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Supporting Pastoralism  
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POLICY BRIEF

# **PARTICIPATORY PLANNING IN KENYA'S DRYLANDS: THE WARD DEVELOPMENT PLANNING MODEL**

Understanding the potential of Ward Development Planning  
for inclusive resilience-oriented development for pastoralists

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## **Summary**

The Ward Development Planning (WDP) model is a participatory planning approach currently implemented in five counties in Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas. The WDP model provides the opportunity for local knowledge and development priorities to be integrated and funded through Ward Development Plans. These plans are multi-sectoral and include a comprehensive range of public goods investments that build resilience to climate change and other shocks. This brief summarises key learning on the WDP approach and gives recommendations for scaling up participatory planning for contextually appropriate and locally legitimate resilience-oriented development.

Cattle herders bring their livestock to Illadu water pan managed by the rangeland committee in Moyale, Kenya.  
Photo: Patrick Meinhardt/Mercy Corps.



## Key findings

1. There is great potential to take a bottom-up approach to development planning in the drylands that is inclusive of the knowledge, input and support of dryland communities. To date, limited participation of pastoralists in government planning processes has resulted in misguided development interventions in the drylands that undermine livelihoods and increase vulnerability.
2. WDP is a local development planning process that deepens Kenya's devolution to the ward level and addresses the chronic political and economic marginalisation that is evident in dryland regions. The ward-level planning institution fills a gap between community- and county-level planning institutions and devolves decision-making to the ward level.
3. WDP empowers pastoralist communities to directly engage in development planning through participatory and deliberate processes. There is effective representation and accountable decision-making through inclusive public selection processes of Ward Planning Committees (WPCs), whose role it is to identify communities' development needs and priorities and to oversee the implementation of a Ward Development Plan. The high social-embeddedness and deliberate selection of WPC members make these individuals well placed to represent the community in mediating conflict, as well as to share knowledge and information that helps address community needs and builds resilience.
4. WDP prioritises development action at the local level according to needs identified by the community. This ensures that investments are contextually relevant and locally appropriate, and avoids wasteful, redundant or maladaptive projects. The model provides a comprehensive multi-sectoral and cross-scale approach that has the promise to strengthen planning across sectors (e.g., water and rangelands) and boundaries to build pastoralists' resilience to climate and other recurrent shocks and stresses.
5. Scaling up the approach holds much potential but requires contextualisation and adaptation during implementation to match the approach to the local governance institutional context and avoid proliferating redundant institutions. It will be important to maintain a focus on the quality of the process, including participation, representative selection and inclusivity. Learning from the WDP model can also be integrated with alternate ward-level planning institutions in the future.

## Introduction

Pastoralists and agropastoralists in the drylands face frequent climatic and other recurring shocks and stresses that threaten their livelihoods and well-being. Over time, pastoralists have developed strategies to manage the high variability of dryland environments to maintain viable production and livelihood systems. However, this knowledge and experience is rarely integrated into government planning and a top-down approach contradicts local strategies and undermines resilience. The result is development interventions ill-suited to pastoralist production or livelihood systems, which constrain pastoralists' adaptive capacity and their ability to recover from shocks. For example, the proliferation of water points in northern Kenya by development agencies and government with little regard to livestock mobility and seasonal grazing patterns has led to sedentarisation, rangeland degradation and conflict, accentuating rather than relieving water scarcity (Gomes, 2006; Davies et al., 2016).

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Historically, Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) have been economically and politically marginalised in favour of higher rainfall areas with greater agricultural potential (Odhiambo, 2013). Pastoralists have not had their voice heard in national policy debates and have faced challenges of effective representation in policy-making. This has led to a clear development deficit and lower public investments and services in the ASAL regions. This is most stark in pastoralist areas of northern Kenya, which has endured considerable neglect despite making up more than half of Kenya's land mass (Figure 1), and is evidenced by the poor infrastructure, high poverty and inequality, and low economic and development indicators (UN Kenya, 2022). It is clear that policies and interventions developed at the national level are less responsive to local needs and do little to reduce vulnerability and economic insecurity, particularly in remote communities.

### **The opportunity of devolution for more inclusive planning**

Devolution – adopted through Kenya's new Constitution in 2010 and coming into full effect through the establishment of county governments in 2013 – transformed the country's political structure. The creation of county-level governments dramatically improved the dispersion of development

funding from a national perspective to the direct allocation of fiscal resources to the county level. This allowed previously marginalised counties to address historical neglect and accelerate investment in public goods and services.

In the ASALs, central to the demands for devolution was a more equitable distribution of resources among regions in order to reduce disparities and the persistent regional imbalances in development. It was hoped that devolution would also address the skewed distribution of power from the centre to the margins, giving a voice to more marginalised groups.

Indeed, public participation in county-level planning and budgeting is mandated in Kenya's 2010 Constitution. However, participatory processes have been weakly institutionalised within counties with large variation in the way they are implemented across counties. In many cases, the lack of a well-coordinated or facilitated process has stymied high quality or meaningful participation, leading to limited inclusivity of marginalised groups, thus leaving them open to capture by certain parties.

Participatory planning institutions offer a way to realise the aims around decentralisation and participation set out in the 2010 Constitution. These institutions help strengthen planning and enable direct and formal involvement of citizens in public processes to identify public policy problems and propose solutions. This can improve the quality and relevance of public goods by incorporating local knowledge into the design of development projects. Participatory planning also empowers previously marginalised groups through participation in deliberation and collective action.

### **The deepening of devolution**

Despite the opportunities provided by devolution in Kenya, decentralisation to the county level limits the extent of local power. For devolution to be felt at the grassroots, resources need to come down further. Devolving responsibility to lower levels of government, including sub-counties and wards, can ensure development decisions are best matched to local needs and priorities.

In Kenya, wards are a sub-county governing area consisting of villages, and they are the lowest administrative unit in Kenya that has a political representative, a Member of the County Assembly at the County Assembly. A ward-level participatory planning institution provides an opportunity to improve

the inclusivity, equity and efficiency in decision-making over development priorities. It is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, where decision-making is devolved to the lowest appropriate level and is taken closest to where it will have an effect, whilst recognising that higher levels of government may still be needed to maintain a coordination role.

The WDP model is a local development planning process that provides a ward-level political structure for collectively advocating for local development and resilience needs to both county and international donors. The WDP model builds on existing ward-level planning structures, including existing sectoral ward-level sub-committees and ward-level climate change planning committees established under the County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) (see Box 1), to function as a holistic multi-sectoral planning process. To date, the WDP model has been implemented in five ASAL Kenyan counties in northern Kenya (Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana and Wajir) by Mercy Corps through the Livestock Market Systems (LMS) programme funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Since 2018, the LMS programme has implemented the WDP model in 33 wards across the five counties, with other implementers and donors taking up the model along the way.<sup>2</sup> The WDP model has produced community plans which helped direct over US\$8.5 million in public and donor funding to priorities identified by pastoralists. These include: improving access to water for human and livestock use, rangeland management, health, education, and peace and security (Mercy Corps, 2022).

The WDP approach is recognised by county governments in Kenya as a model for replication, with plans to scale up the approach to all 10 counties in the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) regional block. As of May 2023, Turkana County has passed legislation institutionalising the model in county law with the other counties set to follow.

This brief describes the WDP model and provides lessons learned and considerations for scaling up the approach in Kenya and beyond. It outlines the relevance of the approach to dryland areas facing multiple and recurring crises due to drought, conflict and other shocks. The brief draws on original, field research carried out by Mercy Corps in Garissa, Isiolo and Turkana Counties in October and November 2021 in wards where the model is being implemented. This was supplemented with key informant interviews and a review of secondary sources including process documents

<sup>1</sup> The LMS programme was implemented in partnership with ACDI-VOCA and operated from 2017 to 2022.

<sup>2</sup> This includes expansion of the ward planning process by Concern Worldwide through the USAID-funded I-CREATE programme in four wards in Turkana County, and by the World Bank-funded Climate Smart Agriculture Programme in four wards in Isiolo County (Mercy Corps, 2022).

and reports capturing broader programme impact. Field data includes 58 in-depth interviews and seven focus group discussions with programme participants (n=54), county and national government stakeholders (n=12), and implementing staff (n=9). All interviewees gave

informed consent, detailing that participation was fully voluntary, confidential and would not impact programme benefits. Interviews and their analysis were done by an independent researcher.

**FIGURE 1: KENYAN COUNTIES WHERE THE WDP MODEL IS BEING IMPLEMENTED AND THOSE COUNTIES INTENDED FOR SCALE UP**



Source: Authors

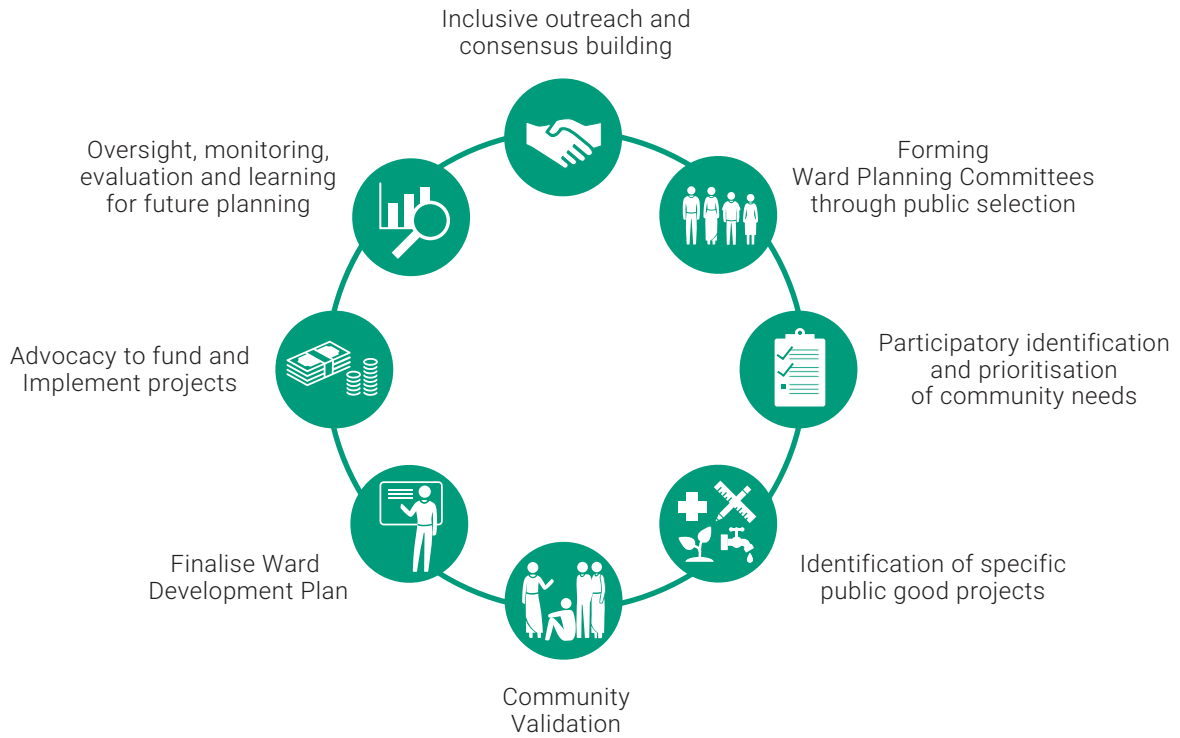
## What is the WDP model?

The WDP model is a participatory planning and development process that strengthens community capacity to assess their own needs, and to prioritise, plan and implement projects (Figure 2). The model is inclusive along geographical and social lines through a locally representative planning committee who are intensively engaged in the process through

a systematic process of selection, training and deliberation. Communities elect a WPC with a broad membership across villages, gender and age groups to oversee implementation of a Ward Development Plan and engagement with county government and other ward- and county-level development actors (Figure 3).

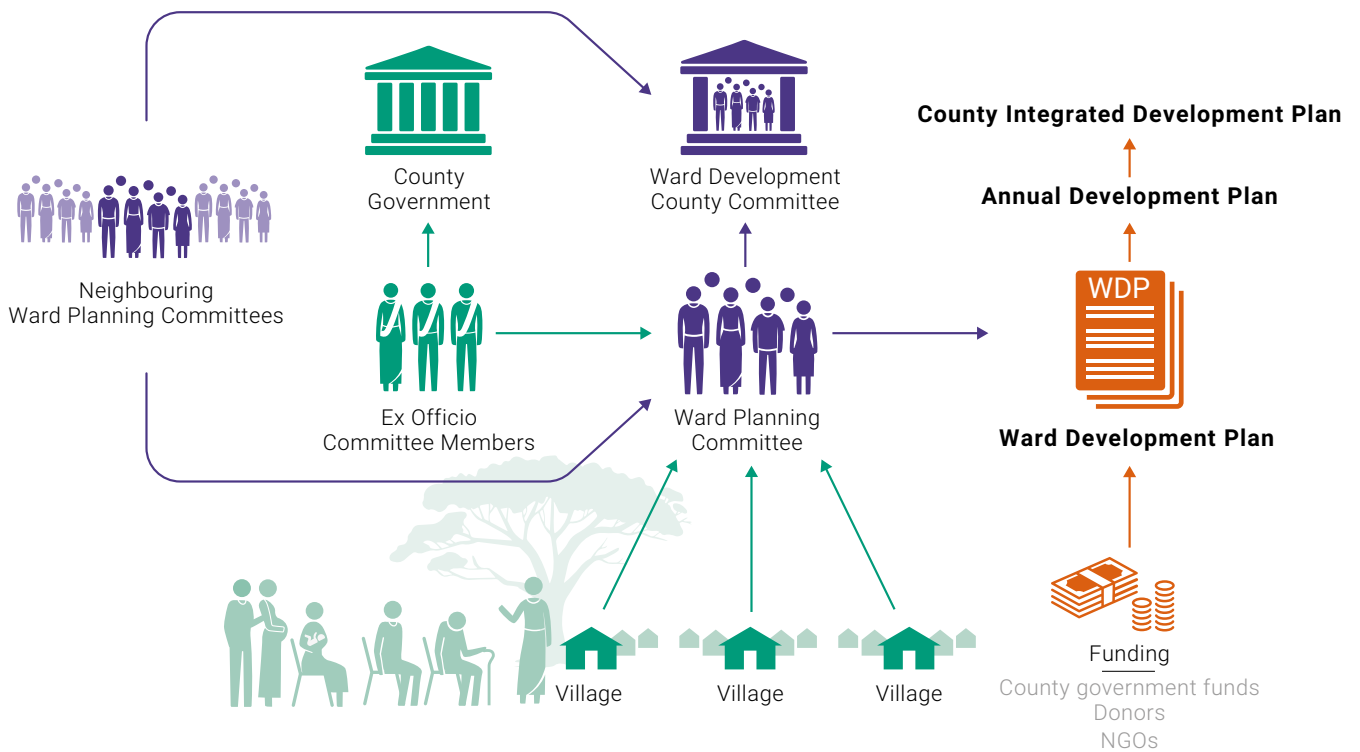


FIGURE 2: THE WDP PARTICIPATORY PLANNING PROCESS



Source: Authors

FIGURE 3: THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE WDP MODEL



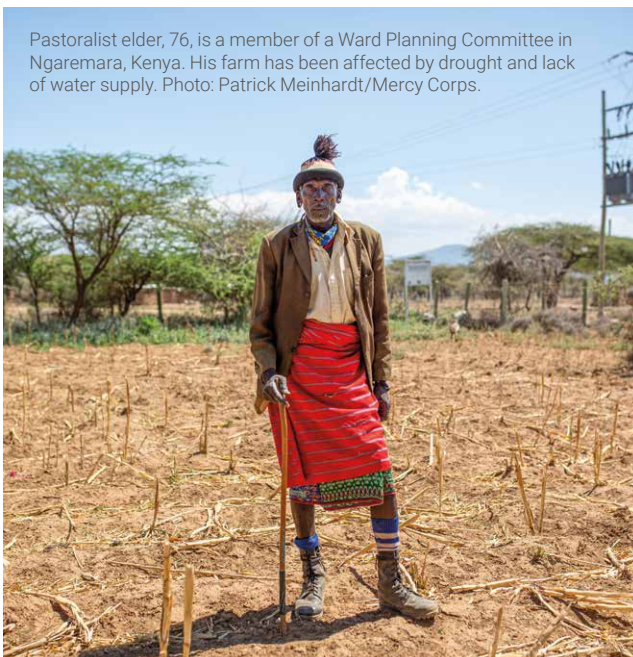
**LEGEND**

- Pre-existing institutions
- Intervention institutions
- Public goods planning and resource

Source: Authors

The WPCs drive the ward planning approach. They link the community to government and other stakeholders, and they oversee the process leading to the development, resource mobilisation and implementation of the Ward Development Plan. The WPCs usually comprise 11–15 elected representatives selected from geographic regions across the ward and are inclusive of representatives from marginalised groups, such as women, youth and people living with disabilities. Rigorous public selection processes are used to select WPC members based on perceived trustworthiness and previous community service and engagement (i.e., women’s groups, youth groups, elder forums and traditional institutions).

The WPCs are multi-sectoral, and they serve as an umbrella institution to existing sectoral sub-committees operating at the ward level – including rangeland, health, agriculture and peace – who support the implementation of actions in different thematic areas within the Ward Development Plan. This provides a holistic and comprehensive planning output that integrates all relevant sectors in the planning process.



Pastoralist elder, 76, is a member of a Ward Planning Committee in Ngaremara, Kenya. His farm has been affected by drought and lack of water supply. Photo: Patrick Meinhardt/Mercy Corps.

The WPCs are closely linked to the county- and ward-level governments, strategically engaging government officials such as Members of the County Assembly and sub-county and ward administrators throughout the WDP process. These government officials are invited to act as ex officio members to the WPC, increasing the ability of WPCs to communicate and advocate to government. This link between the WPCs and

government helps to secure county buy-in and support for their Ward Development Plan and allows it to be coordinated with county government plans (see below).

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The WPC also facilitates coordination of all actors in the ward, including government agencies such as the National Drought Management Authority, the private sector and development actors who support and are responsible for the implementation of specific actions in the Ward Development Plan.

An umbrella Ward Development County Committee operates at the county level and consists of a representative from each WPC in the county. These committees provide a forum for overall collective action and engagement with county government and other actors on issues in which they have a common interest, for example shared water or pasture resources. This is a more recent evolution of the model that provides a coordinated approach within the county, especially important considering the use of cross-border resources and pastoral mobility in the drylands.

The Ward Development Plan is the output of the planning process. It is a ward-specific five-year strategic development plan that outlines the priorities in public goods development at the ward level. Through participatory planning and resilience assessment tools,<sup>3</sup> the WPCs collect local information that is used to develop a comprehensive and contextualised plan that reflects community interests and priorities and considers the needs of the different livelihood populations within the ward, including mobile pastoralists, more settled pastoralists, agriculturalists and urban groups.

The plan identifies ward development challenges, opportunities and priority activities to address them. The plan also outlines the shocks and stresses affecting the community and priority actions to deal with them (see common shocks and stresses in Table 1). The WPCs validate the identified priority issues and activities with their constituent communities through public *barazas* (meetings), which are conducted inclusively to solicit community feedback.

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3 These include community resource mapping, historical timelines, transect walks, seasonal calendars, hazard assessments, vulnerability assessments and disaster risk analysis.

TABLE 1: COMMON SHOCKS AND STRESSES SUMMARISED FROM THE WARD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Shocks and stresses	Impact	Priority actions
<b>Recurrent drought</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water scarcity, lack of pasture, environmental degradation, reduced livestock productivity and loss of livelihoods, food insecurity and malnutrition.</li> <li>Causes conflict over utilisation of scarce pasture and water resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Negotiation on access for livestock.</li> <li>Develop grazing management plans.</li> <li>Strengthening of rangeland management committee.</li> <li>Capacity-building of pastoralists on rangeland management.</li> <li>Water trucking using water bowsers.</li> <li>Selling livestock during onset of drought.</li> </ul>
<b>Conflict</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inhibited access to grazing land and water resources.</li> <li>Low production of livestock products such as milk.</li> <li>Poor prices for livestock.</li> <li>A major hazard during droughts.</li> <li>Destruction of property, closure of schools, human and livestock death.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mobilisation of elders to negotiate for peace.</li> <li>Reconstitution of peace committees to comprise men, women and youth and training on negotiating skills.</li> <li>Regular meetings on resource sharing prior to migration with representatives of host communities.</li> <li>Community sensitisation on agreed peace treaties and importance of adherence.</li> <li>Disarmament of illegal firearms.</li> <li>Creation of youth employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
<b>Floods</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flash floods, particularly along seasonal rivers cause crop destruction, livestock death, household displacement and damage to infrastructure (roads, schools, water and sanitation facilities).</li> <li>Increased risk of livestock diseases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide skills and technology in rainwater harvesting.</li> <li>Construction of sand dams to harvest water.</li> <li>Control outbreaks of livestock and human diseases.</li> </ul>
<b>Livestock diseases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced livestock productivity, loss of income and livelihoods, food insecurity.</li> <li>Livestock death.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Involve communities in county and inter-county disease surveillance.</li> <li>Establish functional disease management infrastructure in strategic locations.</li> <li>Develop a vaccination calendar.</li> <li>Control zoonotic diseases through public awareness and collaboration with Ministry of Health.</li> </ul>

Source: Authors

The WPCs carry forward the development priorities identified in the Ward Development Plans for integration into the Annual Development Plans (the annual county budgeting process) and the five-year County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The WPC does this through ongoing advocacy and collaboration with the various actors involved. The plan is not bound to any government or non-governmental organisation (NGO) budget but is funded through a mixture of county and national government, and donor funding. Development partners

can use the Ward Development Plan as a foundation for determining activities in consultation with the WPC and to ensure that development projects align better with local priorities.

The FCDC is spearheading advocacy of a Ward Development Fund Bill which will institutionalise the ward-based planning process into county legislature. This will operationalise a Ward Development Fund and ensure that resources are used to fund the projects

identified in the Ward Development Plans. According to the Constitution of Kenya (Amendment) Bill (2020), if passed the Ward Development Fund Bill will constitute at least 5% of the county government's total revenue in each financial year.

Every year the WPC conducts monitoring and evaluation to review progress made against the proposed projects in the Ward Development Plan and make updates as necessary. Monitoring and evaluation of community engagement in the planning process is also carried out.

## The WDP model and building pastoralist resilience in the drylands

The WDP model offers a unique opportunity to institutionalise development objectives at the community level, particularly in areas such as the drylands that have historically suffered neglect and marginalisation from centralised development planning. Functioning as a broad, democratic and participatory interface between local-level community institutions and county-level institutions, the WDP participatory planning institutions can improve the quality of local governance and reduce conflict. Further, they support communities to assess, prioritise, plan and implement their development priorities and build their resilience to climate and other shocks. Key learning from the research indicates that the WDP model:

- 1. Empowers pastoralist communities to directly engage in development planning through participatory, inclusive and deliberative processes.** Community members and government staff viewed the WDP model as an intensive and inclusive process with time and effort invested into building the participatory institution. This differed to the county participatory planning process mandated by legislation where interventions were typically viewed as relatively superficial and thin, with the primary interface being only a half-day of poorly structured meetings that resulted in a handful of voices dominating the conversation. Moreover, WPC members emphasised how the WDP improved their understanding of how development decisions are made and how to actively promote the interests of their community vis-a-vis the dominant development actors in their counties – namely, county government and international NGOs. This experience of empowerment is in sharp contrast with previous experiences, where WPC members expressed recurring frustration when the county government or international NGOs implemented projects without seriously consulting the community or building their capacity to understand the development process taking place.
- 2. Limits the marginalisation of communities within the ward, and of wards within the wider county, by creating a ward-level development plan and an inclusive and democratically legitimate committee structure to advocate for the ward-level plan.** Since members are drawn from across the ward, each WPC member represents a distinct locale, collectively covering the entire ward. WPC members, including those from ethnic minority communities, felt that this geographic dispersion limited the marginalisation of minority groups and the domination of one village cluster. This prevented political elites from being able to direct a disproportionate amount of funding to their own villages, as commonly occurs in the provision of public goods (Sheely, 2015). An example was given of this happening in the past, when the development of a borehole was diverted to a politician's own village.
- 3. Enhances inclusivity by ensuring women, youth, people living with disabilities and other marginalised social groups are represented on the WPC committees.** This strengthens the access of marginalised groups to decision-making fora, and supports them in assuming leadership positions. For example, a female treasurer in Isiolo felt that the programme's efforts to include marginalised populations in WPC leadership roles allowed her to take on responsibilities beyond traditional gender roles. This increases the legitimacy and ownership of planning decisions for all social and livelihood groups in the community, and it ensures development is designed for all, fostering a whole-of-society approach.
- 4. Provides participatory representation for the ward through selection of the WPCs.** During inclusive public selection meetings, deliberation allowed community members to make value-based cases for why a candidate should be a member of a WPC, followed by a public selection process (consensus-seeking consultation or queue voting). Members of the WPC are distributed across villages and remain embedded in communities between selection cycles, allowing for ongoing accountability. This high social embeddedness of the committee members provides an informal accountability mechanism (Tsai, 2007) and contrasts with the perception of county representatives who were viewed as living in a distant county capital and only responsive or accountable during the campaign season.
- 5. Through the high social embeddedness of the WPCs, provides community members with a hyper-local information or resource person who can support them in building resilience and adapting to shocks by connecting them to government and development actors.** For example, WPCs are linked





Girl from a pastoralist community fetches water in Kutur village, Kenya. Photo: Patrick Meinhardt/Mercy Corps

to the National Drought Management Authority who prepare monthly drought early warning bulletins for each county. With support from the LMS programme to customise this information to the local context, WPCs disseminate this to the community and inform pastoralists' decision-making strategies. Similarly, the WPCs act as a focal point to outside actors, supporting emerging community needs and vulnerabilities.

- 6. Minimises conflict due to the high social embeddedness and deliberate selection of WPC members.** This gives the WPCs a legitimate mandate for representing the community in mediating conflict and addressing inter-communal violence. The WPCs have worked alongside community institutions to facilitate peace dialogues and resolve conflict, often related to the use of pastoralists' grazing reserves, water points or cattle rustling. As part of a cross-learning process initiated by the LMS programme, WPCs also visited neighbouring ward WPCs (either within or between counties) to work together to resolve conflict especially where pasture and water resources crossed boundaries.
- 7. Provides much needed 'ground-level' information for integration into Annual Development Plans and CIDPs, helping counties better prioritise funding towards the most pressing community needs.** Participatory assessment tools collect local information that is contextualised and provides an understanding of the problems and solutions that

are relevant to the community. This comprehensive local information is used to develop the Ward Development Plan and ensures community-identified needs are integrated into NGO and government plans. This avoids wasteful and redundant projects. Very often, government and NGO investments result in 'white elephants', which are inefficient, redundant or maladaptive. In Isiolo County, an example was given where the county government, without consulting the community, drilled two boreholes in the middle of a strategic drought reserve. This led to premature grazing and exhaustion of the drought reserve before the worst part of the dry season even arrived.

- 8. Integrates and coordinates sectoral ward-level sub-committees through the WPCs to provide a holistic cross-sectoral approach that strengthens planning across sectors (e.g., water and rangelands) in the drylands to build resilience.** Key informants described how this mandate of the WDP model encompasses a more extensive scope compared to other ward-level planning initiatives, including the climate-focused Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs), which are legally constituted under the CCCF legislation (see Box 1). This multi-sectoral approach resulted in Ward Development Plans that cover a comprehensive range of public goods investments and categories, including for education, health, livestock, agriculture, water and sanitation, peace and security, and roads.

9. **Provides a coordinated approach to bottom-up engagement in development planning both within and across wards and counties.** The WPC links communities and their development needs and priorities to government, development partners and other actors. At a broader spatial scale, wards are also connected to other wards through the umbrella Ward Development County Committee to facilitate planning beyond the boundaries of small administrative units. These linkages are critical when planning interventions in the drylands where resources such as water and pasture span administrative and political boundaries, and people and livestock are mobile across borders.
10. **Builds resilience to climatic and other shocks by integrating participatory resilience planning tools to assess underlying vulnerabilities and risks and to identify resilience capacities.** WPCs identify and prioritise the main shocks and stresses – most commonly drought, conflict and livestock diseases (Table 1) – that affect them and devise priority actions in response. Through the Ward Development Plans, WPCs in a number of wards have secured county funding as part of the Annual Development Plan towards drought interventions in water and pasture management and early warning systems. Moreover, the multi-sectoral approach provides a comprehensive planning output that recognises that a range of sectors must come together to build resilience to climate and other shocks and stresses.
11. **Takes account of existing formal or informal governance structures to ensure that the WDP model does not compete with existing institutions.** Where customary governance institutions exist, these are incorporated into the model through WPC representation. In Isiolo, elders from the *Dheda* - a Borana pastoralist governance institution that manages pasture, water and mediates conflict - were included as WPC members to ensure traditional governance institutions were accounted for within the WDP. In turn, Dheda elders negotiate reciprocal access to areas beyond the ward (and county) and so enable the needs of mobile pastoral groups to be incorporated.
12. **Has the flexibility for LMS and other implementing partners to exert discretion to adapt the model according to context and avoid redundant institutions.** In counties that have passed CCCF legislation to channel and implement the CCCF at the ward level (see Box 1), implementers worked with and strengthened the existing WCCPCs. Therefore, the WDP model has the potential to strengthen the adoption of a ward-level planning process as the implementation framework for the CCCF, thus supporting locally led adaptation and development action to build resilience.

#### BOX 1. COORDINATING PARTICIPATORY INSTITUTIONS: WDP AND THE CCCF MECHANISM

Since 2011, the County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) mechanism has supported some county governments and wards to mainstream climate change into planning and budgeting, and access climate finance from different sources. The CCCF finances climate adaptation public goods investments that are prioritised by communities through Ward Climate Change Planning Committees (WCCPCs) (Crick et al., 2019).

CCCF legislation aims to commit 2% of county development funds to climate adaptation investments, predominately at the ward level, and provides a legal framework for the WCCPCs to manage the CCCFs at the ward level.

The CCCF was piloted in Isiolo, Garissa, Kitui, Makeuni and Wajir Counties and is currently being rolled out to Kenya's 47 counties through the World Bank's Financing Locally Led Climate Action (FLLoCA) programme.

The WDP model was designed to build on the WCCPCs and other ward-level planning structures to operate as a broader multi-sectoral institution. The WPCs consider investments in climate change, while also considering public goods planning and resilience beyond a narrow climate focus – for instance, considering needs for educational, health and economic investments. WPCs have this wider mandate, looking to act as a coordinating structure for development priorities financed through national and county government, and development partners.

During the research, the WPCs did not overlap in the same wards with the CCCF WCCPCs, as both models did not cover all wards in the counties. However, it is clear that some coordination needs to occur at the county level to ensure that overlapping and redundant planning institutions are not introduced by different actors and funders. At the same time, cross-learning between models should be pursued.

Source: Authors

## Recommendations for scaling up WDP or applying it to new contexts

Following the first roll-out in five counties, the WDP model is now being scaled up to all 10 counties in the FCDC regional bloc. In scaling the model to other wards and counties in Kenya, or applying it to new areas, we recommend careful consideration of the following guiding principles:

- The design of participatory planning institutions should not be 'one size fits all' but instead responsive to contextual factors. This requires turning away from simple notions of best practice design to carefully matching the design of the intervention to the institutional context. The WDP model is a local development planning process and institution for representation and coordination at the ward level, which is the lowest political and administrative unit in Kenya and the most appropriate level for devolving decision-making according to the principle of subsidiarity. This principle can be applied to other contexts and scale up will require identifying the right unit where this type of functional need exists.
- Focus should be maintained on the quality of participation, the process of representative selection and inclusivity. These can be intensive processes that take time but they are the most important sources of legitimacy of decisions and social accountability, and they reduce the risk of political manipulation. Wide inclusivity also addresses structural inequalities and avoids the exclusion of vulnerable groups. Inclusivity could be deepened by providing additional support to those who traditionally do not have a voice and power (e.g., women and youth) in these forums so they can overcome discriminatory social norms in order to take on leadership roles. Further action could also be taken to ensure mobile pastoralists are deliberately included, for example by timing meetings to fit seasonal movements and including these pastoralists in committee membership.
- Local implementers must have the resources, capacity and authority to exercise discretion and make adaptations during ground-level implementation. The process of matching implementation to context matters, and local implementers are best positioned to judge whether true participation and empowerment is occurring and to make the necessary adjustments.

- Participatory planning interventions must not compete with existing formal or informal governance structures. Locally legitimate participatory institutions, including traditional governance structures, may already exist. Care needs to be taken when planning new interventions that these do not compete with the existing structures.
- Effort should be made to avoid proliferating redundant participatory processes in the same communities through coordination among government and NGOs. The accumulation of participatory structures when a legitimate and high-quality process has already been undertaken may be both inefficient and lead to fatigue. Where overlapping participatory institutions exist, a degree of updating and strengthening may be useful. In Kenya's counties where CCCF legislature is in place, it is recommended that the WDP model works with the existing ward planning committees already institutionalised at the ward level.

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- As the WDP approach is integrated into government planning and processes, a predictable and regular funding stream will be important. This is necessary to provide a more consistent source of resources for prioritised projects, as well as funding for the participatory process itself. Funding can come from various sources, such as national and county government, and it can be institutionalised into law, as is planned through the Ward Development Fund Bill. Government funding to implement priorities within Ward Development Plans can also be supplemented by external sources such as international development funds and climate finance mechanisms.

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