

END-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION OF THE KENYA RESILIENT ARID LANDS PARTNERSHIP FOR INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT (KENYA RAPID)

Summary of Findings and Recommendations



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Cover Photo: *People and livestock wait their turn at a strategic borehole in Kenya, Joyce Kisiangani, Aquaya. (Photo from Kenya RAPID activity)*

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October 2020

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| AHADI | Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions |
| AMEP | Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan |
| ASAL | Arid and Semi-Arid Lands |
| ATM | Automated Teller Machine |
| CCBF | County Capacity Building Fund |
| CCNA | County Capacity Needs Assessment |
| CIDP | County Integrated Development Plan |
| CLTS | Community-Led Total Sanitation |
| COVID-19 | Coronavirus Disease 2019 |
| CRS | Catholic Relief Services |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FH | Food for the Hungry |
| GDA | Global Development Alliance |
| ICT | Information and Communications Technology |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organization |
| IP | Implementing Partner |
| KES | Kenyan Shilling |
| KIWASH | USAID Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Project |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| MWA | Millennium Water Alliance |
| NDMA | National Drought Management Authority |
| PCU | Program Coordination Unit |
| PIFA | Program Implementation using a Facilitation Approach |
| PMG | Project Management Group |
| PREG | Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth |
| PSC | Program Steering Committee |
| PWD | Person with Disabilities |

| | |
|-----------|--|
| RAPID | Kenya Resilient Arid Lands Partnership for Integrated Development Activity |
| RMC | Rangeland Management Committee |
| SDC | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation |
| SO | Strategic Objective |
| SWFF | Securing Water for Food Grand Challenge Fund |
| TOR | Terms of Reference |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USAID/KEA | USAID Kenya and East Africa |
| WASH | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene |
| WASHPaLS | Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability |
| WV | World Vision |

I.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

A five-year, \$35.5 million public private partnership/Global Development Alliance (GDA) activity (2015–2020), the Kenya Resilient Arid Lands Partnership for Integrated Development (RAPID) Activity is funded jointly by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), private sector partners, and Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) international non-government organization (INGO) members. Implementation of Kenya RAPID is coordinated by the MWA.¹

Kenya RAPID brings together public, private and civil society institutions and communities to increase access to water and sanitation for people and water for livestock and to rebuild a healthy rangeland-management ecosystem. The program combines the assets and experience of development actors and private and public institutions by leveraging their capital and investments, innovation and access to markets to address the complex problems in the water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) sector that culminate in inadequate water access and poor governance of natural resources in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). The goal of RAPID is to ensure sustainable and resilient livelihoods for communities in the ASALs.

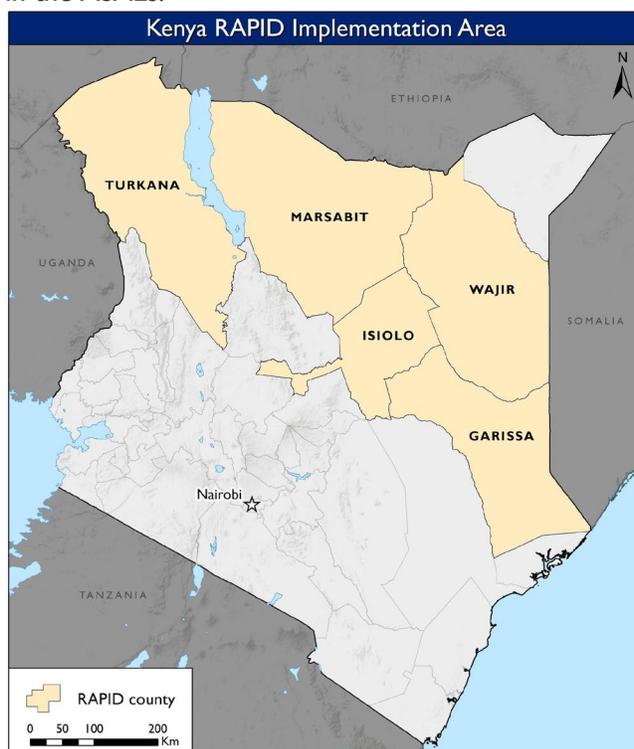


FIGURE I. KENYA RAPID IMPLEMENTATION AREA

As documented in the approved Activity Monitoring and Evaluation Plan (AMEP), the Kenya RAPID theory of change is as follows:

If we build responsive and accountable governance frameworks that ensure sustainable provision of water and pasture in target counties, and develop and operationalize replicable and scalable business models for sustainable WASH and livestock service delivery, THEN communities in target counties will have increased access to sustainable WASH services and improved rangeland management, AND THEREFORE, sustainable and resilient livelihoods for communities in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands will be achieved.

As the name Arid and Semi-Arid Lands suggests, the counties in northern Kenya are faced with significant challenges including harsh climatic conditions and frequent, prolonged droughts. The nomadic lifestyle (in search of scarce pasture and water for livestock) affects WASH and nutrition programming approaches. High poverty levels, insecurity (both internal conflicts

¹ The MWA is implementing KENYA RAPID in collaboration with four of its members in Kenya: CARE, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Food for the Hungry (FH), and World Vision (WV), and in collaboration with its private sector partners: Aqua for All, The KCB Foundation, The Coca-Cola Africa Foundation, The Vitrol Foundation, IBM Research Africa, SweetSense, Davis & Shirtliff, and Acacia Water.

and external threats, like that posed by Al-Shabaab), and low literacy levels are some of the key challenges faced by the counties in the ASAL region. Additionally, traditional gender roles (including those related to livelihoods and asset ownership) in the ASALs remain more deeply entrenched than elsewhere in the country. Several counties in the ASALs are among those that have in recent years experienced outbreaks of WASH-related diseases including cholera, typhoid, and diarrhea related ailments (World Sanitation Program, 2014). Diarrhea is among the top five morbidity-causing diseases in four of the five RAPID target counties, followed by skin disease and pneumonia (Government of Kenya, n.d. 2018a, 2018b; Turkana County Government, n.d., County Government of Marsabit/Government of Kenya, n.d.)

1.2 EVALUATION PURPOSE, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The performance evaluation was commissioned by the USAID/Kenya and East Africa (USAID/KEA) mission in conjunction with the SDC at the end of Kenya RAPID's fifth year. The evaluation sought to assess Kenya RAPID's design and implementation to inform the design and implementation of future WASH, nutrition, livestock, and rangeland management activities in the ASALs. It also provides learning on how innovative partnership approaches can support Kenya on its journey to self-reliance and resilience. Specifically, the evaluation sought to answer the following four evaluation questions (EQs):

1. To what extent is the design of Kenya RAPID appropriate to the context in the ASALs? (Are the assumptions and theory of change valid? Which approaches were not well suited to this context?)
2. To what extent did bringing diverse partners together within the GDA structure result in broader impacts than would otherwise have been achieved? (What were the resource implications of this type of partnership? What kinds of strategic decisions were undertaken by the steering committee, and how effective was this model for partnership governance?)
3. To what extent was Kenya RAPID able to establish sustainable, replicable, and scalable business models? (Were the business models identified appropriate to the ASAL context? Were there any spillover effects or results achieved through private sector engagement?)
4. How effective was the facilitative, governance-focused approach under Kenya RAPID? (Were changes in county government capacity and commitment achieved? To what extent was Kenya RAPID successful in improving community level governance?)

Given the dynamic situation with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Kenya and globally, the Evaluation Team was ultimately advised against travelling or holding face-to-face meetings and therefore conducted the entire evaluation remotely, a first for USAID/KEA. Despite the limitations this posed, the Evaluation Team is confident that the findings and recommendations provided herein reflect as accurate a picture of the Kenya RAPID Activity as has been possible under the circumstances. Considering the goal of the performance evaluation was not to verify and validate actual quantitative outputs, but rather to understand the effectiveness and likely sustainability of the approach, it was possible—although not ideal—to conduct a qualitative analysis remotely.

A desk review informed the design of primary data collection, based on interviews with primary key informants undertaken via Skype, telephone, or other virtual media. Interviews were conducted with approximately 70 key informants (26 percent of whom were women), with 60 percent based in the five Kenya RAPID counties. The team conducted between six and eleven interviews per county.

1.3 ASSESSING THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE KENYA RAPID DESIGN (EQ1)

Kenya RAPID builds on the successes and lessons learned from USAID's Kenya Arid Lands Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Program and the SDC-supported Water for Livestock program, both

implemented in Northern Kenya from 2012 to 2014. Kenya RAPID was designed to support the county governments of Garissa, Isiolo, Marsabit, Turkana, and Wajir in delivering their newly devolved responsibilities as mandated in the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. Three strategic objectives (SOs) form the pillars around which Kenya RAPID's theory of change has been anchored:

- **SO1:** A responsive and accountable governance framework is in place and operational at county government level that ensures sustainable provision of water and pasture;
- **SO2:** Replicable and scalable business models for sustainable WASH and livestock service delivery have been developed and operationalized; and
- **SO3:** Communities have increased access to sustainable WASH services and improved rangeland management.

The overarching assumption is that if the above objectives are met, then sustainable and resilient livelihoods for communities in the ASALs will be achieved.

The Evaluation Team finds that the overarching SOs are clear, logical, and generally mutually supporting, albeit not all mutually reliant. A responsive and accountable governance framework that provides clear rules, regulations, and expectations sets the stage for replicable and scalable business models to be introduced, which then can lead to increased access to sustainable WASH services and improved rangeland management. While the links are clear, achieving SO1 does not automatically ensure that efforts to achieve SO2 and then SO3 will be successful.

None of the SOs strategically or intentionally incorporates a particularly pro-poor or equity-based lens. Strengthening governance at the county and community levels has been assumed to benefit all wealth quintiles. That said, given the nature of many of RAPID's activities and the targeting tools put in place at the county level, poverty alleviation is an obvious focus of the program.

The devolution context loomed large in the interviews with many respondents grateful for the contribution that Kenya RAPID was making in support of building county capacity. The Evaluation Team sensed that Kenya RAPID was initially seeking to apply a somewhat uniform approach across the five counties. Several interviewees referred, however, to the differences among counties (see text box), which appear to have resulted in different levels of uptake across the counties with some elements taking longer to get started. Thus, more could have been explored around where sufficient similarities make an approach or technology viable across the region and where contextual factors mandate a more nuanced response.

Within this context, Kenya RAPID offered a highly ambitious set of activities aimed at supporting county governments to overcome significant capacity gaps. The MWA proposal (p.18) noted that, "Absorptive capacity is being tested" with the five Kenya RAPID counties, "returning over Kenyan Shilling (KES) 500 million in WASH sector funding to the national government in 2014 because policies, plans and strategies were not yet in place during the fiscal year." The Evaluation Team was not able to assess how significantly this has changed as a function of Kenya

VARIATIONS ACROSS THE ASALS

- Political cohesion (allowing for quicker passage of legislation and potentially influencing high growth in private sector investment in Turkana, for example) and demographics;
- Cultural and religious belief systems that influence program areas from WASH practices to lending and finance;
- Local resource base and climatic conditions, with more rainfall in some areas (like parts of Marsabit) influencing farming practices among pastoralist communities;
- Security threats in some sub-regions of Garissa and Wajir;
- Expectations of gender roles that influence not only decision making at the local level but even construction practices for household enhancements (with women in charge of construction of latrines in Turkana, for example); and
- Levels of education among county staff (with Marsabit reported to have the highest level of qualified staff by academic qualification and Wajir with the lowest).

RAPID support. World Bank officials noted that much still needs to be done to put procurement, safeguarding, and other systems in place for counties to qualify for certain funding sources or progress through national funding transfer schemes. However, the emphasis on governance framing documents, as supported by Kenya RAPID, is certainly seen as a necessary step in the right direction.

To meet growing post-devolution expectations at the local level, Kenya RAPID came in at an opportune time to help shape the way forward for counties to develop and deliver on their County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). SO3 allows Kenya RAPID partners the opportunity to offer “business as usual” implementation activities to help meet community expectations through infrastructure investments and training/support activities for water, sanitation, nutrition, and livelihoods, among others. This is obviously more familiar territory for INGO partners, who have historically been more involved in delivering projects at the local level. Unsurprisingly, given the nature of the expenditures, SO3 constituted the bulk of the budget at 59 percent with SO1 at 20 percent and SO2 at 21 percent. This, however, might lead to false assumptions about time allocations. It is understood that SO1 in support to counties around governance framing and coordination was certainly and understandably time intensive.

With the results framework in mind, a potentially more effective and coherent reframing would suggest a three-pronged approach with a focus on continued strengthening of:

1. County governments as the overseer and enabler ensuring that services are delivered regardless of the service provider or the specific arrangements, with clear policies and strategies and a strong participation and feedback loop from communities;
2. Utilities (public or quasi-private in the case of small schemes) and other community-public institutions, like Water User Associations, as the delivery agents with a more institutionalized and commercialized approach that emphasizes sustainability of the service and Rangeland Management Committees (RMCs) that focuses on sustainable resource management; and
3. Supporting entry or refining private sector business models that foster expanded coverage and sustained service delivery and/or resource management through market-based approaches to provide other products and services, where appropriate and applicable within the ASAL context, to utilities, Water Management Committees, households, or other customer groups.

This shift would see SO3 turning into an output rather than an objective. In other words, a program of work more deliberately focused on enhancing the enabling environment and strengthening service providers should indeed result in communities (with greater voice) having increased access to sustainable WASH services and improved rangeland management. In fact, the hypothesis in the original results framework suggests this approach with its emphasis on strengthening governance institutions and financing models but could go even further to seek more transformative approaches that systematically promote greater inclusion and shift (gender and other) norms.

Kenya RAPID assumes that devolution would make county governments eager to be more **accountable to citizens**. Overall, the assumption appears to be valid and Kenya RAPID’s design and engagement has made a significant contribution to fostering this greater accountability, through support of policy development with public participation. Beyond the policy realm, some form of public budgeting and further analysis of public participation would further strengthen this accountability. Efforts aimed at reviewing private sector contracting and strengthening the regulation of small schemes and the work of quasi-public associations would also have an impact.

By all accounts, interviewees at the county level understand their mandates and are keen to expand and ensure access to services and promote other development activities. County officials clearly appreciated implementing partner (IP) contributions to the framing and delivery of the CIDPs with mentions of the impact of Kenya RAPID on budgeting exercises and other aspects. That said, one would expect to see

clearer evidence relating to how counties are spending their own resources as an indicator of their commitment. Spending (as opposed to budgeting) is still difficult to track even by senior department officials at the county level.

County officials recognize that the governance framing documents and the capacity building efforts are critical to their ability to deliver as well as to exercise some control over what development partners, private sector developers/companies, and communities implement on the ground. Framing documents are ultimately being used to guide and secure investments, establish and strengthen utilities and rural water schemes, and provide for the creation of resource governance structures (for water management and rangeland management in particular). These are important developments and bring promise of greater investor confidence. The frameworks have not been tested or challenged, though, in terms of whether the rules and guidance are sufficient, and more specific policies will still need to be negotiated.

In terms of public participation to hold governments accountable, communities in this post-devolution period are participating more in county-level forums and making greater demands on county officials in an effort to shape priorities and investments. Senior county officials noted that voices are growing louder and county officials are under pressure to deliver. How representative this participation is, and whether there are biases toward certain geographic areas, gender and other demographic considerations, or community or wealth groupings proves difficult for the Evaluation Team to assess. Indeed, Kenya RAPID brings a wealth of experience on how this accountability relationship is evolving and how to strengthen tools like the National Community Participation Checklist. The emphasis in the design of Kenya RAPID on capacity building that incorporates technical and management skills will become important in helping to respond to these growing participatory processes.

For health, livelihood, and conflict mitigation, Kenya RAPID assumes that natural **integration** across thematic interventions can and should be tackled in a more holistic and inclusive manner. The four INGO IPs bring extensive experience and expertise across WASH, rangeland management, livelihoods, health, and nutrition. From a programmatic standpoint, county officials were appreciative of Kenya RAPID efforts to support and facilitate the joint planning and coordination of implementation across county ministries and departments through the County Program Steering Committees and County Coordinating Units. This solid contribution notwithstanding, the exit strategy remains unclear around how to maintain these structures.

Literature from the desk review highlighted a variety of potential sectoral linkages. With the exception of nutrition and Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), these linkages did not come out clearly in interviews with county officials or IP staff. CLTS triggering activities afforded opportunities to share a wide range of messages on hygiene, nutrition, livelihoods, and other development priorities. Kenya RAPID did not seem to approach these efforts with a holistic and transformative approach that a social inclusion and gender lens might offer. Admittedly, had the Evaluation Team been able to visit communities to see the activities more directly, this integration may have come out more strongly.

Kenya RAPID spent the initial 12–18 months developing the ways of working across the partners and with the counties. According to the IPs, this was also a time of focusing on the governance framing documents (starting with water) combined with the capacity needs assessments at the county level. The elections then seemed to disrupt much of this work at the middle of the Kenya RAPID timeframe. Efforts in 2018 and 2019 began to incorporate more rangeland-related activities along with nutrition, income generation, sanitation, and other interventions. These were ramping up toward the end of the project with governance framing work and training activities when the COVID-19 crisis halted activities.

The key achievement from an integration point of view appears to be the emphasis on joint planning and coordination at the county level with joint community visits from different county departments. In terms of validating the design, this approach could still bear fruit as the seeds have been planted in terms of forging a new understanding at county level of the linkages between previously siloed activity areas.

Thus, while the design was optimistically appropriate, implementation may have been hampered by events beyond Kenya RAPID's control and the effort required to galvanize county departments toward a more coordinated approach appears to have taken longer than anticipated.

Interestingly, while the Evaluation Team would likely have pursued this more actively had site visits and focus group discussions (FGDs) been possible, the pastoralist context did not emerge clearly from the interviews. Although interviewees were asked to elaborate on the specific context of the ASALs, only some general references to how best to site infrastructure for pastoralists arose. That said, there was recognition that the situation is changing due to the requirement that all children need to be attending school; thereby pastoralist families are living as part of more semi-permanent communities, with only part of the family being more mobile (men) with seasonal movement across geographies.

The Evaluation Team applauds the level of ambition and the level of inclusivity of county governments in the design, management, and delivery of Kenya RAPID, while still acknowledging the challenges faced. Given the complexity of the Kenya RAPID design, the challenge of and time required for aligning ways of working across institutions within the INGO community, let alone across the public and private sectors, cannot be underestimated.

The overriding assumption is that the five Kenya RAPID counties are now in a stronger position to meet national and donor requirements and have higher absorptive capacity to receive funding, as well as greater legitimacy to lobby on behalf of the ASALs at the national level. The governance framing documents are an important first step and Kenya RAPID's engagement could be seen as providing a stamp of approval, some form of risk underwriting, and some safeguarding against mismanagement.

A clearer overarching framing may have sharpened the IPs' understanding of their contribution to strengthening county processes. It is easy to see how the vast majority of interviewees saw the Kenya RAPID work as a series of component parts rather than as an integrated whole. That said, by working in a different way from most development programs, Kenya RAPID appears to have shifted attitudes and approaches of county governments. The proof of success will only be seen after Kenya RAPID ends. As such, key questions remain around Kenya RAPID's overarching impact, whether the timeframe was sufficient to have the desired impact, whether sufficient resources were dedicated to the business models aspect (discussed below in response to EQ3), and whether the case has been sufficiently made for greater integration of activities at implementation level. The Evaluation Team is unable to answer whether:

1. Counties will continue to work through a multi-themed approach without Kenya RAPID's facilitation support;
2. Technologies and data will continue to be used for decision-making;
3. Women's empowerment efforts will be sustained without addressing entrenched gender norms; and
4. The community structures put in place or strengthened will withstand the test of time.

The commitment and enthusiasm from county officials are high, but also with the insistence that Kenya RAPID and the associated funding stream need to continue for several more years to ensure sustainability.

1.4 ASSESSING KENYA RAPID AS A PARTNERSHIP (EQ2)

The Kenya RAPID theory of change was delivered through a multi-partner, multi-layered arrangement that puts counties at the center of programming. Over 20 partners from across public, private, and civil society sectors joined forces to deliver the program with and through county governments. The Activity also forged important relationships under the umbrella of the USAID-supported Partnership for

Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG), with Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI), and also with other Government of Kenya initiatives and agencies, such as the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA).

Paraphrasing from the final approved proposal, the MWA Program Coordination Unit (PCU) based in Nairobi drives the overall program level and the County Coordination Unit plays that role in each of the counties in support of County Program Steering Committees. Overall, the Evaluation Team finds that the structures put in place are effective and the partnership spirit is very positive. The different levels and the designated roles and responsibilities of various partners are clearly laid out and the organizational design is well understood. Under the coordination of a dynamic project leader and PCU, the size of the partnership does not appear to have been a hindrance to progress. That said, it is difficult to assess whether the counterfactual with a smaller program with fewer themes and interventions, a smaller number of counties and partners would have yielded higher impact.

In terms of the partnership², the implicit purpose is several-fold:

- To leverage Program Implementation using a Facilitation Approach (PIFA), otherwise referred to by the partners as “*business unusual*,” to strengthen the systems, capacity, and joint ownership at the county level to meet their development mandates;
- To leverage and connect county context expertise and experience of the INGO partners with sub-sectoral/technical expertise from entities like Acacia Water and SweetSense; and
- To draw on synergies to leverage funds, reach economies of scale, and optimize influence.

Much effort went in to forging the partnership at all levels. Kenya RAPID partners experienced a slow start to actual implementation over an initial 12–18-month period with partners gradually finding their way with the approach, the structures put in place, and the emerging designated roles and responsibilities. After this initial period, as noted by an IP at the Nairobi level:

The county response to the Kenya RAPID activity began to change... They don't see Kenya RAPID like an NGO project like in the past. County officials feel more engaged than in previous projects. You would see county officials trying to step up and demonstrate that they are able to move things, like legislation.

Along with an explanation of the overarching goals and strategic objectives, Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) signed between Kenya RAPID and each of the participating counties underscored the expected commitments and levels of participation as well as the structures and modalities for communication across the partnership. Indeed, the MOUs appear to have withstood the test of time and administrative turnover as an indication of the relationship between Kenya RAPID and the counties. Having IPs with a solid history of working in the counties proved a real strength. This meant minimal disruption to implementation post-election, even if policy-level work was slowed down. Kenya RAPID actively sought synergies under the umbrella of the PREG in terms of coordinating resilience responses, AHADI for drafting water and rangeland governance documents, and NDMA for information sharing.

While different partners and individuals may not be completely unified around a **common agenda**, the PIFA is universally praised as the appropriate approach to support Kenya's “journey to self-reliance.” Within Kenya RAPID itself, more clarity is needed to understand how the contributions of different partners fit together. This would forge greater understanding of **mutually reinforcing activities**, for

² To analyze Kenya RAPID from a partnership perspective, a framing put forward in the article entitled *Collective Impact* (Kania, J., and M. Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, Winter 2011) was combined with that based on the Evaluation Team Lead's own work on partnership accountability looking at partner and partnership compliance, transparency, and responsiveness.

example, how the data collection technologies contribute to greater county government accountability, how the governance framing documents can be designed in such a way as to encourage private sector engagement, and how efforts to foster community participation link to capacity requirements. In the absence of these discussions, some partners saw their contributions in isolation.

In terms of **shared measurement systems**, the Evaluation Team noted it took time for the partners to align their metrics and agree on data collection mechanisms. USAID and SDC had different reporting periods, which proved cumbersome but not insurmountable. Several interviewees mentioned that the funders were interested in different aspects of the program with USAID focusing more on the targets and outputs and SDC more interested in analyzing the outcomes. Albeit with some appreciation for the slower pace of the facilitative approach, the pressure on the targets appears to have won out. According to one IP interviewee from Nairobi, this sent “mixed signals to the implementing partners,” which led to some questions about how much risk was acceptable for Kenya RAPID to take.

By all accounts, the data points being collected are helpful, particularly borehole sensor data and the data from Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), both of which were mentioned numerous times by county officials. County-level interviewees, however, expressed differing degrees of ownership of the data as well as the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) tools. Thus, the Evaluation Team struggled to assess how Kenya RAPID data was being used in a practical sense by county officials to inform decision-making. Similarly, from a partnership perspective, it remains unclear how data helped shape Kenya RAPID’s own investment plans. This speaks to questions around how monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was designed into the program to provide an evidence base for modifications, redirections or staying the course. Further complicating this aspect, others mentioned that the indicators were not necessarily directly tied to the activities in all cases and, by the end, the focus had “shifted to the numbers and then people lost grip on the design.” Thus, the general sense is that the M&E system could have been optimized to be more useful to Kenya RAPID and partners by spurring on greater reflection in addition to measuring whether targets were met.

The MWA PCU opened up a wide range of **communication channels** for individuals in the partnership to share information. Coordination meetings occurred at the national and county levels on a quarterly basis and the PCU published a monthly newsletter. An all-inclusive WhatsApp group kept partners apprised of successes, and subsets of WhatsApp groupings, like among the IP county leads, also allowed for regular contact to share ideas, seek guidance, and offer support. Program Management Group (PMG) meetings occurred every six months. These four-day sessions brought the whole Kenya RAPID team together to share information and to encourage greater connectedness. PMG days were described as including a series of presentations that increasingly and appropriately put county officials at the center, with officials delivering the session and the IPs gradually taking more of a backseat. Frequent PMG meetings created an important sense of being part of a movement and spurring on a sense of quasi-competition among the counties, seemingly more could have been done to interrogate in greater depth the similarities and differences across the counties to understand what is potentially replicable. Given the expense and time commitment, other ways of structuring these exchanges through still non-threatening but more challenging and dynamic facilitation, thematic working groups, focused one-on-one county visits, or other mechanisms might have yielded stronger learning outcomes and replication.

As the **backbone organization**, MWA receives huge appreciation for how it has navigated and positioned Kenya RAPID in a neutral way. The Chief of Party was described as a “great relationships manager” by numerous interviewees, and the PCU staff members are seen as talented, knowledgeable, and supportive. The structures put in place at all levels by MWA and the partners appear to have been effective at keeping activities on track. Yet the Evaluation Team found it difficult to gauge (post the initial stages of negotiation) how decision-making occurred on such topics as spending and what kinds of issues were brought to each level of the partnership.

Certainly, an effective PCU is absolutely critical to making this kind of partnership work, given its size, scope, and breadth. It is difficult to see how Kenya RAPID would have made the gains that it has in terms of county capacity and county commitment to deliver on its mandate without a centralizing focus from the PCU. Often “dragged into logistics and related firefighting challenges,” however, the PCU was seen by many to be too lean in terms of staffing to optimize its role as a knowledge broker across the partnership. While the IPs generally have substantial in-house technical capacity, similar to the discussion above on the PMGs, opportunities may have been missed whereby the Kenya RAPID PCU could have facilitated deeper exchange and internal reflection. A slightly expanded staffing base in the PCU could have allowed space and capacity to forge these more technical debates, particularly around social inclusion/gender and the business model components of the activity.

At first glance, US\$35 million appears to be a large amount for a capacity strengthening program with some implementation activities and infrastructure investments. That said, with a percentage coming from in-kind contributions and some dedicated to the PCU, Kenya RAPID funding was stretched over five years and then over five large and sparsely populated counties. While financially prudent for the PCU to remain quite lean, this may have presented a false economy for a program of this complexity and size if the technical capacity of key staff was underutilized to meet other more administrative needs.

To provide **overarching direction** to Kenya RAPID, a 12-member Program Steering Committee (PSC) was put in place with internal representation at senior levels from across the partnership plus two representatives from national-level government agencies (Ministry of Water and Irrigation and NDMA). An abridged list of the key tasks of the PSC includes overseeing implementation, approving program policies and strategies, supervising the PCU, and intervening as a last resort in case of disagreement or conflict. PSC meetings took place twice a year. In terms of attendance, the IP representative on the PSC shifted every meeting, presumably to ensure that all IPs could engage at this level. While it is understood that Kenya RAPID would want to reflect a majority number of seats for the counties, adding three seats so that all IPs could attend does not seem unreasonable. The participation of the national-level stakeholders was sporadic in the first years but then ceased completely by the seventh meeting. The private sector constituency was originally represented by Aqua for All; on their departure midway through the five-year period, IBM attended once as the private sector representative and SweetSense the remaining times. Whether either really reflects *the private sector* targeted by Kenya RAPID or the aim for much of the business model work is unclear.

County participation was mixed in terms of number of meetings attended and number of government officials representing each county over the period. Some shifts in participation were understandably a result of the elections and the normal shifts in portfolios of senior county officials. Looking at consistency of participation and analyzing attendance based on how many participants attended two meetings in a row, at least five members of the twelve allocated seats either had not attended the previous meeting or sent apologies. The key challenge here is whether Kenya RAPID received robust and consistent guidance in terms of strategic direction. The quality of different PSC member participation was difficult to determine. On balance, the PSC arrangement, as a quasi-Board of Directors, appears to be quite standard and not overly cumbersome to manage for the partnership in terms of resource allocation. Keeping partners at a senior level apprised of progress and challenges and providing space to interrogate the pace of progress and to compare notes across counties appears to have made the PSC a useful organizing component of Kenya RAPID.

1.5 ASSESSING KENYA RAPID’S APPROACH TO BUSINESS MODELS (EQ3)

According to both the literature and interviewees, the ASALs continue to present a challenging development context of dispersed populations across vast areas, emerging but still unclear policy and rules with regard to private sector engagement, emerging but still insufficient supporting infrastructure (e.g., roads), and a challenge of overcoming a culture of not paying for water and sanitation services.

Given these factors, the general sense from interviewees is that presently private sector firms remain less likely to invest in the ASALs relative to other regions of the country. Recognizing that such efforts are largely “starting from scratch in the ASALs,” Kenya RAPID is seen to have encouraged private sector engagement; shifted mindsets somewhat; and even made headway in a few areas, particularly around water service delivery.

With public sector resources and capacity unlikely to fill the gap, Kenya RAPID’s emphasis around private sector technologies and approaches that are focused on ensuring sustainability of services and strengthening more commercial approaches to water service management are appreciated in a context where much of the discussion revolves around expanding service delivery. Ultimately, a more structured approach (combined with a longer time frame for business models to take root) might have seen more direct achievements in this key element of the Kenya RAPID theory of change.

Looking first at strategy, the overarching sense of the interviewees is that more work is needed to galvanize understanding on the potential roles of the private sector. The strategy for and focus on business models appear to have been rather ad hoc and could have been clearer around the entry requirements for different business ventures. In the absence of a more structured analysis, the Evaluation Team is unclear how Kenya RAPID determined:

1. The gaps, needs, and viability of the business models (including from the perspective of the enabling environment);
2. The potential market size or response of a customer base, including lower quintile customers; and
3. The risks and other aspects needed to encourage a private sector response.

Ultimately, the focus should be on understanding the opportunity both from the business perspective in terms of viability, but also from the customer perspective in terms of need, affordability, and competing substitutes. Such a framing might have structured conversations at the county level more effectively.

Of note, the key partner with a dedicated responsibility for moving this agenda forward (Aqua for All) rather abruptly left the program in the third year. Part of the issue was that rather than a more coordinated effort across the partnership, the onus appears to have been on this lead organization to structure and deliver this component. The Evaluation Team understands that Aqua for All put forward a wide range of over 15 possible business approaches for Kenya RAPID to support. However, differences in opinion around strategic direction with regard to which innovations and enterprises to support, how much risk Kenya RAPID should take, and subsequently how best to allocate funds to take advantage of opportunities as they arose while also ensuring best value for money proved insurmountable barriers for Aqua for All from a programmatic perspective. More discussion on analyzing and underwriting the risks of the private sector may have been instructive. Based on interview responses, perceived or real pressure from USAID on reaching the Kenya RAPID targets may have stymied further risk taking.

While Kenya RAPID is extensive and complicated in its own right, a wider conversation around strategy with regard to business models would also have helped in linking Kenya RAPID’s work to that of others, such as the World Bank and other USAID-funded programs like the Kenya Integrated Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (KIWASH) Project; the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Partnerships and Learning for Sustainability (WASHPaLS) Activity’s learning around Market-Based Sanitation; and the Securing Water for Food Grand Challenge Fund (SWFF). Some of this engagement is determined by the capacity of the Kenya RAPID PCU, which may have been too stretched to explore these channels. Given their wide portfolios and exposure across the sector, a key responsibility and contribution of the funders is to optimize the connections among its programming, and potentially to help scan the market for other options or competing products and services.

The USAID GDA requirements are quite flexible around the kinds of partners that qualify as coming from the “private sector.”³ Apart from a few exceptions (notably, Davis & Shirtliff [an engineering and infrastructure firm] and Maji Milele [the developer of the ATM model]), “private” partners in the Kenya RAPID Activity (research institutes, product developers, and consultant firms and foundations) were not actively looking to forge their own sustained transaction-based relationship with households, communities, counties, utilities, other suppliers, or service providers. One interviewee framed this in the sense that Kenya RAPID spent a significant amount of time talking *about* but not necessarily *to* the part of the private sector that would be most likely to develop business models actively in the ASALs.

Some interviewees speculated that the private sector partners were perhaps brought in too soon, creating expectations that would take some time to materialize into real opportunities. This could also have been a function that the sequencing of SOs 1 and 2 could have been more purposeful, i.e., put the governance documents in place first that framed the rules, potential roles, and relationships with the private sector. That said, the timeframe for Kenya RAPID was not sufficient for such sequencing, particularly given the time needed to have the governance framing documents approved by county legislatures.

These strategic and analytical aspects notwithstanding, several technologies and approaches for water delivery hold promise in the ASAL region. A majority of interviewees considered that the technological innovations introduced by Kenya RAPID have contributed to solving challenges experienced by communities in the delivery of water services. Despite the program having invested in the initial stages, other technologies and approaches in the sanitation sector (e.g., biogas center, container-based solutions, and converting waste into briquettes) did not see similar success due apparently to a lack of acceptance by the communities, lack of security in some geographic areas to pursue further, and (unverified) claims of competing approaches with free pilots being offered by some INGOs.

ATMs distribute set amounts of water based on a pre-paid token system, helping to reduce non-revenue water. This appears to stem corruption at the water points and create a more reliable and predictable income stream that can be shared between the community water committees and the managers of the overall water scheme. Such is the appreciation of the ATM innovation that Marsabit County is making it a requirement to be incorporated into all new water projects. Turkana County is purchasing ATMs with county funds cost shared with the Lodwar Water and Sanitation Company and Oxfam. The ATM system could also be introduced as an approach for water for livestock and water bowsers.

With the challenges of high salinity of groundwater in most ASAL areas, the desalination technology piloted in Wajir also appears to hold promise with senior county leadership promising to expand the use of the technology across the county.

Another promising business approach—an insurance scheme for water system repair and maintenance developed by the Catholic Diocese of Turkana—was subsequently promoted by Kenya RAPID and supported by the county government. To buy into the scheme, Water Management Committees pay a set rate, depending on the kind of water system they have. Contracted private sector technical teams can then be requested any time there is a breakdown without additional cost to the community. Under Kenya RAPID, the model appears to have expanded in terms of coverage of more community water schemes and holds great potential across the ASAL region and in Kenya generally.

On the agriculture side, there is some conflation of income generation activities linked to increased food production at the household level with private sector business model initiatives. Income generation activities (e.g., beekeeping, vegetable drying, and milk production) all play an important part in enhancing critical food and livelihood security for poorer households. From a business perspective, a common

³ There also appears to be conflation whereby INGO fundraising efforts for humanitarian relief also count as a “private sector contribution.”

refrain from interviewees was that more could have been done to promote the whole value chain like supporting access to farming supplies (e.g., drip irrigation technologies) or creating opportunities for value addition through greater emphasis on cold storage facilities to reduce post-harvest losses, juicing facilities, training on camel dairy production, and links to markets. Even if the focus is primarily on water and agriculture, enhancing water storage in times of drought and ensuring greater resilience against flooding are clear priorities.

By all accounts, this component appears to have been stymied perhaps by strategy but also by the five-year timeframe. While the ASAL region is still fairly uncharted territory for private sector initiatives, Kenya RAPID appears to have laid the groundwork for future advances in this area with county officials. The overarching strategy for analyzing and introducing the potential for private sector engagement appears to have been quite iterative with county officials and communities (and even apparently some IP staff, according to interviewees) to shift them away from a more humanitarian mindset. That said, it is unclear to the Evaluation Team on what basis decisions were made about which business models to pursue, and at what point and under what circumstances pilots could be scaled up. Beyond the ATMs, it is unclear what analysis of more tried and tested products and services across Kenya was conducted. As noted, more effort could have been made to bring in private operators and service providers, private product suppliers, and private infrastructure providers.

Thus, as interviewees suggested, creating a more shared and cohesive vision early on around what needed to occur to promote different commercial solutions, what sequencing was required to overcome different barriers and what was the balance between Kenya RAPID and county engagement in driving these activities would all have been useful. Given the wide range of responsibilities placed on a small PCU team, more dedicated resources could have helped advance these conversations further between the partners, scan the horizon for potentially viable models, and foster the enabling environment that would encourage the private sector to engage more in these markets. As it is not always easy to predict how a project will progress at the outset, greater flexibility around some of the funding to allow the partners to pursue new opportunities as they emerged could have been helpful.

1.6 ASSESSING THE FACILITATIVE APPROACH (EQ4)

This is a time of change in Kenya's governing structures. Counties have been given significantly more responsibility through the devolution process and citizens are exercising more voice and expecting more responsiveness in terms of service delivery at the local level. County officials appear to recognize the opportunities and are keen to mobilize resources to deliver on their promises, but also the challenges that this new mandate brings.

The facilitative approach (also referred as PIFA) has been a critical component of Kenya RAPID in the five counties. Applying the PIFA, IP staff members were embedded in county government offices to:

1. Provide direct support on the drafting and approval of governance framing documents for county priority areas;
2. Support the joint planning and coordination of activities between the county government and Kenya RAPID;
3. Assist the county in integrating priority activities across different departments (e.g., water, sanitation, rangeland management, and nutrition); and
4. Encourage the coordination and integration of other development partner work in the counties within the framing of the CIDPs.

By all accounts, this approach has proven to be successful and appreciated by county staff.

Major areas of traction include the development of guiding policies and other framework documents and capacity building at the county level. Responding to comprehensive county capacity needs assessments (CCNA), capacity building manifested in three forms: more traditional formal training, mentoring by embedded staff, and overall systems strengthening support. Examples of systems strengthening include development of policies and training manuals, support with budget analysis, and the creation or strengthening of different structures like small town water schemes and Water User Associations.

Kenya RAPID embarked upon CCNAs from roughly the sixth to eighteenth month after launch. The CCNA outlined three dimensions of support for capacity building in the WASH, livestock, and rangeland management sectors: the systemic or enabling environment level, the organizational level, and the individual level. An external consultant was brought in to assess the management and technical capacity of related departments for each county that then formed the basis for the design of a joint county capacity building program. The County Capacity Building Fund (CCBF) was then created as a joint fund managed by the PCU to solicit requests and administer capacity building efforts on the counties' behalf.

A key challenge of working through a facilitative approach noted by several national- and county-level IP staff has been staff turnover within the government as a result of elections midway through Kenya RAPID and the general reshuffling of appointees across project-related roles. While instructive in the early years, there does not appear to have been a subsequent updated capacity assessment after the elections. The Evaluation Team was not able to assess the effectiveness or impact of Kenya RAPID-supported training activities, but county officials speak with confidence with regard to their ability to address community needs. A key stumbling block remains, however, around staffing levels to cover water resources, sanitation, rangelands, and nutrition. Further, the lack of a focused capacity assessment on nutrition and on the office of the Public Health Officer was likely a missed opportunity for Kenya RAPID. However, one government official recognized that the provided trainings were meant to act as a catalyst, in that: "Kenya RAPID may not address everything but can contribute in terms of building skills for the county to go on its own." Strategies employed to help extend the impact of the capacity assessment are the development of budgeted county training plans, in tandem with the CCBF; development of resource manuals; provision of training with a focus on training of trainers; and identification of locally available trainings.

Kenya RAPID embedded between three and five staff in each of the counties, usually in adjacent offices in county buildings to those of key related county staff. Although with some variation across counties, IP staff generally included a coordinator; specialists in areas such as WASH, ICT, food security and nutrition, and livestock; an administrator; and a driver. The approach of embedding staff received very positive responses from county officials. Alongside the practical contributions, as a result, there is a growing appreciation for what INGOs bring to the table in terms of experience, expertise, and skills. Interviewees from IPs acknowledged that the skillsets of embedded staff are as much, if not more, about their facilitation role as about technical knowledge and implementation experience. While the pace of progress might be slower than traditional ways of working, the likelihood of ownership by the county, the ability to coordinate across initiatives, and the emphasis on longer-term sustainability through this facilitative approach is expected to be higher.

The Evaluation Team sees the facilitative approach as a highly successful mechanism to support counties in their efforts to develop and deliver on their CIDPs. Kenya RAPID's modeling of constructive leadership behaviors also appears to have shaped county engagement with counties encouraging other Development Partners to work in this way. The emphasis on capacity assessment and direct hands-on systems strengthening is seen as helping counties deliver on their mandates more directly. The approach should lead to cost-effectiveness through more integrated planning and efficient logistics during implementation of activities, some greater understanding of how different development priorities can mutually support each other, and a greater sense of ownership of development processes supported by Development Partners at the county level.

Government counterparts from each county were appreciative of Kenya RAPID's support in developing governance framing documents (policies, bills, acts, by-laws), providing structure to county-level governance of water, livestock, and rangeland management. This complicated and time intensive process requires significant back-and-forth across stakeholder groups who may not understand the technical aspects or the options put before them. Progress on this work stream varied among counties.

The Evaluation Team understands from the document review and the interviews that a wide range of activities were directed at enhancing community-level governance as well. These activities included:

1. Strengthening structures for resource governance (e.g., Water User Associations, Water Management Committees, and RMCs);
2. Training communities on the use of different technologies (e.g., ATMs);
3. Training households on different aspects relating to wellbeing (e.g., nutrition, hygiene, and how to treat drinking water); and
4. Setting up the community complaints and feedback mechanism for water services.

The feedback has been very positive, with staff noting that communities accepted these initiatives with much positive "political good will." That said, a key challenge remains around the ability of county administrations to sustain these efforts with limited staffing levels and insufficient resources dedicated to administering these programs to cover costs associated with allowances and transport provision. There also remains a residual sense in some communities of dependency with community members still "always expecting to receive something."

Enshrining the facilitative approach further in the CIDP process could be instrumental in negotiating county priorities and ensuring that these are budgeted for under annual departmental plans. A key bottleneck is around the delays in national-level disbursement of funds. To overcome these shortfalls, IPs used their own procurement systems to expedite activity funding. Admittedly, IPs have not had much influence on county procurement systems nor on seemingly influencing spending from major donors.

In terms of an exit strategy, this was not clear across the board. One respondent noted that the whole facilitative approach is about embedding an exit strategy from the start whereby the IP team becomes more and more invisible as the project progresses. Indeed, that is a clear principle of good facilitation and dovetails well with the PIFA principles. The increased role and confidence of the county officials in both PMG and county-level meetings with different stakeholders is testament to the IPs taking more of a back seat. That said, it was noted that IP staff are often mistaken for county staff "...because they were always working hand in hand and at the same locations and really understanding the mechanics of the different initiatives that were aimed at building that accountability at the county level." With this in mind, it is important to safeguard against INGO staff becoming co-opted by the system. The need for the values that INGOs bring to the table must not be lost in the process including an emphasis on evidence-based decision-making and a focus on the vulnerable and marginalized, including women and people with disabilities (PWDs).

The need to form a foundation of trust and a "new way of doing business" resulted in a slow start up as the partners became familiar with their different systems and learned how to work together and as Kenya RAPID sought to ensure co-creation of activities with the counties. Ultimately, the team questions whether the Kenya RAPID Activity was long enough to prepare for exit in a meaningful way that ensures sustainability of the contribution and approach.

I.7 CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

I.7.1 KENYA RAPID THROUGH A GENDER LENS

The Evaluation Team approached the gender component of the evaluation by applying the USAID framework for gender analysis (USAID, 2017). While Kenya RAPID achieved a number of small, yet significant, gains from a gender perspective, limited data and a lean response to gender concepts from which to draw concrete conclusions is seen by the Evaluation Team as a finding in itself.

Kenya RAPID's design included elements that would accommodate women's traditional **gender roles** of caring for children and being responsible for household nutrition; specifically, Kenya RAPID sought to promote kitchen gardens, educate on food diversification, and train/deploy Community Health Workers for nutrition promotion. The concerted effort by Kenya RAPID to understand and respond to **cultural norms and beliefs** is perhaps most noteworthy in terms of behavior change communication and training material design. What remains unknown is the result of implementing these trainings with communities whose social norms and beliefs are deeply rooted.

In terms of **access to and control over assets and resources**, Kenya RAPID sought to provide reliable and easier access to safe and adequate water, particularly relevant to women and girls whose traditional role includes water collection, as well as sanitation infrastructure. Kenya RAPID promoted economic opportunities for women, youth, and the disabled through strengthening women's cooperatives and savings and lending committees. Evaluation findings also revealed an increase in water access for PWDs, directly and indirectly attributed to Kenya RAPID, mainly through inclusive infrastructure design. According to respondents, this concerted effort is attributed to the intentions and commitments of women's groups, rather than the Kenya RAPID mandate. While findings reveal an increase in **access** to resources, **control** over resources was less clearly in evidence, apart from the metering/token (ATM) system, which allows for greater efficiency among women's groups that manage water points by improving record keeping and transparency of sales.

Women appear to have benefited substantially from the introduction of labor-saving technologies particularly the ATM system. In support of users' current **gender roles**, respondents noted that women found this technology to increase efficiency (e.g., reduced time queuing due to increased time options to collect water), and that they could keep the token on a keychain without needing cash to purchase water. According to respondents, the token also allowed women to send a child to collect water more easily, relieving them of this responsibility and the time burden of waiting in line.

Kenya RAPID sought to ensure that **policies and laws** developed to govern water, land, and livestock would be gender intentional by involving women and PWDs in drafting. Analyzed interview data suggest that success in increasing the diversity of governance processes and policies is mixed. Kenya RAPID made consistent and concerted efforts to promote women's participation in all activity-related meetings, following the one-third gender rule (i.e., no more than two-thirds of participants can be of the same gender) as stipulated in Kenya's Gender Policy (Republic of Kenya, 2019). While effective in increasing the participation of women within governance structures, this representative quota does not guarantee increases in women's decision-making power and voice within meetings. Other specific strategies to increase engagement in (and reduce barriers around) women and PWDs shaping policy and governance outcomes were not elaborated on by interviewees.

In terms of **positions of power**, findings show that indeed women are at times placed in positions of leadership within community structures, yet often these positions are limited to the secretary or treasurer. Despite Kenya RAPID's efforts to promote participation of women, there appears to be a ceiling whereby women are accepted in mid-level positions or on boards, but rarely, if at all, do they hold senior leadership positions.

Indeed, Kenya RAPID activities brought a number of key benefits to women in a complex environment. The rigid gender norms and power disparities in the ASAL region, alongside the project's desire to follow "do no harm" principles (i.e., preventing the exploitation of gender inequalities to achieve outcomes), suggests a design going forward aimed at transforming existing gender norms, rather than merely operating within them. An early, more rigorous gender analysis prior to program inception would inform project activities and the AMEP. Stringent accountability measures in place at all levels would ensure the prioritization of gender-transformative efforts. Finally, but not least, is the need for a dedicated social inclusion and gender staff person, if not a subcontracted gender team, to provide technical expertise on, as well as prioritize the implementation of, gender analysis findings in activities.

In any subsequent stages of Kenya RAPID, the PIFA might lead to more constructive and transformative outcomes. Future efforts also have the critical opportunity to address persistent practices with negative consequences (e.g., female genital mutilation, early marriage, menstrual hygiene management stigma and constraints, and land ownership restrictions toward women, among others) as a way to catalyze greater change. Without facing rigid social and gender norms explicitly, the program risks exacerbating vulnerabilities, even while meeting WASH and livelihood targets.

I.7.2 KENYA RAPID THROUGH A RESILIENCE LENS

USAID defines resilience as "the ability of people, households, communities, countries, and systems to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces chronic vulnerability and facilitates inclusive growth" (USAID, 2012). The main hazards to which pastoralist and agro-pastoralist livelihoods in the ASAL counties are vulnerable are drought, followed by flooding, livestock disease, pests, and conflict, which can stem from these other pressures. Interventions aimed at mitigating the impact of drought (i.e., through better management of and improved access to water and pasture resources), improving livestock health, and strengthening market linkages all build livelihood resilience.

Kenya RAPID promoted agribusiness models to increase and diversify household food income sources as a means of hedging risk. These included the introduction or expansion of kitchen gardens and banana cultivation for household consumption and market sales. Kenya RAPID introduced solar-powered drying and food blending techniques to preserve and add value and nutrition to produce, which became available in the off-season and could be more easily transported to markets with less risk of spoilage.

Efforts to enhance the water supply infrastructure had positive results with anecdotal evidence suggesting that households were less likely to waste water they had already paid for. While the analysis is still ongoing through an impact evaluation, real-time data transmitted to both county officials and NDMA from borehole sensors is contributing to resilience at the community/household level. Quicker repairs when there is a breakdown ensures borehole pump functionality leading to a more reliable water source. In Garissa, the introduction of piping as an alternative to open canals improved access to water, reduced water losses, saved labor resources, and minimized impact of seasonal flooding. Farmers could thereby plant further from riverbanks and water sources were less susceptible to silting.

The promotion of basic or primary sanitation facilities was not as effective at building resilience. Advocacy for more advanced sanitation facilities that could withstand seasonal flooding could still prove more promising. Some activity in this area had begun toward the end of the project but was stalled by the COVID-19 restrictions.

Overall, the Evaluation Team heard more about promoting income diversification rather than focusing on existing income sources, namely livestock. Little was mentioned about efforts to coordinate livestock off-take in anticipation of poor rains and subsequent grazing conditions usually resulting in rising livestock maintenance costs and falling livestock prices. The improved management of grazing lands and water sources would likely make it easier to maintain livestock during a drought, but evidence was not

forthcoming of whether households were or were not able to maintain this asset base, which is so fundamental to the pastoral livelihood.

The initial Kenya RAPID Statement of Work included two over-arching indicators of or proxies for resilience: “Depth of Poverty” (a measure of the mean percentage shortfall relative to the US\$1.25 poverty line) and prevalence of stunted children under five years of age. The first indicator would reflect the project’s impact on household income and the second on child nutrition. If resilience has improved, one would expect to see less variation on income and nutrition as a result of a shock from one evaluation period to the next. These findings would be more significant if this variation could have been compared to historical, pre-intervention data, or to a control population. While some decline in income and nutrition is expected as a result of a shock, the impact would be on reducing the degree of that decrease.

According to MWA staff, these overarching indicators were dropped for two reasons.⁴ First, resource constraints prevented them from being captured in project areas, let alone in control areas. Second, as multiple factors contribute to income and nutrition, it would be difficult to discern with any degree of confidence the extent to which this impact was due to Kenya RAPID activities or other external factors.

The concept of resilience is built around the knowledge that there will always be shocks—increasingly so in areas like northern Kenya. In this context, some of the remarks by interviewees were noteworthy. For example, MWA staff stated that shocks are so frequent in northern Kenya that you may have a successful project, but emergency erodes all previous gains and households are quickly back to zero. Under neutral or favorable conditions, the project could achieve temporary gains in access to water and pasture, livestock health, or in income generation; these could be compounded as long as conditions remained stable. Yet when disaster strikes, those gains are eroded and households have to start over. If disasters will continue to disrupt livelihoods and erode any gains made, the length of recovery becomes a proxy for resilience. Alternatively, Kenya RAPID could have selected the prevalence of certain behaviors or negative coping mechanisms after a shock to indicate whether households were any better able to mitigate the impact. For example, changes in food consumption, school dropouts (which NDMA is monitoring), or sales of productive assets are among the ways in which households are affected by or cope with shocks. The less we see households resorting to these strategies, the more resilient they can be presumed to be.

Because of the difficulty or costs of obtaining outcome data and in attributing outcomes to project interventions, much of the reporting was based on outputs. These outputs reflect the progress and scale of activities that are known to contribute to resilience, as stated above. One common example is around strategic boreholes where households can source water for household and livestock consumption even during a drought. Rangeland cover is another indicator being tracked.

Kenya RAPID implemented or enabled multiple initiatives that are likely to improve household and livelihood resilience to shocks. The project did not invest in collecting and analyzing data that could demonstrate whether improved resilience was an outcome of these efforts. The Evaluation Team thus cannot state with confidence which initiatives or combination of initiatives were more or less likely to enhance resilience. While Kenya RAPID IPs bring significant experience in resilience, the Evaluation Team was unable to assess how effectively this was harnessed, or how extensively this knowledge was shared and debated across the program. Furthermore, as Kenya RAPID is fundamentally about building government capacity, how effective county governments are becoming at protecting citizens from recurring external shocks must be considered going forward as one proxy for resilience.

⁴ As noted by USAID, these indicators are still being measured in USAID commissioned population based surveys since no single activity on its own can have a significant impact on the same.

I.7.3 KENYA RAPID THROUGH A CONFLICT LENS

With regard to Kenya RAPID's impact on conflict, the Evaluation Team cannot present findings with any degree of confidence given the inability to travel and conduct FGDs at the community level. That said, a number of Kenya RAPID initiatives would logically have supported efforts at conflict mitigation. As noted by one County Livestock Officer, "Before the Kenya RAPID program, there were movements of livestock from all over the place, with many incidences of conflicts from resource use." Kenya RAPID strengthened community governance systems, a contribution that is appreciated by county officials as having reduced conflicts even during drought seasons as compared to the past. Such governance efforts focused on the establishment, registration, and training of committees with bylaws established and agreed by the communities themselves to manage water resources and oversee rangeland management including planned grazing. Water use plans between farmers and livestock keepers include negotiation of days and even times of use among different communities. Feed storage facilities have also mitigated conflict over resources (pastureland in particular) during drought. Grazing Management Committees have also been brought together to share strategies and adjacent committees have been supported in dialogue to reduce hostilities over resource rights. Resource use mapping has also made it easier to track pastoralist patterns of movement and thus provide targeted support to their production systems.

To mitigate potential escalation of conflict further, Kenya RAPID introduced conflict resolution mechanisms through the formation of community dialogues (peace committees) and sought to ensure inclusivity on and ownership through clan and family representation. By training the chiefs and elders on peacebuilding, Kenya RAPID has recognized the important role that community leadership (chiefs and elders) and traditional mechanisms play in conflict mitigation within and between communities, especially in the context of resource management in the ASALs. While it is difficult for the Evaluation Team to assess the quality and scale of efforts, county officials credit Kenya RAPID with making significant inroads in addressing sources of conflict and providing mechanisms to safeguard against it.

From a broader perspective, Kenya RAPID had project work interrupted in some counties due to conflict and insecurity incidences (particularly Al Shabaab threats in Wajir and Garissa). Such incidences were seen as rather matter of fact in the interviews with Kenya RAPID's task being to navigate around these events as carefully as possible to ensure the safety of staff and continuity of programming where feasible. Other aspects of regional conflict at this level did not emerge strongly in the interviews.

I.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on evaluation findings and conclusions, the Evaluation Team offers recommendations for USAID, SDC, Kenya RAPID partners, and county governments. The recommendations herein offer the Evaluation Team's higher-level perspective considering the breadth of the review and the nature of the questions asked. During the course of the evaluation, interviewees offered a series of activity-specific recommendations that the Evaluation Team shared with Kenya RAPID directly.

I.8.1 FOR USAID AND SDC

With regard to the design of future programming

1. Continue to emphasize integration of interventions encouraging county governments to foster greater linkages through a less siloed and more systems based or systemic approach.
2. Commission robust up-to-date analysis of the business environment across the ASALs, underscoring the differences between county contexts (e.g., demographics; socio-cultural and economic factors; and climate change, land use, and resource management aspects).
3. For consortium composition, determine modalities to engage more private sector partners who are actively seeking or have the wherewithal to forge or take up business opportunities in the ASALs. In an effort to overcome barriers, explore whether a challenge fund approach for private sector innovations could yield further benefits, particularly in sanitation.
4. While connections with PREG and AHADI were effective on resilience and governance aspects, seek to link programs across donor portfolios more effectively (like the USAID-supported SWFF, KIWASH, Financial Inclusion Improves Sanitation and Health Activity, and others) that are focused on private sector development. Likewise, seek to tap into wider sector developments actively, with other Development Partners like the World Bank, to maximize synergies particularly that foster greater integration of interventions, and optimize learning and uptake of promising practices.
5. Encourage greater risk taking by grantees and contractors, particularly with regard to supporting innovations that emerge from the private sector.
6. Given the continuing efforts to strengthen devolved governance, continue to focus on strengthening the capacity of county governments to oversee and enable providers to expand and guarantee service continuity, and expand efforts on effective community participation to continue to foster greater accountability.
7. Use USAID/SDC leverage to develop clearer responses from county governments on their budget allocations and actual spend.

With regard to procurement and metrics

1. Given the start-up and wind-down periods, consider whether the timeframes (typically five years) for systems strengthening programs like Kenya RAPID are sufficient and realistic.
2. Work with grantees/contractors to reconsider the indicators and targets to determine whether they accurately capture the systems change and systems strengthening ambition of programs like Kenya RAPID and the contextual factors in seemingly similar but potentially disparate counties.
3. Ensure that flexibility is woven into GDA funding packages without fully committing all the funding from the initial stages to allow for the possibility of new partners entering later in the project.
4. Further support grantees and contractors across the Mission and SDC's funded portfolios to explore different ways of collecting and analyzing data that shed light on progress on outcome goals (around resilience, for example).

I.8.2 FOR KENYA RAPID PARTNERS

Program design

1. Reconsider the contextual differences between counties to ensure appropriate tailoring and effective replication of interventions.

2. Reinforce for partners the connections among and ensure joint ownership of all SOs.
3. Ensure that the backbone or hub organization has sufficient capacity (time, resources, skillsets) in technical areas like private sector engagement, social inclusion, gender, as well as facilitation skills to broker knowledge effectively across the partner organizations, including by fostering constructive and mutual understanding about each partner’s contribution and how the pieces fit together.
4. Invest in systems, processes, and staffing to harmonize the M&E systems more effectively across partners from the outset and ground M&E processes in a learning as well as a reporting framework. Ensure that indicators are capturing information that more directly reflect the SOs and invest resources to ensure that data can be collected effectively.
5. Through an early rigorous analysis, determine a more transformative agenda to break down social norms relating to social inclusion, gender, and PWDs. A dedicated social inclusion and gender staff person, if not a subcontracted team, should provide technical expertise on, as well as prioritize the implementation of, recommendations coming out of social inclusion and gender analysis of activities.
6. Ensure that key county governance framing documents incorporate and institutionalize an emphasis on how counties should best target the poorest.
7. Invest in effective use of the evidence base generated to make clearer business cases to county governments (using data from Kenya RAPID) on the long-term costs and benefits of investing versus not investing in the types of activities supported by Kenya RAPID.
8. Work with counties and IPs to establish an appropriate exit strategy. One aspect is to understand how best to avoid “dependency syndrome” on the IPs through shadowing approaches, capacity building of county staff on facilitation, and related mechanisms.

Business models and income generation

1. Unpack the viability requirements for business models (including greater emphasis on sanitation) from initial pilot to scale up stages, understanding risks and related market factors.
2. Place business models in the context of a whole value chain approach and consider what other elements are needed to ensure that a business model takes off.
3. Provide resources (including staffing capacity) to ensure that all activities are considered through gender, livelihood, and resilience lenses by making better use of the technical expertise within the partner institutions and strengthening a more collective spirit of constructive analysis.
4. At household/community level, focus on strengthening existing income sources alongside an emphasis on income diversification.

County capacity building aspects

1. Conduct light-touch, in-house capacity assessment exercises halfway through the project and an end-line capacity assessment to gauge impact of capacity building efforts.
2. Capture the progress made in meeting the capacity gaps more actively through follow up with trainees, an end-line internal capacity needs reflection with the counties, and other mechanisms.
3. Beyond an induction program, develop a more deliberate training plan for incoming elected officials and appointees.

4. Continue to analyze and share on how accountability relationships across county government, service providers, and communities are evolving also with an eye on how best to strengthen the design and application of tools like the National Community Participation Checklist.

Investing in learning

1. Ensure sufficient resources are available for critically and constructively unpacking learning including more deliberate analysis across counties/geographic areas.
2. Create mechanisms across smaller, more focused groupings (of county officials, IPs, etc.) to optimize learning that can then be shared across the wider partnership.

I.8.3 FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENTS

Governance and accountability aspects

1. With the macro framing documents in place, continue to pursue sub-policy guidance and strategies across different Kenya RAPID sector areas.
2. Anchor tested and proven innovations (like ATMs) in the governance frameworks.
3. Reinforce efforts for ownership of the data and ensure robust cross-department systems are in place to incorporate the data into evidence-based decision-making.
4. Work with partners to introduce and expand participatory budgeting processes.
5. Continue to strengthen the complaints and feedback processes and mechanisms.
6. Create overarching coordination and learning initiatives for the various resource management structures put in place through Kenya RAPID (for example, forging links between RMCs to share strategies).

County capacity

1. Continue to invest in meeting the staffing gap across all Kenya RAPID sector areas.
2. Continue a process of internal capacity assessment using the Kenya RAPID framing to identify gaps in skills and expertise and then continue to partner and invest with other counties in the ASALs through the CCBF.
3. Consider the best method to pilot the expansion of coordination efforts to the ward level, potentially using county staff as the facilitators (as modeled by Kenya RAPID IPs).

Scaling up

1. Given the wealth of knowledge and experience generated through Kenya RAPID, lobby more effectively with other ASAL counties at national level for policies, funding mechanisms, and other aspects that would reinforce the gains made through Kenya RAPID.
2. Consider the best methods to support value chains across the county to enable greater uptake of the suite of livelihood enhancement interventions introduced by Kenya RAPID.
3. Continue to work through the County Program Steering Committee to develop strategies to upscale Kenya RAPID initiatives (on CLTS, nutrition, rangeland management, etc.) across the county with Kenya RAPID and non-RAPID partners.

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