



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



Photo: CRS USAID Nawiri /Anthony Nyandek



USAID Nawiri Learning Brief: Adapted Milk Matters Study

Background

This brief presents key findings from Nawiri's participatory analysis to identify appropriate context-specific, community-defined interventions that will increase milk production, directly or indirectly over one calendar year, particularly during dry seasons. Given the long-term changes as livestock ownership decreases, largely as a result of worsening, recurrent droughts linked to climate change, the study focused on both livestock and non-livestock interventions that will be integrated into CRS Nawiri's Phase II activities, as part of wider efforts to strengthen nutrition/ health status and resilience by improving the availability and access to livestock milk, especially among children and Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) in vulnerable communities in Marsabit and Isiolo Counties. The study was conducted among the Borana and Samburu communities in Sericho, Cherab, Chari and Oldonyiro Wards in Isiolo and among the Gabra and Dassanch communities in Illeret, Dukana, Maikona, and North Horr Wards in Marsabit. It involved joint analysis with livestock producers, mothers/caregivers of children under 5 years old and PLW in 16 villages. Based on in-depth community discussion and analysis, participants were asked to identify and prioritize interventions that will increase milk production over one calendar year and particularly during dry seasons. The results are informing the design of context specific livestock and non-livestock interventions to increase milk availability and access throughout the year.

Summary Findings and Lessons Learned

During the fieldwork, communities prioritized several livestock and non-livestock interventions to increase milk production, particularly during the dry seasons. Potential intervention areas included animal health, fodder, water, pasture and natural resource management, strengthening livestock and milk marketing and restocking, all of which could help to ensure children's access to milk during the dry season and drought periods. The design and implementation of related interventions needs also to consider several contextual issues, to ensure their intended benefit to improvements in nutrition and health outcomes of children and PLW, as well as their long-term sustainability. Proposed priority interventions include the following:

a) Direct Livestock Interventions

■ **Livestock feed to safeguard herds and sustain milk production in the dry season:**

Local communities suggested targeted emergency feed supplementation for lactating herds that remain behind (with women, children, and the elderly) when satellite herds migrate in drier seasons short term. This would target goats and cattle, as camels are less vulnerable, and sheep generally not kept for milk production. The intervention was considered significant in ensuring that lactating animals continue to produce milk, that animals marketed have better body conditions so fetch higher prices, and that animals are protected from infections and mortality throughout this critical time. In the longer-term, participants proposed improving fodder production and access to alternative fodder markets and improving grazing management. Key informants highlighted that while fodder was available in some areas (including Kinna and Kalacha Wards in Isiolo and Marsabit County respectively), including adequate supply and opportunities to fill fodder gaps in other locations, the distribution and market system for fodder remains underdeveloped.

■ **Improving animal health and productivity:**

Livestock diseases were ranked as the second most important factor affecting milk access and availability during the dry season, as they reduce milk yields and lead to mortalities. As a result, animal health interventions, particularly access to regular vaccination, treatment, and secure/ long-term access to other livestock inputs like medicines, were prioritised in all locations. According to informants, the situation has been worsened in both counties by the high endemicity of diseases, inadequacy of current preventive and surveillance measures by the county governments, poor/ minimal animal inputs (as above)

and the widespread unavailability of extension and animal health services in these communities. In Illeret, participants suggested improving the productivity of local breeds, through crossbreeding local (Dassanech community) goats with Galla goats, which are kept in similar environments by neighbouring Gabra communities. This intervention is believed to have a direct positive impact on local livestock productivity levels.

■ **Strengthening livestock and milk marketing:**

Improving milk marketing and increasing milk availability in markets through the formation and strengthening of women's groups/ cooperatives was also considered important. However, in a few locations such as Saru in Dukana Ward where milk surplus and spoilage are reported to occur in the rainy season, FGD participants recommended better preservation and value addition of milk. In this respect participants highlighted the importance of improved skills in milk handling, storage, and support for effective transportation facilities for milk and other livestock products. They further suggested support on market linkages and promotion, quality control and to ensure the safety of livestock products. Another option suggested was offering milk vouchers or conditional cash transfers to households with malnourished children and PLW, to enhance immediate consumption while also stimulating milk markets as a longer-term initiative.

b) Indirect Interventions

- **Livestock Cash Transfers (CTs):** This is one of the most common interventions in the study area, with Nawiri, the Hunger Safety Net Program (HSNP) and other government safety nets currently being implemented. At the time of the assessment, Nawiri was implementing 4-month of cash transfers, targeting 2,000 vulnerable households at KES 5,000 per month. Any CT interventions need to be complemented with other nutrition-sensitive interventions such as behaviour change communication (BCC) to help ensure better nutrition and health status and informed by stringent targeting criteria to ensure the underlying causes of milk scarcity are addressed in sustainable ways.
- **Strengthening income-earning opportunities:** Access to income to purchase nutritious foods was considered very important and the lack of alternative earning opportunities (beyond livestock) commonly identified as a constraint by women. Women suggested that the provision of small grants, business and entrepreneurship training/ support and strengthened market linkages are essential for income generation. Other opportunities identified included dairy goats, poultry, bee/ honey production and financial access through village saving and loans associations.

Applying the Findings and Lessons Learned

- The livestock and non-livestock interventions prioritized locally to increase milk production, particularly during dry seasons, have been outlined above.
- Ensuring the availability of fodder for livestock which remain close to homesteads during dry seasons was thought to reduce the time and labor typically required by women and children in particular, including for livestock feed collection and management. On improved commercialization of milk, it was observed that with the increasing prevalence of motorized transportation (bodabodas and matatus) of milk, women in Chari, Cherab and Sericho Wards of Isiolo County are being relieved of frequent travel to markets that adversely impact on childcare and other household responsibilities.
- While animal health interventions were said to benefit the family, women's FGDs emphasized that fodder supplements and milk value chain improvements will be of particularly high benefit in terms of increasing the value of their herds. The women shared they had control and access to all the milk in the households, allocating it to different uses. As a result, interventions targeting these animals for animal health, fodder and or feed supplementation, plus strengthened milk marketing, were perceived to be more likely to provide additional milk and income that will either increase own consumption of milk by children and PLW or provide women with income they can use to enhance their children's nutrition.
- Study participants offered a range of actions at various levels including production, marketing and consumption, all of which would serve to increase milk access and availability locally. Proposed interventions were categorized into two groups: direct (livestock) and indirect (non-livestock). However, to maximize their impact and ensure long-term sustainability, the importance of a multi-sectoral approach, achieved through more comprehensive and coordinated interventions, was emphasized. Also highlighted was considering the role of markets in the design and implementation of interventions; strengthening nutrition social and behavior change communication to promote positive choices through increased nutrition knowledge and supporting environments conducive to lasting positive, change, and including markets from design stage onward, as interventions are implemented. Proposed interventions seek to address malnutrition through two pathways; a) a consumption pathway whereby more milk will be available for children and PLWs in particular and b) an income pathway, whereby greater income from milk sales becomes available, supported by SBCC, to support the purchase of appropriate alternative, nutrient dense foods- as opposed to just cereals, the current norm.

Key Lessons Learned	Adaptation or implication	Link to the DIP or TOC
Prioritized milk supplementation interventions that will increase milk availability and accessibility to malnourished children and PLW, especially during the dry period	Support milk vouchers or conditional cash transfers to malnourished children and PLW to immediately enhance consumption, while also stimulating milk markets during dry periods.	P1 & P4
Prioritize livestock interventions to increase local milk availability, especially during the dry seasons.	Support interventions focused on improving fodder production, preservation and marketing and improving livestock health services, to enhance milk availability and accessibility during dry periods	P1 & P3
Prioritize interventions to address malnutrition focused on support to non-livestock and income generating interventions and activities	Support non-livestock interventions to improve women's access to income, e.g., women's group formation such as SILC/VSLAs, business and financial training and support.	P3 & p4
Implement gender sensitive interventions that consider the time burden placed on women, particularly during the dry season	Design interventions that allow women to earn reasonable income for reasonable effort and to reduce their work burden during the dry season in particular (e.g., support to alternative livelihoods, improved access to fodder and to water near homesteads).	P3 & P4

[See the full Nawiri Participatory Analysis and Co-Design of Adapted Milk Matters Interventions Report, for all sources cited](#)



This summary is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Catholic Relief Services, recipient of cooperative agreement no. [72DFFPI9CA00002] and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

