



USAID Nawiri Learning Brief: Government Sector Nutrition Policies and Strategies

Background

This desk review brief presents key findings on government sector nutrition policies and strategies, from the perspective of sustainably addressing acute malnutrition. The literature search focused on national level nutrition policies and strategies and on Isiolo and Marsabit Counties where Nawiri is being implemented. The results were used to inform Nawiri's Participatory Institutional Capacity Assessment (PICA) and Phase II design.



Applying the Findings and Lessons Learned

1. The extent to which national and county policies, strategies and action plans address issues of acute malnutrition

- **Gaps related to mainstreaming nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive approaches and cross-cutting** key vulnerability themes into national and county policies, strategies and development plans:
 - Although nutrition as a development issue is gradually being embedded in various policies, strategies and development plans at all levels of government, especially after the review of the 2013–17 version of the Food and Nutrition Security Policy Implementation Framework, there is still much to be done to ensure that nutrition and food security aspects are not just mentioned but actually mainstreamed in government planning, budgeting and implementation at all levels.
 - Most nutrition policies, strategies and plans have been heavily dominated by nutrition-specific approaches (i.e., treatment) as opposed to nutrition-sensitive (preventive) approaches.
 - Although most national and county level nutrition policies, strategies and plans have included vulnerability themes (gender equity, disability, youth, climate change, etc.), a few have not. For example, The Kenya Constitution 2010, the National Health Policy (2014–2030) and Marsabit Country Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP, 2019–23) need to consider the inclusion of climate change and seasonality issues, which significantly affect the populations in Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2011) is silent on disability, youth and leadership inclusion but does mention learning for reformation. Mainstreaming cross-cutting vulnerability themes like gender equity, disability, youth, climate change and environmental issues, remains key in national and county frameworks, policies and strategies on nutrition. They should be an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of nutrition policies and programs.
 - There are still disparities in how sectors and counties integrate nutrition into the programming and design of interventions.
- **Donor/ partner roles in addressing acute malnutrition:** The critical role of development partners and non-state actors is vaguely stated in national policies despite their significance, including from an institutional standpoint.

2. Multisectoral institutional and coordination structures for nutrition interventions

- *Weak linkages between vertical and horizontal coordination structures* - Multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition, as outlined in the Kenya National Food and Nutrition Security policy implementation framework (2017–2022) and the Kenya Nutrition Action Plan (KNAP), are coordinated at national and county levels, with defined vertical and horizontal linkages. Currently, however, the defined structures are not in place at national and county levels, leading to weak links between structures and sectoral committees, e.g., between the Nutrition Interagency Coordination Committee (NICC) and the National Food and Nutrition Security Council.
- There is no over-arching government structure that coordinates nutrition functions across ministries at national and county levels.
- There is no indication of a higher body (for instance the presidency, the prime minister or parliament), to which the National Food and Nutrition Security Council is accountable to. This limits opportunities to place nutrition as a priority on government agendas. Proposals have been put forward for a higher umbrella structure to bring county and national structures under, e.g., the Office of H.E the Vice President.

Applying the Findings and Lessons Learned

- **Recommendation:** There is need for a dedicated national multi-sectoral nutrition coordination platform to provide clarity around leadership and ownership, roles and responsibilities, as well as hierarchical alignment on who is responsible for results.
- *Lack of a legal framework on multi-sectoral nutrition coordination at county level:* At national level, the Kenya National Food and Nutrition Security policy implementation framework (2017–2022) defines the nutrition coordination structure, although most counties have not adopted the policy. Multiple other coordination structures also exist at county levels, including County Steering Groups (CSGs), which similarly lack an anchoring legal framework.
- *Unclear sectoral mandates and weak linkages across and within sectors:* There is need for greater understanding of sectoral nutrition mandates by each sector, including on how to ensure strong linkages across and within sectors, especially to synchronize activities, messaging, interaction and budgeting. Divergences (including in approach between various players) should be addressed, as well as frontline staffing challenges.
 - **Recommendation:** There is a need for an elaborate legal framework on county multi-sectoral nutrition coordination, to provide clarity around leadership and ownership, roles and responsibilities and hierarchical alignment on who is responsible for results.
- *Weak or non-existent sub-county and lower level multisectoral forums:* At sub-county and lower levels (wards and villages) multi-sectoral forums are largely non-existent. In areas where they do exist there are multiple structures, most driven by partners, which are poorly facilitated and need their multi-sectoral nutrition action capacity strengthened. Capacity weaknesses are also evident among some functions of county and sub-county nutrition coordination structures.
 - **Recommendation:** Subcounty and lower-level multi-sectoral forums need to be created, roles and responsibilities elaborated, capacity built, and accountability structures established.
- *Inadequate financing for nutrition:* The implementation of nutrition-related interventions is tied to sector budgets and allocations, with limited flexibility to complement efforts outside the scope of particular institutional budgets. Coordination committees need to address this critical gap, especially in the early stages of county and sector budgetary planning processes.
 - **Recommendation:** A sector-specific allocation formula should be put in place to ensure adequacy in financial and other support to multi-sector coordination efforts towards addressing acute malnutrition.

3. Analysis of political, institutional and governance capabilities

- Ending acute malnutrition by addressing policy and institutional gaps at sector levels, by strengthening collaboration with the county level including the private sector and other informal systems, will enhance the role of national government in leading the commitment towards more effective nutrition intervention implementation.
- Strengthening institutional alignment in the ASALs context requires deeper understanding of the problem (acute malnutrition), including by bringing the population to invited and claimed spaces where their voices can be heard.
- At present there is a high focus of effort at national level, with lean support at county level and limited impact at grassroots levels. Ultimately, however, the most critical institution is the household. Governance forces need to target households, engaging communities and citizenry in all stages of the nutrition value chain. Making the citizenry the center of governance would help keep interventions focused, context appropriate and impactful.

Applying the Findings and Lessons Learned

- Overall, while institutional alignment for health service delivery focuses largely on curative (treatment) aspects, multi-sectoral nutrition interventions require an inter-twined approach based on involving formal and informal systems of state and non-state actors to address the basic causes of acute malnutrition. The private sector and civil society are also critical in this effort.

4. Nutrition financing to address acute malnutrition

Inadequate financing for the Kenya and County Nutrition Action Plans (CNAPs)

- Multilateral and bilateral development partners have commendably supported the counties to develop their own nutrition action plans, which have helped cascade the national nutrition action plan to county levels.
- The past five years have witnessed a demonstrable bold focus at national level (under the Big-Four Agenda), including increased allocations to nutrition sensitive interventions. However, more work needs to be done.
- According to the annualized Kenya Nutrition Action Plan budget, the nutrition requirement for FY 2020/21 is KES 77.71 billion. However, only 52.8 billion has been earmarked, creating a shortfall of KES 24.91 billion (a shortfall of 47.1%).
- Financing architecture of the CNAPs is not tied to overall county integrated development plans (CIDPs). A mechanism is needed to ensure alignment between nutrition budgeting, action planning and implementation and overall CIDP budgeting and financing, including for key aspects like school feeding, irrigation, livestock farming and advocacy.
- It remains unclear whether resource mobilization for development plans and nutrition action plans is being done cohesively. At the same time, planning and budgeting for nutrition action and development plans at county levels need to be coordinated and a clear results framework is designed. This would enable tracking of progress and demonstrate the county's progress in addressing acute malnutrition through an array of interventions both nutrition-sensitive and specific.
- Building an enduring governance system remains a process, one that requires a well constituted and facilitated framework to coordinate effective implementation.

The lessons learned included below stem from the findings outlined above and from the evidence and knowledge gaps listed above

Key Lessons Learned	Adaptation or implication	Link to the DIP or TOC
Mainstreaming of nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive approaches, including cross-cutting key vulnerability themes into national and county policies, strategies, and development plans, is essential.	Nawiri is supporting the county governments to develop and operationalize various context-specific county policies and legislation, ensuring inclusion of nutrition specific and sensitive approaches, as well as of cross-cutting vulnerability themes.	LLO 3.1.2.1

There are still disparities on how various sectors and counties integrate nutrition into the programming and design of interventions.	Nawiri is facilitating the MSP-Ns to develop a Common Results and Accountability Framework (CRAF) that will ensure all MSP-N members integrate nutrition specific and nutrition sensitive interventions into the programming and design of sectoral interventions.	
Weak linkages between national and county level vertical and horizontal coordination structures; lack of an over-arching government structure to coordinate nutrition functions across ministries at national and county levels; and lack of a higher body to which multi-sectoral structures are accountable; lack of a legal framework on multi-sectoral nutrition coordination at county level; unclear sectoral mandates and weak linkages across and within sectors.	<p>Nawiri is working in collaboration with other partners (UNICEF, WFP, etc.) at SUN CSO level, to advocate the alignment of multi-sectoral coordination structures with the Food and Nutrition Security Policy implementation framework structure.</p> <p>Collaboration with other partners to facilitate institutionalization of the MSP-N; Best practices from other counties are informing these efforts and Nawiri-supported MSP-N TORs have been developed, detailing each sector's roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>In Phase 2 Nawiri will support the MSP-Ns to identify and officially engage the Governor and other key influencers as champions for multi-sectoral nutrition action; facilitating the counties to develop a CRAF for clarity around leadership and ownership, roles and responsibilities, and foster greater hierarchical alignment on who is responsible and accountable for results.</p>	TOC 0 3.1.2.1.5
Weak or non-existent sub-county and lower level multisectoral forums	Nawiri will facilitate the MSP-Ns to establish roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms, strengthen their capacity, including among sub-county and lower level multisectoral forums	TOC 0 3.1.2.1.5
Inadequate nutrition financing to sustainably address acute malnutrition	Nawiri is facilitating the county governments to ensure they commit resources for nutrition (co-investment); facilitating counties to advocate with their county executive for increased nutrition resources and strengthening MSP-N capacity on county planning and budgeting processes	LLO 3.1.2.1



[See the full CRS Nawiri USAID Nawiri's Government Sector Nutrition Policies and Strategies for all sources cited.](#)

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