GOVERNANCE AND SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING FOR NUTRITION

LEARNING BRIEF

INTRODUCTION & RATIONALE

For at least a decade, global acute malnutrition in Samburu and Turkana Counties has remained at or above levels considered a humanitarian emergency. While much investment has been made over that time in efforts to address malnutrition, little impact has been observed. Policy and program efforts have remained largely siloed across sectors impacting nutrition. The main objective of USAID Nawiri's Strengthened Governance for Nutrition Resilience line of inquiry was to identify integrated interventions that effectively strengthen the capacity of formal institutions and governance systems to provide a resilient enabling environment for sustainable reductions in persistent acute malnutrition in Samburu and Turkana. This included understanding political economy factors that influence policy, institutions, and community decision-making dynamics relating to nutrition. Effective strategies require a cohesive, integrated vision for impacting policy and practice, based on in-depth and ongoing analysis of the intersecting roles of politics, economics, environment, and institutions. Political isolation, social inequity, and deep, generational poverty underlie the persistence of acute malnutrition. Measures to address these issues require evidence-based political and governance solutions that work within the political and social dynamics of local institutions and systems and through a strong commitment to community engagement to increase social cohesion. This ensures the appropriate enabling environment for provision of nutrition services and related investments, improved planning and resources, and foster evidence-based, risk-informed decision-making.

This learning brief maps out USAID Nawiri's journey from "evidence-to-design" for governance and systems strengthening work and highlights key insights into local system dynamics and potential modifications to policy frameworks and governance structures that impact nutrition and outlines how they will inform design of interventions to sustainably reduce malnutrition. As it covers an entire USAID Nawiri Purpose area, its length is longer to ensure it covers the most insightful learning from the first two years of the program regarding this critical component of strengthening governance, institutional and local systems.

LEARNING JOURNEY

Through its Institutional and Local Systems Strengthening (ILSS) component, USAID Nawiri has applied a multisectoral approach to research and analysis of the underlying causes and drivers of persistent malnutrition, including the systems and formal and informal institutions that affect the success of efforts to sustainably address acute malnutrition (Young, 2020). Engaging with governance institutions, community structures, civil society, and private sector actors, and other county stakeholders has provided a more holistic vision of how the roles and practices of these diverse stakeholders intersect within the local system, and how county policies serve to support or undermine them. USAID Nawiri's Political Economy Analysis (PEA), combined with ongoing co-creation with county stakeholders, informs a more nuanced and evidence-based understanding of the political economy factors influencing policy, institutions, and community dynamics governing food security, nutrition, and health in each county.

The PEA was carried out through an extensive literature review to refine the line of inquiry as well as interviews with 120 respondents (49 in Samburu and 72 in Turkana) from a cross-section of society, including national and county officials, international organizations, business leaders, clergy, and other community figures. The PEA enhanced our understanding of the context, including stumbling blocks and opportunities within the counties, especially regarding devolution, the resulting changes to responsibilities and policy approaches. The PEA provided insight into how governance dynamics are influenced by power and major events such as political transitions, elections, reshuffles, corruption cases, clan and ethnic positioning. USAID Nawiri also gathered information on the structures (positions, responsibilities and approaches) of diverse stakeholders within the local system, such as community members, development partner organizations, civil society, and government officials, and assessed how various programs respond to identified constraints, barriers, and opportunities.

Gaps and opportunities for evidence informed nutrition sensitive programming included ensuring leadership of county government officials in determining research priorities and implementation approaches, as well as joint planning with technical officers across various relevant sectors, such as health, water, agriculture, education and trade, among others. Robust engagement and validation at the county and devolved levels (sub-county, ward, village), in addition to community engagement more broadly, helped build support and commitment to the program, while also providing crucial contextual data and insight to supplement the findings of the PEA. Additionally, and jointly with USAID/BHA and CRS' Nawiri consortium, our learning journey included co-creating and advancing the collaborative framework and institutional modalities, such as the Multi-Sectoral Platform for Nutrition, the Technical Steering Committee and the National Steering Committee, which provided critical insights and cross-learning from other strategic initiatives.

INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATIONS

INSIGHT N°1: Major governance transition events, including elections, distract government partners in the short-term. USAID Nawiri must use a multi-level strategy that engages both civil servants and political representatives to sustain the long-term opportunity for change.

Within Kenya's five-year election cycle, governance institutions face major changes that present potential for significant disruptions, as well as create new opportunities. These include appointments of the County Assembly, elections of County Cabinet -Executive members, as well appointments of key lead within institutions under the Executive. The five-year planning cycle dictates public expenditure management and therefore the priorities in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). USAID Nawiri continued to deepen contextual understanding of governance dynamics during the term of office holders and in anticipated transitions driven by the election cycle, and the foreseen implications on governance for nutrition. When drivers of transitional changes are influenced by patronage or integrity questions, this changes the behavior of institutional leaders at the apex and leads to changing alliances and sources of influence among those below them.

Campaigning is already underway for the August 2022 elections, and we cannot expect significant action or major investments in development priorities from them until after the polls. Both governors took office in the first county elections after devolution in 2013, and term limits dictate that they cannot run again after serving two five-year terms. New leadership may be open to new approaches, such as reorganizing departments or planning coordination processes around multisectoral nutrition outcomes. But it may also require re-establishing political commitment to the program's goals, and new co-creation activities to encourage political ownership of plans.

In addition, scenario planning must take the country's history of violence in highly contested elections into consideration. While violent conflict is a persistent feature of Kenya's socio-political landscape, it peaks in intensity and impact during election years. Kenya's 2022 elections will take place in the context of an ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; a drought emergency; an increase since 2020 in inter-communal conflict in Samburu, Turkana, and other Arid and Semi-arid Lands (ASAL) counties; and unresolved social injustices. There is fear that acute humanitarian needs and lingering historical grievances will be manipulated to further fuel inter-communal conflict during the election and transition period. In Samburu and Turkana, governors and other county-level elected officials are also reaching the end of their two-term limit, creating additional tensions over political succession among local ethnic communities. Information and rumors are key conflict drivers, particularly during election and transition periods. Information campaigns and political rallies remain an effective means of gathering political support or undermining opponents, and information, whether accurate or not, spreads quickly through the largely oral society.

The COVID-19 pandemic presents several risks for peaceful elections. The decline of job and livelihood opportunities because of the pandemic and drought has contributed to an increase in petty crime, banditry, and insecurity across the two counties. Since disenfranchised youth are more easily mobilized to violence, local stakeholders are concerned that the increased idleness, unemployment, and psychosocial stress observed among the counties' young people could have grave consequences for peace and security during the 2022 elections. The highly charged elections also threaten pandemic control. Drawing lessons from the 2021 Ugandan elections, imposition of COVID-19 restrictions in

Kenya in 2022 - whether supported by science or not - is likely to be perceived as an effort to curtail the election activities of a particular party and trigger violence along ethno-political fault lines. Meanwhile, political rallies and other events are likely to fuel a surge in COVID-19 cases among the largely unvaccinated population, with mounting concerns for the capacity of the health system to cope.

Implications: USAID Nawiri will adopt a two-pronged approach, to both capitalize on opportunities presented by a government transition to give a more central role to a nutrition agenda at county and ward levels, and to leverage community engagement to reduce the risk of election-related conflict and to build social cohesion that supports improved nutrition outcomes. Maintaining a lens on governance and transition dynamics has allowed USAID Nawiri to develop and adapt strategies for meaningfully engaging with political and technical leaders across transitions to secure continued prioritization of a nutrition agenda by elected leaders. Such transitions provide new opportunities to transform the policy environment and leverage election promises. USAID Nawiri also recognizes the power of communal influence on leaders through transition cycles as another opportunity to strengthen and sustain the demand for development progress. This has guided the program's prioritization of social accountability and community mobilization, while increasing capacity of local ("base") and institutional actors that have the potential to strengthen the demand side for strategic planning, co-investments, multi-sectoral planning, and broader multi-layered stakeholder engagement. Improving this capacity could be a game changer, as local actors will no longer have to rely on external actors to push for better governance, prioritization, planning and budgeting. (Theory of Change (ToC) Intermediate Outcome 4.1.3).

USAID Nawiri is prioritizing continued capacity strengthening of technical officials and sector working groups from county departments who will remain through the leadership transitions. This will require USAID Nawiri to enlist the technical officers across government departments as champions, while also demonstrating how the program's multi sectoral community engagement offers political value. Effective community engagement can enable counties to produce responsive, citizen-driven policies that meet citizen's nutrition needs, and translate into increased political legitimacy and trust for government within communities. While the insight on governance transition events, including elections, does not speak to specific aspects of the ToC, it informs where attention and focus needs to be when building the overall institutional capacity of government (i.e., working with the technical officers that act as institutional memory for their respective departments and are less affected by political transition) and sets the stage for critical sensitization and momentum building for implementation in the counties.

Leadership transitions and the elections are also an opportunity to build social cohesion. Our research found that bridging social capital strengthens informal social protections and mainstreams the voices of the ultra-poor community members to increase their participation in governance processes to advocate for investment necessary for nutrition outcomes. To develop contingencies for election violence, USAID Nawiri will integrate scenario planning into our community engagement strategy, including supporting civil society organizations (CSOs) to work with communities across ethnic and political divides to strengthen bridging social capital and help foster a less divisive political culture. This will include mapping potential conflict hotspots and coordination with the peace structures' work (see Conflict Learning Brief) to monitor misinformation, rumors, and signs of increased tensions and define action plans to address them through partnerships with local actors including community-based organizations (CBOs). USAID Nawiri will continue its work with county governments, social media influencers, Community Health Volunteers, and radio stations to promote vaccination messages and other public health measures to reduce COVID-19-related risks during the election period.

INSIGHT N°2: For nutrition outcomes to be prioritized, county planning and budgeting processes need to be well-coordinated across all sectors.

Our learning process confirmed initial assumptions of USAID Nawiri's ToC around the weaknesses in the county planning process and the lack of social accountability between county governments and the communities they serve.

Evidence-based and well-resourced county nutrition policies remain of low priority. Nutrition is chronically underfunded despite the convergence offered by County Nutrition Action Plans (CNAPs) and its Monitoring Framework, because it is viewed as a health concern rather than a multi-sectoral issue. Yet, achievement of nutrition outcomes requires shared responsibility across various sectors such as health, agriculture, water, employment, education, disaster/risk management, and others. The policies and plans of the various departments are poorly aligned and coordinated in implementation as a result of weak sector working groups (SWGs) mandated for setting priorities and planning on behalf of sectors, and there is limited to no capacity for mainstreaming gender-responsive budgeting and planning. CNAPs, which should provide a coordinating framework for all sectors, have yet to be operationalized in either county. While technically co-created with counties, the plans were largely designed and driven by development partners without meaningful ownership from county officials nor integration into government systems, plans, budgeting policy or practice.

Neither county has passed any nutrition-specific laws, meaning they have no binding obligations or accountability for nutrition. There are no mandates guiding multi-sectoral planning and budgeting where collective technical actions across sectors is a prerequisite. This has led to competition for resources among sectors and departments, even when their efforts would be complementary. The operational modalities for CNAPs are therefore undermined by lack of clear accountability mandates and policy. This also complicates efforts to measure results of any nutrition programming, with critical data for nutrition scattered across government bodies. The lack of coordinated monitoring and data management makes it difficult for policymakers and planners to identify drivers of malnutrition or devise appropriate interventions based on evidence. Therefore, patronage heavily influences how the counties make decisions on programs and especially on spending.

Implication: The evidence gathered through USAID Nawiri highlights that adopting a multisectoral approach to planning, budgeting, monitoring and reporting seems to be the most promising way to coordinate collective evidence informed actions to sustainably reduce persistent acute malnutrition. This would be ideally through strengthening and institutionalizing the Multisectoral Platform for Nutrition (MSPs). The MSPs as currently exist have not been formalized and anchored in law that accords it an operational structure and resources to ensure that they are effectively run. Further orientation and strengthening of the SWGs will make the process of identification of specific sector priorities and integration nutrition sensitive aspects much easier. The creation of a county-level nutrition accountability mandate is important for ensuring sustained attention and prioritization of nutrition by county leadership. Situating a Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Office under the office of the Governor has been highlighted as a possible strategy, to serve as lead for the MSPs and to become the coordination platform across government departments and with partners. A permanent Nutrition Office within the county executive would lead the evidence-driven prioritization of coordinated actions; harmonize plans, budgets, and activities; and support the continuation of evidence-based policies across transitional changes in the county leadership. An alternative scenario is to push for anchoring MSPs into law that will guarantee its sustainability in terms of resourcing to achieve its mandate. The transition offered by the

upcoming elections is an opportunity to realize this reorganization to ensure the prioritization of a nutrition agenda.

Another entry point of influence to prioritize investments for nutrition is the 3rd CIDP, covering 2023-2027, that will soon be developed (within 2022-2023) to reflect the priorities of the next regime of the county government. The CIDP is a five-year development planning framework that reflects the county development priorities as identified by the current political leadership. The Public Finance Management Act stipulates that no development programs or projects can be implemented outside a planning framework (CIDP), hence it will be critical to support the technical teams to ensure the USAID Nawiri evidence and the ideas contained in the CNAPs are reflected in the CIDP so that they are prioritized in the subsequent years for implementation. (The ToC modification linked to this insight is with regard to inclusion of additional outputs to strengthen the planning and advocacy capacity, including the functionality of the sector working groups, county assembly committees and CSOs. This fits under outcome 4.2.2.1).

INSIGHT N°3: Proven and meaningful opportunities for public participation and advocacy in planning and budgeting processes can increase social accountability and improve the relationship between counties and communities.

Limited opportunities for public participation in county government planning and processes have led to poor accountability on the use of resources, and the government faces few checks on its choices or its spending. Compounded by high illiteracy levels in these counties, up to 80%, and without policy communication or outreach that addresses this issue, this leaves communities unable to effectively hold their leaders accountable. County governments therefore face few incentives to develop policies or allocate spending that target community needs, and the delivery of services that may support better nutrition outcomes continue to fall short.

Ward development planning (WDP) committees established under Mercy Corps' USAID-funded Livestock Market Systems Activity (Associate Award 2: Strengthening Community Capacities for Resilience and Growth (SCCRG)) provide an effective model that enables bottom-up citizen participation in local development planning in ways that can scale up to accountability across county-levels plans and budgets. Building directly on CATALYSE[1] (Communities Acting Together to Advance Linkages Yielding Social Engagement), Mercy Corps' signature approach to community mobilization, the WDP approach is a participatory planning process that empowers community members to assess and identify their own needs, articulate priorities within a Ward Development Plan, design projects and oversee implementation, and hold government and other development actors accountable for development priorities and service delivery outcomes. The SCCRG program has implemented the model in Turkana, Garissa, Isiolo, Wajir, and Marsabit Counties, with demonstrable success producing tangible achievements in community development outcomes and advocating for ward priorities to be

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[1] CATALYSE is Mercy Corps' community mobilization approach that builds a community's capacity to identify and organize around collective priorities, mobilize resources, implement projects and influence leaders.

included in county budgets. USAID Nawiri will use this approach to ensure multi-sectoral community nutrition interventions are incorporated in Ward planning and budgeting.

Implication: Starting with the established WDP committees in Turkana and expanding to Samburu based on lessons learned and contextual adaptations, USAID Nawiri will leverage and broaden the WDP process to address health and nutrition needs, services, and outcomes. This will also include implementation of the contingency plans for responding to shocks and stresses that are part of the Ward Development Plans which are developed with the support of the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA). The current WDP committees are linked to NDMA's early warning system for purposes of presentation and feedback of risk information, a factor that is critical in effective use of information for decision-making. Potential avenues for sustainability and scale of this model exist, including proposed multi-county legislation by the Frontier Counties Development Council that would institutionalize WPCs in all ASAL member counties, or the recently-enacted Climate Change Act in Turkana County, which like its peer legislation in Garissa, Isiolo, and Wajir, dedicates 2% of the annual county budget to ward-level priorities in Ward Development Plans (Samburu County is still developing its climate change legislation). To make these structures sustainable, with legal status and government financing, the committees' mandates can also expand to include nutrition-sensitive and risk-informed priorities. A critical adaptation would be to ensure the WDP committee members have representation of other existing community structures such as Peace Committees, Community Health Volunteers, Water Users Associations, Natural Resource Management Committees, and Market Committees among others. This will be important in ensuring ease of coordination of WDP activities in different technical areas that USAID Nawiri is focusing on to ensure alignment and integration across activities required to sustainably reduce malnutrition.

Both counties have also established Village Councils which are lower-level governance structures constituting members of the respective villages elected by the community. Though still nascent, the village councils provide a strategic platform to organize and sensitize community members on advocacy mechanisms that will enhance their participation in governance affairs. The practice of public participation continues to present openings for influencing county government departments to ensure they have designed nutrition projects that are responsive to community needs. USAID Nawiri can support local CBOs to increase their capacity to engage meaningfully during the public participation forums, SWGs and other medium-term expenditure framework processes. CSOs and local media provide another opportunity to engage citizens through behavior change communication to improve nutrition outcomes and can hold county government and development partners accountable for the performance of different nutrition programs they are implementing. (This insight is in reference to Outcome 4.1.3.3 of the ToC where the focus is to support strengthening the capacity of WDP, CBOs, and CSOs to act as social accountability structures that will be critical for sustainability. The adjustment to the ToC was in wording to emphasize the need for social accountability structures, to not only understand roles and responsibilities, but be able to execute their mandate - hence being functional).

INSIGHT N°4: Migration of communities triggered by climate change and conflict alter social dynamics and place pressure on social services and safety nets.

Climate change and conflict is exposing weaknesses in local systems and institutions, specifically in their ability to deal with recurrent and growing shocks and stresses, increasing pressures from changing weather patterns, and resulting food and water scarcity, conflicts, and weakened social cohesion.

Increasingly unable to cope through traditional livelihoods, more people are migrating to towns in search of better lives. Town residents, new and old, face unique nutrition needs. The bulging population in towns and urban centers without corresponding expansion in public infrastructure is already putting pressure on existing clean water sources, posing a threat to proper sanitation and hygiene and increasing risk of disease (see also Water Security for Nutrition Learning Brief). Over the coming years, these trends will transform acute malnutrition across both counties. County policies and services to address this challenge and seek sustainable improvements will require routine assessments and analysis, alongside local systems that can adapt strategies in response to changing drivers.

Rapid migration is leading to informal settlements that are growing in tandem with high levels of urban poverty. These new urban residents have complex nutrition needs, but limited resources to meet them. Towns offer more diverse foods; but at a price many cannot afford. The traditional community safety nets for vulnerable households experiencing poverty are substantially less available in these new urban and informal settings, with lower community cohesion and less potential to build or leverage social capital to meet urgent needs. Migration to towns is also placing pressure on land availability, infrastructure capacity, and social services.

Implication: Targeted policy on housing and infrastructure, food availability, and safety net programs for migrant communities by local political structures can mitigate the health and nutrition risks for the new residents, including former pastoralists. Through a market system development approach, USAID Nawiri's livelihood strategies will contribute to a balanced household economy (income/expenditure) that will support both production and purchase of nutritious foods and dietary diversity, including for migrating populations, and form a key component of our approach to sustainably reducing malnutrition. Livelihood strategies will be connected to targeted systems actors and policies related to skills development, resilience, and risk management, and catalysts such as financial services to advance livelihoods and market systems (see Labor Market Learning Brief). USAID Nawiri will prioritize continued learning about the nexus of conflict and persistent acute malnutrition and its immediate and long-term implications for counties' efforts to strengthen the enabling environment for nutrition resilience (see Conflict Learning Brief).

INSIGHT N°5: Ongoing land reform is a strong structural driver of pastoralism informed livelihood diversification.

In Samburu and Turkana Counties, land is central to subsistence as a resource that underlies social and economic well-being of communities engaged in agricultural production and pastoralism. The ongoing land reforms presents opportunities related to agro-pastoralism (crop and horticultural production), urbanization, real estate development, and among others. Land tenure is mostly customary/informal rather than statutory/formal. This has ramifications for security of tenure and the ability of users to engage in the long-term sedentary land use patterns and sustainable crop farming. Both county governments have embarked on land demarcation and are using reforms to pursue objectives related to registration of group ranches to create units for development and to raise community awareness on land laws and community rights. Their goal is registration of all parcels, which will enable landowners to acquire title deeds for their plots to improve their livelihoods. A functional land tenure system and improved land use planning will also facilitate the required diversification of pastoral livelihoods by providing incentives for pastoral management, such as clear rangeland demarcation, water resource management (including gazettement of protected rangelands) and setting apart areas for large-scale

farming with sufficient water access. This will also contribute to addressing human wildlife conflicts through proper delineation of the wildlife corridors (see Conflict Learning Brief).

Implication: USAID Nawiri will support advocacy for the formal registration of communal land, as per the provisions of the Community Land Act 2016 and elevate community voices in this process through our CATALYSE approach and WDP process. Given the complexities of adjudication processes (including the likelihood of disputes), and the fact that community land will still have to be set aside, proper implementation of this process will need to take into account the future food security needs of the county for the adjudication process to provide a strong stimulus for food security and the reduction of persistent acute malnutrition.

INSIGHT N°6: Failure to consider gender, social norms and cultural barriers will undermine the impact of planned interventions.

Cultural beliefs and traditional nutrition practices remain strong across Samburu and Turkana, and have a large influence on food, nutrition, and health choices made across communities. Community dynamics, leadership and governance mechanisms are influenced largely by the cultural psyche including social, gender norms and practices. These norms have considerable implications on disparities in access to resources and opportunities, recognition of the abilities and capacities of women and young people and their participation in decision making.

The attachment to these traditional values is driven by patriarchal community structures, entrenched by custodians such as clan elders (mostly men) and the elderly women who largely influence the decisions of adolescent girls, especially young mothers which range from food choices, health seeking behaviors, childcare practices among others. Leadership, governance, planning and budgeting including priorities also often lack a gender responsive lens. These dynamics make conversation around alternative foods possible only during crises like the current drought when community members have very few options in terms of food other than relief food which mostly vary from their traditional preferences of milk and meat. The current drought could be leveraged to shift habits through continued sensitization of communities of the nutritional value of alternative foods and also supporting the market systems in availing them at favorable prices that incentivizes the communities to consume them. Opportunities exist to transform strategic system actors at policy, planning and communal levels so as to positively influence quality of planned interventions.

Implications: Continuous monitoring of these gendered community and cultural nuances will be key in informing strategic entry points, priorities and become central to the overall adaptive management of the program. Elevating voices of strategic social change actors, including women and adolescents, and utilizing new spaces that have provided opportunities for women's leadership and agency, in addition to collaborating with the key cultural custodians as champions to encourage social behavior change will be critical. This will include championing food access and utilization including around nutritious diets, and the role of market systems in the largely hard to reach areas of Samburu and Turkana. With traditional leadership firmly entrenched in the communities' way of life, cultivating relationships and buy-in with entities like Councils of Elders can help shift norms that contribute to poor nutrition. These include ensuring a balance of where Councils of Elders are effective advocates for social change without undermining the agency and voices of women and girls who are significantly underrepresented in the cultural decision-making systems. For example, elders are currently active in advocating against female genital mutilation (FGM) in Samburu, and could be activated to include nutrition messages in their work.

They are however less motivated to champion reproductive health and contraception (see Gender and Social Dynamics Brief; Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Brief). How the program can strengthen capacities to access, create, and implement solutions at the grassroot level to notably engage girls and women in all levels of decision making is key. A greater role for women in decision-making will be encouraged to help shift community narratives around food and participation in livelihoods such as pastoralism that is very male-centric. The insight relates to Intermediate Outcome 3.1.3 of the ToC with the modification being made was to reframe gender and social norms and broadly look at transforming and redefining masculinity, while strengthening gender responsive planning, budgeting and programming (4.1.1). This strengthens the pathway and forms part of the design considerations.

INSIGHT N°7: Supporting strong systems that guarantee equitable distribution of resources and for addressing community grievances is vital in addressing conflicts.

Competing for resources such as pasture and water during drought periods have been the main driver of conflict in the ASAL region. There is further emerging evidence[2] that the current conflict in Northern Kenya expressed through cattle rustling is a manifestation of local ethnic political contests and rivalries which have their foundation in poor governance. Among the pastoralist communities, politicians and shrewd businessmen have emerged to exploit the ethnic rivalry that exists between these groups and use it to mobilize raids. Competition for political influence is further closely intertwined with competition over scarce water resources and grazing pastures among the different ethnic communities in those localities.

Political marginalization of the minorities within those localities which is manifested through the unequal distribution of resources, business, and job opportunities is another key factor of concern. Due to the lack of a proper mechanism to address community grievances, the inter-ethnic conflict becomes the sole channel they can utilize. Livestock raids no longer occur in the traditional context of restocking, but rather as an expression and manifestation of local ethnic politics and political contests. Political elites use raids to maintain the political hegemony of communities and control of power. The conflicts prevent the pastoralists from utilizing the traditional fallback areas to access water and pasture for their livestock as well as stagnating other development indicators.

Implication: There is a need for a joint concerted effort between USAID Nawiri, the county governments and other stakeholders to support community forums and systems that will address community grievances as well as work towards the reduction of violent conflict. These structures already exist, but most of them are not functioning effectively due to lack of credibility and officiality, their composition, and political linkages. USAID Nawiri's support will entail evaluating their functionality and addressing the challenges such as political interference that prevent them from achieving their goals as well as forming those structures where they are non-existent. The devolved governance platforms such as ward development committees will be a vital instrument in sensitizing the communities and

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[2] W. Okumu, K. N. Bukari, P. Sow, E. Onyiego. The role of elite rivalry and ethnic politics in livestock raids in northern Kenya. J. of Modern African Studies, 55, 3 (2017), pp. 479-509. Cambridge University Press. 2017.

ensuring that the communities participate in the process of identifying their priority needs and influencing the development agenda in their area. The hybrid peace and natural resource management committees will be key in this effort (see Conflict Learning Brief for more details).

INSIGHT N°8: Strengthening an integrated information system will allow for better coordination on information use and enhance evidence-based and risk-informed decision making.

Significant effort had been made by the nascent Departments of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in both counties to coordinate M&E activities through identification of sectoral M&E focal point persons to carry out M&E functions. However, a well-defined information system that can integrate information from the various sectors and various community platforms such as village councils and ward development planning committees still lacks to allow for proper analysis and decision making. The counties, under the leadership of the Department of Planning, are required to develop the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES), a tracking system for county development results and performance. It verifies whether the activities of each county's priority project or program are happening according to planning timelines and targets presented in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP); and whether resources are being used in a correct and efficient manner. CIMES further provides for devolved structures to ensure involvement of citizens, which should be established from county to the village level composed of both government officials and other non-state actors like community members, civil society, private sector and development partners. The role of these structures will be generation and dissemination of a wider range of data in formats that are targeted at different stakeholders for use such as farmers, water users, private actors, wards, pastoralists, and to support the skills to interpret and act on information. This data includes but is not limited to climate and risk information (including early warning systems), conflict hotspots, market information, pasture information services, and livestock migration routes. These efforts will have to be coordinated with other departments, specifically health, agriculture, education, disaster management and water, among others.

However, delays in adoption of the enabling policy and resources to operationalize the same has slowed down these efforts. In the meantime, USAID Nawiri has in the last two years mapped major systemic gaps and has already supported county efforts to build the GIS systems that will through strengthening the capacity of county staff on the GIS system that will allow spatial mapping of their resources in addition to embedding the data systems advisor to shore the technical capacity of the county staff.

Implication: The existence of the M&E department and already ongoing efforts to strengthen them by both counties provides a good foundation to build on. Advocacy supported by USAID Nawiri and other partners to the M&E department is needed to fast-track adoption and operationalization of the counties M&E policy that would help rollout of the CIMES. Existence of a sector specific information management system such as in health provides a platform that could easily be adopted by the county in developing an integrated information system that is linked. This will be important in coordination with all information sources both at sector levels and with community structures that will allow all data to converge at a central point for timely analysis and decision making. For instance, the ward development planning committees can be further linked with NDMA's early warning systems to facilitate timely utilization of shock related information for appropriate action at the local level. Sensitization of the community and sectors on interpretation and utilization of the information provided will also be critical to enhance uptake. USAID Nawiri needs to further build on the ongoing support on GIS including the GIS

infrastructure being developed by the counties to support spatial mapping of resources that will facilitate improved planning and investment with regards to natural resource management, water among others which is also critical to managing conflict. (The insights make references to IO 4.3.1 of the ToC. Major modification was in realignment of the outcomes that were mainly repetitive that were collapsed and mainstreamed in Outcome 4.3.1.1).

Based on the findings and insights, significant structural adjustments to the ToC were not applied to Purpose 4. However, the findings and insights have helped strengthen foundations for the technical components of USAID Nawiri. Purpose 4 will help to organize systems actors and support functions that will help avoid duplication of activities and support sequencing layering and integrating the pathways to increase effectiveness and efficiencies of the USAID Nawiri approach to sustainably reducing malnutrition.

CONCLUSION & PRIORITY AREAS FOR ONGOING LEARNING

The key findings from the Strengthened Governance for Nutrition Resilience line of inquiry which included PEA and USAID Nawiri's co-creation and engagement in Samburu and Turkana confirm the underlying design assertions of USAID Nawiri's Theory of Change on structural and institutional weaknesses at the county level, in participatory planning, and local systems stretched thin by recurrent shocks and prolonged stresses. These factors combine for a nutrition governance system that does not effectively plan and allocate resources to deliver the services communities need for nutrition, nor leverage community cohesion through traditional systems or informal safety nets toward stronger nutrition outcomes.

To address institutional weaknesses revealed by this inquiry, USAID Nawiri will support strengthening the county planning process to increase investment in nutrition priorities, including enhancing coordination through the multisectoral platform and advancing the concept of a county-level Nutrition Office and dedicated accountability mechanism. Whilst new departments and structures can increase competition over funds and resources, the upcoming strategic planning cycle and the transition of governments is deemed an opportune time to advocate for this new office to ensure a proper multi-sectoral management of nutrition issues. This will still depend on buy-in and commitment of the new government and so alternative scenarios including anchoring of MSP into law will also be considered. Support and engagement with county governments will strategically leverage the political openings afforded by the new leadership emerging from the 2022 elections, while also investing in the sustainability of increased coordination and capacity for nutrition policy amongst technical officers. Coordination support will also entail improving existing information systems for effective decision making, risk planning learning and adaptations by both government and community.

USAID Nawiri will also invest in strengthening the social accountability mechanisms and structures, to promote more responsive nutrition-focused policy, as well as services that specifically meet community needs. This will include working with CSOs across each county, especially those working with women and youth to elevate their needs and voices into the policy discussion. The program will also work with ward and village planning committees to promote consideration of community health and nutrition outcomes in local development plans. Cultural beliefs and practices mentioned in insight n°6 are also informing USAID Nawiri's Social and Behavior Change (SBC) strategy, as well as community engagement and partnership approaches. This will be applied building on the deep contextual understanding

developed in the two counties resulting from two years of research, which has uncovered specific practices and beliefs unique to livelihood zones and community groups that form barriers and opportunities to achieve nutrition goals. Studies further identified champions and influencers who can be leveraged to inspire change among communities. This knowledge and human centered design approaches have informed SBC tools and approaches and stakeholder engagement strategies that will motivate behavioral and social change. A gender and social inclusion strategy is deeply embedded that utilizes SBC tools and messages to remove barriers to access and utilization of nutrition systems and services from health seeking behaviors, clean water resources and diverse and nutritious diets. The supporting systems strengthening work will simultaneously strengthen responsiveness and effectiveness of government, civil society and private actors in provision of nutrition specific and sensitive services and resources.

USAID Nawiri is also developing an Institutional and Systems Strengthening Learning Plan as well as a Sustainability Plan that will embed learning in these activities and engage in ongoing monitoring of these political economy factors to inform adaptive management of interventions. The learning will mostly focus on 'how' the changes in governance happen based on employed strategies and how continuously adapt overtime.

PRIORITY AREAS OF ONGOING LEARNING

A number of areas of ongoing learning will be continuously applied to inform programing strategies and adaptations including:

- Effectiveness of approaches to progressively change the harmful cultural practices that are deeply entrenched and inhibiting nutrition outcomes.
- Identification of the right incentives for CSOs, private sectors and other non-state actors for investment and incorporation of nutrition services in plans and activities.
- Identification of the right incentives for government leadership and political actors to give prominence to nutrition.
- Effective approaches for strengthening accountability for multi-sectoral nutrition actions including policy, practice and resourcing, including through either the creation of a Nutrition Office or anchoring of MSP into law.

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