



Improving Nutrition with the Graduation Approach: A Technical Learning Brief

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Introduction



USAID Nawiri is a eight-year Resilience and Food Security Activity (RFSA) USAID-funded program that aims to achieve sustained reduction of acute malnutrition in Kenya’s arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), particularly in Samburu, Turkana, Marsabit and Isiolo.

USAID Nawiri is implementing adaptations of the Poverty Graduation Approach as it aims to reduce persistent acute malnutrition in northern Kenya. The Graduation Approach consists of a sequenced, time-bound package of interventions intended to “graduate” poor households to sustainable livelihoods. “Classic” Graduation programs, inspired by BRAC’s 2002 Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) and

proven impactful across numerous contexts and iterations since, combine social protection, financial inclusion, and livelihoods development to overcome multidimensional challenges of extreme poverty.

Program components typically include a combination of consumption support, savings promotion, livelihood asset transfers, training, mentoring and coaching. However, as an increasing number of organizations and governments have adopted the Poverty Graduation Approach, they have implemented hundreds of permutations and adaptations (including by BRAC itself), responding to changing poverty contexts and drivers, needs of specific geographies and populations, and emerging learning around effectiveness and efficiency.

While BHA has supported Poverty Graduation programming in several development¹, refugee² and drought- and conflict-affected contexts³, USAID Nawiri is the first Resilience Food Security Activity (RFSA) to apply the Poverty Graduation Approach in a program specifically working to reduce Persistent Acute Malnutrition (PAM). For several years development partners have implemented the approach in Kenya, including more recently in collaboration with the government’s State Department for Social Protection⁴. USAID Nawiri is building on that rich foundation of experience and evidence, designing and refining the Graduation Approach to drive nutrition outcomes. This brief provides key insights into the USAID Nawiri Graduation journey during the program’s first four years, covering context, early results, learning and recommendations.

Context



USAID Nawiri operates in historically underserved areas that have Kenya’s highest poverty rates and lowest human development indicators. Targeted communities experience high levels of chronic and acute food insecurity and malnutrition as well as droughts and other shocks. The four counties are highly dependent on pastoralist livelihoods that are under increasing pressure from climate change, economic shifts, conflict, and governance issues. With threats to traditional livelihoods and the need for diversification, gender roles are challenged and changing.

Table 1: Poverty and Malnutrition in USAID Nawiri’s operating counties⁵

	Isiolo	Marsabit	Samburu	Turkana	National
Food Poverty (KNBS 2022)	28.9%	55.1%	60.2%	63.4%	30.5%
Overall Poverty (KNBS 2022)	53.9%	65.9%	66.2%	77.7%	38.6%
Global Acute Malnutrition (2022)	17.8% ⁶	19.8% ⁷	20.3%	26.4%	4.9% ⁸

- Bernagros, A., Kirton, A., and Toussaint, N. (2022). Considerations for Integrating the Graduation Approach within Resilience Food Security Activities. Washington, DC: Implementer-led Design, Evidence, Analysis and Learning (IDEAL) Activity.
- The USAID BHA-funded Graduating to Resilience program works with extremely poor refugee and host community households in Uganda.
- Klass, A. (2023). Is ‘Graduation’ Possible in Emergencies? USAID Marketlinks.
- Kenya’s Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, State Department of Social Protection and Senior Citizen Affairs is responsible for community empowerment and promotion of the rights and welfare of vulnerable persons, including social protection services.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2023). The Kenya Poverty Report: Based on the 2021 Kenya Continuous Household Survey. KNBS with support from World Bank Group.
- January – February 2022 SMART Survey.
- July 2022 SMART Survey.
- KNBS and ICF. 2023. Kenya Demographic and Health Survey 2022. Key Indicators Report. Nairobi, Kenya and Rockville, Maryland, USA: KNBS and ICF.



The programming and learning outlined in this brief took place during exceptionally challenging and dynamic times. First, in 2020, Kenya's economy experienced massive economic and social disruption as COVID-19 forced an estimated two million more Kenyans into poverty. Nationwide school closures, nighttime curfews, market closures, and cessation of free movement had a vast impact on the economy - particularly retail trade - as well as intensifying the demands of unpaid care work on women. Even more devastating, from late 2020 to early 2023, five consecutive failed rainy seasons led to severe drought and humanitarian crisis.

Across Kenya's North, families lost their most important assets: 2.6 million animals died at an estimated economic cost of more than \$1.5 billion. Drought worsened water insecurity, resulting in spikes in disease among young children. In February 2023, there were 188,222 children ages 6 to 59 months and 50,474 pregnant and lactating women requiring treatment of acute malnutrition in USAID Nawiri counties. The aftereffects of drought continue to depress livestock birth rates and milk production (a key driver of child nutrition). High food and fuel costs, driven by global, regional and local factors, continue to pose a challenge, with July 2023 maize prices across the ASALs 18-97% above five-year averages.

Graduation in USAID Nawiri



USAID Nawiri is implementing two variations of the Poverty Graduation Approach: The Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Nutrition Model (ANGM) in Isiolo and Marsabit Counties, and the Rural Entrepreneur Access Project for Nutrition (REAP for Nutrition, or R4N) in Samburu and Turkana Counties. Collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA)--a set of practices that help improve development effectiveness--are the backbone of USAID Nawiri, which dedicated its first two years to action research to refine program design. These models build upon the rigorously tested and researched core Graduation work of USAID Nawiri consortium members [Village Enterprise](#) and [BOMA](#), respectively, while incorporating adaptations to address the immediate, underlying and basic causes of PAM. By implementing two models and continuing to launch new cohorts of participants, the program has numerous ongoing opportunities refining and improving approaches in response to evolving context.



“As a group, we were determined to establish a thriving livestock business despite it being male dominated. We started with only three goats and our husbands were supportive enough to help us take them to the Market on foot 40 kms to Kakuma town where they sold and fetched a profit of KES. 3000 and brought us the money. They have been a very strong Pillar to us in negotiating for our goats to fetch good prices and providing security. ”

Veronica Apeiya, a member of Ngaroon Business group operating I Turkana West.

USAID Nawiri Graduation Reach To-date

Children under 5 in participating households

40,305



Business Groups Formed

8,831



Working capital grants provided

\$ 2.7 million



Graduation Participants

26,303



Female: 25,204 Male: 1,099

Pregnant and lactating women in participating households

16,108



Savings Groups formed

1,003



Consumption smoothing cash provided

\$ 5 million



A defining feature of ANGM and R4N is their dual focus on uplifting the ultra-poor and reducing their risk of malnutrition, while simultaneously positioning them as critical agents of broader community change. Both models seek to enroll the ultra-poor households who are most vulnerable to malnutrition. They provide similar components: asset transfer, group businesses, community-based savings groups, mentorship and coaching, training, and consumption support cash transfers.

However, their sequencing and delivery differ; R4N begins with market assessment, entrepreneurship then asset transfer whereas ANGM starts with entrepreneurship training and savings activities before asset transfer. ANGM offers intensive mentorship with weekly meetings over an initial 12 months, followed by a transition to savings group-level support for a second year. R4N provides monthly mentorship and coaching over 18 months followed by a transition to small rural microfinance, market actors through private service providers (PSP) approach and social services⁹. Both ANGM and R4N are implemented in close collaboration with government, communities and private sector partners. They benefit from the multisectoral nature of USAID Nawiri, which intentionally sequences, layers, and integrates Graduation with other interventions (internal and external).

Across malnutrition hotspots in the four counties, USAID Nawiri has enrolled 27,303 ultra-poor participants (26,204 female, 1,099 male) from ultra-poor households in Graduation activities. These households include 29,631 children under 5 and 17,400 pregnant and lactating women with or at risk of undernutrition. Participants have formed 8,832 business groups (typically of three women business owners) and 1,206 community-based savings and lending groups. The program has provided approximately \$2.3 million¹⁰ in working capital grants and over \$5 million in consumption smoothing cash transfers.

Early Results



Graduation businesses grew, despite launching and operating in a severe, prolonged drought.

Compared to the total grant value of \$370, average business values¹¹ ranged from \$457 in Samburu to \$472 in Turkana, and \$484 in Marsabit. An earlier pilot cohort in Isiolo County received a smaller grant of \$222 and finished one year with average business values of \$360. The program team attributes strong business performance to several factors, including:

- Quality delivery of business training and mentorship components using tried and tested approaches from Graduation “classic”.
- Provision of consumption support to maximize the use of business grants for productive investment rather than emergency household food needs; and
- USAID Nawiri’s market systems support unlocked new, more profitable opportunities for businesses dealing in nutritious food in last mile, hotspot areas.

While we have seen reductions in acute malnutrition among young children from participant households, results have been uneven.

The program is improving and harmonizing practices for measuring wasting prevalence across the program and counties in FY2024, but can identify some trends from available data. In the first Isiolo cohort, using weight-for-height z-scores (WHZ), wasting prevalence decreased from 17.4% at May 2021 baseline to 12.8% in June 2022 for children aged 12-23 months, but there was no significant difference from baseline z-scores or wasting prevalence for the wider 0-59 months of age cohort. Later, in July 2023 in Turkana and Samburu, measured by Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC), the program found reduced prevalence of wasting for children 6-23 months in Graduation households. In Samburu, this was 2.4% compared to 6.3% at baseline (June 2022). In Turkana, prevalence fell from 17.3% to 10.8%. GAM went up in some specific contexts, namely Lake Zone of Turkana where wasting in children 6-23 months increased from 19.6% at baseline to 27.8% at midline. This may be due to factors of fishing livelihoods and women’s time use patterns, discussed more below.

9. Please note the differing durations of ANGM and R4N translate into different timing for surveys. ANGM conducted midline surveys at 12 months, R4N conducted midline at 10 months for cohort 1.

10. Throughout this document, we have used a rate of 135KES to \$1.00.

11. Business value is the sum of: Value of current stock, Value of cash in hand, Value of outstanding credit, Value of Business savings and Value of Equipment/Assets used in the business.

Complementary feeding practices improved, in some places more than others. After a year of their household's involvement in Graduation, more children ages 6-23 months consume a quality and sufficient diet. The largest gains have come in Isiolo and Samburu, where the proportion of children from R4N households attaining a Minimum Acceptable Diet (MAD) increased from 6.9% at baseline to 36.8% at midline and 13.2% at baseline to 33.2% at midline respectively. Turkana had only 0.7% of children attaining MAD at baseline, but 19.7% at midline, whereas progress in Marsabit was much more modest, from 1.1% at baseline to 4.6% after a year. In Samburu, layering of household production activities contributed further to good performance of MAD. Graduation household performance on MAD was better than that of the general population shown in the June 2023 SMART Surveys (13.1% and 17% in Turkana and Samburu respectively), indicating positive impact of the intervention on direct participant households.

Household food security and food consumption improved, even amidst historic drought.

As improvements in food security are a proven result of "classic" Graduation programs, this result aligns with expectations. In Samburu and Turkana Counties, nearly all households were "severely food insecure" at enrollment, as measured by Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS, 93.7% in Samburu and 98.9% in Turkana). The proportion of severely food insecure R4N households dropped to 54.8% in Samburu and 60% in Turkana by midline, with a further 28% and 10% respectively "food secure."

The reduction in 'severe' food insecurity but not a notable increase in 'food security' among R4N HHs is because of the depth and breadth of food insecurity in these communities (that increased further during drought) and the deeply ingrained culture of sharing. There were sizable improvements in Food Consumption Score (FCS) in Marsabit and Isiolo. The percentage of households with acceptable FCS increased from 57.1% at baseline to 85.1% at endline in Isiolo and from 20% at baseline to 48% at midline in Marsabit. Isiolo and Samburu fared better overall, likely thanks to better availability of diverse food as compared to Marsabit and Turkana, where households rely more heavily on last mile markets¹².

Graduation households increased food expenditures. After a year of Graduation activities, households in Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu and Turkana increased their monthly average expenditure on nutritious foods by \$4.13, \$9.44, \$15.56 and \$30.16 respectively. However, in a context of high inflation rates for food and fuel, this may not mean households acquired more or better-quality foods. For example, in Turkana, where a 17.7% increase in the value of the Minimum Expenditure Basket from \$103.78 to \$122.15 took place from December 2022 to June 2023.¹³ This could explain observed discrepancies between increased expenditures on food and unexpectedly low proportions of households achieving 'food secure' status at graduation midline in Samburu and Turkana.

There are promising trends in health-seeking behavior. In the most recent ANGM cohort in Marsabit, the children of Graduation participants receiving crucial preventive interventions such as deworming and Vitamin A supplementation had increased by about 20% by midline. The incidence of diarrhea declined sharply, with the proportion experiencing diarrhea in the past two weeks dropping from over 27% at baseline to about 3%. For those with cases of diarrhea, there was nearly a 50% increase in treatment within 24 hours. The team anticipates findings on these indicators for Isiolo in late November 2023.

Graduation savings groups support effective layering of nutrition components while setting foundations for resilience and sustainability.

Graduation savings groups help their members save and borrow among their peers in sustainable, accessible, transparent and flexible ways. In Isiolo and Marsabit, the program has seen annual savings accumulation of approximately \$48 per participant in 12 months, or about half of the Minimum Food Expenditure Basket. In addition, the ANGM's Saving-With-A-Purpose (SWAP) mechanism encouraged members to set aside savings for household assets that could improve absorptive capacity during drought e.g., water jerry cans or livestock, notably goats. After 15 months of R4N enrollment, average participant savings was \$63 in Samburu and \$76 in Turkana. By midline, over half of participants in Samburu had taken a loan, with a lower rate of 12.9% in Turkana. Over time, the most common use of loans shifted from primarily food purchases to covering business expenses, indicating a shift to more productive uses of credit. Savings groups have also served as an important convening mechanism on which to layer other nutrition-sensitive and nutrition-specific project components, including additional livelihoods training, SBC activities, health and nutrition education, and market systems activities.

12. Mercy Corps Nawiri Consortium. (2021). Food Market Systems Assessment for Samburu and Turkana Counties. Nairobi: USAID Nawiri.

13. Kenya Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMIMI) Fact Sheets: October - December 2022 and April - June 2023.

Graduation businesses are facilitating access to nutritious food in remote rural communities.

Graduation businesses are playing critical roles in activating last mile markets for nutritious food. Many small retail shops – known as *dukas* – are promoting consumption through stocking better varieties of food, such as fortified porridge flours in Isiolo, or acting as off takers from project-supported production farms. The program has promoted aggregation. For example, ANGM business groups in Loiyangalani, Marsabit aggregate dried fish in their saving group and sell on to cooperatives in bulk. In Samburu, R4N Melau Saving Group aggregated 200 goats and sold them to Neema livestock market and a slaughterhouse in Nairobi. Graduation participants are placing bulk orders to cut transport costs, enabling availability of items that a single rural shop would not typically afford to stock. In some locations, such as Longelemwar in Turkana North, such businesses have created vibrant markets within communities where the nearest market used to be 7 kilometers away. Community members appreciate the time and money they save as a result.



Adapted Nutrition Graduation Model – A women’s savings and business group meeting, also including mother-to-mother support group and SMART Couple participants, discussing savings and entrepreneurship in Maikona, Marsabit County. **Photo:** Anthony Nyandiek, USAID Nawiri/CRS

Learning & Adaptations



Targeting Graduation for nutrition is complex and must account for the possibility of perverse incentives. Within PAM hotspot wards and villages, ANGM and R4N have adapted existing poverty targeting processes to prioritize inclusion of households with nutritional vulnerabilities. While all households enrolled in classic Graduation models are ultra poor, those in ANGM activities are poor and include a malnourished child under 5 years of age, a child under 5 who is at risk of acute malnutrition (<12.5-13.4cm MUAC), a child under 5 with a history of malnutrition relapse, and/or a pregnant or lactating woman. R4N targeting has been adapted so that it is done alongside with enrollment for other anchor groups such as GIRL-H, Boy groups¹⁴, and adapted Mother-to-Mother Support Groups¹⁵. This approach provides opportunities to layer

14. Girl-H (Girls Improving Resilience through Livelihoods and Health) and BOY model target out-of-school adolescent girls and young women (ages 10-24) and adolescent boys and young men (ages 15 - 29) respectively. A member-selected mentor facilitates group sessions to improve members’ resilience capacities for nutrition in Samburu and Turkana Counties.

15. A peer group consisting of women of reproductive age that promotes maternal infant and young child nutrition practices. It has specific adaptations informed by the Nawiri’s research phase from the traditional Baby-Friendly Community Initiative mother to mother support groups to include: social cultural influencers including traditional birth attendants, grandmothers, integration with VSLAs and other livelihoods, learning through experiential methods, utilization of champion (positive deviant) model, registration of groups with social services and inclusion of older/non-biological primary caregivers.

interventions to address interdependent vulnerabilities at different levels and scales. While Nawiri's Feedback, Complaint and Response Mechanisms have highlighted isolated inclusion and exclusion errors, the main challenge remains lack of adequate resources to enroll all ultra-poor, malnutrition-vulnerable households. Further, the program must minimize rare but serious unintended consequences: risk of adversely incentivizing keeping children malnourished, ahead of Graduation intakes. Teams are minimizing such occurrences by reinforcing messages about the harm of malnutrition and conducting joint targeting for Graduation and other initiatives.

Market saturation by Graduation businesses is a risk determined by numerous contextual factors that requires deeper exploration. While launching hundreds of new dukas might make for a crowded market, saturation risks are more nuanced. Having many food businesses in vulnerable communities can help achieve and maintain food security, as businesses selling similar commodities can bargain for better prices and benefit from economies of scale, particularly for transport to remote locations. Still, a Randomized Control Trial of BOMA's "classic" REAP Graduation work in Samburu found that higher saturation (over 60% enrollment in a locality) could reduce income impact over time, as businesses compete¹⁶. The RCT also found that some non-participants in the same communities started businesses and savings groups similar to those of REAP. However, the saturation tipping point is not static or constant over time nor similar across contexts. In pastoral zones, the performance of livestock markets determines saturation; whereas in the Lake Turkana zone, it is influenced largely by fishing activities. Across zones, supporting livelihoods diversification and sustained market linkages helps increase the Graduation business saturation threshold.

Engagement of whole households enhances nutrition practices, but the program must attend to mixed trends in women's time use. Women are the primary Graduation participants in nearly all cases, but both ANGM and R4N intentionally involve other household members as an important "do no harm" strategy¹⁷ and enabler of nutrition outcomes. A "family support" module educates all adult household members on ANGM goals and enlist their support. Family members help manage finances or records, purchase commodities, or look after livestock. Where possible, the program enrolls ANGM participants and their spouses in SMART¹⁸ Couple (SC) schools, a series of sessions that develop a shared household vision of nutrition and build skills for making joint decisions. The ANGM businesses of SC households have higher average financial performance than their counterparts¹⁹. There is increasing demand for SC activities beyond direct ANGM participants in Isiolo and Marsabit Counties. Consequently, the program is training Christian and Muslim religious leaders to replicate SC initiatives in their own congregations. In Turkana and Samburu, R4N mentors paired with CHVs conduct structured quarterly dialogues with all household members, establishing household visions and action plans, promoting equity in decision-making, and emphasizing joint efforts to address household vulnerabilities and build nutrition resilience. Spouses of R4N participants have proven strong supporters of businesses, providing co-investment and moving livestock to and from markets.

Program teams are closely tracking how new involvement in business activities changes women's time spent on infant feeding and caregiving. Both ANGM and R4N use a group business approach in which three participants own and operate an enterprise together, fostering the sharing of roles, combining talents, and splitting workload. However, some emerging data indicates the need for further measures to ensure Graduation does not undermine child feeding and care. R4N midline showed a decline in the proportion of time spent on childcare as time spent on income generating activities increased (see table below). This shift in time use, measured using an adapted Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) tool, is greatest in Turkana's lake zone, where breastfeeding rates dropped significantly, households had lower complementary feeding indicators, and GAM rates rose among participants' children. Similarly, the project's annual survey results for Isiolo and Marsabit showed that despite high and increasing knowledge on optimal child feeding and care among primary caregivers, practice remains low. Moving ahead, teams will widen and deepen the reach of SBC with secondary caregivers - primarily grandmothers and older siblings - to address related challenges.

16. Carter, M., Zheng, G., and Jensen, N. (2022.) Clearing Pathways to Prosperity with a Livelihood Building Program in Kenya. Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Markets, Risk & Resilience.

17. Mercy Corps Nawiri Consortium. (2021). Rural Entrepreneur Access Project (REAP) Working Group: Formative Research Report. Nairobi: USAID Nawiri.

18. Strengthening Marriages And Relationships Through Communication and Planning.

19. As measured by Business Value, detailed in endnote 5.

Proportion of time spent by women on various activities (As measured by adapted WEIA)

	Samburu		Turkana	
	Baseline	Midline	Baseline	Midline
Business	19.1%	36.3%	22.4%	42.1%
Childcare	28.4%	20.6%	24.7%	16.6%
Selfcare	7.1%	11.1%	9.4%	10.3%
Household chores	36.6%	20.6%	35.2%	15.9%
Non-Household chores	11.4%	12.7%	9.4%	15.1%

Graduation *dukas* serve as informal food safety nets for their owners and communities, and sources of social capital for their owners. This reflects pastoralist communities' reciprocal sharing norms, which USAID Nawiri's Longitudinal Study work has found has an essential role in mitigating the impact of drought on nutrition in communities.²⁰ While the program does not track this the same way everywhere, R4N monitoring data indicates that over 80 percent of participants with food businesses obtain food from their own businesses, both as income and credit. To date, R4N participants in Turkana have taken food worth \$1,149,634 from their businesses as income or credit while in Samburu they have taken food worth \$513,796. For households that, only months earlier, often relied on handouts and had difficulty getting credit from others for basic survival, the shift in social as well as economic circumstances is substantial. While sharing risk and mitigating vulnerability can help equalize, it can also have a dilution effect, so mentors do coach business owners on managing credit sales.

USAID Nawiri is refining what successful graduation from poverty and malnutrition in shock-prone ASALs looks like, including where sustainability requires additional investments. As communities across project operating areas emerge from prolonged severe drought while also anticipating future shocks, implementing partners are questioning what sustainable graduation truly looks like in such contexts, for both nutrition and poverty outcomes. What constitutes a "good" graduation rate when "classic" graduation criteria expand to include rigorous and ambitious nutrition indicators in shock-prone ASALs? What approximate percentage of graduated households can we expect to remain graduated six months or a year later? What about in the face of the next major shock?

To determine whether a household has graduated to sustainable livelihoods and greater nutrition stability, USAID Nawiri has adopted measurement criteria across five categories: nutrition, food security, livelihoods, savings/assets, and social capital. These will be applied in all cohorts from FY24 to determine progress, graduation rates at endline and, for a sample of graduates six months post exit, sustainability. Participants and their households will engage in determining their progress towards graduation, understanding the criteria, reviewing progress and challenges, and revisiting goals aligned to their household vision.

20. "An enduring feature of the resilience of the pastoralism system is the role of social support systems, networks, and practices." Young, H., Gargule, A., Stites, E., Marshak, A., Munga, J., Odundo, E., and Ochola, S. (2023). Vulnerability, Risk, and Resilience: The implications for the drivers of malnutrition in Isiolo and Marsabit Counties, Kenya. USAID Nawiri Longitudinal Study Learning Brief 3.

Category	Graduation Criteria	
	Adapted Nutrition-Friendly Graduation Model	Rural Entrepreneur Access Project for Nutrition
Nutrition	No acute malnutrition in children under 5 years for the last 3 months	Absence of acute malnutrition among children under 5 years and women business owners of reproductive age (15 - 49 years) for the last 3 months
Food Security	Adults not skipping or reducing meals in last 1 month	All members of the household over the age of 18 have two or more meals per day in the last 7 days. Minimum Dietary Diversity for all children 6 to 23 months in the household - 5/6 food groups
Livelihoods	Business growth of 15%+ over original grant value	Household has 2 or more sustainable sources of income (excludes charcoal burning, firewood, etc.) Business growth with increased value above total grant (current stocks value + cash at hand)
Savings & Assets	5,000 KES in savings 3,000 KES increase in household asset value	Membership in a functional, registered SG with savings, credit, and social fund services 4,000 KES in accumulated household savings Household has a nutrition-sensitive financial plan accounting for shocks and stresses
Social & Human Capital	Participants complete all components of ANGM	Joint household decision-making
Graduation Requirement	Participants must meet the nutrition criteria and three others to qualify for graduation.	

Opportunities and Recommendations



Even as USAID Nawiri continues learning from its Graduation activities, there are key considerations emerging for donors and organizations implementing nutrition-focused Graduation in Kenya and beyond.

- Continue developing the optimal roles of Mentors and CHVs in delivering nutrition results in Graduation households and their communities.** The profile of a Mentor in classic Graduation programs typically prioritizes entrepreneurship and coaching capabilities. USAID Nawiri's addition of the nutrition focus to Graduation adds expectations of Mentors in terms of expertise and workload, some of which are challenging for a single frontline local staff to fulfill, even with training. Further, many of the desired skills such as basic health and nutrition knowledge and counseling skills are core to the existing CHV workforce. Both ANGM and R4N are engaging CHVs in elements of implementation, but face typical challenges of drawing upon overstretched ASAL community health systems (CHS) including CHV workload and remuneration. In some cases, Graduation Mentors are taking on tasks that would ideally fall to CHVs to ensure timely delivery, even while USAID Nawiri aims to avoid duplication or a parallel system. The program is supporting Counties to resolve some of the underlying perennial CHS issues around planning, resourcing, motivation and capacity with its systems strengthening work and support for the new CHS Act.

- **USAID Nawiri should explore how to contribute to and draw upon the National Government’s enhanced single registry for targeting and layering of Graduation within the wider Social Protection and Economic Inclusion landscape.** Kenya’s socio-economic database of the poor and vulnerable households can be a cost effective and efficient tool for targeting²¹, reducing community fatigue from answering frequent surveys by multiple partners. In conjunction with existing working groups’ coordination efforts, a fully functional single registry has potential to reduce duplication of social protection, economic inclusion, and emergency cash transfers among partners. Better harmonized information on need and program reach can permit actors to effectively sequence, layer and integrate interventions. However, protocols for access and use require updating to ensure compliance with the 2019 Kenya Data Protection Act. It will also be essential for the system to improve responsiveness of the registry to frequent migration by pastoral communities during drought emergencies and other considerations specific to ASAL settings.
- **Leverage Graduation as a transition pathway into and out of emergency response, especially within multi-year RFSAs with crisis modifiers.** In the USAID Nawiri Drought Emergency Response, Graduation participants, their businesses and saving groups provided multiple entry and exit points for emergency cash transfers, market systems engagements and the transition from emergency to development programming.
- **Include post-graduation evaluations in plans and budgets as a standard to understand sustainability, including post-graduation shocks, and assess additional contribution of the graduation transition pathways.** The adapted Graduation models have shown potential to contribute to reduction in poverty while also impacting nutrition outcomes, but it remains to be seen how these impacts are sustained beyond the life of the intervention. USAID Nawiri will conduct surveys to determine the degree to which graduated results maintain outcomes, and any key drivers of sustainability or setbacks.

21. BRAC. (2021). Targeting Methods in the Graduation Approach. BRAC Ultra-poor Graduation.



USAID Nawiri

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USAID Nawiri is a consortium that brings together:



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