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**STRENGTHENING POLICY  
AND INSTITUTIONAL  
GOVERNANCE FOR  
IMPROVED NUTRITION  
OUTCOMES:**

Political Economy Analysis  
of Turkana County



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Nawiri**



# **Strengthening Policy and Institutional Governance for Improved Nutrition Outcome:**

## Political Economy Analysis of Turkana County

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<b>ASAL</b>	Arid and Semi-Arid Land
<b>CNAP</b>	County Nutrition Action Plan
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>KNAP</b>	Kenya Nutrition Action Plan
<b>NRM</b>	Natural Resource Management
<b>SMART</b>	Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions





# Executive Summary

## Introduction

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Northern Kenya's arid and semi arid lands remain among the most marginalized parts of the world, with high levels of poverty, inequity, inaccessibility and morbidity observed across the climate change-ravaged area. Structural and systemic deprivation of financial resource, high-performing human capital, physical infrastructure and participation in governance are among the key drivers of the persistent marginalization of the populations in the north, meaning that children born in this environment are more likely to go hungry and less able to read than anywhere else in Kenya.

As the pastoralist way of life becomes less viable and more devalued, these formerly nomadic populations and their children are finding themselves more and more on the margins of peri-urban environments. Now considered 'communities in transition', as they move away from their traditional diets of meat, milk and blood, they remain nutritionally deficient. Among children under age five, this is considered acute malnutrition, and in Turkana, it is persistent, afflicting more than 25% of children born to persistently underfed mothers.

Much of the malnutrition is derived from the chronic poverty and persistent low income in the region, which limits exclusive breastfeeding, forces poor food choices and narrows food diversity. Poverty, backed by cultural, social, gender and age-related traditions within the county's communities, also limits exposure to education and outreach, thereby limiting the ability to make smarter food choices.

Cultural beliefs and practices, as well as suspicion of public health facilities due to mistreatment or poor quality care, also inform health seeking behavior.

The socially and economically disruptive effects of persistent conflict in parts of Turkana County, such as Turkana South, complicates the county's quest for freedom from hunger. Conflict also makes it difficult for governments and humanitarian actors to reach those in need.

Civil society is struggling to thrive in Turkana, with few organizations engaged in the necessary social accountability work on nutrition. Encouraging a shift from humanitarian to more development-oriented engagement will be critically important to make progress against malnutrition.

## Policy Environment

Despite these worrisome, persistent trends, sound and well-resourced nutrition policy remains of low priority in the country. Those regions with the greatest burdens remain as politically remote as they are geographically, with little coordination between national and county-level policy makers to improve the situation.

Good intentions to develop, implement and resource policies to address persistent acute malnutrition in Turkana notwithstanding – including one of the most robust County Nutrition Action Plans developed since devolution – implementation has been spotty and inconsistent.

Poor resourcing and coordination among actors at county level and with their national counterparts have exposed the gaps in a wider understanding of malnutrition as a development phenomenon and implementation concerns in both policy and programming.

Equally, the lack of support provided to counties to domesticate national policies without a coordination framework is stymying necessary progress in providing the communities in Turkana with more than the one meal per day that far too many are using as a coping strategy.

The current institutional framework for nutrition incorporates both national and county-level elements that manage to both over-legislate and under-serve nutrition interests – leading to the ‘homelessness’ of nutrition policy.

The strongest existing policy instrument through which to improve effectiveness and impact in the implementation of nutrition interventions, and to identify pathways to institution strengthening is the county's own County Nutrition Action Plan (2019-2023).

Run through the executive office of the county government, it aims to provide a roadmap for coordination across the multiple stakeholders delivering nutrition services both directly in terms of access to food and indirectly, in terms of aggregation and consistent collection of data about outcomes related to that access. The CNAP also seeks to balance nutrition-specific investments across health, food, WASH and social protection systems: a clear demonstration of the recognition of the value of a holistic, integrated approach to nutrition programming.

## Pathways of change

According to the insights of more than 40 stakeholders interviewed as part of this political economy analysis, Turkana has the ability to develop a complex and multi-sectoral approach to nutrition policy implementation and service delivery if it commits to coordination, co-creates and identifies areas to match policy with contextual and timely evidence, and works to evolve, expand or explore market expansion and diversification in terms of access to livelihoods or access to a diversity of foods.

In its consistent and long-standing work in Turkana, USAID Nawiri has identified the Multi-sectoral Platform for Nutrition as an important vehicle for collaboration in nutrition-relevant interventions that also consider health, water and sanitation, social protection and governance dimensions.

In doing so, the county could also challenge some of the prevailing cultural and traditional barriers – including the entrenched gender imbalances –

to access to both awareness and services as part of a much-needed evolution in dynamics and approaches to addressing the structural as well as emergent challenges that contribute to malnutrition.

Identifying opportunities to understand and use the channels of urban-rural migration could help to increase awareness about nutrition and prevent malnutrition, while operating within the specific cultural considerations of the county.

Leveraging the progress at national level towards universal health coverage, as well as robust learning emerging from the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID Nawiri's evidence could be used to inform the pursuit of greater resilience and sustainability in community-based health systems and community-led health interventions.

Preventive action at community level through critical nutrition investments would be evidence-driven and meet several of the already identified barriers to access to health, among them the lack of infrastructure, the lack of infrastructure, the lack of agency and information for women during and post-pregnancy, and the inability to transform knowledge about nutrition into smarter and healthier food choices.

The collection of existing policies at both national and county level that draw on or contribute to the county's Health Sector Strategic Plan is a comprehensive set of policy instruments through which to engage.

Efforts to address PAM could draw on the constitutional imperative of the Right to Food. Identifying and codifying legally enforceable rights adds a dimension of dignity and agency to the traditionally marginalized communities that make up Turkana county, and are an important entry point for developing advocacy and accountability skillsets within civil society and community-based organizations.

Finally, 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.





# Introduction

Social development, economic diversification and improved crop yields have all contributed to a slow and steady decline in malnutrition globally, confining the wasting and stunting of children to the least resourced parts of the world. Isolated, marginalized and impoverished northwestern Kenya is, unfortunately, of no exception. More than one in four children born in these arid and semi-arid lands is chronically and persistently malnourished, with poor health outcomes matched by limited opportunities for education, advancement and the ability to earn. In the country's poorest county by capita, Turkana, an estimated 25% of children will never know what it means to have enough to eat, to grow and to thrive. To the south of Turkana in Samburu, the situation is no better.

[2]

The consequences of persistent malnutrition reverberate beyond the household. National projections about the impact of undernutrition estimate that the East African country – considered the economic engine of the region – will lose some US\$38.3 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) to losses in workforce productivity.

[3]

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[1] Julia Dayton Eberwein et al, (2016) op. cit.

[2] UNICEF (2018) *Situation Analysis of Children and Women in Kenya 2017*, UNICEF, Nairobi, Kenya.

[3] USAID (2017a) *Country Profile: Kenya*. Available at: <http://www.feedthefuture.gov/country/kenya>.

Despite these worrisome, persistent trends, sound and well-resourced nutrition policy remains of low priority in the country. Those regions with the greatest burdens remain as politically remote as they are geographically, with little coordination between national and county-level policymakers to improve the situation.

Access to markets and diversity of foods is stymied by the failures of infrastructure and innovation, as is the opportunity to earn a consistent income beyond the husbandry of livestock. Rapid but uneven urbanization in these arid regions means that more than 50% of the population aged under 18 awaits an uncertain future amid climatic changes that are compromising even the historical way of life that finds little purchase among the young.

To better understand these challenges, and to explore why despite billions of dollars in emergency, humanitarian and development assistance the problems and consequences of malnutrition persist, an exploration of the structural and political economy context are necessary, in order to understand both the roots of chronic crisis and the enablers of resilience.

This applied political economy analysis seeks to identify and make linkages between the political, social and economic context and the problem of persistent acute malnutrition (PAM) in Turkana county. Recommendations that emerge from this analysis aim to be at the basis of a more nuanced, evidence-led approach not only to meeting the challenge of malnutrition but to providing guidance as to how to mitigate or overcome some of the persistent structural obstacles to inclusion, equity and development that keep the northern arid and semi arid lands in a near-permanent state of crisis.





# The Problem

Political economy factors have long been identified as crucial inhibitors to the effective and sustained implementation of nutrition policy. According to Balarajan and Reich, global clamour in the wake of disaster of acute food crises that result in pictures of starving children flashing across screens fails to translate into either meaningful policy momentum or improved nutrition outcomes.<sup>[4]</sup>

They identify six key elements of the challenges confronting effective nutrition policy implementation and the attendant consequent reduction of persistent acute malnutrition, or PAM: the prevalence of acute malnutrition in more than 15% of the population:

- 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 Turkana County, such limitations despite a relatively robust policy architecture around nutrition, have made it nearly impossible to improve historically nation-leading rates of PAM. Table 1 shows the measurement over five years of the percentage of children aged between six and 59 months with moderate or severe acute malnutrition.

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<sup>[4]</sup> Balarajan, Y., Reich, M.R. Political economy challenges in nutrition. *Global Health* 12, 70 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-016-0204-6>

**Table 1: Turkana County PAM Indicators 2014 - 2019** <sup>[5]</sup>

YEAR	GAM - 5 WITH 95% CI
2014	24.5%
2015	21.2%
2016	23.3%
2017	31.0%
2018	18.1%
2019	25.6%

Applying Balarajan and Reich’s assessment to Turkana county begins to illustrate the structural deficits in the county’s governance and uneven development that have contributed to the persistent crisis. Among the most trenchant deficits are continued gaps in the wider understanding of malnutrition as a development phenomenon and implementation concerns in both policy and programming.

According to the insights of more than 40 stakeholders interviewed as part of this PEA, this has translated, in Turkana, in the meeting of a need for a complex and multi-sectoral approach to nutrition policy implementation and service delivery with a near-total absence of coordination; a failure to ground policy in evidence; historical and current under-resourcing of both human and financial assets; and a failure to evolve, expand or explore market expansion and diversification in terms of access to livelihoods or access to a diversity of foods.

Equally, the cultural, social, gender and age-related mores and traditions within the county’s communities must be considered as part of the needed evolution in dynamics and approaches to addressing the structural as well as emergent challenges that contribute to malnutrition.

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<sup>[5]</sup> Turkana County Smart Nutrition Surveys 2013- 2019

# Methodology

This applied PEA was conducted as a structured approach to examining power dynamics and the economic and social forces that influence development. It is intended to elaborate on what the USAID Nawiri consortium knows and does not know as it implements a learning-driven series of investments in to designing, prototyping and scaling interventions to meet and respond to the drivers of PAM in both Turkana and Samburu counties.



## 1.1. Literature Review

A thorough review of theoretical and empirical literature including books, articles and reports on Kenyan and global nutrition policy and governance was conducted.

Empirical literature included the County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs), Annual Development Plans (ADPs), relevant legislation, and sectoral plans.

Other reviews included foundational documents 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.

## 1.2. Field Work

Interviews were based on a key informant interview (KII) guide (Annex 1), for semi-structured interviews with pre-identified respondents (Annex 2). In compiling the list of proposed respondents, care was taken to include traditionally excluded groups and particular interest groups. Field work was conducted over 10 days, with logistical support and introductions facilitated by the Nawiri consortium.

## 1.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was to the extent possible 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.

Analysis incorporates macro, sector and issue-specific dimensions, emphasizing the identification of entry points and opportunities for engagement, as well as addressing challenges and barriers.

At the macro level, the analysis focused on historical trends, political structures, economic and social processes. Sector-level analysis examined the political dimensions at the broader food and nutrition sector level, and identified specific barriers and opportunities. Issue-specific analysis identified possible policy or programmatic issues within the nutrition context.

## 1.4. Analysis of Implications

Analysis of implications followed a presentation of findings to stakeholders in Lodwar convened May 25, 2021. This stakeholder validation also sought to reflect on the implications of the findings for the opportunities availed under the USAID Nawiri program, and ensuring alignment with program implementation. Pathways of change and report content were discussed with the USAID Nawiri consortium on July 29, 2021.

## 1.5. 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
- This PEA is not intended as a review of the performance of any specific program, set of actors or policy, but as a snapshot of the dimensions of policy, economics, social and health influences that support or constrain PAM in Turkana county.
- Interview data collection was conducted over a five-day period in October 2020 amid widespread restrictions applied to contain COVID-19 across Turkana County. Stakeholders were wary of in-person meetings, even with social distancing, masks, and sanitization. A number of planned interviews were unable to take place even in a virtual setting, which narrowed the field and perspectives available to inform the analysis.





# Structural Diagnosis

Table 2 depicts the dimensions of this applied PEA.

DIMENSION	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*

Diversification within the economy of Turkana is limited, which exposes the county to economic shocks and underperformance. Two-thirds of the economy is reliant on livestock keeping, or pastoralism, which means that any climatic, market, or social shock – such as conflict – has a disproportionately high impact on any household’s ability to earn or save. Commensurately, revenues for the county from taxation are constrained due to the informality of the pastoral sector.

Economic opportunities beyond pastoralism are confined to charcoal burning (12.9%); petty trade (8.6%); crop farming (4.3%), handicrafts (4.3%) and fishing (2.9%). Such an economic monolith of pastoralism and animal husbandry contributes to the significant poverty confronting generations of Turkana county households.

The county’s dependency ratio is high, meaning that the dwindling herds of livestock are supporting an ever-increasing population of people.

Still, there is widespread antipathy to diversification of livelihoods, rooted in the cultural and traditional belief in pastoralism above all else. Even among those no longer able to live the nomadic lifestyle, crop farming is scorned; it is commonly said that only poor orphans “dig soil”.<sup>[6]</sup>

## *Political Marginalization*

Even before devolution to the decentralized county-based governance system in 2010, Kenya’s northern areas were persistently and deliberately marginalized and devalued. The pastoral lifestyle has been devalued both in the pre-independence and post-independence eras, with little support or development of social or physical infrastructure coming unless there were foreseen benefits for the central government. Unbalanced resource allocation for development of public infrastructure for water, electricity, sanitation or road networks means that the region remains generations behind in terms of access to utilities or even tarmac to link its rapidly growing peri-urban centers together.

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[6] Respondent in Turkana.

Limited infrastructure represents a critical inhibitor to sustained progress in Turkana county, and a contributor to many of the structural challenges that prevent growth, development or improvement in nutrition or other health outcomes.

Devolution could in principle redress some of this imbalance; however, the failure as yet to establish and fund an Equalization Fund<sup>[7]</sup> to meet some of the resourcing needs of the most remote and impoverished of Kenya's 47 counties puts these aspirations into the distant future.

## *Rapid Urbanization*

Rapid population growth coupled with diminishing returns and feasibility of nomadic pastoralism have since the late 1980s fueled urbanization across Kenya's north. In Turkana, with the county's youth turning away from pastoralism only to find few other opportunities, they are ending up in sprawling, mostly informal peri-urban settlements – an urban migration compounded by the recurrent and deepening droughts that are a product of the climatic changes the region is enduring.<sup>[8]</sup>

The urban centers are Lodwar (the county headquarters), home to an estimated one-third of Turkana's nearly one million people according to Kenya's 2019 census, as well as Lokori, Kakuma, Lokichoggio, Kalokol, Lorugum and Lokitaung.

Now known as 'communities in transition', these formerly nomadic populations have earned little of what was once considered an urban advantage by moving away from their traditional lifestyles and pastoral livelihoods. They remain nutritionally deficient due to a failure to access income generating prospects in these new urbanizing contexts, from a lack of skills, education and opportunity. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has identified cash exchange as the leading driver of access to food in urbanizing areas barring few exceptions where urban food production might contribute directly to household intake.<sup>[9]</sup>

Failures to purchase food consistently, therefore, due to the lack of a fixed income, are an important contributor to household food insecurity for these formerly nomadic now settled populations on the margins of a peri-urban environment.

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<sup>[7]</sup> Established under article 204 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010 to provide basic services including water, roads, health facilities and electricity to marginalized areas to the extent necessary to bring the quality of those services in those areas to the level generally enjoyed by the rest of the nation, so far as possible.

<sup>[8]</sup> Turkana County Government (2018). *Turkana County Integrated Development Plan II 2018 - 2022*, p. 19.

## Conflict

Turkana County has three international borders – Uganda, South Sudan and Ethiopia – and touches four of the other arid and semi arid northern counties of Kenya. There is a long history of cross-border conflict with neighboring communities, fueled by competition over natural resources. Depletion of those resources amid climatic shocks including recurrent and expanding droughts has heightened the likelihood of conflict and insecurity.

Such conflict situations produce widespread malnutrition and negative health outcomes among vulnerable groups (children, women and the elderly),<sup>[10]</sup> contributing highly to adverse nutrition outcomes across Turkana county.

## High Household Poverty

Turkana is the poorest county in Kenya, with roughly eight in ten of its nearly one million inhabitants living below the poverty line: more than double the national average.<sup>[11]</sup> In 2015, 35% were reported in the poorest wealth quintile and 35.8% in the second poorest, according to a FinAccess household survey (FSD, 2015).

Poverty is also unequal, afflicting female-headed houses, which represent about 25% of households, more profoundly than others, due to the high gender inequality index. Female-headed households are unable to derive even the income from the main economic mainstay of animal husbandry as they are not allowed to own cattle without having a son or a male herder in their employ. Efforts to address the gender dimensions of pastoral poverty are met with suspicion, viewed as ‘interfering with the cultural status quo’ where men dominate.<sup>[12]</sup>

Poverty is a critical driver of persistent and chronic food insecurity and malnutrition, as not only does it limit a household’s purchasing power but also the diversity and availability of foodstuffs in the marketplace. Few commercial providers are willing to shoulder the risk of overcoming the infrastructural deficits to reach the remote region where their products will find no purchase.

Persistent low income is correlated to persistent poor nutrition at all stages of life. It limits exclusive breastfeeding rates, forces poor food choices and narrows food diversity. It also limits exposure to education and outreach, which contributes to the ability to make smarter food choices.

While wage labor is emerging as a livelihood generator for those in the communities in transition in peri-urban environments, far too many households find themselves choosing between eating a diverse array of foods or ensuring each member has access to at least some food.<sup>[13]</sup> This means that in many cases, a single meal a day has become a coping strategy.<sup>[14]</sup>

## *Literacy and Human Capital*

Children in Turkana – identified as those between the ages of six and 13 – are among the least likely in Kenya to access schooling. For most of these children, it follows an early childhood that has few early childhood development or education markers, due to both the high levels of responsibility among Turkana’s women for household tasks as well as the generational legacy of illiteracy. Nine in ten of Turkana’s population over age 18 is deemed illiterate according to national standards.

According to a 2017 UNICEF study, on any given day 78% of Turkana’s school-age children are likely not to be in school. Just 50% of this age cohort are enrolled in any formal education structures – 53.2% for boys and 46.6% for girls: a far cry from the 92.5% overall enrollment at the national level.

Cost and household obligations are the key drivers of disenrollment of children from school; for girls, more than half of whom are likely to be married before they reach age 18, immersion into household responsibilities including childbearing is also a factor keeping them from the classroom.

Registration rates decline even more severely once secondary school transition is measured, and there is little recorded data to measure the number of enrollments into tertiary education.

The opportunities for participation in formal economic structures, political processes, citizen-driven initiatives and other metrics of social-economic development, therefore, are drastically curtailed for the majority of Turkana residents, contributing to the deficits in the development of their human capital as well as poor health and nutrition outcomes.

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[9] [http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/national\\_urbanization\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/national_urbanization_en.stm).

[10] <http://www.fao.org/3/w2357e/W2357E02.htm#ch2.1>.

[11] Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (2018).

[12] CIDP II, p. 26.

[13] Various respondents in Turkana.

## Access to Markets

The diminishing returns of pastoralism as well as the cultural and geographic limitations on agriculture have sent most residents of Turkana county, irrespective of wealth, to markets to source their food items. Infrastructural and resource deficiencies, however, mean that those markets are insufficient to meet local food requirements.<sup>[15]</sup> Such gaps translate to high prices for even basic commodities, making trading a lucrative, though limited, prospect in the region.

Major constraints to wider trading are related to the absence of critical inputs – such as cash and transport capacity – and the paucity of infrastructure. Livestock markets are similarly constrained by high transport costs (25%); lack of markets (16%); long distances to markets (15%); livestock raids and insecurity (15%); low prices (11%), local theft (8%), mortalities on way to markets (5%), lack of market information (4%), and lack of capital to expand business (2%).<sup>[16]</sup> With markets being an important distribution channel for food access, limited capacity has direct and indirect impacts on nutrition outcomes and overall food security in the county.

## Political Economy

County officials consider that the marginalization of the region is most telling in the failure to link plans for development with adequate resourcing. Equally, the failure to develop and deploy accurate and timely data to demonstrate the chronic nature of the crisis confronting the county has compromised any political will to make malnutrition a signature political issue.<sup>[17]</sup>

Much of the marginalization, however, comes from the legacy of neglect that persists in terms of the way the remote north is viewed by the rest of the country. Devolution, in this regard, has yet to yield much in the way of rapprochement.

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[14] Respondent in Turkana.

[15] Alessandro de Matteis (2006) *Market Functioning in Turkana District, Kenya*. Oxfam (unpublished).

[16] George Matete & Conisia Shumba (2018) *Market-driven value chain for the livestock sector: Turkana County Report*. Oxfam/European Union, p.

[17] Interviews with several middle-level county government officials.

[18] Constitution of Kenya, 2010, article 6(2).

[19] Constitution of Kenya, 2010, article 43(c).

## *Institutional and Implementation Framework*

Kenya's 2010 constitution established a system of cooperative governance in which the national and county governments are “distinct and inter-dependent” and are required to conduct their mutual relations based on “consultation and cooperation”.<sup>[18]</sup> Within that Constitution, however, are a number of provisions that seek to redress inequity and mandate dignity in the form of a robust Bill of Rights. Among them is the right to “...to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality”.<sup>[19]</sup>

How this translates into policy, however, remains complicated. The current institutional framework for nutrition incorporates both national and county-level elements that manage to both over-legislate and under-serve nutrition interests – leading to the ‘homelessness’ of nutrition policy characterized by Balarajan and Reich.

The line management of national government interests and functions related to nutrition are coordinated by the Ministry of Health, through its Department of Preventive and Promotive Health into the Division Family Health’s Nutrition and Dietetics Unit. Collaboration across ministries includes Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives; Education; Labor and Social Protection; Devolution and ASALs; and Water, Irrigation and Sanitation.

Institutional coordination between these national structures and the county structures winds through Turkana’s county government structures into the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, through the Division of Family Health, under the County Director of Health: Preventive and Promotive. Coordination beyond the health sector was not explicitly clear.

## *National Policy Instruments*

Per the Constitution, overarching policy guidance is the responsibility of the National Government.<sup>[20]</sup> In this regard, the National Government has developed various policies to provide policy direction on matters that directly and directly concern the management of nutrition in the country. The ones responsible for management, oversight and implementation of nutrition programming are the Kenya Health Policy 2014-2030, the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (NFNSP), the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Framework 2017-2022; the Kenya Nutrition Action Plan 2018-2022 (KNAP); and the National School Meals and Nutrition Strategy 2017-2022.

Many of the ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that the Ministry of Health collaborates with have also developed policies to guide implementation of various aspects of their mandates, which are also expected to influence nutrition outcomes in indirect ways.

Annex 3 provides a table of the relevant policies with a direct impact on nutrition service provision.

## Power Analysis

Understanding power relationships and dynamics both historic and current is critical to understanding how decisions are both made and enacted. For Turkana county, the preservation through isolation both imposed and organic of a unique cultural identity that rests on pastoralism and patriarchy would seem to be a significant barrier to the growth and development that the population needs in order to thrive in a complex and inter-related environment.

## Socio-political Norms

Social contracts between the electorate and their elected representatives appear to be based more on short-term access to cheap goods than significant investments with long-term impacts on the overall health and development of the population.<sup>[21]</sup> Patronage and fealty drive the public sector, rather than competence or professionalism, according to non-government respondents; one private sector respondent noted the prevailing sense of job insecurity due to reshuffles that are personality-driven than merit-based.<sup>[22]</sup>

County bureaucrats have also developed an interest in political leadership and elections, thereby making administrative decisions with an eye on future electoral outcomes. Where ambitions are no more than jobs and pay, county government officials actively participate in electoral campaigns, sometimes using county government resources. According to a number of CSO respondents, senior county government officials have also become accustomed to making procurement decisions based on expected economic returns.<sup>[23]</sup>

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[20] Constitution of Kenya, 2010, article 191.

[21] Interviews with various respondents in Turkana.

[22] Interview with respondent in Turkana.

[23] As one respondent put it, "Corruption is a normal thing for them."

## Cultural and Gender Norms

Turkana traditionally derived all of their nutrients from their livestock: a diet of milk, meat, and blood from camels, cattle, goats, sheep, and donkeys. Diets have evolved in concert with the decline of the viability of the traditional nomadic pastoral lifestyle, but rather than adding consistent supplies of diverse and nutritious foods, they have become compromised by cheap, nutrition-deficient commodities including maize meal, sugar and fats.

Entrenched inequity in households forces drastic competition. As men are the owners of livestock,<sup>[24]</sup> those who continue to migrate in search of pasture often leave women and children behind. In many of those situations, the need to maintain the livestock herd trumps the needs for survival of family members – even in situations of extreme hunger. Polygamy is aspirational even among those with the least amount of asset, as is a large family irrespective of the means to support it.

Cultural beliefs and practices, as well as suspicion of public health facilities due to mistreatment or poor quality care, also inform health seeking behavior.

Assisted births remain rare, guided both by traditional practices of homebirth and the importance of burying the placenta at the homestead as well as the difficulty in accessing facilities due to poor infrastructure.

Free maternity care offered since 2013 has failed to achieve much of an impact in Turkana, driven by the belief that ‘women who deliver in hospitals are considered cowards’.

During pregnancy, women are admonished to eat even less than usual for fear of having large babies and difficult labor and delivery, which contributes to a further compromised mother who may be unable to sustain a pregnancy, deliver a healthy baby or provide the baby with adequate nutrition.

Infant and young child nutrition is also informed by cultural and historic practices, usually passed down from mothers in law. Infants who are born at night are separated from their mothers until they are named, and their first food is not breastmilk but fat or milk from goats.

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[24] According to one respondent, women can only own chicken.



Lactating mothers are restricted in what they eat due to cultural taboos, and uptake of exclusive breastfeeding remains an introduced rather than organic practice, and is often interrupted by the burden of household tasks that fall to women.

Cultural and gender norms also have an impact on access to and uptake of nutrition. Dietary diversity is near-universally low across the county, with just four of 10 identified food groups -- fats and oils, added sugars, grain and grain products, legumes, and pulses – consumed by more than 50% of women in pastoral and agro-pastoral zones. <sup>[25]</sup>

That said, some targeted initiatives to improve maternal and newborn health outcomes have shown considerable success, demonstrating that efforts to consider cultural and social practices within the context of providing access to health care can be successful. For example, the practice of erecting maternity waiting homes has been met with success both in improving maternal and infant mortality rates as well as in changing cultural perceptions <sup>[26]</sup> around breastfeeding, infant care and development and immunization.

## Social Hierarchy and Relations

The Turkana social unit is called an *awi* and comprises a man, his wives and children. Some also include older, dependent women. Age is a key factor in the organizational structure of Turkana society, with a generational structure of leadership that relies on elders for mediation of disputes. Authority is generally decentralized; although there are clan leaders, collective action is usually decided at community level, with decision-making power remaining in the hands of the men.

Young men age in and out of the warrior class, a role that has historic roots but is increasingly becoming a voluntary position. Known as the moran, these youth are typically the footsoldiers in raids on neighboring communities. <sup>[27]</sup> Morans are local youth militias, who are well-organized, increasingly well-trained in military tactics, and heavily armed to protect valuable and highly vulnerable communal resources. <sup>[28]</sup>

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<sup>[25]</sup> Lilian Aluso Olimba (2018) *A Dietary Analysis of Women in the Pastoral and Agro-Pastoral Livelihood Zones in Turkana County, Kenya*. MA Thesis (unpublished). Available at [https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/509/522/RUG01-002509522\\_2018\\_0001\\_AC.pdf](https://lib.ugent.be/fulltxt/RUG01/002/509/522/RUG01-002509522_2018_0001_AC.pdf).

<sup>[26]</sup> [https://options.co.uk/sites/default/files/maternity\\_waiting\\_homes.pdf](https://options.co.uk/sites/default/files/maternity_waiting_homes.pdf)

<sup>[27]</sup> Ryan Triche (2014) Pastoral conflict in Kenya: Transforming Mimetic Violence to Mimetic Blessings Between Turkana and Pokot Communities. Available at <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajcr/article/view/113364/103081>.

These sometimes deadly raids deprive communities of nutrition assets, displace them from productive land, deprive them of breadwinners (whenever they result in fatalities) and increase their vulnerability to PAM.

Although violence against women and children was frowned upon traditionally, deadly clashes increasingly involve the indiscriminate killing of women and children.<sup>[29]</sup>

The socially and economically disruptive effects of persistent conflict in parts of Turkana County, such as Turkana South, complicates the county's quest for freedom from hunger.

According to FAO, conflicts disrupt food production through physical destruction and plundering of crops and livestock, harvests, and food reserves; they prevent and discourage farming; they disrupt food transportation systems; they destroy farm assets and capital; they conscript or entice young men to fight, taking them away from their work at the farm; and they suppress income earning livelihoods and occupations. Conflict also makes it difficult for governments and humanitarian actors to reach those in need.<sup>[30]</sup>

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[28] Fletcher D. Cox (2015) *Ethnic Violence on Kenya's Periphery: Informal Institutions and Local Resilience in Conflict-Affected Communities*. Ph.D. Dissertation (unpublished). Available at <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/217242354.pdf>.

[29] Fletcher D. Cox (2015) op. cit.

[30] FAO (2016) *Peace Conflict and Food Security: What Do We Know About the Linkages?* Technical Note. Available at [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/a-i5521e\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/a-i5521e_0.pdf). A significant number of respondents cited conflict as a key constraint to the county's ability to grow crops in parts of the country with agricultural potential (e.g. along the Kerio River)



# County Government Institutions

The county has developed a number of nutrition-sensitive laws and policies. Anchored in the county's Community Health Services Act (2018), these laws and policies dictate how nutrition services are meant to be resourced, measured and delivered.

The number of laws do not, however, lead to higher degrees of implementation or redress for failures in doing so. Stakeholder interviews repeatedly declaimed both a knowledge of the institutional frameworks and laws as well as methods to engage to ensure accountability for their implementation. There is room to consider a new approach, led not by the county governor's ability to implement but perhaps by the county assembly's responsibility for oversight and regulation.

Lack of ownership – again, the 'homelessness' cited by Balarajan and Reich – of the nutrition function compounds the challenges of implementation.

While nutrition is ostensibly located within the county's Department of Health and Sanitation, there is no compelling directive or oversight to ensure coordination with other departments. Clear dotted-line relationships with departments such as Agriculture, Education, WASH and Trade are in name only. Some would consider this dysfunction to be "useful chaos" for county government, so as to hide funding administratively for personal gain.<sup>[31]</sup>

In a county where poverty is so pervasive and literacy uncommon, it is unsurprising that financial incentives are so powerful. The humanitarian and emergency communities are contributors to this, either unwittingly or knowingly, injecting large sums into resource-constrained environments in short bursts of time while resisting engaging in longer-term, more administratively complex development investments and initiatives.

For government at all levels from the municipal to the central bodies, relief funding is popular because it allows for the swift and significant purchase of commodities for both human and animal consumption without strict procurement and tender guidance.

Planning and budgeting at the county level remains top-down, with public participation mostly window dressing and superficial compliance with the law instead of an opportunity for people to participate in their own governance and set priorities in constructive engagements with the county government.

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<sup>[31]</sup> Interviews with respondents in Turkana

Several respondents complained about how the public participation events focus more on the provision of information to citizens rather than an opportunity to listen to their preferences, priorities, and aspirations.<sup>[32]</sup> Plans are therefore not of good quality because they are seen to meet the public officers' expectations rather than the citizens'.

Strengthening collaboration with health-related sectors is a key policy objective, in pursuit of which the county plans to reduce the percentage of malnourished children (measured by the percentage of under 5s stunted and percentage of under 5s underweight).

The strongest existing policy instrument through which to improve effectiveness and impact in the implementation of nutrition interventions, and to identify pathways to institution strengthening is the county's own County Nutrition Action Plan (2019-2023).

Run through the executive office of the county government, it aims to provide a roadmap for coordination across the multiple stakeholders delivering nutrition services both directly in terms of access to food and indirectly, in terms of aggregation and consistent collection of data about outcomes related to that access. The CNAP also seeks to balance nutrition-specific investments across health, food, WASH and social protection systems: a clear demonstration of the recognition of the value of a holistic, integrated approach to nutrition programming.

Alignment with higher-level initiatives is also a priority of the CNAP for Turkana. It seeks to provide for and draw from peer learning and best practice for the most appropriate and cost-effective interventions to be brought to scale in order to achieve targets under the Scaling Up Nutrition movement: a global initiative in 6 countries to support all people in realizing their right to food and nutrition, to reach their full potential, and to shape sustainable and prosperous societies.

## *County budgeting processes*

A review of the resource allocation by the Turkana County Government demonstrates this misalignment of priorities. Allocations to the Department of Agriculture, Pastoral Economy and Fisheries were assessed at KSh. 11 billion over 5 years (8.6% of the total), as compared to the approximately KSh. 18 billion (14.1%) allocated to the Department of Health and Sanitation in the same period.

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<sup>[32]</sup> One respondent remarked, ruefully "They do not even take notes." (Interview with a Lodwar resident).

Irrigation schemes, initially hailed as a strong food security alternative with substantial investments, have dried up or are being ineffectively managed. Lessons are neither learned nor integrated into institutional policies, and production at scale remains a far-off aspiration; as one respondent said, they're 'embarrassing' to the county. This has meant that initiatives like the Katilu Irrigation Scheme, headquartered in Turkana South and envisioned to water the bread-basket of the county, have dried up and had little to no impact on the high rates of malnutrition. <sup>[33]</sup>

Competition for resources among county departments also complicates a coordinated approach to malnutrition, as does a lack of evidence about the drivers of PAM. Long-standing assumptions, such as the impact of improved access to clean water and tertiary sanitation on childhood growth and development, remain unproven by evidence. A lack of clarity about best practice for scale of public service delivery, particularly which practices work best in which geographic zones, means that planning is compromised.

## *Coordination challenges*

The incomplete transfer of functions from national to county level governments has yielded considerable conflict. In many ways this is related to finances; in others, it's related to oversight. Within the context of disaster or emergency management, this plays out in a number of ways that not only fail to benefit the population but have the knock-on effect of worsening health outcomes and contributing to a deterioration of the quality of life for most.

The current CIDP in Turkana has consistently under-allocated funding for disaster management, bolstered by the belief that in the event of crisis, resources from the national coffers will be deployed to support. At the same time, the county government is unable to benefit from the more sophisticated infrastructure for weather forecasting and disaster preparedness in order to be more deliberate in their planning.

Undermining of collaboration can also be individualistic and insidious. National government representatives have sought to deploy traditional chiefs to challenge the legitimacy of the county government in mapping and identifying the most vulnerable households and in managing the delivery of public information about behavior change to improve nutrition outcomes.

Low capacity among legislators at the county level also contributes to poor planning and resourcing for improved nutrition outcomes.

Interview respondents lamented the continued interest in flashy infrastructure projects at the expense of development of service infrastructure and essential service delivery – even in the identification of those that are the most vulnerable to PAM.

Among the essential services being cut is the registration and monitoring of births – a function both of the chaos in county service delivery as well as the default to home births. Birth dates and names are not consistently documented, which not only prevents identification of newborns vulnerable to stunting and wasting but also will limit these children from accessing administrative identification in the future.

Coordination even at the local level between the policy and service delivery components of nutrition-related programming is also beset by rivalry.<sup>[34]</sup> Front-line officials have insight into the right mix of inputs to improve nutrition outcomes but are resource constrained and with little power to influence improved allocation.

This contributes to considerable low morale among the limited skilled and experienced nutrition-oriented human capital within the county public service. Turkana’s nutrition programming, therefore, is grossly understaffed. The county employs just 85 nutrition staff – from an envisioned 1,344.

## Public participation

According to the SUN Civil Society Network (CSN), citizen engagement is better when it is associated with local organizations or social movements.<sup>[35]</sup> Community-based organizations, therefore, represent a bridge between an ill-informed and marginalized population and their nominal representatives, in order to ensure that the policy, plans, and pledges are implemented in the interest of the people and reach the populations most vulnerable to malnutrition and the drivers of all forms of malnutrition.

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<sup>[35]</sup> Turkana County Department of Health (2019) *Turkana County SMART Nutrition Surveys: June 2019 Report* .

<sup>[34]</sup> Interviews with various middle-level county government officials.

<sup>[35]</sup> SUN Civil Society Network (2020) *Accountability for Nutrition Think Piece* . Available at <https://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Accountability-Think-Piece.pdf>.

<sup>[36]</sup> <https://www.suncsakenya.org/>.

Civil society is struggling to thrive in Turkana, with few organizations engaged in the necessary social accountability work on nutrition. Encouraging a shift from humanitarian to more development-oriented engagement will be critically important to make progress against malnutrition.

The SUN Civil Society Alliance – Kenya<sup>[36]</sup> is an example of an emerging civil society network with potential for accountability work on nutrition, building on the 2012-16 Enhancing Nutrition Surveillance and Resilience (ENSURE) program that was established to respond to high levels of global acute malnutrition in Turkana, Wajir and Mandera.

## Natural Resource Management

Geographically, Turkana covers the second largest area in all of Kenya's 47 counties. However, 80% of the county is categorized as either arid or very arid posing a challenge to agricultural productivity, which in turn constrains the ability of the county to achieve food and nutrition security and thereby reduce malnutrition.

Turkana has a long history of efforts to develop its agro-pastoralist potential. Katilu Irrigation scheme was started in 1966 but came to operation in 1970 through joint effort of Ministry of Agriculture who provided recurrent costs and FAO who provided capital cost and technical personnel. The total land under irrigation is approximately 7,087 ha directly benefiting over 32,000 households, against a potential of 37,500 ha for the county.<sup>[37]</sup>

Since 2013, the county government has invested in expanding irrigated land, rehabilitating existing schemes and promoting new technologies, putting an additional 870 ha under irrigated crop production. The main crops grown in the irrigation schemes in Turkana are maize and sorghum. Most are grown on subsistence farms measuring on average 0.2 ha.

Turkana farmers grow maize, sorghum, millet, cow peas, and green grams. The main horticultural crops are vegetables, pawpaws, watermelon, and mangoes. Dates, guavas, grapes, lemons, oranges, and bananas have also been tried in the county with some success.

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[37] Turkana CIDP II, op. cit.

[38] National Land Commission *Advisory on Comprehensive Programme for Registration of Title in Land: Draft Report*. Available at [http://landcommission.go.ke/media/erp/upload/draft\\_advisory\\_comprehensive\\_program\\_booklet\\_for\\_registration\\_of\\_title\\_in\\_land.pdf](http://landcommission.go.ke/media/erp/upload/draft_advisory_comprehensive_program_booklet_for_registration_of_title_in_land.pdf).

According to the National Land Commission, Turkana County is a “virgin area with little or no adjudication at all”<sup>[38]</sup>. In much of the county, land tenure was mostly customary/informal rather than statutory/formal. This has ramifications for security of tenure and the ability of users to engage with the long-term sedentary land use patterns and activities associated with sustainable crop farming. Following consultations, the government has embarked on adjudication of the land tenure disputes:<sup>[39]</sup> a process that could have implications for future food security needs.

Rain is intermittent, erratic and unreliable in Turkana County, made more so by climatic changes that have brought recurrent and enduring drought to the region. Rain usually comes in brief, violent storms that trigger flash floods, leading to economic loss, loss of life and social disruption.

The driest periods (akamu) are in January, February and September and the county is highly prone to drought. Degraded and reduced natural resources due to these extreme climatic events, can exacerbate conflict and limit access to nutrition. Vulnerability to disaster is a condition known to the entire county.

Impacts of climate change have been identified by the county government as some of the key challenges for implementation of programs and activities to ensure food and nutrition security.

This has also worsened the problems of resource conflicts and cattle rustling within the county and the neighboring counties. These adverse climatic shocks and their disruption of government performance hold prospects for the county government and other actors to adopt a “business unusual” mindset. This new mindset, necessitated by the disruptive climatic shocks, should be the philosophy of policy development and planning to improve nutrition outcomes.

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<sup>[39]</sup> Turkana interviews. See also <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/farmkenya/news/article/2001385692/relief-for-residents-as-county-begins-land-adjudication>.





# Challenges

## Disease

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There has always been an inextricable link between malnutrition and disease, as part of a vicious cycle: just as malnutrition can make a person more susceptible to infection, so too can infection contribute to malnutrition.<sup>[40]</sup> The risk factors associated with these health issues are poor housing, overcrowding, poor hygiene, lack of awareness, influx of refugees from malaria endemic conditions, high illiteracy levels, open defecation, dusty environment, food insecurity.<sup>[41]</sup>

With the county's inadequate capacity to handle nutrition-related NCDs, nutrition service delivery, TB and HIV, this disease burden puts significant pressure on the limited resources of the county and will continue to have an impact on its capacity to reduce PAM going forward.

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<sup>[40]</sup> Peter Katona & Judit Katona-Apte (2008) "The Interaction between Nutrition and Infection". *Clinical Practice* (15 May). Available at <https://academic.oup.com/cid/article/46/10/1582/294025>.

<sup>[41]</sup> Turkana CHSSP, op. cit.

# Dependence on Partner Funding

Due to historical and other factors, Turkana County receives significant donor support to development programs. By 2016, the total average funding for nutrition was in the order of US\$ 115million for both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive programs. Yet there is a long-standing impression that relief assistance (especially food aid) has not achieved enough, and cannot do enough, to move people beyond a need for aid.<sup>[42]</sup> With the advent of devolved government, county governments are being pressed to invest a greater proportion of domestic resources into development programming. Several respondents argued that the structure of aid programs seems to provide a perverse incentive that continues to foster dependency.

# Governance Incoherence

Collaboration among competitors for patronage, power and resource remains the single greatest stumbling block to a coordinated policy and service delivery approach. According to one county government respondent, “there is no sectoral coordination between WASH or other sectors and nutrition – even trainings are haphazardly done”.<sup>[43]</sup> Another said: “planning does not see nutrition”.<sup>[44]</sup>

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<sup>[42]</sup> Jeremy Lind (2005) *Relief Assistance at the Margins: Meanings and Perceptions of 'Dependency' in Northern Kenya* . HPG Background Paper. London: ODI.

<sup>[43]</sup> Turkana interview.

<sup>[44]</sup> Turkana interview.



# Opportunities

## Turkana County Community Health Services Act, 2018

If the Turkana County Community Health Services Act, 2018 is successfully implemented, it will establish a mechanism to provide community-based health services, including nutrition, delivered by community health workers and extension workers with roots in their own communities and the necessary cultural context to be responsive to enduring traditional and cultural barriers.

USAID Nawiri's interventions could be oriented toward not only the recruitment and training of community-based health workers but also toward the institutionalization of their knowledge within the county's own institutions.

However, the CNAP nutrition policy remains the strongest possible instrument to support the 'housing' of nutrition policy in the county, with a durable commitment to integration and a multi-sectoral approach to investment in, and management of, nutrition-oriented interventions.

## Land Reforms

Land tenure and questions about ownership and communal holding could be a constraint to development-oriented investment to improve nutrition outcomes. Agro-pastoralism ventures, especially at scale, will require significant land and improved rangeland management to achieve scale.

# Urbanization and Rural-Urban Migration

Rapid urbanization will require a differentiation in approaches to meet the three fundamental components of food security (availability, access, and utilization).<sup>[45]</sup> Access to food in urban areas is dependent on cash exchange, and some urban food production (such as kitchen gardens) contributing directly to household intake.

From the interviews, employment opportunities are primarily from the county government and the local businesses.<sup>[46]</sup> This translates into an expanded number of households as well as the potential for growth of household income levels in these areas.

People living in urban areas are exposed to new information and other emerging cultures faster than those living in rural areas. This is partly due to access to modern channels of information and the high interaction among urban dwellers. Urban-rural migration offers an opportunity to increase awareness about nutrition and prevent malnutrition, while operating within the specific cultural considerations of the county.

## Encouraging Accountability and Strengthening Institutions

USAID Nawiri as a strong government partner has an opportunity with technical and resource support to strengthen nutrition-related accountability and oversight, as well as improved budgeting and appropriations.

Activities could include evaluating the effectiveness of nutrition-related programming (coverage and equity), accountability for allocated funds, and capacity strengthening to reduce leakages and prevent wastage. This is an activity portfolio with several audiences beyond the county executive, including legislators at county level as well as public engagement for oversight and accountability, through structures such as Ward Planning Committees.

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[45] The Food and Agriculture Organization (2010) *Food and Nutrition Security in Urban Environments* . Available at [http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban\\_security\\_en.stm](http://www.fao.org/ag/agn/nutrition/urban_security_en.stm)

[46] Interviews with various respondents in Turkana.

[47] Young, H. (2019) *Nutrition in Africa's Drylands: A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Acute Malnutrition* . Boston: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University.

# PATHWAYS OF CHANGE & POSSIBLE ENTRY POINTS

Critical to the success of the USAID Nawiri program is the consortium's ability to coordinate with stronger and more collaborative institutions at the county level. Using that collaboration as the basis for the design and implementation of effective policies and programs, county-level actors from government, the private sector and civil society may then be able to confidently own, resource and carry those interventions to scale and maximum cost-effective impact.

Existing policy instruments and shared-ownership initiatives represent the most potentially viable entry points into already ongoing discussions, to demonstrate USAID Nawiri's willingness to be a supportive partner that brings its evidence, its technical capacity and its resources to bolster and transfer skills to its county partners' existing strategies for overcoming PAM in the county.

In using these existing policy instruments – chief among them the County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) and the County Health Sector Strategic Plan – and demonstrating the value of finding areas of alignment between nutrition and health policy most explicitly, USAID Nawiri could help set the county executive on the path towards ending the 'homelessness' of nutrition policies.

## Community Health Systems

Leveraging the progress at national level towards universal health coverage, as well as robust learning emerging from the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID Nawiri's evidence could be used to inform the pursuit of greater resilience and sustainability in community-based health systems and community-led health interventions.

Preventive action at community level through critical nutrition investments would be evidence-driven and meet several of the already identified barriers to access to health, among them the lack of infrastructure, the lack of agency and information for women during and post-pregnancy, and the inability to transform knowledge about nutrition into smarter and healthier food choices. The collection of existing policies at both national and county level that draw on or contribute to the county's Health Sector Strategic Plan is a comprehensive set of policy instruments through which to engage.

## Rights-based Approaches

Efforts to address PAM could draw on the constitutional imperative of the Right to Food. Identifying and codifying legally enforceable rights adds a dimension of dignity and agency to the traditionally marginalized communities that make up Turkana county, and are an important entry point for developing advocacy and accountability skillsets within civil society and community-based organizations. Those who have been actively engaged in the humanitarian supply of emergency assistance are already familiar with the core principles of the international, regional and national actors who seek to place dignity and rights at the heart of their programming, and could be supported in pivoting that dignity and rights-based approach to development-oriented engagements.

## Stronger, Better Coordinated Institutions

Competition for resources and power remains the most prominent impediment to implementing smart and effective policies that regulate and oversee the delivery of nutrition-related services and activities to the people of Turkana. Resolving those power imbalances and shifting the dynamics – whether in relationships between national and county-level bodies or among county actors themselves – is beyond the mandate and purview of the USAID Nawiri consortium.

However, its commitment to SMART governance, and demonstrating the value of SMART governance both to development outcomes and financial resource management could help chart a course for the constellation of actors engaged in Turkana.

Within the scope of existing development planning – whether at the national level with the Vision 2030 agenda or in the county’s own articulation of priorities in the CIDP or CNAP – there is clear guidance about how such collaboration should occur. Providing institutional capacity strengthening to make such collaboration occur more seamlessly could be part of the engagement by USAID Nawiri.

One immediate and local entry point would be at the level of ward planning committees: those local government institutions that are often omitted from higher-level policy discussions but integral to the actual implementation of policy-driven activities. Identifying and meeting the needs of those committees to oversee resilience interventions in the communities might be the catalyst for improved ownership and implementation.

# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

USAID Nawiri proposed to use the conceptual framework for Acute Malnutrition in Africa's Drylands<sup>[47]</sup> 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, how the county's service delivery prioritizes investments in and around nutrition. 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 right mix of incentives for each 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 factors.

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. 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 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.

# 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 is 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 poses 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

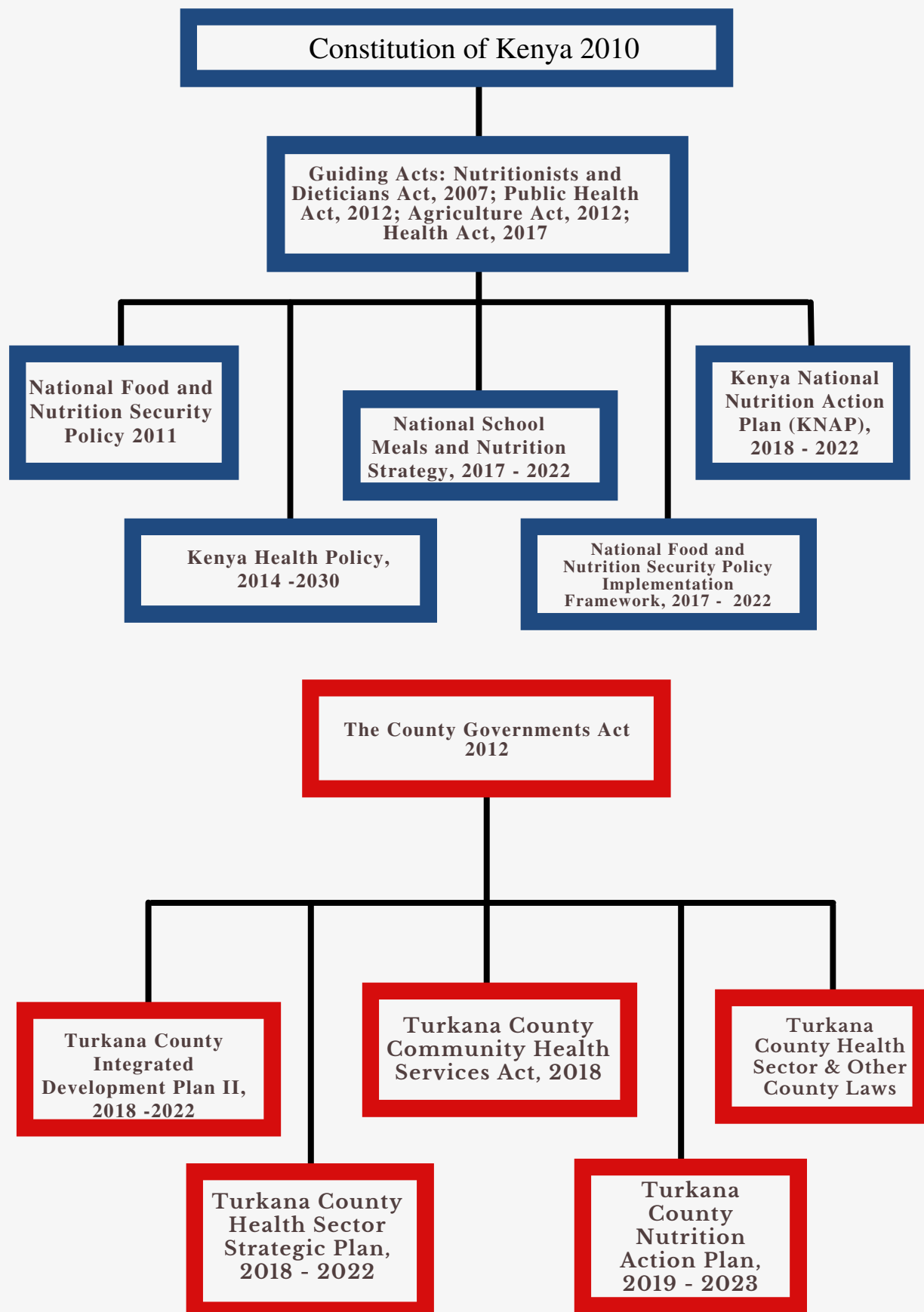
1. Hassan Mohammed – Health & Nutrition Lead, Save the Children
2. Darius Radcliffe – Chief of Party, Nawiri
3. David Rotich – Livelihoods & Market Systems Lead
4. Joseph Munyeri – Water Systems Advisor Advisor
5. Martin Mailosi – Monitoring & Evaluation Lead
6. Faith Thuita – Research Lead
7. Erin Lewis – 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 Agrovot
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

## Turkana 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 Turkana County Integrated Development Plan II	2018 - 2022	Identifies features of development, address' county's internal transformation needs, resource mobilization and management framework
The Turkana County Health Sector Strategic Plan	2018 - 2022	Elaborates county interventions, aligns interventions to CIDP II and National Policy. Commits Universal Health Coverage
The Turkana County Nutrition Action Plan	2019 - 2023	Coordinates and provides a platform for implementation of cost-effective nutrition activities and interventions
The Turkana County Community Health Services Act	2018	Establishes a community basic health care services system and provides for capacity development for CHV's and CHEW's

# CONTACT

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