systems. Nonetheless, challenges persist, exacerbated by global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, locust invasions, and regional conflicts that bring new layers of complexity. Recent El Niño rains, which caused severe flooding in counties such as Marsabit, Garissa, and Turkana, have highlighted the urgency of sustainable development solutions that can mitigate the impacts of climate-related events.

The Ministry's strategy for ASAL development is built on five priorities: effective coordination, resilience building, social and cultural integration, climate change mitigation and adaptation, food and nutrition security, financial sustainability, knowledge management and governance. In pursuit of these priorities, the Government has benefited from the steadfast support of development partners such as USAID, UN agencies, NGOs, and other non-state actors. Together, we have made strides toward the Ending Drought Emergency (EDE) strategy, implemented projects focused on food and nutrition security, and launched climate action initiatives, including the Build Resilience for Food and Nutrition Security (BREFONS) and Dryland Climate Action for Community Drought Resilience (DCADR) projects.

Our partnerships have been instrumental in creating a foundation for sustainable socio-economic development, and we remain committed to deepening these collaborations. By continuing to support joint initiatives in humanitarian aid, resilience-building, and sustainable development programming, we are creating a future where ASAL communities are better equipped to withstand and overcome both natural and economic challenges.

As we move forward with the joint work planning approach of implementing programs, it is essential to build on our achievements while addressing emerging challenges. Real progress will require inclusive and equitable opportunities for youth, women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to contribute to transformative changes in their communities. Their involvement is key to fostering the economic, environmental, and social resilience necessary for long-term development.

This publication is a tribute to the dedication and partnership that have driven the success of Joint Work Planning in Kenya's ASALs. May this collaborative spirit continue to guide our efforts toward a future of shared prosperity, resilience, and sustainable growth for all.

Thank you.

Kello Harsama

Principal Secretary,
State Department for the ASALs and Regional Development
Ministry of East African Community (EAC), The ASALs and Regional Development

Foreword by the Chairman, Council of Governors

In today's global landscape, marked by climate change, socio-economic disparities, and unprecedented disruptions, collaboration has become a necessity for sustainable development. In Kenya, our counties—particularly those in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs)—face significant challenges, including recurrent droughts, limited access to markets, and systemic food insecurity. These issues require county governments to play a pivotal role in fostering local development and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. However, this responsibility cannot be fulfilled in isolation.

The Council of Governors (CoG), established under the Intergovernmental Relations Act (IGRA) of 2012, is a non-partisan body that represents the 47 county governors in Kenya. The CoG is mandated to provide visionary leadership, facilitate inter-county consultations, promote best practices, and act as a unified voice on policy issues affecting counties. Central to this mandate is fostering collaborative frameworks that address pressing development challenges by uniting communities, national government institutions, development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), and the private sector.

At the heart of this collaborative effort lies joint work planning—a transformative approach that enables multi-sectoral dialogue, co-planning, co-implementation, and co-monitoring. This strategy ensures that all stakeholders align their efforts to achieve greater collective impact while avoiding duplication and optimizing resources. As counties often grapple with constrained budgets, JWP serves as a bridge to leverage external funding, technical expertise, and innovations, enabling counties to implement projects that would otherwise remain underfunded or unachieved. Through this framework, counties can co-create sustainable solutions that complement their own investments, ensuring that critical services such as healthcare, food security, and infrastructure development are not compromised by financial shortfalls.

A critical aspect of collaboration is building resilience in the face of climate change and natural hazards. Counties, working in tandem with development partners and local communities, are committed to strengthening multi-hazard

early warning systems and enhancing joint participatory scenario planning for disaster management. These efforts are further complemented by a commitment to building resilient food systems through structured intergovernmental consultations and coordinated programming. Such transformative programs align closely with the Council's mission to deepen devolution through consultation, capacity building, and strategic partnerships.

Moreover, joint work planning provides an inclusive platform where all voices are heard, including marginalized groups, persons with disabilities, women, youth, and minorities. By ensuring equitable participation, this approach integrates diverse experiences and aspirations into the development, implementation, and evaluation of policies, leading to strategies that are both sustainable and equitable. Transparency and accountability are central to these processes, reflecting the Council's commitment to fair participation and progress.

In addition, the CoG recognizes that knowledge sharing is a powerful driver of innovation and effective solutions. By building the capacity of county institutions to collaborate and adapt, we can address local priorities while contributing to global development goals, such as the United Nations Agenda 2030. Strengthened intergovernmental relations, partnerships, and joint planning processes eliminate duplication, pool resources, and enhance collective action, creating a stronger foundation for sustainable development.

This foreword is an open invitation to stakeholders—local and international—to join hands with us in shaping a future defined by innovation, inclusivity, and collaboration. Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities, ensuring no one is left behind as we work toward a resilient and prosperous Kenya.



H.E. FCPA, Ahmed Abdullahi EGH,
The Governor -Wajir County
Chairman, Council of Governors

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About the USAID-Resilience Learning Activity

Since 2019, the USAID Kenya/East Africa (KEA) Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) has supported regional and country-level institutions to conduct resilience learning activities in the Horn of Africa aimed at contributing to the region's pathways to resilience. At the regional level, RLA has supported USAID's investments in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, and Somalia through the Horn of Africa Resilience Network (HoRN) to strengthen regional and crossnational collaboration and improve evidence-based resilience programming. At the Kenya country level, RLA has provided critical support to two coordination mechanisms: i) the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) in six counties in Northeastern Kenya (Isiolo, Garissa, Marsabit, Samburu, Turkana, and Wajir) and ii) the Southeastern Kenya (SEK) mechanism in three counties (Kitui, Makueni and Taita Taveta.)

About this Publication

This publication highlights inspiring collaboration stories from USAID's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and Southeastern Kenya (SEK) mechanisms, showcasing how coordinated efforts are transforming communities across Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions. Through these stories, readers gain insight into the innovative strategies, partnerships, and resilient spirit that drive sustainable development in counties facing complex challenges. By documenting these successes, this booklet not only celebrates the collective impact of USAID, local governments, implementing partners, and communities but also serves as a valuable resource for fostering cross-county learning and collaboration. This publication is a testament to the power of partnership, providing practical examples of how shared goals and coordinated action can deliver lasting, positive change.

Acronyms

3Cs	Co-planning, Co-implementation, and Co-monitoring	CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ARVs	Antiretrovirals	DCADR	Dryland Climate Action for Community Drought Resilience
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land	DER	Drought Emergency Response
ASALs PCF	ASALs Partnership Coordination Framework	DRSLP	Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Program
BFCI	Baby-Friendly Community Initiative	EAC	East African Community
BREFONS	Build Resilience for Food and Nutrition Security	EDE	Ending Drought Emergency
BSGs	Business Support Groups	EEF	Elephant Exclusion Fence
CBC	Competence-Based Curriculum	FCDC	Frontier Counties Development Council
CBCR	Cross-Border Community Resilience Activity	FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
CCC	Comprehensive Care Clinic	FP	Fence Plan
CCECs	County Executive Committee Members	GAPs	Good Agricultural Practices
CHAs	Community Health Assistants	GBV	Gender-Based Violence
CHPs	Community Health Providers	HoA	Horn of Africa
CHUs	Community Health Unit	ICCM	Integrated Community Case Management
CHVs	Community Health Volunteers	IGRA	Intergovernmental Relations Act
CIDPs	County Integrated Development Plans	IMAM	Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition
CCI	Community Center of Innovation	INK Fund	Impact for Northern Kenya Fund
CMS	Content Management System	IPs	Implementing Partners
CRM	Customer Relationship Management	JWP	Joint Work Planning

KCDMS	Kenya Crops and Dairy Market Systems
KM	Knowledge Management
KMS	Knowledge Management Systems
KRCS	Kenya Red Cross Society
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
LDOs	Local Development Organizations
LMA	Livestock Marketing Association
LMS	Livestock Market Systems
MCA s	Members of the County Assembly
MIS	Management Information System
M2MSG	Mother-to-Mother Support Groups
MSMEs	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
MUAC	Mid-Upper Arm Circumference
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NCRC	National Crime Research Center
NHIF	National Health Insurance Fund
NIA	National Irrigation Authority
NRT	Northern Rangelands Trust
OVCs	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PCF	ASALs Partnership Coordination Framework
PEP	Postexposure Prophylaxis

PrEP	Pre-exposure Prophylaxis
PWD	Persons Living with Disabilities
R4N	REAP for Nutrition
REGAL-AG	Resilience and Economic Growth in the Arid Lands Accelerated Growth
SBDC	Small Business Development Centers
SHA	Social Health Authority
SILC	Savings and Internal Lending Communities
SIIL	Strategic Innovation and Implementation Lab
SLI	Sequencing, Layering, and Integration
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan Associations
WARMA	Water Resources Authority of Kenya
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WDCs	Ward Development Committees
WFZ	Wildlife Friendly Zone
WFP	World Food Programme
WRUA	Water Resource Users Association

Glossary of Key Terms

CAPACITY	encompasses the knowledge, skills, and motivations, as well as the relationships that enable an actor—an individual, an organization, or a network—to take action to design and implement solutions to local development challenges, to learn and adapt from that action, and to innovate and transform over time.
CO-CREATION	Co-creation is an intentional design approach. It aims to foster innovative approaches to problems through a participatory process. Co-creation's goal is to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome. Co-creation is distinct from other collaborative or participatory practices because it involves sharing power and/or decision making. Cocreation is transparent, time-limited, and organized. It can be used to address a specific problem, challenge, question, or to gain further insight into a topic of interest.
CO-DESIGN	Co-design is a collaborative process that utilizes collective brainstorming and problem-solving techniques to develop appropriate and suitable solutions.
FISCAL YEAR (FY)	The 12 months from October 1 to September 30 are used for financial planning and reporting purposes.
GIS	A computer-based system for capturing, managing, archiving, analyzing, querying, and presenting spatial information. GIS technology applies geographic science with tools for understanding and collaboration. It helps people reach a common goal: to gain actionable intelligence from all types of data.
HORN	The Horn of Africa Resilience Network (HoRN) was established by USAID in 2012 to support the use of mutually enforcing activities to build resilience capacities to shocks and to support learning and collaboration across the network.
IMPACT	Positive and negative long-term effects on identifiable population groups produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended, or unintended. These effects can be economical, sociocultural, institutional, environmental, technological, or of other types.
IMPLEMENTATION	Implementation is the third phase of the project life cycle, during which the project management plan is executed, monitored, and controlled. In this phase, the design is finalized and used to build the deliverables.
INNOVATIONS	Refers to service components, other practices or products that are new or perceived as new. A “set of interventions” including not only a new technology, educational component or community initiative, but also the managerial processes necessary for successful implementation.
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	Knowledge management (KM) is defined as the systematic processes, or range of practices, used by organizations to identify, capture, store, create, update, represent, and distribute knowledge for use, awareness, and learning across the organization and its ecosystem.

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) are any kind of system that stores and retrieves knowledge, improves collaboration, locates knowledge sources, mines repositories for hidden knowledge, captures and uses knowledge or in some other way enhances the KM process.
LOCAL CAPACITY STRENGTHENING	a strategic and intentional investment in the process of partnering with local actors, individuals, organizations, and networks—to jointly improve the performance of a local system to produce locally valued and sustainable development outcomes.
NDMA	The National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), under the Ministry of Devolution and ASALs, is the national authority responsible for drought risk management.
PARTICIPATORY APPROACH	Involvement of communities, organizations and people in any organized activity to achieve a common goal.
PREG	The Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) brings together humanitarian and development partners to build and strengthen resilience among vulnerable pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya. Membership includes both USAID programs and implementing partners in nine Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) counties and builds on community-identified strengths and priorities.
SCALABILITY	Ease or difficulty of scaling up a practice, based on the attributes (or determinants) of success, which have previously been identified in research on the diffusion of innovation and through practical experience.
STAKEHOLDERS	Individuals, communities, non-governmental organizations, private organizations, parastatals, government agencies, financiers, and others having an interest or a “stake” in a project or Activity and its outcome. Primary stakeholders are those ultimately affected, either positively or negatively. Secondary stakeholders are the intermediaries in the process of carrying out RLA/project.
RESILIENCE	USAID defines resilience to the recurrent crisis as the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth.
RLA	The Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) is a five-year, USAID-funded initiative (2019-2024). It supports regional, national, and local organizations and institutions in Northern Kenya, Somalia, and the Horn of Africa, to undertake analysis while strengthening their capacities for analytics; facilitating learning for adaptive management; and improving KM and communication to align with USAID’s pathways to resilience and the Horn of Africa Resilience Framework.
SUSTAINABILITY	The ability to continue effectively once direct donor funding/program support has ended.
THEORY OF CHANGE	A theory of change explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts.

INTRODUCTION

Background

“CLA Is Our Heartbeat”: Understanding Collective Action, Collective Impact through the PREG and SEK Mechanisms in Kenya

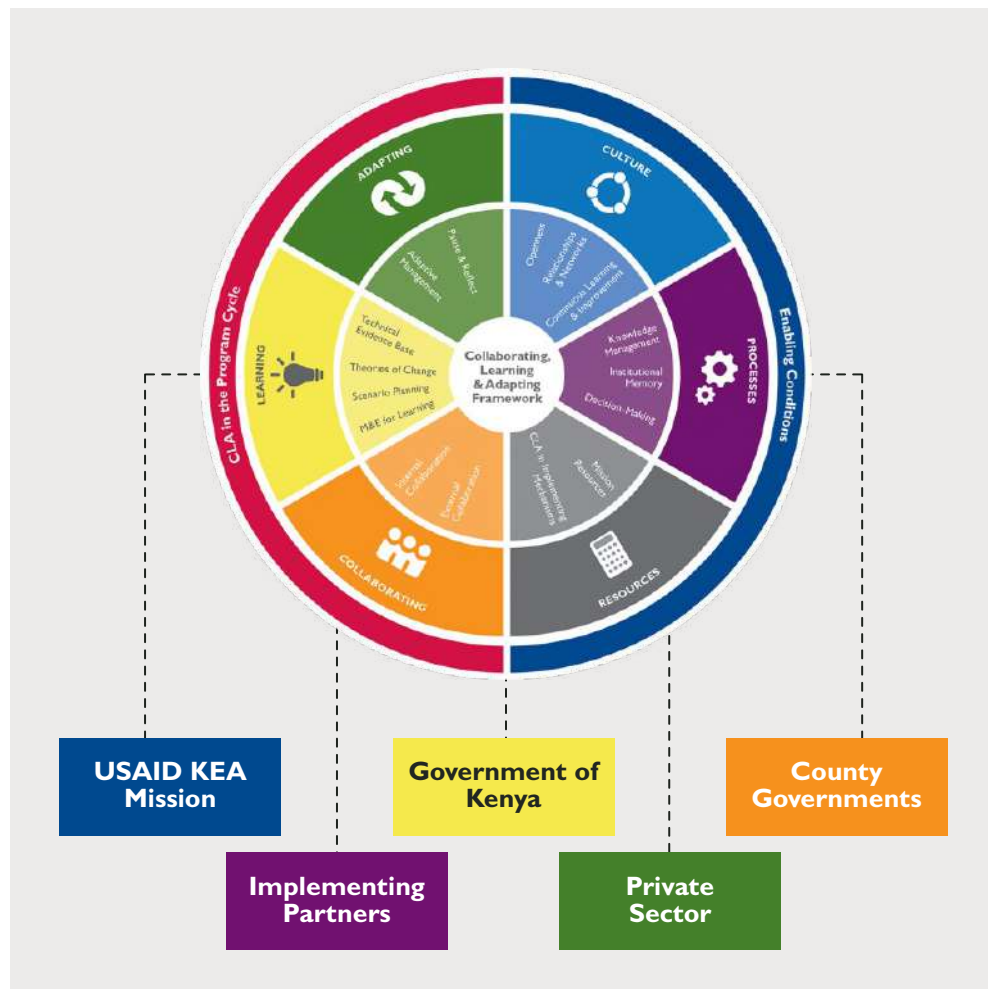
Collective Action in USAID Programing

USAID defines Collective Action as a strategic, intentional, and agreed-upon process that engages stakeholders to take joint actions in pursuit of shared objectives or addressing a common issue. This approach prioritizes stakeholder engagement, fostering cohesion, and empowering participants to lead efforts in implementing their own agendas, ultimately achieving lasting change.

By identifying and involving relevant stakeholders, Collective Action offers a coordinated and deliberate effort to tackle complex development challenges such as poverty, access to education, climate change, child mortality, water scarcity, and corruption. These issues often transcend the capabilities of individual organizations, with fragmented or competing efforts reducing overall effectiveness.

To address shared problems, Collective Action emphasizes the alignment and integration of stakeholder actions through clearly defined structures and processes. For example, member associations in specific sectors may focus on established structures such as membership and communication protocols, while participatory consultations for strategic planning follow set processes tailored to specific issues or stakeholders.

Effective Collective Action is characterized by a high degree of both structure and process, allowing for robust collaboration that aligns the goals and work of participants. This organized approach facilitates sustainable solutions and maximizes impact, offering a transformative pathway to address the most pressing development challenges.



The figure below demonstrates a comparison of program approaches along a Spectrum of Collaboration

	Individual Action	Coordinated Action	Collective Action
	DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION (low collaboration)	INFORMATION, COORDINATION, CONSULTATION (moderate collaboration)	ALIGNMENT (high collaboration)
Approach Participants and Relationships	Individual organizations and end-users. Some formal/informal coordination with other organizations.	Participants include other stakeholders to the problem. May or may not be consistent in participation.	Members who participate consistently, preferably representing diverse stakeholders of the problem.
Level of Engagement in Collaboration	Low engagement between one organization and others.	Low-moderate engagement: May be one-time or infrequently repeated.	Moderate-high engagement: Sustained over time including regular communication, joint decisions and actions.
Shared Purpose	Organization has its own funding, objectives and mission. Other organizations may be working on the same problem with different goals or expected results.	Participants are all working toward the same general goals with respect to the problem.	Members align their understanding of explicitly agreed upon goals with respect to the problem.
Coordination of Action	Individual organization's actions informed by limited knowledge of others' actions.	Participant actions aligned toward the same goal, attempting to avoid duplication or contradiction.	Collective problem analysis and aligned purpose leads to joint decisions on actions.
Commitment from Stakeholders	Stakeholders/individual organizations retain full autonomy.	Participants have some accountability to one another or to the same end-users/goals.	Members have influence over one another's actions and are held accountable.

Adapted from USAID Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership “Defining Collective Action Approaches in WASH” April 2020, and USAID/Vietnam Learns “Collective Action for Environmental Health Study” September 2020

Why Resource Collective Action? Due to increasing complexity and uncertainty where USAID works, development challenges typically exceed the mandates of any individual organization or institution involved, and multiple efforts by different stakeholders have limited impact and can often make the complex problem worse. Therefore, designing and facilitating diverse stakeholder collaboration on development efforts including with host country governments, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholder groups has become an essential way of implementing USAID programs. Collective Action is one example of a collaborative approach that directly and practically enhances locally-led approaches and represents an evolution of programming models that put local actors in the driver's seat.

The USAID PREG and SEK Mechanisms in Kenya

The 2011 drought in northern Kenya was a devastating event, pushing more than 3.75 million people into crisis and requiring urgent food assistance. This highlighted the need for a strategic shift in how USAID approached resilience programming in the region. USAID sought to reduce the humanitarian caseload in the Horn of Africa

PUT SIMPLY, RESILIENCE IS THE ABILITY TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE WELL-BEING DESPITE SHOCKS AND STRESSES.

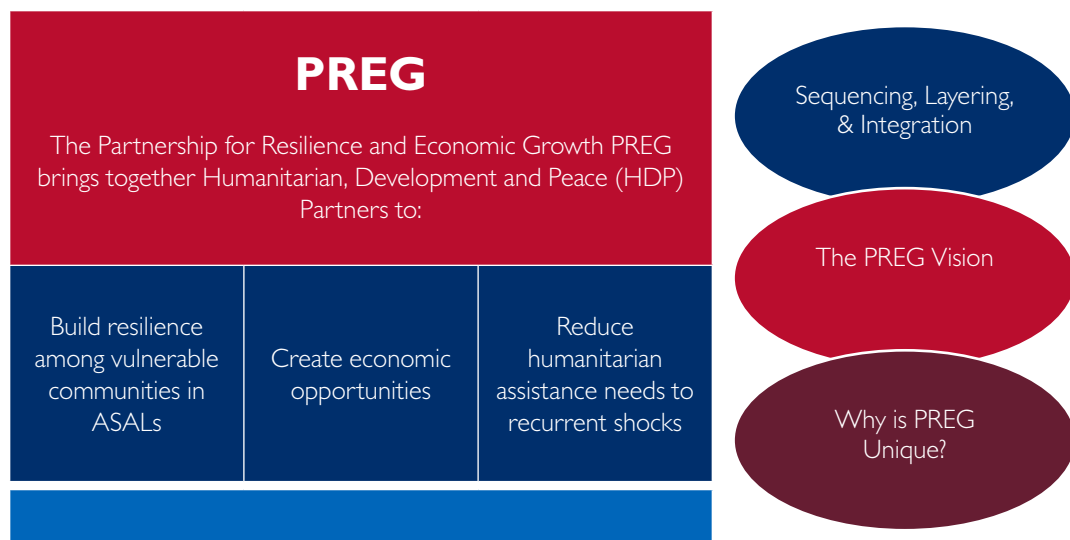
RESILIENCE IS FORMALLY DEFINED AT USAID AS “THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE, HOUSEHOLDS, COMMUNITIES, COUNTRIES, AND SYSTEMS TO MITIGATE, ADAPT TO, AND RECOVER FROM SHOCKS AND STRESSES IN A MANNER THAT REDUCES CHRONIC VULNERABILITY AND FACILITATES INCLUSIVE GROWTH.”

Source: USAID Resilience Policy-June 2024

by one million people, emphasizing sustainable economic growth and household resilience. This necessitated a new operational model that integrated humanitarian and development assistance.

In 2013, the USAID Kenya and East Africa Mission established the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) to address these challenges. The platform was designed to coordinate 26 USAID-funded activities across northern Kenya, including those supported by the Offices of Food for Peace (FFP) and Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), as well as various mission technical offices. PREG brought together humanitarian and development partners to collaboratively strengthen the resilience of vulnerable pastoralist communities in nine arid counties, aligning their efforts with Kenya's national and county development plans, such as the Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) framework and County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).

The platform also responded to the governance shifts brought about by Kenya's 2010 constitution, which devolved significant authority to county governments. This changing landscape necessitated collective action to maximize impact. PREG partners adopted a shared theory of change, emphasizing the principles of sequencing, layering, and integration (SLI) to ensure strategic collaboration and achieve greater impact than standalone efforts could.



SLI Defined

Sequencing, layering, and integration (SLI) refers to a theory of change logic that organizes project interventions, actors/stakeholders, and learning processes in such a way that achieves complementarity, synergy, and reduces duplication of efforts for optimal impact.

- **Sequencing** is the intentional organization and phasing of interventions and the way they are delivered, to coordinate the order in which activities are implemented and actors are engaged to maximize outcomes and sustainability.
- **Layering** is the strategic coordination of geographically overlapping interventions across the different sectors and stakeholders that complement each other to achieve resilience objectives. Interventions can be designed to layer over and build on the completed interventions in the recent past or ongoing interventions within or across sectors, stakeholders, and different pillars of assistance.
- **Integration** of interventions is the intentional layering and sequencing of multisectoral interventions and the coordination of actors to address needs and prevent or reduce the drivers and effects of shocks and stresses that undermine long-term wellbeing.

(Source: 2022 Resilience Policy Revision, draft as of December 2022)

To further strengthen its coordination, USAID transitioned PREG's secretariat responsibilities from Mission staff to the Africa Lead II Activity in 2016, establishing the PREG Learning and Institutional Strengthening initiative. This provided essential support for strategic communication, capacity building for Kenya's National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) and county governments, and improved partnership alignment under USAID's 2012 Resilience Policy and Program Guidance.

Since 2019, the USAID funded Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) has served as the backbone mechanism that supports PREG's secretariat responsibilities across 9 counties. Backbone mechanisms are independent entities that support partners in maintaining strategic coherence, and facilitate learning, collaboration, and coordination in a geographical area.

To support resilience building interventions in the southern part of Kenya in Kitui, Makueni and Taita Taveta counties, through RLA, the South Eastern Kenya (SEK) coordination mechanism was created in 2020.

Both the PREG and SEK coordination platforms unite multiple national government ministries, departments and agencies, nine county governments, 35 USAID programs and implementing partners who all collaborate to coordinate diverse humanitarian and development activities working with the same people in shared geographies. Integrated complementary activities allow USAID and partners to adapt and leverage knowledge and resources.

Locally Led Government Approach

USAID's investment under PREG are in full partnership with the Government of Kenya (GoK) and aligned to the Ending Drought Emergencies framework

7

MINISTRIES AT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL

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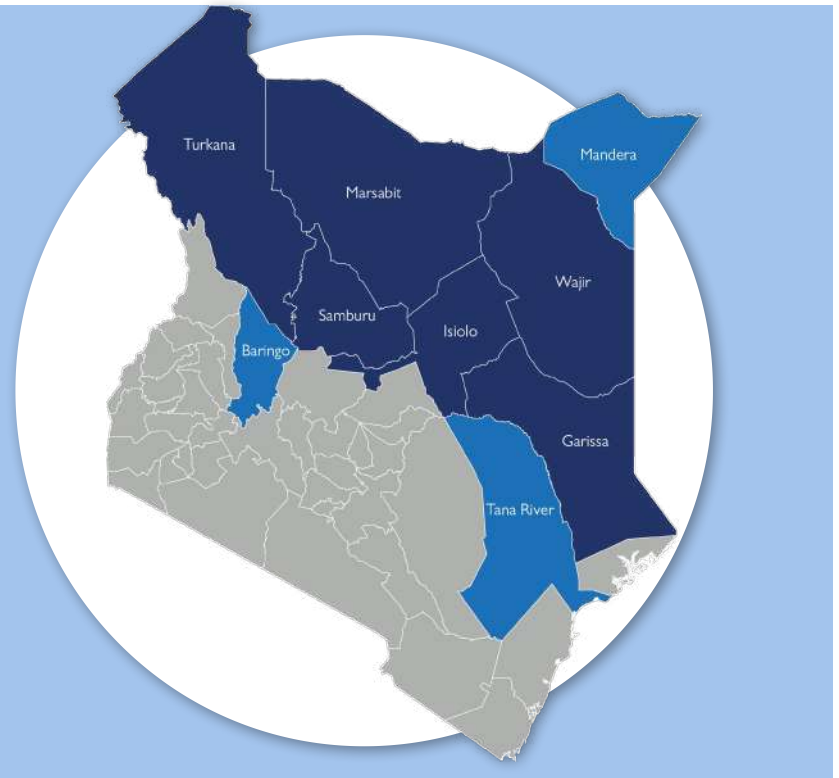
COUNTIES WITH HEAVY INVESTMENT IN SIX

34

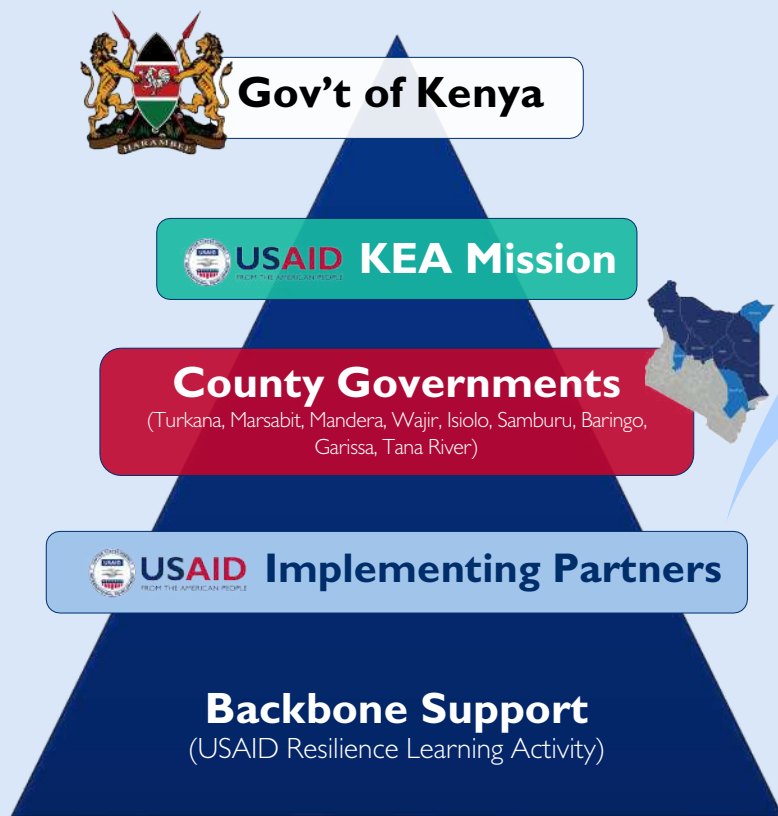
USAID ACTIVITIES ACROSS DIFFERENT SECTORS

7

USAID OFFICES REPRESENTED



USAID PREG Partners / Activities



OEGI

- Livestock Market System (LMS)
- STAWI Project
- STAWI Mashinani
- SBDCs - Strathmore Resilience Learning Activity
- USAID KUZA
- Kenya Sanitation Alliance – UNICEF
- Cross Border Community Resilience Activity (CBCR)
- Food Systems Activity

BHA

- USAID Nawiri CRS
- USAID Nawiri MC
- Action Against Hunger
- ACTED
- Kenya Red Cross
- Concern
- RACIDA
- Save the Children
- UNICEF
- WFP
- WASDA
- IRC
- Millennium Water Alliance (MWA)
- FEWSNET

DGPS

- Strengthening Electoral Accountability and Inclusivity Program (SEAIIP)
- The Mulika Initiative - Peaceful and Accountable Democratic Processes for a Cohesive Kenya
- Kenya Electoral Conflicts Mitigation & Civic/Voter Education Support Program

ENV

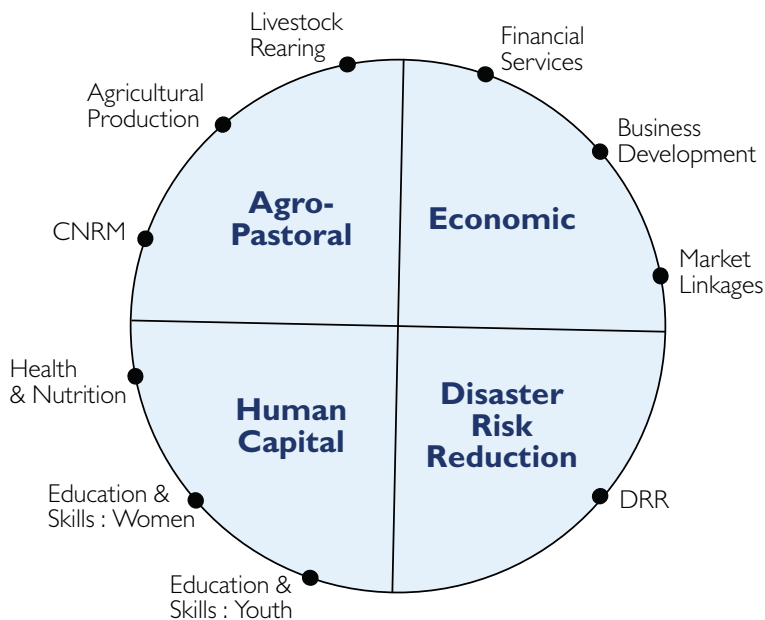
- Climate Resilient Community Conservancies (NRT)
- SERVIR
- Scaling Sustainability and Resilience of Community Conservancies in Northern Rangelands and Coastal Ecosystems of Kenya
- Conflict Management & Mitigation (Northern Landscape Program)
- Northern Kenya Landscape Local Works Project

HPN

- USAID Imarisha Jamii
- USAID Tujenge Jamii
- Nutrition and HIV Program (NHP Plus)
- MTaPs
- USAID Health Governance and Strategic Partnerships

PREG II Impact Evaluation

Findings from the quantitative impact evaluation of the “Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth Phase II” (PREG II) implemented in Northern Kenya, the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), home to over 10 million people and over 70 percent of Kenya’s landmass, from 2018 to 2023 indicates that over the period, the population experienced a strong increase in shock exposure marked by multiple drought and flooding periods, crop disease, COVID-19 lockdowns, and inflation in the prices of food, agricultural inputs and livestock inputs. The PREG II’s goal was to increase households’ resilience to such shocks, and the impact evaluation results indicate that it succeeded in doing so as well as improving multiple household resilience capacities and well-being outcomes.



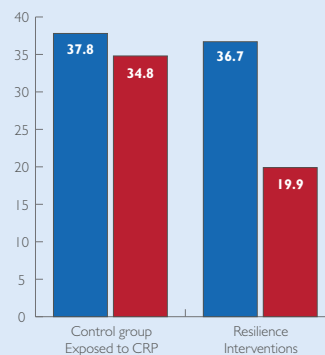
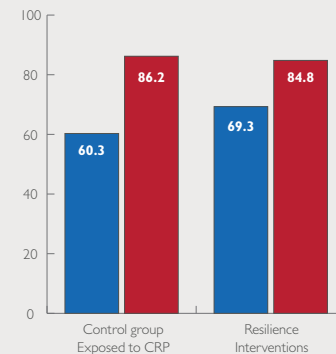
The preliminary analysis suggested that household exposure to PREG II “Comprehensive Resilience Programming” (CRP) had the following impact:

Food Insecurity

Reduced food insecurity by **10.4 percentage points**

Reduced severe food insecurity by **7.3 percentage points**

Improved **household dietary diversity**

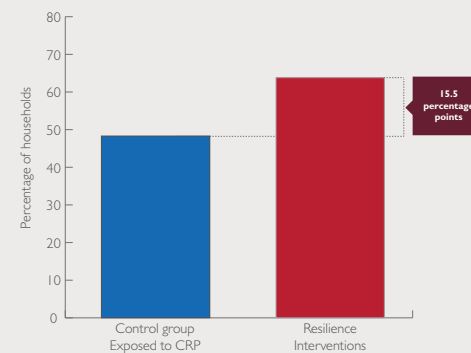


Poverty

Reduced poverty by **13.5 percentage points**

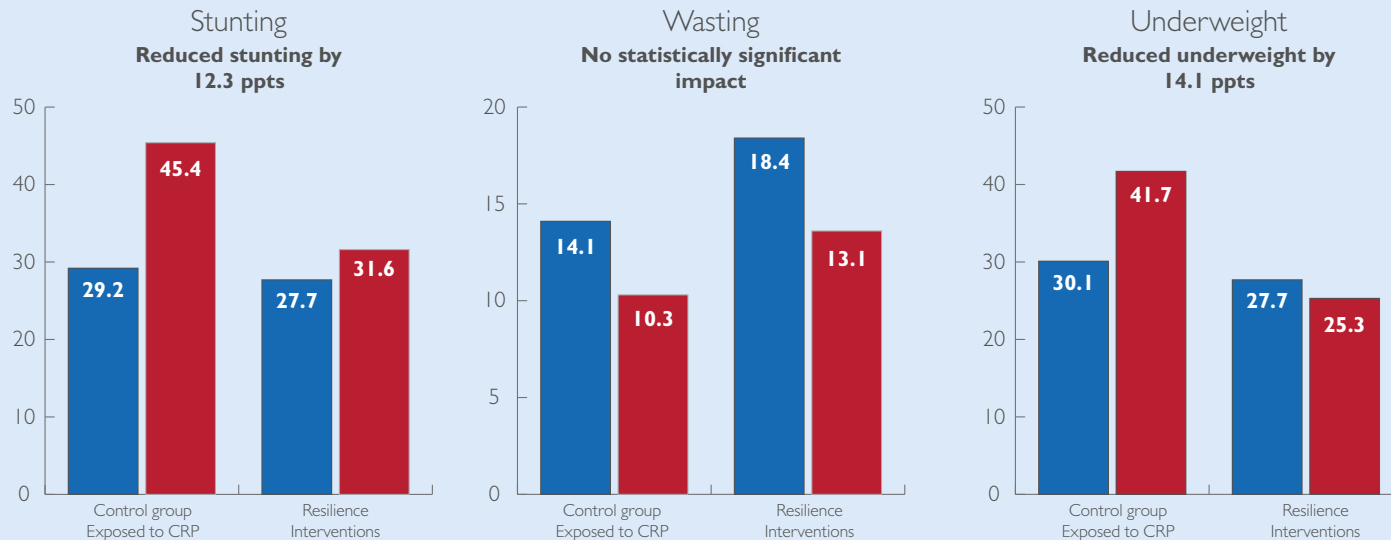
Resilience

Percent of households resilient to shocks: Able to maintain or increase their food security between the BL and EL (“Realized Resilience”)



Child Malnutrition

Lifted more than 1 out of every 3 impoverished households exposed to PREG II CRP programming out of poverty as measured by an asset-based wealth index



The PREG and SEK platforms exemplify the power of collaboration, demonstrating that collective action across multiple sectors and stakeholders is essential to addressing the complex challenges faced by Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid communities. By uniting humanitarian, development and peace (HDP) goals, collective action remains a critical driver of resilience and economic growth in the region.

To achieve collective impact, the PREG and SEK coordination partners have in the last five years implemented an innovative approach called the Joint Work Planning (JWP) initiative.

This publication highlights inspiring collaboration stories from USAID's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and Southeastern Kenya (SEK) mechanisms, showcasing how coordinated efforts are transforming communities across Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions.

Anchoring USAID Joint Work Planning Efforts on a Global Scale

USAID is strongly aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 17 (SDG 17), which emphasizes the importance of global partnerships for achieving sustainable development. SDG 17 focuses on enhancing cooperation among governments, the private sector, and civil society to leverage resources, share knowledge, and create more effective solutions to global challenges. Through this alignment, USAID collaborates with a wide range of partners, including local governments, international organizations, private sector entities, and community-based groups, to amplify the impact of development programs. By fostering strategic partnerships, USAID not only strengthens local capacities and fosters innovation but also ensures that its initiatives are more inclusive and tailored to the unique needs of communities. This approach helps to mobilize resources, improve program sustainability, and drive progress toward shared development goals, ultimately contributing to resilient and self-reliant communities around the world.

To enhance the achievement of the SDG 17, USAID is committed to the localization agenda. At USAID, localization is the set of internal reforms, actions, and behavior changes that the Agency is undertaking to put local actors in the lead, strengthen local systems, and become responsive to local communities.

USAID's approach to localization is informed by over a decade of experience showing that local leadership is critical for greater equity, effectiveness, and sustainability. There is a widespread consensus that development and humanitarian assistance must enable local actors to set their own agendas, develop solutions, and bring their leadership and resources to make those solutions a reality. USAID therefore prioritizes advancing localization by:

1. Adapting its policies and programs to foster [locally led development](#) that is tied to each country's unique political, social, cultural, economic, and environmental conditions, including through [local systems practice](#) and [local capacity strengthening](#);
2. Shifting power to local actors, including, with an [inclusive development lens](#), those from marginalized and underrepresented groups, and promoting space for them to influence and exercise leadership over priority setting, activity design and implementation, and measuring and evaluating results;
3. Channelling a larger portion of funding directly to local partners while ensuring accountability for the appropriate use of funds and achievement of development and humanitarian results.
4. Serving as a global advocate and thought leader; using our convening power, partnerships, voice, and other tools of development diplomacy to catalyze a broader shift toward locally led development.



The USAID Local Capacity Strengthening policy calls for four major shifts in practices as highlighted below.

Shift to local leadership

FROM	TO
Donor driven prioritization and leadership including prescribed sectors, interventions, and targets	Community participation in design and implementation
U.S.-based activity management	Local management and decision making power
Limited or insubstantial co-creation	Ongoing and meaningful co-design and co-creation
Donor driven monitoring, evaluation, and learning	Locally designed indicators; locally-led monitoring and evaluation

Shift to improved partnerships

FROM	TO
Overly complicated procedures and requirements	Building more flexible partnerships through iterative and adaptable activity designs
Limited number of local partners in leadership roles	Partnering with a diverse range of local partners, not just elite organizations
Inadequate funding of operating costs	Commit to supporting an organization's longer term goals by providing full and fair cost recovery
Limited use of locally spoken languages	Encouraging interpretation and translation from pre-award through implementation

Shift to enhanced capacity strengthening

FROM	TO
One size fits all approaches such as standard "off the shelf" training	Demand-driven, contextually effective approaches to capacity strengthening such as mentoring and coaching
Imbalanced focus on compliance, risk management, and project deliverables	Focus on local definitions of success, thinking beyond the life of an activity, and locally defined performance improvement targets

Shift to mutual trust, respect, and accountability

FROM	TO
Power disproportionately held by USAID with limited opportunities for power sharing with local actors	Recognizing, valuing, learning from, and deferring to local knowledge and expertise
Risk posture and demeaning language that conveys the assumption that local partners do not have capacity	Mutual accountability meaningful feedback loops and learning between USAID, local partners, and communities
Local partners accountable to USAID, not mutual accountability	

In Kenya, USAID is advancing the localization agenda through an innovative approach dubbed the Joint Work Planning (JWP) process.

Joint Work Planning: A Catalyst for USAID's Local Capacity Strengthening Success

Sustainable development depends on local actors leading efforts to improve their communities and working inclusively and collectively to see those efforts through. For this reason, local capacity strengthening is and has been a foundational component of USAID programming. Effective local capacity strengthening can propel inclusive economic growth; advance improvements in essential health, food and nutrition, and education services and systems; and cultivate democratic governance. Local capacity strengthening also can address underlying factors of fragility, bolster local humanitarian response systems, and enhance resilience to shocks and stresses. As a result, effective local capacity strengthening supports countries to prevent, mitigate, and recover from crises. Ultimately, the capacity of local actors is a key determinant of the success of USAID and its partners in achieving and sustaining humanitarian and development gains around the world.

Partnering with local actors to strengthen their capacities is one of the most effective ways to advance sustainable development. Local capacity strengthening is most likely to contribute to the achievement of sustainable outcomes when the decision to invest in capacity strengthening is made in collaboration with local partners and is based on a comprehensive and mutual understanding of the relationship between capacity and sustainable change at the systems level.

In Kenya, 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 include 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.

As one of the largest bilateral donors to County Governments, 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



The JWP approach recognizes that no single organization or sector alone can solve large-scale societal problems and that coordinated efforts are necessary for significant, systemic change.

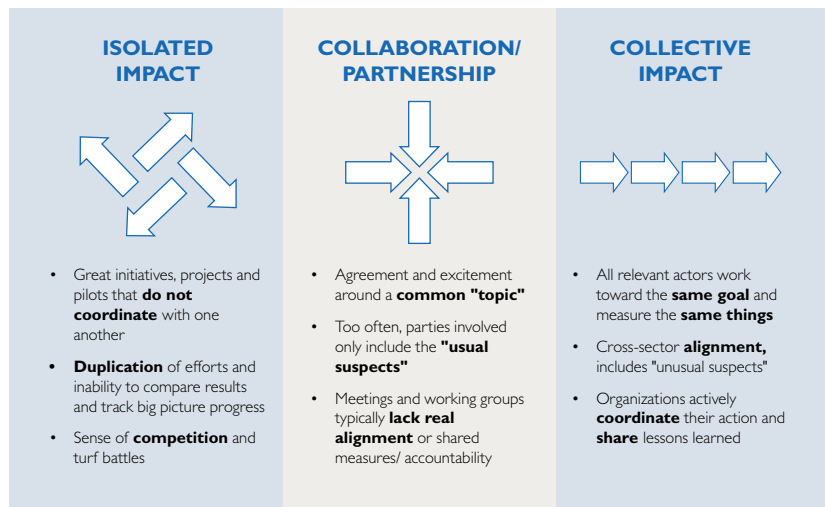
hygiene interventions, climate-smart adaptation. Such an extensive portfolio elevates the importance of co-planning, co-implementation, and co-monitoring (3Cs) and timely information-sharing across projects, to reduce duplication of partners' efforts and leveraging resources.

Through its five-year funded USAID Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) the Agency has been at the forefront of collaborating with the County Governments in implementing the 3Cs through a Joint Work Planning model/approach (hereafter referred to as JWP) and thinking collaboratively to identify points of intersection within the development activities.

In Kenya, the USAID initiated Joint Work Planning approach is a game changer on local engagement with stakeholders at national and county levels. In the Kenyan context, the Joint work planning model is defined as a way of working together to solve the complex development challenges by bringing different groups and organizations together towards a shared goal-that of elevating local communities out of poverty by building their resilience. Unlike typical collaborations where efforts can be scattered and uncoordinated, the Joint Work planning process unites all stakeholders around a common vision and aims to move them from isolated interventions to collective impact.

In the Kenyan context, the Joint work planning model is defined as a way of working together to solve the complex development challenges by bringing different groups and organizations together towards a shared goal-that of elevating local communities out of poverty by building their resilience. Unlike typical collaborations where efforts can be scattered and uncoordinated, the Joint Work planning process unites all stakeholders around a common vision and aims to move them from isolated interventions to collective impact as in the diagram on the next page.

Moving from Isolated Impact to Collective Impact



The RLA grant recipient local organizations that have facilitated the JWP process in the last four years are all in agreement with the five conditions of collective impact that makes JWP a success as listed below².

- **Common Agenda:** Everyone involved shares the same vision for change and agrees on the problem and how to address it.
- **Shared Measurement Systems:** By collecting data in the same way, everyone can track progress and hold each other accountable.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Each group has its own role, but their efforts are coordinated so they complement each other.
- **Continuous Communication:** Regular and open communication helps build trust and keep everyone on the same page.
- **Backbone Support Organization:** This condition anticipates that collaboration must be intentional and must also be fully resourced. To achieve this, there is need for a dedicated organization or team that manages the process, keeping everything running smoothly and making sure everyone

stays on track. The USAID-RLA program has over the last five years played the role of the backbone organization.

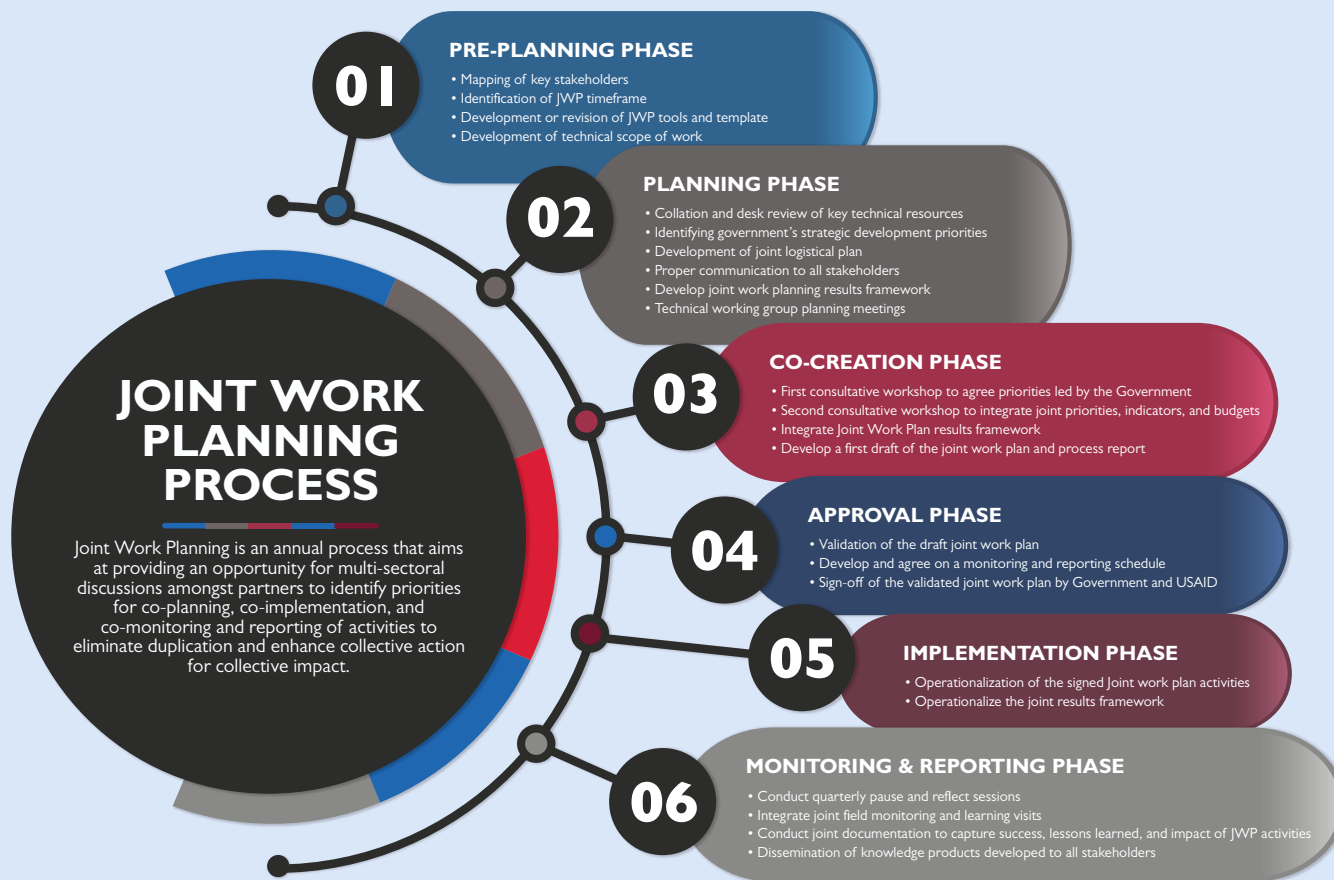
By using these principles, the JWP process in Kenya has brought together the strengths of various stakeholders to find long-term solutions to challenging issues. The model recognizes that big social problems cannot be solved by just one organization or sector, but by working together in a coordinated way, real change can happen.

The County Government spearheads this process through the Department of Economic Planning or any other appointed department. RLA serves as the secretariat of all the other USAID-funded programs that operate under the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and Southern Eastern Kenya Coordination Mechanism (SEK).

The users of Joint Work Planning include the local communities, national and County Governments; development partners, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other actors responding to the development needs at the community level. Joint Work Planning provides an opportunity for multi-sectoral discussions amongst these partners to identify priorities for co-planning, co-implementation, and co-monitoring and reporting of activities to eliminate duplication, pooling of investment and enhance collective action for collective impact. It seeks to promote greater commitment to better collaborative planning, implementation, progress review, learning, and adaptation that will eventually lead to strengthened capacities for the pathway to sustainability.

RLA initiated the Joint Work Planning model in 2020 across nine ASAL counties (Isiolo, Turkana, Samburu, Marsabit, Garissa, Wajir, Kitui, Makueni and Taita Taveta) and has already gone through four fiscal cycles (FY 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24) involving the County Governments and USAID Ips. The implementation cycle comprises the following key phases.

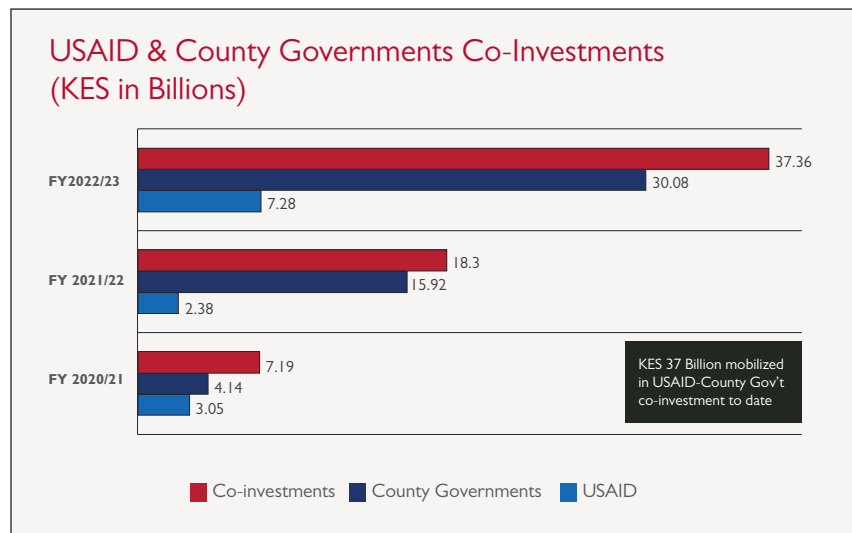
2 Source: Kania, J., & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective impact*. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9(1), 36-41.



The Joint Work Planning process endeavors to achieve the following:

- Use the opportunity as an avenue to review progress and agree on strategic areas for improvement.
- Deliberately layer programmatic activities with County priorities.
- Provide a cross-sectoral platform to identify opportunities for leveraging on what other partners are doing to eliminate duplication.
- Jointly examine data, evidence, and past progress to identify priority areas for the next fiscal year.
- Agree on a joint process of measuring progress and performance.

Snapshot of the JWP Impact for the last four years

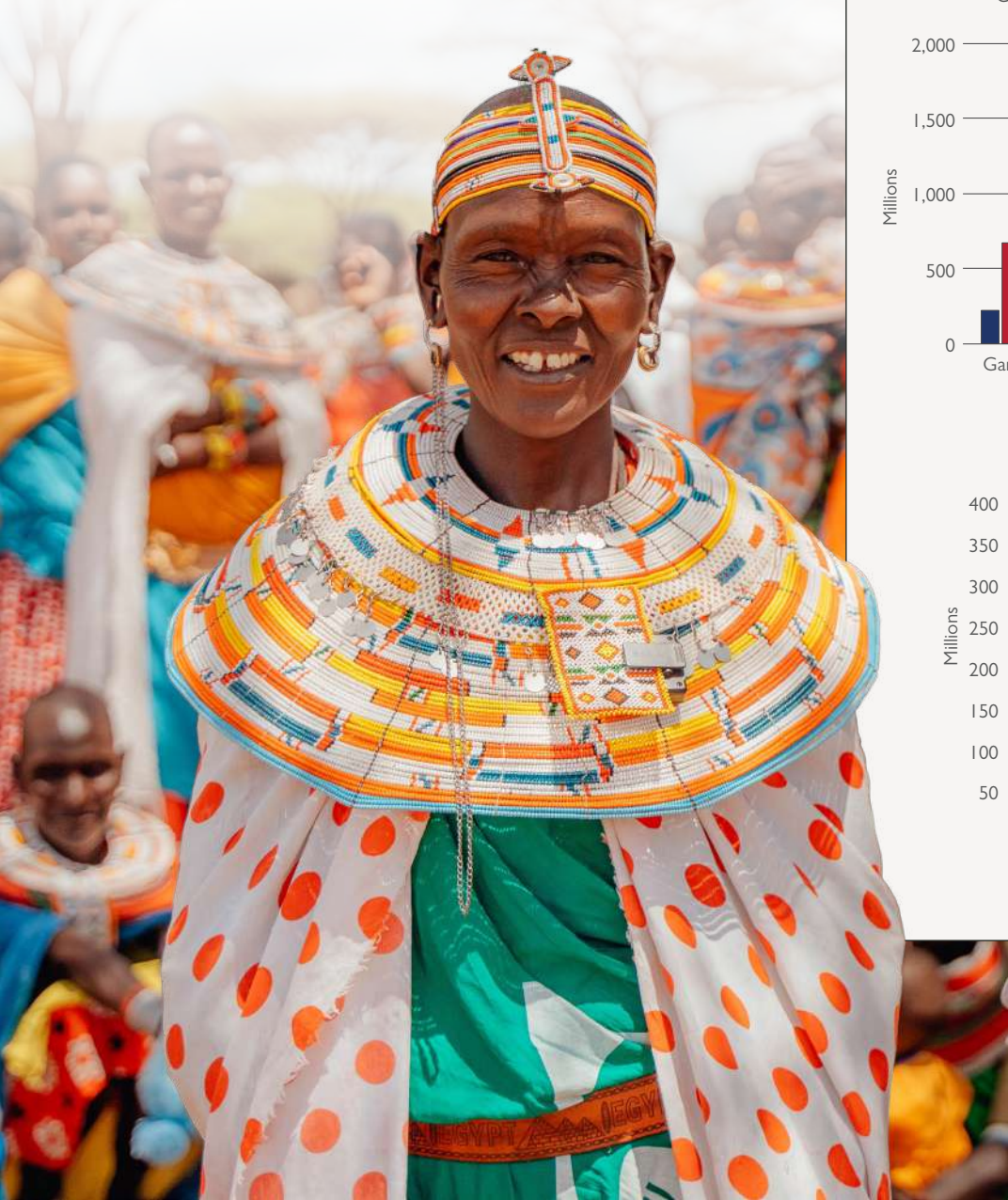


From the desk review conducted, the JWP grantees over the last four years supported by the Resilience Learning Activity, have unanimously noted that the Joint planning of program interventions between County governments and USAID implementing partners significantly contributed to local capacity strengthening in several ways as highlighted below:

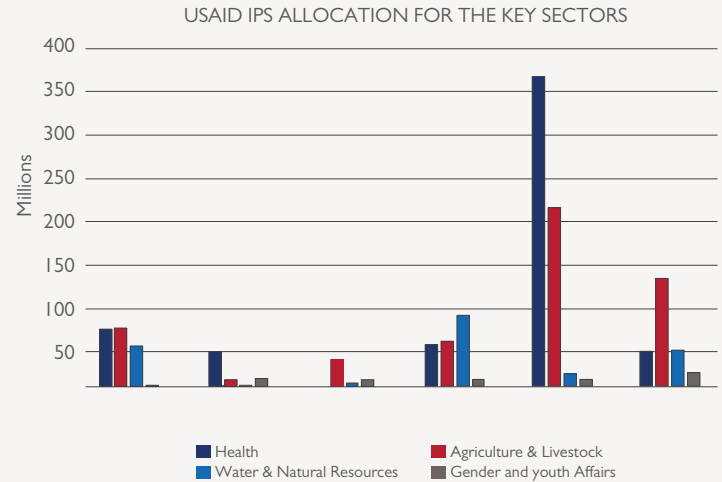
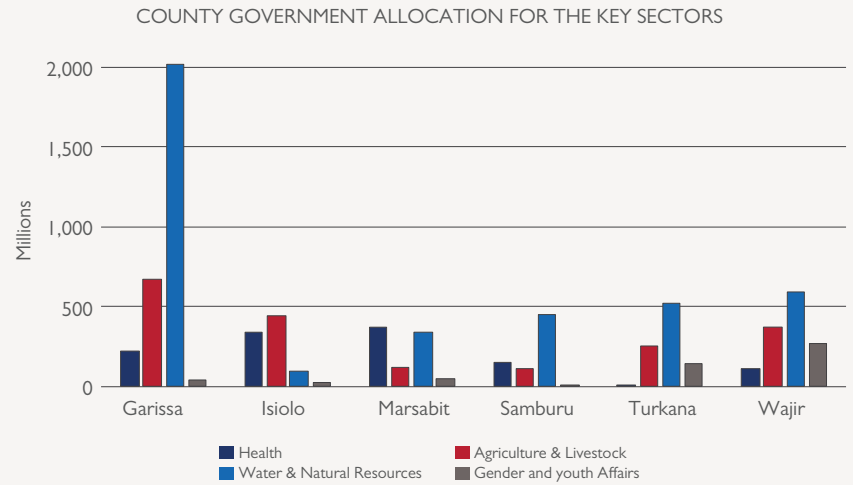
1. **Alignment of County Governments USAID Implementing partners priorities and resources:** By working together, County Governments and USAID implementing partners have been able to align their priorities and resources, ensuring that development interventions directly address the needs identified by local communities. This alignment enhances the relevance and impact of the programs and allows local authorities to better understand and integrate these interventions into their planning processes.

2. **Skills Transfer and Technical Expertise:** Through collaborative planning, County government staff have worked closely with USAID implementing partners technical experts and vice versa, gaining exposure to new methodologies, technical expertise, and best practices. This hands-on learning has enabled both implementing partners and County governments to build their capacities to independently plan, execute, and monitor development projects in the future.
3. **Improved Coordination and Reduced Duplication:** Joint work planning has fostered a coordinated approach, reduced duplication of efforts and ensured that different projects complement each other rather than overlap or compete. This has resulted in more efficient use of resources and encouraged the County government to take a leadership role in overseeing and managing development activities within their jurisdiction. As a result of JWP, all the nine ASAL counties involved have since established donor coordination units to manage all partners.
4. **Strengthened Institutional Processes:** As County governments participated in planning with USAID partners, they strengthened their internal processes, such as budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation. This collaboration helps to institutionalize practices like data-driven decision-making, resource allocation, and effective monitoring systems, which are critical for long-term capacity building.
5. **Enhanced Accountability and Ownership:** When County Governments are involved in the planning and implementation process, they develop a stronger sense of ownership over the projects. This ownership has increased accountability to their communities and fostered a commitment to maintaining and sustaining the programs beyond the period of external support from USAID-funded programs. It also builds trust between the County government, implementing partners, and the communities they serve.
6. **Facilitated Community Engagement:** Joint work planning encouraged greater engagement with community stakeholders, as County Governments and ward-level planning committees understood local dynamics and facilitated dialogue between community members and development partners. This inclusivity ensured that interventions were community-driven, further empowering local authorities to respond effectively to community needs and priorities.

Overall, the joint work planning process has enabled County Governments to become more self-reliant, capable, and prepared to lead development efforts, which is essential for sustainable growth and resilience.



Sector Allocation Across PREG Counties



Reflections from USAID KEA Mission - Resilience Coordinator

People at the Heart of Partnership: The Driving Force Behind PREG/SEK Success



Insights from Jennifer Maurer USAID/KEA Resilience Coordinator

The USAID/Kenya and East Africa (KEA) Country Development Cooperation Strategy (2020-2025) envisions a Kenya where a competitive private sector, resilient communities, empowered civil society organizations, and a citizen-responsive public sector collaborate effectively to drive inclusive growth and self-reliance.

Aligned with this vision, the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) has been instrumental in supporting this strategy through its focus on Knowledge Management, Learning, and Adaptive Management. PREG has played a pivotal role in amplifying the value of partnership across USAID programming by fostering evidence-based decision-making, promoting collaboration among stakeholders, and emphasizing the adaptability of strategies to address and respond to emerging challenges.

I remember the 2011 drought in northern Kenya that was a devastating event, pushing more than 3.75 million people into crisis and requiring urgent food assistance. This highlighted the need for a strategic shift in how USAID responded to recurrent crisis as well as its approach to resilience programming in the region. USAID sought to reduce the humanitarian caseload in the Horn of Africa by one million people, in recognition of increasing global crises and limited resources, therefore emphasizing sustainable economic growth and household resilience. This necessitated a new operational model that integrated humanitarian and development assistance. In March 2015, the USAID Kenya and East Africa Mission established PREG to address these challenges in Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, Samburu, Garissa, Wajir, Baringo, Mandera and Tana River. In 2020, USAID set up the South Eastern Kenya (SEK) coordination platform to support in Kitui, Makueni and Taita Taveta with the aim of preventing poverty back sliding.

The journey of PREG/SEK has been one of shared vision, collective action, and transformational impact. At the center of this journey are the people—the resilient communities, dedicated government officials, passionate implementing partners, and steadfast development stakeholders—whose collaboration has defined and refined the essence of Joint Work Planning (JWP) and its success.

We began with about 9 implementing mechanisms in Northern Kenya, today we have 35 USAID programs coordinated under PREG/SEK. The results of the partnership have been recognized, studied, and exported to other contexts. The partnership model has been adapted and adopted to be implemented under several initiatives such as the Sahel RISE program, South Sudan's Partnership for Recovery and Resilience Framework, Somalia's Resilience Learning Program, Uganda's Karamoja Resilience Support Unit, and the latest "baby" in Ethiopia's Partnership for Lowlands Resilience. This model has also provided valuable lessons for the Kenya Government under the EDE framework and the IGAD's IDDRSI framework. The investments and impacts are immense.

Every project, initiative, and milestone under PREG/SEK has been driven by the determination of people to create a better future. I have had an opportunity the past ten years to visit communities across the counties. I am confident that from the women farmers in arid regions adopting climate-smart agricultural practices to county leaders championing joint coordination frameworks, and from development practitioners harmonizing efforts to youth and women lending their voices to shape priorities, the human element has been the glue that binds our partnership.

The success stories in this compilation serve as a testament to the power of collaboration and the impact of putting people first. They highlight how JWP has transformed the way we work together—bridging gaps, aligning goals, and ensuring resources reach those who need them most. These stories illustrate the resilience and innovation of communities and partners in the face of challenges and showcase how PREG/SEK's collaborative approach has strengthened systems, built capacities, and unlocked the potential of Kenya's counties.

As the USAID/KEA Resilience Coordinator, I am honoured to witness the incredible achievements of this partnership. These are not just stories of projects and programs—they are stories of people rising to meet the moment, working hand in hand to overcome obstacles, and driving sustainable development. Askhari Johnson Hodari says it best in his quote: "If everyone helps to hold up the sky, then one person does not become tired."

Let these reflections inspire us all to continue placing people at the center of our efforts. It is only through collaboration, mutual respect, and shared responsibility that we can achieve our ultimate goal: building resilience and fostering inclusive growth for a brighter, more prosperous future for all.

JWP SUCCESS STORIES - COUNTY LEVEL



JWP IN NORTHERN
KENYA (PREG)

Isiolo County

Isiolo County is a land of contrasts—where arid landscapes meet vibrant cultures and tradition interweaves with resilience. Spanning an impressive 25,700 square kilometers, Isiolo serves as a critical link between Kenya's lush central highlands and its vast northern arid lands. Here, pastoralism is more than a livelihood; it is a lifeline, with goats, sheep, cattle, and camels driving the local economy and shaping the social fabric of the community.

Despite formidable challenges like recurrent droughts, water scarcity, human-wildlife conflicts, and sparse infrastructure, Isiolo is a county on the rise. A hub of cultural diversity and potential, it is the focus of transformative development projects backed by both local and global partnerships. These initiatives aim to boost food security, improve access to essential resources, and empower communities. Dive into the story of Isiolo County to uncover how a region defined by its harsh conditions is redefining what it means to thrive against the odds.



Interview with Mohamed Boru, Isiolo Deputy County Secretary: Reflections on Joint Work Planning (JWP)



Introduction

Mohamed Boru, the Deputy County Secretary for Isiolo County, has been at the forefront of steering transformative initiatives aimed at fostering collaboration, improving resource utilization, and ensuring impactful service delivery at the county level.

The Situation in Isiolo Before JWP

Prior to the introduction of Joint Work Planning (JWP), the partnership and coordination between implementing partners (IPs) and the County Government were fragmented. Development efforts were carried out in silos, leading to significant challenges such as duplication of interventions, minimal integration and layering of activities, and an uneven distribution of NGO efforts, with a concentration in specific geographical areas. This disjointed approach resulted in inefficient resource utilization and limited impact on community resilience and development.

Key Achievements of JWP in Isiolo County

JWP has revolutionized how Isiolo County approaches development planning and implementation. Key achievements include:

- **Locally Led Initiatives:** The County Government now leads and manages initiatives through the JWP process, taking charge of co-creation, co-financing, co-implementation, and joint monitoring and evaluation of activities.
- **Enhanced Accountability:** JWP provides a two-way accountability mechanism, ensuring transparency between the County Government and partners.
- **Aligned Priorities:** Development priorities are now derived directly from the County Government's Annual Development Plans (ADPs) and inform the five-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP).
- **Optimal Resource Utilization:** By employing sequencing, layering, and integration of activities, JWP minimizes duplication and maximizes the use of available resources.
- **Improved Collaboration:** Enhanced communication channels have fostered stronger collaboration between the County Government and USAID implementing partners, improving service delivery.
- **Strengthened Sector and Technical Working Groups:** These groups now play a pivotal role in driving targeted and coordinated development efforts.
- **Engagement Beyond USAID Programs:** The JWP process has also opened avenues for the County to engage with non-USAID-funded programs, broadening its development reach.

EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL JWP INITIATIVES

- Aroo Multi-Use Water Project
- Daaba Multi-Use Water Project
- Attan Food System Strengthening Project
- Rapsu Irrigation Scheme
- Isiolo Livestock Market

Impact of JWP on Community Development

JWP has significantly influenced development at the community level, delivering tangible results:

- **Influencing Budget Cycles:** The inclusion of Ward Planning Committees (WPCs) in the planning process ensures community priorities are reflected in CIDPs, addressing local needs.
- **Enhanced Service Delivery:** Improved sectoral performance and program delivery have bolstered the effectiveness of County Government initiatives.
- **Eliminating Duplication:** Targeted interventions now focus on areas of greatest need, avoiding the over-concentration of assistance and maximizing coverage.
- **Collective Impact:** Communities benefit from optimized resource utilization and resilience-building interventions, reducing vulnerabilities to shocks and stresses.

Plans for Sustaining JWP

To ensure the sustainability of JWP, Isiolo County has outlined several strategic actions:

- Establishing a JWP Steering Group to oversee and guide the process.
- Formalizing a JWP Secretariat at the County level to coordinate activities.
- Developing a Functional JWP Structure, to be approved by the County Assembly, institutionalizing the process.
- Capacity Building: Training County Government officers on JWP monitoring, documentation, and dissemination to strengthen institutional capacity.

Parting Shot

The operationalization and domestication of the JWP Manual will be a game-changer in revitalizing partnership and coordination programs. It will not only transform county-level service delivery but also enhance collaboration across all levels of government and with development partners. JWP offers a pathway to more effective and impactful development interventions, ensuring that resources are optimally utilized to meet the needs of our communities.



Attan: How a Multi-Use Water System is Transforming a Community, One Drop at a Time

In the heart of Ngaremara Ward, Isiolo County, lies Attan village, a small yet determined community of 1,129 people—105 of whom are children under the age of five. For decades, Attan's pastoralist population struggled with severe water shortages, which impacted everything from health and food security to education and economic stability. Today, however, thanks to a strategic multi-use water system and the collaborative efforts of multiple partners, Attan has become a beacon of sustainable development and resilience.

A New Vision for Attan's Water Access

Led by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) through the EU Kenya RangER Programme, the Attan Water Infrastructure Project involved drilling a high-yielding borehole and establishing a comprehensive water distribution system powered by solar energy. The County Government of Isiolo and the Nakuprat-Gotu Conservancy identified Attan as a key site, seeing the potential to reduce local environmental degradation, especially from charcoal burning—a common but unsustainable livelihood that had taken a toll on the area's biodiversity.

This project introduced an ambitious approach: small-scale, irrigated crop farming as an alternative livelihood, aimed at promoting food security, reducing malnutrition, and fostering sustainable environmental practices. From an initial group of 90 farmers, the project has expanded to include 250 farmers actively engaged in crop production. This shift has enabled Attan to grow nutrient-rich crops, improving both food availability and nutrition for the community's most vulnerable.

Empowered by Partners: A Collaborative Force

The Attan project's success is rooted in its partnership model, bringing together organizations and agencies that each played a unique role:

- NRT drilled the borehole, installed a solar-powered pumping system, and constructed a 100m³ elevated water tank, essential for both domestic and agricultural use. NRT's infrastructure investments have ensured a stable water supply, supporting Attan's transition toward sustainable farming.
- USAID Nawiri played a pivotal role by laying out 5.8 kilometers of water piping to connect the village with the water source. Additionally, they constructed four water kiosks to ensure equitable access, built a 50m³ elevated tank, renovated four livestock troughs, and extended water access to Attan Primary School. By connecting the school to clean water, Nawiri improved sanitation for students, enhancing attendance and overall health.
- Plant Village and JKUAT's CETCIL Project established a Community Center of Innovation (CCI) on 0.5 acres, equipped with irrigation systems to train farmers and youth. The CCI offers programs on advanced farming techniques, pest management, and soil salinity management, imparting valuable skills to ensure the long-term success of Attan's agricultural initiatives.
- Eremet Dispensary healthcare workers received nutrition training, supported by the project partners, to address malnutrition in the village. This effort included case conferencing and follow-ups on malnutrition cases, reducing the number of severe malnutrition cases from 30 to just seven. By integrating health services into the water project, partners ensured an integrated approach to community well-being.
- Business Savings Groups received training and support from USAID Nawiri, fostering economic resilience through access to savings and credit. With additional support from NRT, community anchor groups were able to create alternative income streams, reducing the community's dependence on unsustainable charcoal burning.

Strengthening Livelihoods and Health through Diverse Initiatives

The water infrastructure project laid the groundwork for other impactful interventions. Attan's community members received training in modern livestock practices, disease surveillance, and vaccination campaigns, with 135 residents directly benefiting. Improved livestock health has increased productivity, bolstering the community's food security.

Youth empowerment also became a core focus, with 40 young farmers cultivating nutrient-dense crops on eight acres, ensuring better nutrition across households. Access to clean water, combined with these agricultural improvements, has reduced household reliance on insecure, environmentally harmful practices and contributed to a healthier, more productive village.

Tangible Impact Through Collaboration

The Attan water project has transformed daily life in measurable ways. Walking distances for water collection have been drastically reduced, as has the time spent waiting at water points, easing the burden on women, who traditionally bear the responsibility of fetching water. Reliable water access has also reduced Attan's dependency on charcoal burning, supporting environmental conservation efforts, and fostering sustainable livelihoods.

The project's benefits extend beyond the economic and environmental realms. Improved access to water has shifted the community's focus away from cattle rustling and conflict, as peace dialogue forums and collaborative resource management have strengthened local engagement. Attan's community members now take part in decision-making processes that encourage peace, stability, and shared prosperity.



Building a Sustainable Future

Attan's transformation underscores the power of collaboration and the impact of inclusive decision-making. By working together, the County Government, NRT, USAID Nawiri, Plant Village, JKUAT, and local anchor groups have created a foundation for long-term growth and resilience. The project has not only improved water access but has also spurred economic resilience, food security, and environmental conservation.

Today, Attan stands as an example of how communities can thrive with the right support, partnerships, and shared vision. "As women, we are now saving time and energy as we access water at ease. I urge all women in the ASALs to come to Attan and witness how water access can change lives through embracing crop farming," says Cecilia Lunyoki, a proud project beneficiary.

In Attan, a village once defined by scarcity now flourishes with the hope that comes from partnership and collaboration, proving that even in the harshest conditions, resilience and sustainable growth are possible.

ATTAN: By the Numbers



POPULATION

1,129

521 females

608 males

105 children under 5

328 households

Agricultural Impact

130 acres
CULTIVATED

560 pastoralists
REGISTERED FOR IBLI

250 FARMERS
INVOLVED

11 youth
TRAINED AT CCI



Water Infrastructure

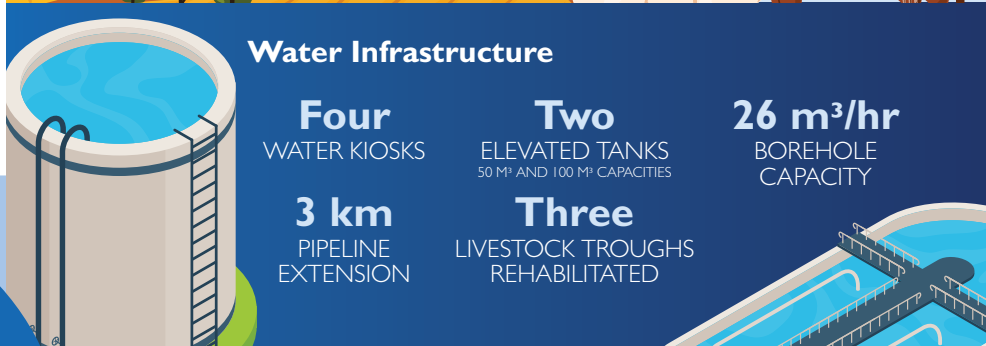
Four
WATER KIOSKS

Two
ELEVATED TANKS
50 M³ AND 100 M³ CAPACITIES

26 m³/hr
BOREHOLE
CAPACITY

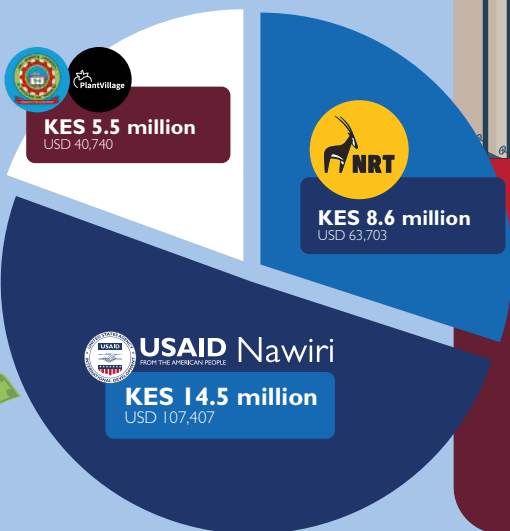
3 km
PIPELINE
EXTENSION

Three
LIVESTOCK TROUGHS
REHABILITATED



Investments and Financial Support

A TOTAL OF
KES 28.6 million
(USD 211,850)



Planned Expansion (Attan Irrigation Scheme)

350 acres
300 ACRES FOR CROPS &
50 ACRES FOR PASTURE

3,000 individuals
TO BE EMPLOYED

500 goats
IN THE GOAT FEEDLOT

90 acres
REHABILITATED

Oldonyiro Livestock Market: A Collaborative Success Transforming ASAL Communities

In the heart of Isiolo County, the Oldonyiro Livestock Market has emerged as a vibrant economic powerhouse, changing the lives of over 4,000 households. This bustling weekly market has become more than just a place for trade—it's a model of collaboration that connects local livestock traders with buyers from Nairobi and surrounding counties, fueling the prosperity of Oldonyiro's economy. The market's success is largely due to a web of partnerships, extensive infrastructure development, and a shared vision among diverse players.

A Market Built on Collaboration and Community Vision

Operated by a 13-member Livestock Marketing Association (LMA) under a co-management model with the county government, the Oldonyiro market brings together traders, community members, and government stakeholders every Tuesday to facilitate the trade of cattle, sheep, and goats. Originally held under a tree next to a church, the market has evolved into a modernized hub, meeting international standards thanks to USAID's Resilience and Economic Growth in the Arid Lands Accelerated Growth (REGAL-AG) program. This transformation began with USAID's consultative meetings with local leaders, county officials, community members, and various partners, setting a foundation where collaboration and shared ownership drive success.

Before and After: A Transformation Through Partnership

Before the market's revitalization, traders faced numerous challenges: there was no central trading location, transport was costly and unreliable, and most livestock sellers had to travel long distances to reach buyers. Many traders relied on intermediaries who offered low prices, and limited veterinary services left livestock health largely to traditional methods. But through concerted efforts by SNV Netherlands and USAID, a fenced marketplace took shape, and soon, Somali herders began frequenting Oldonyiro to sell their livestock.

In 2016, USAID's investment of \$445,721 (KES 57.6 million) made the construction of the modern Oldonyiro livestock market a reality. With extensive support from the USAID Livestock Market Systems (LMS) program, the LMA management team gained essential skills in record-keeping, leadership, marketing, and inclusivity, bolstering their capability to manage the market effectively. The establishment of the Oldonyiro Livestock Market Savings and Credit Cooperative (SACCO) further empowered traders by providing access to financial services, enhancing economic sustainability.

Resilience Amid Challenges

Even amid the COVID-19 pandemic and recurrent droughts, the market remained resilient. The LMS, in partnership with the county government, rolled out an economic stimulus package that injected \$169,600 (KES 21.9 million) in cash grants to over 1000 traders. This support, targeted at small and medium enterprises, enabled vendors to invest in hygiene and safety measures while stabilizing their businesses during turbulent times. The USAID Feed the Future LMS program also collaborated with local government and partners to refine and implement livestock trade regulations, ensuring that the market operated smoothly, fostering a fair and thriving trade environment.

A Hub for Economic and Social Growth

The Oldonyiro Livestock Market has grown into a robust platform extending far beyond livestock trade. Today, the market offers access to veterinary services, a reliable water supply, and an array of goods, from fresh produce to household items. Women and youth, once underrepresented in market activities, have found a stronghold through food vending, motorcycle transport services (boda-bodas), and other entrepreneurial roles. Revenue collection has seen substantial growth—between 50% to 75% from 2017 to 2023—highlighting the market's positive trajectory and impact on the local economy.

The economic benefits reverberate across the community: vendors report increased sales, malnutrition rates have dropped, and diverse foods are now readily accessible. Even a hay barn has found a new purpose, transforming into a restaurant that serves hundreds of every market day.

Ongoing Challenges and a Vision for the Future

While the Oldonyiro market has made incredible strides, challenges persist. Poor road infrastructure, land degradation, lack of electricity, and human-wildlife conflicts continue to hinder optimal market operations. Recognizing these hurdles, community leaders, government agencies, and USAID partners have collaborated on strategies for sustainable growth. The introduction of legislation, such as the Sales Yard Act 2016 and subsequent regulations, aims to address these challenges, with plans for market renovation, electricity access, and improved road conditions to ease traders' burdens and enhance market efficiency. The Oldonyiro Market Sales Yard Act of 2016 outlines a 40:60 revenue-sharing model between the Isiolo County Government and the Livestock Market Association (LMA). Under this arrangement, 40% of the revenue generated from the livestock market goes to the County Government, while 60% is allocated to the LMA. This model aims to empower the LMA to manage and maintain market operations efficiently, ensuring that a larger share of resources supports local needs directly. The funds collected by the LMA are used for market maintenance, infrastructure upgrades, and the provision of essential services to traders and customers, enhancing the market's sustainability and operational standards.

Fostering Sustainable Ownership

Empowered through training, community members have taken ownership of the market's operations, supported by elders who maintain security and order. Revenue from the market sustains infrastructure and operational costs, while plans are underway for a County Government-led umbrella unit to unify livestock marketing associations (LMAs) for improved coordination and support.

Seizing Opportunities for Growth

The Oldonyiro Livestock Market's success is a testament to the power of collaboration. By embracing social behavior change, promoting women's leadership, restoring degraded lands, and expanding market infrastructure, Oldonyiro can continue to grow and empower its community. With the support of the County Chamber of Commerce, transparent pricing can help stabilize the economy, fostering a market that truly benefits both traders and buyers alike.

This thriving marketplace exemplifies how a shared vision and joint efforts can transform a community, proving that when people unite with a common purpose, they can overcome challenges and create lasting prosperity. Through collective commitment, the Oldonyiro Livestock Market stands as a beacon of empowerment, resilience, and collaborative growth.



Rapsu Irrigation Scheme: Transforming Agro-Pastoralism Through Partnership

In the arid lands of Isiolo County, the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme stands as a beacon of collaboration, resilience, and innovation, reshaping traditional livelihoods and bringing new opportunities for food security and economic growth to Kinna Ward. Established in 1974 by the Methodist Church under the National Christian Council of Kenya, the scheme initially aimed to provide an alternative livelihood for Borana and Somali communities who had lost livestock during the 1960s Shifta War. While the scheme was

abandoned amid conflicts, it was revived in 1990, breathing new life into agro-pastoralism in this drought-prone region.

Today, the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme is more than an agricultural project; it is a lifeline for approximately 500 farmers and over 2,000 community members. It spans 200 acres, with 182 acres under irrigation from the River Bisanadi. Each household cultivates a plot to grow produce for both personal consumption and sale, buffering against drought's harsh impact on livestock. This project has not only diversified local food sources but also reduced reliance on livestock, a critical adaptation as climate change makes traditional pastoralism increasingly difficult.

Partners Transforming Agriculture in Oldonyiro, Isiolo County



County Gov't of Isiolo
Provided certified seeds and extension services



National Irrigation Authority
Construction of intake works, canals and irrigation access



WE-WORLD
Facilitated setting up the hay store



NDMA
Installation of feeder canals for rows 4 to 7.



USAID LMS
Facilitated the formation of Bisanadi Cooperative



World Food Programme

- Supported**
- provision of extension services for crop and fodder production
 - provision of seeds and seedlings for varieties like orange fleshed sweet potatoes, ground nuts and iron-rich beans
 - the formation of **RAMUKI WRUA** and the development of **SCMP** for the **WRUA**
 - the installation of feeder canals for rows 1 to 3.

Collaboration: The Heart of Rapsu's Success

A range of partnerships has been instrumental in driving Rapsu's transformation. In 2013, the National Irrigation Authority (NIA) improved infrastructure, constructing intake works, irrigation canals, and access roads. The World Food Programme (WFP) supported crop and fodder production, providing seeds for nutrient-rich crops like iron-fortified beans, groundnuts, and orange-fleshed sweet potatoes. The formation of the RAMUKI Water Resource Users Association (WRUA) through WFP and the development of its catchment management plan fostered a collaborative approach to water sharing across upstream and downstream communities, easing water disputes, and promoting sustainability.

With additional support from the County Government, LMS, and WE-WORLD, the project addressed crucial issues like market access, resource management, and storage solutions. The Bisanadi Cooperative, established by LMS, strengthened farmers' collective bargaining power, while We-World's hay storage initiatives have fortified fodder management during dry seasons. The County Government's provision of certified seeds and extension services has ensured farmers have high-quality inputs and technical support, reinforcing the project's sustainability.

The Tangible Impact of Collective Efforts

This collaborative approach has yielded remarkable results. Farmers now produce high-demand crops like pawpaw, tomatoes, onions, kales, and fodder. The availability of reliable irrigation has motivated many residents to embrace farming, creating new income streams, especially for youth who have found job opportunities through the project. Improved economic stability has allowed families to invest in education, evidenced by a surge in school attendance from 100 to 300 children.

The irrigation scheme's impact extends beyond individual households; it is now a central economic driver for the region. With an average gross income of USD 970 (KES 125,000) per acre per year, the scheme has contributed to improved livelihoods, with some families even venturing into commercial fodder production aimed at the nearby Isiolo Abattoir.

Building for a Sustainable Future

A shared commitment to sustainability underpins the Rapsu Irrigation Scheme's success. By organizing common interest groups focused on fodder production and feedlots, farmers have fostered knowledge-sharing networks that strengthen the local livestock sector. The establishment of designated areas for fodder production, such as 300 acres set aside for hay, illustrates the community's proactive stance on self-sufficiency. Initiatives for value addition—like processing and packaging papaws, tomatoes, onions, and maize—offer farmers potential to increase their income.

The WRUA continues to ensure fair water distribution, mitigating conflicts and protecting this critical resource. Equipment investments, including maize shellers and hay balers, are also on the horizon, aiming to enhance productivity and increase profits. In pursuit of ongoing support, the community sees an opportunity to form a county task force dedicated to overseeing the scheme, as well as attracting agricultural experts to guide their work.

Overcoming Challenges and Leveraging Opportunities

Despite its successes, the scheme faces challenges such as limited market access, pest invasions, and lack of local agrovet supplies. However, potential solutions like contract farming, model farms, and establishing local agrovet outlets promise to bolster resilience. Additionally, securing markets and expanding mobile network infrastructure will enhance connectivity and improve market operations.

The Rapsu Irrigation Scheme is a testament to the power of partnership and perseverance. Through a shared commitment from local communities, the County Government, and development partners, this once-abandoned project has evolved into a thriving model of agro-pastoralism. It stands as a shining example of how collaboration can transform lives and landscapes, turning challenges into opportunities and building a path toward lasting sustainability in Isiolo County.

Daaba: United in the Face of Water Challenges

In the sun-scorched plains of Ngaremara Ward, Isiolo County, the community of Daaba has long battled one of life's most essential needs: access to water. Home to about 9,000 people, Daaba's nomadic, pastoralist roots run deep, with livestock as the heartbeat of its economy. Yet recurrent droughts and fierce competition for water between people, livestock, and wildlife have strained the community's resilience.

Before recent interventions, Daaba's shallow wells struggled to provide enough water, leading to long treks to distant sources, and even conflicts among community members and wildlife. Children, instead of attending school, spent hours hauling water, their education and health sacrificed to meet basic survival needs. With untreated water as the primary source, waterborne diseases were a constant threat. Sanitation was minimal, open defecation was common, and poor hygiene left the community vulnerable to illness. But amidst these challenges, hope arrived in the form of strategic partnerships—an effort as diverse as it was determined, with local and international players coming together to rewrite Daaba's story.

Partnerships Bringing New Hope to Daaba

In the 2022-2023 financial year, a transformative coalition including the County Government of Isiolo, USAID BHA Nawiri, the Water Resources Authority, Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), World Food Programme (WFP), and the CRS Rapid+ Project embarked on a journey to address Daaba's water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs. Their shared mission: to bring lasting solutions to Daaba's water crisis.

The County Government of Isiolo led water quality testing, environmental assessments, and planning while facilitating the formation of community-led water

management committees. USAID Nawiri focused on installing multi-use water systems at Daaba Juu and Daaba Centre. These systems included solar-powered pumps, elevated tanks, animal troughs, and water kiosks, creating reliable water access for both people and livestock. WFP provided cash transfers to vulnerable households, stabilizing families as they adapted to improved water resources.

To safeguard Daaba's water infrastructure from the destructive habits of local elephants, the Save The Elephant initiative restored perimeter walls, creating a safer environment for community members. Meanwhile, the Kenya RAPID program upgraded boreholes and solar systems, ensuring sustained water supply. Local conservancies, guided by NRT, developed water management strategies and peace initiatives, helping the community mitigate water conflicts and ensuring fair access.

The Human Impact of Water Security

Thanks to this collective intervention, Daaba has seen profound changes. The daily trek for water has been cut to less than 500 meters, giving community members more time for productive activities. Queuing time for water has also dropped significantly, from over an hour to less than 30 minutes, easing the daily burden on families. Today, each resident enjoys access to over 20 liters of clean water per day, and local livestock, too, benefits from reliable access to water, strengthening the community's pastoral economy.

The eight new water kiosks serve hundreds of households in Daaba Juu and Daaba Centre, bringing convenience and health benefits to around 2,684 people. With a flat-rate water tariff introduced, the community now manages its finances sustainably, setting aside funds for future maintenance. Children are back in school, and households have even begun establishing kitchen gardens, providing fresh vegetables that enhance food security. Hygiene and sanitation have improved, reducing the incidence of waterborne diseases, and marking a new era of health for Daaba's residents.

The community's financial resilience has also grown through the formation of 21 Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC), where members save together and access small loans. With 324 active members, mostly women, the SILC groups have accumulated substantial savings, empowering Daaba's residents to build financial stability and invest in their futures.



Sustaining Daaba's Water Security

The success of Daaba's WASH initiatives rests on ongoing community ownership. With training in plumbing and maintenance, local members are equipped to handle repairs, reducing reliance on external support, and ensuring the water system's resilience. Community health volunteers, though unpaid, continue to educate residents on hygiene practices, enhancing household health standards.

Regular revenue collection from water kiosks and water troughs supports routine maintenance, and a committed approach to financial discipline has instilled trust in the system. By setting aside funds for repairs and implementing fines for late payments, the community can keep its water system running smoothly for the long term.

Challenges and Future Steps

While Daaba has made remarkable progress, challenges remain. Maintaining and repairing infrastructure in remote areas is demanding, as are conflicts over water resources during the dry season. Effective management by the Water Resource Users Association (WRUA) is essential to uphold fairness and ensure no household or livestock is left without access. Continued vigilance is also needed to prevent waterborne diseases, which remain a threat if water quality standards are not maintained.

As Daaba looks to the future, its partnerships remain crucial. Scaling water access to reach more remote households, expanding water troughs for wildlife, and exploring model farms to shift mindsets toward agriculture will help solidify Daaba's progress. Automated water kiosks could strengthen revenue collection, supporting future maintenance. Regular refresher training for local technicians and WRUA members will ensure that skills stay sharp, and the water system remains reliable.

A Community Transformed by Collaboration

In Daaba, collaboration has not only quenched a community's thirst but also ignited hope. From long water treks to thriving gardens, from conflict over water to cooperation across households, Daaba's transformation is proof that partnerships rooted in a shared vision can change lives. Daaba's story continues, shaped by the determination of its people and the unwavering support of partners united in the belief that everyone deserves access to clean water and a brighter future.

BUILDING DAABA TOGETHER

The County Government of Isiolo was actively involved in participatory planning and the design of water systems undertaking water quality analysis and conducting Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA). Provided joint technical supervision for construction works and facilitated capacity building for the water management committees thus ensuring sustainability.

USAID Kenya RAPID program upgraded Daaba Juu's borehole pump and solar system. Constructed an elevated steel tank and perimeter wall, supported capacity building of the local water management committee.

Save The Elephant rehabilitated the Daaba Centre masonry wall

World Vision drilled the Etok Borehole and strengthened the capacities of women's groups, supported poultry

Well Aware drilled boreholes, plastic tanks, facilitated community training on prioritizing water use for people over animals and promoting hygienic water handling practices.

At Daaba Centre, USAID Nawiri upgraded the solar water pumping system, built four water kiosks, and constructed elevated steel tanks and animal watering troughs. Their participation also included the implementation of Adapted Community-Led Total Sanitation, improving hygiene practices in the community.

For Daaba Juu, USAID Nawiri conducted borehole test pumping, camera inspections, and water quality analysis. The program also built three new water kiosks and rehabilitated one existing kiosk, alongside constructing cattle troughs and installing an inline chlorine dozer to ensure water sanitation.

WFP and the Water Resources Authority (WRA) supported capacity building for the Waso Mara Water Resources Users Association, provided cash transfers to 150 households.

LMS supported capacity strengthening for the Ward Planning Committee (WPC)

E4impact restocked livestock for 25 community members, providing one camel and five goats per person thus improving livelihoods.

NRT supported Nakuprat-Gotu Conservancy in the development of a water strategy and peacebuilding initiatives. construction of a maternity wing at Daaba Centre



Empowering Camel Keepers in Isiolo: A Drop of Camel Milk, A Ripple of Change

In the vast arid lands of Isiolo County, where pastoralism is a way of life, camels stand as symbols of resilience and survival. Known for their strength in harsh, dry climates, camels provide more than just transport—they offer vital sources of milk and meat, becoming lifelines for the community. In a transformative turn, the Walqabana Camel Milk Cooperative Society has not only expanded the camel milk industry but also changed lives, one milk drops at a time.

The Rise of the Walqabana Camel Milk Cooperative: A Community-Driven Journey

For years, camel milk in Isiolo was primarily consumed within households, and any excess was shared or sold at informal markets. But in 2018, a vision took root: What if camel milk could drive real, sustainable economic growth? With this idea, the Walqabana Camel Milk Cooperative was born, officially registered in 2020, uniting three self-help groups with a mission to unlock the potential of camel milk. Today, this cooperative, with 54 members—89% of whom are women—has become a model of empowerment and innovation, supported by USAID and the Isiolo County Government.



Turning Investments into Impact: Infrastructure and Empowerment

Thanks to the cooperative's development partners, substantial investments have transformed camel milk production and processing. USAID's support allowed the cooperative to purchase essential infrastructure: cooler tanks, refrigerated trucks, solar-powered equipment, and pasteurizers. These tools have made it possible to collect, process, and transport milk under optimal conditions, reducing spoilage and preserving quality. Where once milk would spoil within hours, now it is safely processed into various products, including boiled milk, yogurt, camel milk candies, and camel milk powder.

Training in business management, milk hygiene, and record-keeping has equipped cooperative members with the skills needed for effective operations. Exposure tours, workshops, and grants have further enriched their knowledge, setting the stage for sustainable growth. Today, Walqabana is professionally managed, with members adhering to principles of operational excellence and financial discipline, making it a leading example of how collective action can shape the future.



Beyond Economics: A Catalyst for Community Transformation

The Walqabana Cooperative has sparked profound social change, particularly for its female members. Women, who make up the vast majority of the cooperative, are now key decision-makers and income earners for their families. This shift has had rippling benefits: improved nutrition, better education access, and more stable households. Children who once struggled with malnutrition now enjoy better health, while the community has seen an increase in school attendance as families become more financially secure. The cooperative's success also contributes to Isiolo County's tax revenues, helping fund local infrastructure and essential services.

Fighting Post-Harvest Losses and Expanding Markets

Camel milk production is one of Isiolo's hallmarks, but it has always faced challenges with post-harvest losses due to spoilage and limited storage. Now, the Walqabana Cooperative exports between 6,000 to 7,000 liters of camel milk daily to Nairobi, where demand for camel milk is growing rapidly. Collaborations with Kenya Cooperative Creameries and support from USAID have allowed the cooperative to expand value addition efforts, transforming raw milk into products that fetch higher prices and reach broader markets. The cooperative's efforts are not only addressing post-harvest losses but also enhancing the quality of life for its members through increased income.



Shaping a Future of Promise and Prosperity

The Walqabana Camel Milk Cooperative Society is more than a dairy collective; it is a testament to the resilience and resourcefulness of Isiolo's pastoral communities. In a region often defined by its climate challenges, the cooperative has found a way to turn adversity into opportunity. Supported by collaborative efforts, this community-led initiative has paved the way for sustainable growth, empowered women as community leaders, and positioned Isiolo on the map as a center of camel milk excellence.

With more partners and government policies backing their efforts, Walqabana members now look to the future with optimism. Their journey is proof that even in the driest landscapes, prosperity and hope can flourish through community collaboration, determination, and a shared vision. As they continue to grow, the cooperative serves as an inspiring model for pastoral communities worldwide, showcasing how traditional livelihoods, innovation, and partnerships can drive transformative change.

A Multi-Partner Approach to Tackling Water Scarcity in Aroo

Addressing Aroo's water crisis required a united effort. Through USAID's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG), multiple partners and the Isiolo County Government joined forces to implement the Aroo water project. PREG, which operates in six arid and semi-arid counties, promotes coordinated efforts between USAID implementing partners to integrate humanitarian and development assistance for maximum impact.



The PREG coordination mechanism allowed stakeholders to assess community needs, align resources, and avoid duplication of efforts. "The county identifies opportunities for leveraging with other partners to eliminate duplication, assess progress, and jointly examine data to prioritize areas for the next fiscal year," explained Mohammed Boru, Isiolo Deputy County Secretary. This approach facilitated the collaborative design of the Aroo water project, ensuring it addressed a broad range of community challenges.

Partners Unite to Build a Water System

The Aroo water project showcases the power of partnerships. Each organization brought expertise and resources to create a sustainable water system:

- **Isiolo County Government:** Led borehole drilling and test pumping to tap into the water table.
- **USAID Nawiri:** Supported the development of vital water infrastructure, including a solar pumping system, 2.2 kilometers of water distribution lines, two community watering points, three cattle troughs, a sanitation block, and an elevated steel tank to store water.
- **World Food Programme (WFP):** Focused on strengthening water resource management institutions, such as the Water Management Committee, and promoting irrigated agriculture. WFP also provided a reservoir tank and shade nets for youth groups to engage in farming.
- **Feed the Future Kenya Livestock Market Systems Activity:** Strengthened the Ward Planning Committee, facilitated peacebuilding and conflict resolution through the Nakuprat Gotu Conservancy, and supported the development of a water strategy.
- **Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT):** Enhanced water resource management and coordinated schedules to ensure equitable water access for different communities.
- **RAPID+ Program:** Installed four prepaid water meters, four water kiosks, and borehole sensors to improve water access and monitoring.

Impact on the Community

For the 300 residents of Aroo and their 15,200 livestock (including cattle, sheep, goats, and camels), the new water system has been life changing.

“We are happy now,” Regina said with relief. “I no longer have to walk long distances in search of clean water for my livestock, drinking, and cooking. The water is nearby and safe.”

Before the project, contaminated water sources caused frequent waterborne diseases, but these cases have drastically reduced. Conflicts over water, once a source of tension among the diverse ethnic groups, have also subsided. “We have trained water committee members on how to best manage water resources,” explained Josephine Ekiru from the Northern Rangeland Trust. “They schedule watering times for different communities, and this has greatly improved resource management.”

The water system not only supports household, and livestock needs but also facilitates micro-irrigation for farming, enhancing food security in the drought-stricken area. The community can now focus on rebuilding their livelihoods with reliable access to clean water.

A Model for Resilience in Arid Regions

The Aroo water project is a testament to the success of USAID’s integrated approach to addressing recurrent stressors in arid and semi-arid regions. By layering humanitarian aid with long-term development initiatives, the partnership has built resilience in a vulnerable community.

Mohammed Boru reflected on the broader impact of such collaborations: “The joint work planning process allows partners with a shared goal to address a broader range of challenges and maximize their impact.”

For Aroo’s residents, the project marks a turning point in their struggle against drought. With clean water flowing and a collaborative system in place to manage resources, the community now has a foundation for sustainable growth and harmony.

As Isiolo County continues to face climate challenges, the Aroo water project serves as a blueprint for how partnerships between government and international agencies can transform lives. Through cooperation, innovation, and community involvement, water scarcity is no longer an insurmountable obstacle but a challenge that can be overcome.

Partners Building Water Systems in Aroo, Isiolo County



County Gov’t of Isiolo

Led borehole drilling and test pumping to tap into the water table



USAID Nawiri

Supported the development of vital water infrastructure, including a solar pumping system, 2.2 kilometers of water distribution lines, two community watering points, three cattle troughs, a sanitation block, and an elevated steel tank to store water.



World Food Programme

Focused on strengthening water resource management institutions, such as the Water Management Committee, and promoting irrigated agriculture. WFP also provided a reservoir tank and shade nets for youth groups to engage in farming



Northern Rangeland Trust

Enhanced water resource management and coordinated schedules to ensure equitable water access for different communities



Feed the Future LMS Activity

Strengthened the Ward Planning Committee, facilitated peacebuilding and conflict resolution through the Nakuprat Gotu Conservancy, and supported the development of a water strategy



RAPID+ Program

Installed four prepaid water meters, four water kiosks, and borehole sensors to improve water access and monitoring



Strengthening Resilience through Partnership: Middle East Bank and USAID Kuza's Impact for Northern Kenya Fund

In December 2023, USAID Kuza, through its Impact for Northern Kenya Fund (INK Fund), extended a transformative \$3.25 million loan to Middle East Bank Kenya Limited (MEB). This loan, matched dollar-for-dollar by MEB on a pari-passu basis, marked a pivotal investment aimed at catalyzing financial inclusion and economic resilience in Northern Kenya. The partnership has had far-reaching impacts, offering new opportunities for marginalized communities, supporting micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and fostering sustainable development.

A Strategic Partner in Economic Transformation

Middle East Bank Kenya Limited (MEB), a Kenyan-owned financial institution, stands as a crucial enabler for development across Northern Kenya. Serving over 3,000 retail, MSME, and corporate customers, MEB operates as a wholesale lender to microfinance institutions (MFIs), savings and credit cooperative organizations (SACCOs), investment groups, and producer associations. The bank's loan products span a range of financial needs, including asset financing, overdrafts, term loans, stock financing, personal loans, and agricultural loans tailored for MSMEs.

With a total loan portfolio of approximately \$54 million, MEB has dedicated 30% of its funds to Northern Kenya, with 13% specifically supporting agribusinesses. The bank's "hub and spoke" distribution model combines physical branches in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Eldoret with digital channels and partnerships, ensuring accessibility even in remote areas. Notably, 40% of MEB's transactions are conducted digitally, reflecting the bank's commitment to leveraging technology for financial inclusion.

Driving Financial Inclusion and Social Impact

The collaboration between USAID Kuza and MEB has accelerated financial access in Northern Kenya, a region often underserved by traditional banking systems. Through the INK Fund, MEB has issued **91 loans to 15 clients** in the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) region, totalling an impressive \$9,177,500.92 within just one and a half years. These loans have supported diverse beneficiaries, including smallholder farmers, agro-processors, and livestock producers, directly addressing the unique economic needs of the region.

MEB's commitment to fostering financial inclusion extends to marginalized groups, ensuring that women and other vulnerable populations gain access to credit and opportunities. To date, the bank has supported **11 male and 4 female clients** in the FCDC counties and created **27 jobs (20 males, 7 females)**. These efforts not only reduce poverty but also contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable economy.

Innovating for Sustainability

MEB's dedication to environmental sustainability is exemplified by its **Go Green Initiative**, which finances energy-efficient equipment and supports green energy entrepreneurs, such as solar equipment manufacturers and importers. This initiative aligns with global sustainability goals and encourages businesses to adopt environmentally responsible practices, further contributing to resilience in the face of climate challenges.

Broader Impacts of the Partnership

Beyond individual loans, MEB's partnership with USAID Kuza has had broader ripple effects:

- **Support for Financial Institutions:** MEB has provided wholesale loans to MFIs, SACCOs, and investment groups, creating a robust financial ecosystem that empowers grassroots development.
- **Capacity Building:** The financing has enabled producer associations and small businesses in agriculture and livestock sectors to scale operations, boosting regional economic activity.
- **Strengthened Value Chains:** By financing milk processors, agro-processors, and distributors, MEB has reinforced critical agricultural value chains, ensuring better livelihoods for smallholder farmers.

Resilience Through Collaboration

The partnership between USAID Kuza and MEB epitomizes the power of collaborative investment in driving resilience and economic growth. By strategically channelling resources into Northern Kenya, this initiative has addressed systemic barriers to financial inclusion, promoted sustainable development, and empowered communities to thrive.

Through partnerships like this, the vision of resilient, self-reliant communities in Kenya becomes a reality—one investment, one loan, and one empowered entrepreneur at a time.



Empowering Resilience in Kenya's ASALs: The Dot Capital and USAID Kuza Partnership

In 2023, USAID Kuza, through its Impact for Northern Kenya Fund (INK Fund), disbursed a transformative \$1 million loan to Dot Capital Limited, a women-owned microfinance institution (MFI) dedicated to empowering Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). This partnership highlights the critical role of financial inclusion in driving resilience and economic growth in regions that are often underserved by traditional financial systems.

Catalyzing Growth for MSMEs in Northern Kenya

Dot Capital Limited provides tailored financial solutions that include asset financing, agricultural equipment finance, input finance, and working capital support. With operations spanning the North Rift, Northern Kenya, and North Coast regions, Dot Capital has established satellite customer centers in Eldoret, Kilifi, Turkana, and Lamu, serving as critical hubs for its regional clientele.

The MFI's focus on marginalized and underserved populations aligns seamlessly with USAID Kuza's goals to foster economic opportunities and build resilience in Kenya's ASALs.

Key Performance Metrics

Dot Capital has achieved remarkable outcomes within its partnership with the INK Fund:

- **Average loan size:** Approximately \$2,000, making financial services accessible to a broad range of MSMEs.
- **Sector focus:** 53% of loans are directed toward agriculture, a cornerstone of livelihoods in ASALs, while 24% focus on trade.
- **Client demographics:** A strong commitment to inclusivity is evident, with 58% of clients being women and 65% being youth.
- **Staff demographics:** The institution leads by example, with 65% of its staff being female and 76% youth, promoting gender equity and youth empowerment.
- **Non-performing loan ratio:** An impressive 5%, reflecting Dot Capital's robust financial health and prudent lending practices.

Transformative Impacts in ASAL Communities

The partnership between Dot Capital and USAID Kuza has delivered tangible benefits for communities in ASAL regions:

- **Expanding Access to Finance:** Dot Capital has tailored its financial products to the unique needs of traders, transporters, and livestock keepers, ensuring alignment with their business cycles.
- **Serving Marginalized Populations:** The institution has extended financing to refugees—an often-excluded group—providing them with opportunities to rebuild and sustain livelihoods.
- **Extending Reach:** Within just one year of receiving the INK Fund loan, Dot Capital issued 354 loans to 257 clients (150 females and 107 males) in Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) regions, with a total loan portfolio of \$1,675,755.34.
- **Creating Employment Opportunities:** The partnership has directly contributed to the creation of 463 jobs (270 females and 193 males), significantly enhancing household incomes and regional economic activity.

Driving Resilience through Inclusive Financial Services

Dot Capital's commitment to empowering women and youth in ASAL regions represents a critical step toward addressing systemic barriers to financial inclusion. By focusing on agriculture and trade—the economic lifeblood of ASAL communities—the institution has bolstered food security, supported local economies, and built resilience against economic shocks. The organization's robust business model and its ability to maintain solvency, liquidity, and earnings growth underscore its capacity to drive sustained development. Furthermore, Dot Capital's efforts to support refugees and other marginalized groups align with global goals of leaving no one behind, making it a vital partner in USAID Kuza's resilience-building agenda.

A Model for Resilience and Economic Growth

The partnership between USAID Kuza and Dot Capital exemplifies the power of collaboration in achieving economic transformation in underserved regions. By leveraging innovative financial products, creating meaningful employment, and focusing on inclusive growth, this initiative is helping build stronger, more resilient communities across Northern Kenya. This success story underscores the critical importance of partnerships in unlocking the potential of ASAL communities and paving the way for sustainable development.

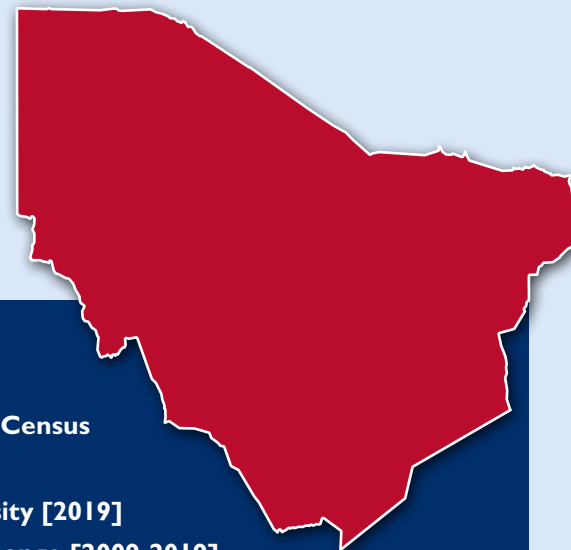
Marsabit County: A Resilient Heart of Northern Kenya

Nestled in Northern Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), Marsabit County spans a vast 70,961.3 km², sharing its borders with Ethiopia to the north and northeast, Wajir County to the east, Isiolo County to the southeast, Samburu County to the south and southwest, and Lake Turkana to the west and northwest. Despite its rugged terrain and challenging climate, Marsabit is home to an estimated 459,785 residents, reflecting an increase from the 2009 Census population.

Marsabit's population is a rich cultural tapestry, with communities such as the Rendille, Gabra, Borana, and Samburu each bringing unique traditions and practices. This cultural diversity is interwoven with challenges, as the county's pastoralist population grapples with resource scarcity and recurring droughts. These climatic pressures often lead to conflicts over grazing lands and water—a precious resource in this arid region.

The county's landscapes are as diverse as its people. From the vast Chalbi Desert to the mountainous terrains of Mount Marsabit and Mount Kulal, Marsabit is a sanctuary for unique wildlife, including elephants, buffaloes, and rare bird species. Marsabit National Park is an ecological gem, drawing eco-tourism and conservation efforts that aim to preserve the county's natural heritage.

Marsabit County stands as a testament to resilience—a place where communities continually adapt to environmental challenges, rooted in traditions and a deep connection to their land.



Marsabit

- **459,785 Population [2019] Census**
- **70,944 km² Area**
- **6.481/km² Population Density [2019]**
- **4.7% Annual Population Change [2009-2019]**

Loiyangalani	Subcounty	26,111	35,713
Marsabit Central	Subcounty	46,502	79,181
Marsabit North	Subcounty	29,561	54,297
Marsabit South	Subcounty	39,558	65,376
Moyale	Subcounty	81,373	108,949
North Horr	Subcounty	45,635	71,447
Sololo	Subcounty	22,426	44,822
Kenya	Republic	38,610,097	47,564,296

Source : Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Bubisa Water Project: Transforming Lives in Northern Kenya, One Drop at a Time

In the dry landscape of Marsabit County's Chalbi Desert, Bubisa village had endured an unrelenting scarcity of water for decades. The 1,200 households of Bubisa lived with a daily struggle, forced to trek over 10 kilometers to access just a few liters of water from one of three village boreholes. This gruelling task was largely shouldered by the women of the village, who not only queued for hours but also made this exhausting journey multiple times a day, leaving little time for education, work, or family. The cycle of poverty and hardship seemed unbreakable.

A Unified Mission for Change

Recognizing the profound need, USAID's Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) in Marsabit County, backed by the USAID Resilience Learning Activity (RLA), set forth an ambitious plan. This was not just about building infrastructure; it was about changing lives through collaboration. In a groundbreaking partnership, USAID implementing partners, the Marsabit County Government, and private actor Maji Milele united with community leaders and development organizations to bring Bubisa the life-changing access to clean, sustainable water it so desperately needed.



Building a Sustainable Solution Together

Every aspect of the Bubisa water project was meticulously planned and implemented to ensure sustainable, long-term impact. The PREG mechanism, coordinated through RLA, facilitated seamless collaboration across all partners:

1. **The Marsabit County Government** provided land to facilitate the borehole drilling process.
2. **PACIDA** led the initial investment, channelling USD 34,900 (KES 4.5 million) to drill and fence the borehole.
3. **Cargo Human Care** contributed a state-of-the-art water treatment system valued at USD 170,187 (KES 22 million), using reverse osmosis to meet Kenya's strict standards for drinking water.
4. **USAID Nawiri** constructed a 50m³ steel storage tank and installed pipelines that deliver water to seven villages and multiple institutions. They also built seven water kiosks and installed prepaid meters, while offering the community financial management training – all with a total investment of USD 131,507 (KES 17 million).
5. **USAID Kenya RAPID** added another 50m³ storage tank, a water kiosk, and prepaid meters, with an investment of USD 30,943 (KES 4 million).
6. **Marsabit County Government** contributed valuable land and installed a bulk prepaid meter, committing to ongoing technical and governance support.
7. **Maji Milele** led the automation, installing water ATMs that would revolutionize water access in the village by providing accessible, efficient water points.

A Ripple of Transformation

The Bubisa water system, with its capacity to produce 11,000 liters per hour, is not just a water source—it is a catalyst for economic and social empowerment. Eight water kiosks, run by trained community members, allow residents to purchase water easily and affordably. Revenue is generated through an automated system, ensuring transparency and accountability. The income from water sales now goes toward maintenance, salaries, and community development projects, laying the foundation for sustained progress.

The impact is staggering as the number of kiosks grew from one to over 100 across Marsabit County, water cartels lost their grip, freeing communities from exploitation. Bubisa's daily revenue from water sales soared from USD 24 (KES 3,000) to USD 155 (KES 20,000), bolstering the local economy.

The project also brought about an unexpected gift: time. Women and youth, freed from daily treks for water, now have time to work, earn an income, and participate actively in the community's future. With over 3,200 jobs created and managed by local committees, the project is not just a water initiative but a full-circle empowerment engine, especially for women, who are now key decision-makers in the village's welfare and operations.

The Power of Collaboration

The Bubisa Water Project is a testament to what can be achieved when diverse partners share a vision and work hand-in-hand. By co-designing, co-implementing, and co-managing the project, USAID, local government, private sector partners, and the community have redefined resilience for Bubisa village. Their collective efforts have brought lasting change—ensuring that clean, accessible water flows not just today, but for generations to come.





PARTNERS PROVIDING WATER TO FAMILIES IN BUBISA



USAID Nawiri installed pipes that distribute water to the residents of seven villages and four institutions, constructed an elevated 50m³ steel storage tank, seven water kiosks, and prepaid meters and trained the community on financial management, investing a total of USD 131,507 (KES 17m)

PACIDA invested USD 34,811 (KES 4.5m) to drill a borehole and fence it

The Marsabit County Gov't provided land, installed one bulk prepaid meter and continues to provide technical support for the operation, maintenance, and governance of this water project

Maji Milele constructed water ATMs that serve as water collection points for the community and automated the entire water facility.



Cargo Human Care provided a USD 170,187 (KES 22m) water treatment system

USAID Kenya RAPID constructed an elevated 50m³ steel storage tank, one water kiosk, prepaid meters and invested a total of USD 30,943 (KES 4m)

The local community works together in water management committees that govern the project and collects revenue from water sales

USAID RLA coordinated the partners' activities and continues to coordinate joint work planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities

Transformative Tale of Turbi: How Access to Healthcare Improved Livelihoods

In Marsabit County's Turbi area, a powerful transformation has taken root, driven by the partnership between the County Government and USAID's implementing partners (IPs). Turbi's dispensary, only 50 meters from the local police station, now stands as a beacon of hope, earning a 5/5 rating from the local community. This small but mighty facility has become a symbol of quality healthcare and the positive impact of collaborative efforts on local livelihoods.

Collaboration Sparks Lasting Benefits

This partnership has yielded remarkable outcomes for Turbi and surrounding areas. One standout initiative is the Baby-Friendly Community Initiative (BFCI), which trained mothers and health workers on the benefits of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. This knowledge empowered mothers to provide proper nutrition, dramatically improving infant health.

Economic empowerment has also flourished. Through local savings and credit groups, community members access loans with ease, repaying on manageable terms. Cash transfers further uplifted household incomes, while training in kitchen gardening encouraged families to grow their own vegetables, making fresh produce accessible and affordable.

To address waterborne diseases, the partnership implemented a WASH program that provided mothers with water treatment training and water storage facilities. This focus on clean water access has significantly reduced disease rates. Partners also supported outreach programs that brought healthcare to even the most remote areas, helping ensure everyone in Turbi Ward could access essential services.

In response to a rising trend of early divorces, the Smart Couple program helped couples strengthen relationships, promoting healthy family dynamics and reducing the rate of early divorces.

From Desperation to Hope: Measurable Impact on Health and Well-being

Before these interventions, mothers in Turbi would introduce food and water to their infants early, unaware of the immense benefits of exclusive breastfeeding. Now, with a full understanding of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding, mothers are raising healthier, better-nourished children.

The once scarce and costly vegetables are now readily available through thriving kitchen gardens, which have enhanced household diets with fresh, nutritious produce. Where women once risked their lives delivering children at home, now the majority deliver in healthcare facilities, leading to a significant drop in maternal and infant mortality.

Waterborne diseases, once widespread due to inadequate water storage and treatment, have declined remarkably with the introduction of WASH training and new water storage facilities. Nutritional support has also had a substantial impact, with rates of malnutrition plummeting thanks to kitchen gardens and the distribution of nutrition supplements.

Extensive training for the Community Health Assistants (CHAs) and Volunteers (CHVs) has equipped local health workers with essential skills, improving service delivery and productivity. The introduction of Mother-Child booklets allows healthcare providers to track pregnancies and newborn health, ensuring mothers and infants receive critical care.

Significant improvements are evident in other areas, too: 95 percent of households now use pit latrines, marking a milestone toward eradicating open defecation. Efforts against female genital mutilation (FGM) have taken hold as locals work together to protect women and girls from this harmful practice.

Access to healthcare, especially for children needing vaccinations, has also improved. Outreach programs have expanded to ensure that even remote communities receive care, and mothers now understand the importance of vaccinations and antenatal visits, protecting their children from preventable diseases.

Empowering Knowledge for Sustainable Change

The true strength of these initiatives lies in the knowledge imparted to the community. Women share insights on vaccination, savings, and water treatment, creating a network of informed, empowered families. They support one another in building pit latrines, and their reach now extends beyond Turbi to neighbouring areas like Kukub Fami.

The savings groups, like Silk, have established water kiosks and retail shops, which provide sustainable income sources. Deep freezers, another project innovation, offer income opportunities while giving travellers access to cold water along the Moyale-Nairobi route—a simple yet life-enhancing service.

The habit of saving, fostered by cash transfers from PACIDA, has become an essential safety net, helping community members prepare for emergencies and unexpected needs.

The success of these programs underscores the power of partnership and the sustainable transformation possible when communities are empowered with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to build healthier, more resilient lives. Turbi's story is a vivid reminder that, through collaboration, even the most remote communities can unlock a future filled with hope and opportunity.



Partners Transforming Community Health in Turbi, Marsabit County



Smart Couple

promoted healthy relationships among couples



WFP

provided cash transfers



County Gov't of Marsabit

runs the health center



BUBISA HEALTH CENTRE

Bubisa Health Center: A Beacon of Collaboration Enhancing Service Delivery in Northern Kenya

In the vast, arid stretches of Marsabit County, where health services are often sparse, the Bubisa Health Center has emerged as a beacon of progress and resilience. Thanks to the partnership between the County Government of Marsabit and USAID Implementing Partners (IPs) like USAID Nawiri, UNICEF, and Concern Worldwide, Bubisa Health Center has not only elevated its service quality but has also transformed community health. Earning a commendable 4 out of 5 rating from local residents, the facility embodies what's possible when collaboration and shared goals converge in the pursuit of health and well-being.

Fueling Bubisa's Health Transformation: The Power of Partnership

The journey to transforming Bubisa Health Center has been rooted in carefully orchestrated support from multiple stakeholders. This collaboration has enabled

the center to offer an impressive array of services that were previously out of reach. Through a shared commitment, the County Government and its partners have ensured a steady supply of essential drugs and nutrition commodities, enabling the facility to meet the needs of vulnerable patients, especially those with critical nutritional needs.

Capacity-building for staff has been a cornerstone of this initiative. Healthcare providers at Bubisa have received ongoing training and mentorship, ensuring they are equipped to deliver quality care effectively. Frontline Community Health Providers (CHPs) receive stipends and support for regular review meetings, boosting their morale and sustaining their critical work at the community level. With USAID's support, Bubisa Health Center has acquired vital resources like client registers and anthropometric tools, which allow for accurate documentation and real-time monitoring of health data. This robust data management has transformed the facility's ability to track and respond to health trends, an invaluable tool in an area with limited health infrastructure.

But one of the most impactful contributions from this collaboration is outreach support. USAID and its partners have made it possible for healthcare teams to reach isolated communities, where the journey to healthcare was once an insurmountable obstacle. Today, no child is denied access to essential healthcare services, thanks to the commitment of these partners in bringing health access to the farthest corners of Marsabit County.

Key Collaborative Activities: Improving Health and Livelihoods Together

The collaborative efforts extend beyond health services to address essential needs like water and sanitation. Together, the County Government and USAID IPs established water kiosks in Bubisa, which have profoundly impacted community life. Access to clean water now supports basic hygiene practices such as handwashing, and essential household tasks like washing utensils, clothes, and beddings. This newfound access has not only improved public health but has also made a significant contribution to agri-nutrition by allowing families to sustain small-scale kitchen gardens.

In partnership with the Ministry of Agriculture, the County Government provided seeds to households, sparking a wave of home gardening. USAID Nawiri, NDMA SND, and PACIDA bolstered these efforts by offering financial transfers, helping vulnerable families secure food stability.

USAID Nawiri, UNICEF, and Concern Worldwide also championed the Baby Friendly Community Initiative (BFCI), an educational campaign promoting best practices for infant and young child nutrition. Community members learned about exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, and sanitation practices, creating a healthier foundation for the youngest members of the community. Anchor groups such as the Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSG), SILL, and BSGs have played a pivotal role in spreading this life-saving information to households, ensuring that best practices take root in every corner of Bubisa.

Reflecting on the Impact of Collaboration

The collaborative efforts in Bubisa have fundamentally reshaped the community. Where there was once a lack of knowledge on health and hygiene practices, there is now a well-informed community practicing safe water usage, agri-



nutrition, and small-scale income-generating activities like kitchen gardening and small livestock rearing.

The training programs for health workers have also brought about remarkable change. Through seminars, on-the-job training, and mentorship, healthcare staff are more competent and confident, enabling Bubisa Health Center to become a trusted pillar of support.

These health improvements are not limited to direct medical interventions. By ensuring access to clean water and equipping the community with the skills to grow their own food, the partnership has helped build household resilience, making families less reliant on external support and better able to navigate economic hardships.

Ensuring Sustainability: Empowering the Community for Lasting Change

To sustain these gains, community empowerment remains key. The community has embraced a culture of knowledge-sharing, with mothers, health workers, and support groups continuing to educate one another on vaccinations, sanitation, and saving practices. Involving men, women, and youth in these initiatives has fostered inclusivity, while community leaders now champion these health and hygiene interventions, helping to keep the momentum strong.

Local savings groups, like Silk, have even established water kiosks and retail shops, creating steady income streams that benefit the broader community. With the support of these partnerships, families have embraced saving, making them better prepared for emergencies or unanticipated needs.

The journey of Bubisa Health Center serves as a shining example of the impact that can be achieved through coordination, commitment, and collaboration. In Bubisa, a community that once struggled to meet its most basic health needs now thrives, with a legacy of shared knowledge, improved health, and sustainable development lighting the way forward.



Partners Transforming Healthcare Delivery in Bubisa, Marsabit County



County Gov't of Marsabit
supplied seeds to households



County Government and
the USAID IPs
supported installation of water
kiosks at Bubisa community



USAID Nawiri, NDMA
SND & PACIDA
provided financial transfers



USAID Nawiri, UNICEF,
and Concern Worldwide
endorsed the Baby Friendly
Community Initiative (BFCl)

Diversifying Socio-Economic Activities: Transforming Livelihoods in Marsabit County

In Marsabit County, where access to nutritious food and essential resources has long been a challenge, partnerships between USAID Implementing Partners (IPs) and the County Government are creating a powerful wave of change. This collaborative effort has brought new training, resources, and sustainable solutions to local communities, significantly uplifting livelihoods and enabling residents to thrive despite challenging conditions. By strengthening agriculture, enhancing water access, and introducing sustainable energy solutions, this partnership is reshaping the social and economic fabric of Marsabit.

The Shift Toward Diversified Livelihoods and Increased Production

Previously, Marsabit's households were heavily reliant on livestock as their primary livelihood, making them vulnerable to economic and environmental shocks. Today, however, many families have successfully diversified their income streams, venturing into crop production. Training programs in Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) have empowered local farmers to cultivate a variety of crops, including nutrient-rich vegetables like collard greens, spinach, and capsicum, along with staple cereals such as maize, beans, and green grams. The result? A 25% increase in the area under cultivation and significantly higher crop yields, providing households with ample food stocks and improved nutrition to cushion them against shortages, especially during droughts.

A Multi-Purpose Water Supply: Boosting Health and Productivity

Access to clean water has revolutionized life in Marsabit. Boreholes, like the solar-powered Dadach Elele borehole, are now crucial sources of water for human consumption, household chores, livestock, and even small-scale irrigation. Solarization has reduced operational costs and introduced a sustainable energy solution, aligning with the global movement toward green energy to mitigate climate change.

With closer water access, women and children no longer need to trek long distances, which has freed up time for women to engage in household chores, social activities, and income-generating endeavors. For children, it means more time to attend school, contributing to a brighter future and healthier, more educated communities.

Elevating Hygiene and Health Practices

Enhanced access to water has also fostered better hygiene practices at both household and institutional levels, strengthening overall community health. Training on proper sanitation practices has led to improved hygiene behaviors, which in turn reduces the spread of waterborne diseases. The collective well-being of Marsabit residents has improved as a result, with cleaner living environments and fewer health risks.

Ensuring Lasting Impact: Sustainability and Knowledge Transfer

To guarantee sustainability, key community resource persons have been trained extensively on techniques to support local farmers. These resource persons play a critical role, passing down the knowledge and practices learned through this partnership, ensuring that community members are equipped to maintain and expand their agricultural productivity.

The formation and training of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLA) has also fostered financial resilience. By developing skills in financial management, community members are better prepared to manage their incomes, plan for the future, and share these skills beyond the program's timeline. Diversified incomes now offer a safety net, so if one source of income is affected, other revenue streams can sustain the household.

A Future Rooted in Resilience

Through these targeted interventions, Marsabit County is embracing a future of resilience and prosperity. Diversified income, improved food production, sustainable water access, and heightened community knowledge all contribute to a robust foundation that allows families to flourish. The success of this partnership demonstrates how empowering local communities with knowledge, resources, and sustainable practices can lead to lasting transformation, making Marsabit a beacon of innovation in the face of challenging conditions.

Building Lasting Peace: How Peace-Building Committees Are Uniting Communities in Moyale

For years, Moyale's communities, positioned along the tense Kenya-Ethiopia border, faced relentless challenges typical of border regions: frequent robberies, ethnic strife, and livestock theft. Without structured systems for conflict resolution, tensions ran high, communities grew distrustful, and local leaders relied heavily on distant government intervention. But with the establishment of Community Peace Building Committees, supported by USAID's Cross-Border Community Resilience Activity (CBCR), this story of division is being rewritten into one of unity, security, and resilience.

Laying the Foundation for Lasting Peace and Cooperation

Recognizing the urgent need for a community-driven approach to peace, the Peace Building Committees were formed with representatives from each border community. Their mission was simple yet profound: to build trust, strengthen cooperation, and tackle issues that often extended beyond Moyale town itself. One notable success is in the Dilo gold mine area—a site previously closed due to violent clashes. With the committee's involvement, a peaceful resolution allowed the reopening of the mine, benefiting communities on both sides of the border.

The impact of these committees has been profound. Community members rated their experience with the committee's work 5 out of 5, noting improved relationships and new cross-border coordination mechanisms. The structured, organized approach enabled better follow-ups and feedback between communities and counties, allowing for timely, community-led solutions and strengthening cross-border ties.



Remarkable Achievements Through Collaboration

Through the committee's efforts, border communities have seen a reduction in crimes such as robbery, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. An improved reporting and response mechanism has strengthened local security, even facilitating the recovery of stolen livestock and motorcycles—long-standing sources of tension and economic loss. The committee's collaborative approach was rated 70% effective by community members, highlighting significant strides in peacebuilding and cohesion.

A key to the committee's success is its inclusivity. Elders from all border communities are actively involved, ensuring a diversity of voices shapes policies and decisions. This sense of ownership has also spread to shared resources, with herders now feeling confident to share pastures and water sources without fear of conflict, further strengthening bonds across communities.

Transforming Moyale's Social Structures: A New Chapter of Unity

Comparing Moyale's border regions before and after the establishment of these committees reveals a striking transformation. Previously, there was no structured communication between border towns, making coordinated problem-solving nearly impossible. Security was rigid, movement across the border was limited, and government responses were often slow and ineffective.

Today, structured communication channels have created a transparent, reliable relationship between Moyale's communities. Issues are now resolved quickly through community-led solutions, bypassing bureaucratic delays. The once-strict border now facilitates the free movement of people and goods, enriching the local economy and fostering a spirit of unity. The committee has also effectively shifted community focus away from ethnic divisions to shared responsibility and cohesion. Where there were once multiple ethnic committees, a single, unified peace committee now represents all communities, fostering dialogue and cooperation.

Ensuring Sustainable Peace and Expanding Success

To build on these gains, the committee has committed to continuous training and knowledge-sharing with other successful peacekeeping initiatives. Plans for benchmarking against other cross-border committees are already underway, with hopes of refining their practices and learning from the most effective examples.

In their vision for the future, committee members are advocating for official recognition and support from the national governments of Kenya and Ethiopia. By establishing a legal framework and allocating resources, the governments could further enhance the committee's capacity, expand mobility, and strengthen peace operations across the border.

The story of Moyale's Peace Building Committees is a testament to the transformative power of coordination, commitment, and community-driven action. In a region once marked by division and distrust, the committees have united communities in a shared vision for lasting peace. Through these collaborative efforts, Moyale stands as a beacon of resilience and a powerful example of how communities, united in purpose, can overcome the challenges of history and geography to create a more secure, prosperous future.

Partners Transforming Healthcare Delivery in Moyale, Marsabit County



USAID CBCR
supported formation of the peace-
building committees



Community Elders
participate and allow inclusivity
across demographics strengthening
community bonds



Peace Committee
spearheads peace and conflict
resolution, works with local
administration



Local Administration
works closely with peace committee
to promote peace and enhance
conflict resolution

Samburu County: A Land of Resilience and Rich Heritage



Situated in northern Kenya, Samburu County is a captivating landscape where rugged terrain meets vibrant cultural traditions. Home to a predominantly pastoralist population, Samburu's communities are deeply connected to the land and livestock, which form the lifeblood of their economy and daily lives. In this arid region, rainfall is scarce, averaging only 700mm per year, with frequent droughts placing considerable strain on the county's people and resources.

Pastoralism and Livestock: The Heart of Samburu's Economy

Livestock farming is the backbone of Samburu's economy. Goats, sheep, camels, and cattle are not just commodities; they are central to trade and community identity. In this harsh landscape, herders lead their animals across vast plains, searching for pastures in a cycle dictated by the rains. Livestock markets, held regularly, create bustling hubs where traders gather to buy, sell, and barter, providing essential income for many families.

Samburu's economic landscape extends beyond livestock. Small-scale agriculture plays a role, though its success is closely tied to the limited rainfall. Farmers grow crops such as maize and vegetables, providing crucial food sources for local families. The county's breathtaking scenery, unique wildlife, and proximity to

conservation areas attract eco-tourism, generating employment and highlighting the county's natural beauty. Additionally, Samburu women's traditional beadwork is renowned for its intricate designs, bringing income and cultural pride as their art is sold locally and internationally.

Challenges Facing Samburu's Communities

Despite its rich cultural heritage and potential for growth, Samburu faces complex challenges typical of arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). Food insecurity is a persistent issue, with unpredictable weather patterns and scarce rainfall often leading to crop failure and reduced grazing lands for livestock. Water scarcity further exacerbates the problem, as communities rely on seasonal rivers and boreholes that sometimes run dry, forcing residents to trek long distances in search of water for their families and animals. Limited access to healthcare compounds the county's difficulties, with rural areas often underserved and maternal and child health services constrained. Illiteracy remains a significant hurdle as well, limiting economic opportunities and access to information, especially among women and girls who often lack equal access to education.

Resilience and Hope for the Future

In the face of these challenges, Samburu's communities continue to demonstrate resilience and adaptability. USAID programs and local initiatives are making strides to address issues such as water access, food security, and healthcare infrastructure. Efforts are underway to diversify income sources through initiatives in small-scale agriculture and support for women's crafts, enabling households to build more stable livelihoods.

Samburu County is a land of striking beauty, enduring traditions, and resilient people. As the county navigates the path toward sustainable development, Samburu's communities continue to hold tightly to their heritage while adapting to an ever-changing landscape, showcasing their strength and unity in the face of adversity.

Ngilai Community Unit: Building Resilience and Improving Livelihoods Through Partnership

In the rugged, pastoral lands of Wamba North Ward in Samburu East lies Ngilai, a community of 5,323 people across 620 households, all striving to overcome significant challenges in health, nutrition, water scarcity, and economic stability. Yet, a collaborative effort between dedicated partners has sparked a transformation in Ngilai, setting a new course towards resilience, self-reliance, and sustainable development.

Fighting Malnutrition and Fostering Lasting Health Practices

At the heart of Ngilai's health initiatives stands the Ngilai Dispensary and its dynamic Community Health Unit (CHU), supported by 20 committed Community Health Promoters (CHPs). With backing from Acted, UNICEF, USAID Nawiri, and IRC, the CHU provides essential health services, actively manages malnutrition, and promotes community hygiene. UNICEF alone supports three outreach sites that deliver supplementary feeding to children and mothers grappling with acute malnutrition. Through these efforts, over 110 children and 96 pregnant and lactating women have received vital nutritional support. By addressing immediate needs and instilling lifelong health practices, these programs are not only combatting malnutrition but also helping to break the cycle of hunger and poor health.



Securing Sustainable Water Access

In the arid landscapes of Ngilai, water scarcity is a relentless challenge. To secure a sustainable water source, USAID Nawiri, alongside the Water Resources Authority of Kenya (WARMA) and the County Government of Samburu, initiated the Ngeny Water Resources Users Association (WRUA). This community-led group actively manages local water resources, overseeing the recharge of shallow wells, boreholes, and seasonal rivers. Additionally, WRUA has implemented a sub-catchment plan that includes rehabilitating the Ngilai River pipeline. These initiatives are pivotal not only for human consumption but also for livestock, safeguarding Ngilai's primary economic asset and supporting the broader ecosystem on which the community relies.

Building Infrastructure and Bolstering Livelihoods

Acted has played a transformative role in infrastructure and environmental sustainability through their Cash-for-Work programs. These initiatives involve community members in meaningful work, such as constructing gabions around the Ngilai Health Centre, managing soil erosion, and establishing community kitchen gardens. Additionally, critical boreholes have been repaired, ensuring reliable water access for both household and agricultural use.

USAID Nawiri has further strengthened Ngilai's resilience through agricultural extension programs. Promoting diversified crop production via micro-irrigation, poultry farming, and apiculture, these efforts enhance nutrition and create alternative income sources, thus expanding Ngilai's economic safety net. The result is a community more capable of withstanding environmental and economic shocks, with more households empowered to provide for their families.

Through anchor groups tailored to specific needs, such as adolescent girls, boys, pregnant mothers, and women entrepreneurs, USAID Nawiri fosters a sense of community and targeted support. Among these, the Mother-to-Mother Support Groups stand out, providing critical resources for addressing and preventing gender-based violence (GBV) while promoting awareness and response. IRC has bolstered this effort by training health workers in GBV clinical management and establishing clear referral pathways to ensure that survivors receive appropriate care and support.



Overcoming Market and Economic Hurdles

While progress is undeniable, Ngilai continues to face economic challenges that contribute to malnutrition, including limited market access, high illiteracy rates, and restricted access to diverse diets. Weekly market days are lifelines for the community, where residents trade in staple foods like cereals, legumes, and vegetables. USAID Nawiri's initiative to train community disease reporters has strengthened livestock health and productivity, addressed a primary livelihood source and enhanced food security.


In the realm of healthcare, the USAID Tujenge Jamii project has been instrumental. Supporting HIV testing for 52 clients, ART treatment for 19 clients, TB management for 16 clients, and PMTCT services for 29 clients, this project has significantly improved health outcomes in Ngilai. It has also invested in facility infrastructure, supplying essential equipment and hosting performance reviews to boost service delivery, thereby reinforcing the community's confidence in their health system.


Charting a Path Towards Sustainability

Ngilai's journey to resilience and self-reliance exemplifies the power of partnership and community-driven progress. With continuous capacity building, water, and sanitation improvements, and strengthened health services, Ngilai is positioned for a promising future. Organizations remain committed to long-term impact through community ownership, knowledge transfer, and collaboration with the county government. The Ngeny WRUA, along with health and agricultural programs, provides Ngilai with the tools to sustain these gains, empowering residents to lead their community towards a future of stability and prosperity.


Through coordination, commitment, and an unwavering focus on sustainability, the partners supporting Ngilai have built a foundation for resilience that not only meets immediate needs but also fosters lasting change. The people of Ngilai now stand as a testament to the strength that comes when communities, governments, and organizations unite around a common goal: a self-reliant, thriving Ngilai community.

Partners Transforming Livelihoods in Ngilai, Samburu County







UNICEF
supports three outreach sites that provide supplementary feeding for children and mothers suffering from acute malnutrition




The IRC
trained health workers on GBV clinical management





USAID Nawiri
supported formation anchor, training for community disease reporters and through extension programs promoted diversified crop production through micro-irrigation, poultry, and apiculture



Acted
supported Cash-for-Work programs



USAID Nawiri, WARMA and County Gov't of Samburu
supported establishment of the Ngeny Water Resources Users Association (WRUA)

USAID Tujenge Jamii
supported HIV testing, ART treatment, TB management and PMTCT support, also enhancing the facility's infrastructure, providing essential equipment and hosting performance reviews to improve service delivery

Fostering Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods in Lolgerded Village

Nestled within Samburu East's Waso Ward, Lolgerded village lies along the Isiolo-Marsabit road, with about 70 households and a population of 400. The people of Lolgerded are deeply rooted in livestock rearing, primarily of cattle, goats, camels, and sheep. The livestock value chain is not only the village's economic backbone but also a primary source of nutrition. However, Lolgerded's dependence on livestock exposes the community to various challenges, including prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and livestock disease outbreaks, which add stress to household resilience and food security.



Health and Water Access Through Laresoro Community Unit

Lolgerded is served by the Laresoro Community Health Unit, which also supports neighbouring villages like Ntilal and Lalparua. This unit, facilitated by Laresoro Health Facility with support from USAID Nawiri, provides essential healthcare services to a population of 1,593, including 269 children under five and 338 women of reproductive age. This health facility has become a lifeline, addressing community needs in maternal and child health, nutrition, and general healthcare access.

The residents of Lolgerded engage in a diverse range of livelihood activities beyond livestock rearing to supplement their income, especially during times when livestock sales are limited. Cattle, goats, and camels are traded in the bustling Archer's Post livestock market each Saturday, while some residents engage in petty trading of essentials like sugar, tea leaves, and cooking oil. Additionally, REAP for Nutrition groups contribute to household income by selling vegetables and handcrafted ornaments, adding color and variety to the local economy.

Despite these economic activities, the community still faces high rates of malnutrition, driven by financial constraints, limited access to diverse, nutritious foods, and seasonal water scarcity. As pastures deplete, herds migrate, leaving households without milking animals and exacerbating nutritional deficiencies, especially for young children who rely on milk as a primary food source.

Collaborative Efforts Driving Change

USAID Nawiri, in collaboration with other organizations, has spearheaded several initiatives to strengthen resilience, address malnutrition, and improve health outcomes in Lolgerded. Key interventions include:

Participatory Rangeland Management (PRM): Hybrid committees, trained on rangeland management, guide the community in sustainable practices, ensuring the land can support livestock and agriculture in the long term. This initiative, combined with holistic education for anchor groups, helps protect and restore grazing lands.

Mother-to-Mother Support Groups and Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs): These groups empower women by providing platforms to share

knowledge on nutrition, health, and savings. The groups support financial resilience and community health, while the REAP for Nutrition (R4N) initiative promotes dietary diversity and practices such as exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding.

Drought Emergency Response (DER): USAID Nawiri has provided cash transfers to 39 vulnerable households, helping them weather the impacts of drought. Health outreach and community health system strengthening activities at Laesoro Health Centre are also contributing to improved maternal and child health outcomes.

In addition to USAID Nawiri's programs, other partners play a crucial role in fostering resilience:

- **Samburu County Government:** By supporting health, water, and education services, the county government helps build a stable infrastructure for community development.
- **Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT):** Working through the Kalama Conservancy, NRT supports conservation, rangeland management, and health initiatives, ensuring that natural resources are managed sustainably.

- **Feed the Children:** This organization uses a care group model to drive behavior change and provides educational materials and water resources, fostering health and resilience.
- **Grevy Zebra Trust:** Focused on conservation and rangeland management, Grevy Zebra Trust's involvement underscores the importance of biodiversity and sustainable land use, which benefits both the community and the local ecosystem.

Building a Foundation for Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods

Despite these challenges, the people of Lolgerded remain united in their commitment to improving their lives and building a foundation for resilience. By adopting sustainable practices in livestock and rangeland management, diversifying income sources, and promoting health and nutrition, Lolgerded's community is setting itself up for a brighter, more stable future.

With support from USAID Nawiri and its dedicated partners, Lolgerded village is developing a framework for resilience that supports health, food security, and economic well-being. This collaboration serves as a testament to the power of partnership in driving sustainable change, equipping the community to face the challenges ahead with confidence and strength.

Partners Transforming Livelihoods in Lolgerded, Samburu County



USAID Nawiri

provides cash transfers to 39 vulnerable households under the Drought Emergency Response (DER) program and contributes to improved maternal and child health.



County Gov't of Samburu

provides support in health, water, and education



NRT

works on conservation, rangeland management, and health initiatives through the Kalama Conservancy



Feed the Children

applies a care group model for behavior change and provides educational and water resources.



Grevy Zebra Trust

contributes to conservation and rangeland management efforts

A Testament to Resilience and Adaptability: Lolkuniani Village's Journey Towards Transformation

Nestled in the heart of Samburu, just 20 kilometers from Wamba town, Lolkuniani village is a thriving example of resilience and adaptability, standing strong amidst the challenges faced by pastoralist communities. Selected strategically by USAID Nawiri and USAID Livestock Market Systems (LMS) for its pivotal role in food security and economic empowerment, Lolkuniani is helping drive change throughout Samburu East sub-county.

Every Thursday, the Lolkuniani livestock market comes alive, with traders from neighbouring regions gathering to trade goats, sheep, camels, and cattle. On these market days, the village swells to around 6,500 people, bustling with the exchange of not only livestock but also goods like foodstuffs, clothing, and household essentials. Yet, despite its significance, Lolkuniani has long faced challenges including water scarcity, limited sanitation facilities, and restricted access to health and education. A broken borehole left the community reliant on seasonal streams and water vendors, leading to frequent waterborne illnesses and adding financial pressure on households. Open defecation, a result of low latrine coverage, further amplified health risks.

Against this backdrop, USAID's holistic interventions in Lolkuniani have been transformative, using a multi-partner, community-centered approach to tackle the core issues of water, health, and agricultural resilience.

USAID Nawiri: Building Resilience Through Agriculture, Health, and Financial Empowerment

USAID Nawiri's initiatives in Lolkuniani have gone beyond quick fixes, instead laying the foundation for long-term sustainability:

- **Agricultural Empowerment and Climate-Smart Farming:** Recognizing the potential of small-scale farming, USAID Nawiri supported the establishment of community farms around the Lolkuniani dispensary. With 40 households allocating land for vegetable production, the project introduced climate-smart agricultural practices, allowing the community to cultivate nutrient-dense greens like kale, spinach, and cowpeas. These crops support household nutrition, providing fresh vegetables even during droughts. The group received training in Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) methods, enabling them to pool resources, access loans, and boost their income—a vital step towards financial independence and improved nutrition.
- **Strengthening Health Systems:** USAID Nawiri worked to fortify the health infrastructure in Lolkuniani, providing training and mentorship for healthcare workers on topics such as health, nutrition, and inventory

management. This training ensured that the Lolkuniani Dispensary could better manage health commodities and maintain a steady supply of essential items. With improved referrals between community and facility, residents now have access to a more comprehensive healthcare system.

- **Livestock Market Support:** Understanding the critical role of livestock in the community's economy, USAID Nawiri helped strengthen the Lolkuniani Livestock Market Association (LMA). The project arranged learning tours for LMA representatives and local livestock traders, exposing them to terminal markets in Nairobi, where they could forge new connections and identify trade opportunities. These exchanges have created pathways for local producers to reach larger markets, empowering Lolkuniani's livestock keepers to expand their reach and enhance their income.
- **Water Management Training:** USAID Nawiri also focused on sustainable water management by forming and training water management committees. These committees, equipped with skills in water resource protection and catchment management, are now empowered to operate and maintain the village's water systems. Training local leaders further strengthened this initiative, ensuring ongoing support for the committees' work.



Community Contributions: Ownership and Collective Action

Lolkuniani's community members played an instrumental role in this transformation. Their involvement included:

- **Security and Oversight:** Local residents provided security for construction materials, protected water infrastructure, and oversaw the building processes, ensuring that projects progressed smoothly.
- **Land and Labor:** The community generously donated and prepared land for both agricultural use and construction, contributing labor for land preparation and maintenance. This sense of ownership has fostered a deep commitment to the project's success.
- **Water Resource Management:** Local residents now manage and maintain water infrastructure, taking responsibility for the technical upkeep and contributing to sustainable water usage practices.

DRSLP's Role: Bolstering Water Access

The Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods Program (DRSLP) has also played a vital role in Lolkuniani, addressing water access with sustainable solutions:

- **New Borehole Installation:** DRSLP drilled a 130-meter-deep borehole with a discharge rate of 7.2 cubic meters per hour, ensuring a reliable water source for the community.
- **Infrastructure Development:** In addition to the borehole, DRSLP constructed a water kiosk, installed a 10-cubic-meter tank, and built a water trough, providing accessible water points for both human and livestock use.

A Future of Resilience and Sustainable Development

Lolkuniani stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved through multi-sectoral, community-centered approaches. USAID Nawiri and LMS' collaborative efforts have fortified essential services, boosted the local economy, and created resilient food systems that promise sustainability for years to come. As Lolkuniani and neighbouring villages continue to grow stronger, these initiatives are paving the way for sustainable development, improved livelihoods, and a hopeful future for Samburu's people.

Through partnership, empowerment, and a shared commitment to resilience, Lolkuniani has transformed from a village facing immense challenges into a beacon of strength and adaptability—demonstrating what is possible when communities and organizations unite in purpose.

From Hardship to Empowerment: Sepian's Journey of Resilience

In the remote and rugged landscapes of Lorrok village in Samburu County, Kenya, lives Sepian, a resilient mother of five, including her young son, Lekipan. For Sepian, life is a daily challenge, especially as she bears the weight of providing for her family when her husband travels far to find pasture for their livestock—a lifeline that sustains them but remains vulnerable to the harsh cycles of drought. In this pastoralist community, cultural norms dictate that women are restricted from owning assets or stepping beyond traditional roles, further limiting their chances of achieving economic independence.

From Scattered Aid to Targeted Support through JWP

For years, humanitarian aid reached Lorrok village sporadically, its inconsistency leaving essential needs unmet. But everything began to change with the launch of the Joint Work Plan (JWP) under USAID's PREG (Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth). Through JWP's coordinated approach, PREG joined forces with the Samburu County Government to address the multifaceted challenges facing Lorrok's families with a holistic, community-centered approach. This initiative aimed to deliver sustainable, multi-sectoral support that would truly transform lives, and it brought real, lasting change to Sepian's life.

When Lekipan's health began to deteriorate, with his weight dropping drastically, Sepian sought the help of a Community Health Volunteer (CHV), whom she was connected with through JWP and PREG. Supported by USAID Nawiri and UNICEF, the CHV's timely intervention enrolled Lekipan in a malnutrition program, and he received continuous monitoring from the local health assistant. This crucial moment marked the beginning of Sepian's journey from hardship to empowerment.

A Circle of Support through Mother-to-Mother Groups

Sepian also found an invaluable source of strength and solidarity in a USAID Nawiri-supported Mother-to-Mother Support Group, part of PREG's commitment to maternal and child health. In this safe space, she connected with other mothers who shared her struggles and her hopes, crossing the boundaries of cultural restrictions. Here, Sepian gained not only nutritional knowledge and

guidance but also a newfound sense of community, solidarity, and confidence.

PREG's layered support provided Sepian and her fellow mothers with skills that reshaped their lives and empowered them to break the cycle of dependency. With training in kitchen gardening and nutritional awareness, Sepian learned how to improve her family's diet with fresh, home-grown vegetables. This knowledge, coupled with practical skills, allowed her to take charge of her family's health and well-being. For the first time, she saw the possibility of change within her reach.

Breaking Barriers and Growing Resilience

Driven by her commitment to a better life for her children, Sepian took a bold step in defiance of cultural norms—she started her own kitchen garden, where she grows collard greens to feed her family. But her determination did not stop there. Inspired by the progress she had made, Sepian joined the community-driven Lulu Farm Irrigation Project, a sustainable agriculture initiative aimed at promoting economic empowerment through collective farming.

For Sepian, Lulu Farm was a transformative opportunity. With access to irrigation, she could cultivate a larger plot of land, growing produce to sell at local markets. Her field flourished, and her income grew, marking a significant milestone on her path from hardship to self-reliance. She now plays an active role in sustaining her family, defying cultural limitations, and paving the way for other women in her community to explore similar paths.

A Beacon of Hope and Resilience

As Sepian tends to her portion of Lulu Farm, her life tells a story of transformation, gratitude, and resilience. Once defined by scarcity and limited choices, her world now brims with possibility. Her journey has become a testament to the transformative power of collective support, community-based solutions, and the strength of a mother's love.

Through PREG and JWP's coordinated, locally driven initiatives, Sepian's story is a powerful reminder of how resilience can be fostered in the most challenging circumstances. What was once a life of hardship is now a journey of empowerment and hope—a shining example of how crisis can become opportunity and how, with the right support, a community can turn resilience into lasting prosperity.

Turkana County

Turkana County, located in northwestern Kenya, is the country's second-largest county by land area and one of its most arid and underdeveloped regions. Sharing borders with Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the north, and Ethiopia to the northeast, Turkana is uniquely positioned as a gateway to East Africa's cross-border trade and regional integration. Despite its strategic location, the county faces significant environmental and socio-economic challenges that have shaped its history and development trajectory.

Geography and Climate: Turkana is characterized by arid and semi-arid lands, with a landscape dominated by rugged terrain, desert-like plains, and the iconic Lake Turkana. Known as the world's largest desert lake and a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Lake Turkana is a vital lifeline for the county's communities, supporting fishing, tourism, and biodiversity. However, the region's climate is harsh, with temperatures often exceeding 24°C and minimal annual rainfall, making it prone to droughts and water scarcity.

Livelihoods and Economic Activities: Pastoralism is the backbone of Turkana's economy and culture, with livestock such as goats, sheep, cattle, and camels providing food, income, and social status. Fishing around Lake Turkana supplements livelihoods, while small-scale farming is practiced in areas with access to water. However, recurrent droughts, erratic rainfall, and limited agricultural infrastructure often constrain productivity, leaving the population vulnerable to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Challenges

- **Water Scarcity:** Access to clean water is a persistent challenge, as the county's water sources are often depleted during prolonged droughts.
- **Food Insecurity:** Low agricultural yields and the reliance on rain-fed systems have contributed to chronic food shortages and widespread malnutrition.
- **Climate Change:** Increasing temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns exacerbate the vulnerability of Turkana's communities, further threatening their livelihoods.

Joint Work Planning (JWP) Initiatives:

Under the Joint Work Planning (JWP) framework, multiple stakeholders, including the County Government of Turkana, USAID, and implementing partners, are working to address these challenges. Key focus areas include:

1. **Food Security and Nutrition:** Initiatives aim to improve access to nutritious food through sustainable farming practices, fishing programs, and nutrition education.
2. **Sustainable Livelihoods:** Programs promote resilience by diversifying income sources and enhancing adaptive capacity through skills training and market access.
3. **Water and Climate Resilience:** Investments in water infrastructure, including boreholes, irrigation systems, and water conservation techniques, help communities adapt to climate change.
4. **Health and WASH:** Efforts to improve health outcomes include outreach on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), maternal health programs, and combating malnutrition through growth monitoring and targeted interventions.

A Vision for Resilience: Despite its challenges, Turkana County has demonstrated remarkable resilience. Through collaborative efforts and innovative solutions, communities are adapting to their environment, enhancing their livelihoods, and building a more sustainable future. With continued focus on partnerships, capacity building, and climate adaptation, Turkana is steadily transforming into a region of opportunity and growth.



Village Doctors Saving Young Lives in Turkana During COVID-19

At daybreak in Lobang'a village, Turkana West, John Epeta, a 57-year-old community health volunteer affectionately called the "village doctor," begins his daily mission. Despite lacking formal education, Epeta is an indispensable figure, walking door-to-door to save lives and improve the health of women and children. His dedication exemplifies how grassroots collaboration can transform marginalized communities.

A Community Struggles Amid a Pandemic

In May 2020, Turkana County reported its first case of COVID-19, becoming the 29th county in Kenya to face the virus. The pandemic sparked fear and disrupted health systems across the region. Caregivers, wary of contracting the virus, became hesitant to seek healthcare services. Reports such as the Kenya COVID-19 Perceptions, Stigma and Impact Study and Survey on Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Households documented significant declines in essential health indicators. For instance, the Kenya Health Information System noted a 34.3% drop in admissions of severely malnourished children in Turkana in 2020 compared to the previous year.

To address these challenges, the Turkana County Department of Health implemented a business continuity plan aligned with the Ministry of Health's guidelines. Central to this plan was the Community Health Services Act of 2018, which empowered a network of community health volunteers (CHVs) like Epeta to deliver vital health services.

Empowering Local Heroes

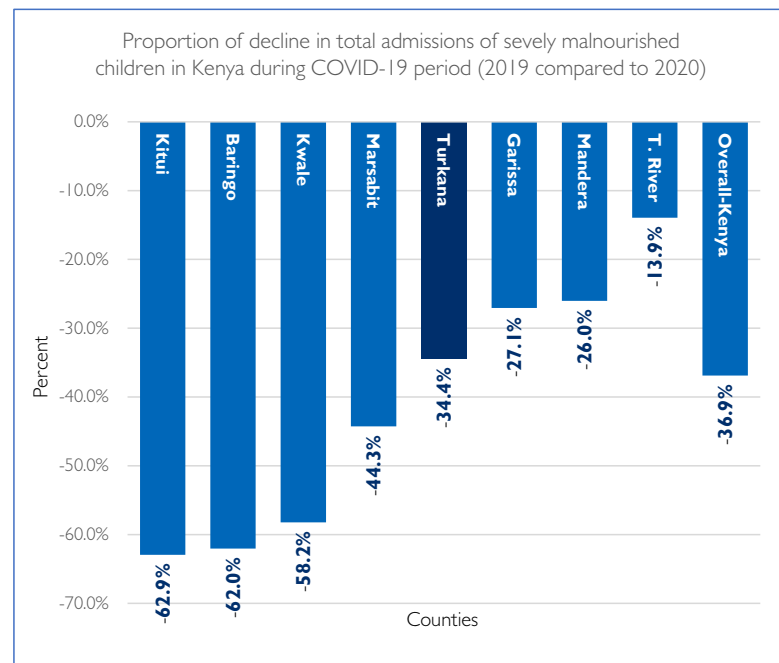
Through the Kenya Community Health Policy (2020–2030), CHVs were trained, equipped, and provided stipends to ensure continuity of care. These semi-literate but dedicated volunteers were armed with tools to manage health and nutrition issues at the household level. Epeta, for instance, now delivers care equipped with a thermometer, color-coded tools for pneumonia detection, oral rehydration salts, malaria drugs, and the MUAC tape for malnutrition screening.

"I serve my people with the knowledge and skills I've acquired," Epeta says proudly. "Through my training in Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM), I can detect illnesses early, treat minor cases, and refer severe ones to health facilities."

On an average day, Epeta visits five to ten households, educating families on disease prevention, managing childhood illnesses, and monitoring maternal health. His work has significantly reduced malnutrition rates in his village, highlighting the power of local health volunteers in improving community well-being.

Adapting Health Systems During a Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic forced CHVs like Dalmas Lomeju in Nabwelpus village to adapt their services. To minimize contact, caregivers were trained to use the simplified, color-coded MUAC tape to detect malnutrition in children. Mothers like Margaret Atabo, a resident of Nabwelpus, now confidently monitor their



children's health, referring cases to CHVs or health facilities when needed.

“The MUAC tape is simple,” Margaret explains. “Green means my child is healthy, yellow indicates moderate malnutrition, and red signals severe malnutrition requiring urgent care.”

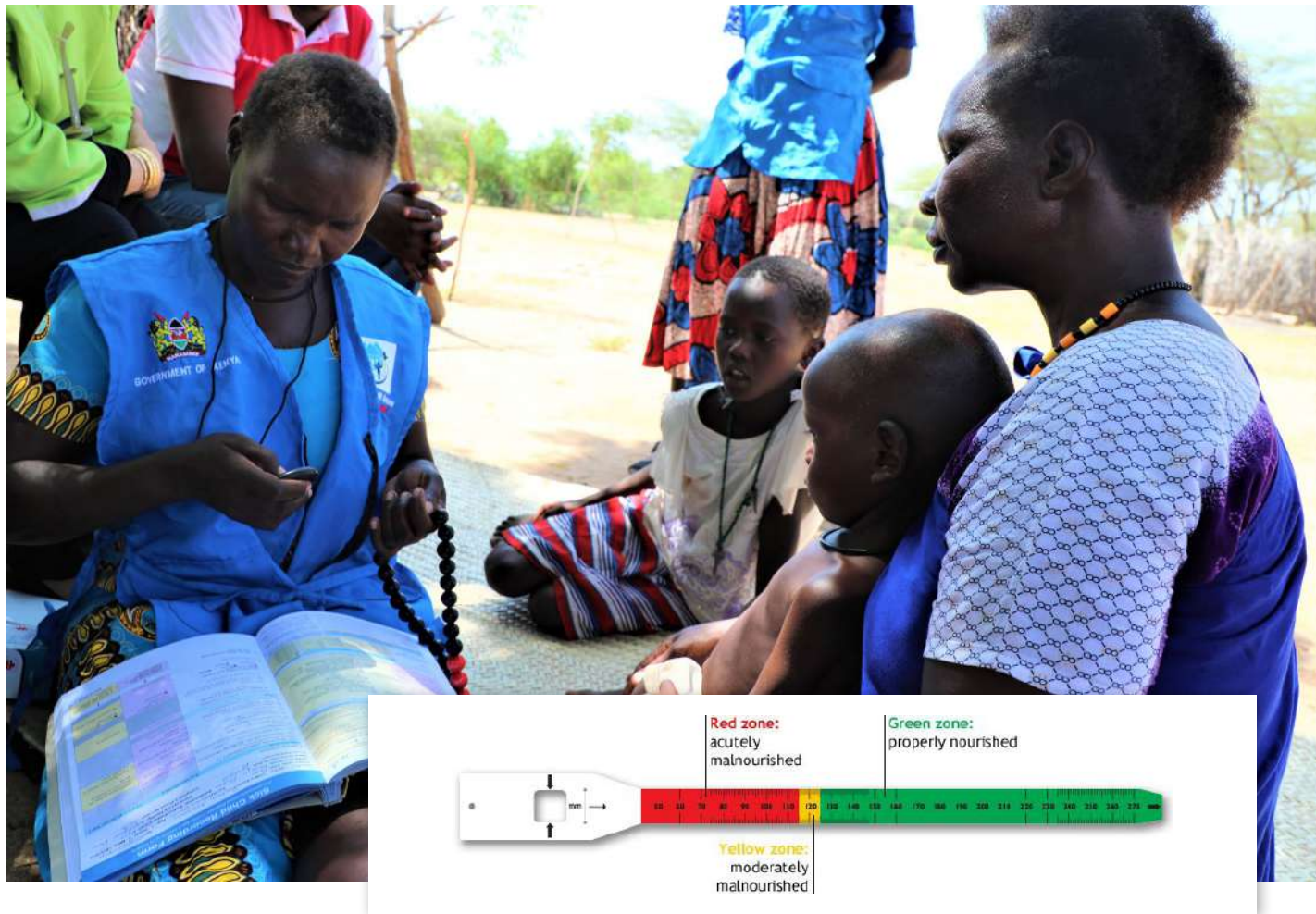
The pandemic also underscored the importance of innovative tools like Rapid Pro, a two-way communication platform for behavior change messaging, and the IMAM Surge approach, which ensures health facilities are prepared for surges in demand.

UNICEF's Low-Cost Innovations Ensuring Health and Nutrition Service Continuity

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the challenges of delivering health and nutrition services in marginalized and hard-to-reach regions like Turkana County, Kenya, necessitated innovative, cost-effective solutions. UNICEF, in collaboration with the Turkana County Government and partners, introduced several impactful strategies to ensure the continuity of essential services, particularly for children and vulnerable populations. These innovations emphasized empowering communities, leveraging technology, and building health system resilience. Key interventions included:

Family/Mother-Led MUAC Screening

The **Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC)** tape is a simple, color-coded tool enabling caregivers to screen children for malnutrition at the



household level. The innovation's impact includes:

- **Empowering caregivers:** By teaching mothers and caregivers to use the MUAC tape, families became active participants in monitoring their children's health. This strategy ensured timely identification and referral of malnourished children to health facilities, even during movement restrictions.
- **Pilot success:** Implemented in 106 of 187 community units (56%), the program attributed nearly 50% of all health facility admissions for malnutrition to early detection through this method.



Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) and ICCM-SAM

ICCM equips community health volunteers (CHVs) with simplified tools to diagnose, treat, and refer cases of malnutrition and common ailments such as pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhea. The ICCM-SAM extension addresses severe acute malnutrition. This initiative:

- **Empowered CHVs:** Trained volunteers delivered health services at the household level, bridging gaps in access to healthcare during the pandemic.
- **Prompt referrals:** Complicated cases were referred to health facilities for advanced care, ensuring continuum of care.

RapidPro Communication Platform

This open-source platform facilitated two-way communication between health workers and the community, enabling:

- **Behavior change and education:** Health messages related to COVID-19 prevention, nutrition, and childcare were disseminated effectively.
- **Reduced physical contact:** By leveraging technology, the need for in-person interactions was minimized, reducing the risk of virus transmission while maintaining service delivery.
- **Real-time feedback:** Community members could share their challenges and receive support promptly, ensuring responsiveness to emerging needs.

IMAM Surge Approach

The Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM) surge approach is designed to enhance the health system's capacity to manage acute malnutrition during periods of high demand. Key aspects include:

- **Resilient health systems:** The approach prepared health facilities to handle surges in malnutrition cases without compromising their ability to deliver regular services.
- **Widespread implementation:** Adopted by 144 out of 192 health facilities in Turkana County (75%), this approach has been instrumental in addressing malnutrition effectively.

Impact and Sustainability

These low-cost interventions underscore the importance of community involvement, innovation, and collaboration in building resilient health systems. By simplifying tools and protocols, leveraging digital platforms, and empowering frontline workers and caregivers, Turkana County maintained essential health services during a global crisis. These initiatives not only addressed immediate needs but also strengthened the long-term capacity of health systems to respond to future challenges. The success of these strategies highlights the potential for scalable solutions in other regions facing similar barriers to healthcare access.

Partnerships Driving Change

Turkana's health resilience has been bolstered by partnerships with USAID funded organizations like UNICEF, Nawiri-MercyCorps, Save the Children, and the International Rescue Committee. Together with the Turkana County Government, these partners scaled up the ICCM program during the pandemic by training 328 CHVs and 82 health workers in Turkana West and Turkana Central.

"The ICCM program is a lifeline for hard-to-reach areas," explains Mark Lomoru, Health System Strengthening Advisor for the USAID Nawiri program. "Through simplified protocols and co-investment, we're saving lives by increasing access to health services."

The collaboration extends to integrated approaches that address acute malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and pneumonia—the leading causes of child mortality in the region. By equipping CHVs with tools and mentorship, the county has built a shock-responsive health system capable of adapting to crises.



A Model for Resilient Health Systems

Health resilience requires coordinated efforts across public and private sectors, NGOs, and community actors. In Turkana, governance, financing, and innovative partnerships have enabled CHVs to sustain care even during a global pandemic. By empowering individuals like Epeta and Dalmas, Turkana has turned its community health system into a model of resilience.

"The pandemic taught us that we must work together to strengthen community health platforms," says Lomoru. "When health systems are resilient, they save lives and create healthier futures for all!"

As Margaret urges, continued support for CHVs is critical. These unsung heroes are the backbone of Turkana's health system, proving that collaboration can overcome the toughest challenges and ensure that even the most remote communities have access to quality care.

The Moving Blackboard: Increasing education access, retention, and transition among children from nomadic communities in Turkana



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 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 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.

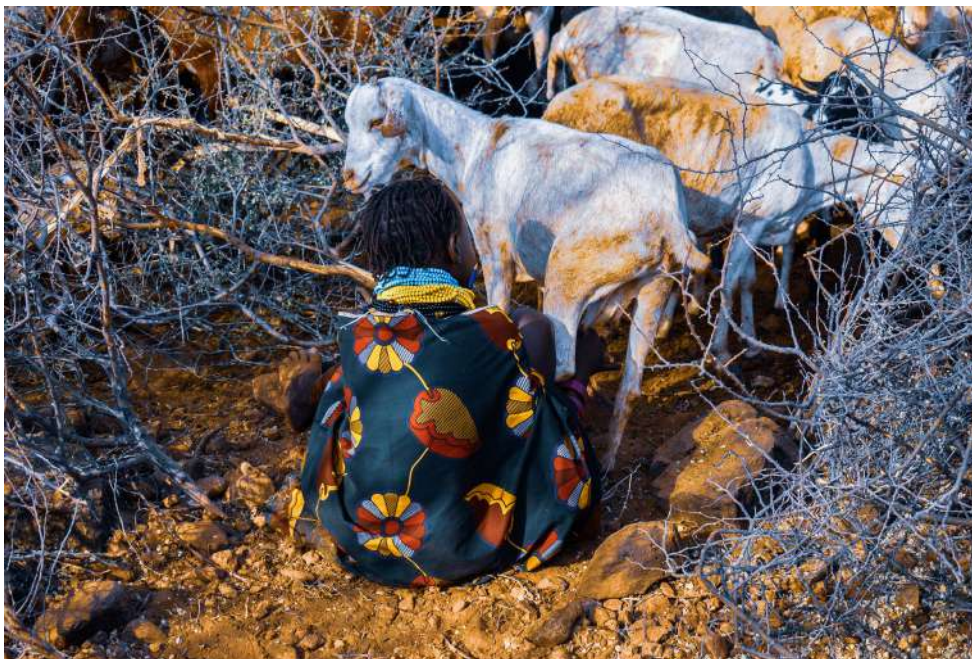
Another resident Ebulon Ekeno said: “I didn’t go to school, and we take them (children) to school so that they help us to read and interpret written materials. We recently temporarily settled in Loruth due to the availability of spring water. But we are likely to migrate again because the spring water 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. Enrolment 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 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.



Elelea Irrigation Scheme: A Collaborative Model for Resilience in Turkana East

In the heart of Turkana East, Elelea stands as a beacon of hope and resilience amidst the harsh realities of Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). For decades, the pastoralist communities here relied on livestock rearing—keeping goats, sheep, cattle, and camels—as their primary source of livelihood. However, recurring droughts, climate change, and food insecurity continually threatened their way of life. Elelea, strategically located near the Kerio River and blessed with fertile soils, had untapped potential for agriculture, hindered only by insufficient water access and invasive vegetation like *Prosopis juliflora*.

To combat these challenges, the revitalization of the Elelea Irrigation Scheme emerged as a transformative solution, made possible through collective action and multi-stakeholder collaboration spearheaded by the USAID Nawiri program, the County Government of Turkana, and a host of other partners.

The Challenge

Originally established in the 1980s by the National Government, the Elelea Irrigation Scheme suffered from years of neglect. Worn-out infrastructure, invasive plant species, and years of disrepair rendered it largely unusable. Communities struggled with persistent food insecurity, increasing malnutrition rates, and the devastating effects of prolonged droughts on their livestock-dependent livelihoods. Recognizing the need for alternative livelihoods and sustainable food production, USAID and its partners adopted a Joint Work Planning (JWP) approach to breathe new life into Elelea, integrating expertise, resources, and efforts from various actors.

Collaborative Action: What Was Achieved

1. Land Reclamation and Expansion

- USAID Nawiri began by clearing 108 acres of *Prosopis juliflora*, an invasive species choking arable land. The effort expanded to reclaim 523 acres and further grew to include 669 acres, leveraging work previously done by the National Irrigation Authority (NIA). Today, the scheme boasts a total of 1,300 acres of arable land.

2. Irrigation Infrastructure Development

- USAID Nawiri constructed 1.2 kilometers of stone-pitched water canals and is working on 3.7 kilometers of concrete-lined canals to ensure efficient water flow.
- The County Government of Turkana built 500 meters of stone-pitched canals, repaired 45 diversion boxes, and constructed three bridges within the scheme to improve accessibility.
- The NIA repaired key infrastructure at the river intake point, ensuring a reliable water supply.

3. Capacity Building and Training

- The County Government deployed technical officers to train the community on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), pest and disease management, land reclamation, and crop production.
- USAID Nawiri supported community members through training on investment strategies, nutrition, and conflict resolution.

4. Agricultural Inputs and Tools

- The County Government supplied seeds and farming tools, enabling farmers to transition from pastoralism to crop farming.
- Concern Worldwide and CARITAS supported WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) initiatives, addressing cultural myths around latrine use and improving hygiene practices.

5. Health and Social Support

- Concern Worldwide offered cash transfers to 60 households, provided health outreach programs, and supported nutrition education to mitigate malnutrition.
- Kenya Red Cross provided medical support and WASH services, while CARITAS sunk two shallow wells for irrigation and one for domestic use.
- The International Rescue Committee (IRC) offered medical care during floods, and CRS distributed non-food items to affected families.

6. Community Empowerment and Livelihood Diversification

- USAID Nawiri's REAP for Nutrition initiative supported 156 groups, providing grants and training for micro-businesses, with many engaging in goat trading.
- These efforts helped households diversify their income sources, reducing reliance on livestock and enhancing resilience.

Impact on Communities

The revitalization of the Elelea Irrigation Scheme has been a lifeline for the community, providing a sustainable alternative to pastoralism. With improved access to water, agricultural tools, and training, Elelea is now a hub for crop production. Farmers grow nutritious crops that bolster food security, reduce malnutrition, and generate income.

“Our livelihoods were solely dependent on livestock keeping, which limited our opportunities to be food and nutrition secure. However, crop production has come at the right time, especially because climate change continues to affect our pastoralism-supported livelihoods,” says Moses Lukuja, Vice Chairman of the Elelea Irrigation Scheme.

Through this collaboration, communities have also gained access to clean water, improved health services, and strengthened social structures. Open defecation,

once a norm, has significantly reduced, thanks to targeted WASH interventions. The younger generation is now being trained in diversified livelihoods, positioning them to adapt to a changing climate.

“We are raising a generation at a time when the effects of climate change are becoming more intense. Therefore, there is a need to think beyond pastoralism and train the younger generation in diversified socio-economic endeavors,” explains Rev. Jimmy Lomullen, a community leader in Elelea.

A Model for Resilience and Sustainability

The Elelea Irrigation Scheme is a testament to the power of collaboration and collective action. By bringing together diverse stakeholders—USAID, the County Government of Turkana, NIA, and organizations like CARITAS, Concern Worldwide, IRC, and CRS—the initiative has laid the groundwork for long-term resilience.

Through the Joint Work Planning approach, each partner contributed their unique expertise and resources to achieve a shared goal: building climate-resilient, food-secure communities. This model serves as a blueprint for scaling similar interventions across Kenya's ASAL regions, offering a path to sustainable development.

Conclusion

The revitalization of Elelea is not just a story of an irrigation scheme; it is a story of hope, resilience, and the transformative power of collaboration. As Elelea flourishes with thriving crops and empowered communities, it stands as a shining example of what can be achieved when governments, donors, partners, and local communities unite to tackle shared challenges.

Together, they have turned arid land into fertile ground—not just for agriculture, but for opportunity, resilience, and a brighter future for Turkana East.

PARTNERS IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT IN ELELEA, TURKANA COUNTY

NIA (National Irrigation Authority) supported infrastructure repair at the intake point.

Kenya Red Cross supported health outreach programs and provided medication and medical care

Concern Worldwide supported health outreach programs and offered cash transfers to 60 households



The County Government of Turkana

- Deployed technical officers to train community members on land reclamation, good agricultural practices (GAP), crops production, investment, pests and diseases management, conflict resolution and nutrition.
- Provided seeds and farming tools to communities.
- Constructed 500 meters of stone-pitched water canals to reduce water seepage.
- Supported repair of 45 diversion boxes and construction of three bridges within the scheme.
- Deployed technical staff to support agro-pastoralist communities.

USAID Nawiri

- Supported clearing the invasive *Prosopis juliflora*.
- Stone-pitched canal lining for 1.2 kilometers; undertaking concrete lining for another 3.7 kilometers.
- Cleared a further 669 acres that had been established by NIA.
- Supported 156 groups through REAP for Nutrition.

Enhancing Access to Quality Health Services: One Intervention at a Time

Located in Aroo, Turkana South, Katilu Sub-County Hospital is a lifeline for over 23,000 residents spanning Katilu Ward, parts of Lobokat Ward, Kaptir, and surrounding areas. Managed by the County Government of Turkana, the hospital is equipped with essential facilities, including a theatre and tuberculosis (TB) testing units. However, the growing demand for services, coupled with limited staffing, has stretched the hospital's capacity, leaving gaps in healthcare delivery.

To bridge these gaps, a remarkable partnership between the County Government of Turkana, USAID, and other development partners under the Joint Work Planning (JWP) framework has been instrumental in enhancing healthcare access and quality for the underserved communities of Turkana South.

Supporting Healthcare Delivery and Building Capacity

Through the USAID Imarisha Jamii Program, implemented by AMREF, critical support has been provided to boost the hospital's capacity:

- **Increased Staffing:** The program employed additional personnel, including a clinical officer, two reproductive health nurses, an HIV counselor, and an HIV Testing Services (HTS) supervisor. These staff members have alleviated the burden on existing hospital personnel, ensuring better service delivery.
- **Targeted Training:** Comprehensive training was offered to both project-supported and county-deployed staff on critical areas such as HIV care, gender-based violence (GBV), and youth-friendly services, equipping them to meet the unique health needs of the population.
- **Improved Equipment:** Nutrition services were enhanced through the provision of water dispensers, electric kettles, and refrigerators. Additionally, the hospital received life-saving equipment like oxygen concentrators, blood pressure machines, and computers. Clinical officers were trained on using the Electronic Medical Register (EMR) system for effective data management.
- **Maternal Health Promotion:** Open days were organized to educate expectant mothers on childbirth, antenatal, and postnatal care, reducing maternal stress and complications.

“CHPs need to be well-equipped with knowledge and resources to reach communities deep in villages and deliver necessary services effectively.”

— Faith Lomburia, Nutrition Officer,
Katilu Sub-County Hospital



Collaborative Efforts to Combat TB and Malnutrition

Recognizing the high burden of TB and malnutrition in the region, USAID Imarisha Jamii and its partners implemented innovative solutions:

- **TB Management:** To ensure timely diagnosis and treatment, mobility support was provided for health workers to conduct contact tracing in remote villages. A rider was contracted to transport TB samples from eight facilities to Katilu Sub-County Hospital for testing, accelerating diagnosis and treatment.
- **Malnutrition Reduction:** USAID Nawiri, in collaboration with the County Government, supported routine growth monitoring, cooking demonstrations, and WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) sensitization to improve nutrition outcomes.

Partnerships Driving Healthcare Transformation

The transformation of Katilu Sub-County Hospital reflects the power of multi-stakeholder collaboration:

County Government's Role:

- Provided staff who worked alongside partner-deployed experts.
- Acted as custodians of medical equipment and data, supporting partners with key insights on malnutrition and disease burden.
- Supported outreach logistics, including fuelling the motorbike used for home-based care.



“Our work must involve organizations that foster peace and cohesion, as health outcomes are deeply linked to stability. A consultative approach is essential for holistic development interventions.”

— Dr. Mathew Budotich, Medical Superintendent, Katilu Sub-County Hospital

Partner Contributions:

- UNFPA/IRS: Donated a motorcycle ambulance to enhance maternal health services and conducted outreach programs to improve nutrition and maternal health indicators.
- USAID Nawiri: Trained communities on maternal health and resilience-building, while working with Turkana Pastoralists Development Organization (TUPADO) to foster peace and cohesion, which is critical for health service delivery in conflict-prone areas.
- CARITAS: Addressed hygiene and sanitation issues, overcoming cultural myths about latrine use, and drilled boreholes to enhance water access for domestic use and agriculture.
- Concern Worldwide: Supported vulnerable households through cash transfers and health outreach programs.

Conclusion

Katilu Sub-County Hospital's transformation into a center of hope for Turkana South exemplifies the power of the Joint Work Planning (JWP) approach. The collaboration between the County Government, USAID, and other partners has not only strengthened healthcare delivery but also addressed systemic challenges like malnutrition and maternal health.

This collective action has resulted in improved healthcare access, reduced disease burden, and empowered communities with the knowledge and tools to build resilience. Katilu Sub-County Hospital stands as a model for tackling complex healthcare challenges through partnerships, offering a roadmap for sustainable development in underserved regions.

Partners Transforming Healthcare in Katilu, Turkana County



County Gov't of Turkana

- Employs staff members.
- Acts as the custodian of equipment and other aid provided at the facility.
- Supports outreach programs by managing logistics and providing fuel for the motorbike.
- Provided data on key areas such as malnutrition and disease burden.



IRS (Funded by UNFPA)

- Donated a motorcycle ambulance.
- Conducted nutritional and maternal health outreach programs.
- Provided cash transfers to vulnerable households.
- Drilled a borehole in Kangete to improve water access.



USAID Nawiri

- Trains communities on maternal health and provides cooking demos for mothers, including sensitization on WASH.
- Works with TUPADO to foster peace and cohesion.
- Supports routine growth monitoring in partnership with the County Government to monitor malnutrition.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Imarisha Jamii,
implemented by AMREF

- Employed four additional staff.
- Provided comprehensive training for project-supported and county-deployed staff.
- Supplied the nutrition department with equipment like water dispensers, electric kettles, and refrigerators to improve service quality.
- Supported maternal health through open days.
- Facilitated contact tracing for TB patients. Contracted a rider to transport TB samples from eight dependent facilities.
- Supplied essential equipment such as oxygen concentrators, blood pressure machines, and computers.
- Trained clinical officers on using the Electronic Medical Register (EMR) system to enhance data management.

Kalimapus Water Project: A Lifeline for Namadak Community

In the heart of Turkana County, in Namadak sublocation, the Kalimapus Water Project has emerged as a beacon of hope, transforming lives and fostering resilience. Home to approximately 8,500 people spread across seven villages, Namadak faced chronic water scarcity, a challenge that deeply affected health, education, and livelihoods. Today, the Kalimapus Water Project stands as a powerful example of what can be achieved through collaboration and shared responsibility.

This initiative, brought to life through the Joint Work Planning (JWP) framework, exemplifies the collective efforts of USAID implementing partners, including the recently concluded Livestock Market Systems (LMS) Activity, the Kenya Red Cross Society, the Turkana County Government, and the local community. Together, these stakeholders addressed the critical need for clean and sustainable water access, paving the way for improved health, education, and economic opportunities.

Fruits of Coordinated Efforts

The Kalimapus Water Project is the result of strategic collaboration and resource pooling by multiple partners:

USAID Livestock Market Systems Activity (LMS)

- Procured and installed two 50,000-liter water tanks, a solar pump, and solar panels to power the system.
- Constructed a water kiosk and fenced the project area for security.
- Extended pipelines to distribute water to the wider community.



Turkana County Government:

- Provided an additional solar panel and a water tank to increase capacity.
- Assigned a technician for regular maintenance and monitoring, ensuring the project's functionality.

Kenya Red Cross Society

- Contributed a water tank, built an additional water kiosk, and extended pipelines to reach more households.

The Local Community:

- Donated land for the project, underscoring their commitment to collective progress.

Transformative Impact

The Kalimapus Water Project now provides 50,000 liters of clean water daily, serving a wide range of beneficiaries including households, schools, a health center, fishermen, traders, and livestock owners. The impact is both profound and far-reaching:

- 1. Education:** School attendance has surged as children no longer miss classes to fetch water from distant sources.
- 2. Health:** Cases of waterborne diseases have plummeted, thanks to access to clean, safe water.
- 3. Economic Growth:** Fish traders have significantly reduced losses by washing and processing fish promptly, boosting their profits. The project has created local jobs, including roles such as a pump attendant, security guard, and administrative positions.
- 4. Sustainability and Accessibility:** Water is sold at an affordable rate of KES 5 per 20-liter jerrican, with the income directed toward paying workers and maintaining the project's operations. Inclusivity remains a cornerstone of the initiative, with elderly women who cannot fetch water receiving 40 liters of water free daily.

Conclusion: Collaboration for Sustainable Resilience

The Kalimapus Water Project is more than just a source of clean water; it is a cornerstone of health, education, and economic resilience for the Namadak community. The project exemplifies how collaboration among diverse stakeholders can lead to sustainable, life-changing outcomes. By pooling resources, expertise, and efforts, the USAID implementing partners, Turkana County Government, and the local community have created a blueprint for addressing critical needs and fostering long-term development.

Through its emphasis on inclusivity, sustainability, and shared responsibility, the Kalimapus Water Project offers a compelling vision of what can be achieved when communities and stakeholders come together to solve pressing challenges. It is not just a project—it is a testament to the power of collective action to transform lives.

Partners Transforming Water Availability in Namadak, Turkana County



USAID LMS

procured and installed two 50,000-liter water tanks, a solar pump, and solar panels, built a water kiosk, and fenced the project area while laying the pipeline to distribute water to the community.



Turkana County Government

contributed a solar panel, an additional water tank, and assigned a technician for regular maintenance and monitoring of the project.



Kenya Red Cross Society

supplied a water tank, constructed another kiosk, and extended water pipes to reach more households.



The Community

donated the land for the project

JWP: Optimizing Resource Utilization and Broadening the Scope of Interventions

Insights from Isack Echapan – Project Coordinator, USAID Nawiri, Turkana

The Power of Joint Work Planning (JWP)

For me, Joint Work Planning (JWP) is more than a framework; it is a transformative process where diverse stakeholders—county governments, development organizations, and communities—come together to align resources, prioritize needs, and achieve impactful results. JWP embodies collaboration, fostering synergies that enhance efficiency, reduce redundancies, and deliver development interventions that

truly resonate with the needs on the ground. It is about moving from independence to interdependence and from competition to complementarity, ensuring that our collective differences drive us toward shared goals.

Overcoming Isolation: Embracing Joint Initiatives

Before JWP, development organizations often worked in isolation, focusing narrowly on specific locations or activities. This siloed approach led to duplication of efforts, a concentration of resources in already-served areas, and the neglect of regions with potentially greater needs.

With JWP, partners now collaborate closely with the county government, aligning their activities with the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). This ensures that interventions are not only strategic but also equitably distributed. For example, when two partners identify overlapping plans in one location, JWP allows for a reallocation of efforts, redirecting resources to underserved areas. The result? Broader geographical coverage and higher-quality interventions, maximizing the collective impact on communities.



Bridging Gaps Amid Constraints

JWP has also proven invaluable in bridging resource and operational gaps:

1. Resource Sharing:

- When county governments face resource constraints, development partners step in to fill the void, ensuring projects are implemented on time and without compromise.
- Partners are actively involved in reviewing CIDPs, ensuring their activities align with county priorities and community needs.

2. Navigating Security and Access Challenges:

- In areas with restricted movement or security concerns, JWP integrates local organizations to reach communities that might otherwise remain inaccessible.
- This strategic involvement allows partners to extend their reach, overcoming barriers that would traditionally limit the scope of interventions.

Broadening Scope and Delivering Impact

Through JWP, stakeholders have optimized resource utilization and expanded the scope of interventions to include priority sectors such as:

- **Climate Change Resilience:** Supporting communities to adapt to changing environmental conditions.
- **Health and Nutrition:** Delivering essential healthcare services and combating malnutrition.
- **Food Security:** Empowering communities with sustainable agricultural practices.
- **WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene):** Enhancing access to clean water and improving hygiene standards.

JWP has transformed development planning from isolated efforts into a coordinated, efficient process. It represents a practical solution to modern development challenges by fostering inclusivity, equity, and impact at scale.

A Vision of Collaborative Impact

JWP demonstrates the strength of unity in diversity, allowing stakeholders to build on their unique strengths while working toward shared goals. By aligning interventions with community needs, prioritizing underserved regions, and fostering collaboration, JWP offers a replicable model for sustainable development across Kenya and beyond.

As Isack Echapan aptly puts it:

“It’s all about being together in our differences and making those differences work toward the same goals.”

This collaborative approach, grounded in shared responsibility and mutual support, is setting new benchmarks for what development partnerships can achieve.



Garissa County

Located in northeastern Kenya, Garissa County spans a vast 44,175.5 square kilometers of arid landscape, home to a population of approximately 841,319 people, including 111,616 children under the age of five (Garissa SMART Survey, June 2024). This region is defined by four primary livelihood zones: pastoralism, agro-pastoralism, casual/waged labor, and formal employment. However, most of the population relies heavily on pastoralism and livestock trade, making these activities essential to Garissa's economy and culture.

The county's arid climate, characterized by frequent droughts, places immense strain on both water resources and pastoral livelihoods. In recent years, the effects of climate change have compounded these challenges, leading to prolonged dry spells punctuated by intense, erratic rains and flash floods. These shifting climate patterns have further complicated the resilience of local communities, who now face increasing difficulty in securing sustainable water access for livestock and supporting seasonal agriculture.

In response, a growing number of initiatives focus on strengthening community resilience, improving healthcare access, and expanding educational opportunities. These initiatives are often supported by partnerships between local agencies and international organizations, including impactful USAID-supported programs. Through these collaborative efforts, Garissa County is gradually building the foundations needed to adapt to its evolving climate challenges and support the well-being of its communities.



Demystifying Development Partnerships: Building Trust and Impact in Garissa County

Insights from Mohamed Sahal, Director of Partnerships and Resource Mobilization, Garissa County Assembly



For years, partnerships between Garissa County Government and development organizations were hindered by mistrust and misconceptions. Development

partners often viewed the government as overly bureaucratic and vulnerable to corruption, while county officials saw development organizations as removed, operating with their own agendas and lacking local prioritization. This mutual wariness created silos, with each side working towards community goals separately, diminishing the potential impact.

Breaking Down Barriers: Building Trust and Understanding

When Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) partners approached Garissa County, there was a clear need for a new approach. Both sides recognized that despite their shared commitment to improving community welfare, they were operating in isolation. To address these barriers, PREG embedded itself within Garissa's existing Donor Partnership Coordination Department, a strategic decision that enabled better alignment and more efficient operations.



Aligning Priorities Through the Joint Work Plan (JWP) Framework

The creation of the Joint Work Plan (JWP) framework was a game-changer, bridging the goals of PREG with Garissa County's five-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). By aligning PREG's initiatives with Garissa's CIDP, they established a clear, unified roadmap for action. The CIDP was then divided into annual, manageable plans, providing development partners with an accessible blueprint to synchronize their efforts with local priorities.

This alignment fostered collaboration not only between the county and development agencies but also within county departments themselves. The JWP encouraged departments to coordinate more closely, recognizing each other's roles and capitalizing on collective resources. This coordinated approach has reduced service gaps, minimized overlap, and improved both the quality and accountability of services delivered to communities.

The Phases of JWP: A Structured Approach to Partnership

The JWP framework follows a structured sequence of stages designed to maximize partnership efficiency and impact:

1. **Pre-Planning:** Partners and county officials identify activities based on community needs and prioritize them, ensuring that actions reflect local aspirations.
2. **Planning:** Roles and responsibilities are defined clearly for each partner, and shared goals are set.
3. **Co-Implementation:** Projects are layered and sequenced for optimal impact, allowing each activity to complement the next.
4. **Joint Monitoring and Evaluation:** All stakeholders engage in regular assessments, identifying progress, challenges, and areas for improvement. This includes SWOT analyses and feedback sessions to inform future planning.

By embracing these phases, JWP has become a cohesive, evolving process that encourages constant reflection, adaptation, and teamwork among all stakeholders.

A Journey of Learning and Adapting

One of the most valuable lessons from the JWP process has been learning to adapt to the unique mandates and operating regulations of each organization involved. For example, PREG partners adjusted their timelines to accommodate the county's annual budget cycle, creating a more harmonious collaboration. Moving forward, the involvement of the County Assembly is seen as critical. As the community's official representatives, Members of the County Assembly (MCAs) can act as vital links between communities and partners. Their participation in JWP is expected to enhance accountability and drive the creation of relevant policies that support partnership and resource mobilization.

In a step towards formalizing coordination efforts, Garissa County recently moved the Department of Partnerships and Resource Mobilization under the County Assembly's oversight, anchoring these efforts within the legislative framework and reinforcing sustainable resource allocation.

Beyond PREG: Expanding the Reach of JWP

Looking ahead, Garissa County has plans to extend the impact of JWP even further. The Kenya School of Government, in collaboration with USAID, is developing a curriculum on the JWP framework, aiming to train future leaders and policymakers in sustainable government-development partnerships. This initiative will allow JWP's influence to expand beyond Garissa and the SEK (Samburu, Isiolo, Marsabit, and Garissa) counties, equipping more regions with a structured approach to fostering collaboration.

Garissa's journey with PREG and the JWP framework demonstrates that breaking down longstanding barriers is not only possible but transformative. By establishing a foundation of trust, aligning priorities, and working as one cohesive unit, Garissa County and its development partners have pioneered a model that can serve as an inspiration for communities across Kenya and beyond.



Dasheg Irrigation Scheme: A Collaborative Model of Agricultural Transformation in Garissa County

In the arid outskirts of Garissa town, where water scarcity often defines the boundaries of agriculture, the Dasheg Irrigation Scheme has become a beacon of transformation. This initiative not only provides hope for food security but has also redefined possibilities for agricultural productivity in one of Kenya's most drought-prone counties. Born as a modest mango orchard in the 1970s along the Tana River, Dasheg has evolved into a diverse agricultural hub, nurturing crops from tomatoes and beans to pineapples and lemons. Today, the scheme is more than a farming project—it is a testament to the potential of partnerships, infrastructure, and community collaboration in transforming lives.



“THE REFORMS IN GARISSA COUNTY IRRIGATION SECTOR WILL COME A LONG WAY TOWARDS ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF IRRIGATION PROJECTS. THIS WILL CREATE EMPLOYMENT AND ENHANCE FOOD ACCESS THUS IMPACTING ON FOOD AND NUTRITION AS WELL AS ECONOMIC WELLBEING FOR COMMUNITIES,”

- ENG YUSUF ABDULLAHI NOOR, DIRECTOR, IRRIGATION SERVICES, GARISSA COUNTY

From Mango Orchards to a Resilient Agricultural Ecosystem

While the scheme started with mango trees along the riverbanks, the seasonal nature of mango farming meant the community needed a broader agricultural strategy. In response, Dasheg has diversified to cultivate crops such as chilli, beans, coconuts, and sweet potatoes, creating a year-round income stream for its 54 members, including 34 women who actively contribute to and benefit from the project. This diversity provides stability, sustains food security, and offers financial support to families.

Overcoming Challenges Through Multi-Partner Collaboration

Despite its success, Dasheg has encountered significant challenges. Until recently, the scheme relied on diesel-powered pumps for irrigation—a costly and environmentally damaging solution. The region's high temperatures also led to rapid evaporation from open canals, compounding fuel costs and water scarcity. Flooding from erratic rains has further disrupted irrigation efforts, with rising waters regularly damaging pumps and sweeping away equipment.

Recognizing these challenges, USAID's Livestock Market Systems (LMS) project introduced a floating, solar-powered pumping system at Dasheg. This adaptive pump adjusts to changing water levels, ensuring a more stable and efficient water supply and protecting equipment from flood damage. USAID LMS also installed 400 meters of water piping, streamlining water delivery and reducing evaporation losses.



“IF ONLY FARMERS IN THE ASALS CAN HAVE SUSTAINABLE ACCESS TO WATER, WE WOULD NOT NEED TO KEEP ASKING FOR DEVELOPMENT AID.”

– BILADO YARROW, FARMER

WFP's Contribution: Seeds, Training, and Land Restoration

The World Food Program (WFP) played a key role by providing seeds, seedlings, and hands-on training in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), helping farmers adopt sustainable crop management practices. WFP introduced sweet potato vines, a versatile crop that bolsters food security while doubling as livestock feed during scarce seasons, further stabilizing pastoralist incomes.

In addition, WFP assisted in clearing land overtaken by the invasive *Prosopis juliflora*, known locally as Mathenge. This resilient plant disrupts ecosystems but once cleared, allows for better crop cultivation and opens more fertile ground for productive farming.

Extending Impact with USAID STAWI and County Government Support

Building on the foundation laid by LMS and WFP, the USAID STAWI project is set to extend water piping by an additional 2.7 kilometers, reaching further sections of the 54-hectare farm. This extension will reduce water loss by replacing open canals and, in turn, cut down on irrigation costs, making the system even more sustainable. The County Government of Garissa has been an essential ally in this project, offering technical support and advocating for the transition to solar energy, aligning with Garissa's environmental and sustainability goals.

In collaboration with local communities, Garissa County has facilitated the use of land, fostering a shared commitment to the project's success. Additionally, the county's forthcoming Irrigation Policy and planned Irrigation Act will establish a legal framework to protect and promote long-term irrigation development, helping donor-supported projects like Dasheg thrive beyond their initial phases.

Building Sustainability and Resilience for the Future

Farmers at Dasheg are now embracing climate-resilient crops like coconuts that can withstand the high temperatures, offering a steady income source even when other horticultural yields may be low. As members of the Garissa Farmers Network, Dasheg's farmers have access to a platform for market insights, peer

learning, and information exchange, enhancing their knowledge and skills to sustain this agricultural transformation.

A Model of Transformation Through Partnership

The Dasheg Irrigation Scheme stands as a model of agricultural transformation in Garissa County, made possible by the synergy between local and international partners, community engagement, and government support. By diversifying crop options, introducing sustainable irrigation solutions, and equipping farmers with essential skills, the scheme has provided a lifeline for hundreds of families. Through resilience, adaptability, and strong partnerships, Dasheg's journey serves as a compelling example of how innovation and collaboration can bring sustainable development to even the most arid landscapes.

As Garissa County moves forward, the lessons from Dasheg continue to inspire a future where agriculture thrives, communities prosper, and sustainable practices pave the way for resilience in the face of climate challenges.

Partners Transforming Agriculture in Dasheg, Garissa County



County Gov't of Garissa
Provided technical support and linked community with development partners



USAID LMS
Installed floating water pumping, solar & 400m piping systems



WFP
Supported clearance of the land for expansion, provided seedlings & trained farmers



USAID Stawi
To do 2.7 km piping

Where Water Access Was a Matter of Life and Death: The Journey of Dololomidi, Garissa County

In the remote Dololomidi area of Garissa County, water has always been more than a necessity—it's a matter of survival. For generations, Dololomidi's residents endured unimaginable challenges to access this vital resource, facing not only exhausting treks but also life-threatening dangers. Today, their journey reflects both resilience and the transformative power of partnerships that have brought a new era of opportunity.

A Deadly Journey for Water

Community members vividly recall the six-kilometre round trip they would make to fetch water from the river, a journey fraught with risks. Dirty, untreated water was often the only option, posing severe health risks, particularly for the elderly and children. Water purifiers, though available, were costly, making clean drinking water a rare luxury.

For the women of Dololomidi, the burden was even heavier. They not only had to fetch water for their households but also for livestock, including young goats too small to make the journey. Household responsibilities meant that water-fetching was just one of many tasks in their daily lives.

“WATER ACCESS IMPACTS ON DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF LIFE INCLUDING HEALTH, EDUCATION, HYGIENE AND SOCIAL ECONOMICALLY. WATER IS HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT.”

– ABDI YUSUF, CHAIRMAN,
DOLOLOMIDI WATER USERS
ASSOCIATION

The river itself harboured deadly threats. One tragic incident in 2008 is seared into the community's memory: a young bride-to-be was attacked by a crocodile as she fetched water and was never seen again. This trauma is a haunting reminder of the

dangers Dololomidi residents once faced daily. To mitigate these risks, villagers would travel in groups, taking turns keeping watch for crocodiles as others drew water—a practice that meant no one could fetch water at their convenience.

Setbacks in the Search for Relief

The Water Resources Management Authority (WARMA) once provided a temporary solution, drilling a borehole and installing a basic piping system. But heavy floods soon destroyed both the borehole and the pipes, forcing the community back to the river and its associated dangers. Women shouldered the heaviest load, often doubling their trips to support vulnerable community members like new mothers and the elderly.

For pregnant women like Zeinab Abdi, this arduous journey was a dangerous ordeal. “Once, while I was heavily pregnant, I slipped and fell while returning from the river,” she recalls. “Luckily, I wasn't hurt, but that memory lingers.” She remembers the treacherous path, often relying on passersby for help navigating the slippery slopes.

A Borehole, A Tank, and a New Hope

In recent years, partnerships have brought transformative change to Dololomidi. Through a collaborative effort by USAID's Kenya Rapid project, Millennium Water Alliance, SDC, and CARE International, the borehole was rehabilitated, a durable steel water tank was installed, and an expanded piping system was implemented. These interventions finally provided Dololomidi with a sustainable water source, lifting a heavy burden off the community.

The World Food Programme (WFP) also played a crucial role, establishing a 300-hectare farm with irrigation infrastructure. Today, despite occasional flooding challenges, half of this land is under cultivation, providing much-needed food security and income opportunities.

Throughout these developments, the Garissa County government has been instrumental, offering technical support, while community members contributed land and their own labor. With reliable access to water, many households now have piped connections, supporting both domestic needs and small-scale irrigation for kitchen gardens.

“BESIDES BEING A STUDENT, I EARN FROM FARMING, THANKS TO ACCESS TO WATER,”

- ABDI JAMAL, YOUTH FARMER



A Student's Story of Resilience and Opportunity

For 26-year-old Abdi Jamal, a university student in Dololomidi, access to water has brought not only convenience but also new possibilities. Outside his family's home, he now grows tomatoes and beans, which he sells both locally and in larger markets. "I sell some of the tomatoes to my sister at USD 0.23 (KES 30) per kilogram, and she resells them for USD 0.31 (KES 40)," Jamal shares, explaining how this arrangement allows him to contribute toward his university fees.

Each week, Jamal harvests between 200 and 300 kilograms of produce, some of which he aggregates from neighbouring farmers to sell in towns like Garissa. Through these sales, Jamal not only supports his family but also finances his studies as he works towards a Bachelor's Degree in Education.

A Future Built on Resilience and Hope

For the people of Dololomidi, water is no longer a source of fear but of life and growth. Their journey from dangerous river treks to the security of nearby water access has been long and difficult, but the transformative power of collaboration has given them a future full of promise. Today, with water at their fingertips, the community stands poised for growth, a testament to the resilience of Dololomidi and the lasting impact of partnerships in the face of adversity.

Partners Transforming Agriculture in Dololomidi, Garissa County



USAID Kenya Rapid project, Millennium Water Alliance, SDC and Care International

rehabilitated the borehole and erected a steel water storage tank and water piping.



WFP

supported the establishment of a 300-hectares farm & installed water piping on the farm.



County Gov't of Garissa

Provided technical support to the community together with land and piped water to their homes

Cultivating a Culture of Saving, Empowering Communities in Garissa County

When the World Food Programme (WFP) invited Isnino Abdi to a training on Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLA), she didn't yet realize the lasting impact she would have. Initially trained in financial management and the benefits of VSLAs, Isnino has since become the driving force behind a growing culture of saving in three villages across Balambala, Garissa County, inspiring her neighbours to reimagine their financial future.

Forming the Iskashata VSLA: A Community Initiative

In early 2023, fueled by the WFP training, Isnino rallied friends and neighbours to establish the Iskashata VSLA, a group of 15 members, including seven youth, four men, and four women. Every Sunday, the members meet to contribute to two main funds:

- **Social Fund:** Each member deposits USD 0.15 (KES 20) into this fund, reserved for emergencies like medical costs or bereavements. This safety net provides essential support during times of crisis, allowing members to respond to urgent needs without resorting to high-interest debt.
- **Savings and Credit Fund:** Each member contributes a minimum of USD 1.6 (KES 200) to this fund, from which they can borrow interest-free loans in line with Sharia principles. A minimal processing fee covers administrative costs, and at the end of the year, the group's pooled savings and earnings are shared among members based on their individual contributions. In a region where formal banking options are scarce, Iskashata offers financial security, stability, and growth.

A Movement Gains Momentum

When the Iskashata VSLA members received their end-of-year returns, enthusiasm spread quickly through neighbouring villages, inspiring more community members to join the VSLA movement. Leveraging this momentum, Isnino helped facilitate the creation of seven additional VSLA groups, further spreading the benefits of community-led financial empowerment.

To sustain this growth, Isnino identified and trained seven village agents to support new groups. Among these agents is Zainab Mohammed, a 23-year-old Garissa University student studying Public Administration. Balancing her studies with work, Zainab also dedicates herself to the VSLA model, which has allowed her to contribute to her tuition fees. "With the loan from the VSLA, I am able to contribute towards my school fees," she shares proudly. Inspired by Isnino, Zainab has already helped form a new group and is actively encouraging other young women to join, creating a ripple effect of financial empowerment among youth.

Investing in Livestock: A Step Toward Economic Independence

As their savings grew, Iskashata members decided to pool their resources into a sustainable venture: livestock investment. With their savings, they purchased 12 goats and plan to gradually expand the flock, securing a consistent source of income through livestock sales. Currently, the group has saved USD 650 (KES 84,000), which they securely store within the community due to the lack of local banking facilities. By expanding their herd, they aim to diversify their income and establish a steady, reliable business that will support members' economic well-being.

With ambitions to broaden their livestock trade, Iskashata members envision a sustainable future that boosts the economic standing of the group and strengthens the local economy. As they strategize for future growth, they're also looking to expand their membership, providing more residents the opportunity to benefit from the financial security and empowerment offered by the VSLA model.



"I AM ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS EDUCATING MY OWN AND MY BROTHER'S CHILDREN BECAUSE I CAN ACCESS LOANS FROM THE VSLA GROUP UNLIKE BEFORE WHEN I HAD TO LARGELY DEPEND ON MY HUSBAND;"

- ISNINO ABDI, FOUNDER, ISKASHATA VSLA

Building a Culture of Empowerment and Self-Reliance

The rise of VSLAs in Balambala highlights the transformative impact of community-led financial solutions. Under Isnino's leadership and with the dedication of committed members like Zainab, VSLAs are fostering a robust culture of saving, economic resilience, and self-reliance across Garissa.

As Iskashata and other VSLAs grow, they serve as a powerful example of how, even in the absence of formal banking, communities can build financial security. By collectively investing in their future, these groups are not only securing a brighter tomorrow for themselves but are also laying a foundation of hope, resilience, and opportunity for the generations to come.

"I FORESEE A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD AS WE WILL HAVE BETTER ACCESS TO FINANCES AND THEREFORE, WE WILL TAKE BETTER CARE OF OUR FAMILIES AND CATER FOR OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION,"

– SARAH IBRAHIM, MEMBER, ISKASHATA VSLA



World Food Programme

World Food Programme

- trained a community ToT
- formed VSLAs
- trained Village Agents



Collaborative Efforts Drive Down Malnutrition in Garissa County

In Garissa County, where malnutrition has long been a challenge, a recent significant drop in malnutrition rates highlights the power of coordinated multi-sector interventions. Led by the County Government of Garissa and the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) partners, diverse programs spanning health, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), agriculture, and cash transfer initiatives have united to combat malnutrition at its roots.

Significant Drop in Malnutrition Rates

According to Garissa's 2024 SMART survey, malnutrition rates dropped from 20.1% in 2023 to 14.7% in 2024. This notable improvement reflects the success of an integrated approach to health and nutrition, where targeted and non-nutrition-specific initiatives work together. By aligning various programs, the County Government and its partners have created a robust response to malnutrition, addressing not only immediate health needs but also underlying factors that contribute to nutritional deficiencies.

Collaborative Interventions Impacting Communities

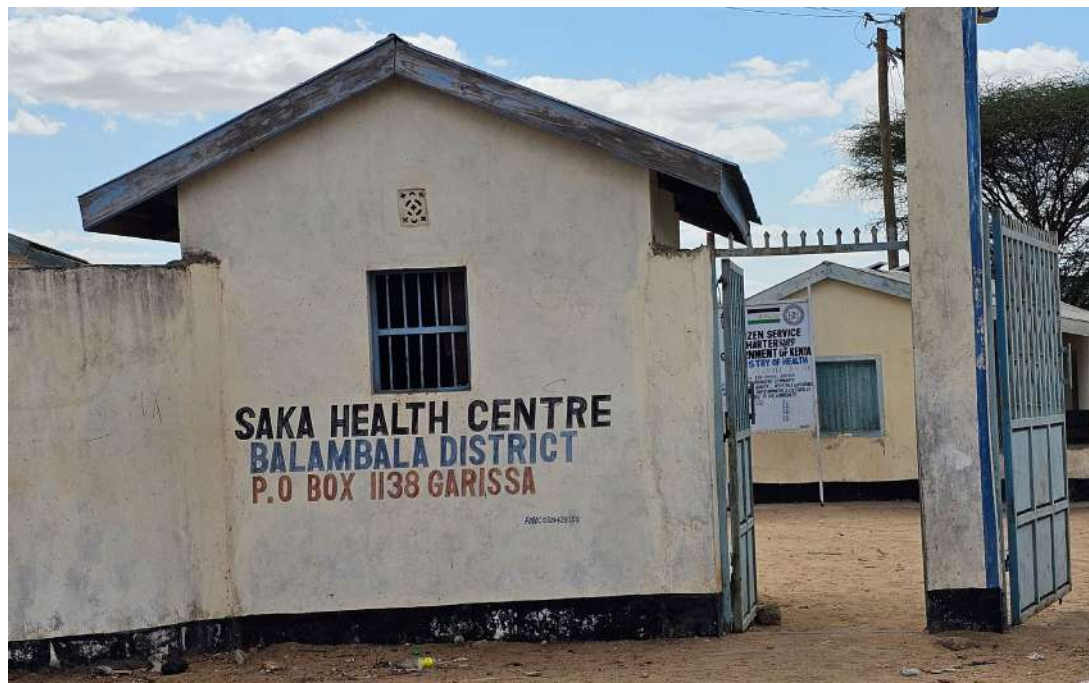
While WASH projects primarily focus on clean water and sanitation, they also indirectly benefit nutrition by creating healthier environments for crop cultivation. Through reliable access to clean water, communities can maintain kitchen gardens and small-scale farms, diversifying their diets with nutrient-rich vegetables, grains, and other essential foods. This diverse food availability benefits those most vulnerable to malnutrition, particularly children under five, expectant mothers, and lactating women.

Organizations like Save the Children and the World Food Programme (WFP) have been pivotal in implementing WASH initiatives, improving water access and promoting good hygiene practices. These efforts reduce the incidence of waterborne diseases that often exacerbate malnutrition, creating an environment where children and families can thrive.

Cash Transfers: Strengthening Food Security and Resilience

Cash transfer programs, a cornerstone of the Safety Net Program, provide targeted support for families facing medium to severe cases of malnutrition. By offering financial assistance, families can afford nutritious foods and meet other essential needs, significantly reducing the risk of malnutrition. Mercy Corps and the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) manage cash transfer initiatives, ensuring that funds reach the families most in need.

These programs have proven essential, especially during periods of drought and economic hardship, providing families with the resources they need to secure steady meals. Cash transfers thus play a critical role in Garissa's nutrition strategy, stabilizing food sources and helping families maintain healthy diets even during challenging times.



Expanding Health Services and Outreach Programs

Access to healthcare services in Garissa County has improved through extensive outreach programs, reaching over 341 sites in the past year alone. These outreach events allow health professionals to screen for malnutrition, distribute dietary supplements, offer deworming treatments, and provide nutrient-rich foods. The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) leads many of these initiatives, hosting monthly outreach programs, coordinating the distribution of nutritional commodities, and organizing community dialogues to raise awareness around nutrition.

KRCS also facilitates technical forums where health experts, community leaders, and development partners exchange knowledge, address challenges, and collaborate on solutions for nutrition-related issues. Through these activities, community members gain access to essential health information and resources that help improve long-term nutrition outcomes.

The County Government of Garissa also operates 94 health facilities with over 2,200 staff, including health and nutrition professionals. By embedding government personnel in health and nutrition initiatives, Garissa County builds internal capacity, ensuring skills and expertise remain in the public sector, sustaining the impact of interventions well beyond donor project timelines.

Nutrition-Specific and Nutrition-Sensitive Approaches

Garissa's strategy to combat malnutrition combines both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive services. Nutrition-specific interventions, such as those coordinated by KRCS, involve direct actions like distributing dietary supplements and conducting nutrition awareness forums. Nutrition-sensitive programs, on the other hand, tackle root causes of malnutrition indirectly, as seen in WASH and agricultural initiatives that improve living conditions, promote food security, and boost overall resilience.

With the support of development partners, Garissa County has achieved a remarkable reduction in malnutrition, illustrating the impact of a collaborative, multi-sector approach. By addressing immediate needs and building a foundation for sustained improvements in health and nutrition, Garissa's partnerships have paved the way for continued progress in resilience, transforming lives and shaping a healthier future for communities across the county.

"The most memorable thing is that despite the prolonged drought, partners ensured communities had constant water supply. During floods, again partners worked towards salvaging the farms, and this is the power of partnerships," - Abdi Sheikh Mohamed, Garissa County Nutrition Coordinator

Partners Transforming Community Healthcare in Balambala, Garissa County



KRCS

Hosted technical forums, coordinated meetings, held monthly medical outreaches, supported transportation of nutritional commodities and community dialogues



Save the Children

Supports WASH



WFP

Supports sanitation and crop farming activities



Mercy Corps

Supports cash transfers and coordinates nutrition-related activities



NDMA

Supports cash transfers

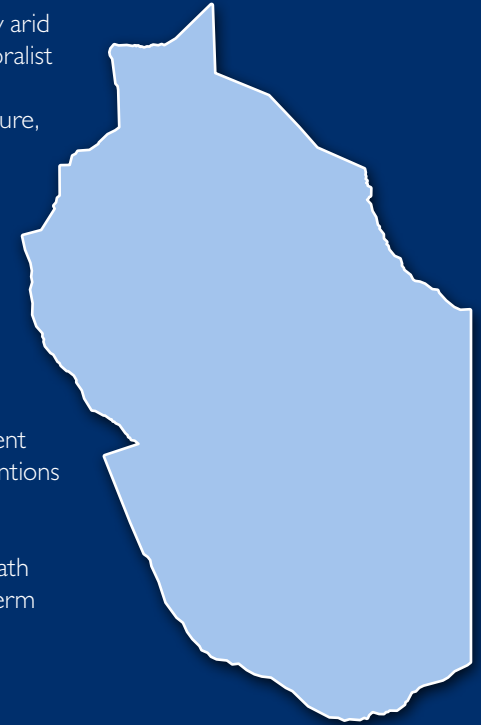
Wajir County: Building Resilience in the Face of Adversity

Wajir County, a sprawling region in northeastern Kenya, covers approximately 56,000 square kilometers of predominantly arid and semi-arid land. Characterized by a hot climate and unpredictable rainfall, this environment shapes the lives of its pastoralist population. Camels, goats, and sheep are the lifeblood of the local economy, providing sustenance and income for most households. However, the county's communities face a host of challenges, including recurrent droughts, limited infrastructure, and inadequate access to education and healthcare.

Despite these obstacles, Wajir holds untapped potential, particularly in renewable energy, such as solar power. Efforts are underway to leverage this resource and integrate innovative technologies with resilience-focused programs to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. These programs aim to strengthen livelihoods, diversify income sources, and build the county's capacity to adapt to environmental and socio-economic shocks.

A key driver of progress in Wajir has been the adoption of the Sequencing, Layering, and Integration (SLI) approach, a transformative framework in the development sector. By strategically aligning activities across multiple sectors—such as water, agriculture, health, and education—and ensuring cohesive implementation, SLI maximizes the impact of development initiatives. This approach enhances resource efficiency, fosters collaboration among stakeholders, and ensures that interventions address the complex and interconnected challenges facing Wajir's communities.

Through resilience-building strategies, renewable energy integration, and the SLI framework, Wajir County is charting a path toward sustainable development. These efforts not only address immediate needs but also lay the groundwork for long-term prosperity, empowering the people of Wajir to overcome adversity and thrive in their unique environment.



Cultivating Resilience: How Pastoralists in Alhamdu are Thriving Through Crop Farming Amid Climate Change

In the heart of Wajir County, where the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) dominate the landscape, pastoralist communities have faced generations of hardship. Livestock keeping, the backbone of the region's economy, has long been their primary source of sustenance and income. However, recurrent droughts—worsened by the sweeping impacts of climate change—have led to devastating water shortages, loss of pasture, and the death of livestock. The resulting economic losses, coupled with food and nutrition insecurity, have left communities searching for sustainable alternatives.

Recognizing the need for diversified income sources to build resilience, pastoralists in Alhamdu have begun embracing an alternative livelihood: crop farming. Supported by a collaborative network of partners, this shift is proving to be a transformative solution to the region's challenges.

A Farm a Day: Collaborative Efforts Transforming Lives

The Alhamdu crop farming project is a shining example of how coordinated efforts between local communities, government agencies, and development partners can address complex challenges. Through innovative agricultural practices and resource mobilization, the project has turned barren land into a thriving hub of productivity.

“AS WOMEN WE ARE KEY DECISION MAKERS IN MATTERS ABOUT FAMILY DIETS. THEREFORE, ENGAGING IN FARMING HAS EMPOWERED US TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE DIVERSIFIED DIETS THEREFORE ENHANCING HEALTHIER FAMILIES,”

- FAHIYA ADAN, FARMER, ALHAMDU, WAJIR

At the heart of this initiative are the women of Alhamdu, working in groups to cultivate a variety of crops, including collard greens, spinach, tomatoes, and parsley. This success story is a result of the combined efforts of key stakeholders:

- **USAID LMS** provided training on entrepreneurship, financial management, record-keeping, and group dynamics, equipping farmers with the skills to manage their farms sustainably. Additionally, the program offered cash grants to farmer groups to kickstart their operations.
- **World Food Programme (WFP)** excavated a water pan and installed a solar-powered irrigation system, ensuring a sustainable water supply. WFP also provided shade nets, which protect crops from harsh sunlight, and a drip irrigation system to optimize water usage. Today, nine shade nets support horticultural farming, while 10 acres of open farmland are dedicated to cereals like maize, beans, and sorghum.
- **The County Government of Wajir** contributed mechanization services, trained farmers on seed selection, and provided capacity-building programs focused on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).
- **Save the Children** supported farmers with agrochemicals and additional farm inputs.
- **Community members** contributed labor, additional farm inputs, and even employed guards to ensure the farm's security.

This collaborative approach has resulted in a self-sustaining model of agricultural development, where each stakeholder plays a crucial role in ensuring long-term success.

Impact: Healthier Diets and Improved Incomes

In an area where malnutrition rates are alarmingly high, the farm has become a lifeline. Fresh vegetables, once imported from regions like Meru, are now grown locally, reducing dependence on external supplies and ensuring communities have access to nutrient-rich food. Excess produce is sold in neighboring towns and Wajir's central market, generating additional income for the farmers.

“For years, we had to rely on vegetables from far away, but now we can grow what we need right here,” says Halima Hassan, a farmer at Alhamdu. “Not only do I earn my own money to support my family, but even during drought, the water pan remains a reliable source for irrigation.”

Women, who are the primary stakeholders in this project, are reaping the benefits of economic empowerment. With newfound financial independence, they no longer rely solely on their husbands for household needs. This shift has also empowered them as key decision-makers in matters of family nutrition.

“As women, we are responsible for ensuring our families have healthy diets,” shares Fahiya Adan, another farmer. “Farming has given us the ability to provide diverse, nutritious meals, which has greatly improved the health of our families.”

Fostering Resilience and Sustainability

The success of the Alhamdu farm demonstrates the power of collaboration in addressing the challenges faced by pastoralist communities. By integrating climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy solutions like solar irrigation, and sustainable water management, the project is building a foundation for long-term resilience.

Moreover, the farm has become a source of inspiration for other communities in Wajir County and beyond. It exemplifies how partnerships

between government, development organizations, and local groups can unlock potential in ASAL regions, turning adversity into opportunity.

A Vision for the Future

The Alhamdu farming project is more than just a response to climate change—it is a blueprint for resilience and empowerment. By embracing collaborative solutions, the pastoralist communities of Wajir are not only adapting to a changing climate but also creating a pathway toward sustainable development.

As the women of Alhamdu continue to cultivate their crops, they also nurture a brighter future for their families and community. Their story is a testament to the transformative power of collective action, proving that even in the most challenging environments, hope and opportunity can grow.



“AT LEAST I NOW MAKE MY OWN MONEY, AND I CAN SUPPORT MY FAMILY. EVEN WHEN THERE IS DROUGHT, THE WATER PAN DOESN'T DRY UP AND THEREFORE, THERE IS ALWAYS WATER FOR IRRIGATION.”

- HALIMA HASSAN, FARMER, ALHAMDU, WAJIR.

Partners Transforming Agriculture in Alhamdu, Wajir County



USAID LMS

trained farmers in aspects such as financial management, record keeping and group dynamics and provided cash grants



County Gov't of Wajir

provided mechanization services on this farm. They also trained farmers on seed selection and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP)



WFP

excavated a water pan which provides water for irrigation, established a solar-powered irrigation system which supports sustainable water supply to the farm and provided shade nets which secures crops from harsh direct sunshine and a drip irrigation system.



Save the Children

supported the farmers with agrochemicals and farm input



Community members

provided farm input and labor at the farm. They also employed guards to ensure security at the farm.



From Scarcity to Resilience: The Transformation of Weladhi Community

In the heart of Wajir County, Weladhi was once a community plagued by severe water scarcity. Families and livestock competed for a single watering point, creating social and economic tensions that disproportionately burdened women and children. Forced to endure long waits for water, residents faced limited opportunities for growth and stability. However, through targeted interventions under the Joint Work Plan (JWP), Weladhi has become a model of resilience and sustainable development, transforming challenges into opportunities for progress.

Climate Change and the Decline of Pastoralism

For decades, pastoralism was the backbone of livelihoods in Wajir and other Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). Yet, the worsening impacts of climate change have amplified vulnerabilities in this traditional practice. Prolonged droughts lead

to devastating livestock losses, while heavy rains trigger floods, washing away property and livelihoods. During droughts, livestock owners are often forced to sell their animals at throwaway prices to survive. These challenges underscore the urgent need to diversify socio-economic activities, spreading risks and enhancing resilience against climate-related shocks.

The History of Water Scarcity in Weladhi

Water scarcity was a defining struggle for Weladhi's residents. For decades, the community relied on costly water trucking, with a single truck delivery costing around USD 139 (KES 18,000)—equivalent to selling four goats. Despite these efforts, the supply was insufficient for over 1,000 residents and their livestock.

In 2014, Africa Oil, a private company, drilled a borehole and installed a solar-powered raised tank, easing some of the challenges. However, the community still had only one watering point, perpetuating resource competition and conflicts.



Collaborative Interventions: Laying the Foundation for Transformation

Development partners, recognizing the urgency of water access, engaged the community to identify and prioritize solutions. Through collaborative efforts, transformative interventions were implemented:

- **USAID LMS Activity** rehabilitated a 50m³ masonry tank, constructed two livestock troughs, and rehabilitated the borehole. An elevated steel tank was installed, along with a 1 km pipeline extension and two water kiosks, bringing clean water closer to the community and livestock. USAID LMS also introduced a water purification system to ensure water safety.
- **Save the Children** implemented a cash transfer program, providing USD 100 (KES 13,000) monthly to 74 households over seven months. This financial aid allowed families to meet their essential needs, reducing their vulnerability to economic shocks.
- **World Food Programme (WFP)** revolutionized agricultural practices by introducing advanced techniques, including shade nets and drip irrigation, and sinking a borehole to support farming. These measures increased agricultural productivity, enabling farmers to diversify crops and improve yields.
- **The County Government of Wajir** collaborated with WFP engineers to provide technical expertise and project design.

The local community contributed labor and demonstrated remarkable ownership of the project. Over 100 homes now have direct water connections, a testament to community-driven efforts.

“WE NO LONGER FEAR THAT DROUGHT WILL BRING TOTAL LOSS. FARMING COMPLEMENTS OUR INCOME AND FOOD SUPPLY, PROVIDING MUCH-NEEDED STABILITY.”

- ABDIAZZIZ ALI, CHAIRPERSON OF THE WELADHI FARM

A Transformed Community

The cumulative impact of these initiatives has been transformative. Reliable water access has reduced conflicts, while sustainable farming practices have diversified income sources. Agricultural yields have improved, enhancing food security and boosting household incomes.

Abdiaziz Ali, Chairperson of the Weladhi farm, expressed the community's newfound confidence: “We no longer fear that drought will bring total loss. Farming complements our income and food supply, providing much-needed stability.”

The benefits of these efforts extend beyond economic gains. At the local primary school, teacher Hussein Abdi has incorporated farming lessons into the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC). “I train my pupils to think beyond the norm, embrace technology, and adopt diversified socio-economic activities,” he explained. “It is vital for this generation to rethink how we live and work, given the changing climate.”

Ensuring Sustainability for Future Generations

The success of Weladhi lies not only in the immediate outcomes but also in its emphasis on sustainability. Stable community committees now manage water and irrigation projects, ensuring smooth operations beyond the implementation period. Residents contribute to the system's maintenance through affordable monthly fees—USD 0.77 (KES 100) for water users and USD 2.30 (KES 300) for homes with direct water connections. These contributions fund day-to-day operations and long-term maintenance, safeguarding the community's progress.



Lessons in Resilience and Replicability

Weladhi's transformation serves as a blueprint for other arid regions. By addressing the interconnected challenges of water access, economic stability, and agricultural productivity, the initiative has redefined livelihoods and fostered resilience. The integrated approach demonstrates that meaningful change is achievable through collaboration, innovation, and community empowerment.

The story of Weladhi stands as a testament to the power of partnership in overcoming adversity. By uniting government agencies, development partners, and the local community, Weladhi has turned the tide of scarcity into a beacon of hope, resilience, and sustainable development for generations to come.

IT IS VITAL FOR THIS GENERATION TO RETHINK HOW WE LIVE AND WORK, GIVEN THE CHANGING CLIMATE."

– HUSSEIN ALI, TEACHER, WELADHI



Partners Transforming Livelihoods in Weladhi, Wajir County



Africa Oil

drilled a borehole and installed a solar-powered raised tank



Local communities provided labor and connected water to 100 homes



County Gov't of Wajir offered technical support including designing the project which was done jointly with an engineer from WFP



Save the Children

introduced a cash transfer program, disbursing USD 100 (KES 13,000) monthly to 74 households for seven months



World Food Program (WFP)

established the farm, sank the bore hole and provided advanced agricultural techniques, such as shade nets, borehole rehabilitation, and reliable water sources



USAID LMS Activity

- rehabilitated a 50m³ masonry tank
- constructed two livestock troughs
- installed an elevated steel tank
- established a 1 km pipeline extension and two water kiosks
- provided a water purification system

From Milk to Markets: Empowering Women in Wajir Through Income Diversification

In Garsey, a small rural community in Wajir County, 36 women once relied on selling milk sourced from local pastoralists in an open-air marketplace. Using plastic containers under the searing heat of northeastern Kenya, they worked tirelessly to earn a modest income, unaware of the health risks posed by inadequate milk storage. Yet, their livelihoods remained precarious, as climate change and the nomadic nature of pastoralism led to inconsistent milk supplies, making their business unpredictable and unsustainable.

Today, these same women are thriving entrepreneurs, thanks to a collaborative initiative that transformed their lives through income diversification and strategic support.

Empowering Women for Resilience and Sustainability

Recognizing the challenges faced by the women of Garsey, the USAID LMS Activity stepped in with a comprehensive package of support to diversify their income sources and enhance sustainability. A shipping container was repurposed into multiple business units, creating a space for the women to expand their activities beyond milk sales. With an initial grant of USD 2,310 (KES 300,000), the women ventured into new businesses, offering a variety of goods and services, including clothes, household items, horticultural produce, and beverages.

The group organized into smaller teams, with each specializing in a specific trade:

- Group 1: Water and beverages
- Group 2: Clothing
- Group 3: Household goods
- Group 4: Horticultural produce

To further bolster their economic resilience, they purchased 20 goats, which have since multiplied, adding an asset to their wealth portfolio.

In a region where extreme temperatures challenge daily life, USAID LMS provided deep freezers to cool beverages and water, meeting the needs of both locals and travelers. Additionally, the women were supplied with 50 aluminium milk jars, replacing the plastic containers previously used, ensuring safer, more hygienic milk storage.

Building Skills and Infrastructure for Success

The USAID LMS Activity went beyond financial support, empowering the women through targeted training in financial management, group dynamics, and business development. These skills enabled the women to operate as cohesive business partners, effectively manage their earnings, and make informed decisions about savings and reinvestment.

The County Government of Wajir further contributed by constructing an additional building to store freezers and segregate stock from open-air businesses. This infrastructure improvement enhanced product quality and business organization. The government also facilitated access to essential legal documents, ensuring the group's operations were compliant with regulations, further solidifying their position as formal entrepreneurs.

Impact: A New Chapter of Financial Independence

The combined interventions have revolutionized livelihoods in Garsey. Today, each woman earns a consistent monthly income of KES 5,000, enabling them to sustain their families and reinvest in their businesses. Profits are also saved collectively, fostering financial security and resilience against economic shocks.

“With a monthly income, we can now budget ahead and support our families sustainably,” says Nasra Keinan, Secretary of the Garsey Milk Sellers Women Society. “Even during periods of low milk trade, we have the stability to ensure our children’s needs are met.”

The transformation extends beyond individual households. With improved storage facilities and diversified business offerings, the women have become key economic contributors to their community. Their ventures cater to local demands, reducing reliance on external markets and fostering a self-sustaining local economy.



A Blueprint for Empowerment

The story of Garsey is a powerful testament to the impact of collaboration. By aligning the efforts of USAID LMS Activity and the County Government of Wajir with the determination of local women, this initiative has created a sustainable model for economic empowerment.

The success demonstrates that empowering rural women through income diversification and capacity building not only transforms their lives but also strengthens entire communities. It highlights the importance of equipping women with the tools and knowledge to thrive in challenging environments and underlines the role of partnerships in fostering resilience and sustainable development.

Garsey's journey from milk to markets serves as an inspiring example for similar communities across Kenya and beyond, highlighting how collaboration and innovation can unlock the potential of rural women to drive lasting socio-economic change.

Partners Empowering Women in Garsey, Wajir County



County Gov't of Wajir
constructed an extra building to store freezers and separate stock from the open-air businesses and facilitated access to the relevant legal documents



USAID LMS Activity
provided a shipping container modified into multiple business units, gave a grant amounting to USD 2,310 (KES 300,000), provided the women with deep freezers to cool water and beverages for sale, provided with 50 aluminum milk storage cannisters, train the members in aspects such as finance management, group dynamics as well as ideal business ideas

"WITH A MONTHLY INCOME, WE NOW CAN BUDGET AHEAD AND SUPPORT OUR FAMILIES SUSTAINABLY;"

- NASRA KEINAN, THE SECRETARY GARSEY MILK SELLERS WOMEN SOCIETY

Transformative Shift: From Competition to Complement

INSIGHTS FROM UKHTAR ABDI, PROGRAMS ASSOCIATE, WFP, WAJIR



In Wajir County, development efforts were once characterized by fragmentation. Partners operated in isolation, each striving to implement projects without knowledge of others' activities. This disjointed approach led to duplication, inefficient use of resources, and limited long-term impact. The establishment of the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) network marked a significant turning point, replacing competition with collaboration and creating a unified approach to development.

From Outshining to Efficiency

Before the formation of PREG, development efforts often centered on visibility and individual impact. Partners focused on “outshining” one another, competing for recognition in the community rather than collaborating for collective benefit. Projects in vital sectors such as health, water, education, and entrepreneurship often overlapped, leading to wasted resources and diminished returns. Small-scale interventions struggled to make lasting change due to a lack of alignment and scalability.

A Shift to Collaboration and Inclusivity

The introduction of the Joint Work Plan (JWP) under the PREG network revolutionized development efforts. Partners shifted their focus to co-planning, co-investing, co-implementing, and co-monitoring projects. This approach

eliminated the competition and fostered equality, transforming individual entities into a unified team working toward shared goals.

For instance, under the JWP model, what might have previously been a stand-alone project like drilling a borehole has become a collaborative intervention. One partner may focus on water access, while another develops supporting infrastructure, and a third establishes an irrigation scheme. The result is a comprehensive solution that not only provides water but also addresses food security, economic empowerment, and community well-being.

Community Involvement: The Cornerstone of Change

A key strength of the JWP lies in its emphasis on community involvement. From project inception to implementation and beyond, communities are active participants. They are informed about who is doing what, where, and why, ensuring transparency and fostering ownership. This inclusive approach ensures that projects are tailored to actual community needs, increasing their relevance and sustainability.

In Wajir, the impact of the JWP is profound. For example, a borehole project now supports multiple development goals simultaneously providing water for domestic use, irrigation for farming, and improved health outcomes. Education initiatives are integrated with nutrition and health programs, addressing the holistic needs of students and their families.

Redefining Development

The collaborative approach of the JWP has redefined development in Wajir County. By pooling resources, partners achieve greater impact while minimizing waste. Sequencing, layering, and integration of activities have replaced duplication, allowing development efforts to address multiple challenges in a coordinated manner.

This unified strategy has also enhanced trust and cooperation between partners and the community. Residents now see development efforts as cohesive and transparent, building a stronger sense of partnership and shared responsibility.

A Model for Transformative Change

The PREG network and JWP have set a new standard for development in Wajir County. By fostering collaboration, inclusivity, and community ownership, they have replaced fragmented efforts with coordinated actions that deliver greater impact.

The benefits extend beyond individual projects. Partners now address cross-cutting issues with greater efficiency, ensuring no resource goes to waste. "What I like most about the JWP is that it enhances the pooling of resources," says Muktar Abdi.

"Resources are often limited, but by pooling what is available, the impact is significant.

Sequencing, layering, and integrating activities have minimized wastage and created greater value."

The success of the PREG network in Wajir offers a powerful blueprint for sustainable and impactful development. By aligning efforts, fostering mutual respect, and embracing shared goals, the JWP has demonstrated that transformative change is possible when competition is replaced with complementarity. This collaborative model stands as an inspiration for other regions, proving that partnerships are the key to unlocking lasting resilience and growth.



A photograph of a man in a white shirt smiling and holding several ripe mangoes. The background shows a mango orchard with trees and a blue sky with clouds. A dark blue banner with white text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

JWP IN SOUTH EASTERN KENYA (SEK)

Makueni County: A Land of Potential and Resilience

Nestled in southeastern Kenya, Makueni County spans 8,008 square kilometers of predominantly semi-arid land. Bordering Kajiado County to the west, Machakos to the north, Kitui to the east, and Taita Taveta to the south, Makueni is a place where the strength of its people meets the challenges of a tough landscape. With erratic rainfall and long dry spells, agriculture—the backbone of Makueni's economy—is both a lifeline and a test of resilience for the community.

Agriculture: The Lifeblood of Makueni

In Makueni, most residents rely on small-scale farming, cultivating crops such as maize, beans, pigeon peas, and mangoes. Mango farming stands out as a vital income source, driving both local and export markets. The crop has proven resilient even in Makueni's semi-arid conditions, becoming a promising avenue for economic growth and food security.

Yet, farming in Makueni is a constant balancing act. The county's rainfall is not only limited but also unpredictable, making it challenging to sustain crops and secure water for livestock and human consumption. These climate patterns strain agricultural output, leading to food insecurity and impacting household income. Like many other arid and semi-arid regions, Makueni faces intersecting challenges: high poverty rates, limited access to health services, and food and nutrition insecurity, all of which complicate efforts to realize the county's full potential.

Thriving Amidst Challenges: The Future of Agriculture in Makueni

Despite these difficulties, Makueni's farmers have adapted with resilience and ingenuity. The potential for fruit farming, particularly mangoes, is significant, with the county exploring ways to expand export opportunities and strengthen value chains to maximize returns. With investments in climate-smart agriculture, water harvesting techniques, and irrigation solutions, there is hope for a more sustainable future. Makueni's story is one of perseverance, as its people strive to overcome the limitations of their environment and turn challenges into opportunities.

Makueni County, with its rich agricultural heritage and determination, continues to seek innovative approaches to drive development, empower its communities, and build resilience. As new initiatives in agriculture, water management, and health emerge, Makueni stands as a testament to the strength of its people and the enduring potential of its land.



Joint Work Planning in Development Cooperation

INSIGHTS FROM FRANCIS NTHUKU - DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT OF MAKUENI COUNTY

On 4th August 2010, Kenyans historically voted in favor of a new Constitution that replaced the previous 1969 constitution. The new Constitution was approved by 67% of voters and was officially promulgated as the supreme law of Kenya (promulgated) on 27th August 2010. The Constitution introduced new concepts and a change in the way Kenya was to be governed. The reasons for this high approval rate by the voters was largely because they wanted power devolved or decentralized and equitable sharing of resources and development throughout the country.

At a time when devolution is gaining roots, the resource envelop to counties is decreasing at an increasing rate for the sub-national governments to deliver services to their residents adequately. Transfers from the Exchequer to counties is not only inadequate but it is not released timely. Some of the effects are:

- Operations and Maintenance (O&M) expenses are squeezed because the county governments must meet development budget
- Staff sit in their offices, because there is no money for travel or for development work
- Human and physical capacity is wasted, morale is low and staff lack motivation
- County governments are unable to deliver their mandates to citizens

County governments must forge strategic cooperation with Non-State Actors to marshal and mobilise the valuable resources to support their development agenda. They must tap into the competitive advantages of development and business partners in their counties aware that, these partners enter the development space in the counties at different times and leave once their objectives are met, have boundaries between them, have different skill sets and specialisations, have different outlooks and operating styles, have autonomous

desires and different value systems. Such dynamics can easily outweigh the valuable role played by the actors and make the system complex to sustain a certain degree of synergy and continuous flow of information, knowledge and resources. Inter and intra linkages between the actors can easily become dichotomous, wasteful and actors lose the ability to connect and synergise ultimately losing the flow of development support from the actors.

It is for this reason that in 2018, the Government of Makueni County established the Directorate Strategic Partnerships and Intergovernmental Relationships with a budget to coordinate development cooperation. Besides, the government has co-created its successive planning blue prints with partners and has systematized Annual Joint Work Planning (AJWP) at sector level as a way of demonstrating its deliberate intentions to work with partners. This way, both the government and partners influence each other's policy, plans and budgets. The AJWP framework has become a helpful tool for:

- a. Strengthening partner coordination
- b. Building sustainable relationships for external support (resource) mobilisation
- c. Improving targeting of development partners
- d. Improving communication and relations with partners

Among other examples of initiatives implemented jointly with USAID Implementing partners include the following:

- a. Control of fruit fly pest among fruit farmers
- b. Strengthening democratization and civil society participation in devolution
- c. Water and sanitation
- d. Water Governance
- e. Support for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs)
- f. Elephant Exclusion Fence

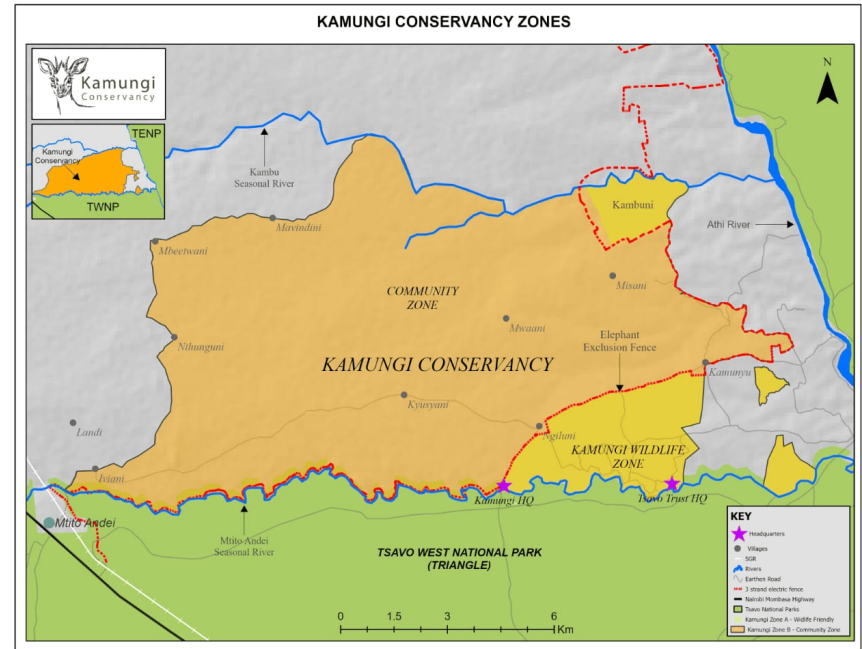
United For Coexistence: Mitigating Human-Elephant Conflict and Empowering Communities in Kamungi Conservancy

In Kamungi Conservancy, Makueni County, human-wildlife conflict has long been a challenge, especially with elephants venturing into community lands, causing damage and threatening livelihoods. But through USAID’s SMAT project, Kamungi Conservancy has embarked on an ambitious journey to create harmony between people and elephants. By building collaborative initiatives such as the Elephant Exclusion Fence (EEF), the 10% Fence Plan (FP), and livelihood projects, a collective approach has transformed both the landscape and the lives of those who call Kamungi home.

Reducing Human-Elephant Conflict with the Elephant Exclusion Fence (EEF)

In 2021, the Tsavo Trust constructed a two-strand Elephant Exclusion Fence (EEF) stretching 33 kilometers from Mtito Andei to Kamunyu village. Designed to deter elephants from entering community lands, the fence offered initial relief, but elephants soon adapted, finding ways around the fence boundary to reach unfenced areas near Kamunyu. Recognizing this gap, the County Government of Makueni extended the fence by 60 kilometers from Kamunyu to Masongaleli village, substantially reducing conflicts in areas covered by the Tsavo Trust EEF section, though tensions shifted to the newly adjacent regions.

To ensure full containment, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) took on the final phase, fencing from Masongaleli onwards. By the end of 2023, data showed an 80% reduction in human-elephant conflict compared to 2021. With this fence, Kamungi Conservancy experienced improved crop yields, fewer incidents of property damage (particularly to water tanks), and a boost in community engagement, as conservancy membership rose from 140 households in 2022 to 385 by late 2023. This community growth demonstrated the EEF’s value in fostering interest in conservation as people felt safer and more supported.



Fostering Coexistence with the 10% Fence Plan (FP)

While the EEF proved effective, some households remained outside the fenced area, now designated as the Wildlife Friendly Zone (WFZ). To address the challenges these households continued to face, the Tsavo Trust and Tofauti Foundation introduced the innovative 10% Fence Plan (FP). This plan secures 10% of each household’s land with a short, electrified “porcupine fence,” protecting essential areas while leaving the remaining 90% open for livestock and wildlife.

The 10% FP, supported by Tofauti Foundation, BIOPAMA, and Exodus Travels Foundation, has benefited 18 households, covered 76.5 acres of fenced land and leaving an additional 800 acres as open roaming space. This balance has nurtured a unique coexistence, where residents and wildlife share the landscape harmoniously. The 10% FP has not only enhanced human-wildlife coexistence but has also become a model for promoting shared landscapes in other conservancies facing similar challenges.

Livelihood Initiatives Supporting Coexistence and Resilience

Beyond the fences, USAID's SMAT project collaborated with local partners to improve the livelihoods of WFZ residents and neighboring communities, directly impacting living standards and strengthening community conservation efforts.

- **Water Solutions:** Addressing water scarcity, the project installed 110 dam liners, each with a capacity of 60,000 liters, to harvest surface runoff. These water pans now support fruit tree nurseries, kitchen gardens, and livestock, minimizing the need for people to venture into wildlife areas for water. Additionally, 28 households received 3,000-liter tanks for rainwater harvesting, significantly easing daily water demands.
- **Climate-Smart Agriculture:** Through training on Climate Smart Agriculture, community farmers have adopted techniques that have doubled crop yields and extended storage periods, with harvests lasting beyond six months. This approach has greatly bolstered food security within the conservancy, reducing dependence on external aid and mitigating the effects of unpredictable weather.
- **Solar Home Systems:** To reduce fossil fuel reliance, 113 households received solar home kits, which included a battery pack with charging ports, three bulbs, and a floodlight. The solar systems replaced kerosene lamps, cutting down household energy costs and benefiting health by reducing indoor air pollution. Families now save an estimated 4,000,000 KES annually, which they can invest in other household needs.
- **Energy-Saving Cooking Stoves:** The project introduced 200 energy-saving cooking stoves, which reduce firewood consumption by 65%. These stoves, built by trained community members, have become a source of income as they are now sold to other households in the conservancy. This initiative not only reduces environmental degradation but also improves respiratory health and supports household economies.



"I HAD CONSIDERED MOVING AWAY FROM THIS PLACE BECAUSE OF FREQUENT DISTURBANCES FROM ELEPHANTS. WITH THE FENCE IN PLACE, I AM NOW COMFORTABLE AND HAVE SINCE STARTED FARMING INCLUDING ESTABLISHING A BUDDING ORCHARD,"

- CHRISTOPHER NDETO, FARMER



Kamungi Eco-Tourism Bandas: A Model for Sustainable Development

To boost local tourism and support economic independence, Tsavo Trust, BIOPAMA, and Tofauti Foundation developed the Kamungi Eco-Tourism Bandas within the WFZ. Launched in September 2023, these eight-bed, self-catering bandas provide visitors with a unique and eco-friendly experience, allowing them to observe wildlife in its natural habitat. The bandas have quickly become an emblem of Kamungi's commitment to conservation-based tourism, officially recognized by the Makueni County Tourism Department and incorporated into the Makueni Hospitality Association Forum.

To ensure long-term success, six local youth received scholarships from Tsavo Trust for hotel management training, with three now employed full-time at the bandas. This venture has created employment opportunities, steady income, and a new avenue for promoting conservation, proving that eco-tourism can serve both community and environmental goals.

A Collaborative Model for Conservation and Socio-Economic Growth

The SMAT project's success lies in its collaborative model, where various organizations and donors have come together to address human-elephant conflict while boosting community livelihoods. The effective implementation

of the EEF and the innovative 10% FP, alongside supplementary livelihood initiatives, demonstrates the power of partnership in creating a balance between conservation and socio-economic progress.

Through these efforts, Kamungi Conservancy has transformed into a model for human-wildlife coexistence. The Kamungi Eco-Tourism Bandas, the climate-smart agriculture programs, and community-driven water solutions have created a sustainable, resilient community that values both its environment and economic well-being. The conservancy's achievements offer a promising template for other regions, proving that conservation and community empowerment can go hand-in-hand to protect wildlife and uplift lives.

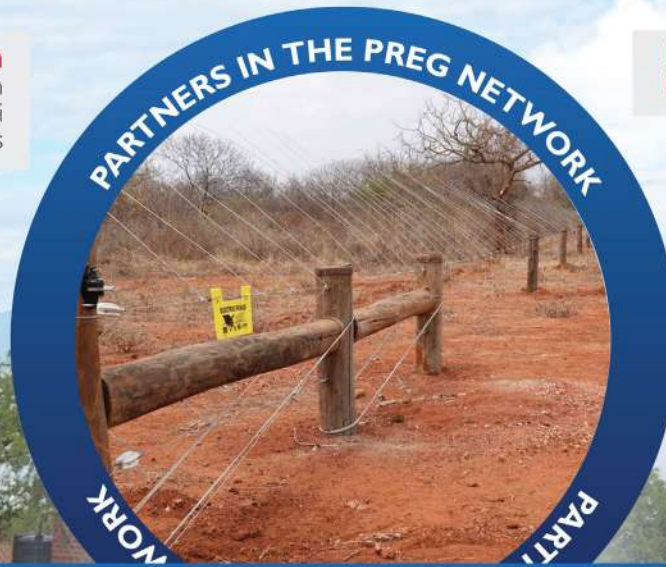
The Kamungi story is a testament to the strength of collective impact—showing how communities, conservation organizations, and donors can build a future where human and wildlife populations thrive together. This collaborative success sets a precedent for similar initiatives, fostering a landscape where resilience, economic independence, and environmental stewardship become inseparable pillars of progress.

MITIGATING HUMAN-ELEPHANT CONFLICT IN KAMUNGI

The County Government of Makueni
expanded the fence to 60 km

Tsavo Trust and Tofauti Foundation
introduced the 10% Fence Plan (FP). Together with
BIOPAMA, they constructed the Kamungi
Eco-Tourism Bandas

**BIOPAMA, and Exodus Travels
Foundation** supported the 10% fencing plan

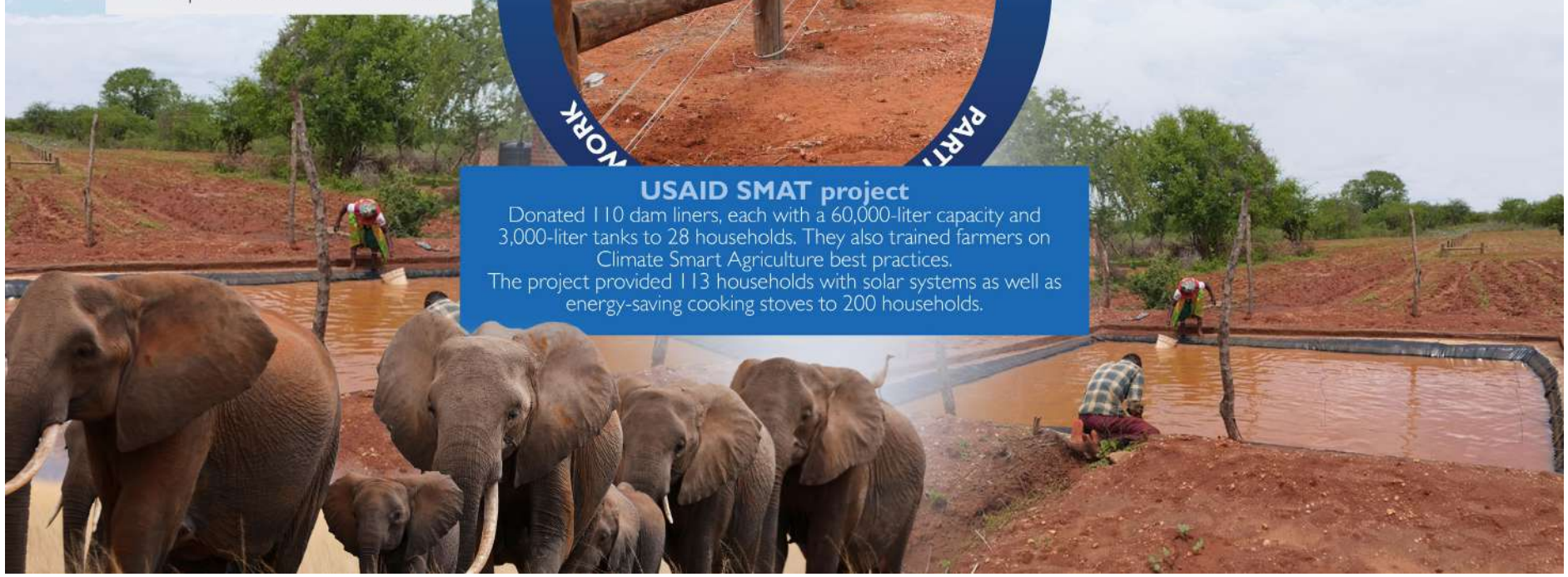


Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)
commenced the final phase of the EEF

Tsavo Trust constructed 33 km
Elephant Exclusion Fence in 2021

USAID SMAT project

Donated 110 dam liners, each with a 60,000-liter capacity and
3,000-liter tanks to 28 households. They also trained farmers on
Climate Smart Agriculture best practices.
The project provided 113 households with solar systems as well as
energy-saving cooking stoves to 200 households.



From Chaos to Order: Transforming Record Keeping in Makueni County

Just two years ago, Makueni County's offices were overflowing with stacks of paper, crammed into cartons and scattered across floors. These were not just papers—they were valuable records, containing essential data and historical documentation critical to the county's governance. However, with no proper storage system, these records faced a real risk of damage, loss, and neglect. But in 2023, an impactful collaboration with the USAID Resilience Learning Activity on knowledge management and strategic communications sparked a transformation, setting Makueni on a path from chaos to order.

Laying the Groundwork for Organized and Secure Record-Keeping

Under the third objective of the Activity, "Improving knowledge management and strategic communication for local and host country organizations," RLA supported communities, the national and county governments, and research institutions in generating learning and packaging knowledge relevant to resilience. The Activity supported skills transfer sessions of technical officers to ensure effective government-public engagement through information designed to be accessible, practical, and applicable for decision-making. Recognizing the critical role of knowledge management and strategic communications in strengthening governance and supporting effective resilience programming, RLA convened a series of engagements with the Makueni County Government Communicators and technical officers.

The engagement, dubbed "Strengthening County Governments' Resilience Capacities through Knowledge Management and Communications Practices," aimed to achieve several objectives. First, it sought to establish and understand existing county capacities, gaps, and opportunities for strengthening strategic communications for resilience, particularly with new county

leadership and directors in office. Second, the collaboration explored progress made at the County level in institutionalizing knowledge management and strategic communications as core functions in resilience programming and governance. The engagement also sought to establish a roadmap to enhance county government strategic communications and knowledge management functions further.

This collaboration between USAID-RLA and the Makueni County Government proved to be a pivotal moment, strengthening the expertise and technical capabilities of 25 officers from various Makueni County departments. The County Governor H.E. Mutula Kilonzo Junior and Deputy Governor H.E. Lucy Mulili underscored the high-level commitment to records management and strategic communication within Makueni's leadership. Deputy Governor Mulili remarked, "In most counties, record-keeping is wanting. Often, only health departments have well-managed records." Her statement highlighted a widespread issue, as many counties relied on clerks instead of trained records

RECORDS MANAGEMENT DOES NOT ONLY ENHANCE PRESERVATION OF THE PAST BUT ALSO ENSURES THAT THE FUTURE IS WELL INFORMED;"

- H.E LUCY MULILI, DEPUTY GOVERNOR, MAKUENI COUNTY



officers for this vital function, often leaving it under-resourced and undervalued. The collaboration with USAID RLA provided a foundation for a stronger, more resilient approach to knowledge management and strategic communication across the county's departments, marking a crucial step toward institutional resilience and improved governance.

Energized by this newfound focus, Makueni County set out to overhaul its record management system. The first step was investing in a bulk filer, which is already 80% full, and allocating a dedicated budget for records management. A draft records policy and procedure manual are now in development, soon to be distributed across departments. To lead this transformation, a structured records department was established, staffed by trained professionals equipped to handle and preserve the county's documents. The County Public Service Board even created a career pathway for record officers, ensuring skilled personnel across departments.

Embracing Digitalization, One Department at a Time

In Makueni's journey toward modernization, digitalization has become a core strategy. Departments are being equipped with automated records systems, improving accuracy, accountability, and accessibility. The revenue department, now fully digital, has seen remarkable improvements—data is secure, transactions are efficient, and instances of corruption have been reduced significantly. In the internship department, applications and forms are now managed digitally, curbing “perennial” internships that once limited opportunities for new applicants.

Makueni County has also engaged the National Government's ICT Authority to accelerate digitalization across departments, from health to agriculture. This partnership aims to create a seamless, county-wide system, ensuring records are well-managed, secure, and easily accessible.



“WE NEED RECORDS THAT ARE AUTHORITATIVE, AUTHENTIC AND THAT TELL HISTORY AND PROGRESS FOR PROPER DECISION MAKING,”

- ANN NYAGA, OFFICER IN CHARGE, RECORDS MANAGEMENT, MAKUENI COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Insights from Ann Nyaga: Leading the Records Revolution

Ann Nyaga, head of records management in the Office of the Governor, recalled how records were once scattered, disorganized, and difficult to retrieve. Thanks to the USAID RLA workshop, the county now has a clear roadmap for efficient record-keeping. Records officers are capturing the institutional knowledge of long-serving employees, conducting structured exit interviews to preserve valuable insights, stories, and recommendations. This approach minimizes the need to contact retirees for information, safeguarding institutional knowledge for future use.

Nyaga highlights that the workshop emphasized not only best practices but also the historical value of records in today's digital age. By documenting the experiences and lessons of long-serving officers, Makueni is building a rich archive of institutional knowledge, accessible for generations to come.

Overcoming Challenges and Expanding Awareness

While Makueni has made great strides, challenges remain. Further training is essential to ensure that officers generating records, such as County Executive Committee Members (CECMs) and Chief Officers (COs), adopt best practices in documentation and preservation. Deputy Governor Mulili acknowledged, “Our budgets are also limited, and we need to mobilize additional resources to meet our targets.” To address these financial constraints, Makueni is actively seeking support from partners and stakeholders to drive these crucial initiatives forward.

Collaboration Through Joint Work Plans and Knowledge Sharing

Collaboration has been a cornerstone of Makueni’s transformation. Through Joint Work Plans (JWP), Makueni has hosted significant meetings that brought together all development partners active in the county. These sessions fostered synergy among partners, encouraging shared insights and joint initiatives to support the county’s goals.

Deputy Governor Mulili has become an ambassador for Makueni’s record-keeping progress, sharing the county’s achievements at events like the Annual Records Management Conference in Mombasa. Her presentations position Makueni as a model for other counties, emphasizing the role of well-organized records in enhancing governance, transparency, and informed decision-making. Building a Centralized Knowledge Hub

The knowledge gained from the workshop has been shared widely across the county’s workforce, with over 100 secretaries trained in records management principles. Makueni is now developing a centralized “one-stop shop” for records, creating a structured repository that will streamline access and improve the speed and accuracy of information retrieval. Classification schemes are also being designed to standardize data storage across departments, ensuring that all records are systematically organized and preserved.

From Clutter to Clarity: A New Era of Governance in Makueni County

What was once a cluttered office is now a streamlined, efficient system that serves as the backbone of Makueni’s governance. Through collaborative partnerships, resource mobilization, and a commitment to change, Makueni County is transforming its approach to record-keeping, setting a new standard for public service management.

This journey—from stacks of cartons on office floors to a centralized, organized, and digitalized system—is a powerful reminder of the value of collaboration in overcoming challenges and driving sustainable transformation. Makueni’s story showcases how a commitment to order and transparency can enhance governance, foster growth, and preserve a legacy for the future.

Partners Transforming Record Keeping in Makueni County



County Government of Makueni

bought bulk filers & held 2 meetings
with all development partners



RLA

Trained 25 Officers from Makueni
County



Trainees

Trained 100 secretaries

Transforming Enterprises, Transforming Lives: Empowering MSMEs in Kenya Through USAID'S SBDC Program

Micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) are at the heart of Kenya's economy, providing a lifeline for poverty alleviation, job creation, and income generation. With an estimated 1.5 million formally registered MSMEs and over 5 million more in the informal sector, these enterprises contribute to 30% of the nation's GDP and provide employment for a substantial portion of the non-agricultural workforce. They operate across various sectors, particularly in wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, and food services, playing an essential role in Kenya's socio-economic stability.

The USAID SBDC Model: Building Capacity and Opening Markets

USAID's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) program in Kenya is based on the successful U.S. SBDC model, tailored to meet the unique needs of Kenyan MSMEs. This program works to empower enterprises by building their operational capacities and creating linkages with U.S. business counterparts. Focused on agribusinesses—spanning crops, livestock, and fisheries—as well as the apparel and creative industries (including artisanal crafts, visual arts, and film), the USAID SBDC program is creating a solid foundation for MSMEs to thrive locally and compete on a global scale.

Anchored in six county-based business centers, the USAID SBDC program offers a comprehensive curriculum covering business management, market analytics, and financial planning, adapted to the Kenyan context. These centers provide invaluable support to MSMEs, helping them access local and international market opportunities, build resilient business models, and contribute to Kenya's economic competitiveness. By strengthening MSMEs, the program is driving sustainable growth, job creation, and stable livelihoods.

Makueni County: Leading the Charge in Small Business Development

Makueni County stands out as a pioneer in small business development through its partnership with USAID SBDC. The program has focused its efforts in Makueni on four main areas:

1. **Consulting:** Supporting businesses in structuring production processes, setting pricing strategies, and planning operations across value chains to improve efficiency and profitability.
2. **Training:** Preparing businesses for export markets and reinforcing governance, management, and planning practices for long-term viability.
3. **Business Development Advisory:** Offering guidance on financing, business planning, technology adoption, regulatory compliance, marketing, and international trade.
4. **Policy Research and Market Intelligence:** Providing insights into consumer trends, export market dynamics, and policy recommendations to strengthen MSME resilience and growth.

Since the program's inception, USAID SBDC has served 1,724 clients in Makueni, including 996 women and 728 men. Among these, 263 beneficiaries received personalized advisory sessions, while 346 group coaching sessions facilitated collective learning and growth. Through this tailored support, MSMEs in Makueni have been empowered to innovate, grow, and sustain their operations in increasingly competitive markets.

Driving Economic Impact: Sales, Capital Injection, and Job Creation

The economic impact of USAID SBDC in Makueni County has been remarkable. The program has injected approximately USD 390,115 (KES 50,324,833) into business capital, spurring expansion and job creation. Additionally, Makueni-based MSMEs reported a sales increase totalling USD 373,350 (KES 48,162,136), strengthening their position within competitive markets. This growth has extended to Kenya-U.S. trade, with exports from Makueni's MSMEs increasing by KES 1.7 million.

Employment growth has also been a significant outcome, with 37 new jobs created and 665 positions sustained through USAID SBDC's interventions. These outcomes underscore the program's role in building resilient enterprises that provide stable incomes for families and contribute to the county's socio-economic development.

Building Partnerships for Sustainable Development

A cornerstone of the USAID SBDC program's success in Makueni is its network of strategic partnerships, which enhance the reach and sustainability of the program:

- **County Government of Makueni:** Hosting USAID SBDC offices, the county government provided interns and matching grants, strengthening the program's activities.
- **Strathmore University:** The university offered technical support for marketing strategies, policy reviews, and trade conferences, extending USAID SBDC's reach to regional markets.
- **Kenya Chamber of Commerce:** The Chamber mobilized members for USAID SBDC training and facilitated access to the MasterCard Foundation-funded Jiinue program, opening avenues for loans and financial support.
- **Faith-Based Organizations (SUPKEM, KCCB, NCCK):** Under the USAID Mulika Initiative, these groups mobilized youth from six counties for USAID SBDC training, promoting skill-building in Makueni, Nakuru, Mombasa, Kiambu, Isiolo, and Kisumu.

Empowering MSMEs with Lifelong Skills

The sustainability of the USAID SBDC program hinges on equipping MSMEs with essential skills in finance, investment, business management, and marketing. With these skills, business owners can make informed decisions, adapt to changing market demands, and transfer knowledge to employees, family members, and partners. Additionally, many beneficiaries remain engaged with the Chamber of Commerce and financial cooperatives (SACCOs), ensuring ongoing access to resources and opportunities for growth beyond the project's lifecycle.

The USAID SBDC program has transformed Makueni County's MSME landscape, turning small enterprises into engines of growth and prosperity. With solid partnerships, dedicated resources, and a commitment to resilience, USAID SBDC is not only fuelling economic growth but also setting a precedent for sustainable development and economic empowerment across Kenya. Through collaboration and capacity-building, MSMEs are empowered to turn ambition into success, securing a brighter future for their communities and the nation.

Success Story: Sammy Mukeku's Journey to Growth with USAID SBDC

Key Partners in Makueni County SBDC Support



County Government of Makueni

Hosts SBDC offices, provides interns, and offers matching grants



Strathmore University

Provides technical support for marketing strategy, policy review, and trade conferences



Kenya Chamber of Commerce

Mobilizes members for training and supports integration with Jiinue program loans



MasterCard Foundation's Jiinue Program

Provides loans for Chamber of Commerce members



SUPKEM, KCCB, and NCCK

Mobilize youth for training through the USAID Mulika Initiative

Sammy Mukeku, co-owner of Makon Hardware in Salama, Makueni, exemplifies the transformative power of USAID's Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) program. Situated along the bustling Nairobi-Mombasa highway, Makon Hardware caters to a rapidly growing community driven by real estate developments. However, before connecting with USAID SBDC, Sammy and his wife, Bilha, grappled with challenges that threatened their business's sustainability, including inadequate record-keeping, stiff competition, and limited capital for growth.

Through tailored support from the USAID SBDC, Sammy and Bilha overhauled their operations, transforming their business into a thriving enterprise. Here's how they achieved it:

- **Enhanced Security:** One of the first changes Sammy and Bilha implemented was the installation of CCTV cameras. This upgrade allowed them to monitor the store remotely, which significantly reduced stock theft and helped address employee misconduct, providing peace of mind and improving the overall efficiency of their operations.
- **Modernized Record-Keeping:** Embracing a "point-of-sale" (POS) system enabled Sammy to track sales and inventory with precision, a game-changer for their business. The POS system allowed him to analyze monthly sales trends, optimize stock levels, and make informed purchasing decisions—all of which strengthened their profitability.

- **Strategic Financing:** With guidance from USAID SBDC, the couple secured a loan to diversify their product offerings. Adding high-demand items like water tanks, timber, and other essential hardware supplies resulted in a 30-40% increase in monthly sales, totalling over USD 3,876 (KES 500,000). This financial boost allowed Makon Hardware to stand out in a competitive market.
- **Extended Operating Hours:** By expanding store hours from 8 am-6 pm to 7 am-7 pm, Makon Hardware could serve customers beyond standard hours, capturing additional sales and distinguishing itself from competitors.

The growth of Makon Hardware has had a ripple effect on employment in the area, with the business now employing three full-time staff members and two to three casual laborers daily. Looking ahead, Sammy plans to expand his offerings further, eyeing products such as plumbing pipes, HDP water pipes, and wood carving machinery to meet the needs of his growing customer base.

Sammy Mukeku's journey with USAID SBDC is a testament to the value of targeted support, strategic planning, and adaptability. From strengthening security to implementing digital solutions and securing financing for expansion, Sammy has transformed his business and laid the foundation for continued growth and community impact.

"I AM GLAD WE LISTENED TO THE ADVISORS FROM USAID SBDC BECAUSE WE ARE NOW REAPING THE FRUITS OF KNOWLEDGE;"

— SAMMY MUKEKU,
CO-DIRECTOR, MAKON
HARDWARE, SALAMA,
MAKUENI



From Stigma to Strength: Anastasia Mwende's Journey with USAID'S 4Better Health Project

In the quiet village of Kwa Kivisi, Makueni County, Anastasia Mwende's life has been a powerful story of resilience, transformation, and hope. At 34, this mother of four has faced challenges that could break the strongest of spirits. Living with the burden of stigma and struggling to support her family, Anastasia once felt confined by the limitations imposed by her community and circumstances. But through the support of the USAID 4Better Health Project, implemented by ADSE, she has not only found empowerment for herself but has also become a beacon of hope in her village.

Anastasia's early years were marked by hardship. The stigma surrounding her family's circumstances took a physical and psychological toll, ultimately forcing her to temporarily relocate to Machakos County to escape the scorn of her community. Her husband was based there, but even in this temporary respite, the challenges continued to follow. When the USAID 4Better Health project reached Makueni, it brought with it a holistic approach to transforming the lives of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVCs) and their caregivers, offering Anastasia the lifeline she needed.

The Birth of Thatuka Savings and Lending Association: A Journey of Collective Growth

In 2021, Anastasia joined 17 other caregivers to form the Thatuka Savings and Lending Association (VSLA), starting as a modest merry-go-round among women who shared a common struggle. What began as a simple savings group became an organized association with the support of USAID 4Better Health. Through training and connections to credit institutions, the project empowered Thatuka to expand its reach and capabilities.

Every week, members gathered to contribute between USD 0.40 and USD 1.95 (KES 50 - KES 250). Although many struggled to meet even these small contributions initially, USAID's support helped them stabilize, gradually building trust and financial discipline within the group. Today, Thatuka's members contribute a total of USD 269 (KES 34,650) each week, with a cumulative loan note reaching USD 233 (KES 30,000). The group's structure allows members to borrow double their monthly contributions at a 10% interest rate, providing a valuable tool for funding small business ventures and personal development.

Economic Empowerment and Personal Transformation Through Community Savings

Anastasia has seen her life transform through her involvement in Thatuka VSLA. From the modest weekly savings, members can now access loans that they invest in small businesses, agriculture, and essential household needs. For Anastasia, these funds have meant the ability to improve her home, pay school fees for her children, and even purchase assets. More than just a financial support system, Thatuka has fostered a sense of unity and purpose among its members, building not only their individual resilience but also strengthening the community's economic base.

Through this support system, Anastasia and her peers have broken down barriers of stigma, turning their challenges into stepping stones for economic empowerment. The financial stability that they have achieved has also reshaped perceptions within the village, inspiring others to join in the journey of self-reliance and collective growth.

USAID 4Better Health's Holistic Support: A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Empowerment

The USAID 4Better Health Project has provided Anastasia and other caregivers with support that goes beyond economic aid. Beneficiaries receive psycho-social support, financial training, and access to material aid, allowing them to improve their quality of life while gaining essential skills. Caregivers are given transport assistance for clinic visits, school fees, and training in areas like child rights, nutrition, and sustainable farming. Many caregivers, including Anastasia, have started kitchen gardens with seeds provided by the project, growing produce that enhances family nutrition and boosts food security.

The project's interventions span four critical domains:

- **Healthcare for OVCs:** The project ensures that orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) receive comprehensive healthcare, encouraging consistent attendance at clinical appointments and promoting good nutrition.
- **Education for OVCs:** By covering school fees, providing uniforms, and offering dignity kits to adolescent girls, the project ensures school retention and reduces the financial burden on caregivers.
- **Economic Stability for Caregivers:** Through VSLA formation, training, and the provision of livestock such as goats and poultry, caregivers gain the tools for economic independence and resilience.
- **Child Protection and Safety:** Awareness programs on child rights help foster a safe and nurturing environment for OVCs, addressing fundamental human rights issues.

A Ripple Effect Across Makueni County: The Impact of 4Better Health

The impact of the USAID 4Better Health Project in Makueni County has been transformative. Enrollment of OVCs increased from 1,376 households to 2,938 individuals, nearing the target of 3,318. Additionally, 189 OVCs have successfully graduated from the program, with a target of 572 in sight. Preventive interventions have also exceeded expectations, with 571 adolescents reached against a life-of-project goal of 468.

Beyond individual success stories, the project has established a robust network of 42 VSLAs across the county, bringing together 1,107 caregivers who have collectively saved KES 945,000 and provided loans totalling KES 735,570. Partnerships have been critical, with all supported OVCs and caregivers enrolled in the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), now known as the Social Health Authority (SHA), enabling access to universal healthcare. In a significant boost, two VSLA groups received USD 6,202 (KES 800,000) in financial support from a German-funded project, further enhancing their investment potential.

New Income-Generating Ventures and Community-Wide Development

One of the project's most notable achievements has been the development of 314 new income-generating activities for caregivers within the VSLAs. These activities, along with six producer groups specializing in mangoes, honey, goat rearing, and green gram production, have diversified the local economy. These initiatives not only support individual caregivers but also strengthen the community's resilience against economic shocks, creating a more stable economic environment for all.

A Legacy of Resilience and Community Empowerment

Anastasia's journey is a testament to the power of resilience, community support, and the transformative impact of the USAID 4Better Health Project. Through Thatuka VSLA and her participation in the 4Better Health initiative, she has overcome stigma, rebuilt her life, and set a powerful example for her children and community. Her story is a reminder of how coordinated, multi-faceted support can turn hardship into opportunity and build a foundation for lasting change.

In Makueni County, where once stigma prevailed, communities are now empowered and thriving. Through collaboration, financial empowerment, and skill-building, USAID 4Better Health has created a legacy that will benefit future generations. Anastasia and her peers stand as symbols of hope and strength, illustrating how impactful partnerships and community resilience can transform lives and uplift entire communities.

Kitui County: A Land of Resilience and Agricultural Potential

Spanning 30,520 square kilometers, Kitui County is Kenya's sixth-largest county in terms of area and boasts a steadily growing population, recorded at 1,136,187 (2019 census). Kitui County shares its borders with seven counties; Tharaka-Nithi and Meru to the north, Embu to the northwest, Machakos and Makueni to the west, Tana River to the east and southeast, and Taita-Taveta to the south. Kitui is characterized by diverse landscapes, with regions ranging from arid and semi-arid to more arable areas, each with distinct agricultural opportunities and challenges.

Agriculture and Livestock: The Lifeblood of Kitui

With over 80% of Kitui's residents relying on subsistence farming and livestock rearing, agriculture is deeply embedded in the county's identity. The primary crops include maize, beans, pigeon peas, sorghum, millet, and cassava, all staples in local diets. Livestock rearing, especially of goats and cattle, complements crop farming and serves as an essential income source.

Kitui also supports small-scale industries in honey, gypsum, and fruit processing, providing additional employment opportunities. These industries, though small, are crucial to Kitui's economic fabric and hold the potential for growth as the county seeks to diversify its economy.

Challenges in Water Access and Food Security

Despite the agricultural potential, Kitui faces significant challenges in achieving food security. Unpredictable weather patterns and limited water access often lead to food shortages. The county depends on seasonal rivers, dams, and boreholes for water, but these sources frequently dry up during prolonged droughts. With unreliable water supplies, crop yields fluctuate, and livestock productivity suffers, impacting household income and nutrition.

The rainfall pattern in Kitui is bi-modal, with long rains occurring from March to May, though these rains are often erratic and inconsistent. The short rainy season, from October to December, tends to be more reliable, making it critical for farmers to maximize crop production during these months. High temperatures throughout the year, ranging from 14°C to 34°C, add further challenges, as the heat intensifies water scarcity and strains agriculture.

A Community of Resilience and Innovation

Kitui's residents demonstrate remarkable resilience in adapting to these challenges. Local initiatives, often supported by county and national programs, are working to enhance water access and promote sustainable agriculture. Investments in water storage, conservation agriculture, and alternative income sources, such as honey production and fruit processing, are helping to build a more resilient community capable of withstanding climate uncertainties.

Kitui County's journey underscores the strength and adaptability of its people, who continue to find ways to thrive in the face of adversity. As the county seeks to improve food security, develop its industries, and enhance water access, Kitui stands as a testament to resilience, innovation, and the enduring spirit of its people.



The Impact of JWP Interventions in Kitui County

INSIGHTS FROM REDEMTA MARY, DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL PROGRAMMES COUNTY GOVERNMENT OF KITUI



Introduction

Redemta Mary is the Director of Special Programmes in the County Government of Kitui, Kenya. In her role, she oversees resource mobilization, donor linkages, and strategic partnerships, driving innovative collaborations between the County Government and development partners. Redemta has been instrumental in spearheading co-creation processes that align county priorities with global and local development efforts, fostering sustainable and impactful initiatives.

Pre-Joint Work Planning (JWP) Challenges in Kitui County

Before the introduction of Joint Work Planning (JWP), development efforts in Kitui County faced significant challenges. Partners operated in silos, leading to:

- **Duplication of Interventions:** Multiple partners often reported the same projects or targeted the same beneficiaries, resulting in inefficiencies.
- **Lack of Regional Balance:** Development efforts were concentrated in select areas, leaving other vulnerable regions underserved.
- **Unsustainable Projects:** Initiatives funded by development partners frequently failed after their exit, as they lacked government involvement in their design and implementation.

These issues underscored the need for a coordinated approach to optimize resources, reduce redundancy, and enhance impact.

Key Achievements of Joint Work Planning in Kitui County

The adoption of JWP in Kitui County, particularly through co-creation with USAID Implementing Partners over the last four years, has transformed development planning and execution. The key achievements include:

- **Coordinated Development:** Partners now align their activities with county priorities, reducing overlaps and ensuring resource optimization.
- **Enhanced Transparency and Accountability:** Development partners now openly disclose their resource envelopes, fostering trust and better collaboration.
- **Mega Projects Realized:** Collaborative synergies have enabled the implementation of impactful large-scale projects that would have been challenging for individual partners to achieve.
- **Sustainable Development:** With government involvement from the start, projects now have clear timelines and sustainability plans.
- **Capacity Growth of Local CSOs:** Local civil society organizations have benefited financially and technically by collaborating with major development partners.
- **Cross-Learning and Knowledge Sharing:** Partners leverage technical expertise and share best practices, strengthening their collective capacity.
- **Expanded Networks and Partnerships:** JWP has attracted non-USAID partners to collaborate with the county, broadening the pool of resources and expertise.
- **Comprehensive Documentation:** Best practices and successful projects are now documented, serving as references for future interventions.
- **Improved Monitoring and Evaluation:** Joint monitoring visits assess the value for money and ensure projects meet their goals.
- **Focused Commitments:** Regular “pause and reflect” forums help partners track progress and stay aligned with their objectives.
- **Resource Maximization:** JWP has identified and tapped into unforeseen opportunities within project components.
- **Comparative Advantage:** Development partners benefit from cost-effective technical support provided by government officers, reducing reliance on costly private consultants.

Impact of JWP on Community-Level Development

JWP has transformed community development in Kitui County by fostering enhanced citizen involvement and public participation. Communities are now directly engaged in identifying priorities, ensuring that development initiatives address real and pressing local needs.

Notable Success Stories of JWP Initiatives

Joint Work Planning has led to remarkable achievements, including:

- **Oxygen Plant Installation** at Mwingi Level 4 Hospital, improving healthcare delivery.
- **Solar Driers Installation**, supporting local agricultural value chains.
- **Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA) support**, exemplified by groups like “Menda Makoka” in Ikanga Kyatune, boosting financial resilience.
- **Construction of a Cancer Centre** at Kitui County Referral Hospital, enhancing access to specialized care.
- **Newborn Unit Development** at Kitui County Referral Hospital, improving maternal and child health outcomes.

Sustainability Plans for JWP in Kitui County

To ensure JWP's sustainability, the County Government is strengthening coordination mechanisms for resource mobilization and donor linkages. These efforts include institutionalizing the process within county structures and fostering long-term partnerships with stakeholders.

Parting Thoughts

Joint Work Planning is a game-changer for development, providing a blueprint for effective collaboration between governments, development partners, and communities. It resonates deeply with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 17: “Partnerships for the Goals,” underscoring the importance of global collaboration for sustainable development.

As an African proverb wisely states:

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Let us continue working together to unlock greater impact, foster resilience, and build a sustainable future for all.



Bold Beyond Living with HIV: The Journey of Kyatuni Menda No Makoka

In Kenya, people living with HIV face formidable challenges, with stigma ranking among the most difficult. Often ostracized by family, friends, and the community, many endure isolation and mental distress that intensifies the physical impact of the virus. For many, limited access to medical care and the financial means to secure proper nutrition makes managing HIV even more challenging. Caregivers, too, carry the weight of this stigma, often facing social exclusion and lacking access to resources that could help them better support their loved ones.

Yet amidst these challenges, inspiring stories of resilience emerge. Christine Mumbe, a mother who tested positive for HIV, confronted stigma directly. Instead of hiding, Christine chose to go public about her status, transforming her struggle into a platform for change. Her courage inspired others in her community to open up, leading to the formation of Kyatuni Menda no Makoka, meaning “they will join us when they so wish.” This support group became a sanctuary for people living with HIV, initially meeting in a private room at a hospital maternity wing, where members could find mutual support away from prying eyes.

Voices from the field

“WHEN I TESTED POSITIVE FOR HIV, I THOUGHT I WOULD DIE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. BUT I NOW EVEN HAVE GRANDCHILDREN. I NEVER USED TO SAVE BECAUSE I DID NOT FORESEE TOMORROW. BUT I NOW SAVE AND I’M OPTIMISTIC FOR BETTER DAYS TO COME”

- CHRISTINE MUMBE, KITUI

“I GLADLY OFFERED A SECTION OF MY LAND FOR THE GROUP BECAUSE I BELIEVE THERE IS SO MUCH TO LIFE THAN BEING INFECTED WITH OR AFFECTED BY HIV;”

-EVELYN MATHEKA, CHV, KITUI

A Growing Movement of Empowerment

As Christine recalls, “The same people who used to peep at us through a window at the maternity wing ended up joining our group.” This small yet powerful group flourished with support from the USAID 4Better Health project, which helped Kyatuni Menda no Makoka evolve from a support group into a dynamic community initiative focused on holistic empowerment.

Under the guidance of USAID 4Better Health, the group expanded its impact, tackling not just health issues but also economic and social challenges. One turning point came when Evelyne Matheka, a dedicated Community Health Volunteer (CHV), offered a section of her land for the group to farm. Members began cultivating vegetables, cereals, and other crops, and even dug a well to support irrigation. Kitchen gardens were established at each member’s homestead, allowing easy access to diverse, nutritious foods that support their health and reduce their reliance on outside resources.

Financial Independence through Village Savings

The USAID 4Better Health project encouraged members to form a Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA), providing training and mentorship on financial management. Starting with modest monthly contributions of just USD 0.77 (KES 100), the group has now collectively saved USD 771 (KES 100,000). Part of this savings was used to purchase and install a water tank, irrigation pipes, and a fence for their farm. Across Kitui County, USAID 4Better Health has facilitated the formation of 40 such VSLAs, helping hundreds of households achieve greater financial stability.



In addition, the group received essential tools like a water pump and solar power unit, enabling efficient irrigation and easing the physical burden of manually pulling water from the well—a challenge particularly difficult for older members. USAID 4Better Health also connected the group to Simlaw Seeds for certified, high-quality seeds, while the Kitui County Government provided agricultural extension officers to train members on Good Agricultural Practices (GAP). The Department of Agriculture further supported them with certified seeds to distribute, allowing each member to cultivate their own crops.

Supporting the Vulnerable and Elderly

Understanding the unique needs of the group’s elderly members, USAID 4Better Health helped enroll them in the Inua Jamii program, a national government initiative that provides cash transfers to senior citizens, improving their quality of life. Monthly group meetings became both a gathering of solidarity and an opportunity for economic empowerment, as members brought produce for sale. They sell their vegetables, fruits, cereals, and even poultry both among themselves and to passersby, generating income and further supporting each household.

Graduating to Self-Sufficiency

Thanks to coordinated support from USAID 4Better Health and local and national government interventions, Kyatuni Menda no Makoka has seen incredible transformations. Six households have graduated from the program, achieving financial independence and self-sufficiency, and the group eagerly anticipates further support from the County Department of Irrigation to expand their farming activities.

Through the dedication of Christine and her fellow members, Kyatuni Menda no Makoka has grown from a small, private support group into a thriving community initiative. Their story is one of resilience and empowerment, a testament to how coordinated, compassionate support can transform hardship into opportunity and lead to a brighter, more independent future for those living with HIV.

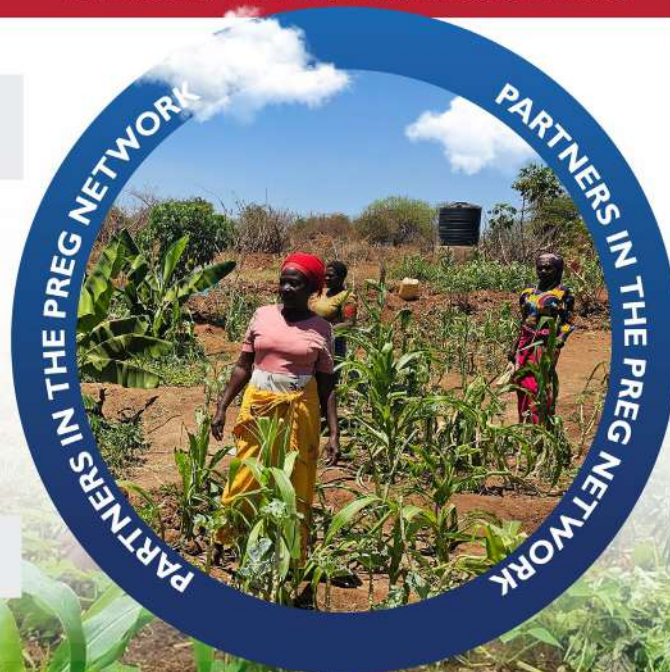
PARTNERS TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF HIV+ WOMEN OF KITUI COUNTY

The County Government of Kitui availed extension officers who trained them on GAP and supported the group with certified seeds which were re-distributed to individuals

The National Government offers cash transfer to the elderly linked through Inua Jamii program

CHV offered the group land where they cultivate different crops including vegetables and cereals

Community members dug a well, established kitchen gardens



USAID 4Better Health project supported them to start a VLSA, supported the group with a water pump and solar power unit, supported the aged for enrollment into the Inua Jamii program and linked the members to Simlaw seeds where they access certified seeds. They are also planning to link the group to the County Department of irrigation.

Empowering Women, Transforming Communities: The Tharaka Water Success Story

In the heart of Tharaka Ward, Mwingi North Sub-County, where drought has long dictated the rhythm of daily life, a remarkable story of resilience and transformation is unfolding. The challenges of water scarcity and its ripple effects on health, agriculture, and economic stability once cast a shadow over this community. Yet, through the power of collaboration and the determination of its people, Tharaka has become a beacon of hope, demonstrating how partnerships can set communities on a path to success.

At the center of this transformation is the Tharaka Women Water User's Association, established in 2004 with the support of Action Aid. Starting with a vision to address acute water shortages, the association has grown into a formidable force for change, bringing together 510 women dedicated to improving water access and management. For decades, the women and children of Tharaka bore the brunt of water scarcity, walking up to 40 kilometers daily to fetch water. These grueling journeys not only drained their energy and time but also exposed them to waterborne diseases, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Recognizing the urgent need for change, Action Aid partnered with the community to lay the foundation for progress. Their first steps included constructing a sand dam and swamp well, vital in securing a reliable water source. A 74-kilometer pipeline network was later built, connecting these sources to 15 water kiosks, 11 of which are operational today. This infrastructure marked a turning point, ensuring easier access to water for households and community facilities.

The journey of transformation didn't stop there. In 2014, the County Government of Kitui amplified these efforts by drilling a borehole and equipping it with a generator, further boosting the water system's capacity. Later, the USAID KIWASH program introduced solarization to reduce energy costs and installed a chlorination doser to ensure the water's safety. These partnerships have culminated in a reliable, clean, and accessible water system, fundamentally altering life in Tharaka.

Transformative Impact on the Community

Access to Clean Water

What was once a luxury has become a reality for the people of Tharaka. The establishment of water kiosks and household connections has drastically reduced the time and effort required to access water. Reliable access to chlorinated water has significantly reduced cases of waterborne diseases, improving health and hygiene standards across the community.

Agricultural Growth and Food Security

Access to water has unlocked agricultural potential, with ten households using pipeline connections to establish kitchen gardens. These gardens provide fresh vegetables, enhancing household nutrition and strengthening food security in a drought-prone region. This shift from subsistence to sustainable farming is reshaping livelihoods.





Economic Empowerment and Women's Leadership

The association's success has created economic opportunities for its members and the wider community. With monthly revenues ranging from Kes 70,000 to Kes 90,000 from water sales, the association ensures water is affordable at just Kes 5 per 20-liter jerrycan. This affordability guarantees access for all residents, including those with limited resources. Additionally, the revenue generated has fostered financial independence for the women involved, allowing them to meet their families' needs and participate in decision-making processes. This empowerment has elevated women into leadership roles, advancing gender equality in Tharaka.

Job Creation and Local Stability

The operation of the water system has generated employment, with seven staff members ensuring its smooth functionality. These jobs contribute to local economic growth and stability, reinforcing the community's resilience to external shocks.

Strengthened Community Solidarity

Beyond its economic and health impacts, the association has become a hub for community cohesion. Each water kiosk serves as a gathering point where Reflect Saccos—welfare groups—support financial assistance, literacy training, and sustainability initiatives. These groups have strengthened the social fabric, fostering collective resilience and mutual support.

A Model for Inclusive Development

The Tharaka Women Water User's Association is a shining example of how collaborative partnerships can transform lives. From the steadfast support of Action Aid to the strategic interventions of the County Government of Kitui and USAID KIWASH, this success story illustrates the critical role of partnerships in overcoming complex challenges. It highlights how empowering women and involving communities in development planning can lead to sustainable, inclusive growth.

This story serves as an inspiration for other communities worldwide, showcasing the power of shared vision and collaboration. It underscores the importance of involving every stakeholder—governments, development partners, and communities—in creating solutions that are not only impactful but also enduring.

The journey of Tharaka is more than a story of water; it is a testament to the strength of community, the significance of empowering women, and the transformative impact of partnerships. It is a call to action for the global community to replicate this model of inclusive, sustainable development and to continue investing in the potential of people working together. As Tharaka demonstrates, when communities and partners unite, they don't just survive—they thrive.

Mwingi Level IV Hospital Launches Lifesaving Oxygen Generating Plant

In a monumental step towards improving healthcare in Kitui County, Mwingi Level IV Hospital now boasts a state-of-the-art oxygen generating plant, launched by H.E. Governor Dr. Julius Makau Malombe. This cutting-edge facility, donated by USAID in collaboration with JHPIEGO and Chemonics International, underscores the transformative power of partnerships in addressing critical healthcare needs. The plant is set to dramatically improve the delivery of essential medical services, saving lives and uplifting communities across the Mwingi region.

A Game-Changer for Healthcare Delivery

The oxygen plant, with a daily capacity to fill 10 cylinders of 50kg each, ensures a consistent and reliable supply of medical-grade oxygen, a critical resource for patient care. Previously, the hospital faced significant challenges, spending Ksh 300,000 monthly to procure and transport oxygen from Nairobi—a time-consuming and costly process. This plant now eliminates the logistical hurdles and financial strain, ensuring that oxygen is readily available on-site and for distribution to other healthcare facilities within the region.

This marks a significant step in reducing dependence on external oxygen suppliers and ensuring uninterrupted services, particularly in emergency and critical care scenarios.



Impact on Local Communities

The launch of the oxygen plant has far-reaching benefits for communities within Mwingi and beyond:

1. Saving Lives with Reliable Access to Oxygen

Oxygen is a lifesaving resource in treating critically ill patients, particularly those with respiratory illnesses such as pneumonia, asthma, and COVID-19, as well as during surgeries and childbirth complications. The plant ensures:

- Continuous oxygen supply to Mwingi Level IV Hospital and other facilities.
- Reduction in avoidable deaths due to delays in oxygen delivery from external sources.
- Improved outcomes for vulnerable groups such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly.

2. Reducing Costs for Healthcare Delivery

With the elimination of monthly oxygen procurement costs of Ksh 300,000, the hospital can redirect these funds toward other critical areas, such as purchasing essential medicines, improving infrastructure, and hiring additional healthcare staff.

3. Extending Services to Peripheral Facilities

The surplus oxygen produced will be distributed to healthcare facilities across the Mwingi region, strengthening their capacity to handle emergencies and provide quality care.

4. Enhancing Maternal and Neonatal Care

Mwingi Level IV Hospital is a referral center for maternal and child health services. The availability of consistent oxygen supply will significantly improve outcomes for high-risk pregnancies and neonatal care, particularly for preterm babies requiring respiratory support.

5. Strengthening Healthcare Resilience

With the capacity to produce oxygen on-site, the hospital is better equipped to respond to future health crises, such as pandemics or disease outbreaks, ensuring healthcare resilience in the region.

A Testament to the Power of Partnership

The oxygen plant is a shining example of what can be achieved through collaborative partnerships. USAID, in partnership with JHPIEGO and Chemonics International, provided not only the funding but also technical training for hospital staff to ensure the plant's efficient operation and maintenance. This capacity-building ensures the plant's sustainability and long-term impact.

Governor Dr. Julius Malombe lauded these partnerships, emphasizing that sustainable healthcare solutions require the combined efforts of government, development partners, and local communities. "This oxygen plant is more than a machine—it is a symbol of hope and a testament to what we can achieve when we work together," said the Governor during the launch.

The Role of Local Leadership

Local leadership has been pivotal in this success story. Hon. Bernard Munyasya Mwangangi, Chair of the County Assembly Committee on Health and Sanitation, commended Governor Malombe for his vision in prioritizing healthcare. He also called for further investment in expanding the hospital's infrastructure, particularly the establishment of a childcare and maternity wing to complement the oxygen plant's capabilities.

Dr. Evans Mumo, the Medical Superintendent of Mwingi Level IV Hospital, expressed gratitude for the plant, noting, "This development not only reduces costs but also strengthens our ability to provide timely care to those in need. We are deeply thankful to USAID for their continued support and for training our technical staff."

Reinforcing Kitui County's Healthcare System

The installation of the oxygen plant at Mwingi Level IV Hospital marks the second such facility in Kitui County, following the installation of a similar plant at Kitui County Referral Hospital in Kitui Town. Together, these facilities form the backbone of the county's oxygen supply chain, ensuring equitable access to this vital resource.

Key Figures and Facts

- Capacity: Fills 10 cylinders (50kg each) daily.



- Cost Savings: Reduces hospital expenses by Ksh 300,000 monthly.
- Beneficiaries: Over 200,000 residents across Mwingi region, including remote areas.
- Technical Support: Training provided for local staff to operate and maintain the plant.

A Model for Future Collaborations

This achievement serves as a blueprint for other counties and regions, demonstrating how partnerships between governments and development partners can yield impactful and sustainable solutions. The success of the oxygen plant highlights the importance of investing in infrastructure, capacity building, and community-driven healthcare solutions to address systemic challenges.

Through continued collaboration, the Mwingi region is well on its way to achieving better health outcomes, fostering resilience, and setting an example for holistic healthcare transformation. This milestone reminds us that with aligned goals and shared resources, we can create a healthier and more equitable future for all.

Resilience Knowledge Fair: Learning, Networking and Building Synergies

There is an African proverb that says that 'Whoever does not visit their neighbor assumes that his/her mother is exclusively the best cook'. Giving it a wider and deeper analysis, this means that whoever does not seek knowledge, whoever does not network, has a very narrow and limited world view.

This becomes the essence of Resilience Knowledge Fairs especially in the counties and in the spirit of devolution. Recently in Kitui, it was not initially easy to have the stakeholders understand what a 'Resilience Knowledge Fair' is. Just like the event, this term was new to many.

The inaugural Kitui County Knowledge Fair could not have come at a better time. The county is among those considered Arid and Semi Arid Lands (ASALs) and was recently affected by prolonged drought which is said to have been worse in the last four decades. So much that was done during the fair, is being done and needs to be done towards building resilience among communities.

Under the theme 'Strengthening community learning to increase adaptive capacity to shocks and stresses', the one-day event brought together 38 exhibitors drawn from development world- (both USAID and non-USAID-supported programs), finance, education, health, agriculture, environment, business among others. It was graced by close to 471 participants drawn from various sectors and regions within Kitui. The Knowledge Fair is a joint initiative by UDAID-RLA and County Government of Kitui.

Kitui County Commissioner Mr. Erastus Mbui took time to educate communities on need to venture into large scale livestock keeping as opposed to largely depending on crop farming.

Mr. Mbui noted that farmers often plant crops such as maize during the rainy season but the crop withers and dies due to lack of ample rains.

When crops wither, he added, pastoralists from neighboring counties get a field day, grazing their livestock freely in farms within Kitui. This, sometimes poses a threat to security as farmers guard their crops while pastoralists focus on pasture for livestock.

"Let us read between the lines, diversify and align our economic activities with climate change. Instead of planting crops, we can keep livestock as this can earn us



better income to sustain our households' livelihoods," said Mr. Mbui, adding that livestock sector is a major foreign exchange earner.

The county knowledge and learning fair provided an opportunity for the exhibitors to showcase their work and a chance for the county leadership to interact with all partners and understand their work. There were also opportunities for networking and business among attendants.

The county commissioner urged youth to be innovative and engage in value addition and recycling. He challenged the to learn from an exhibitor who displayed body cream made from bee products and another who makes flower vases from recycled towels.

Kitui County Deputy Governor, Augustine Wambua urged development partners, private sector and government to educate communities on climate change and its effects.

This way, he noted, they would be able to make relevant actions that are geared towards adaptation and resilience. He called on communities to grow adoptive seeds which are able to withstand erratic weather patterns and are resistant to pests and diseases.



Among key exhibitors was an initiative by USAID-KCDMS which is producing and commercializing certified seeds, among other innovative interventions. Youths too showcased skills like fashion design, recycling old towels to make flower vases, manufacture of body lotion from bee products, fitness among others. The fair also provided an opportunity for health check up, thanks to medical institutions who graced the event.

For this county, this was just the beginning that opens the way to bigger, more innovative knowledge fairs in the years ahead. Kitui becomes the fourth county to hold a Resilience Knowledge Fair after Garissa, Taita Taveta and Samburu.

Taita Taveta County

A Land of Natural Wealth and Unique Challenges

Nestled in Kenya's coastal region, Taita Taveta County covers 17,083 square kilometers, with over 60% of its landmass forming part of the famous Tsavo National Park. This unique setting gives the county a diverse landscape, from the low-lying arid plains to the lush highlands of the Taita Hills, where the cool climate supports thriving agricultural activities.

Agriculture, livestock keeping, and gemstone mining are the county's main economic activities, capitalizing on its rich natural resources. The fertile highlands produce a range of crops, while the county is also known for its gemstone extraction, attracting local and international interest in its mining sector.

However, Taita Taveta also faces significant challenges. Water scarcity is a constant issue, particularly in the arid lowlands where access to clean water is limited. Infrastructure development lags behind, impacting both the movement of goods and accessibility to essential services. Despite these obstacles, Taita Taveta remains a region of potential, with ongoing efforts to address its water needs, improve infrastructure, and unlock sustainable growth across its diverse landscapes.



Breaking Barriers in HIV Care: A Collaborative Model at Moi Referral Hospital

In Taita Taveta County, collaboration has proven essential in tackling healthcare challenges, particularly in HIV prevention and support. Since 2020, the Joint Work Plan (JWP) has fostered a web of partnerships that have reshaped healthcare delivery and HIV services in the county, positioning it as a model for collaborative healthcare. Key partnerships with USAID Stawisha Pwani and other organizations have driven significant advancements at the Moi Referral Hospital, creating a safer, more supportive environment for those living with HIV.

A New Approach to Comprehensive HIV Care

In partnership with the Taita Taveta County Health Department, USAID Stawisha Pwani has strengthened service delivery through the Comprehensive Care Clinic (CCC) and the mother and child Clinic. These clinics now provide essential support, including HIV and tuberculosis (TB) testing, prevention, and treatment services, which have greatly reduced the spread of these infections. The CCC offers a holistic range of services, such as:

- **Integrated HIV and TB Care:** Patients can receive dual testing, immediate initiation of treatment, and contact tracing, helping to reduce infection rates.
- **Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Counseling and Support:** Providing a safe space for victims, encouraging them to access health and social services.
- **HIV Prevention Services:** Access to pre-exposure (PrEP) and post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) as well as free distribution of male and female condoms.

At both clinics, USAID Stawisha Pwani supports the salaries of counselors and funds their travel for outreach, providing medicine, testing kits, and condoms to strengthen community engagement and support for those living with HIV.

The Role of Mentor Mothers in Peer Support and Community Health

The partnership has introduced Mentor Mothers at the mother and Child Clinic, who play a unique role as former patients with undetectable viral loads. These mothers provide counseling to HIV-positive expectant and new mothers, helping them understand effective practices for preventing mother-to-child transmission. Beyond counseling, Mentor Mothers follow up with mothers in the community, ensuring that HIV-positive children take their antiretrovirals (ARVs) daily.

The mentorship program has become an anchor of the community's health response, with Mentor Mothers supporting discordant couples, helping individuals disclose their status safely, and addressing social issues like food insecurity. Recognizing the emotional toll, USAID Stawisha Pwani provides psychosocial support to Mentor Mothers and counselors, ensuring they are equipped to offer sustainable, compassionate care.

The Broader Collaborative Impact of JWP: A Shift in Healthcare Transformation

Through strategic collaborations, including with Blue Cross, Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS), Amref/USAID UAT, and USAID Hero, the JWP has built an interconnected support system. By uniting departments across health, nutrition, agriculture, and WASH, the county has developed comprehensive solutions that strengthen preventive healthcare, reduce curative demands, and save valuable resources. For instance, collaboration between Blue Cross and USAID Stawisha Pwani in sample testing logistics led to a 30% cost savings and improved service coverage by adding more riders and laboratory capacity.

Strengthening Capacity and Reducing Resource Duplication

JWP's collaborative approach has significantly strengthened local health systems by addressing budget deficits and capacity gaps. Training for Community Health Assistants (CHAs) and Community Health Promoters (CHPs) has empowered local health workers with essential skills, enhancing the quality of healthcare delivery across the county. Through this collaboration, staff capacity has grown, and supervision and monitoring efforts have improved, ensuring that health programs are efficiently managed and evaluated for impact.

Profound Impact and e-Health Innovations

The impact of the JWP's collaborative approach in Taita Taveta's health sector has been profound. Support for Mentor Mothers has established a strong peer network that connects new mothers with vital resources and guidance. Support groups for young mothers under 24 provide an empowering space for those who often feel isolated. Targeted mentorship for individuals with high viral loads has led to better management practices, while community sensitization on HIV testing has improved public health awareness.

The integration of e-Health Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) further highlights the county's forward-thinking approach. The adoption of WebADT, a digital dispensing tool, allows for real-time tracking of patient care and medication, enhancing data collection and analysis in the county's health system. This innovation has streamlined operations and improved patient outcomes, making Taita Taveta a model for other regions.

A Path Forward Through Partnership

The transformative partnerships fostered through JWP have created a resilient health system in Taita Taveta, demonstrating how strategic collaboration can lead to lasting improvements in healthcare. Through shared commitment, these partnerships have paved the way for sustainable progress, showing how the strengths of diverse organizations can converge to achieve better health outcomes. With the JWP platform, Taita Taveta continues to advance toward a brighter future, one where healthcare is accessible, comprehensive, and transformative for all.

Partners Transforming Maternal Health at Moi Referral, Taita Taveta County



Blue Cross and USAID Stawisha Pwani

delivers samples for testing resulting in a remarkable 30% savings.



USAID Stawisha Pwani

provides psycho-social support to all the Mentor Mothers and counsellors at all hospitals in Taita Taveta - as well as salaries at the CCC for the counsellors, one PMTC Nurse and two Mentor Mothers



Mwaroko-lyomboni-Sinai Water Project: Transforming Water Access through Collaborative Efforts

In Taveta's Chawia Ward, where residents once walked tens of kilometers for water, the Mwaroko-lyomboni-Sinai Water Project has brought a life-changing solution. This project, a joint initiative by the County Government and the Kenya Red Cross Society (KCRS), has addressed long-standing water scarcity issues by sinking a borehole, constructing water tanks, rehabilitating pipelines, and restoring the Inyombo intake. The result is a sustainable water system that serves thousands, highlighting the power of collaboration and community-driven success.

Partnerships Drive Long-Term Success

The project layered on earlier efforts by organizations such as TAVEVO Water and Sewerage Company Ltd. and SNV, which previously built water systems across Taveta. By integrating their work and expanding with new tanks and pipes, this project not only increased access but demonstrated how public participation can enhance sustainability. Community members played a vital role, contributing land, participating in planning, and committing to maintaining the system. This sense of ownership became crucial in tackling initial challenges, such as vandalism, fostering a united effort toward project success.

The Impact of JWP in Enhancing Water Sector Collaboration

The Joint Work Plan (JWP) brought together diverse stakeholders in the water sector, including USAID STAWI, ActionAid, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), the State Department of Agriculture (KCEP-CRAL), STAWI Mashinani (MAZIDO), FAO, Wildlife Works, and Nature Kenya. Through JWP, the project avoided duplication and improved coordination between the water department and other key players.

These partnerships supported the creation of water catchment management plans through Water Resource Users Associations (WRUAs), vital for sustaining water resources. Collaboration with the county agriculture department trained 3,200 farmers on conservation agriculture techniques to protect water resources and develop irrigation channels. The Special Programs Department launched a WASH forum and introduced a data management information system (MIS) to improve resource management and flood mitigation.

A joint implementation team, consisting of government officials and partners, was established to oversee the project, conducting regular monitoring and inspections to ensure successful outcomes. Additionally, a community management committee was formed to promote community ownership and active involvement in the project's progress.

Empowering Youth and Creating Employment Opportunities

The project not only improved water access but also created employment opportunities. Youth involvement, facilitated through the JWP, saw young people participating in irrigation activities that boosted household incomes. Additionally, some received training as plumbers, providing them with valuable skills to maintain the water system, enhancing both employment and project sustainability.

The uptake of technology in water access points, including automated systems for tracking water usage, has increased community awareness and improved service delivery. With more reliable access to clean water, Taveta residents now experience improved sanitation, reduced waterborne illnesses, and a generally better quality of life.

Building a Sustainable Future through Collaboration

Through collaboration, the Mwaroko-lyomboni-Sinai Water Project has transformed water access in Taveta, empowering communities, fostering youth employment, and creating a sense of ownership. The project's success highlights the potential of joint initiatives in solving pressing issues, paving the way for sustainable water management in Taveta and beyond.

Driving the Dairy Agenda Daily: The Story of Tagho Dairy Cooperative's Transformation

Tagho Dairy Cooperative began with a simple goal: to bring together local farmers for milk aggregation, allowing them to enjoy economies of scale and secure a stable income. Originally set up through national government initiatives, the cooperative received additional support from the county government to address the growing needs of the local dairy community. However, despite its steady operations, the cooperative faced numerous challenges that limited its profitability.

Profitable Partnerships Powering Success

A turning point came when USAID's Kenya Crops and Dairy Market Systems (KCDMS) program partnered with Tagho Dairy Cooperative to help overcome these challenges. This partnership brought invaluable support:

- **Capacity Building:** USAID KCDMS provided training for both cooperative members and board members, strengthening governance and operational management.
- **Infrastructure and Technology:** USAID KCDMS equipped the cooperative with coolers, chillers, and a digital weighing scale, improving milk storage and processing. An ICT system was also installed to automatically record each farmer's milk delivery and send updates via SMS, ensuring transparency and trust. Additionally, motorbikes were provided for efficient milk collection, and milk-measuring and testing equipment was made available both on the field and at the main depot.
- **Field Officer Training:** Cooperative field officers were trained on modern livestock management practices, which they then passed on to farmers, helping increase both the quality and quantity of milk delivered.

The partnership extended to livestock vaccinations and the establishment of demo farms, which allowed farmers to access hands-on, practical training in improved dairy practices. These initiatives have not only increased yields but also attracted new members, expanding the cooperative's reach.

Building Resilience through Collaboration

Other key partnerships have enriched the cooperative's services:

- KCSAP supported value addition by helping Tagho Dairy produce yoghurt and fermented milk (mala), diversifying the cooperative's product offerings.
- FAO contributed to sustainable farming practices by building hay barns, allowing farmers to store grass during harvest season for use during dry spells.
- Brookside Kenya facilitated breed improvement training through Mavuno Cooperative Society, and AI services were provided with support from ACDSAP, improving livestock genetics and overall milk productivity.

Reflecting on Key Achievements

These collaborative efforts have transformed Tagho Dairy Cooperative. The number of farmers served has increased from 183 to 492, thanks to improved services, operational efficiency, and competitive pricing. Members benefit from selling milk at a fixed price, insulated from the typical fluctuations in demand and supply, and can access inputs like medication, AI, and supplements on credit against future milk deliveries.

The cooperative now markets its fresh milk and value-added products, such as yoghurt and maziwa mala, through its outlets in Wundanyi, Mwatate, and Voi. Additionally, it supplies bulk buyers in Mombasa, Voi, and local schools, expanding its customer base and revenue streams.

Uniting Stakeholders Through the JWP Process

The Joint Work Plan (JWP) process has been instrumental in fostering collaboration among stakeholders. By facilitating a clear understanding of each partner's role, JWP has helped avoid duplication, build synergies, and amplify impact. Bringing together county government officers, partners, and the community, JWP supports strategic, co-designed development initiatives that are implemented and monitored collaboratively.

Through these partnerships and the transformative power of collaboration, Tagho Dairy Cooperative has become a model for community-driven agricultural growth, empowering farmers, stabilizing incomes, and creating opportunities for the local dairy industry.

JWP SUCCESS STORIES - NATIONAL LEVEL

Building Resilience through Collective Learning

Reflections and Experiences from the USAID PREG Cross County Knowledge Exchange Activity in Kenya

Background and Introduction

Kenya's 23 counties in the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) cover 89% of the country and support 38% of the population. ASAL counties have continued to experience sporadic rainfall, recurrent shocks of drought, floods, and human conflict.

To address these challenges, USAID is investing more than \$500 million in ASAL counties in Kenya to increase resilience and economic growth among pastoralist communities to increase adaptability, reduce risk, and improve social and economic conditions to target causes of vulnerability.

The USAID Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) network in Kenya brings together humanitarian and development partners to build resilience and accelerate economic growth among the vulnerable pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya. The PREG network is operational in six ASAL counties including Isiolo, Garissa, Turkana, Marsabit, Samburu, and Wajir.

The network unites multiple USAID program implementing partners working with the National Government, the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), County Governments, the private sector, and local communities to coordinate resilience and economic growth activities. The coordination and integration of complementary humanitarian and development assistance activities allow for USAID and partners to adjust as communities increase resilience over time and enable partners to leverage knowledge and resources.

The USAID PREG Cross County Exchange Activity

Strategic economic growth and development have the power to revitalize local communities, attract investments, build wealth, and support long-term sustainability. One of the crucial steps to achieving this goal is through continuous learning and knowledge exchange for adaptive management in program implementation. These crucial steps serve as pillars to leverage resources, build partnerships, advance the principles of equity, and strengthen systems to address local and global threats like climate change. It is against this backdrop that the USAID PREG Cross-County Knowledge Exchange activity was organized from January 28th to February 2nd, 2024.



USAID DEFINES RESILIENCE AS "THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE, HOUSEHOLDS, COMMUNITIES, COUNTRIES, AND SYSTEMS TO MITIGATE, ADAPT TO, AND RECOVER FROM SHOCKS AND STRESSES IN A MANNER THAT REDUCES CHRONIC VULNERABILITY AND FACILITATES INCLUSIVE GROWTH."

The activity targeted the USAID-funded programs that are implemented in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit Counties, thus fostering a dynamic knowledge-sharing platform among multilateral partners.

The knowledge exchange and learning activity was aimed at achieving the following objectives;

- To reflect on effective and innovative approaches that USAID PREG partners are implementing to build the resilience of local communities.
- To facilitate uptake of lessons, experiences, and good practices emerging from USAID PREG partners, government, and other private sector investments that promote HDP coherence.
- To consult with stakeholders, exchange ideas, and foster collaboration between individuals, teams, and institutions for replication and scaling up sustainable resilience interventions.
- To increase participants' awareness and understanding of the USAID PREG network and its coordination approaches to develop new perspectives individually and collectively.

Themed “Building Community Resilience through cross-county experiential Learning and deepening integration for sustainable development in the ASALs”, the activity served as a nexus for collaboration, bringing together a diverse cohort of 267 participants.

The participants were drawn from various organizations, including USAID bilateral missions, the National Government-State Department of ASALs and Livestock, the Council of Governors (CoG), the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), IGAD, USAID implementing partners from Kenya, Uganda, Somalia, and Ethiopia, as well as Local Development Organizations (LDOs).

The activity began with an inaugural conference held at El-Boran in Isiolo County, officiated by Hon. Dr. James Lowasa, the Deputy Governor of Isiolo County. This set the stage for the upcoming days by outlining the learning objectives for participants, an in-depth review of the field sites' itinerary, and the creation of five small groups to enhance experiential learning processes in the field. The sites to be visited were selected at the County PREG leadership level based on criteria aimed at showcasing the Sequencing, Layering, and Integration (SLI) of USAID

IP programs in collaboration with County Governments and local communities. Each of the five groups comprised USAID Mission representatives, USAID implementing partners (IPs), county government officials, private sector players, and local development organizations. Each group was assigned a dedicated learning capture rapporteur, and video/photographer to document insights.

Participants embarked on the site visits in Isiolo County after the first-day conference and explored various locations, including the Isiolo livestock market, Isiolo abattoir, Rapsu irrigation scheme, Isiolo County government offices, the Walqabana milk cooperative, Invems, Daaba water supply, Increded, and Mchuro-Garbatula. These visits provided valuable opportunities for firsthand learning about the graduation model and its implementation approach.

On the second day, participants embarked on visits to key sites in Samburu County, including the Ngilai Health Center, a mother-to-mother group, Ngilai farm, Ngilai land reclamation and rehabilitation initiatives, the Northern Rangeland Trust conservation site, Lolkuniani Health and water projects, a sand dam, Suari Model Health Center, Lukwasi water facility, and Samburu County government offices. These visits facilitated discussions on collaboration and community engagement in development initiatives.

To advance the experiential learning journey, on the third day, participants visited sites in Marsabit County, including Merille Health Facility and livestock market, and the Marsabit County government offices where the discussion was themed around policy frameworks in programming. Additionally, visits to various food production sites, including Karare Ujuzi Manyattani, Bubisa WASH, and health facilities, provided valuable insights.

The activity reached its pinnacle with a full-day learning conference in Marsabit on Thursday 1st February 2024, the final day, presided over by H.E. Solomon Gubo, Deputy Governor of Marsabit County. Through panel discussions, group work sessions, and plenary discussions, participants shared the wealth of knowledge accumulated over the three days of field visits. This collaborative exchange fostered an insightful conclusion to the knowledge-sharing activity.



Key learnings from the field site visits

- County Government buy-in and Community Ownership are critical for the sustainability of development interventions:** from the PREG program engagements, it was evident that the sustainability of the community interventions and programs depends on both the County Government's involvement and ownership by the local communities. Experiences from the community rangeland management processes established that the sustainability of the USAID interventions at the community level depends on finding innovative and inclusive ways to engage the local people, by increasing their capacity to participate in the policy-making processes to influence their future. While the program sites visited had their respective USAID implementing partners, it was the County Government representatives and community members who took the lead in sharing their daily experiences with participants; a testament to County Government buy-in and community ownership of these interventions. The use of existing community structures such as Ward Planning Development Committees at the Rapsu Irrigation scheme and the Isiolo Livestock Market, utilization of water management committees and market cooperative groups to negotiate producer prices proved effective in ensuring that engagement activities take place in both formal and informal settings to get wider feedback and input into the County Development Integrated Plans (CIDPs) for policy-making process.
- Use of innovative digital technologies and creative approaches offers tremendous opportunity to build strong social resilience for sustainability:** Most of the PREG programs demonstrated solid evidence of new community-centered innovative approaches using

technologies to have an impact on sustainability, inclusiveness, and resilience. Experiences on the cash transfer programs in the Garbatulla region of Isiolo County revealed that harnessing digital systems, particularly mobile money, holds immense potential to significantly lower operational expenses and improve access to savings mechanisms. In the Bubisa water facility in Marsabit County, scientific innovations like reverse osmosis for the purification of saline underground water, and utilization of data dashboards to trace daily sales offer immense opportunities for engaging with communities, cutting off water cartels by enhancing transparency, and accelerating the interaction between the people and the county government, and influencing the decision-making process more effectively.

THE USAID PREG EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITY PROVIDED PARTICIPANTS WHO WORK ACROSS HUMANITARIAN AID, DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE, PEACE-BUILDING EFFORTS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, TO LEARN A GREAT DEAL BY LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LEADERS AS THEY REFLECT ON THE IMMEDIATE EFFECTS AND LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF THE DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS EFFORTS.

- Joint planning is a useful tool for county-level programming.** We live in a world of increasing frequency and complexity of risk, where shocks and long-term stresses threaten development gains and overall human well-being and no single organization can provide all the solutions. The PREG network, recognizing the importance of collaboration in finding and implementing solutions to complex problems, has established, and advanced the Joint Work Planning collaborative approach to development. JWP explores new ways of thinking about how County governments, stakeholders, communities, and USAID implementing partners can work together.
- Private Sector and Local Development Organization engagement are key to success:** PREG partners demonstrated that collaboration with the private sector actors who understand local contexts enabled innovation and creative approaches like the automation of the community water kiosks and the provision of solar water pumps. Such innovations and collaborations expanded the community reach of those who can access essential services thus the need for partners to continually provide an enabling environment for the private sector collaborations to thrive.
- The evolution of access to finance initiatives in Northern Kenya** has propelled the region along the investment spectrum, transitioning from reliance on humanitarian aid to embracing impact investing. This shift has involved USAID's provision of capital to financial institutions, enabling them to extend loans to micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises across counties within Kenya's Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) region. Experiences from recipients of the USAID Impact for Northern Kenya Fund (INK fund) outlined the creation of safer business opportunities for sustainable development in the region.
- A market systems approach has the potential to strengthen resilience by harnessing business models and market dynamics to address development and humanitarian challenges on a broad scale.** The management of the Isiolo and Merille livestock markets by PREG partners exemplifies the application of market-based strategies aimed at enhancing the resilience of local communities. These strategies include: 1) Facilitating livestock co-management dynamics through partnerships with community members and livestock market associations; 2) Promoting financial inclusion opportunities by establishing livestock market cooperatives and village savings and loans associations for farmers and traders; 3) Encouraging the diversification of community livelihoods by fostering other value chains within the markets, such as beekeeping, poultry, and camel milk and finally 4) supporting the adoption of innovative climate change and drought risk management technologies, such as hydroponics.
- Gender mainstreaming and inclusion of women and youth is key to success:** In most of the sites visited, there was a notable increase in women, youth, and persons living with disabilities (PWD) either taking the lead or playing a significant role in the management of community interventions. In Karare village-Marsabit County, Antonella Lekupano demonstrated the strength of a woman-led household farm that utilizes solar water pumps and rain harvesting technologies for sustainability. At the Ujuji Manyattani site in Marsabit County, it was evident that youth engagement is especially essential for not only income generation but also succession planning in rural communities. In pastoralist communities in Samburu County and within Daaba and Garbatulla groups visited in Isiolo County, PREG partners demonstrated the application of gender-intentional approaches by integrating women's asset building with asset protection measures. Testimonials from the women groups pointed to the findings that partners not only invested in building assets but also implemented measures like insurance or savings interventions through the Savings and Internal Lending Communities (SILC) programs in empowering the women to safeguard their assets over the long term.
- The importance of a backbone facilitator organization in promoting collective learning among stakeholders.** Throughout the learning week, participants consistently recognized the pivotal role of a backbone facilitator organization in fostering a collective learning experience among the PREG stakeholders. Amidst the challenges of meeting programmatic mandates and contractual obligations, carving out intentional time for cross-partner collaboration can be daunting for the USAID implementing partners and government representatives. Thus, the presence of a backbone support organization, exemplified by the PREG Coordination mechanism in this instance, is essential. With deliberate planning, structure, and resources, such an entity facilitates stakeholders to convene and share experiences, fostering experiential learning across the region. In this knowledge exchange activity, the USAID-Resilience Learning Activity, overseeing the PREG network, played a pivotal role in mobilizing, coordinating, and facilitating the learning process.

Opportunities identified

- There is a need for continued support to local leaders in their work and to build the capacity of communities to engage and own the development interventions.
- Incentivizing communities with income-generating activities. This could include additional training in skills such as weaving and handicrafts to diversify income sources.
- Emphasis should be placed on evidence-based programming to attract public-private partnerships. Private sector actors are critical in designing, building financing, and operating community infrastructure facilities provided by the public sector for improved service delivery. The actors also support capital mobilization given the inadequate funding from donors and governments and thus their involvement can speed up the delivery of public services.
- The Samburu rangeland and pasture restoration site exemplifies a sustainable grazing management approach, effectively addressing community conflicts stemming from poorly coordinated livestock grazing practices. It was evident that by implementing community by-laws that regulate the frequency, duration, intensity, and timing of livestock grazing, healthy rangeland ecosystems are maintained. While significant progress has been made, there exists an opportunity to further enhance rangeland conditions and increase the availability of quality forage through initiatives such as seed harvesting, storage, and selling. These improvements not only contribute to enhanced livestock health but also offer additional income sources for rangeland members to withstand droughts. Consequently, this strengthens the resilience of pastoral rangeland systems, aids communities in adapting to climate change, and enriches livestock-based livelihoods.
- Increased adoption of climate-smart agricultural technologies and practices that enhance productivity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and contribute to food security. The increase in food production has been linked to agricultural expansion, and unsustainable use of land and resources, leading to an increase in emissions. PREG partners can thus support Climate-smart agriculture interventions to offer farmers in substantial benefits in terms of increased productivity and income, better risk management, and improved resilience to climate change.
- Shifting from nutrition-specific interventions, such as prenatal care and behavioral interventions targeting women's diet and child feeding practices, to more nutrition-sensitive interventions is essential. The mother-to-mother groups in Ngilai in Samburu County and Daaba in Isiolo articulated their understanding of food groups and exclusive breastfeeding. There is a need to focus on diversification in the production of vegetables for use at the household level and incorporate extension officers for capacity building on good agricultural practices. These interventions focus on broader factors that influence nutrition outcomes, including livelihood diversification, improved access to safe drinking water, and the empowerment of adolescent girls and women. By addressing these underlying determinants, nutrition-sensitive interventions have the potential to create sustainable improvements in nutrition outcomes and overall well-being.
- Supporting the diffusion of information through documentation of indigenous community knowledge. Local individuals and communities, particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities, and indigenous peoples, play pivotal roles as producers of knowledge for resilience evidence. At the Rapsu Irrigation scheme, local farmers showcased their ingenuity by developing a method to distinguish between male and female pawpaw seeds through a localized experiment using water in a bucket. By gently agitating the seeds, they observed that the female seeds would settle at the bottom while the male seeds would float, demonstrating their ability to self-determine and implement innovative solutions. Following their discovery, local farmers proceeded to utilize this method for seed propagation and multiplication purposes. By employing the technique to distinguish between male and female pawpaw seeds, they could effectively manage their seed stocks and optimize their agricultural practices for improved yields and sustainability. The legacy of such knowledge and skills can help the present generation fight against environmental and climatic stresses. It is imperative to acknowledge the local communities' contributions and provide them with the necessary recognition and support in documenting such indigenous knowledge represented through profound wisdom, skills, and innovative practices cultivated by communities across generations in fostering resilience.

In conclusion, the learning and knowledge exchange activity revealed the extensive scope of resilience-building interventions across Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties. It showcased the stakeholders' utilization of various approaches and the collaboration with different communities to foster resilience.

How Kenya's Maarifa Centre is Improving Decision Making & Service Delivery to Stakeholders

Introduction

The Council of Governors (CoG) is an intergovernmental relations body established by Section 19 of the Intergovernmental Relations Act (IGRA) 2012. One of its mandates is to be a forum for the sharing of information on the performance of the Counties in the execution of their functions with the objective of learning and promoting best practices, and where necessary, initiating preventive or corrective action.

Arising from this statutory mandate, CoG established the Maarifa Centre ("Knowledge Centre") as "Kenya's Premier Devolution Knowledge Sharing and Learning Platform for effective Governance and Service Delivery". The online platform serves as the primary knowledge repository and "go-to place" for anybody interested in quick access to Kenya's devolution progress. It serves as an important national platform that facilitates the exchange of ideas, experiences, and knowledge among counties to enhance learning for improved socio-economic empowerment. For the Maarifa Centre to effectively manage this knowledge and ensure experiences and lessons learned are systematically captured and shared across the eco-system, a Knowledge Sharing System (KSS) is required to resourcefully capture, share, and manage critical learnings.

USAID-CoG (Maarifa Centre) Collaboration

Kenya's Vision 2030 envisages a knowledge-based economy for sustainable growth and prosperity. With County Governments delivering the most essential services, it is important for Counties to continually explore sustainable and resilient solutions for efficient and effective service delivery. Institutionalization of Knowledge Management (KM) is therefore pivotal for all County Departments and entities since it has the capacity to contribute towards efficient use of resources, improved performance, and sustained productivity.

The Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) is a five-year initiative funded by USAID to support regional and country-level institutions to conduct resilience learning

activities in the Horn of Africa (HoA). In Kenya, USAID, under two coordination mechanisms, the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and the Southeastern Kenya (SEK), collaborates with local institutions and leaders, national governments, regional actors, and implementing partners to: (1) increase analytic capacity for local and host country organizations: (2) facilitate learning for adaptive management by local and host country organizations: (3) improve knowledge management and strategic communication for local and host country organizations and (4) establish and strengthen systems and networks for CLA.

In line with the third objective, USAID collaborated with the Council of Governors Maarifa Centre team to redesign the Maarifa Centre, based on the experiences and lessons learned in the last years of implementing devolution and to promote cross- County learning.

Why redesign

To promote better alignment with the current needs and goals of the County governments. The advancement in technological innovations and the lessons learned from the onset of devolution in Kenya necessitated the redesign process of the Maarifa Centre to ensure the website can handle current needs and goals, while providing the scalability to accommodate the next phase of information technology evolution.

Advanced security-Cyber security threats are a major risk for all websites. The website redesign provided an opportunity to fix any security errors on the existing website, while utilizing the most advanced security practices to prevent future threats.

Gaps of the old platform

- Not user friendly
- Poorly structured information architecture
- Difficult to update for content managers.
- Not mobile friendly
- Difficult to maintain as a custom Content Management System.
- Not disability friendly
- Non-effective search functionality

The redesigned platform - What is new?

The redesigned Maarifa Centre e-platform (<https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/>) promotes interaction and collaboration among key users of the site.

- It is a **trendy and user-friendly website** with a strong visual appeal.
- The website embodies CoG's wide and forward-looking mandate and has **robust Content Management System (CMS) and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) modules** that can effectively manage large amounts of data and an array of file types, including embedded videos, audio, photo formats, HTML, and PDF.
- The website is **rich with resources for consumption by stakeholders** and brings a wealth of history and latest information from different sectors: Tourism, Trade, Agriculture, Health, Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), Education among others.
- **Enhanced navigation:** The information is categorized as latest updates, success stories, comprehensive compendiums, reports among others. Also included is credible data which reflect real impact across counties and sectors.

Additionally, it is endowed with numerous stories of change objectively told to give the real pictures of counties across the country.

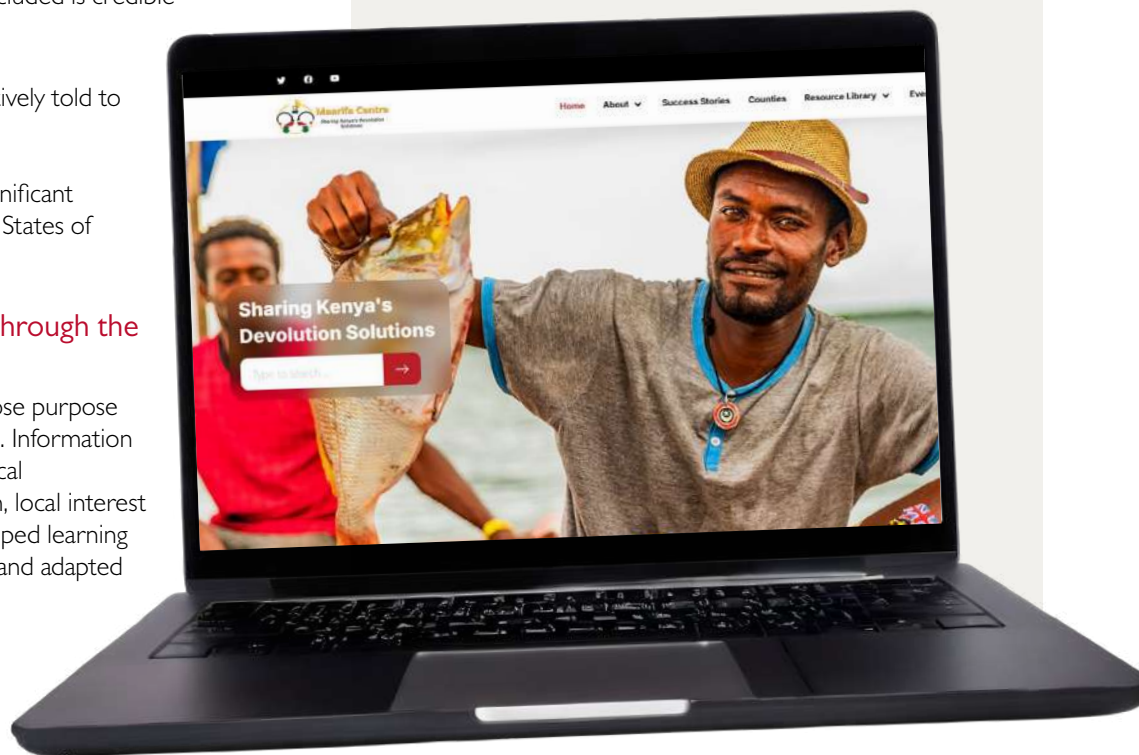
Tracking the numbers: Revamping the website has led to a significant rise in monthly visits by 25%, primarily from Kenya and the United States of America.

How peer to peer cross-county learning is facilitated through the Maarifa Centre

The Maarifa Centre convenes peer-to-peer learning initiatives whose purpose is to promote the exchange of knowledge on various sector issues. Information and knowledge flowing across the Maarifa Centre is tailored for local dissemination to marginalized groups in a way that fosters inclusion, local interest and good understanding of local issues. Below are examples of looped learning environment where practical local knowledge is shared, discussed and adapted for differing contexts across the counties.

The website is easily accessible and simple enough for convenient access from different gadgets like mobile phones and computers. This ensures that many potential users have convenience of access even if they do not have highly sophisticated gadgets, and this is the gist of devolution in the sense of access to information for all.

James Muchiri, CoG's Head of ICT.



Case 1: Lessons from Maarifa Centre Compendium ignites counties interest in the uptake of Facility Improvement Financing

The Maarifa Centre, with support from USAID-PEPFAR funded Amref initiative, held a series of peer-to-peer workshops in Kisumu, Makueni and Nakuru Counties, which focused on the development and operationalization of Facility Improvement Financing (FIF) and Community Health Services (CHS). These workshops served as valuable platforms for sharing knowledge and building capacity. County stakeholders were able to exchange insights. Consequently, this led to stakeholders' development of the FIF model law and the compilation of best practices in the FIF/CHS compendium. The compendium was then uploaded on the Maarifa Centre online platform as a knowledge product to facilitate learning not only within the 47 Kenyan counties, but across the globe, as it serves as Kenya's premier devolution knowledge sharing and learning platform for effective governance and service delivery. As a result of the successful peer-to-peer interactions, several Counties, including Bomet, Meru, Wajir, Garissa, Lamu, Nyamira, and Homa Bay, have initiated the development of their FIF programs. Counties that have already implemented FIF like Homa Bay and Nakuru have reported significant improvements in service delivery.

Case 2: Strengthening NCIC-County linkages to promote learning on Peace Initiatives

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) was inspired by a story on West Pokot County peace border schools that was covered on the Maarifa Centre platform <https://maarifa.cog.go.ke/county-initiatives/west-pokot-peace-border-schools> highlighting a story of vulnerable children facing challenges in accessing quality education due to insecurity, cattle rustling and inter-ethnic conflicts. As a result, the NCIC team paid a visit to the Maarifa Centre with the primary aim of strengthening its linkages with the County governments through the Maarifa Centre coordination mechanism to get more peace and cohesion related updates and best practices from the local communities in the Counties. The team also explored ways of improving its internal knowledge management processes. This visit subsequently initiated a platform for both institutions to consider signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for collaboration in various areas, including documentation of success stories related to cohesion, mutual interlinkage of their websites, and dissemination of valuable peace-related devolution knowledge assets through the Maarifa Centre platform.

Case 3: Investing in Inter-County Peer Learning as a Strategy for Institutional Reform

In December 2022, the Maarifa Centre team, with funding support from the Effective Institutions Platform (EIP)- organized of a forum on investing in Inter-County Peer Learning. This activity brought together representatives from Isiolo, Kisumu, Tana River and Embu Counties to showcase their reforms that focused on addressing the challenges of youth unemployment and on the digitisation and improvement of community healthcare systems.

During the sessions, participants were able to examine and utilize the strategic documents available on the online Maarifa centre platform including the County Integrated Development Plans and policy briefs to exchange knowledge and ideas on the progress made by each county. The analysis and comparison of these knowledge products provided an in-depth understanding for participants on various elements including key priorities for the counties involved and the policy frameworks.

From the analysis of the existing documents, participants shared their own experiences, participated in problem-solving exercises and developed action plans as a way forward to implementing the best practices in their counties.

Utility of the knowledge hub in promoting decision making

The Maarifa Centre has successfully enhanced decision-making across various levels, encompassing national government agencies, Counties, and internal CoG processes. Notably, in 2023, the center has hosted four prominent national institutions namely, The Senate, National Crime Research Center (NCRC), National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), and Meru University of Science and Technology. All with the common objective of benchmarking on knowledge management.

At the council level, Maarifa has played a crucial role in enhancing decision-making processes. It has instigated a mandatory practice where every committee is required to incorporate documentation of County best practices in their work plans and upload sector-specific knowledge assets on the Maarifa Centre website. To always meet the high expectations of organizations that come to benchmark with the Maarifa Centre on knowledge management, the council has taken the initiative to develop an internal knowledge management strategy. This strategy is aimed at addressing issues related to institutional memory loss and promoting the efficient management of digital records.

In conclusion, the Maarifa Centre has emerged as a pivotal catalyst in enhancing decision-making, knowledge sharing, and service delivery across various levels of government in Kenya. Its collaborations, peer-to-peer initiatives, and strategic improvements have not only strengthened intergovernmental relations but also contributed to the continuous growth and development of devolution practices in the country.

Systemic change for sustainability

Prior to the collaboration with USAID, through the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) and South Eastern Kenya (SEK) mechanisms, CoG would identify specific knowledge champions through the County leadership nominations using a set criterion. The selected champions would be individuals who are knowledgeable and well familiar with County systems to help channel content and best practices to the CoG through the Maarifa Centre. The challenge with this approach was that it created over-reliance on one person in each County, with fluctuating availability, commitment and remuneration expectations which the Maarifa Centre team could not meet.

To ensure continuity and effective knowledge transfer, USAID supported the Council of Governors to introduce sustainable systems by having the knowledge management champions embedded within the County governments communications departments and in the office of the governors. Through PREG and SEK mechanisms, USAID invested in training County Communication Directors and their teams to be the knowledge management champions representing local interests at the County level. The County communication teams are embedded in each technical department and tasked with content generation from daily multi-sectoral County activities. Content is captured using the World Bank-USAID designed template that ensures inclusion of key pointers for learning. These are documented and channeled through the communication directors who then upload on the Maarifa Centre platform for further review and approval for public viewing by the Maarifa technical team. This approach is sustainable and reliable as content capture, generation, packaging and dissemination is a daily requirement of the County communication teams. Several local media journalists have also been trained by USAID on using the site as a source of news content for further coverage in their news platform for public consumption.

Although primarily RLA focuses on nine counties in the ASAL region, the collaboration with CoG on Maarifa Center not only brings out information from and about these areas, but from all the 47 counties. The e-platform is also a great avenue for showcasing Kenya's investments to the world through the lenses of devolution.

“Knowledge management and visibility is a key component of development and having an active website that serves as a one-stop information hub for Kenya is one main way of ensuring devolution works among stakeholders. The Maarifa Center for example, has content that traverses multiple audiences that have never been to any of the counties in Kenya, and that is the essence of learning,” noted Galgalo Fayo, the Marsabit County Communications Director during the USAID-CoG Maarifa Centre training session.

Building Resilience Together: Transforming Kenya's ASALs Through Strategic Partnerships

The USAID Strategic Partnership Program, spearheaded by Strathmore University Business School, stands as a transformative initiative fostering inclusive development in Kenya. Anchored on collaboration between the public and private sectors, this program aims to catalyze sustainable economic transformation by improving livelihoods, enhancing economic resilience, and paving the way for long-term prosperity. Through two distinct yet complementary components—Kenya Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) and Transformational Resilience Programming (TRP)—the program delivers integrated solutions to Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), addressing challenges that threaten stability and growth.

Transformational Resilience Programming (TRP): A Game-Changer for Kenya's ASALs

At the heart of the program is Transformational Resilience Programming (TRP), an approach that redefines resilience by emphasizing local leadership, strategic partnerships, and integrated investments. TRP is designed to empower national, county, and community-level institutions to lead their resilience initiatives, leveraging both public and private sector resources. The result is the creation of opportunities for vulnerable communities, improved livelihoods, and strengthened capacity to mitigate future shocks.

Key pillars of TRP include investments in institutional strengthening and the expansion of economic opportunities, ensuring a holistic approach to resilience-building. With strategic technical frameworks, the program addresses climate risks, social vulnerability, and economic challenges in a coordinated and impactful manner.



Flagship Initiatives Driving Resilience

I. ASALs Economic Development Master Plan (AEDMP 2050)

The AEDMP is a bold roadmap to unlock the potential of Kenya's ASALs, driven by the State Department for ASALs, the Council of Governors, USAID, and other partners. Aligned with Kenya Vision 2030, the SDGs, and the African Union Agenda 2063, this master plan envisions a future where sustainable investments transform ASALs into thriving economic hubs.

Expected Outcomes

- Unlocking ASAL potential through strategic investments and resilience-building initiatives.
- Promoting inclusive economic growth that engages women, youth, and marginalized groups.
- Adopting market-oriented approaches that align interventions with real-world opportunities.

2. Ending Drought Emergencies Common Programming Framework (EDE CPF II)

Building on the successes and lessons of EDE CPF I (2012–2022), this initiative aims to end drought emergencies by addressing gaps and challenges identified in its predecessor. EDE CPF II aligns with Kenya's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and focuses on policy, legal, and institutional reforms to enhance drought risk management and ASAL development.

Expected Outcome

- A nation resilient to drought risks, with systems in place to protect lives and livelihoods during climatic shocks.

3. Kenya Shock Responsive Safety Net System (KSRSNS)

This initiative tackles the resource and capacity gaps that hinder Kenya's ability to respond effectively to climate-induced shocks. By integrating resources from the government, private sector, and development partners, the KSRSNS creates a unified system for crisis response and resilience-building.

Expected Outcomes

- A unified and integrated safety net system for enhanced resource efficiency.
- Real-time crisis response using emerging technologies to target beneficiaries, disburse aid, and transition communities from relief to resilience.

4. Post-Drought Disaster Assessment (PDDA)

In the aftermath of Kenya's worst drought in four decades, the PDDA evaluates the socio-economic impacts of the 2021–2023 drought. By quantifying damages and estimating recovery resources, this initiative lays the foundation for improved emergency preparedness and climate risk mitigation.

Expected Outcomes

- Enhanced emergency preparedness and mitigation strategies for climate-related risks.
- Comprehensive data to inform recovery and resilience investments.

Collaboration for Community Impact

At the core of these initiatives lies the principle of collaboration. Through a multi-stakeholder approach, the program brings together government agencies, development partners, and the private sector to pool resources, align strategies, and prioritize community-led solutions. This partnership model ensures that investments are targeted, impactful, and sustainable, addressing both immediate challenges and long-term goals.

By integrating data-driven insights and fostering local leadership, the program equips communities to respond to crises, diversify livelihoods, and build resilience against climate risks. The emphasis on inclusivity ensures that women, youth, and marginalized groups are actively engaged in shaping their future.

Conclusion: A Blueprint for Resilience and Prosperity

The USAID Strategic Partnership Program exemplifies how collaborative action can redefine resilience in Kenya's ASALs. By combining innovative frameworks like the AEDMP, EDE CPF II, KSRSNS, and PDDA, the program creates a holistic roadmap for sustainable development. Its focus on empowering local institutions, fostering inclusive growth, and leveraging public-private partnerships ensures that communities not only recover from shocks but also thrive in the face of future challenges.

This integrated approach serves as a model for building resilience and driving economic transformation, offering hope and opportunity to some of Kenya's most vulnerable populations.

Locally Led Joint Documentation Initiative

Transforming How USAID is Telling Its Success Stories at the County Level in Kenya

Local community members are confronted daily with issues of disaster risk, climate change, and poverty. The interaction of local knowledge with the technical knowledge of local CSOs has incubated some of the most innovative resilience-building ideas. Communities are complex and dynamic, and so are the vulnerabilities that challenge them. Many factors influence community resilience (e.g., physical, human, financial, natural, and social aspects of life). These factors are also interconnected, which requires that they be considered and understood holistically through a multidisciplinary approach that considers how factors influence one another.

There is increasing recognition that media and communication can build resilience of local communities 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. Within disaster risk reduction, there is also a history of using media and communication for public education and public awareness. Local media outlets are critical in providing applicable knowledge on how to take actions relating to agriculture, pastoralism, and entrepreneurship. Communications and knowledge management have also been recognized as important roles in fostering public dialogue and public decision-making. The evidence base around what works is still evolving, while the implementation context can change rapidly and unexpectedly. This volatility requires implementers to closely monitor and adapt interventions to meet the most critical needs. Against this backdrop, the opportunity exists, through documentation of our implementation progress, to advance learning.

Over the last five years, the USAID PREG/SEK platforms have invested in strengthening the capacities of local media journalists, County technical teams and leaders, USAID implementing partners and local communities on working with the media for development impact. This has been achieved through holding joint work planning and documentation sessions.

STORIES ARE WHAT MAKE US WHO WE ARE. IT IS HOW WE MAKE SENSE OF THINGS, AND BY SHARING OUR STORIES, WE HELP OTHERS IN THEIR IDENTITY PROCESS FORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING, AS WELL. OF ALL STORIES, THE STORIES OF RESILIENCE ARE FREQUENTLY THE ONES THAT HELP PEOPLE THE MOST IN THEIR PROCESS OF BECOMING. LEARNING ABOUT HOW OTHERS PERSEVERED THROUGH THEIR DIFFICULT TIMES SHOW US HOW TO SURVIVE OUR OWN STRUGGLES.



Objectives of the joint documentation

- To take stock of progress made in executing joint/multisectoral/multiagency best practices, innovations, and tools in implementing programs at the County level.
- To increase awareness of the local media journalists in understanding the work done by the County Governments and USAID PREG implementing partners.
- To capture and disseminate through the local and national media channels the lessons learned and best practices for the benefit of local communities.
- To promote peer-to-peer learning and collaboration across County Governments, USAID implementers partners, NDMA, local/community media, and the communities.

Why Locally-Led and Locally Owned Approach?

1. To strengthen collaborative action and investment: Collaboration across sectors, initiatives, and levels to ensure that different programs and different partners support each other, and their activities avoid duplication, to enhance efficiencies and good practice.
2. Building a robust understanding among local media teams on the County Government and USAID investments that target local communities.
3. To promote transparency and accountability: Monitoring progress and sharing lessons on what is working vs what's does not to promote transparency and accountability downward to local stakeholders.
4. To nurture collaboration between the media and PREG/SEK partners to give a bigger picture of USAID's investments and increase visibility.

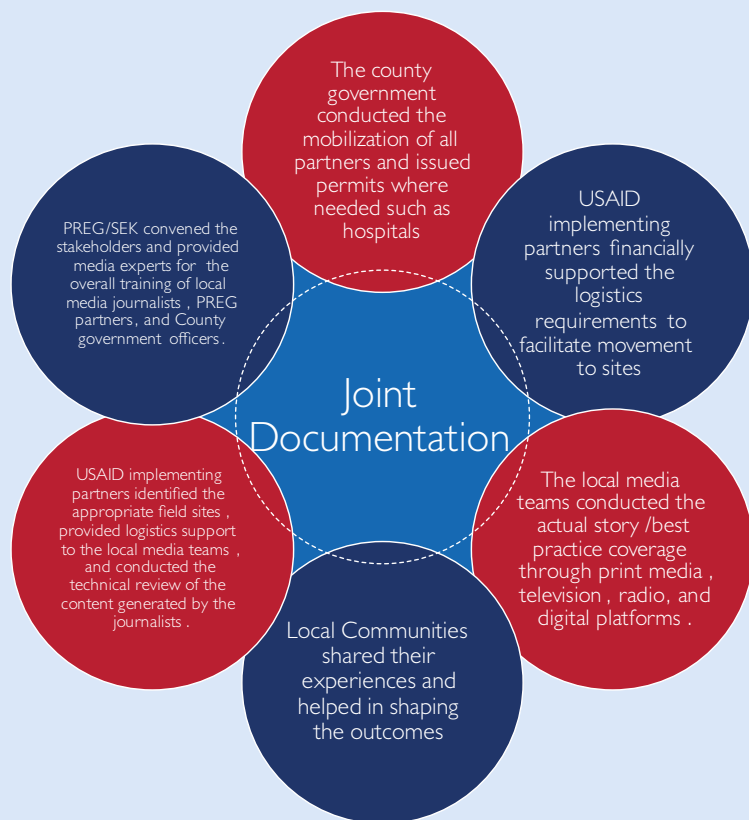
PREG/SEK encouraged county-owned, country-led documentation through the trained local journalists and county communications teams. Through a learning by doing approach stakeholders collaborated with local media teams to jointly visit program implementation sites to gather stories and images that tell compelling stories of community resilience.

“Media needs to be recognized as technical partners by the NGOs and CSOs, we need them to know that we can tell their development stories and that we can work together,” Mike Ekutan, Radio Maisha Journalist in Turkana County



Before embarking on the joint documentation activity all the stakeholders were taken through a rigorous skills transfer process by leading media experts in the country. The training equipped the journalists with skills to offer quality information and collaborate with the County Governments and USAID implementing partners to combat disinformation and ably disseminate technical information and data to communities. The training provided an opportunity to discuss key issues that affect both the media and implementing partners, including; low level of awareness of the development implementation processes within the media, lack of technical skills within journalism to report on economic development, and sectoral specific issues such as health, education or agriculture, poor relationship between government and journalists hindering strong coverage of related public issues, lack of interaction between implementing partners and media which could lead to greater understanding and engagement by media, media outlets increasingly demanding payment for coverage of development-related issues, and adjusting strategies to engage media to new media environments.

The collaboration matrix



“Our main challenge is that most implementing partners prefer national media outlets than our local community channels. It has also been challenging to access the county government to get information as they do not make time for Journalists. I am glad that PREG has facilitated the training with both the County Governments and USAID implementing partners in the same room because now we all understand the significance of working with community media for the benefit of the people here in the county.”

- Philip Ekidale, a participant who attended the USAID training and KBC Journalist based in Turkana County.

Learning by Doing

- Through the learning by doing approach, participants were grouped into five teams.
- Each team comprised of a print, TV, radio, and a digital platform journalist in addition to a photographer, implementing partner staff, and a county communications officer.
- The teams visited communities where the USAID implementing partners and County Governments executed interventions to witness interactions and interview participants on their experiences. This allowed for a participatory storytelling approach as community voices and experiences were amplified.
- Stories were covered through various formats, including print, broadcast (radio and TV), and digital platforms, were reviewed on the last day for partners' clarification and clearance, then published.



Impact of the USAID Investments in the local media through PREG and SEK platforms

1. **USAID provides technical leadership, promotes innovation** (including the use of new digital technologies) and **independent media strengthening** to advance development.
2. **Promoting Impactful Reporting:** Through USAID's investment in PREG/SEK, **250 journalists and content creators**, including social media influencers, and **320 technical County leaders** across nine ASAL counties were trained in fact-based reporting thus improved their ability to cover social issues through both traditional and digital media, with a focus on data-driven journalism. The result is a more informed public, greater government accountability, and increased civic engagement, fostering a more active and knowledgeable citizenry.
3. **Strengthening Community Engagement in Development:** USAID's support empowered the media to play a critical role in enhancing community resilience. By making technical information more accessible and addressing social norms, media initiatives help communities evaluate their choices, foster dialogue, and encourage informed decision-making. Enhanced reporting on public interest topics and increased dialogue between media, stakeholders, and youth influencers have built trust between the public, governments, and the media.
4. **Information as Lifeline During Crises:** USAID's investment has ensured that **3.56 million households in ASAL counties** receive vital resilience information, including early warnings, through collaborations with local partners. This access to timely information has significantly improved community preparedness for droughts and floods, leading to better decision-making. Through targeted messaging, USAID's partners reached **24,000 households in Makueni and Taita Taveta** with crucial drought preparedness tips.
5. USAID, through the media played a vital role of curbing disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. USAID's training of local journalists played a crucial role in curbing

disinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic by equipping them with skills to deliver accurate and timely information. Through the Resilience Learning Activity and other initiatives, USAID trained journalists to produce fact-based reporting, which helped counteract rumors, myths, and false information that spread rapidly during the pandemic. These journalists learned how to verify facts, interpret complex data, and communicate public health messages clearly to their communities through various media channels. This increased the dissemination of reliable information on topics like COVID-19 prevention measures, vaccination, and government regulations. As a result, local communities were better informed, more likely to trust credible sources, and able to make decisions based on accurate information rather than misinformation. The enhanced capacity for data journalism also enabled the media to report on trends and the impact of the pandemic effectively, fostering greater transparency and accountability during the crisis.



Lessons Learned

<p><i>There is an appetite for documenting development-oriented stories if well packaged for media audiences, contrary to the popular belief that political stories are given priority. Development is a political agenda.</i></p>	<p>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.</p> <hr/> <p>Recognizing the importance of media and communication as central to disaster, risk, and emergency responses from the onset at the County level improves the outcomes of these shocks and stresses because communications/information is aid in times of disaster.</p> <hr/> <p>Media and communication can build communities' 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 crises more conscious than other communities and they also act smarter against disasters.</p>
<p><i>If properly trained and mentored, local journalists can document development-oriented stories properly without distorting the content.</i></p>	<p>Strengthening the relationships and links between local media outlets and USAID implementing partners will improve dialog between the counties and the communities they serve. Catalyzing this collaboration may open opportunities for interdisciplinary and innovative work among or between institutions.</p> <hr/> <p>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 of the planning process.</p> <hr/> <p>The local media could be used to push for intersectoral implementation of interventions based on the community's demands.</p>

Recommendations

- There is a need for partners to continue supporting the development of **County Communication strategies, Disaster Risk Communications** plans, and policies for implementation to build resilient communities.
- Development partners and County Governments should **practice continuous engagement with community media** to share the progress of their work, other than the one-off sessions to release research findings. It is also cheaper to build the capacity of local media teams and utilize them for story coverage than getting journalists from Nairobi to go and cover local progress.
- Development partners **should provide facilitation** that includes lunch, transport, and allowance for journalists involved, considering **the geographical terrain** of the Northern Counties and **limited resources available** to community/local media
- Continuous **mentorship, refresher training** and involvement of media and county communication teams is critical in the ongoing program activities
- **Direct phone calls from partners/stakeholders** are the best means of reaching out to the media and working with journalists compared to email communications.

Sustainability: USAID implementing partners and County Governments adopted an approach of including media engagement budgets into their annual work plans. They independently continue to train and build the capacities of the local journalists in their respective areas of interventions for continuous engagement.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT JWPP

Frequently Asked Questions about the USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning Process

General Questions

1. What is Joint Work Planning (JWP)?

Joint Work Planning is a structured and collaborative process that brings together county governments, USAID implementing partners, and other stakeholders to co-create, co-implement, and co-monitor development activities aimed at improving resilience and economic growth.

2. Why is JWP important?

JWP ensures the alignment of resources, avoids duplication of efforts, and fosters collaboration across sectors to deliver coordinated, impactful interventions that address the most pressing community needs.

3. Who participates in the JWP process?

Participants include county government officials, USAID implementing partners, community-based organizations, non-USAID funded programs, private sector actors, and other relevant stakeholders, such as Ward Development Committees (WDCs).

4. What are the key phases of the JWP process?

The JWP process typically includes pre-planning, co-creation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and documentation of lessons learned and impacts.

County Government Questions

5. How does JWP benefit county governments?

JWP aligns USAID and partner activities with County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), ensuring that resources address priority areas identified by the county. It also builds capacity for planning, resource allocation, and monitoring.

6. What role does the county government play in JWP?

County governments provide leadership in identifying local priorities, aligning plans with development partners, mobilizing resources, and overseeing the implementation of agreed activities.

7. How does JWP ensure sustainability of county development projects?

JWP emphasizes community involvement, capacity-building, and integration of interventions into county systems, ensuring projects are sustainable beyond donor funding.

USAID Implementing Partner Questions

8. How does JWP benefit USAID implementing partners?

JWP fosters collaboration with other partners and county governments, reducing duplication of efforts and enhancing the efficiency and impact of development activities.

9. How are USAID activities aligned with county priorities through JWP?

During the JWP process, partners and county officials collaboratively identify shared priorities and integrate them into joint action plans that are aligned with CIDPs and other national frameworks.

10. What tools or frameworks guide the JWP process?

JWP is guided by the principles of Sequencing, Layering, and Integration (SLI), as well as tools like County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and joint monitoring templates.



Community and Stakeholder Questions

11. How does JWP involve local communities?

Communities are engaged through Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and other local structures, ensuring their voices shape project design, implementation, and monitoring.

12. How does JWP address local challenges like drought or food insecurity?

JWP brings together multi-sectoral stakeholders to design integrated interventions that address immediate needs (e.g., water and nutrition) while building long-term resilience (e.g., livelihood diversification and capacity building).

13. How are community-based organizations involved in JWP?

Community-based organizations are critical partners in identifying local needs, implementing activities, and monitoring progress to ensure projects remain relevant and effective.

Process and Impact Questions

14. How is the success of JWP measured?

Success is measured through joint monitoring and evaluation frameworks that track progress against agreed outcomes, including improvements in livelihoods, food security, and community resilience.

15. What are some challenges in the JWP process, and how are they addressed?

Challenges include misaligned priorities, resource constraints, and limited community involvement. These are addressed through transparent communication, resource pooling, and engaging local stakeholders in decision-making.

16. Can the JWP process be replicated in other regions?

Yes, the JWP model is adaptable and can be implemented in other regions to coordinate multi-sectoral development activities, promote collaboration, and achieve sustainable impacts.

17. What lessons have been learned from the JWP process?

Key lessons include the importance of high-level leadership commitment, the need for inclusive participation, and the value of aligning interventions with local priorities to ensure sustainability and impact.

LESSONS LEARNED & KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Lessons Learned and Key Recommendations

Most of the lessons learned on Joint Work Planning experiences from Kenya in the last five years align with the findings on the study by the Stanford Social Innovation Review on “*Does Collective Impact Really Make an Impact?*” These are outlined below.

I. Performance results are not the whole story: There is need to use non-traditional MEL frameworks and target cohesion in Collective Action programs¹

Development practitioners increasingly recognize that the challenges faced by communities in dynamic and complex environments often defy simple solutions. These challenges transcend the capacity and mandate of any single organization, making non-aligned or siloed efforts both inefficient and potentially harmful. To address such complexities effectively, USAID and its implementing partners have adopted **Collaborative Action** approaches, such as the PREG and SEK platforms, which leverage systems thinking to unite diverse, interdependent actors in tackling shared challenges.

While Collective Action is an effective framework for addressing these challenges, it requires careful alignment with **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL)** practices. Traditional MEL frameworks, which rely on clear cause-and-effect relationships, often fall short in capturing the nuances of collective action and the dynamic nature of complex systems. In this context, the cohesion and collective capacity of coalition members are as critical as the technical results achieved, yet these factors are rarely incorporated into standard MEL frameworks.

Recommendations

Incorporate Complexity-Aware Monitoring (CAM) Approaches:

- Use CAM approaches to complement traditional performance monitoring. CAM is particularly valuable in uncertain, rapidly evolving contexts where agreement on the development problem and solutions is low.
- Adopt CAM methodologies to explore interrelationships, engage diverse perspectives, and reflect on boundary judgments to better understand how collective action influences outcomes.

Expand Indicators to Measure Coalition Cohesion:

- Develop indicators that capture the collective capacity, trust, and cohesion among coalition members, as these factors are key to sustaining collective action efforts and achieving shared goals.
- Monitor how well coalition members align around a shared vision and how effectively they collaborate in implementing activities.

Adapt MEL Practices for Collective Action:

- Shift focus from only short-term technical results to a broader narrative that includes the quality of partnerships, collaboration, and systems-level changes.
- Use a combination of qualitative and quantitative data sources to capture the multifaceted nature of collective action impacts.

Tailor Complexity-Aware Methodologies:

- Choose CAM methodologies that align with the coalition's theory of change, the type of evidence being sought, and the specific stage of the initiative (e.g., planning, implementation, or evaluation).
- Examples of CAM methods include Outcome Mapping, Most Significant Change (MSC), and Developmental Evaluation, which are designed to adapt to evolving contexts.

¹ Reflections by Neetu Hariharan, Health Systems Quality Advisor Bureau in USAID's Global Health Bureau, Office of Health Systems

Foster Adaptive Management:

- Design MEL systems that support real-time reflection and adaptation, allowing coalitions to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- Integrate regular feedback loops to adjust strategies and align activities with the pace of change in complex environments.

Combine Approaches for Comprehensive Insights:

- Use a hybrid approach, blending traditional performance monitoring with complexity-aware methods, to create a more holistic understanding of the impacts of collective action.
- Tailor the approach to operational and contextual considerations, ensuring it remains feasible and actionable.

By adopting complexity-aware monitoring and broadening the scope of MEL practices, collective action mechanisms like PREG and SEK can better capture the dynamic nature of their efforts, enhance adaptive management, and ultimately achieve more meaningful and sustainable development outcomes

2. Joint work planning is a useful model of the Collective Action/Collective impact approach for Country/county-level programming and undoubtedly contributed to changes in target populations or places.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning (JWP) model has proven to be a valuable adaptation of the Collective Impact approach for country and county-level programming, particularly in addressing the complex and interconnected challenges faced by Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). In a world increasingly characterized by frequent and complex risks—such as climate shocks, prolonged droughts, and economic stresses—no single organization can provide all the solutions. The JWP model effectively demonstrates how collective action can drive population-level change and strengthen community resilience in these vulnerable regions.

The documented success stories reveal a direct connection between the implementation of collective impact principles and tangible improvements among targeted populations and places. These include better health outcomes, reduced malnutrition rates, increased incomes, job creation, and expanded access to

essential services. Through coordinated multi-sectoral efforts, PREG and SEK partners not only expanded services and programs but also influenced policy changes at both national and county levels. This process allowed stakeholders to collectively leverage resources, cultivate a shared vision, and engage in mutually reinforcing activities that contributed to meaningful change.

Recommendations

- *Adopt Joint Work Planning as a Standard for Collective Action:* Promote the JWP model as a practical framework for multi-stakeholder collaboration at the county and national levels. Integrate the model into broader development programs to address complex, multi-dimensional challenges in vulnerable areas.
- *Leverage Success Stories to Enhance Learning:* Use documented success stories as evidence of the JWP model's effectiveness. Share these stories widely with partners, policymakers, and donors to advocate for the adoption and scaling of the approach.
- *Strengthen Process Tracing and Contribution Analysis:* Enhance the use of process tracing methodology to clearly map the connection between interventions, collective impact principles, and population-level changes. Use these analyses to refine future interventions and better understand the drivers of success.
- *Scale Up Multisectoral Partnerships:* Continue to engage diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, private sector actors, and local communities, to foster effective partnerships that align resources and efforts. Ensure that partnerships prioritize shared goals and mutually reinforcing activities to maximize impact.
- *Institutionalize Policy Influence:* Build on the success of influencing policy changes at county and national levels by institutionalizing collective impact principles in governance frameworks. Advocate for policies that promote long-term collaboration and resource mobilization to sustain the impact of joint initiatives.
- *Expand Services and Programs for Broader Reach:* Invest in scaling up programs and services that have demonstrated success in improving health, nutrition, livelihoods, and access to essential services. Prioritize underserved regions and populations to ensure equitable access to these benefits.



By adopting the JWP model and leveraging the principles of collective impact, USAID PREG, SEK partners, and other stakeholders can continue to drive sustainable and scalable change, setting communities in Kenya's ASAL regions on a path to resilience and long-term success.

3. A backbone facilitator organization is a critical element in promoting collective action/collective impact among stakeholders.

"The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails."

Throughout the five years of implementation, the PREG/SEK partners consistently recognized the pivotal role of a backbone facilitator organization, in this case, the USAID Resilience Learning Activity, in fostering a collective learning experience among the PREG stakeholders. This is because

- Collaboration **MUST BE INTENTIONAL**
- Learning **MUST BE SYSTEMATIC**
- Adapting **MUST BE EFFECTIVE**

Effective cross-partner collaboration is challenging, especially when USAID implementing partners and government representatives are also navigating programmatic mandates and contractual obligations. The introduction of a **backbone support organization**, as demonstrated through the PREG/SEK coordination mechanisms, was pivotal in addressing this challenge. A well-resourced backbone organization with a dedicated team, separate from participating organizations, ensures the smooth functioning of collective action initiatives. These entities provide critical support, including ongoing facilitation, communication, data collection, reporting, and managing logistical and administrative details.

By fostering intentional planning, structured processes, and resource allocation, backbone organizations enable stakeholders to convene, share experiences, and learn from one another. This facilitates a culture of experiential learning and adaptation, enhancing the collective impact of the initiative. The USAID-Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) exemplifies the value of a backbone entity, playing a key role in mobilizing, coordinating, and facilitating the learning process.

Recommendations

Establish and Resource Dedicated Backbone Organizations:

- Allocate sufficient resources to establish and maintain backbone organizations as a central pillar of collaborative initiatives.
- Ensure the backbone team is independent from participating organizations to maintain objectivity and focus on coordination and facilitation.

Define Clear Roles and Responsibilities:

- Develop a detailed framework outlining the backbone organization's functions, including planning, facilitation, communication, data collection, reporting, and administrative support.
- Position the backbone as a neutral facilitator to foster trust and alignment among stakeholders.

Facilitate Cross-Partner Learning and Collaboration:

- Use the backbone organization to create structured opportunities for stakeholders to convene, share experiences, and learn from each other.
- Organize regular learning events, workshops, and reflection sessions to promote experiential learning and innovation across regions.

Support Deliberate and Adaptive Planning:

- Encourage the backbone organization to adopt adaptive management practices, using real-time data and stakeholder feedback to refine plans and strategies.
- Provide logistical support to ensure that collaboration remains seamless and efficient, even amidst competing priorities.



Invest in Capacity Building for Backbone Organizations:

- Equip backbone staff with skills in facilitation, systems thinking, communication, and monitoring and evaluation to enhance their effectiveness.
- Develop tools and templates to streamline their processes and ensure consistent delivery across the initiative.

By institutionalizing backbone support organizations and equipping them with the necessary structure and resources, USAID initiatives like PREG and SEK can strengthen cross-partner collaboration, enhance experiential learning, and maximize the collective impact of their efforts.

4. The joint work planning contribution to population-level change doesn't always look the same.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning (JWP) experience in Kenya reveals that the contribution of joint work planning to population-level change is not uniform and often depends on a combination of factors. While the collective impact approach plays a significant role, it is not always the sole driver of outcomes. In some instances, external influences—such as policy changes, additional funding, or the quality of existing initiatives—are equally critical in explaining success. This demonstrates that collective impact can complement and amplify other efforts, acting as a catalyst rather than the sole determinant of change.

5. Quality of implementation matters.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning (JWP) experience in Kenya highlights the critical importance of quality implementation in achieving meaningful outcomes through collective impact. Collective impact relies on five key conditions: backbone support, a common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement systems, and continuous communication. Findings indicate that the extent to which these conditions are fully implemented directly influences the success of initiatives in achieving population-level change.

Key conditions—**backbone support** and a **common agenda**—emerged as particularly influential. Backbone organizations played a pivotal role in convening and facilitating collaboration, ensuring that partners worked cohesively toward shared goals. A well-defined common agenda provided clarity and direction, helping partners align their activities and achieve significant policy and institutional changes. Shared measurement systems, though less frequently implemented, were described as a powerful driver of change when present, fostering accountability and evidence-based decision-making. Conversely, initiatives that had not achieved population-level change demonstrated weaker implementation of these five conditions, underscoring the importance of consistent and comprehensive adherence to the collective impact framework.

Recommendations

- *Prioritize Backbone Support:* Ensure that well-resourced backbone organizations are in place to convene stakeholders, facilitate collaboration, and provide ongoing coordination and technical support. Clarify roles and responsibilities for backbone organizations to maximize their effectiveness in driving collective impact.
- *Develop and Align a Common Agenda:* Engage all partners in identifying a shared vision and measurable goals to establish a strong foundation for collaboration. Use the common agenda as a guiding framework to align mutually reinforcing activities across sectors and organizations.
- *Invest in Shared Measurement Systems:* Build robust shared measurement frameworks to track progress, inform decision-making, and ensure accountability. Provide partners with the necessary tools, resources, and training to adopt and utilize shared metrics effectively.
- *Strengthen the Implementation of All Five Conditions:* Facilitate continuous communication among partners to maintain trust, transparency, and alignment. Promote mutually reinforcing activities by coordinating and sequencing interventions to amplify collective outcomes.
- *Evaluate and Address Gaps in Implementation:* Regularly assess the quality of implementation of the five collective impact conditions. Identify areas of weakness and implement targeted interventions to address gaps, ensuring consistent progress toward population-level change.

By ensuring high-quality implementation of the five collective impact conditions, USAID PREG/SEK and its partners can optimize their efforts and achieve transformative, sustainable outcomes in Kenya's ASAL regions.

6. There are many ways to engage in systems change.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning (JWP) experiences in Kenya underscore the diversity of approaches required to drive systems change in support of population-level outcomes. The study revealed that initiatives focused on transforming the systems within which they operate achieved meaningful results through various forms of systems change. These included introducing or expanding services, aligning organizational practices, enhancing workforce capacity, and amending organizational or legislative policies.

Systems change took many forms, ranging from informal, time-limited interventions to formal, institutionalized changes. Informal changes, such as piloting new processes or running short-term campaigns, offered organizations opportunities to experiment and refine approaches before scaling. In contrast, formal changes, such as policy amendments, helped institutionalize progress, ensuring sustainability. Matching the scale and scope of systems change to the initiative's goals was critical for success.

Recommendations

- *Leverage a Range of Systems Change Strategies:* Encourage initiatives to explore both formal and informal approaches to systems change based on their objectives and the context. Use informal changes, such as pilot programs or time-limited campaigns, as a testing ground to refine processes and build readiness for larger-scale changes. Pursue formal changes, such as policy reforms or organizational restructuring, to institutionalize and sustain successful innovations.
- *Align Systems Change to Population-Level Goals:* Ensure that the type and scale of systems change are aligned with the desired population-level outcomes. Develop clear pathways for scaling informal changes into formal, institutionalized practices where appropriate.
- *Foster Cross-Organizational Collaboration:* Promote alignment and coordination among diverse types of organizations to maximize the impact of systems change. Encourage shared learning across organizations to replicate successful practices and avoid duplicating efforts.

7. It takes time to create real change.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning (JWP) experience in Kenya demonstrates that creating meaningful, population-level change through collective impact is a gradual and long-term process. While the successes achieved in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) highlight the potential of the collective impact approach, these outcomes often require sustained effort over many years. For instance, the achievements under the PREG mechanism have been realized between 5–10 years, underscoring that collective impact is not a quick fix but a deliberate, long-term strategy for social change.

The JWP model, while effective, is influenced by various factors during implementation, including stakeholder engagement, contextual challenges, and resource availability. It is also anticipated that in some cases, the full impact of the JWP model may only be evident beyond the typical five-year program cycle. This reinforces the need for patience, persistence, and continuous adaptation in the collective impact journey.

Recommendations

- *Adopt a Long-Term Perspective:* Recognize that collective impact requires significant time to deliver population-level change. Develop multi-year strategies that extend beyond program cycles to ensure continuity and sustainability. Incorporate mechanisms for adaptive learning to address challenges and refine approaches as initiatives progress.
- *Manage Stakeholder Expectations:* Clearly communicate that meaningful change through collective impact is a long-term endeavor. Align expectations of all stakeholders, including donors, partners, and communities, to the gradual nature of the process.
- *Plan for Post-Cycle Sustainability:* Build systems and capacity within local governments and communities to sustain momentum and scale impact even after program cycles end. Establish robust exit strategies that include knowledge transfer, leadership strengthening, and local resource mobilization.
- *Monitor Progress Over Time:* Use phased monitoring and evaluation frameworks to capture incremental progress and identify emerging impacts. Document and share lessons from long-term initiatives to inform future programming and highlight the benefits of sustained collaboration.

- *Invest in Relationships and Resilience:* Strengthen partnerships and foster trust among stakeholders to maintain commitment over time. Build resilience into program designs to address unexpected challenges and ensure sustained impact in dynamic environments.
- By embracing the long-term nature of collective impact and strategically planning for sustainability, USAID PREG/SEK and similar initiatives can achieve durable, transformative outcomes in the ASAL regions of Kenya.
- *Compare Approaches to Collaboration:* Evaluate collective impact against other cross-sector collaboration frameworks to determine its unique advantages and limitations. Develop criteria for when collective impact is the most suitable approach.
- *Examine Key Conditions in Depth:*
 - Assess the effectiveness of various backbone organization structures and their specific roles in different contexts.
 - Explore innovative ways to use data to foster learning and adaptive management across partners.
 - Analyze when and how to involve different sectors to maximize impact, considering factors such as timing, resource availability, and local dynamics.

8. We have a lot more to learn.

The USAID PREG/SEK Joint Work Planning experience in Kenya has highlighted the potential of collective impact as a powerful approach for cross-sector collaboration. However, it has also underscored the need for continued learning to enhance its effectiveness and understand its limitations. While many initiatives have successfully implemented the conditions for collective impact and achieved positive outcomes, important gaps remain. For example, there is limited understanding of why some initiatives fail to implement collective impact effectively, or why others implement it well but do not achieve the desired results. Furthermore, the comparative value of collective impact in the 9 counties with a backbone supporting Activity such as RLA vs those that have attempted collective action without support from a backbone organization remains largely unexplored.

Recommendations

- *Investigate Barriers to Success:* Conduct research to identify the factors that hinder successful implementation of collective impact and those that prevent initiatives from achieving their desired outcomes despite proper implementation.

By addressing these areas, the USAID PREG/SEK initiative can strengthen the collective impact approach, improve outcomes, and ensure that collaborative efforts are inclusive, effective, and sustainable.

PARTING REFLECTIONS

Collaboration for Collective Impact #TogetherWeThrive



Parting Reflection from Mulinge Mukumbu,

Chief of Party-USAID Resilience Learning Activity

Reflection on the PREG and SEK Coordination

Over the past five years, the Resilience Learning Activity (RLA), with funding from USAID, through the PREG and SEK platforms, has made progress in fostering resilience and sustainable development

across the Horn of Africa. Through collaborative planning, implementation, and monitoring, the PREG and SEK platforms have influenced USAID bilateral missions, governments, government agencies, USAID implementing partners, private sector stakeholders, other non-USAID funded development actors and communities to convert daunting challenges into opportunities for growth and self-reliance through collaboration and coordination. From the grasslands of Northern Kenya to Ethiopia's highlands, coordinated efforts under the PREG, HoRN and SEK platforms have strengthened livelihoods, boosted food security, and reinforced resilience against climate and economic shocks.

The achievements highlighted in this publication are a powerful testament to the transformative impact of partnerships and a unified approach to development. PREG/SEK have created a culture of shared learning, joint action, and continuous improvement, setting a foundation for sustainable progress across Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. As these communities continue to build upon these gains, the legacy of PREG/SEK and its partners speaks to a future defined by resilience, hope, and unity.

What is the Impact of Joint Work Planning on Local Communities?

Joint Work Planning plays a pivotal role in empowering local communities by ensuring development efforts are coordinated, inclusive, and responsive to their needs. By bringing together diverse stakeholders—government, implementing partners, and community representatives—this approach harmonizes resources, aligns priorities, and minimizes duplication of efforts.

Through Joint Work Planning, communities benefit from tailored, multi-sectoral interventions that address critical issues such as food security, health, education, water access, and livelihoods. It fosters community ownership by involving local voices in planning and implementation, ensuring that solutions are relevant and sustainable. Ultimately, Joint Work Planning strengthens the impact of development programs, enhances resilience, and creates lasting opportunities for improved living standards, empowering communities to thrive even in the face of challenges.

Take, for instance, the story of Bubisa village in Marsabit County. Five years ago, Bubisa was synonymous with water scarcity and struggle. The community faced a stark reality of water scarcity, lack of infrastructure, and waterborne diseases due to inadequate access to clean water for both human use and livestock. However, the tide turned when a coalition of USAID Implementing Partners, the Marsabit County Government, private sector actors, and local groups, under the USAID PREG coordination platform, united to address Bubisa's water crisis and restore hope. This diverse group of stakeholders, driven by a shared purpose, overcame initial differences in approach, resources, and perspectives, aligning under a unified mission to lift Bubisa out of poverty and build a foundation for sustainable development. Through a coordinated approach, each partner contributed a crucial piece of the puzzle:

- The Marsabit County Government provided land, technical expertise, and training for local water management.
- PACIDA drilled and fenced the borehole, while Cargo Human Care provided a reverse osmosis system to purify the water.
- USAID Nawiri installed pipelines, elevated storage tanks, and water kiosks with prepaid meters, extending water access to multiple villages and institutions.
- USAID Kenya Rapid constructed additional storage and distribution points.
- Private sector partner Maji Milele automated the facility with water ATMs, while local communities established governance committees to manage the resource sustainably.

The impact was transformative. Bubisa flourished. Waterborne diseases dropped, small businesses emerged, and youth and women found employment managing water kiosks. Once marked by despair, Bubisa became a symbol of hope and prosperity—a vivid example of what can be achieved through partnership.

This story underscores a vital truth: sustainable development is not a solo effort but a collective endeavor. When diverse stakeholders unite, they bring a wealth of knowledge, resources, and innovation that can transform entire communities. Bubisa's journey exemplifies how coordinated action can create lasting impact, and it reminds us that genuine progress requires holistic, multi-sectoral approaches. The establishment of coordination platforms such as PREG, HoRN, and SEK has been essential in achieving these profound outcomes.

What were the challenges of the Joint Work Planning process?

Joint Work Planning (JWP) with governments and other stakeholders is critical for coordinated development, but it is not without challenges. While implementing the JWP initiative, the RLA team experienced a myriad of challenges but being a learning and adapting Activity, we were able to find solutions collaboratively with the partners.

- **Misaligned priorities:** Stakeholders often had differing priorities due to varied mandates, funding streams, or political interests, which can hinder collaboration.
Solution: we established a shared vision and goals early in the process through inclusive consultations. We aligned JWP activities with county development plans, such as the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), to ensure mutual buy-in.
- **Limited stakeholder commitment:** There were instances of frequent staff turnover, especially in government, orchestrated by the country's election cycle and sometimes among implementing partners. There were also cases of inconsistent attendance in planning sessions, and competing demands on government officials and partners that often disrupted the JWP process.
Solution: we were able to secure high-level commitment from the USAID Kenya and East Africa Mission, county leadership and institutionalized JWP within county systems. We had partners support in assigning dedicated focal points for continuity and accountability.

- **Resource Constraints:** Financial and human resource limitations delayed or reduced the scope of joint activities.
Solution: Advocated for resource pooling and co-investments among stakeholders. Ensured transparency in resource allocation and leveraged funding from development partners for shared objectives. Moving forward, it is highly commendable to have partners set aside coordination budgets into their overall programming budgets because effective collective impact must be well structured and resourced.
- **Poor Communication and Coordination:** A lack of clear communication channels led to misunderstandings and duplication of efforts among stakeholders.
Solution: Developed structured communication protocols, including regular progress updates and feedback loops. Utilized technology, such as GIS data portals or shared dashboards, to facilitate real-time information sharing.
- **Limited Community Involvement:** Top-down approaches overlooked the unique needs and perspectives of local communities, reducing project relevance and sustainability.
Solution: Engaged community members throughout the JWP process, from planning to implementation and monitoring. Utilized Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and other local structures to ensure community voices are integrated.
- **Bureaucratic Delays:** Lengthy administrative processes within county governments slowed down decision-making and implementation.
Solution: Established clear timelines and accountability measures during JWP sessions. Engaged county secretariats to streamline approvals and reduced bottlenecks.
- **Resistance to Change:** in some instances, stakeholders resisted adopting new ways of working, particularly if they perceived a loss of autonomy or authority.
Solution: Emphasized the benefits of JWP, such as resource efficiency and collective impact, through capacity-building and continuous dialogue. Celebrated early wins to build confidence and trust among partners.

By proactively addressing these challenges, Joint Work Planning can become a powerful tool for harmonized, impactful development that effectively meets the needs of local communities while fostering stronger partnerships among stakeholders.

What do you consider as the success catalysts for the JWP process?

For the RLA team, there are key collective impact conditions that facilitated successful collaboration and coordination with other partners.

KEY CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION SUCCESS		
CONDITION	EXPLANATION	HOW THIS WAS DESIGNED AS KEY COMPONENTS INTO THE RLA PROGRAM
Common Agenda	All stakeholders have a shared vision and a common understanding of the development challenges that unites us	Component 2: Learning and Adaptive Management
Shared measurements	Use of data for decision making and measuring collective impact	Component 1: Data and Analytics
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Each stakeholder brings a different activity to the table while contributing the overall mutual implementation plan (JWP)	Component 4: Collaboration Systems and Networks
Continuous communications	Consistent and open communication among all stakeholders for information sharing	Component 3: Knowledge Management and Strategic Communications
Backbone Coordination support function	<p>Collaboration MUST BE INTENTIONAL.</p> <p>Learning MUST BE SYSTEMATIC</p> <p>Adapting MUST BE EFFECTIVE</p> <p>“The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails.”</p> <p>There must be a backbone organization with a team of dedicated staff, that is separate from the participating organizations who can plan, manage, and support the initiative through ongoing facilitation, communications support, data collection and reporting, and handling the myriad logistical and administrative details needed for the initiative to function seamlessly.</p> <p>This is what the USAID Resilience Learning Activity has supported by coordinating the PREG and SEK platforms.</p>	
USAID KEA Mission and GoK Support	Goodwill from the leadership of the USAID Mission management and key government agencies	
Innovation and use of Technology such as GIS	To visualize location and identify overlaps and areas of duplication that need to be addressed	

Parting shot: As we reflect on these successes, let us carry forward the spirit of collaboration. Each of us has the potential to create a ‘Bubisa moment’ in our own spheres of influence. When we collaborate, we craft solutions that endure. We build not only resilient communities but also a sustainable world. Together, we can achieve a future that is not only brighter for us but also for generations to come

Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can achieve a sustainable future.



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