



LOCALLY LED JOINT DOCUMENTATION INITIATIVE: TRANSFORMING HOW USAID IS TELLING ITS SUCCESS STORIES AT THE COUNTY LEVEL IN KENYA

The USAID Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) funded five-year Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) in Kenya, Nawiri is a project implemented in the ASAL counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana and Samburu. The project's goal is to sustainably reduce levels of acute malnutrition among vulnerable populations in Isiolo and Marsabit counties.

More than 50 stakeholders in Isiolo County, comprising the County Government technical officers, local media journalists, and the USAID implementing partners within the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth Network (PREG), participated in the joint documentation initiative from September 13th-17th, 2021. The event, dubbed *measuring impact and value of the development Interventions in Isiolo County*, was organized by the County Government of Isiolo with support from the USAID-Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) and the USAID Nawiri program.

The purpose of the one-week joint documentation initiative was to;

1. Identify and profile USAID implementing partners' (led by Nawiri) approaches, innovations, best practices, and tools in implementing integrated multi-sectoral interventions within disaster risk communities in Isiolo County.
2. Increase awareness of the local media journalists on the interventions of the USAID implementing partners' interventions and programs in Isiolo County.
3. Capture and disseminate through the community and mainstream national media channels the lessons learned and promising practices for optimizing the integration of multi-sectoral interventions among county



Media expert Yussuf Ibrahim leading a session on working with the media and amplifying community voices.

governments and development partners to benefit local communities.

4. Promote peer-to-peer learning and collaboration across County Governments, USAID implementers partners, local/community media, and the communities.

The joint documentation initiative presented an opportunity to collaborate with stakeholders to gather stories and images that tell compelling stories of community resilience – stories that encourage prevention of and prepare for climate/human-made-related extreme events in local communities

at the county level. This aimed to encourage county-owned, country-led documentation through the trained local journalists and county communications teams. This promoted cross-county learnings as the Turkana team shared their collaboration experiences.

The five-day event was structured into;

- Two days of rigorous writeshop sessions to create awareness among stakeholders on identifying and documenting best practices
- Two days of participatory story telling and capturing with local communities.

"A major challenge we have had as local media journalists is the lack of collaboration with development partners in this County. Most implementing partners are not very responsive to us when we reach out, and some only take keen interest from national mainstream media outlets. Today's session has made us all appreciate that local/community media journalists are key custodians of information sharing with the local communities. We have also learned that the development partners have very good content that can sustain our community programs on air if we work together."

Ibrahim Yaro Journalist Angaaf Radio Isiolo County

HOW IT WORKS

DAY 1: Training of all stakeholders on common aspect of documenting best practices

DAY 2: USAID PREG partners pitching their work and story elements to the media team

DAY 3: Field story coverage and editing

DAY 4: Field story coverage and editing

DAY 5: PREG partners and County Government review the stories from the field and provide feedback for finalization and clearance



Bruno Mutunga(K24/KBC), Isiolo County journalist, during field work and content sourcing for fodder farming story.

- A final day of reviewing the stories and best practices gathered from the field by the various teams.

The training provided an opportunity to discuss critical issues that affect both the media and implementing partners, including: low levels of awareness of the USAID programs and development implementation processes within the media, limited technical skills among local journalists to report on economic development, and sectoral specific issues, poor relationships between local implementing partners and the media, media outlets increasingly demanding payment for coverage of development-related issues, and innovative strategies of utilizing digital platforms to share information.

Through the learning by doing approach, participants were grouped into five teams. Each team comprised a print, TV, radio, and a digital platform journalist, a photographer, an implementing partner, and a county communications officer. The teams visited communities where the USAID implementing partners executed their interventions for real-time interactions and interviews with the

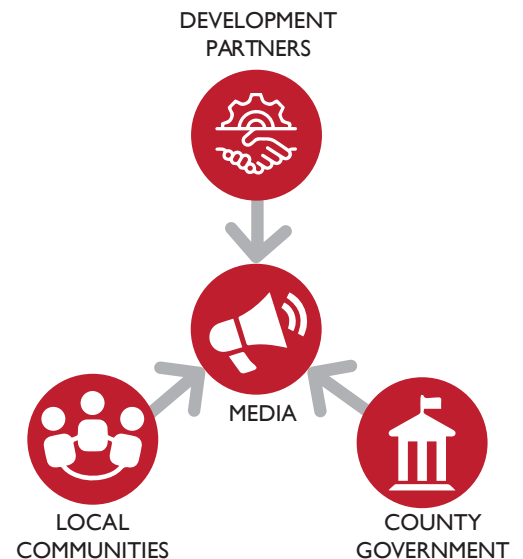
local people. Stories covered through various formats, including print, broadcast (radio and TV), and digital platforms, were reviewed on the last day for partners' clarification and clearance.

THE COLLABORATION MATRIX DURING THE JOINT DOCUMENTATION INITIATIVE

- USAID-Resilience Learning Activity supported the training of local media journalists, USAID implementing partners and County government officers through key Communications and Knowledge management experts. Given the Resilience secretariat mandate, RLA also coordinated and led the overall initiative from conception to execution.
- USAID-Nawiri supported the five days convention of all stakeholders
- The county government conducted the mobilization of the local media partners and the county officers. The

government also guides on security and safety issues to the selected field sites selected by implementing partners and provided required permits/clearances on a need-by-need basis.

- USAID Implementing partners including MercyCorps, the World Food Program, Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), identified the appropriate field sites with potential best practice stories to be covered, provided logistics support to the local media teams to the sites for actual story coverage and conducted the technical review of the content generated by the journalists.
- The local media teams conducted the actual story/best practice coverage through print media, television, radio, and digital platforms.



Lessons learned

LOCAL/COMMUNITY MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS

- Investing in local media outlets as key local organizations/partners in ASAL counties to tell their own stories and influence decision making is critical for USAID implementing partners and the County Governments. These local outlets speak the language of the people, and the audience can identify and connect with, rather than the voices of distant experts telling them what to do.
- The local media could be used to push for intersectoral implementation of interventions based on the community demands.
- Recognizing the importance of media and communication as central to disaster, risk, and emergency responses from the onset at County level improves the outcomes of these shocks and stresses because communications/information is aid in times of disaster.
- Media and communication can build resilience by making technical information more accessible, addressing social norms and perceptions, supporting people to evaluate their choices, facilitating dialogue, prompting positive decisions, and influencing power. The community that has smart and thoughtful media is prepared to deal with all kinds of crisis more conscious that other communities and they also acts smarter against disasters.
- Strengthening the relationships and links between local media outlets and USAID implementing partners will eventually enhance information flow with local communities. Catalyzing this collaboration may open opportunities for interdisciplinary and innovative work among or between institutions.
- Capacity building with active participation and collaboration between project implementing partners and local media outlets enables stakeholders to form strategic alliances, increasing community ownership over the interventions and effectiveness of the planning process.

COLLABORATION

- To maintain the support and momentum of planned activities by USAID implementing partners, county governments and local media teams should be engaged early enough, comprehensively, and continuously with the involvement of local communities. This is key to the success of the interventions. The opportunities acted to dispel communication mistrust, interests, misconceptions, fears and existing tensions between media and other stakeholders.
- The ongoing county level multi-stakeholder forums through PREG monthly meetings and County Steering Groups are effective in ensuring that existing initiatives are monitored, supported, and discussed at the local level. Implementing partners may need to consider quarterly joint dissemination forums with local media teams to share impact and progress with wider audiences at community level. Implementing partners will benefit from bringing together the perspectives, knowledge, and expertise of different stakeholders through an iterative process of consultation and planning.
- A multi-sectoral approach to planning is recommended for sectors such as Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, education, health, and nutrition that is beyond the reach of a single institution.



Community voices being represented during the field work and content sourcing.

GENDER MAINSTREAMING

- To promote gender empowerment, it is important to ensure that gender considerations are explicitly spelled out in the project document where women are active members of the project with well defined livelihood opportunities and roles. This was well demonstrated through the Nawiri program presentations to the media in Isiolo.
- To ensure meaningful participation and encourage empowerment, a project can benefit from tailoring activities to the economic needs of women, involving them in all committees, improving their skills in business planning and designing assessments to understand how women view themselves in intra-household gender relationships.
- Implementing partners should consider supporting their communications teams to disseminate information rapidly and effectively at the community level to encourage behavior change.



Community voices being represented during the field work and content sourcing.

Key Achievements

Below are the key achievements from the joint documentation initiative.



10 best practices from implementing partners captured and documented for wider dissemination and learning in Isiolo County. The joint documentation process showcased USAID's

investments in Isiolo County, though its partners in several successful resilient sectoral support strategies across different thematic sectors such as health, nutrition, livelihood and security education, water and sanitation. Strong partnership and collaborations have been established as basis of self-reliance and lasting impact but limited information, knowledge and appreciation across local political, social-economic, and cultural landscape exist due to gaps in strategic communication using lens development.



Shared learnings among USAID implementing partners, the local communities, County stakeholders, and local media outlets on the best practices in resilience programming. The joint documentation activity provided

an innovative participatory platform that allowed partners, journalist, government, and experts to identify common strengths, gaps and opportunities for progressive partnership, collaboration and engagement in documenting and disseminating resilience success for diverse audiences and stakeholders. The platform

allowed the actors to identify processes, both systemic and structural that had limited ability of journalist to access and report on their project interventions, successes, and breakthroughs.



Strengthened relationships and linkages between local media outlets, County Government communications teams, and USAID implementing partners to enhance information sharing with local communities. The platform established lasting partnership and collaboration breakthroughs for journalist, government and implementing partners to objectively work together in documenting and disseminating successes in their resilient activities.



Strengthened the capacity of local media outlets as critical local organizations/partners in Arid and Semi Arid (ASAL) counties to tell their own stories and influence the decision-making by policymakers and communities at household levels. (Locally owned, locally led information sharing model)



Reinforced strategic communications and knowledge management as central to disaster, risk, and emergency responses from the outset at the County level for improved outcomes of these shocks and stresses because communications/information is aid in times of disaster.



USAID Nawiri Deputy Chief of Party opening the Nawiri Joint Documentation session.

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