



# PREG PARTNERSHIPS

CASE  
STUDY

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This study is directly relevant to the REAL Associate Award Project Result 1: Knowledge Capture, which guides the collection and analysis of new and existing data and the identification and documentation of promising practices.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

<b>AHADI</b>	Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions
<b>APHIA/IMARSHA</b>	AIDS, Population, and Health Integrated Assistance plus Integrated Marginal Arid Regions Innovative Socialized Health Approach
<b>ASAL</b>	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
<b>AVCD</b>	Accelerated Value Chain Development
<b>C4R</b>	Center for Resilience (USAID)
<b>CDCS</b>	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
<b>CIDP</b>	County Integrated Development Plan
<b>CLA</b>	Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation
<b>CLT</b>	County Liaison Team
<b>COP</b>	Chief of Party
<b>CSG</b>	County Steering Group
<b>DAI</b>	Development Alternatives Incorporated
<b>EDE</b>	Ending Drought Emergencies
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization
<b>GIS</b>	Geographic Information System
<b>GoK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>JPC</b>	Joint Planning Cell
<b>J2SR</b>	Journey to Self-Reliance (USAID)
<b>KALDRR</b>	Kenya Arid Lands Disaster Risk Reduction – WASH program
<b>Kenya RAPID</b>	Kenya Resilient Arid Lands Partnership for Integrated Development
<b>KI</b>	Key Informant
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>LMS</b>	Livestock Market Systems
<b>MCA</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>MOU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NDMA</b>	National Drought Management Authority
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NHPplus</b>	Nutrition and Health Program plus
<b>NIWETU</b>	<i>NiWajibu Wetu</i> (Kiswahili phrase that translates to “Kenya Is Our Responsibility”)
<b>NRM</b>	Natural Resource Management
<b>NRT</b>	Northern Rangelands Trust

<b>OFDA</b>	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID)
<b>PfRR</b>	Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (South Sudan)
<b>PREG</b>	Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth
<b>PRRO</b>	Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation (of WFP)
<b>REAL</b>	Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) Associate Award
<b>REGAL-AG</b>	Resilience and Economic Growth in Arid Lands – Accelerated Growth
<b>REGAL-IR</b>	Resilience and Economic Growth in Arid Lands – Improving Resilience
<b>RLA</b>	Resilience Learning Activity
<b>SLI</b>	Sequencing, Layering, and Integrating (i.e., Convergence of services)
<b>TANGO</b>	Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations International
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children’s Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
<b>WDC/WPC</b>	Ward Development Committee/Ward Planning Committee
<b>WDP</b>	Ward Development Plan
<b>WFP</b>	World Food Program

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Study Objective, Background, and Methods

This case study explores the factors that have enabled effective collaboration and coordination for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) initiative in northern Kenya. The study focuses on the period from 2016–2019, but also includes precursor initiatives to PREG (from 2013) as well as the partnering approach that continued during the early months of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. The study provides lessons on the opportunities and challenges for achieving greater stakeholder collaboration and activity sustainability and institutionalization in the next phase of PREG. The learning is also relevant for other operational contexts facing recurrent crises. It does not offer simple or prescriptive solutions, but insights into the **emergent practice of building resilience as a partnership and as a complex adaptive system**.

Indeed, PREG represents a complex partnership arrangement in a complex setting—a system nested within systems. PREG is situated within a context of recurrent drought, climatic variability, conflict and insecurity, and a lack of investment by government and other international entities. The PREG initiative unites multiple USAID partners, together with the Kenya National Drought Management Authority (NDMA), the Government of Kenya (GoK) at national and county levels, and other international organizations in a development agenda for the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of northern Kenya. It also reflects the shift toward county leadership and self-reliance at the local level through Kenya’s devolution strategy. PREG serves as an umbrella mechanism for multi-sectoral USAID programs and humanitarian and development partners to strengthen resilience in nine ASAL counties: Baringo, Isiolo, Garissa, Marsabit, Mandera, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, and Wajir. Across partners and implementation areas, appropriate and effective layering, sequencing, and integration of activities is central to PREG’s approach for strengthening resilience and realizing collective impact. This approach has coalesced as the convergence of services, articulated in the USAID/Kenya Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) for 2020–2025.

The consultant team from Technical Assistance to Non-Governmental Organizations (TANGO) International used a **multi-stage research design** to investigate partnership mechanisms, opportunities, and constraints across institutional levels and target areas. The study began with a document review and collaborative study design phase, followed by an inception mission used to identify and refine key characteristics of partnership with Nairobi-level stakeholders. In November 2019, TANGO researchers carried out additional key informant interviews (KIIs) with PREG stakeholders in Nairobi, as well as field work in two counties (Isiolo and Turkana), which represented a variation in context and PREG activities at the county level. In May 2020, TANGO remotely conducted six follow-up KIIs (national and county levels) to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on PREG partnering and coordination. The follow-ups also examined perceptions of the pre-pandemic mechanisms that have supported continued partnering during the pandemic. In

total, TANGO collated nearly 100 program-related documents, and conducted 18 Nairobi-level and 50 county-level discussions with both small groups and individuals.

This summary is organized around the study research questions. The learning from this case study will inform PREG going forward and, more generally, institutional partnerships to strengthen resilience at scale.

## Case Study Learning

*What frameworks, processes, and mechanisms contribute to effective collaboration and coordination across diverse partners, multiple geographies, and levels of implementation? What are the primary constraints?*

**Preconditions for partnership:** PREG partners have made tremendous efforts to coordinate under the umbrella of PREG: building mutual trust, a shared identity, and common agenda, and also bringing partners together for collective action. Built-in flexibility by USAID starting at the proposal and design stage is an important foundation for adaptive programming and partnership. USAID/Kenya has ensured resilience is a common vision across sectors and activities by including improved resilience of as one of four development objectives in the CDCS 2020–2025. At the time of the fieldwork, the study team found that they needed a shared results framework to guide PREG partners in their contributions to resilience building. The new CDCS calls for a Mission-wide approach to fit-for-purpose integrated programming, with improved resilience of vulnerable people and environments as a core objective, and the development of metrics to measure integration outcomes and partnership effectiveness.

**Shared conceptual understanding:** Since 2016, PREG has shifted in both its programming and partnership approaches—from implementing activities in isolation to integrating activities with partners and facilitating systems-level change. In the Collective Impact model, this signals the significant conceptual and behavioral change needed to foster a move toward systemic collaborative work.

PREG partners discussed the big conceptual shift in programming that took place when the cornerstone activity of PREG shifted from Resilience and Economic Growth in Arid Lands–Accelerated Growth (REGAL-AG) to the Livestock Market Systems (LMS) Activity;<sup>1</sup> from a focus on implementation to facilitation of systems, policies, and capacities. This new kind of programming required a different conceptual understanding among USAID partners of their respective roles and how to execute them. The inclusion of strengthened resilience among vulnerable people and communities in the USAID/Kenya CDCS further supports PREG’s integrated programming and engagement with county government and communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Feed the Future (2019).

**Technical expertise:** There is a role for PREG in technical capacity strengthening of county government counterparts on converging humanitarian and development assistance and resilience. A resilience-oriented response to recurrent shocks may necessitate more emergency contingency programming or crisis modifiers in PREG planning.

**Institutional and operational mechanisms:** The backbone support provided by the PREG Secretariat and Africa Lead, along with developing various concrete tools and practices, have helped the PREG teams improve partnering and coordination. The biggest challenges to joint work planning and coordination are the variation in project cycle timelines and the large level of effort required for coordination. Again, the critical steps to strengthen PREG going forward are the new USAID/Kenya CDCS, coupled with the establishment of County Liaison Teams (CLTs) and Collaboration, Learning, and Adaptation (CLA) program officers at the county level, and a common Mission-wide results framework to guide measurement of integration outcomes and partnership effectiveness.

*To what extent have PREG partners sequenced, layered, and integrated at multiple levels (national, county, ward/community)?*

PREG partnering and coordination has ramped up since 2016, when various processes and mechanisms were established, such as the PREG Secretariat, regular county team meetings, joint work planning, and activity mapping.

**National-level mapping and Sequencing, Layering, and Integrating (SLI) overall:** USAID/Kenya has supported PREG partners with activity mapping, including Geographic Information System (GIS) maps and dashboards, which help partners visualize present and past activities to support collaboration and coordination. The layering planning process at both national and county levels has helped identify key areas for improvement in planning. Overall, the number of well-integrated or layered locations is small, but growing, with various showcase sites that provide inspiration for the transformative potential of SLI or convergence of services. As noted previously, the new CDCS prioritizes integration of activities wherever appropriate and feasible.

**County-level resilience platform:** At the county level, PREG is a core member of the County Steering Group (CSG), led by NDMA, as a multi-sectoral and multi-agency platform to support emergency monitoring, contingency systems, and emergency response. NDMA serves a crucial and strategic role at the national level, and is valued at the county level for expertise in drought monitoring and assessments. The study findings suggest that while the CSG serves a convening role, there is a need for a strategic resilience coordination platform to engage county government officials and external donors. The recent USAID Mission CLTs may help support such county-level resilience platforms, which include government representatives, donors and implementing partners.

**Community- and ward-level planning:** Some PREG partners have started engaging communities through the ward development planning (WDP) process, which was in the pilot stage at the time of the study. The WDP presents an important opportunity to support and scale up local governance, advocacy, and accountability mechanisms, helping to “institutionalize” development objectives at the community level.

*What contributes to institutionalization, scale, and sustainability of activities?*

PREG is directly engaged in programming at three levels—national, county, community—and supports the pathways for coordination and communication among these levels. As PREG activities are institutionalized across these levels via dedicated government funding and policy, there is more potential for **sustained activities and outcomes**. Thus, PREG’s partnership approach importantly reflects Kenya’s commitment to self-reliance at the local level, and contributes to USAID’s Journey to Self-Reliance (J2SR). The study noted various practical challenges of partnership with government, such as activity co-creation, joint budget planning, and implementation, which PREG and USAID/Kenya more broadly seek to address through the new CDCS.

PREG has benefited communities through building community ownership of development and governance processes. Among the numerous benefits of increased PREG coordination, such as less duplication and leveraging of resources and expertise, many PREG partners have been satisfied with the potential for sustainability and community impact that comes from enhancing their partnership and coordination with government, particularly at county and local levels. One key informant (KI) referred to this process as **mutual accountability for impact**. There is an opportunity to include more explicitly this objective of building trust in institutions across these multiple levels as one of PREG’s objectives.

*How do the challenges of a complex environment affect capacity to coordinate and partner, and how has COVID-19 affected the partnerships?*

Prior to the pandemic, this study did not collect evidence that the complex environment affected collaboration more than the usual risks and challenges the partners were largely accustomed to addressing in their operations. Prevention measures to slow the spread of COVID-19 caused unprecedented disruptions to PREG operations, as with resilience and development programs globally. A subset of follow-up interviews explored how COVID-19 has affected PREG partnerships and programming, including challenges, adaptations, and even opportunities that have arisen.

In summary:

- **Virtual/remote coordination and communication** have been effective because of the trust and teamwork established prior to the pandemic among PREG teams and with the government and other partners. As a result, PREG partners were well-positioned to quickly pivot, leverage resources across partner agencies, and integrate COVID-19 mitigation and response into activities on the ground.
- **The prompt layering of new activities** to support the COVID-19 response has been possible because of the foundation PREG established through joint work planning and the previously developed layering plans.
- **Response work in support of county governments was initiated, but limited** by what could be subsumed under existing budget activities in the absence of a crisis modifier fund.
- **As would be expected, there were difficulties in continuing institutionalization processes** as many non-response-related activities were paused. This may impact the handover of key PREG activities ending this year, but PREG will continue to model integrated humanitarian and development programming during crisis.

## Lessons Learned and Considerations for the Next Phase of PREG

This section is framed around the “Five Conditions for Collective Impact,” identified as the key work streams for strengthening PREG’s collaboration and partnership approach. Many of the considerations are a reiteration and reaffirmation of ongoing partnership efforts among PREG teams in past years, while also providing distinct points of learning from the case study.

- **A common agenda among partners.** PREG has achieved the significant task of creating a common space for collaboration. The study team concludes that PREG would benefit from a high-level theory of change (TOC) and shared results framework. There is also a need to build consensus and understanding around resilience programming with external stakeholders. During crises or stressors such as COVID-19, PREG is well-positioned to lead SLI (convergence of services) approaches and integrated resilience programming: i.e., a voice to advocate for the continuation of development work during an emergency, strategically linked to humanitarian response.
- **Shared measurement and learning approaches.** Related to the first point, a common results framework is needed first among PREG, and then expanded to a platform for resilience measurement across stakeholders and owned by government, particularly at county level. As articulated in CDCS 2020–2025, a common results framework and joint work planning, implementation, and measurement in collaboration with county government is a Mission-level priority going forward. In addition, there needs to be built-in flexibility for

multiple project cycles that operate on different time frames, targeting and assessments, and strengthened learning capacity at the county level. The recently initiated Resilience Learning Activity (RLA), a follow-on to Africa Lead and PREG's central CLA partner, is well-positioned to support institutional learning and measurement across the PREG partnership. Moving forward, RLA, an Associate Award under the LMS Activity (a Leader with Associates), will need to maintain neutrality across partners, accessibility to county and community level stakeholders, and mechanisms to integrate learning for effective adaptive management. With COVID-19, PREG has recognized the need to advance database management, analytics, and adaptive management at the county level. The study team sees these as advances in the right direction if paired with a common vision, results framework, and supported by the “backbone” of PREG.

- **Mutually reinforcing activities.** PREG has made big strides in team coordination and joint planning, but the SLI sites were still very few at the time of fieldwork for this study. The study team expects the level of SLI/convergence of services to improve when the shared vision and common measures of PREG are clear among partners, and with Mission-wide support through the new CDCS. Co-creation between USAID and field-level partners is needed to increase alignment of future project sites with previous/current projects. In addition, the study finds the joint work planning and activity mapping should be more than a reporting activity, but one of strategy, and more closely aligned with the county's development vision—a vision nested within the government's vision and the priorities of ASAL counties and communities. PREG guidance around branding may also need to evolve to reflect the desire of communities and counties to own their development vision. With the challenges of COVID-19, the study team finds the PREG platform has shown great adaptive capacity and ability to pivot in implementation and coordination strategies. To improve PREG's response capacity, a contingency fund is needed.
- **Continuous communication and stakeholder engagement.** This study documented the perceived need among PREG county teams for improved multi-directional information flow and interactions with the various levels of USAID and among partners—recognizing that partnership and communication are time-intensive requirements. There are current efforts to address such issues, including the new CLTs, the RLA and CLA officers at the county level. It will be important to monitor the CLT approach, in terms of how it affects planning, coordination, and implementation at the county level, with government and other PREG partners. PREG's approach of close collaboration with country government will be further strengthened by the signing of Mission-level memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with county governments to co-create, implement, monitor, and finance programs to achieve joint objectives. PREG must also continue to ensure communities are part of their planning and coordination, as equal partners, through mechanisms such as the WDP process. Learning and adaptations resulting from COVID-19 have provided an opportunity to refocus on the potential scale-up of the WDP for fuller engagement with community stakeholders in the next phase of PREG.

- **Backbone support.** The “backbone support” initiated through the PREG Secretariat and Africa Lead proved highly useful and relevant for PREG teams. Moving forward, the study team finds the PREG county leads need more institutional support in various areas, from technical capacity in resilience programming to documentation of their processes and lessons in facilitating the partnerships. They also need support integrating this learning into adaptive management processes and institutionalizing activities with the government and communities. To optimize collaborative learning and partnership going forward, PREG will need to address the time burden of coordination among PREG partners and recognize the multiple demands on partner organizations (e.g., multiple donor agencies, internal organizational requirements). This includes guidance for engaging with county government on cost-sharing, embedding capacity, planning for exit, revising MOUs or contracts, among others. Since the time of fieldwork, the installation of the CLTs, as well as CLA officers at the county level under the Resilience Learning Award, aims to address these needs.

*Overall, PREG has demonstrated immense learning, and more importantly, has provided a springboard for operationalization of this learning Mission-wide. PREG is well-positioned to make an intentional shift to more strategic partnerships and strategic, improved SLI for collective impact through its convergence of services approach, integrated programming and measurement framework.*

# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

## 1.1 STUDY OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objectives of this case study are to identify the conditions that foster effective collaboration and coordination under the USAID-funded PREG initiative in northern Kenya. The study also seeks to distill lessons on the opportunities and challenges for achieving greater stakeholder collaboration relevant for other operational contexts facing recurrent crises, including drought, weather variability, conflict, and more recently, global pandemic.

To address these objectives, the study will investigate the following research questions:

1. What frameworks, processes, and mechanisms (e.g., learning events, communication portals, and common frameworks for joint work-planning and measurement) contribute to effective collaboration and coordination across diverse partners, multiple geographies, and levels of implementation? What are the primary constraints?
2. To what extent have PREG partners effectively sequenced, layered, and integrated<sup>2</sup> under the Ending Drought Emergencies (EDE) framework, and in coordination with the NDMA?
3. What characteristics contribute to the institutionalization, scale-up, and sustainability of PREG activities (related to the J2SR)?
4. How do the challenges of implementing in complex environments affect the capacity for effective partnership and coordination?

### **COVID-19 impacts on partnering:**

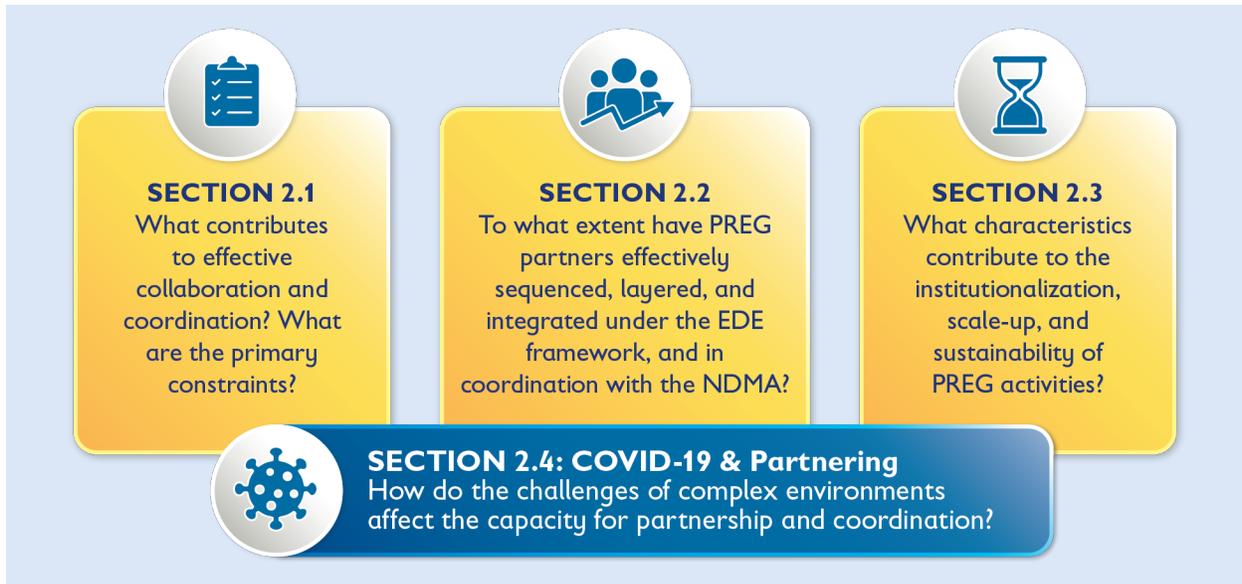
As the study team was finalizing the analysis and draft report for this study in early 2020, the global coronavirus pandemic was declared. The tremendous effects of the pandemic on humanitarian and development programming quickly became evident. It became clear COVID-19 would likely impact *how* these programs are implemented, coordinated, and monitored or evaluated for months, if not years, to come. The study team, with agreement from USAID stakeholders, felt this presented an opportunity to extend this study on partnering in complex environments to include recent reflections on PREG partnering achievements and challenges in the midst of COVID-19.

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<sup>2</sup> The study team recognizes that USAID/Kenya uses the term “convergence of services” to refer to an integrated bundle of activities implemented in a specific target area. This report uses SLI terminology, as it is included in this research question.

**Case study report outline:**

The four case study research questions are addressed in Section 2, as shown in Box 1. Section 3 provides a discussion on the lessons learned and considerations for the next phase of PREG.

**BOX 1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND REPORT OUTLINE****Introduction of Key Issues by the Study Team**

Considering the research questions, this report seeks to balance a) telling the story of PREG and the specific components and recommendations applicable to PREG partnerships and collaboration, with b) the broader analytical learning that may be useful for other complex operational contexts.

PREG is a complex partnership arrangement in a complex setting. Fundamentally, the study team has asked: What does this require? How does the PREG model reflect these “requirements?” How do these findings inform the PREG model going forward, as well as other complex partnerships or portfolio initiatives that seek to strengthen resilience at scale? The study team used the inception phase to first identify **key characteristics of partnership**, compiled from literature on partnerships and complex systems and interviews with key stakeholders during the inception mission. These characteristics that contribute to effective partnership, detailed in Section 2.1, include preconditions for partnership, both tangible and intangible (such as a common vision, well-defined roles, leadership, and trust); shared conceptual understanding; technical capacity; operational and institutional mechanisms that support flexibility and collaboration, including appropriate resource allocation; and the ongoing and shared monitoring, evaluation, and learning that support adaption and accountability of partnering processes as well as improved programming.

While this study focuses on the institutional architecture for partnering, the assumption (though, not measured here) is that effective partnership and collaboration for adaptive management in

complex systems translates into positive benefits for participants in PREG activities. **In the Kenyan context of devolved government, this study argues that the best way to support sustained benefits for PREG communities is partnering with the aim of institutionalizing programming—through community and county governance systems.** Thus, this study also asks the critical question: How are PREG partnership and coordination mechanisms contributing to USAID’s broader initiative Journey to Self-Reliance?<sup>3</sup>

As described in a brief literature review in the next section, PREG is a nested system. Within PREG, as elsewhere, there is **no single model** for partnership or collaboration, rather, enabling conditions or characteristics contribute to effective collaboration and integrated activities across complex and nested “subsystems.” Frameworks and mechanisms for partnership need to account for variability across levels, both vertical and horizontal. This requires flexibility to adapt operational mechanisms across the components of the system. The breadth of the PREG partnership lends itself to a study of this variability, comparing for example, mechanisms at the national level and across different counties. This study looks at differences across two counties for case study examples, as well as the intra-program differences that exist even within a county.

### Background on Partnerships, Complexity, and Resilient Systems

Several USAID programs have provided salient lessons on partnerships for resilience in fragile and complex settings. The recent case study on the Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR) in South Sudan by Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI) Global, with support from USAID’s Bureau of Food Security, hypothesized that their partnership approach of two coordinated communities (international and local), i.e., two “hands clapping,” can be a relevant methodology for engagement and one which achieves their common objectives.<sup>4</sup> The approach requires that both the international and local communities coordinate among their respective level of actors and institutions, as well as work together, to strengthen recovery and resilience in South Sudan. The premise of this approach is equality among international and local actors in their capacity to contribute to the partnership, which is necessary for mutual accountability.

In Ethiopia, USAID has made structural changes to provide better integration across sectors for resilience programming.<sup>5</sup> The current strategy includes resilience as a development objective, which enables the mission to align multiple sectors such as food security; livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); and health, among others. Under this resilience objective, each sector has clarity and accountability in terms of how they contribute to the overall objective. The new strategy also prompted changes to the internal management structures of the mission, towards a geographically-focused multi-sectoral model, which supports better integration of activities from the design phase. Implementing partners are also adopting this structure.

<sup>3</sup> USAID (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Deng, D.J. and Chopak, C. (2019).

<sup>5</sup> USAID/ATLAS (2020).

In Senegal, the USAID-supported Yaajeende project emphasizes the importance of building strong and adaptive local governance systems to strengthen resilience and achieve well-being outcomes for local communities.<sup>6</sup> The project supports partnerships between Citizen Working Groups and local government, an approach that “devolved responsibility for managing resources along with multi-sector programming” and contributes to improved nutrition, food security, women’s empowerment, and poverty outcomes among households in the project area.

Some of the original literature on complex systems and social-ecological resilience corroborates these examples of USAID programs in South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Senegal. Resilient systems are characterized by the attributes of adaptive governance and leadership, equity, and community collaboration.<sup>7</sup> Importantly, complex systems should be understood as containing multiple and nested subsystems across different scales.<sup>8</sup> The dynamic connections and relations among subsystems and across levels must be considered to address sustainably system-level social and ecological challenges.<sup>9</sup> A systems approach to large-scale change is driven by changes in attitudes, behaviors, and (inter)actions for different results among stakeholders within the system.<sup>10</sup> The advancing science of complexity, applied to human organization, urges us to expect and embrace change and uncertainty—to develop “an emergent practice,” while resisting the urge to use past experiences to predict solutions for the future.<sup>11</sup> Complexity and systems theories have contributed to the development of the adaptive management and shared leadership domains.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, for international cooperation, complexity-informed responses guided by local adaptation, experience, and connected systems are the way forward.<sup>13</sup>

The PREG umbrella is a mechanism to facilitate and coordinate such linkages in a complex adaptive system. PREG has adopted an evidence-based model for collaboration, the Collective Impact Framework.<sup>14</sup> For PREG, collective impact is driven by a shared commitment to implement activities in a way that supports and is coordinated with the actions of others.<sup>15</sup> PREG’s Collective Impact Framework elements are defined as:<sup>16</sup>

- **A common agenda among partners.** All participants share a common vision for change, including a collective understanding of problems and solutions.
- **Shared measurement and learning approaches.** Collecting data and measuring results consistently across partners/and levels to ensure alignment and accountability.

<sup>6</sup> USAID/C4R (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Berkes and Folke (1998); Adger (2000); Nelson et al. (2007); Ostrom (2009).

<sup>8</sup> Berkes et al. (2003: 6).

<sup>9</sup> Cash et al (2006); Gunderson and Holling (2002).

<sup>10</sup> Amadei (2015).

<sup>11</sup> Snowden and Boone (2007).

<sup>12</sup> Hazy (2006).

<sup>13</sup> Ramalingam (2013).

<sup>14</sup> Kania and Kramer (2011).

<sup>15</sup> USAID/PREG (2017).

<sup>16</sup> Kania and Kramer (2011).

- **Mutually reinforcing activities.** A plan of action that outlines and coordinates the different, but reinforcing, activities for each partner.
- **Continuous communication.** Open and ongoing communication using a common vocabulary, is needed to build trust over time and create motivation.
- **Backbone support.** A support organization and infrastructure that facilitates the coordination work, and builds coalition leadership while handling the administrative, data management, and logistical pieces of collaboration.

The concepts outlined in this section describe a multi-level partnership and collaboration approach for resilience programming amidst complexity, such as that of PREG and others. The PREG partnership approach was born from the complexity of the context and continues to evolve and emerge in its practice. The partnership itself is a complex social system. To function, it has required changes in attitudes and behavior among its stakeholders to achieve a new way of working and partnering. PREG is embedded within a larger complex system containing the political, social, economic, and ecological subsystems of Kenya's ASALs. Building strong partnerships with change-ready, learning relationships across institutions and levels creates the social capital and trust necessary to innovate in times of adversity. Folke et al. call this social capital "the glue for adaptive capacity,"<sup>17</sup> and it can be relied on in times of stress, as will be discussed in Section 2.4: partnering during COVID-19.

Key tenants of complex adaptive systems thinking are the capacity to decipher emergent solutions and embrace organizational complexity. Thus, this report should not be interpreted as offering simplistic or prescriptive solutions for partnership. As noted previously, there is no single model for partnering in complex settings. Even within the PREG umbrella, diverse geographies and governance systems at the county and local levels necessitate different partnership arrangements. Above all, this case study represents an opportunity to consolidate learning, as part of the evolutionary process of the PREG approach to partnerships and resilience.

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<sup>17</sup> Folke et al. (2005: 451).

## 1.2 PREG BACKGROUND

Kenyan ASAL counties are characterized by recurrent drought, conflict, a legacy of marginalization by government, and a lack of international investments. Home to over 10 million people, ASAL counties were particularly affected by the severe drought emergency of 2011–2012 that swept across the Horn of Africa. The crisis spurred a new approach to strengthening resilience to recurrent crises and managing drought risk as a development priority among governments, donors, and an array of partners. As part of this approach, USAID partners responding to drought coordinated under a new platform, the Horn of Africa Joint Planning Cell (JPC).<sup>18</sup>

The GoK launched its Vision 2030 in 2008, which prioritizes development in the 29 ASAL counties and established the development agenda of these ASAL counties.<sup>19</sup> As part of this long-term national strategy, the GoK initiated the 10-year EDE (2012–2022), which became part of the national development plan in 2013. EDE is widely recognized as a country-led model for building resilience and strengthening the link between relief and development over the long-term. The NDMA was established by an Act in 2016 to lead the EDE implementation. At the same time, county governments were established as part of the devolution process under the new constitution.

*The EDE policy framework, the establishment of NDMA and devolution of authorities and resources to county-level governments all provide a key to building the space within which international development and humanitarian partners can contribute to a country-led effort to build resilience to recurrent crises.*

– PREG Training Manual (2018)

PREG is situated within the broader EDE initiative and aligned with the Horn of Africa Resilience Network’s Regional Resilience Framework.<sup>20</sup> These cornerstone documents provide the guiding framework for PREG, which operates as an umbrella mechanism to bring together multiple USAID

programs and humanitarian and development partners to strengthen resilience in vulnerable pastoralist communities in nine counties of northern Kenya, including: **Baringo, Isiolo, Garissa, Marsabit, Mandera, Samburu, Tana River, Turkana, and Wajir.**<sup>21</sup>

PREG’s three interrelated objectives are to increase household incomes, enhance resilience, and bolster adaptive capacity to climate change in northern Kenya.<sup>22,23</sup> The program seeks to generate the economic growth needed to reduce poverty and hunger and to achieve the GoK’s vision of a commercial and modern agricultural sector by investing in agriculture and livestock production to improve the competitiveness of high-potential value chains and promote diversification into higher-return on- and off-farm activities.

<sup>18</sup> Africa Lead II (2018a).

<sup>19</sup> USAID/PREG (2017).

<sup>20</sup> USAID (2016b).

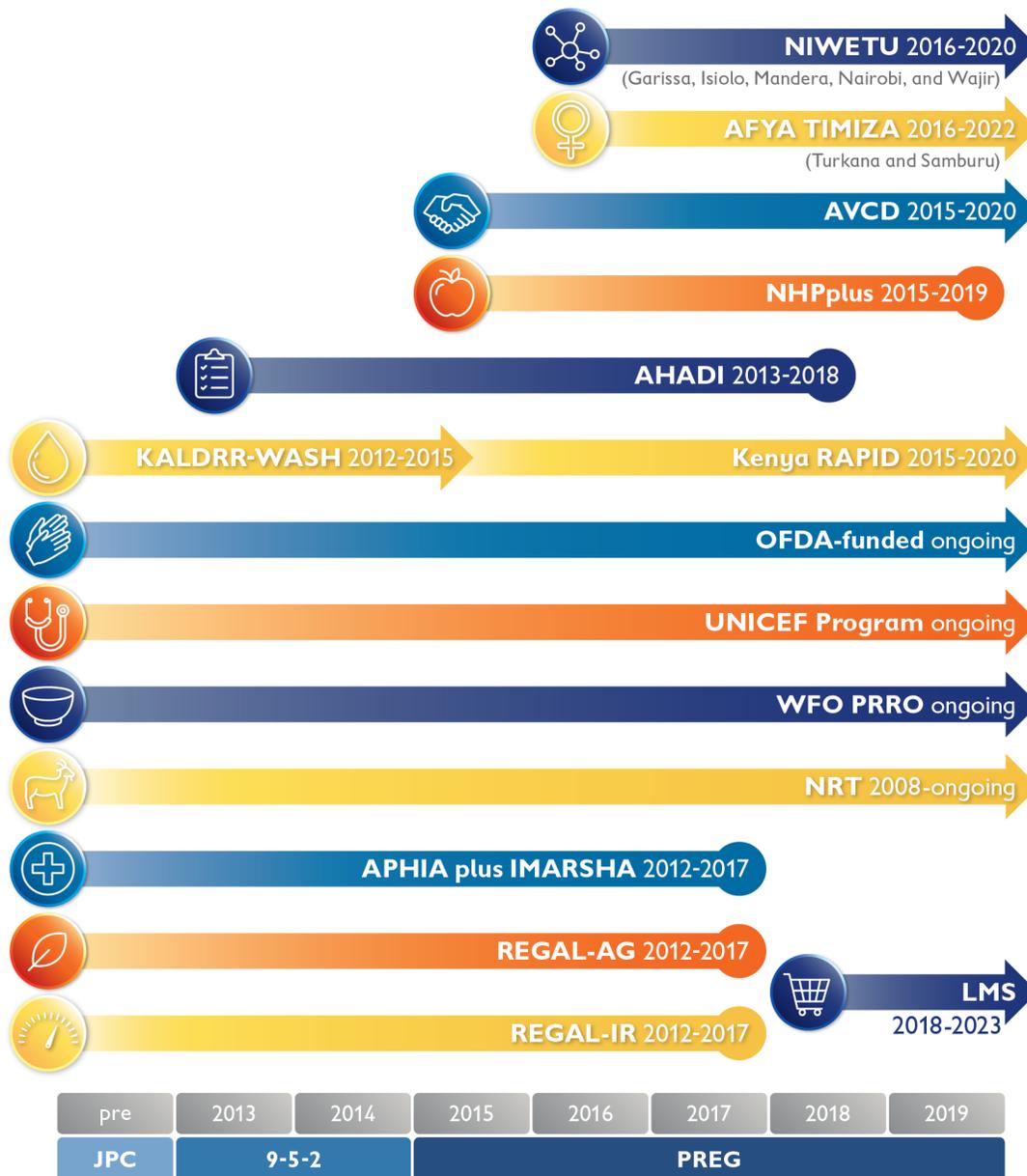
<sup>21</sup> Note: After the research was carried out for this study, PREG added three additional counties.

<sup>22</sup> USAID (2018).

<sup>23</sup> USAID (2016a).

From 2013–2017, USAID committed an investment of over \$291 million for the ASALs targeted at increasing adaptability, reducing risk, and improving the social and economic conditions that underlie and exacerbate vulnerability. The precursor to PREG was known as 9-5-2, referring to the layering of activities across those nine counties. The initiative brought together World Food Program (WFP), working in nine counties on life sustaining projects, with two USAID Feed the Future development projects: Resilience and Economic Growth in Arid Lands – Improving Resilience (REGAL-IR) (in five counties) and REGAL-AG (in two counties). Figure 1 shows a timeline of key PREG activities (including 9-5-2) from 2013 to 2019.

Figure 1. Timeline of key programs and activities under PREG (2013-2019)



Source: USAID (2018); USAID (2016a). See List of Acronyms for full names of activities.  
 Note: The chart is not exhaustive of all PREG programs and activities, others operating in the ASAL counties include: TUSOME (education), K-YES (youth), SERVIR (Vulnerability Mapping), etc.

PREG activities may vary by county, but the main sectors include: livelihoods; infrastructure; WASH; health; nutrition service delivery; natural resource management; disaster risk reduction/management; finance, such as micro-credit and savings groups; governance at community, county, and national levels; conflict resolution and peace-building, including countering violent extremism, such as through the *NiWajibu Wetu* (NIWETU) activity); and humanitarian assistance, including food/cash assistance modalities.<sup>24</sup> The activities shown in Figure 1 include multi-partner and multi-sector programming with USAID funding from Feed the Future, Office of Food for Peace, and Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), along with United Nations (UN) partners (WFP, United Nations Children’s Fund) utilizing the United States Government and other donor funds.<sup>25</sup>

PREG works directly with NDMA at both national and county levels, as well as multiple other ministries and departments, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), United Nations organizations, local consortium partners, and academic and research institutes. Africa Lead (through DAI Global) supports PREG’s systems and structures for collaboration and helps to ensure policy analysis. Research is demand-driven and responsive to county-level decision makers.<sup>26</sup> At the time of this study, PREG comprised 33 partners across the nine ASAL counties and was based in Nairobi. The configuration of partners varies across and within counties. Box 2 lists the main INGO partners.

#### BOX 2. MAIN INGO PREG PARTNERS AS OF 2018

- ACDI/VOCA, Leader with Associate
- Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
- Africa Medical Research Foundation Health Africa
- Center for International Development of the State University of New York
- Concern Worldwide
- Development Alternatives, Inc. (DAI)
- FHI 360
- Food for the Hungry
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Mercy Corps
- Mercy USA
- Millennium Water Alliance
- Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT)
- RTI International
- Rural Agency for Community Development and Assistance
- Save the Children
- UNICEF Program

<sup>24</sup> USAID/PREG (2017).

<sup>25</sup> For information on specific projects, see USAID’s activity-specific fact sheets.

<sup>26</sup> Africa Lead (2016).

- Wajir South Development Association (WASDA)
- World Food Program
- World Vision

**Other partners included in this study:** Catholic Relief Service, BOMA Project, Smart Regional Consultants, and International Livestock Research Institute

Source: USAID (2018).

**PREG partnership:** The focus of this study is PREG’s flagship partnership model. It is unique in that it links and coordinates with multiple and diverse partner activities working with the same target groups in common geographies. PREG’s county-led and partner-driven approach facilitates coordination at the regional level to improve livelihoods; strengthen livestock value chains; enable access to water sources and WASH services; increase conservation measures; address conflict; and promote inclusiveness and gender responsiveness. Moreover, the coordination and integration of complementary humanitarian and development assistance activities allows for USAID and partners to adjust as the resilience capacities of households and communities change over time.

Across partners and areas of implementation, appropriate and effective SLI<sup>27</sup> of activities is central to PREG’s approach. The model is built on two key assumptions:<sup>28</sup>

**Assumption 1:** Strengthening resilience and catalyzing economic growth requires a range of activities across sectors, along with humanitarian and development spheres.

**Assumption 2:** Bringing together multiple activities will only achieve collective impact if activities are linked over temporal, geographic, and institutional scales.

**The PREG model of collaboration is intended to enable partners to minimize redundancies, promote synergies, and achieve multi-partner collaboration and coordination.** Overall, there is acknowledgement that partnership is complex and dynamic, compounded by transitions in government and the challenge of maintaining focus on longer term partnership objectives in a context of recurrent crisis.<sup>29</sup>

*Through collaborative activities and approaches in the ASAL areas of Kenya, USAID PREG partners will more effectively support the Government of Kenya to develop individuals, communities, and systems resilience capacities resulting in sustainable reductions in humanitarian assistance needs, prevalence/depth of poverty, household hunger, and acute/chronic undernutrition.*

– PREG Vision Statement

<sup>27</sup> Also called “convergence of services.” See: USAID/Kenya CDCS 2020–2025.

<sup>28</sup> Africa Lead (2016).

<sup>29</sup> Africa Lead (2016); USAID/PREG (2017).

### 1.3 STUDY METHODOLOGY

TANGO International used a multi-stage research design to investigate partnership mechanisms, opportunities, and constraints across multiple institutional levels and target areas. TANGO employed a participatory approach through all phases of the study based on a systematic feedback process between TANGO and USAID/PREG stakeholders. The phases included:

- ✓ **Phase 1: Document review, protocol, and tool design**  
This phase began with a kick-off call including representatives from USAID/Kenya, the USAID Center for Resilience (C4R), and TANGO on August 28, 2019). TANGO conducted an initial desk review of approximately 30 documents to inform the study design, the design of qualitative tools, and identification of key stakeholders for initial consultation during Phase 2. For the qualitative topical outlines, see Annex 4.1.
- ✓ **Phase 2: Inception field visit**  
A TANGO team of two (TANGO president and senior research staff) conducted an inception field visit to Nairobi from September 30 to October 4, 2019. The team met with PREG staff and conducted key Nairobi-level stakeholder interviews, which helped the team to further refine the research design and to collect additional secondary documentation (more than 65 documents).
- ✓ **Phase 3: County-level field visit and reporting**  
From November 4–15, 2019, TANGO researchers carried out additional KIIs with PREG stakeholders in Nairobi, as well as fieldwork at the county level. In collaboration with USAID, and based on county team availability, the study team selected Isiolo and Turkana for county visits. The selection criteria for sites included demonstration of SLI, variation in duration and type of PREG activities, and variation in county context (e.g., government relations, ecological diversity, etc.).
- ✓ **Phase 4: Integration of COVID-19 emerging lessons**  
In consultation with USAID, TANGO carried out six additional remote interviews at the county and national levels in May 2020, to explore the impacts of COVID-19 on PREG partnering and coordination, as well as perceptions of the pre-pandemic partnering mechanisms that have supported continued partnering during the pandemic. All key KIIs were previously interviewed during Phases 2 or 3 of the study.

To address the study questions, TANGO conducted KIIs with a range of stakeholders at the Washington D.C., Kenya national, and county levels. To identify the set of institutions from which to draw a sample of KIIs, TANGO reviewed lists of Chiefs of Party (COP), Deputy COP, PREG Points of Contact, as well as county leads and their deputies. To capture changes in PREG over time, TANGO has sought to meet with stakeholders involved at various stages of implementation. In total, TANGO conducted 18 Nairobi-level interviews and 50 county-level interviews, including individual and small group discussions. Notably, among PREG partners and study participants,

there is a broad range in levels of engagement in and knowledge of PREG activities. With this in mind, the study team met with a diverse set of partners, with a focus on core partners most connected with PREG, representing the following categories of institutions:

- USAID, USAID/Kenya and PREG staff
- GoK: NDMA at national level, and county levels; county officials
- UN agencies (e.g., WFP)
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (including PREG partners)
- Community members and beneficiaries of site visits and ward planning committees
- Other donors/external projects
- Private sector and financial services (county level)
- Research and early warning institutions

TANGO recorded notes for all interviews in English. After each day of interviews, the TANGO team debriefed key points and determined how to best refine and focus the main areas of inquiry. Qualitative information was transferred into matrices, aligned with the research questions, and analyzed to identify patterns and specific contextual information that help to address the research questions and explain other responses or data. As the case study draws from two of the nine PREG counties, readers should note that the experiences of partnership in those two counties may differ from those not visited.

## 2. CASE STUDY RESULTS

### 2.1 FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS



This section addresses the main study questions: *What frameworks, processes and mechanisms contribute to effective collaboration and coordination across diverse partners, multiple geographies, and levels of implementation? What are the primary constraints?* The discussion includes both the contributing and constraining factors that affect coordination and partnerships. While the case study is specific to PREG, many of the factors discussed in this section would be relevant to other USAID complex operational contexts.

#### Preconditions for Partnership

PREG NGO partners made commendable efforts to coordinate under the umbrella of the PREG name. Across interviews with PREG partners and external stakeholders, partners identified as and were recognized as PREG. Stakeholders identified multiple advantages of partnership, such as leveraging comparative advantages and technical expertise, the cross-fertilization of strategies and approaches, the relative strength of a collective voice, and the overall potential for greater impact. In some cases, this translated to country- and community-level stakeholders, where government staff, Ward Development Committee (WDC) members, or market leaders expressed their roles as in partnership with PREG as well.

The effectiveness of the PREG approach relied on a set of preconditions for partnership, meaning those elements that should exist or be agreed upon as organizations begin to collaborate. **As preconditions, these elements are the foundation of effective partnerships.** The preconditions are both intangible,<sup>30</sup> such as mutual trust and shared identity, and tangible, such as a common TOC and mechanisms for communication and collaboration.

Across interviews and through site visits in Nairobi, at Oldonyiro market, and in Isiolo and Turkana, common themes emerged around the question of “what makes partnership work?”. Repeatedly, study participants noted the importance of **mutual trust, communication, commitment to partnering, and leadership**. These characteristics are particularly important for complex partnerships with diverse actors operating at multiple levels across different geographies.

To some extent, these elements were explicitly fostered through PREG in tangible ways. KIs noted the important role of Africa Lead, for example, in organizing events that set a tone conducive to establishing a learning culture, exchanging experiences, and learning cross-organization and cross-county. The shared physical space occupied by PREG partners at the county level fostered communication and collaboration. Regular meetings and partner updates helped to build rapport and information exchange among partners. Leadership at the county level created space for collaborative learning, assessment, planning, and site visits, and also supported PREG staff as

<sup>30</sup> We refer to “intangible” here as the subjective or nonphysical conditions for partnership that cannot simply be addressed through a policy.

PREG. Together, these components helped to create **an enabling environment for collaboration** among partner organizations. Given the extent of the PREG umbrella, with over 30 organizations at the time of the study, **the dynamic and adaptive nature of PREG partnership, built around common interests, capacities, geographies, and objectives, has supported positive relationships and allowed for different levels of commitment.** At both the national and county levels, partners acknowledged that while they represent organizations that compete for limited project funding, they value the trust and relationships forged through PREG.

At the community or site level, where PREG seeks to layer interventions or to strengthen ward governance structures, **leadership is also crucial.** At the Oldonyiro Market, for example, the market chairman was perceived as someone who could bring various market stakeholders together. This was critical to make a new market system work—a system that depends on community ownership and management. The chairperson possessed the **trust and social capital to build cohesion and buy-in** among the market actors, even when it meant that some actors would incur higher fees for improved market services.



*Community leader, Oldonyiro Market, Isiolo*

Partners have also highlighted key **challenges to building and maintaining a partnership**, including the competitive aspect of funding streams. Funding streams tend to be siloed rather than focused on collective impact, accountability to multiple donor agencies, internal organizational demands, and effective engagement with government in transition. There is also a range of commitment to or investment in PREG among partners, which, in some cases, contributes to a perception that participation is imbalanced.

At the national level, PREG developed a Common Agenda, a key element of the Collective Impact Framework. This provides the common vision, or TOCs, for the program. The Regional Resilience Framework guides the Common Agenda. At the time of the fieldwork, the PREG partnership lacked an overarching results framework to guide the partnering priorities across the counties. A common results framework is important for bringing partners together and defining their contributions to the results, particularly when the partners have differing project timelines and activities. PREG did make efforts to this end: In Turkana, the PREG team sought to harmonize their monitoring tools with the support of Africa Lead, and at the time of the study, the team was developing common monitoring indicators. Stakeholders at county and national levels noted that

the extent of direct participation in PREG layering activities, by individual Agreement Officer's Representatives,<sup>31</sup> varied across activities at the mission level.

Since the fieldwork for this study, the USAID/Kenya CDCS 2020–2025<sup>32</sup> has been developed, which includes improved resilience of vulnerable people and environments as one of four development objectives. The new strategy also calls for an integrated implementation approach through clusters of integrated activities wherever possible, and the development of Mission-wide metrics to measure integration outcomes and partnership effectiveness. This strategic and programmatic pivot, and accompanying monitoring, evaluation and learning framework, though not without challenges, builds on and is expected to enhance the capacity for integrated programming across sectors and activities. It also provides a common management plan and results framework to support collaboration within Mission teams and among implementing partners to bolster work towards harmonization that was well underway at the time of fieldwork.

### Common Conceptual Understanding: A Mindset Shift

Since 2016, PREG has shifted in both its programming and partnership approaches, from implementing activities in isolation to integrating activities with partners and facilitating systems-level change. In the Collective Impact model, this represents the significant conceptual and behavioral changes necessary to move toward systemic collaborative work.

PREG partners discussed the big conceptual shift in programming that took place as the cornerstone activity of PREG shifted from REGAL-AG to the LMS Activity,<sup>33</sup> from a focus on implementation to facilitation of systems, policies, and capacities. This new kind of programming required a different conceptual understanding among USAID partners of their respective roles and how to execute them. As traditional implementors, the partners had built infrastructure such as market structures. Now, the partners are working to ensure the environment is in place at all levels to support and sustain that infrastructure. As one PREG partner explained, “It’s about supporting the market as a system, not just a structure.” The Isiolo PREG team noted **the year of training and learning among partners to make this mindset shift**. The partners then set out to communicate this approach with external stakeholders and influence a mindset shift among some government counterparts.

Multi-level and integrated systems-change work requires partnership. Thus, while partners were shifting their internal programming approach, they also needed to shift their approach to partnering. Africa Lead had the crucial function of bringing PREG partners together to set up a system for regular meetings and coordination. The monthly meetings began with the teams sharing emerging issues, opportunities, or challenges. This led to opportunities for cooperation and leveraging others’ relationships with government and other actors. For example, where one

<sup>31</sup> The Agreement Officer's Representative is charged with the administrative management of a specific grant or cooperative agreement on behalf of USAID.

<sup>32</sup> USAID/Kenya and East Africa (2020).

<sup>33</sup> Feed the Future (2019).

partner was having difficulties reaching a government contact, another could help. For some county PREG teams, each meeting included site visits, which allowed co-evaluation of the efficiency and effectiveness of activities in their county as well as collective problem solving.

A mindset shift was also necessary to partner with the aim of institutionalizing activities within government systems. The study team observed that how and to what extent PREG partners engage with county government varies greatly. Some partners only held briefing meetings with their government counterparts, while some were engaged in technical advising, and others were embedded within county government teams to provide ongoing capacity building or engaged counterparts in an activity from design through implementation.

Interviewed county officials voiced a preference for MOUs to be developed with the PREG partners from the start of a project, including clear cost-sharing agreements, a practice carried out by some PREG partners. Among study participants, there was consensus that such **MOUs would facilitate a more productive partnership with government** and more effective institutionalization of PREG work. The new CDCS codifies this approach at the Mission level. To operationalize Kenya's commitment to self-reliance at the local level, the Mission is signing MOUs with county governments to co-create, implement, monitor, and finance programs to achieve joint objectives.<sup>34</sup>

Part of this conceptual and programmatic shift relates to changes in systems-level work and toward a deeper understanding of resilience, in concept and practice—transformative capacity, in particular.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the study team did not find that all partner staff, including some government contacts, have a strong conceptual understanding of PREG as a resilience program. With a clear, shared results framework through the new CDCS, PREG is now undertaking the task of effectively communicating the resilience framework to partners and to external audiences, including county government departments.

The study team acknowledges that a new approach to partnering, including the shifts in organizational mindset and practice on how to partner, takes time. The PREG partners visited have made tremendous adaptations in past years, and are in the midst of forging this path—now with additional Mission-level support articulated in the CDCS.

## Technical Capacity to Strengthen Resilience in a Complex Environment

As PREG matures in its conceptual understanding of programming and partnerships for integrated, systems-level work, it has also needed technical capacity to implement the new approach. One partner explained that the shift to facilitation and institutionalization **required new skillsets among staff**, and that all staff had to be taken through a process of learning about systems-thinking to integrate sectors within their respective organizations. In some cases, it

<sup>34</sup> USAID/Kenya and East Africa (2020).

<sup>35</sup> Transformative capacity involves the governance mechanisms, policies/regulations, infrastructure, community networks, and formal and informal social protection mechanisms that constitute the enabling environment for systemic change. Source: TANGO/for USAID (2018).

was necessary for partner organizations to **restructure or make staffing changes** to better align with county structures, enabling more effective interaction with different technical teams in the county government.

Has increased capacity through collaboration contributed to the successful management of shocks and stressors? The study team finds there is a role for PREG to support capacity strengthening of county-level government staff on DRM and resilience, particularly considering the disaster-prone contexts of ASAL counties. Under LMS in Isiolo, for example, the PREG team conducted a skills mapping exercise with county government to support training a new generation of county employees and to foster integrated, resilience programming within government departments.

PREG should also continue to bolster its own ability to implement SLI or convergence of services of humanitarian and development programming. In Turkana, for example, humanitarian-development sequencing was occurring with IRC largely providing humanitarian assistance. The study team did not find that emergency contingency programming or crisis modifiers were included in most program planning of PREG NGO partners. The study team is told that PREG has recognized this issue and plans to address it. Multiple county officials in Isiolo and Turkana perceived PREG partners as not responding to emergencies that arise in the county or lacking the flexibility to do so, which crisis modifiers will improve. However, this perception may also be related to gaps in their knowledge of the PREG stakeholders and their response activities.

**Therefore, there is an opportunity for PREG to improve its capacity to implement SLI/convergence of services of humanitarian and development programming in the complex environment of Kenya's ASALs.** PREG has provided examples of layering activities to prevent and manage multiple kinds of shocks, including animal and human disease, insecurity/corruption in markets, low rainfall/drought, and violent extremism. There are some good examples to draw upon, and continued strategic collaboration is needed to address these shocks and stressors. The extent of PREG SLI is discussed further in Section 2.2.

## Operational and Institutional Mechanisms: Tools for Coordination and Learning

What mechanisms or processes help PREG partners operationalize partnership at the county level? The backbone support provided by Africa Lead, the development of a layering matrix, implementing systematic onboarding/offboarding protocol for partners, and instituting regular meetings are a few of the **concrete tools and practices** that have helped the PREG teams improve partnering and coordination. Specific examples from the county case studies include:

- The Turkana PREG team described **Africa Lead's support role** (2016–2019) as critical. Africa Lead helped facilitate the partners' coming together, develop common targeting, and work effectively with the county government.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> See: <https://www.africaleadftf.org/2019/04/17/africa-lead-facilitates-joint-work-planning-follow-up-and-mentorship-visits-for-usaids-partnership-for-resilience-and-economic-growth-preg/>

- The Turkana PREG team developed a “**layering matrix**” tool to geographically track the activities and targeting of each partner in relation to needs, and to identify where layering is occurring (coincidentally) or could occur (intentionally), or where there may be duplication. The team regularly reviewed and updated the matrix. Note, this tool is similar to the “3W/4W” matrix used among humanitarian clusters.
- The Isiolo PREG team developed their own **system for onboarding/offboarding** of partners to ensure team coherence and to mitigate the disruptive effects of partners transitioning in/out of the program at different times. Africa Lead supported this work. Together with the RLA, the follow-on to Africa Lead, PREG is using this onboarding model across counties.
- Both county teams visited in this study discussed the importance of **regular meetings**, with the full team meeting monthly, along with sectoral working groups that meet and coordinate more frequently. In Isiolo, county government counterparts are invited to attend the sectoral meetings. This internal meeting structure for the PREG team has “helped put their house in order,” as stated by one partner. The challenge PREG county leadership face is to balance the time and effort dedicated to meetings with the benefits of intentional collaboration.
- The PREG teams indicated that having **common deliverables** among partners also prompts them to better integrate and work together. A common deliverable may be developing a manual together or co-conducting an assessment, for example.

However, the partners face various **operational and institutional challenges** to this work together. One of the biggest challenges to joint work planning and coordination is the **variation in program cycles** for every partner. According to partners, often the timing is not sufficiently aligned to be able to conduct joint assessments, let alone implement integrated activities. There is also **misalignment between the USAID calendar year and that of the county government**, which can be challenging for annual planning, according to some PREG partners and county government. Members of the PREG team have managed this constraint by allocating two to three days each year to sit together with county government officials to embed PREG activities into the county Annual Development Plan. As previously noted, the new CDCS calls for joint planning for PREG partners and all USAID activities at the county level through the CLTs and MOUs signed with county governments.

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*“The PREG plan is not clearly linked to our annual plan.”*

*– County Gov KII*

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Another challenge is that the **level of effort required for partnering and coordination is not included in partner budgets**. PREG partners estimate numerous hours each month spent on PREG coordination meetings and activities, including hosting PREG visitors such as the TANGO team for this study. Some partners said that their activity implementation is affected on occasion because making time for PREG partnering takes precedence. The time-burden for PREG partnering is particularly high for the designated county team lead. The recruitment of CLA officers through RLA is expected to address this challenge.

### BOX 3. SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING–FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

- **Preconditions for partnership include a clear common vision, flexibility from design through implementation, and some intangible factors like strong leadership and trust.** PREG partners made tremendous efforts to coordinate under the umbrella of PREG. They built a shared identity and common agenda to bring the partners together. A shared results framework has now been articulated in the new CDCS for 2020–2025, and is critical to guide partners and leverage their collective contributions. Moreover, USAID/Kenya has ensured resilience is a common vision across sectors and activities by adding a resilience objective to the CDCS. Built-in flexibility by USAID and the Mission starting at the request for proposal and design stage is important for adaptive programming while in partnership. The main intangible preconditions for effective partnership shown by PREG include mutual trust, leadership, and commitment to partnering.
- **Mindset shifts to systems-level programming and enhanced partnerships.** Since 2016, PREG has undergone a significant shift in both its programming and partnership approaches, which has been a learning journey for partners in how they conceptualize their activities and roles. Multi-level and integrated systems-level work requires partnership, and Africa Lead was crucial in bringing the PREG NGO partners together. In general, partners have trained and restructured staff accordingly. How and to what extent PREG partners have engaged with county government varied but is becoming more systematic such as through signed MOUs.
- **Ongoing strengthening of technical capacity is important to implement the new approach.** There is a role for PREG in capacity strengthening of county-level government staff on converging humanitarian and development efforts and resilience. This means continuing to bolster PREG’s own technical capacity to do so, drawing on experience gained in integrated programming and the convergence of services (e.g., in market systems strengthening). A resilience-oriented response to recurrent shocks may necessitate more emergency contingency programming or crisis modifiers included in PREG planning.
- **PREG partners initiated various mechanisms and processes to effectively operationalize partnership at the county level, with its challenges.** The backbone support led by the PREG Secretariat and Africa Lead, the development of a layering matrix, systematic on/offboarding, and regular meetings are some of the concrete tools and practices that have helped the PREG teams improve their partnering and coordination. The partners face some operational and institutional challenges to this work together. One of the biggest challenges to joint work planning and coordination is the variation in project cycles. Another challenge is the demanding level of effort for coordination. Both of these challenges are addressed Mission-wide through the 2020–2025 CDCS.

## 2.2 EXTENT OF PREG SEQUENCING, LAYERING, AND INTEGRATING AND COORDINATION



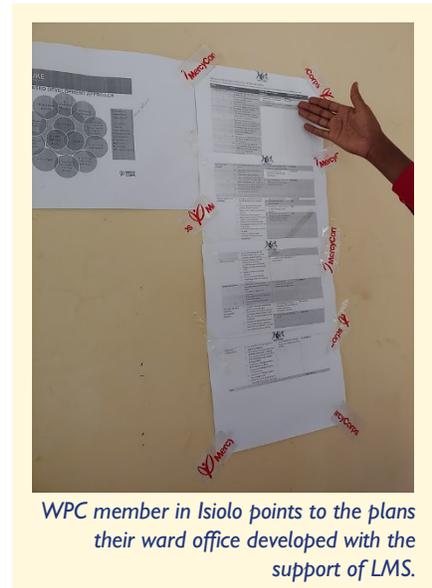
This section provides discussion on the research question: *To what extent have PREG partners sequenced, layered, and integrated at multiple levels (national, county, ward/community)?* Notably, USAID/Kenya also refers to SLI as convergence of services, both phrases referring to strategically connecting and leveraging various humanitarian and development activities.<sup>37</sup> PREG partnering and coordination has gained momentum since 2016, when multiple processes and mechanisms were initiated or enhanced, from establishing a PREG Secretariat, to regular county team meetings, joint work planning, and unified communications guidance, among others.<sup>38</sup>

### Coordination with the National Drought Management Authority and Integration with Ending Drought Emergencies

The study findings indicate a discrepancy between the national and county level perceptions of NDMA's role, as well as differences in NDMA's role across counties. At the national level, NDMA is the core GoK PREG partner and lead agency for the EDE initiative. NDMA provides leadership in assessment around resilience and all types of shocks, in addition to drought, and coordination across donors. At the county level, NDMA's main role in coordination is two-fold: 1) to support the convening of the CSG as secretariat, and 2) to support emergency monitoring, contingency systems, and response coordination.

Interviews with different types of stakeholders in both counties reported gaps in NDMA's convening capacity and in the effectiveness of the CSG as a strategic planning platform.

Stakeholders highly value NDMA's technical capacity and capacity assessment, which has provided critical information to transform emergency responses. The CSG, however, is viewed by various stakeholders as non-strategic and focused on drought emergency response, rather than a broader resilience approach to shock mitigation and adaptation. The study team gathered examples in both counties where parallel coordination platforms are being convened to fill this gap, such as by the Governor's office, line ministries, or joint government/non-government coordination groups.



WPC member in Isiolo points to the plans their ward office developed with the support of LMS.

<sup>37</sup> See: [https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/principles\\_of\\_sli.pdf](https://www.fsnnetwork.org/sites/default/files/principles_of_sli.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Africa Lead (2016).

**In all, the study team finds the key learning for partnership is the importance of a well-defined platform and framework for enhanced resilience coordination at the county level, and finding the right convening partner for such a platform.** Since the fieldwork, the establishment of new USAID CLTs may help to support such county-level resilience platforms.

### Coordination and Empowerment at the Community Level

The main political body at the county level is the County Assembly, comprised of Members of County Assembly (MCA) who represent each ward in the county.<sup>39</sup> Through devolution, each ward now has the **opportunity to directly advocate for their needs and priorities**. LMS has engaged pilot WDC, or ward planning committees (WPC), to help develop plans that can feed directly into county integrated development plans (CIDP), and thus, county-to-ward resource allocation. An interview with one WPC described the development of a ward action plan that identified their priority needs, which served the dual purpose of supporting advocacy to the county for resources and informing any (I)NGO that sought to implement programming in their communities.

The WPCs interviewed in this study identified two main coordination challenges. First, they feel they are now the institution to work through because they are representative of all communities in the ward, having gone through the long process of the WDP. Yet, other donors or county staff have gone around them to give benefits to certain community groups, causing tensions and overriding their process. Secondly, the WPCs need more technical capacity to develop and provide oversight on their budgets and project proposals, which is key to their ownership and ability to ensure accountability (of the MCA) in the governance process. At the time of the study, very few wards have completed this process, but there is **exciting potential for scaling up** this community partnership and governance component.

### Mapping and Examples of Sequencing, Layering, and Integrating Sites: Convergence of Services

USAID/Kenya has supported PREG partners with activity mapping since 2014, with the aim of **helping partners visualize** “who” is doing “what” and “where” to support their coordination. This began with the development of “3W” matrices, which partners are now required to update quarterly. By 2016, dashboards including GIS maps have been available for the partners to use in joint work planning. The maps include closed-out activities to promote institutional memory and sequencing of activities. Some of the dashboards are shared with county governments, but the mapping has not yet been linked with other donor projects. At the national level, PREG participates in an ASAL donor group and there is a desire to strengthen this coordination in PREG’s next phase, both at the national and county levels.

<sup>39</sup> The administrative subdivisions of a county include: constituency, sub-county, then ward. The ward is comprised of a number of sub-locations, for example 8-10 villages.

There is also SLI planning occurring at the Nairobi level with COPs. According to a mission staff member, nearly 50 layering sites were selected for 2018, and there are efforts to tighten the layering planning between the Nairobi and county levels. The layering planning process at both levels (national and county) has identified the need to target activities more effectively, and to use nutrition and poverty indicators to guide program implementation. Initial mapping activities revealed the so-called “tarmac” bias, whereby PREG partners targeted areas close to main roads, and also the need to better link humanitarian caseloads with development and resilience commitments. Thus, the mapping has provided valuable information and opportunities for reflection on enhancing partnering and coordination.

KIIs with USAID and partner staff indicated that, in reality, the number of well-integrated or layered locations was small, because the SLI approach was somewhat “opportunistic” during the first phase of PREG. As a result of efforts by PREG to map activities, align program cycles, and leverage investments across PREG partners, the approach is becoming increasingly well-targeted. The 2020–2025 CDCS will further strengthen these efforts, through fit-to-purpose integrated programming and a commitment to the convergence of services. There are various showcase sites and partner initiatives that provide inspiration for the **transformative potential of SLI or convergence of services**. Examples of SLI from the study team’s site visits and document review follow.

**Sequencing:** In Turkana, the study team visited the Moruese irrigation scheme and mill. It is a good example of SLI overall, and in particular, the sequencing of donor projects, with the recent add-on of the mill as a community business. The 2015 irrigation scheme involved land clearance by WFP and Turkana County; water system development by REGAL-IR; secondary canals by community members with the support of the local Catholic Diocese; farm inputs by WFP and Turkana County; and training by REGAL-IR, WFP, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).<sup>40</sup> At the time of this study’s visit, the Moruese Millers Limited Company was newly registered with plans to mill grain produced from the irrigation farming. The mill is funded by the World Bank.



*Moruese community in Turkana with their recently-installed mill supported by World Bank, a new project building on the USAID PREG irrigation canal investment and farming support from USAID, WFP, FAO, and Turkana County.*

**Layering:** In mid-2018, the county PREG teams began developing a layering workplan. Most locations in the workplans are at ward level, with some at the village or site level. According to numerous PREG partners, the process of developing layering or activity matrices has helped them identify opportunities for coordination.

<sup>40</sup> USAID/PREG (2019).

For example, Afya Timiza described collaborative work with the NRT in Samburu to use conservancy volunteers to circulate critical preventative health and family planning messages among communities and households. Through the PREG team in Turkana, they have coordinated in two of the same areas as IRC/OFDA-funded activities. Afya Timiza recognizes the impacts of climate shocks on delivery of health systems and on health-seeking behaviors of pastoral communities. It also bridges to One Health, which fosters the connection between animal and human health. “Veterinary care is an entry point for all healthcare in pastoral areas,” said a PREG partner, describing the cross-sectoral work needed to build resilience to shocks. In this example, future strategic coordination may be expanded and strengthened with Ministry of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture, and PREG partners to connect climate and disease surveillance systems and referrals, particularly among the most remote and vulnerable pastoral communities.

**Integration:** The study team visited the Oldonyiro Market in Isiolo, an exemplar of PREG integration of activities at the site level, as well as the J2SR. PREG partners, including NDMA and Isiolo County ministries, have improved the infrastructure, health (human and animal), nutrition, WASH, governance, social cohesion, early warning systems, and security provided through the market. According to KIs, before PREG-led investments in the market, there were regular security incidents; lack of revenue collection from trader fees; WASH and health issues (because community members had no clean water or facilities, and animals were slaughtered anywhere); and a lack of variety in produce and products. Now, according to a market committee leader, the community’s youth collect market fees instead of the government. Half of the market fees are allocated to educational scholarships in their communities—an approach which has promoted community ownership of the market system.



*Women at Oldonyiro Market in Isiolo, which was supported by USAID/PREG. A community leader says the market is now thriving because “the people see it as their own.”*

Improved market structures, coupled with training in small business management among market leadership and vendors, and linking market supply chains (e.g., newly trained vet service providers who received small grants to better service the market with improved products and skills) has also contributed to community ownership. In addition, the community recognizes the market as an active center for product and information exchange and networking. The skills and social cohesion spurred by market investments over time led local leadership to advocate for a telecommunications tower to service the area—a transformative change in the area. Data

collection at the market carried out by trained youth provides real-time information on livestock health, and supports information for early warning and response, such as in the case of disease outbreaks. Now, even after USAID direct investment has ended, the market is thriving as a community hub and economic engine, serving multiple counties.

*“For two years, USAID held our hand in management of the market, and then we graduated.*

*They let us take the lead.”*

*– Oldonyiro market manager*

#### **BOX 4. SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING—EXTENT OF PREG SLI AND COORDINATION**

- **A strategic coordination platform for resilience is needed at county level.** The study team emphasizes the importance of a well-defined platform and framework for enhanced resilience coordination at the county level, with the right convening partner for such a platform. NDMA serves a crucial and strategic role at the national level and is valued at the county level for their expertise in drought monitoring, information, and assessments. The new CLTs may help support county level resilience platforms.
- **Ward development planning is a key opportunity for PREG partners to support communities to advocate for their needs and priorities.** Some PREG partners have started engaging communities through the ward development planning process, but this was in the pilot stage at the time of the study. This is an important opportunity to support local governance and accountability mechanisms, and to “institutionalize” development objectives at the community level.
- **PREG mapping and layering planning has advanced in recent years.** USAID/Kenya has supported PREG partners with activity mapping since 2014, helping partners visualize present and past activities to support their coordination, which now includes GIS maps and dashboards. The layering planning process at the national and county level has identified key areas of improvement in planning, such as connecting humanitarian caseloads with development and resilience commitments. There are few well-integrated or layered locations, but they are increasing strategically. There are numerous showcase sites and partner initiatives that provide inspiration for the transformative potential of SLI, coupled with a Mission-level commitment to fit-for-purpose integrated programming and measurement articulated in the new CDCS.

## 2.3 PARTNERING FOR THE JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE



This section addresses the study question: *What contributes to institutionalization, scale, and sustainability of activities?* It continues from the previous sections' findings on the factors that affect partnership and the extent of government engagement in PREG with discussion on the contributions of this partnership model for longer-term institutionalization.

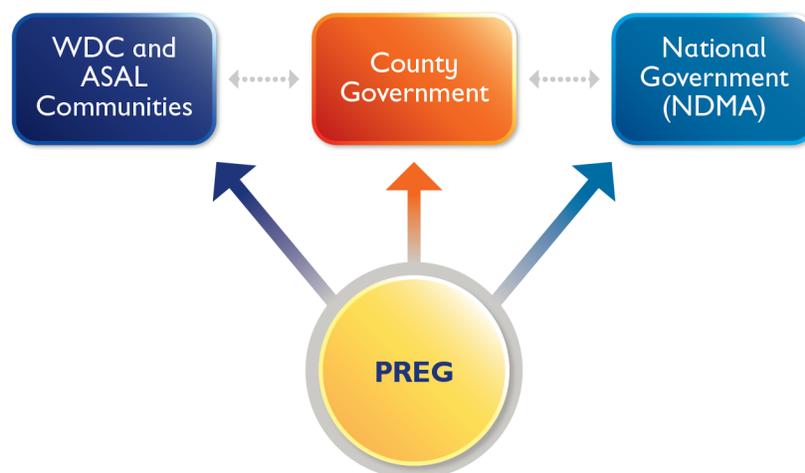
A key enabling factor for the PREG partnership approach has been the GoK's second devolution, as it has not only equipped counties to be better partners but has also promoted their ownership over development. Many county officials indicate the desire to take the reins of development coordination, which is an important factor for PREG partners to consider in their partnership and implementation approaches.

As noted in Section 2.1: Conceptual understanding, PREG partners' past engagement with government has varied, and county officials have a clear desire to be more involved in the planning and implementation of PREG activities. According to KIIs, some partners struggled with the issue of detailed budget planning with government counterparts. For instance, some county officials advocate for partners to share more project budget details and vice-versa. The study noted an opportunity for collaborative finance and policy mentorship with county government, such as the guidance provided by the PREG partner, Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions (AHADI). The recent signing of MOUs between the Mission and county governments to co-create, implement, monitor, and finance programs to achieve joint objectives is a significant step to address this challenge.

PREG is directly engaged at three critical levels: 1) Ward and community, 2) County government, and 3) National government, and it supports linkages among these levels (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. PREG multi-pronged partnerships for self-reliance**

*PREG's contributions to the pathways among these three levels are just as important as the direct work done at each level.*



The stronger the linkages or pathways become, the more potential for PREG to achieve sustained activities and outcomes, noting the specific characteristics of the linkages will vary across PREG counties and communities. The pathways are made stronger when PREG activities are institutionalized and as communities engage in local representative governance systems to prioritize and coordinate their respective development initiatives.

The aim of institutionalization to achieve scale and sustained results is articulated through USAID’s J2SR—and more recently in the USAID/Kenya CDCS, which is prompting shifts in strategy, partnership models, and program practices to achieve sustained development outcomes. The integration of J2SR into project design requires enhanced partnerships at all levels of society.<sup>41</sup> The study team finds that **PREG’s partnering and coordination approach has contributed toward the J2SR in Kenya** and should continue with this aim in mind. Interviews indicate PREG partnerships with national and county government entities have helped government staff connect with vulnerable communities. At the same time, PREG’s work to strengthen community governance systems (through the WDC) has helped communities engage with their government. According to some PREG partners, their partnership with the government under the banner of self-reliance has enhanced the counties’ commitment to and involvement with PREG programming. Also, PREG’s engagement with NDMA at the national level has helped to link NDMA work at the county level.

### Reported Benefits of Partnering for the Journey to Self-Reliance

**For government:** County officials report that PREG partners’ strong community-based experience is critical, facilitating effective communication between county officials and their constituents. The counties can learn from the partners in this way. There are other benefits for government actors from the PREG partnerships, as reported to the study team by various stakeholders:

*“Mutual accountability  
for impact”  
– County Gov KII*

- PREG coordination helps to **fill gaps** in critical county services, as well as with county structures and the workforce, giving the county time to plan how to assume responsibility for the gap. One county official described this enhanced coordination with PREG as beneficial “because it helps with mutual **accountability** for impact.”
- PREG’s partnering with government at various levels builds government technical and administrative **capacity**, such as through mentorship, advising, and training. An example of this is AHADI, PREG partner in Turkana, which focused on capacity building of government policies and guidance on public participation in devolution processes.
- PREG supports **joint assessments** with county government stakeholders, which informs strategy and policy at the national level.

<sup>41</sup> See: [https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/integrating\\_j2sr\\_into\\_pd\\_2pager.pdf](https://usaidlearninglab.org/sites/default/files/resource/files/integrating_j2sr_into_pd_2pager.pdf)

- PREG partnering, in some cases, may help the government provide a stronger enabling environment for **private sector engagement**. For example, in Turkana, LMS has supported access to animal health services through business grants to local veterinary drug distributors. There is a desire to scale this effort (also observed in Oldonyiro). In another example, the Health and Sanitation Department credits PREG partners for developing the model of “sanitation marketing” that both stimulates a local market for latrine repair/materials and improves sanitation access in the county. In Isiolo, a small grant to a local entrepreneur in poultry processing has spurred market linkages between small-scale producers to distributors and markets.
- Importantly, PREG partnering with government has helped develop **policy and regulations**, securing corresponding funding by the county (and to the county by the national government) for key PREG priority areas. County and partner staff across the two counties named numerous policies (in various stages of development and implementation) supported by PREG, from the Water Act and Community Health Services Act in Turkana to various other policies in Isiolo on livestock market management, rangeland management, and on youth and climate, among others.

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*“Because of PREG helping to make it policy, it will be entrenched.” – County Gov KII*

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**For communities:** The PREG partnership model strengthens capacity and sustainability at all levels. Communities have benefitted, in particular, through PREG’s work to enhance ownership of development and governance processes. This was observed by the study team via improved market management and fee-sharing at Oldonyiro Market, and through conversations with community leaders about the WDP process in Isiolo and Turkana. Through the governance structures strengthened by PREG partners, multiple communities told the study team it was their first time they have “seen government,” thus enhancing the devolved government’s visibility and transparency. PREG partnerships on both sides (with government and with communities) have a key role in supporting the linkages between communities and government/policy. PREG has promoted public participation, which pushes local government for policies that are relevant to communities’ development needs. One PREG partner described these as “**transformative links that everyone can see.**” Notably, the South Sudan PfRR clearly states the aim to build trust in institutions. In Kenya, great strides have been made to build institutional capacity and trust in recent years. The study team finds that PREG can capitalize on that process and make it more explicit in their documented objectives.

**For partners:** Many PREG partners have been satisfied with the potential for **sustainability** and community impact by enhancing their partnership and coordination with government. Layering with government, a partner explained, helps the government “do” its job, i.e., through supportive policies, efficient regulations, funds allocations based on community need, providing security, etc. It also demands more of the partners, thus, the mutual accountability component. One PREG partner said they have more **satisfaction** with their work when they are working toward institutionalization. Another partner said they can “sleep better” knowing they are not just *hoping* government takes on their activity when the project cycle is over; rather their county government partners have made it part of the county plan. The 2020–2025 CDCS further institutionalizes this approach across PREG.

Among PREG partners, there have also been perceived benefits of PREG team coordination (among implementing partners and with government counterparts). PREG partners noted the operational/planning benefits of less duplication, more continuity between activities, and the ability to build on what has been done. Benefits of increased PREG team coordination have been observed by multiple county officials as well. Some partners also noted the value of partnering for more intentional targeting in the most-needed areas, which is particularly relevant in a context of chronic vulnerability and recurrent crises. The establishment of USAID CLTs and CLA Program Officers at the county level is expected to enhance the coordination and continuity PREG achieved during its first phase.

#### **BOX 4. SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING—PARTNERING FOR THE J2SR**

- **A significant benefit of PREG partnering and coordination is the contribution toward the J2SR in Kenya.** PREG is directly engaged in programming at the community, county, and national level and in supporting the pathways between those levels. The stronger those pathways become (as PREG activities are institutionalized), the more potential for sustained activities and outcomes. The study noted various challenges of partnership with government that will need to be overcome for further institutionalization, including budget planning.
- **Enhanced coordination and institutionalization with PREG and government supports mutual accountability for impact.** PREG partnering with government has helped develop capacity and policy, which ensures corresponding funding by the county (and to the county by the national government) for key PREG priority areas. The PREG partnership model that strengthens capacity and sustainability at all levels has benefited communities through community ownership of and engagement with development and governance processes. Many PREG partners have been satisfied with the potential for sustainability and community impact by enhancing their partnership and coordination with government, work that they expect PREG to prioritize further under the 2020–2025 CDCS.
- PREG partners also noted the operational/planning benefits of less duplication, more continuity between activities, and the ability to build on what has been done—**benefits of increased PREG team coordination.**

## 2.4 PARTNERING DURING COVID-19



The study team conducted a series of follow-up KIIs with PREG stakeholders at the national and county levels who were previously interviewed during the inception or field missions. The conversations explored how PREG partnerships and programming have been affected by COVID-19, including the challenges, changes or pivots, and even opportunities that have arisen.

This section addresses the research question: *How do the challenges of implementing in complex environments affect the capacity for effective partnership and coordination?* Before the COVID-19 pandemic, this study did not collect evidence that the complex environment affected collaboration more than the types of challenges that would be expected for harsh operating environments—e.g., occasional restricted access to communities due to floods, insecurity, or other risks; and the operational challenges due to lack of resources, systems, and infrastructure across northern Kenya. KIIs described these risks and challenges as aspects they are largely accustomed to addressing in their operations.

The restrictions of COVID-19 and disruptions to operations were unprecedented for PREG, as for many other resilience and development programs globally. For the first month after offices closed in mid-March 2020, according to KIIs, PREG and its partners turned their focus to internal coordination, communications, and if possible, implementation and COVID-19 response. After this transition period, remote collaboration has been reportedly largely positive and effective. New virtual meeting tools were rolled out and staff trained on how to use new software. An LMS update reported, “The virtual discussions have led to some interesting results; staff meetings are more frequent and better attended than before, donor interactions are more frequent, government communications have not fallen off, and new ways of delivering trainings and other program elements show significant promise.”<sup>42</sup> The follow-up interviews confirm this perception that at both national and county levels the **coordination and communication have benefited**, even improved, from the necessity to do so remotely. The virtual meetings and trainings are perceived as more intentional and productive.

The **uptake of technology** for meetings and monitoring has also been an indirect benefit of pandemic restrictions. In the field, the partners are using mobile phones to send/receive photos, videos, and other activity updates. In many cases, they rely on each other, their social networks, and community stakeholders to provide information on their target sites/communities that they cannot access in person. This required them to leverage resources for a more coordinated and comprehensive response, from sharing vehicles and materials, to quickly integrating messaging for WASH, health, livestock, and market information. “While this was done out of necessity, it has also demonstrated that we were not always using the skills, time, and talents of our stakeholders to share in the responsibility of implementing the project,” reported LMS.<sup>43</sup> However, this situation

<sup>42</sup> ACDI/VOCA (Kenya LMS Leader and Associate I Award) (May 4, 2020).

<sup>43</sup> ACDI/VOCA (Kenya LMS Leader and Associate I Award) (May 4, 2020).

also exposes inequalities that exist around technology and network access. Some PREG partners are investing in internet or mobile services for key contacts, such as their county government counterparts, to ensure they can be reached. According to an update report, LMS may begin working with other PREG partners to support the virtual meeting capacities of local government.<sup>44</sup>

**The follow-up interviews highlighted the importance of well-established pre-pandemic partnering mechanisms to support continued partnering and effective response during the pandemic.** First, at the county level, **team trust and unity** were already built through monthly meetings and joint work planning, which allowed PREG partners to support each other's response activities and engage effectively with virtual meetings. They found this applied to county government contacts as well, as the foundation for partnership pre-existed. There have also been opportunities for more layering of activities and for response work with the government. Some new layering of activities is occurring in the Turkana and Isiolo counties included in this study, which was made possible by having **layering plans in place**. The partners have added community sensitization on COVID-19, increased hygiene/sanitation promotion and supplies, or increased water access to project sites, among other activities. At the national level, there are plans to implement remote workshops that will support more integrated and geographically-focused work planning. **Joint assessments** among PREG teams, county government, and NDMA have also taken place. These assessments have informed targeting and market protocols developed by PREG.

PREG partners also feel they have effectively worked with county governments as part of COVID-19 response and prevention work, according to the select follow-up interviews conducted. These PREG partners highlighted attempts to fill response gaps and requests from government counterparts by using resources available through their existing budgets and activities, but this has limits, and a **crisis modifier fund is needed**. This would allow PREG to have a greater voice and position in response work aimed to mitigate the need for significant humanitarian assistance, such as supporting small businesses or traders and vulnerable parts of the value chain before they are forced to shutter.

*“There is the need for a PREG county crisis modifier fund, to allow us to have leverage and the ability to respond in emergencies that arise like COVID-19.”*

*– PREG partner KII*

The follow-up interviews also described some of the **indirect consequences and difficulties** of partnering during COVID-19, particularly related to the J2SR at community and county levels. At the community level, implementation of the WDP process was mostly at a standstill at the time of the interviews. Yet, according to one interview, the situation under COVID-19 has prompted wider discussions among PREG partners on how to scale up the WDP model to guide more comprehensively the SLI/convergence of services approach going forward. At the county level, according to PREG partners, government budgets and priorities have been redirected to COVID-

<sup>44</sup> ACDI/VOCA (Kenya LMS Leader and Associate I Award) (May 4, 2020).

19 response and related projects. This shift caused the government to delay or deprioritize other livestock, agriculture, or market development work. This is difficult for the PREG implementing partners who will end their projects in 2020 and who are not able to receive government commitments for continuing key activities.

Follow-up interviews also pointed to the importance of cross-county learning in real-time during this complex and novel emergency. This need was articulated during county-level visits before the onset of COVID-19 and is being addressed through the new roles of CLA officers at the county level and the rollout of a new PREG learning agenda.

#### **BOX 5. SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING – PARTNERING DURING COVID-19**

- **Virtual/remote coordination and communication have been effective**, because of the trust and teamwork established among PREG teams and with GoK at various levels prior to the pandemic.
- **Prompt layering of new activities is possible because of the foundational partnership**, including joint work planning and the previously developed layering plans. Partners have been able to leverage resources and integrate COVID-19 response activities into previously planned activities (e.g., COVID-19 prevention messages at PREG-supported markets). They are also considering opportunities to scale up community initiatives (e.g., WDP). These foundational partnerships and relationships extend to county government and communities.
- **Response work with county governments has continued**, though limited by existing budget activities. A greater response by PREG would necessitate a crisis modifier fund.
- **There were difficulties in continuing the J2SR during crises**, as non-response related work with communities and county government largely came to a standstill for periods of 2020. This may impact the handover of key PREG activities, but PREG will continue to model the continuum and convergence of humanitarian and development activities.
- **Liaison and learning efforts within PREG were addressed even during COVID-19**. Related to the new learning agenda, Mission-appointed County Liaison Teams, and county CLA officers (through the Resilience Learning Activity) in place in 2020 were perceived as positive advancements for the partnership.

### 3. LESSONS LEARNED AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEXT PHASE OF PREG

This section is organized around the “Five Conditions for Collective Impact” identified at the August 2016 PREG Learning Event because they are used as the key work streams for strengthening PREG’s collaboration and partnership approach at the national and county levels.<sup>45</sup> The study team recognizes that PREG teams have dedicated much time and attention to the challenges and achievements of partnership.<sup>46</sup> This discussion reiterates some of those reflections, while also distilling key ideas for case study learning and lessons for partnerships in the next phase. The study team sees PREG making an intentional shift towards more strategic partnerships and strategic, needs-based targeting for collective impact, which is expected to improve SLI and promote the convergence of services approach articulated in the USAID/Kenya CDCS for 2020–2025.

#### 1. A common agenda among partners

The study team finds PREG has **achieved the significant task** of creating a “tent” or “banner” under which individual partners have effectively gathered. Mindsets have shifted from isolated to integrated programming, and core partners have developed a sense of team, trust, and common identity as PREG. PREG has advanced the vision and goals of Kenya’s EDE and the Horn of Africa resilience framework. As PREG has rightly recognized, the purpose for partnership and collaboration among USAID-supported actors is not collaboration itself, but to achieve collective impact at scale. The purpose for PREG, in terms of its resilience-building objectives, is generally known among its partners and is now reinforced as a development objective of the Mission-wide CDCS.

**In the next phase**, USAID/Kenya will implement a coherent Mission strategy and shared measurement framework around resilience, including a baseline evaluation for the resilience development objective. This is a promising next step to strengthen the common vision around resilience in Kenya’s ASALs. It will require efforts to further deepen knowledge and understanding of the vision and the resilience framework among partners both internal and external to PREG. In particular, the CLTs and PREG should continue to ensure alignment with GoK resilience results framework, also underway.

**In times of COVID-19**, PREG has positioned itself to provide a strong voice for SLI and resilience thinking—a voice to advocate that development work should not be dropped during an emergency, but strategically linked to humanitarian response. Through PREG partners’ market assessments and cash programming, for example, PREG is demonstrating the importance of mitigating COVID-19 impacts to lessen the need for humanitarian assistance.

<sup>45</sup> Africa Lead (2016). Note: The “Five Conditions for Collective Impact” is from Kania & Kramer (2011).

<sup>46</sup> Africa Lead II (2018b).

## 2. Shared measurement and learning approaches

PREG teams have **coalesced through joint activities** for assessment and learning in past years, thus breaking through many siloes of implementation. The efforts of PREG to provide learning opportunities and documentation of impact and good practices has been critical to PREG's effectiveness to date.

**In the next phase**, this component will be strengthened with a common results framework developed through the Mission's CDCS and resilience objective. The critical point for PREG is to ensure all partners identify how they align with and directly contribute to these resilience measures. Changes in transformative capacities are often the most difficult. Thus, the study team suggests that PREG systems-level indicators for both the national and county levels capture institutional change. These measures provide accountability and motivation for the progress achieved through partnership. Further, as shown through current partnership achievements, built-in flexibility, analytic and learning capacities at county level are critical for adaptive, collaborative programming. Going forward, PREG should continue to ensure the partners have the ability to overcome mismatched project cycles to facilitate more joint monitoring, assessments, and targeting exercises—all of which contributes to the Mission-wide priority of fit-for-purpose integrated programming. These issues were challenges for shared measurement and joint planning in the past, which the study team believes will be resolved as part of the new CDCS and Mission strategy to align project cycles.

**With COVID-19**, PREG has recognized the need to advance database management, analytics, and adaptive management at the county level. The newly established county CLA officers will be pivotal to this end. The study team sees these as advances in the right direction if paired with the Mission's resilience results framework and supported by the “backbone” of PREG.

## 3. Mutually reinforcing activities

There have been **big strides in PREG team coordination and integration of activities**, with numerous sites demonstrating the transformative potential of SLI, and with opportunities to continue to expand this model of convergence of services. Joint work plans and layering plans have been and will continue to be fundamental to moving beyond “opportunistic” SLI to intentional, resilience-driven collective impact with target communities. As documented by South Sudan's PfRR and observed in Turkana and Isiolo, convergence points of resilience programming are “the ultimate test of partnership.”

**For the next phase**, the learning from this study urges a rethinking of what co-creation might look like for the design of future-funded projects in the ASALs to include field-level PREG perspectives. The study team finds locally driven co-creation—with partners and government stakeholders at the county level—could increase alignment of new PREG projects and SLI sites with previous or current projects, and contribute to smooth onboarding of new PREG partners.

PREG has an **important role** in bringing resilience strategy and partnership models to the fore, particularly at the county level. In general, study informants characterized the CSG and other county platforms as descriptive, rather than strategic. The CLTs, together with PREG partners, should continue moving toward a common resilience agenda with counties, and support platforms that are inclusive of multi-donors, multi-partners, and government (e.g., aligned with county development plans).

The study team finds the PREG platform has shown **great adaptive capacity to coordinate and support activities amidst the challenges of COVID-19**. PREG has been able to pivot implementation and coordination strategies; leverage existing networks and relationships among partners, and with county government and communities; and rely on partner organizations to adapt workplans, improve coverage, and avoid duplicate efforts. PREG needs a contingency fund to improve response capacity, , which the study team understands PREG is addressing.

#### 4. Continuous communication and stakeholder engagement

**PREG has implemented concrete tools and practices** that have helped the PREG teams improve regular communications and coordination. The county case studies revealed the importance of team meetings, joint planning, communications guidance, and protocols for onboarding/offboarding of partners. Study interviews emphasized the importance of multi-directional information flow and meaningful interactions among PREG stakeholders. The study team recognizes efforts made, such as with the new CLTs to foster coherent USAID engagement with county government. In addition, in recognition of the time burden and cost of continuous communication and coordination necessary for partnership, PREG has taken the initiative to recruit CLA officers at the county level, through the RLA.

In terms of **communications during COVID-19**, PREG provides an excellent example of how to re-tool and draw on complementary capacities to ensure continuous communications, using new virtual coordination methods to both continue and even improve communication.

Learning from this case study emphasizes the importance of PREG continuing to ensure counties and communities are part of their development planning and coordination structures. “Entrenchment” of PREG activities in policy and with county planning is embraced by PREG partners, and it contributes to sustainability and the J2SR. However, communities have not been consistently included as equal stakeholders in the PREG partnership approach. Entities and processes like WDP/WDC provide a foundation to make sure ASAL community priorities reach other levels of planning and other donors. A process or mechanism is needed to better involve communities in PREG planning, and to ensure better integration of WDP in strategic layering and mapping. Learning and adaptations in the context of COVID-19 have provided a window of opportunity to focus more on the WDP model and the full engagement of community stakeholders.

## 5. Backbone support

The backbone support originated through the PREG Secretariat and with Africa Lead, in particular, proved to be **extremely useful and relevant** for PREG teams. Through the development of shared leadership, now the PREG County Leads have a larger role in partnership facilitation. In the next phase, these leads may need more institutional support and guidance in various areas (in addition to recognizing their time commitment), which PREG has already been addressing through the CLTs and CLA officers. For example, some PREG teams needed more technical capacity to support strategic resilience platforms among county stakeholders, which will be supported through the CLTs. The PREG county teams could also be guided to more formally document their processes and lessons learned on partnering, documentation of layering, etc., which will be supported by the new CLA officers.

Additionally, PREG partners may benefit from more **resources and guidance on how to better “institutionalize”** and implement in true partnership with the government. According to multiple stakeholders, there is more opportunity for “walking together.” The CLTs are well-positioned to support this effort and facilitate, for example, standardized guidance for PREG partners on how to better engage with county government in terms of cost- and budget-sharing, project-cycle alignment, embedding capacity within county structures, planning for exit, etc. Similarly, they can offer guidance on how to refine institutional instruments for adaptive joint work planning processes with both government and communities. PREG guidance around branding may also need to evolve to reflect the desire for communities and counties to own their development vision.<sup>47</sup>

### BOX 6. SUMMARY OF KEY LEARNING–LESSONS LEARNED FOR PREG’S NEXT PHASE

- **A common agenda among partners.** PREG has achieved the significant task of creating a common vision for collaboration. In the next phase, USAID/Kenya will implement a coherent mission strategy and measurement framework around resilience as an objective of the CDCS. This is a promising next step in strengthening the common vision around resilience in Kenya’s ASALs. It will require efforts to further deepen knowledge and understanding of this vision and the resilience framework among partners both internal and external to PREG. The COVID-19 related stressors have proved that during crises, PREG is well-positioned to provide a strong platform for the convergence of services/SLI and resilience strategies that strategically link development to humanitarian response.
- **Shared measurement and learning approaches.** The study team identified the need for a common results framework to guide implementation and measurement across the PREG partnership. This framework could be extended to include broader stakeholders and owned by the government, particularly at county level. Since the time of fieldwork, USAID/Kenya has elevated resilience as a Mission-wide development objective, outlined in the 2020–2025 CDCS. It is committed to developing a coherent measurement framework in partnership with county government.

<sup>47</sup> Noted in relation to the 2018-19 workplan for this component including “communication and visibility at the community level e.g., branding in sites with multiple PREG implementing partners, including layering sites.”

- **Mutually reinforcing activities.** Integrated programming with and flexible project cycles, targeting through the convergence of services approach guided by robust resilience assessments and activity mapping, joint work planning with county government, and strengthened learning capacity at county level, supported by the “backbone” collaborative learning through the RLA will strengthen PREG going forward.
- PREG guidance around branding may also need to evolve to reflect the desire of communities and counties to own their development vision. Notably, the PREG platform has shown great adaptive capacity over time, and particularly with the onset of COVID-19. To improve PREG’s response capacity, a contingency fund is needed.
- **Continuous communication and stakeholder engagement.** There is a perceived need for improved multi-directional information flow and interactions between PREG partners and the various levels of USAID. The recruitment and onboarding of USAID CLTs is a promising approach to address this need. PREG must also continue to ensure counties and communities are part of planning and coordination structures, scaling up, for example, the WDP model.
- **Backbone support.** The backbone support initiated through the PREG Secretariat and Africa Lead proved highly useful and relevant for PREG teams. Moving forward, the study team finds the PREG county leads need more institutional support in various areas, from technical capacity in resilience programming to documentation of their processes and lessons in facilitating the partnerships. They also need support to integrate this learning into adaptive management processes, and institutionalize activities with government and communities. To optimize collaborative learning and partnership going forward, PREG will need to address the time burden of coordination among PREG partners and recognize the multiple demands on partner organizations (e.g., multiple donor agencies, internal organizational requirements). This includes guidance for engaging with county government on cost-sharing, embedding capacity, planning for exit, revising MOUs or contracts, among others. Since the time of fieldwork, the installation of the CLTs, as well as CLA officers at the county level under the Resilience Learning Award, aims to address these needs.
- *Overall, PREG has demonstrated immense learning, and more importantly, has provided a springboard for operationalization of this learning Mission-wide. PREG is well-positioned to make an intentional shift to more strategic partnerships and strategic, improved SLI for collective impact through its convergence of services approach, integrated programming and measurement framework.*

## 4. ANNEXES

### 4.1 QUALITATIVE TOPICAL OUTLINES

**The following topics provided general guidance for the case study interviews, which were adapted as relevant for different types of key informants.**

1. What is your role/association with PREG? How long have you worked with PREG?
2. To start, please describe how you have observed partnerships and collaboration functioning with PREG (i.e., both related to PREG structure and how sequencing/integrating/layering is implemented and types of collaboration: national or country GoK, NGOs, UN, private sector)?
3. How have PREG partnerships changed or developed over time or in different regions? (Changes considered positive or negative, and why? What prompted the changes?)
4. What are the specific mechanisms or activities that enable effective collaboration and coordination (e.g., communication portals, learning events, common frameworks for joint work planning and measurement, increased local ownership, etc.)? What factors influence collaboration (including: leadership, trust, common vision)?
5. What have been the successes of partnerships and collaboration under PREG? Examples?
  - a. E.g., harmonization/synergy of activities, reduced redundancies, early warning information and response, institutionalization, scale-up, sustainability of PREG activities. Does partnership contribute?
  - b. How and why?
6. What have been the constraints/challenges? (e.g., funding streams, multiple and incongruent institutional agendas and requirements, disparate capacities across institutions/levels)
  - a. What has been done to address the challenges?
7. How have recurrent crises (e.g., drought, chronic food security, conflict) affected your ability to effectively partner and collaborate? (Do shocks enable more collaboration, or hinder it?)
  - a. Any practical lessons learned on how to successfully manage shocks and stresses in partnership?
8. Has PREG effectively coordinated/collaborated under the EDE framework, and in coordination with the NDMA and government partners? Why or why not?
  - a. With other donor programs? With private sector? Why or why not?
9. To what extent do you feel PREG partnerships contribute to longer-term partnerships and collaboration? Sustainable outcomes?
10. What is the role of PREG going forward? How should partnering look different?

**Additional questions (to above topical outline) for County Government and NDMA County:**

- How does PREG carry out work planning among partners at the county level? How has this changed over time? How do PREG implementing partner planning processes link with county government planning and budgeting? Challenges/recommendations?
- How has PREG engaged with county level government? The CIDP process? Has this been beneficial or not? Why or why not?
- How has PREG engaged at the ward level (e.g., Ward Development Planning Process)?
- How have PREG partners worked in policy at the county level? Perceived effectiveness? Recommendations going forward?
- How do partners identify, prioritize and target activities? What have PREG partnerships looked like “off the tarmac”? Perceived reasons for these observations.
- How effective has PREG been in sequencing, layering, or integrating activities? Why (and where) or why not? And with other donor programs? What have you learned about approaches to SLI?
- What changes would you recommend for PREG in the future (e.g., around PREG identity/ownership, geographic targeting/coordination with external partners)? What challenges or opportunities do you envision going forward?

**NDMA:**

- What is NDMA’s involvement in county planning?
- Has PREG been successful in sequencing, layering, or integrating activities? Why (and where) or why not? And with other donor programs?
- How has information collection/capacity/the use of the collected information changed over time and as a result of PREG? How has this informed planning at the county, ward, and community levels? How does this inform PREG practice?

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## ABOUT THE REAL AWARD

The Resilience Evaluation, Analysis and Learning (REAL) Associate Award is a consortium-led effort funded by the USAID Center for Resilience. It was established to respond to growing demand among USAID Missions, host governments, implementing organizations, and other key stakeholders for rigorous, yet practical, monitoring, evaluation, strategic analysis, and capacity building support. Led by Save the Children, REAL draws on the expertise of its partners: Food for the Hungry, Mercy Corps, and TANGO International.

