



USAID Nawiri Learning Brief: Participatory Institutional Capacity Assessment (PICA) for the implementation of Multisectoral Nutrition Approaches in Isiolo and Marsabit Counties

Background

Reducing acute malnutrition requires effective interventions across disciplines and sectors to address its multi-faceted determinants, combined with capable human resources, effective institutions, adequate financing and functional systems to lead, plan, manage and evaluate nutrition-related programs. Strong county commitment and leadership and the active engagement of communities, the private sector, academia and civil society are essential to achieving and sustaining nutrition outcomes.

Nawiri is working with and through strengthened local systems and institutions, enhancing collective capacity to implement sustainable multi-sectoral approaches to reduce acute malnutrition and effectively manage, adapt and scale up promising approaches in context-informed ways. To achieve Nawiri goals and facilitate sustained ownership of institutional capacity development processes, the county departments represented on each county Multisectoral Platform for Nutrition (MSP-N) were facilitated to self-identify their respective capacity gaps and opportunities, before planning and budgeting their capacity strengthening initiatives. The five-day supported self-assessment used an adapted CRS' Holistic Organizational Capacity Assessment Instrument (HOCAI), focusing on 16 capacity statements categorized into five capacity areas (see Figure 1 below). Additionally, a quantitative nutrition budget analysis was conducted using the Strengthening Partnerships, Results and Innovations in Nutrition Globally (SPRING) method, and a Political and Economy Analysis (PEA) conducted using key informant interviews and focus group discussions at county, sub-county and ward levels.

Summary Findings and Lessons Learned

Institutional capacity:

- The 5 capacity themes were assessed, and a score given for each of the 16 statements (see Fig. 1).¹ Apart from a few statements where the counties scored above 50% categorized as “good,” overall performance was “weak”—indicating the need to strengthen these capacity dimensions in both Isiolo and Marsabit.
- While sectoral nutrition targets exist, their actions are not well mainstreamed to optimize nutrition sensitivity, e.g., nutrition education is not mainstreamed into sectors other than health. A sector-by-sector orientation on mainstreaming nutrition into sector policies, strategies, and actions towards strengthened nutrition-sensitivity is needed, accompanied by the attendant revision of related sector/ departmental functions, TORs, nutrition focal person JDs and staff training.
- While the MSP-Ns are functional at county level, they remain not formally recognized and not robustly linked to subcounty and ward multi-sectoral platforms or systems. The counties need to formalize and institutionalize and, if not yet present, form MSP-N structures and link them with strengthened sub-county, ward and sub-ward level multisectoral platforms, structures and working groups, to spearhead the collaboration and coordination of nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific actions at all levels in the county and to ensure as many relevant sectors as possible are represented to actively address nutrition-related challenges.

Budget analysis:

- Limited government funding for nutrition interventions - Using CNAP budgets as a benchmark, the county government's contribution to nutrition in both counties was inadequate, though external sources of funds are increasing in Marsabit (to match and exceed government nutrition allocations). However, there was no indication of donors co-budgeting with the county for increased government contributions to nutrition. Generally, the nutrition-sensitive allocation was on the rise, albeit with no tangible results on nutrition outcomes to date, while nutrition-specific allocations are declining.
- Limited tracking of nutrition budget allocation and expenditures: In both counties, tracking nutrition financing and expenditures remains an ad-hoc, non-systematized activity due to 1) lack of a suitable adapted tool agreed upon by all departments for use; and 2) lack of staff training on the same. This means that evidence-based feedback on the nutrition budgeting process is missing. Limited budget tracking further contributes to the challenge of determining the adequacy of funding allocated for nutrition, although inadequacy was confirmed qualitatively.
- Limited capacity among key nutrition-affiliated staff on nutrition budget tracking processes, including MSP-N member capacity on necessary “soft” advocacy skills to influence budget allocations at higher levels of the executive and county assembly, remains a challenge.

¹ U.S. Agency for International Development. Multi-sectoral Nutrition Strategy 2014-2025

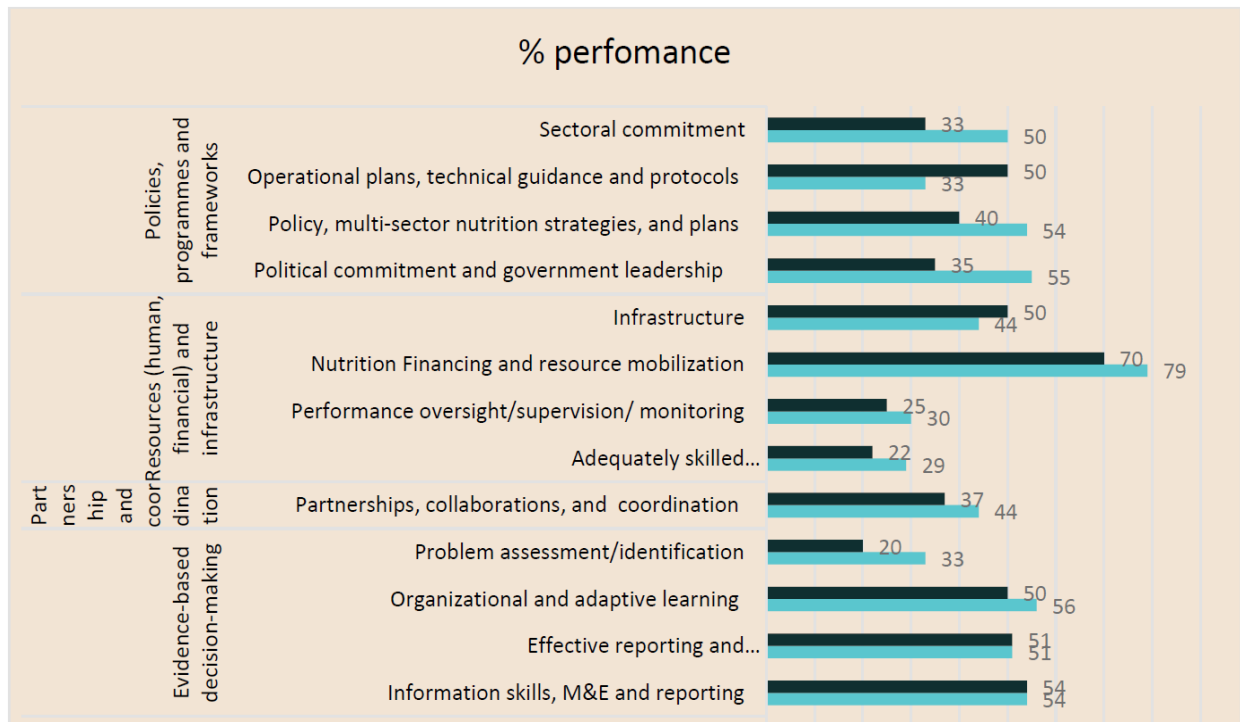
² <https://www.spring-nutrition.org/publications/series/users-guide-nutrition-budget-analysis-tool>

³ Scores - 0–29.9% (poor); 30–49.9% (weak); 50–79.9% (good); and 80–100% (strong)

Political economy analysis:

- Low awareness and prioritization of multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition among key political leaders was noted, with limited prioritization of nutrition on the development agenda.
- Politician priorities: Politicians are more concerned with issues that touch on pressing and common community concerns in significant ways, in particular the severe drought and associated implications including increased conflict, acute lack of food and disease outbreaks. Understandably these elicit high concern among senior politicians and remain a valuable entry point for multisectoral nutrition advocacy.
- Gender issues have been well identified as a critical social concern requiring the attention of highest county and department authorities. Efforts to support women's equal representation at decision-making levels are ongoing but hampered by widespread socio-cultural norms and attitudes that curtail women's participation.

Figure 1: County performance based on self-assessment by Isiolo and Marsabit MSP-N members



Key: Isiolo County [black square] Marsabit County [teal square]

Applying the findings and lessons learned

Key Lessons Learned	Adaptation or implication	Link to the DIP or TOC
<p>Institutional capacity Through the PICA self-assessment, both counties developed and budgeted priority actions to address their weaknesses around 5 key capacity themes (see Fig. 1 above).</p>	<p>Nawiri, in collaboration with other partners, will facilitate the counties to address these capacity weaknesses and gaps during the implementation phase. Further, Nawiri will support the counties to mainstream food and nutrition security aspects in government planning, budgeting, and implementation at all levels, supporting the multi-sectoral integration of nutrition across sectors.</p> <p>Formalize/ institutionalize the MSP-N, support links to sub-county, ward and sub-ward level multisectoral platforms and structures.</p>	<p>IO 3.1.2 Counties have improved risk-informed service delivery</p> <p>LLO 3.1.2.1; O 3.1.2.1.5</p>
<p>Nutrition Budget Analysis In both counties, tracking nutrition financing and expenditure remains ad-hoc and not systemized, due to 1) lack of a suitable adapted tool agreed on by all departments; and 2) the lack of related staff training.</p> <p>If compared to the CNAP budgets as a benchmark, funding allocations for nutrition in both counties was inadequate, though external sources of funds were increasing in Marsabit, to match and exceed government nutrition allocations.</p> <p>There was no indication of donors co-budgeting with the county for increased government contributions to nutrition.</p>	<p>Support counties to ensure that budgeting and implementation are aligned to overall county development plans and financing.</p> <p>Nawiri will support counties in planning and budgeting for nutrition by developing action and development plans and a clear results framework, to enable tracking of progress in addressing acute malnutrition through both nutrition-sensitive and specific interventions.</p> <p>Nawiri is facilitating the county governments to commit resources to nutrition (co-investment); building the capacity of MSP-N members to advocate with the county executive for increased nutrition resources; capacity building MSPs on county planning, budgeting and nutrition budget tracking processes.</p>	<p>LLO 3.1.2.1 Context-specific and financed county policies and plans developed and operationalised</p>
<p>Political economy analysis Low awareness and prioritization of multisectoral approaches to nutrition was noted among key political</p>	<p>Nawiri will facilitate awareness and advocacy on multi-sectoral approaches to nutrition. This will be contextualized to target external influencers, top leadership and politicians, through relevant</p>	

<p>leaders, and limited prioritization of nutrition on the development agenda.</p> <p>Key county government positions were identified as external influencers on development issues in the county. Economic development drivers are well identified and can be augmented to foster positive change in support of livelihoods and nutrition.</p> <p>Gender issues were identified as a critical social concern that needs the attention of the highest county authorities and across all departments.</p>	<p>thematic/sectoral committees and specially organized advocacy forums.</p> <p>Nawiri will facilitate the counties to develop an advocacy and communication plan that aims to support key actors and influencers to take action on addressing acute malnutrition.</p> <p>Nawiri to support implementation of gender and gender-related policies alongside dispelling negative socio-cultural attitudes and practices which adversely affect women.</p>	
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 [See the full CRS USAID Nawiri PICA Report for all sources cited.](#)

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