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STRENGTHENING POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE FOR IMPROVED NUTRITION OUTCOMES:

Political Economy Analysis of Samburu County



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Strengthening Policy and Institutional Governance for Improved Nutrition Outcome: Political Economy Analysis of Samburu County

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CEC	County Executive Committee
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CNAP	County Nutrition Action Plan
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FEWS	Famine Early Warning Systems
PAM	Persistent Acute Malnutrition
PEA	Political Economy Analysis





Executive Summary

Context

Samburu County is one of the four poorest counties in Kenya, with 78 percent of the population living in poverty. Most of Samburu's 310,000 people follow traditional ways of life, relying on livestock management as their primary source of income. About 60 percent of Samburu follows a nomadic lifestyle with their herds, and another 30 percent combine pastoralism with some farming.

While livestock remains central to Samburu's traditions and culture, the focus on cattle is also in part because 80 percent of the county's land is suitable only for grazing.

As climate change makes droughts more frequent, and population growth creates a need for more cattle for food, the soil has degraded. This has led to a migration to the county's towns, where some lands that could be used for crops have turned into informal settlements.

While some of Samburu's social indicators have improved, children younger than 5 still suffer rates of acute malnutrition that are above the 15 percent threshold that the WHO considers an emergency. By that standard, Samburu's children have lived in a hunger emergency since 2014.

Samburu's population is very young -- 60 percent are under 20, and one-third are under 10. Education rates are very low. Only six percent of the county has completed high school.

The low rate of schooling is one sign of how successive governments have neglected Samburu, from colonial times through the post-independence era. Since Kenya introduced a new constitution in 2010 and carved the nation into 47 counties, political power has devolved to new local entities. Each county now has a governor and assembly, and the possibility to direct services to its own people.

USAID Nawiri

USAID Nawiri is a five-year program that aims to sustainably reduce persistent acute malnutrition through multi-sectoral interventions that tackle both immediate and systemic drivers. Learning is a major component of the project, and this political economy analysis is one element of that learning.

This analysis looks at how political, social and economic contexts contribute to persistent acute malnutrition in Samburu county. The resulting recommendations aim to inform a nuanced, evidence-led approach to reducing malnutrition.

Researchers interviewed 49 people from a cross-section of Samburu society, including national and county officials, international organisations, business leaders, clergy, and other prominent figures in the community. These interviews were validated against an extensive literature review. Findings from the interviews were analyzed thematically and are summarized here.

Coordinated Action

Among the frustrations most commonly cited in interviews was the lack of coordination among the levels and agencies of government, and to some degree with development partners.

Kenya's ongoing process of political devolution poses particular challenges. Responsibility for nutrition and food security is shared between the national and county governments. Overall policy, and to a large degree funding, is set by Nairobi. Counties implement programming on the ground, set local priorities within the national policy, and can raise additional funds through fees and other levies.

Given the extreme poverty in Samburu, and the unpaid nature of livestock management, the county has little space to raise its own funds. That leaves programs within Samburu dependent on funds dispersed by the national government.

However, these funds are allocated by department -- rather than by policy priority. Responsibility for nutrition is divided among the agriculture, health and education departments. This institutional "homelessness" leads to rivalries and competition for resources, while also complicating efforts to measure results of programming. Policymakers and planners can't identify drivers of stunting or devise appropriate interventions because data is scattered.

While experts broadly agree on the need to prioritize nutrition, to vary diets, and to diversify incomes, county budgeting doesn't reflect that. Most spending still revolves around support for livestock, which is popular with voters who see pastoralism as core to their individual and community identities.

Transition to Paid Work

Among nutrition experts and government officials, a consensus emerged around the potential of paid work to diversify diets and shield communities from external shocks. Creating opportunities for paid work would allow more people to access markets, where they can buy a greater variety of food to supplement traditional meals of milk, meat, and blood.

Access to markets brings its own challenges, including physical access. Samburu only has 10 kilometres of paved roads -- just one factor in the cost of transporting goods to local markets. Samburu's markets also remain largely cut off from financial services, with limited supply chains. But given the migration into Samburu's towns, more people will depend on markets and kitchen gardens for food.

Pathways of Change

Kenya's constitution requires public consultation. Low levels of education in Samburu place a particular responsibility on nascent forums to ensure that everyone can participate. These forums, especially at the ward level, offer a chance to both direct policy and spread information about nutrition.

Samburu's legislature recently approved a new community health act, which elevates the role of community health workers to provide both curative and preventive services. These community health workers could become ambassadors of change in nutrition.

One interview subject noted that young men traditionally would have been conscripted into local militias known as morans. This duty increasingly is seen as volunteer, leaving a large number of young men available for work.

Women in pastoralist families often stay home with children while men follow the livestock's grazing patterns. Opening opportunities for paid work for these women would give them greater control over household finances and allow them to buy foods to supplement diets.

Enlisting support from traditional leadership in councils of elders can help ensure buy-in from communities around all of these transitions.

Over the medium term, Kenya's land reforms will record and issue deeds for land across the country. The demarcation process has begun in Samburu. Once complete, this will create a way for communities to invest and develop their land, creating more opportunities for farming.

The County Assembly gives another means of oversight, particularly of budgets. Lawmakers can also be enlisted to support community outreach projects.

Conclusion

USAID Nawiri must show the value of a multi-sectoral approach to persistent acute malnutrition, and encourage the creation of an office to coordinate efforts across government departments and with partners. Samburu's governor has made food security one of his three top priorities. Ideally, a permanent nutrition office within the county executive would harmonize efforts and ensure continuation as the county's administrations change over time.

As a more immediate step, Nawiri must identify spaces of influence to capture the attention of key actors. Coordination meetings (led by government, with the inclusive participation of other key stakeholders) are one such space, in which Nawiri can both encourage co-creation of a research agenda and present evidence that emerges from that agenda.

Nawiri must invest in supporting the transition to paid work, in a way that helps families shield themselves from shocks and stresses. New peri-urban neighbourhoods must be included, as well as rural areas.

As part of its continuing collaboration with government partners, Nawiri must invest in innovative capacity strengthening initiatives that leave behind stronger institutions, not just stronger individuals. For example, Nawiri should consider directly supporting a stronger M&E function within the Governor's office and the department(s) responsible for nutrition in order to better demonstrate results and influence the direction of nutrition investments through better generation of evidence and translation of policies into action.



Introduction

Malnutrition has steadily declined globally, thanks to improvements in farming combined with social and economic development.^[1] In the least resourced and most marginalized parts of the world, however, children continue to suffer wasting and stunting despite sustained efforts to address the problem.

In the arid and semi-arid lands of northwestern Kenya, more than 25% of children are persistently malnourished, with the attendant health and education problems that come with never having enough to eat.

The implications multiply nationally, with the workforce productivity lost to hunger expected to cost Kenya's economy \$38.3 billion.

Billions of dollars in emergency, humanitarian and development assistance have failed to solve the problem. Nutrition policy remains a low national priority that often falls into bureaucratic cracks widened by Kenya's ongoing process of political decentralization. Basic infrastructure, already lacking, has failed to keep up with rapid urbanization.

Animal husbandry remains the prominent source of income, but one that's less prized among the large youth population.

This applied political economy analysis looks at how political, social and economic contexts contribute to persistent acute malnutrition in Samburu county. The resulting recommendations aim to inform a nuanced, evidence-led approach to reducing malnutrition.

^[1] Carter A, Akseer N, Ho K, et al. (2020) *A framework for identifying and learning from countries that demonstrated exemplary performance in improving health outcomes and systems*. *BMJ Global Health* 2020;5:e002938. doi:10.1136/bmjgh-2020-002938

The Problem

Political economy factors have long been identified as drags on the effective nutrition policy. According to Balarajan and Reich, the aftermath of disasters produces a global clamour as images of starving children flash across screens. But this fails to translate into either meaningful policy momentum or improved nutrition outcomes.

They identify six key challenges confronting effective nutrition policy implementation that would reduce persistent acute malnutrition, or PAM:^[2]

- The institutional ‘homelessness’ of nutrition policy
- A fragmented nutrition system and nutrition community, with multiple owners
- A multiplicity of narratives around nutrition, without prioritization
- The limited capacity of nutritionists to engage effectively in the policy process
- Skepticism and contention around the role of the private sector
- A limited ability to clearly demonstrate results

In Samburu County, these challenges are clear in the table 1, which shows how malnutrition among young children is more common now than it was in 2019, despite all efforts to address the crisis.

Applying Balarajan and Reich’s methods to Samburu County reveals two main hurdles: understanding malnutrition as a development issue, and deciding how to use policies and programmes to reduce malnutrition.

We interviewed 49 people for this PEA, revealing a near-total lack of coordination across sectors, a failure to ground policy in evidence, persistently under-resourced staff and programmes, and a failure to use markets to diversify livelihoods or increase access to foods.

This report also considers how Samburu County’s cultural, social, gender and age-related mores and traditions can inform efforts to improve nutrition.

Table 1: Samburu County PAM Indicators 2013 - 2019

YEAR	GAM - 5 WITH 95% CI
2013	10.9%
2014	17.3%
2015	18.3%
2016	14.5%
2017	18.3%
2018	15.7%
2019	15.8%

Source: Samburu County Smart Nutrition Surveys 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019

^[2] The prevalence of acute malnutrition in more than 15% of the population

Methodology

The applied PEA focuses on identifying entry points and opportunities for engagement, as well as addressing challenges and barriers. The goal was to expand the USAID Nawiri consortium's knowledge and gaps as it implements a learning-driven series of investments to designing, prototyping and scaling interventions to meet and respond to the drivers of PAM in Samburu and Turkana counties.

Literature Review

We reviewed theoretical and empirical literature including books, articles and reports on Kenyan and global nutrition policy and governance. Empirical literature included the County Integrated Development Plans, Annual Development Plans, relevant legislation, and sectoral plans. Foundational documents were also reviewed, such as the USAID Request for Applications for Fiscal Year 19 Development Food Security Activities in Kenya; USAID Nawiri proposal; quarterly reports; research and learning agenda; and the Unicef nutrition strategy.

Field Work

We interviewed 49 people for this report, using a key informant interview guide (Annex 1) for semi-structured interviews with pre-identified respondents (Annex 2). Interviewees included Nawiri sector leads, national and county government officials, civil society, and members of the public. Care was taken to include particular interest groups as well as traditionally excluded groups. Fieldwork was conducted over two weeks, with logistical support and introductions facilitated by the Nawiri consortium.

Data Analysis

Data was disaggregated by gender, age, and other relevant criteria and triangulated for a fuller, more balanced, and nuanced analysis. The overall data analysis approach was content analysis, supplemented with quantitative analysis (using Excel) for numerical data.

The study comprises analysis at the macro, sector and issue-specific levels, with focus on identifying entry points and opportunities for engagement, as well as addressing challenges and barriers. At the macro level, the analysis focused on issues such as historical trends, political structures, economic and social processes. Sector-level analysis examined political dimensions to the broader food and nutrition sector, and identified specific barriers and opportunities. Issue-specific analysis aimed to illuminate the specific policy or programmatic issues within nutrition. Interviews were used to corroborate or challenge the literature on persistent acute malnutrition.

Analysis of Implications

Analysis of implications followed the presentation of findings to stakeholders in Samburu on May 25, 2021. In addition to sharing and receiving feedback on the PEA, the meeting reflected on what the findings mean for the Nawiri programme's goals, and ensuring alignment with the programme's work. We met with Nawiri management on July 29, 2021 to discuss pathways of change and the final report.

Research Limitations

Discussion of this PEA should consider the following limitations:

- PEA are typically high-level and broad analysis with limited opportunities for in-depth exploration of programmatic details
- The PEA was not designed to review a specific county government program, set of actors or policy, but to broadly understand factors affecting PAM in Samburu County.
- Interviews were conducted over two weeks in October 2020 amid restrictions to contain covid. We conducted 49 interviews, but some stakeholders were reluctant to hold face-to-face meetings. Some planned interviews had to be cancelled, limiting the perspectives informing this analysis.
- Time and other constraints reduced the viability of several co-creation exercises that had initially been planned for the assignment.





Structural Diagnosis

Table 2: The dimensions of this applied PEA.

LEVEL/ASPECT	1. COUNTY	2. SECTOR	3. ECOLOGY
1. Structural/ Enabling Environment	Long-term contextual factors relevant to county development trajectory, which are unlikely to be readily influenced, either because of the time scale needed, or because they are determined outside the country and/or region. These may include economic and social structures and norms, geo-strategic position, natural resource endowment, demographic shifts, climate change, and conflict or post-conflict context.		
2. Political Economy	The role that formal and informal economic, political, and social institutions (e.g. rule of law; elections; social, political, gender and cultural norms, values, and ideas; markets) play in shaping human interaction and competition for power and resources. This should also include a review of county government capacity, organizational culture and practices, and the political interests that influence how that has formed.		
3. Power Analysis	Who has power and influence in society (County/Community/Local actors e.g. Church/Private Sector, etc.) and how is that manifested in how decisions are made? How do gender and power dynamics impact the level of influence that men, women, youth, and persons with disabilities have?		
4. County Government Institutional Capacity	What are the strengths and weaknesses of each County government and their departments in terms of performance and capacity? What is functioning well and what needs investment and improvements? Detail aspects of general county planning, budgeting, and implementation (service delivery), but also coordination of sectoral plans and programs relevant to broader county development plans. This assessment will also determine the levels of political commitment, technical capacity and accountability for gender mainstreaming within the county government and their departments as they relate to USAID Nawiri thematic areas.		
5. Natural Resource Management	How are the key principles of NRM (i.e., legitimacy, transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, fairness, integration, capability, and adaptability) applied to nutrition sensitive sectors in the Counties?		

Structural Barriers

Economic Structure and Livelihoods

Samburu's economy depends on livestock. County data shows 60% of the population are nomadic pastoralists, with another 30% practicing agro-pastoralism.^[3] This leaves the county vulnerable to long-term effects of climate change and to short-term shocks in weather, markets or society. The dominance of unpaid work limits the tax base, constraining the county's ability to raise funds. Despite the risks to the pastoralists, there's little motivation to change, due to deep cultural attachment to that way of life.

Remoteness and Marginalization

The colonial and modern governments deliberately devalued Kenya's northern regions, with little support for social or physical infrastructure. The country covers 21,022 square kilometres, making it slightly smaller than all of Rwanda. Of the county's 1,606 kilometres of road, 10 kilometres are paved. Most are gravelled rural access roads linking to towns, without enough roads to connect the rapidly growing peri-urban centres. Samburu has few public facilities in health, education, sanitation or electricity. The country estimates that getting its public services on par with the national averages will cost KES 4.7 billion!^[4]

The county is too poor to raise that kind of money on its own. Kenya's political devolution should open the door for the county to expand services, but the devolution process has not yet been fully funded. Samburu's remoteness (Nairobi is 357 kilometres away) makes access to outside markets costly and laborious.

Literacy and Human Capital

Six percent of people in Samburu have a high school education, and only 26% have finished primary school. About two thirds of the population has no formal education. Schooling rates are higher in towns. In the county seat Maralal, 17% of people have finished high school.^[5] Changing attitudes towards formal education is a generational project. Low education accounts for the slow uptake of alternative livelihoods such as commercial crop farming, vocational and technical occupations and trading.

Geography, Climate and Topography

About 80% of Samburu's land is used by pastoralists for grazing. Only about 8% of the county's land can support crop farming.^[6] Overuse of the soil, combined with climate change, has degraded the land. Urban migration means land once used for grazing is now used for homes around the towns of Maralal, Wamba, Archer's Post and Baragoi. People who do take up farming have to take land away from grazing, a double-edged challenge to diversifying incomes and food sources.

Access to markets

Diminishing returns of pastoralism have sent more and more people to markets to buy food, but the markets can't support increasing demand. Existing markets have underdeveloped physical infrastructure, are largely cut off from the financial system, and have limited supply chains. Producers outside of the county need to be linked to local consumers to enhance access to diverse foods, especially outside of the main towns.

[3] <https://www.samburu.go.ke/2016/10/13/agriculture/>

[4] 2018-2022 CIDP

[5] Samburu County CIDP 2018-2022

[6] Samburu County CIDP 2018-2022

Political Economy

Under Kenya's devolved system of government, policy is determined at the national level and largely implemented at the county level. However, in the decade since devolution began, the government has yet to link adequate funding to the needs the county is meant to address.

Nutrition policies have been created at both the national and county level (Annex 3) but implementation of devolved roles remains incomplete. Data collection and distribution is spotty. As a result, any political impetus to address the legacy of neglect in Samburu is diluted through uncoordinated and inefficient structures.

Institutional and Implementing Framework

Devolution requires cooperative governance, but shortcoming at both the national and county levels hobble implementation of food policies.^[7] Samburu's county legislature has yet to authorize its Nutrition Action Plan, which means it has no binding obligations or accountability for nutrition. The county has passed no nutrition-specific laws.

Implementation of nutrition programmes is split across many sectors, with no overarching coordination. For example, supplemental food programs target children in a way that improves school attendance – but reaches children too late in their lives to prevent wasting and stunting in early childhood. Funding for county government is earmarked by department, rather than by policy priority, meaning money for malnutrition must be shared and tracked across multiple offices.

In interviews, civil society and donor organizations said that government agencies don't collaborate well with their work. The county also struggles to coordinate nutrition policy across its own departments, leading to duplication of efforts and mandate conflicts. Faced with an immediate need to raise revenues, the county focuses on charges and fees, at the expense of long-term efforts that could, for example, improve market access.

The county has enacted a new Community Health Act to clarify how services are provided and to elevate the roles of community health extension workers. These workers would become care coordinators tasked with both treatment and prevention, which would allow them to become feet on the ground in fighting malnutrition.

[7] The overarching policy mandate on Agriculture is allocated to the National government. Constitution of Kenya (2010), Fourth Schedule, Part 1 (29).



Power Analysis

Social political norms

Interviewees indicated that Samburu's political culture is deeply entrenched with patronage and competitive clientelism. Most members of the County Executive Committee and Chief Officers are appointed by patronage, which largely determines how and where money is spent. This leads to underfunding of services like nutrition and worsens regional marginalization. The dominant Kerinkishu, Salaon, Lkirna, and Motina clans dominate the resource-rich regions, giving them more sway over how those resources are allocated.

A local radio journalist said county governance often reflects culturally-charged power struggles. The centrality of pastoralism to the regional identity has inhibited discourse of alternative livelihoods. Local and national politicians have wooed voters on a platform of livestock development, despite its decreasing prospects. Initiatives on policy reform are driven by international partners like Unicef, WFP, and USAID. But these ideas find little traction among policymakers.

Intense attachment to traditional diets, driven by patriarchal community structures, makes conversation around alternative foods possible only during crises like droughts. Men own the cattle, and travel with them in search of pasture while women stay behind with the children. Women are being supported and encouraged to be more involved in decision making, which may help shift community narratives around food. Women may also be more receptive to alternative livelihoods that they can easily participate in, since pastoralism is very male-centric.

A county lawmaker said politicians prefer short-term food strategies that are more visible. These "stroke of the pen" reforms like food relief programs and subsidies do little to address underlying causes of malnutrition. Simply put, hand-outs appear to be more popular than driving long-term investments.

Cultural Norms

Samburu diets traditionally consisted of milk, meat, and blood. But this diet cannot keep up with population growth. Grazing lands are limited and afflicted by drought, worsened by climate change. Men must take herds farther and farther away to graze during droughts, meaning the source of food disappears for the women and children left behind.

Communities have expanded their diets in response to lower food supplies, but cultural resistance against vegetables and poultry make nutrition-deficient options like maize meal, sugar and fats more popular.

Traditions also discourage pregnant women from eating large portions and starchy foods, which are believed to make the fetus too big resulting in complications during birth. Pregnant mothers feed on nkarer, a drink of milk topped with water. Taking of the nkarer drink is known to restrict the growth of the fetus which results in somewhat emaciated and small infants. This predisposes children to malnutrition even before they are born.

One encouraging food culture is a festival that entails mass slaughtering of cows to provide enough preserved or dried meats during dry seasons. This doesn't help infants, whose digestive systems can't process the dried meat.

One traditional birth attendant noted that Samburu are not change-averse. She noted that mobile phones are extensively used, with obvious benefits of reducing communications costs and assisting with commercial activities, including livestock trade.^[8] She said communities need basic information about new foods, like how to cook them.

Moranism

Traditionally, young men were conscripted into a warrior class known as *moran*. They are youth militia who raided neighboring communities and who protected valuable communal resources. Increasingly these are voluntary positions, but deadly clashes still erupt. Although morans are accountable to elders, these clashes destroy food sources, displace communities from productive land, and deprive families of breadwinners when casualties occur.

Although violence against women and children was frowned upon traditionally, deadly clashes increasingly involve the indiscriminate killing of women and children.

One county agriculture official noted that as the population grows, there are more potential morans than communities can absorb. He suggested that these youth could take up alternative livelihoods in crop production, to increase food production as well as earn money to buy food from the market. Culturally *moranism* remains a foundation of male pride in the Samburu community. The future of *moranism* will continue to drive malnutrition unless a delicate balance is maintained between tradition and evolution of this cultural practice.

[8] MuBhoff, O., Parlasca, M.C., & Qaim, M. (2020). Can Mobile Phones Improve Nutrition Among Pastoral Communities? Panel Data Evidence from Northern Kenya. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 51(3), 475-488. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/agec.12566>



County Budgeting

The county governor's manifesto prioritizes food and nutrition, but the county's budget doesn't reflect that goal.^[9] Rather, funds are allocated to supporting livestock, while only 18.3% of the Samburu's KSH 3.3 billion budget was marked for food security initiatives, with another 26.21% for crop diversification and management.

During the 2018-2022 CIDP period, most of the money for food security initiatives was for infrastructure development such as irrigation schemes or structures for agricultural shows, etc. (see table below)

PROGRAM	AMOUNT IN KES	(%) OF THE TOTAL BUDGET
Administration, Planning, and support services	177,400,000	5.26
Livestock Policy Development & Capacity Building	33,000,000	1.03
Livestock Production & Management	212,710,000	6.63
Livestock Marketing and Range Management	407,000,000	12.69
Management of livestock diseases and conditions	542,350,000	16.90
Leather development industry	64,125,000	2.00
Education extension and trainings	286,150,000	8.92
Crop Development & Management	841,000,000	26.21
Food security initiatives	587,000,000	18.30
Management and Development of Fisheries	57,745,000	1.80
TOTAL	3,375,480,000	100%

Table 2: Analysis of program budget for the Agriculture, Livestock Development, Veterinary Services and Fisheries Department for the period 2018-2022

FOOD SECURITY INITIATIVES (ACTIVITIES)	ALLOCATION IN KES (2018-2022)
Start 8 small irrigation schemes	240,000,000.00
Establish an Agricultural Showground 10 structures	50,000,000.00
Install 150 Green houses, 10 for each ward together with other stakeholders	80,000,000.00
Establish 15 water conservation structures for agriculture	75,000,000.00
Construction of 5 cereal stores	30,000,000.00
Establish soil and water management structures - 150 sites	75,000,000.00
Facilitate formation of 6 farmer cooperative groups	6,000,000.00
Start 2 canning agro-processing plants	25,000,000.00
Establish a departmental Monitoring and Evaluation System	6,000,000.00
Sub-Total Food Security Initiatives sub-program	587,000,000.00
Grand Total - Agriculture, Livestock Development, Veterinary Services and Fisheries	3,375,480,000
% share of Food security Initiatives	17.39%

Table 3: Analysis of Food Security Initiatives Budget Allocations 2018-2022. Source: 2018-2022 CIDP.

^[9] The Governor's Manifesto outlines the key pillars that need to be afforded appropriate focus through the period of 2018-2022. These are contained in the CIDP outlined as the 3 strategic thrust areas that should stimulate the entire service delivery impetus in the county as Food Security, Health care and Education.

All budgets result from negotiations where competing priorities play out.

Some interviewees felt that politicians like the easy mileage of populist statements and handouts from food relief programmes. But county technical officers tend to push for preventive programs or efforts to diversify livelihoods. Assembly members have the actual budget powers, but they like infrastructure projects, which they sometimes pay for by steering money away from essential service departments and into Ward Development Funds that are easy to direct to pet projects.

Tensions also emerge between front-line workers in the field and policymakers. One county director said front-line officers who do the actual service delivery have a good view of the right mix of inputs required to improve nutrition. But they have limited powers to influence the budget. Technical officials, due to their power over the purse, and proximity to the headquarters can deny front-line officials basic resources like transportation.

Lack of data also makes budgeting hard, as officials struggle to link plans to outcomes. Challenges in identifying stunting and wasting exist across the county, especially in very remote settings health workers can't easily reach. In such settings, children often have poor access to health care. Newborns may not be measured, or their birth date may not be documented, complicating later efforts to measure their growth. Children often do not visit health facilities, because there are limited numbers of facilities and they are hard to access. Even when a child is born in a health facility, the risk factor measurements for stunting tend to be normalized by a cultural belief that Samburu women tend to give birth to short children characterized by low weight. All these factors and lack of data limit proper planning for programs to address malnutrition.

Even if funds flowed smoothly, corruption drains resources and causes programs to founder. For example, a 2014 county Agriculture Department program bought 30 tractors for farmers' groups. Currently none are currently operational.

County governance could also be improved by imposing deadlines for goals. For instance, the County Agriculture Sector Plan calls for investment in crop production and agri-nutrition, yet there is no single demonstration farm. Samburu county communities are not accustomed to the consumption of nutritious foods, especially from plants, and hence the need to demonstrate how to grow them and prepare them as food.

A community health volunteer pointed out that breastfeeding mothers face impossible decisions about whether to feed or to fetch water or firewood, as well as caring for small animals including sheep and goats. Interventions to improve child nutrition should help mothers to free their time for breastfeeding.



Coordination challenges

The inconsistent transfer of powers from the national government to the county government has caused considerable gaps, often about finances, but also about oversight and the mandates of various entities.

For example, the Constitution divides responsibility for disaster management both to the national and county governments. In practice, the county does not allocate enough resources to deal with severe droughts, hoping that the national government will come to its aid. National government maintains a more sophisticated infrastructure for weather forecasts and disaster preparedness, but systems are not yet entrenched for the county to access that information.

The National Government Coordination Act, 2013 created a network of national government officials who work at the county level, with the goal of coordinating functions. This creates a parallel power structure, in particular in the offices of the chiefs. Chiefs and the county commissioner could be key to fighting malnutrition. The chief's office is particularly critical in mapping vulnerable households and in speaking to communities about better nutrition.

Responsibility for nutrition is split among county departments of Agriculture, Health and Education. This institutional "homelessness" leads to rivalries and competition for resources. With programming split along department lines, finding unified ways of measuring results is complicated. Policymakers and planners can't identify drivers of stunting or devise appropriate interventions because data is scattered.

Coordination with multilateral organizations and international NGOs is also lacking, despite lip service to the need for multi-sectoral approaches. Some NGOs are driven by a view of the persistence of malnutrition as an opportunity to remain in business. This is demonstrated by several features: their budgeting system, which allocates more funds to administration cost as opposed to service provision, maintaining a heavy bureaucracy in their headquarters, and maintaining multiple site offices that drive up operational costs.

Part of the problem is that county government is grossly understaffed, according to a County Director of Health. There are currently 12 nutritionist personnel out of the required 62. Several interviewees noted tensions between patronage appointments and merit-based hiring.

Public participation

Civil society struggles in Samburu. The Kenyan Constitution requires citizen involvement at all stages of the political process, but this is complicated due to the low schooling and literacy levels in the county. Adding to the challenge is the poor transport network which makes it challenging to hold events in all of Samburu's 108 villages.

Civil society is critical especially for purposes of answerability and enforceability. The power balance between CSOs and the Samburu County Government is very constrained. There is a dearth of local CSOs that drive accountability in nutrition. A non-state actors mapped study by AHADI^[10] showed that most CSOs and foundations focus on service delivery; since they are founded by politicians, they have been turned into vehicles for political mobilization. There is therefore no sustained accountability.

[10] USAID Kenya/East Africa through the Agile & Harmonized Assistance to Devolved Institutions (AHADI) undertook the NSA mapping exercise. The exercise sought to generate data on NSAs on the following parameters: location, contact information, scope of operation, organizational structure, functions, operations including interactions with citizens and CGs, mode of implementing activities, financing, NSA capacity to engage with county governments and administration of the NSA.



Challenges

Bureaucratic Inertia

Previous governments ignored Samburu for decades. Bureaucratic inertia is difficult to overcome, especially with the lack of coordination widely decried by our interviewees. Because malnutrition is most severe in very poor and remote areas, the problem too easily remains hidden. Nawiri needs to be aware of this and hence be strategic with regard to programming activities that consider allocating resources to improve the county government's capacity in efficient program management.

Weak Political Will

The governor has made food security one of his three top priorities, which could galvanize the county to focus on malnutrition, if more of the political elite throw their weight behind it. Without a permanent nutrition office in the county executive, future governors could shift priorities to other areas.

County Development Planning

Weather forecasting and Famine Early Warning Systems (FEWS) are yet to be incorporated in the county planning framework. This leaves programming open to knee-jerk responses when predictable crises arise.

Climate Change

Climate change, resulting in more frequent and more severe droughts, threatens any progress in reducing malnutrition.



Opportunities

Devolution

The 2010 Constitution establishes public participation as a bedrock principle, and enshrines the rights of Kenyans to access services and enjoy social and economic development throughout the land. These provisions create new space for USAID Nawiri to partner with the county in improving service delivery, including through supporting Ward Planning Committees as a forum that fosters community involvement.

Farming

The governor has made food security one of his three priorities. Partnerships work better when the partner has already placed the issue on the agenda, and this signals an openness to initiatives to boost food production and household incomes. For USAID Nawiri, more is required to ensure vulnerable households benefit from the improved food production and access to food by improving distributional mechanisms. Similarly, an opportunity exists for USAID Nawiri to partner with the county government to launch interventions such as social protection (cash transfer) to supplement vulnerable household incomes levels especially in times of shock.

The Community Health Services Act

The proposed law would create a new ecosystem for USAID Nawiri's work, including new mechanisms to ensure that the community health system is working. This would also provide a way to empower households in nutrition health, and give the county an explicit legal commitment to facilitating community health.

Land Reforms

The process of demarcating land under ongoing national reforms has begun in Samburu. Once land is registered and deeds issued, the new right holders may be able to invest in the property and reap benefits. More people may be willing to invest in crop farming, which increases prospects for Nawiri to design interventions to expand livelihoods.

Lessons from COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the essential nature of health and nutrition services. Momentum from the focus on public health could help reorient planning and service delivery so that nutrition and health care are placed as central pillars to support social welfare and wellness.

Migration to Towns

As more people move to Samburu's towns, informal settlements are spreading around Maralal and Archers Post. While these areas present new challenges around poor spatial planning and poverty, they also present the opportunity to reach a more densely populated community of former nomads.

More kinds of food are available in towns, mostly dependent on cash exchange but with the potential for kitchen gardens. The opportunity lies in teaching people how to access and use new foods, and to grow their incomes.^[1]

Migration to towns also opens the possibility of providing clean water and sanitation to more people. Samburu Water and Sanitation Company says it wants to extend services around towns.

People in towns are exposed to new information and other cultures, which could aid in learning about new foods and nutrition. And since new town residents tend to travel back to the village almost every weekend, they can carry their new knowledge with them and become ambassadors of change.

^[1] The Food and Agriculture Organization (2010), Food and Nutrition Security in Urban Environments http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_security_en.stm



Education and Paid Work for Women

Creating educational and employment opportunities for women would give them more control over household resources and better ways to supplement their diets by buying more varied foods.

Accountability and Leveraging on Representative Politics

The creation of the County Assembly under the devolved county government gives an opportunity to strengthen accountability, particularly in budget oversight for nutrition programs. Lawmakers can also be invited to work with community activities, which they can use their positions to spearhead.

Supporting the establishment of community-level structures such as Ward Planning Committees is also critical in increasing public involvement in both planning and informing government priorities. These structures also help hold authorities accountable for service delivery.



PATHWAYS OF CHANGE & POSSIBLE ENTRY POINTS

Community Health Systems

Samburu's legal environment places community health at the centre of development goals, and calls specifically for preventive measures that can be used to address malnutrition. Support for community health is consistent with both national and county frameworks, and the county's desire to expand the role of community health workers can lead to critical investments and coordination both on the ground and among government agencies.

Participatory Governance

It is difficult to set meaningful priorities and to achieve the right level of ownership for public policy without involving citizens. USAID Nawiri can support citizen participation in political discourse on nutrition and related topics, such as diversifying household incomes. This can be done through incorporating citizen participation in many of the activities USAID Nawiri will support, as well as strengthening the capacity for citizen participation. A proposed intervention for USAID Nawiri could be working with the county's lower level structures to establish Ward Development Planning Committees that are composed of community members. This is a strategic platform that has been supported by another Mercy Corps program, the Livestock Markets Systems, to involve communities in the planning process and to hold the county accountable during service delivery. That aspect of local governance was not fully researched for this report, but warrants further consideration. Support for nutrition education to women and men, including through integration in the formal education system is also a means for developing such capacity.

Market Systems

Markets are an efficient way to get food to consumers. Supporting market systems can be done through diversifying pastoralist incomes, strengthening food production systems, value addition, marketing, cooperatives, and supporting the county government to take policy actions that support development of private enterprise, specifically development of markets.

Strengthening Coordination

Poor coordination hampers many useful interventions to address food security and nutrition challenges. An example of an entry point is strengthening of ward planning committees and community networks to oversee resilience interventions in the communities would greatly improve ownership and coordinated implementation. Strengthening existing platforms like MSP and others to champion and advocate for multisectoral programming around nutrition service provision will also improve outcomes overall.

Cultural Institutions

Collaboration with cultural institutions like councils of elders opens possibilities to work with traditional practices like moranism towards fighting malnutrition. Willing partners need to be identified, as changes recommended from within traditional institutions are more likely to find acceptance.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID Nawiri proposed to use the conceptual framework for Acute Malnutrition in Africa's Drylands as the basis for the design of activities that are community-driven and responsive to a theory of change that posits that:

A stable and resilient nutrition-enabling environment, monitored by formal institutions able to learn and adapt to scale the most effective interventions to reach the most vulnerable and food insecure households, will help maintain food security despite exposure to shocks and stresses and contribute to a sustainable reduction in persistent acute malnutrition.

The success of USAID Nawiri depends on, among others, the extent to which the county government's service delivery prioritizes investments in nutrition and nutrition-sensitive sectors. USAID Nawiri's political advocacy must demonstrate the importance of a sustainable reduction in PAM to the future growth, development and opportunity of the county's residents. USAID Nawiri must consider audiences for this information and the need for the right mix of incentives for each of those audiences, including the private sector.

USAID Nawiri's engagement must demonstrate the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to PAM that incorporates commitments from governance systems, encourages citizen engagement and accountability, and right-sized technical solutions that consider social, cultural and political economy dimensions.

USAID Nawiri must identify spaces of influence to capture the attention of key actors to prioritize sustainable reduction of PAM. Coordination meetings (led by government, with the inclusive participation of other key stakeholders) are one such space, in which USAID Nawiri can both encourage co-creation of a research agenda and present evidence that emerges from that agenda. USAID Nawiri ought to be conscious of the blind spots, particularly those within the realm of informal institutions and actors since they have the advantage of real experience of suffering acute malnutrition and as recipients or lack thereof of the interventions.

USAID Nawiri must invest in supporting the diversification of household incomes, in a way that helps families shield themselves from shocks and stresses. New peri-urban neighbourhoods must be included, as well as rural areas. As part of its continuing collaboration with government partners, USAID Nawiri must invest in innovative capacity strengthening initiatives that leave behind stronger institutions, not just stronger individuals. For example, USAID Nawiri should consider directly supporting a stronger M&E function within the governor's office and the departments responsible for nutrition in order to better demonstrate results and influence the direction of nutrition investments through better generation of evidence and translation of policies into action.

Annex 1

Key Informant Interview Guide

1. How would you describe the prevailing economic situation in the county?
2. How would you describe the prevailing political situation in the county?
3. In your opinion, what are the causes of acute malnutrition?
4. What do you consider as the main challenges posed by acute malnutrition in the county?
5. What in your view has been the impact of acute malnutrition to the communities and households?

Probe for areas or communities most affected; sectors most affected and the reasons why etc.

6. Who is involved in addressing the challenges posed by acute malnutrition in the county?

Probe for the actors that have greater influence in nutrition discourse in the county, who are the service providers in food and nutrition and what do they provide. Who are the key actors in making decision on nutrition – resource allocation; the kind of support that they offer; and those that are likely to be opposed to measures to address the challenge of acute malnutrition in the county.

7. Is it the responsibility of the county government to address malnutrition? Probe about allocation of the nutrition function within county government structures, budget allocation etc.

8. In your opinion how effective is the county government in delivering services related to food and nutrition? Probe for quality of service delivery, beneficiaries, accountability.

9. What would you say are the performance and capacity issues in relation to food and nutrition?

10. How well does the county perform its planning, budgeting, and sectoral coordination roles?

Probe for what needs investment and improvements in planning, budgeting, and sectoral coordination.

11. What mechanisms do the county, communities, and households use to respond to the challenge of food and nutrition in the county? Probe for the capabilities that communities possess in addressing the challenge of food and nutrition.

12. What traditional practices of communities in the county relating to nutrition and food issues can be used to address acute malnutrition? Probe for community specific values, traditions and norms on food and nutrition.

13. What is your view on the rules and regulations that govern food and nutrition in the county and how these affect the ability of communities to address challenges posed by malnutrition? Probe on issues of laws in place, implementation, enforcement, food trade etc.

14. What can be done differently to improve the ability of the county's communities and households to solve the issue of persistent acute malnutrition? Probe for reasons.

15. Who communicates information on food and nutrition practices in the county?

Probe for dominant views, who shapes the discourses/narratives, advocacy campaigns, etc.

Annex 2

Interview Respondents

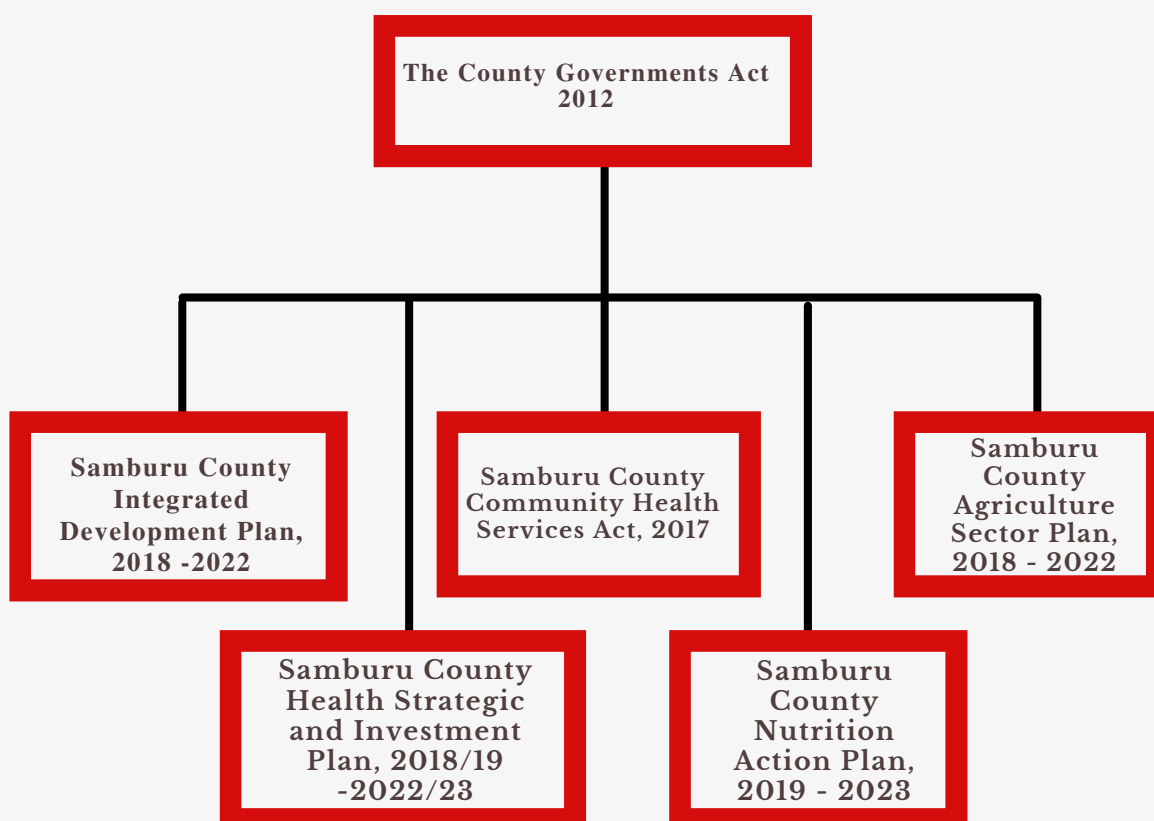
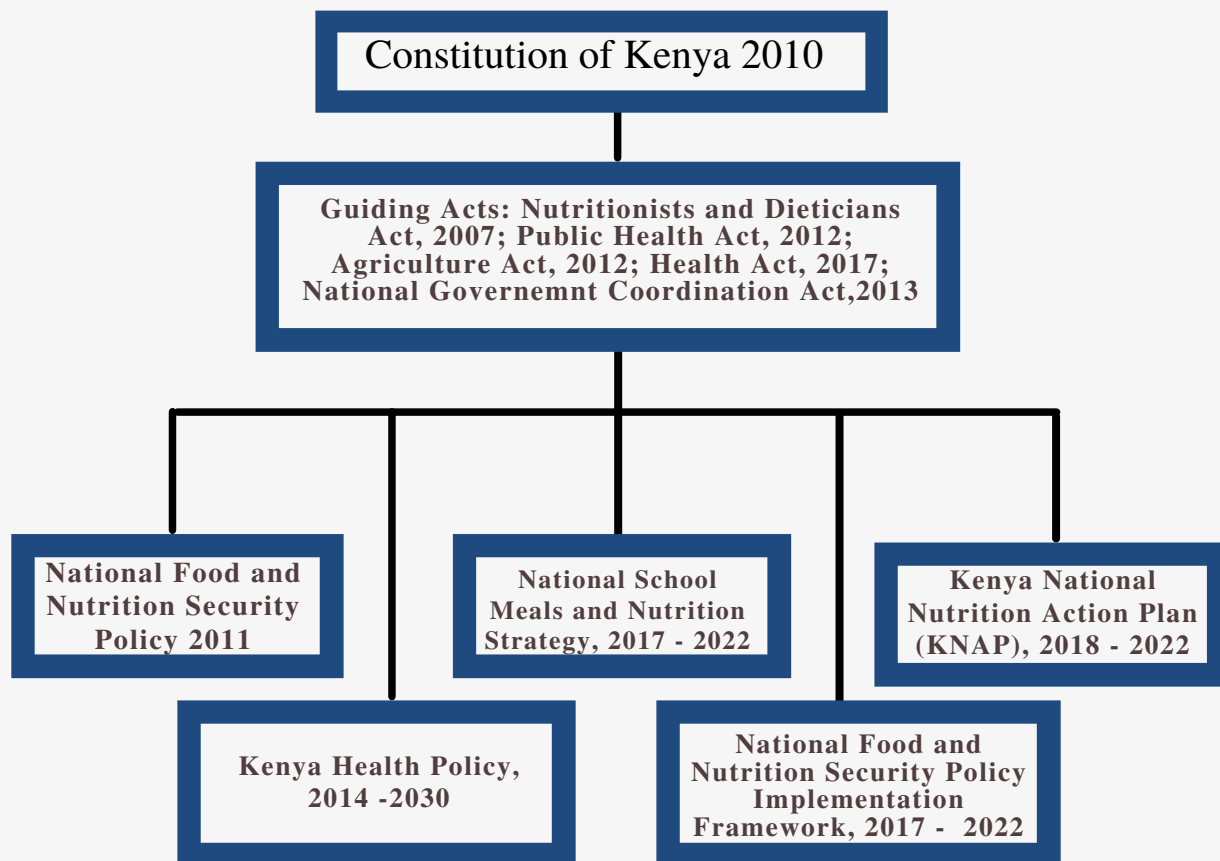
1. Hassan Mohammed – Health & Nutrition Lead, Save the Children
2. Darius Radcliffe – Chief of Party, Nawiri
3. David Rotich – Livelihoods & Market Systems Lead
4. Joseph Munyeri – Water Systems Advisor Advisor
5. Martin Mailosi – Monitoring & Evaluation Lead
6. Faith Thuita – Research Lead
7. Erin Lewis – Regional Technical Director, BOMA
8. Christine Forster, Strategic Learning Lead
9. Sherif Rushdy – Systems Advisor, PriAct
10. Rosemary Mbaluka – Deputy Chief of Party
11. Eliud Emeri – Executive Director, TUBAE
12. Annette Cherotich – Program Manager, World Vision
13. Francis Edome – Chairman, Lodwar Chamber of Commerce
14. Jacinta Abenyo – Women Leader
15. Amfry Amoni – SAPCONE
16. Joseph Imuton – SAPCONE
17. Ekai Lomorukui – SAPCONE
18. Elizabeth Edupon – SAPCONE
19. Joseph Elim – Politician/Clergyman
20. Agnes Lomodei – County Project Coordinator, LMS
21. Benson Musau – Nutrition Support Officer, UNICEF
22. Fred Ekitela – Executive Director, KARMO
23. John Erika – Team Leader, Turkana Extractives Consortium
24. James Njoroge – Trader
25. Elizabeth Lokolio – Chief Executive Officer, Silo Agrovet
26. Kasim Lupao – Nutrition Specialist, Africare
27. Mark Esekon – Program Officer, Africare
28. Patrick Lokitele – Program Officer (Health and Nutrition), Concern Worldwide
29. Mollen Onderi – Deputy Director (Gender & Youth Affairs), Turkana County Government
30. James Lokwale – Director (Industry & Enterprise Development), Turkana County Government
31. David Kosgei – Chief Superintendent (Water), Ministry of Water Services, Environment & Mineral Resources, Turkana County Government
32. Moses Nawoton – Deputy Director (Disaster Risk Management), Turkana County Government
33. Alice Akalapatan – Director (Family Health) Turkana County Government
34. Paul Lokonene – Director (Agriculture) Turkana County Government
35. Linus Ebenyo – Chief of Staff/Head of Strategy & Delivery Unit, Turkana County Government

Annex 2

36. Rebecca Lowoia – Political Advisor to the Governor & Intergovernmental Relations, Turkana County Government
37. Cosmas Ekiru – Sub-county Administrator (Turkana West), Turkana County Government
38. James Kooya - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
39. Robert Rotich - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
40. Douglas Aukot - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
41. Hosea Losia - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
42. Billy Wakatu - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
43. Trizabeth Oliwa - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
44. Peter Mitunda - Turkana West, Turkana County Government
45. Ekitela Lokaale – Speaker, Turkana County Assembly
46. AF Losikiria – Sub-county Administrator (Turkana South), Turkana County Government
47. Peter Erukudi, Principal Office Administrator (Turkana South), Turkana County Government
48. David Long’iole – Deputy Sub-county Administrator (Turkana South), Turkana County Government
49. Flemings Losikiria – Sub county Administrator (Turkana South) Turkana County Government
50. Benjamin Ebenyo – Chairman, Turkana Council of Elders
51. Elizabeth Akiru – Farmer, Katilu Irrigation Scheme
52. John Ekamais – Farmer, Katilu Irrigation Scheme
53. Agnes Ekori – Farmer, Katilu Irrigation Scheme
54. Felix Njagi – Nutritionist, Kakuma Mission Hospital
55. Jemimah Akiru – Nutritionist, Kakuma Mission Hospital
56. Cosmas Taale Ekiru – Ward Administrator (Turkana West), Turkana County Government
57. Dr. James Keben – Livestock Projects Coordinator, TUPADO
58. Bernard Aarii – Households Economic Strengthening Coordinator, Save the Children
59. Bobby Ekadon – Director (Livestock), Turkana County Government
60. Anthony Arasio – Aftya Timiza Coordinator
61. Barendina Lochampa – M& E Volunteer, Caritas Lodwar
62. Akai Locham – Community Health Extension Worker
63. Caroline Emanikor – Community Health Extension Worker
64. Mathew Logulare – DDG Coordinator
65. Zakary Otieno – Program Officer, Caritas Lodwar
66. Rev.Fr. Paul Areman – Vicar General, Diocese of Lodwar
67. Yusuf Aremon – Religious Leader, Council of Churches and Muslims
68. Mark Lominito – Health Systems Strengthening Advisor, Save the Children
69. John Lokoli – Director, Peace and Security, Turkana County Government
70. Lokol Sericho – Youth Leader
71. Jesica Akai – Community Health Volunteer (Turkana West), Turkana County Government
72. Pamela Abei – Community Health Volunteer (Turkana West), Turkana County Government

Annex 3

Samburu County Policies and Legal Hierarchy



NATIONAL

NAME	YEAR	KEY ELEMENTS
Kenya Health Policy	2014-2030	National development vision Food safety Adequate nutrition for all Nutrition is one plank in health plans
Food and Nutrition Security Policy	2011	Framed within 'right to food' Works with public and private partners Focus availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability.
National Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Framework	2018-2022	How to achieve the policy Calls for coordinations among public and private sector, NGOs, and others Measure results
Kenya National Nutrition Action Plan	2018-2022	Operationalizes framework Allocates responsibilities between national and county Budget: KES 38.4 billion/ US \$379.88 million
Nutritionists and Dieticians Act	2007	Regulates the training, registration and licensing of nutritionists and dieticians
National School Meals and Nutrition Strategy	2017-2022	Gives pre-primary and primary school students at least one meal a day
The County Governments Act	2012	Requires counties to develop sectoral plans Plans require annual updates Plans to be reviewed every five years

COUNTY

NAME	YEAR	KEY ELEMENTS
The Samburu County Integrated Development Plan	2018 - 2022	Identifies features of development, address' county's internal transformation needs, resource mobilization and management framework
Samburu County Health Strategic and Investment Plan	2018 - 2022	Details investments needed, for workers and infrastructure. Maps role for partners but does not link with other departments
The Samburu County Nutrition Action Plan	2019 - 2023	Coordinates and provides a platform for implementation of cost-effective nutrition activities and interventions
The Samburu County Community Health Services Act	2018	Establishes a community basic health care system and provides for capacity development for health volunteers and workers

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