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## Policy and financing interventions supporting community managed drought resilience strategies: A case of Marsabit County, Kenya

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#### Abstract

Drought risk management is the function of the national government complemented by the developed systems of governance in Kenya. However, this function is clearly delineated only for institutions and misses the mark in identifying the roles of communities and strategies they apply in building resilience to drought. This paper is part of a two-part series of outcomes of a study in Marsabit county, that looked at community managed strategies that promote drought resilience. Using an evaluative research design, it highlighted the policy environment in Marsabit county, mapped the institutional structures, and identified warning strategies aligned to the policy instrument. Additionally, it sets clear financial instruments within the county that support community strategies. Finally, it maps policy gaps that hinder community resilience strategies hinging them on the existing policy and financial interventions at community level.

**Keywords:** developed systems, finance, Kenya, Marsabit county, policy



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## Introduction

Disaster risk management is a constitutionally assigned function for both the national and county governments in Kenya (GoK, 2010). Despite this clear stipulation in the constitution, legislation for disaster management is still disjointed. A draft disaster management policy is yet to be ratified since the first draft of 2009. This draft policy covers fundamental issues such as systems of disaster management, resource mobilization, monitoring and evaluation and the current state of disaster management in Kenya. At a devolved level, counties such as Laikipia, Samburu and Turkana have been able to develop legislation enabling them to leverage on disaster financing through the annual fiscal cycle, however, this is yet to happen in Marsabit County. The draft legislation has not moved in the local assembly for over 5 years. On a financing level, the public finance and management act of 2012, documents instances under which both county and national government may alter development planning in articles 16, 21, 108 and 112 to support disaster response. Additionally, the legislation underpins the importance of counties allocating financing for contingencies up to 2% of the total allocation, (GoK, 2012). However, it fails to qualify what contingencies are. In 2019, a bill was introduced into the Kenya national assembly to harmonize disaster coordination by setting up a national disaster management Authority, however, this is yet to be achieved (GoK, 2018). The mentioned legislative only focus on the government, falling short on what communities can do. However, the ending drought emergencies policy document and the ASAL strategy emphasize on building the capacity of ASAL communities but still fail to mention how community strategies and local knowledge can be leveraged (GoK, 2018, GoK 2016). This article is part of a two-part series of outcomes of a study in Marsabit county that looked at community managed resilience strategies that promote drought resilience. It peers through the policy interventions that support community drought management strategies at county levels, coupled with the supporting financial interventions.

## Study area

The study was conducted in Marsabit County, Kenya. It lies between latitude 02o 45' North and 04o 27' North and longitude 37o 57' East and 39o 21' East, as indicated by Figure 1. It was the focus of this study due to its high drought profile and vulnerable pastoral population. Marsabit County has an area of 70,961 km<sup>2</sup> with an arid and semi-arid ecosystem (KNBS, 2019).

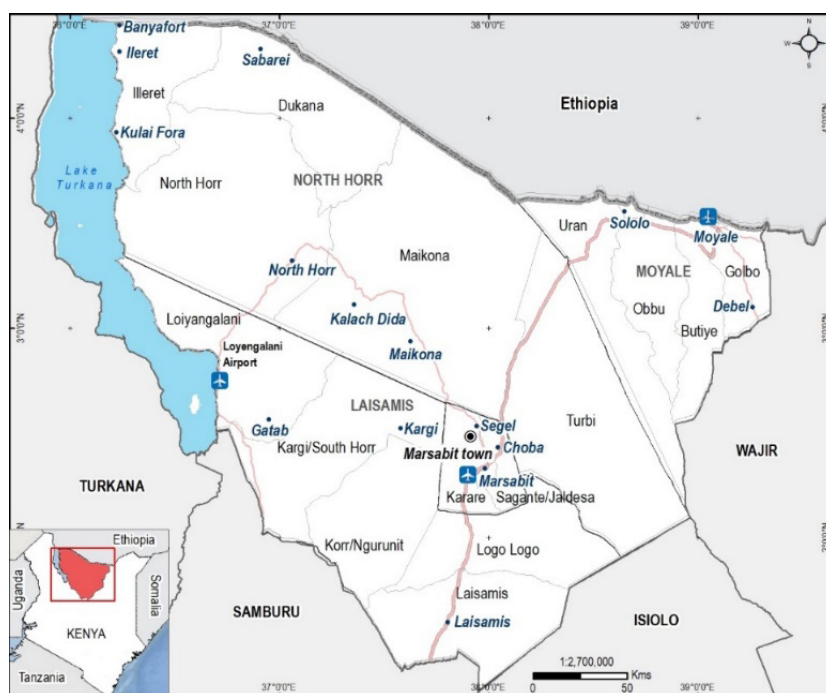


Figure 1: Map of Marsabit County  
Source Researcher (2019)

**Methodology:**

An evaluation research design was adopted for this study since it provided for the use of both qualitative and quantitative data in answering the core study questions (Neumam, 2012). The study collected primary data using structured interviews for 385 household heads. Structured questionnaires were used as they provided the study with samples that were controlled more effectively during data collection (Kothari, 2004). To measure reliability and validity, tools were tested using Cronbach’s coefficient alpha where a coefficient Alpha of 0.891 was achieved, indicating internal reliability of the tool. For qualitative data from the focus group discussion and key informant interviews, collation, coding, and analysis was conducted after compilation and analysis of verbatim by the researcher in a coding matrix. This was based conceptualization of underlying patterns and themes from respondents.

**Policy interventions in Marsabit County**

There are several policies and legislative instruments that support and guide community managed drought strategies in Marsabit county. In this paper, reference is mainly on governance instruments that followed devolution and the promulgation of the constitution in 2010. While evaluating the policy environment in Marsabit, it was deduced that drought management structures provide for focused planning and execution of risk management measures. However, only 28% (108) of the respondents in Marsabit confirmed awareness on enacted drought management structures, while 72% (277) are not aware of existing structures. This study observes that the gap in policy knowledge denied the community a leveraging platform applicable in drought resilience building. The knowledge gap could be linked to inadequate public participation during the development of disaster management policies and legislations, low literacy levels and poor infrastructure development. Its thus recommended that communities ought to be holistically involved in policy planning to increase understanding and application of set strategies. However, the Marsabit resident should take it upon themselves in driving the resilience building agenda in Marsabit county, through demanding for county government support through resource allocation.

The study noticed that legislation and policies at county level mirror those at national government level including the draft disaster management policy, draft national disaster management bill of 2019, national food security policy and contingency plan. The Kenya law reform commission (2021) documented that the policies and legislations are useful for the mitigation of disaster loss on communities, infrastructure, and the environment. Additionally, the commission noted that the policy environment supports response and recovery to shocks by laying intrinsic community measures for early warning and preparedness.

The findings are contrary to Obrecht (2019) who documents that drought coordination mechanisms have improved greatly since the 2011 drought and were contributing to efficiency in drought response. Owour (2015), concurs with the study, and distinguished that the implementation of disaster management strategies is hindered by the lack of political good will and allocation of financial resources by the national and county movement. To dig dipper, a mapping of the existing policy and legislative document was organized and below a summary of those that influence community resilience.

**Table 1: Policy and legislative interventions in Marsabit County**

Existing Legislations and Policies	Summary of the policies and legislations
Constitution of Kenya, 2010	In article 58, the constitution delineates when public emergencies/ national disaster may be declared. In the fourth schedule, disaster management is mapped as a function shared between the national and county government.

Arid and semi-arid land policy of 2012 and Vision 2030 development strategy for ASALs	Both provide a road map of development of marginalized and underdeveloped areas after devolution. It advocates for strengthening resilience of communities for a meaningful life of residents in arid and semi-arid lands
County appropriation Act of 2015,	This supported the allocation of resources to emergency relief services in Marsabit county though the disaster management unit. This was mainly for the year 2015 onwards.
Public finance management act, 2012	The legislation allowed for both the county and national government to deviate from normal financial allocation to respond to disasters chapter as documented in section 16, 21, 108 and 112.
Nation Drought Management Act of 2016	In part, the legislation supported the set-up of a drought management specific institution that is funded by government and other bi-lateral institutions to manage drought risk in Kenya. It also responds to drought through drought funds.
Emergency fund Act of 2014	It established an emergency fund for Marsabit county. It continuously guides county allocation for emergencies, including grants and donations, though it fails to acknowledge the role of communities is emergency response.
Marsabit County planning Act, 2016	Provides for resource planning at county level through sectoral plans and county integrated plans across administrative units but fails to acknowledge emergency planning in the administrative units though community engagement. The policy fails to account for allocated funds by the county government available for community response and recovery.
Marsabit County Multi-Hazard contingency plan of 2020	This contingency plan provides for action to be undertaken at community level while focusing hazards such as drought, floods, desert locust and conflicts.
Marsabit County Agriculture sector development plan	Prioritizes community actions for both livestock, fisheries, and crop production. It maps out practical proposal for all livelihood zones in Marsabit County.
Draft Marsabit County Disaster Management Policy	The policy document defines role, functions, and complementarities for community management risk reduction considering devolution in Marsabit County.
Marsabit County Climate Change Act 2020	It provides a basis for climate change programs at community level, to mitigate and coordinate adaptation interventions across the county and provides a legal basis for climate financing targeting communities in Marsabit County.
Marsabit County Fiscal Strategy Paper (CFSP) 2019	Provided the economic outlook of Marsabit county, by setting priorities for sector implementation at all administrative units and livelihood zones. It also elucidated the need to hazard mitigation mechanisms by building institutional capacities and disaster coordination.
Marsabit County Integrated Development plan 2018-2022	Strategically provides county wish list of sectoral interventions that if implanted by the county government of Marsabit and development actors at community level will promote economic development and empowerment.

Source: Field data (2021)

The above policy instruments were synthesized into 5 main subcategories. The sub-categories look at what principles the instruments espouse and support. The five areas include drought risk reduction, financial allocation, coordination and synergies in emergencies, public participation, and political

acceptability, and finally, efficiency in service delivery during emergencies.

1. Drought risk reduction instruments: These aim to reduce risk and empower Marsabit residents at the grass root level through sector financing and streaming lining allocation of resources for disaster risk reduction. However, a bias was noted for drought, conflict, and flood responses, when compared to other natural shock that affect the county. This includes the climate change Act and the County planning Act 2016
2. Financial allocation instruments: examples of such include: the emergency fund act of 2014, the public finance management act of 2012, and the county appropriation Act of 2015. These set a clear environment for fiscal resource allocation for drought risk management and other county development priorities, while cognizant of other disasters that affect Marsabit County. The financial allocation process is cognizant of the disaster cycle encompassing anticipation, response, and recovery. The county leadership plays a key role on providing oversight on resource utilization and accountability.
3. Coordination and Synergy creation in emergencies instruments: aware that financial resources allocated by the Marsabit county government are never adequate, the policies in Marsabit provide room for leveraging on external support from the national government and non-stake actor. This is mainly in the climate change act, annual workplans and the county integrated development plan, that seek to leverage on external donor/stakeholder support to aid in response to disaster.
4. Public participation & Political acceptability instruments: These tools envision the engagement of the public through continuous public discourses for drought risk reduction. However, it was observed that this is limited only to open forums, organized annually through the annual budgeting cycle at the county level, apart from of the formal assembly meetings that call for public participation in legislative process.
5. Efficiency in service delivery instruments: it was observed the allocation of resources is affected by disbursement of funds from the national government, thus delays in disbursement of funds to the county government of Marsabit affected efficiency in drought response and recovery initiatives. The policy environment at Marsabit county level cannot influence allocations from national government or any other non-state actor but rather left to political lobby.

### Drought resilience strategies by institutions-

In promoting drought resilience, several institutions leverage on the existing policy instrument and tools to build community strategies. These institutions are drawn from both the public and private sector. Zwaagstra *et al.*, (2010) placed emphasis on ensuring that drought management structures encompass both policies and strategies that are well coordinated for drought response. Table 2 below illustrates resilience measures by different actors and institutions aimed at building community strategies for drought response.

**Table 2: Drought resilience measures by different actors and institutions**

Institutions	Measure by institutions for Drought Risk reduction in Marsabit County
County Government of Marsabit	The County Government of Marsabit has a directorate of disaster management that leads in planning and responding to disasters. It also allocates funds through normal development budgets to reduce drought risk in extreme cases through there exist a 2% allocation to emergencies and contingencies the annual budget.

National Drought Management Authority	Established through an act of the Kenya parliament, it is legally mandated by government to take the lead in drought monitoring, planning, early warning, and provision of oversight to drought risk reduction measures. Technically supports response planning at ward and county level.
Non-governmental organization (both national and international non-governmental organization)	These provide humanitarian support in key thematic areas such water and sanitation, nutrition, food aid, cash-based assistance, and agriculture. They also disseminate drought early warning information, capacity build communities on drought risk management, support needs assessment, community organization and advocacy.
Religious Organizations	Provide humanitarian support though most of the activities are linked with promoting the religion agenda whilst offering humanitarian support.
Community institutions	Communities take the lead in responding to drought during and after it occurs. They depend on local knowledge especially from elders and sears. They mainly depend on weather patterns, signs in livestock and wildlife to make decision on drought trends, coupled with the impact.
National Government projects	The national government has supported various recovery and resilience building project in Marsabit County such as the regional Pastoral Livelihoods resilience Project (Kenya) and the Kenya Climate Smart agriculture project. Structurally this project support allocation of finances and implementation of emergency response initiatives as mandated by the constitution, where it takes the lead in disaster management.

Source: Field data (2021)

### Warning systems and community drought resilience systems in Marsabit

The study established that drought warning systems are entrenched in policy documents such as the multi hazard contingency plan and drought response plan in the county. The warning instruments bring into action both the community preparedness and response mechanisms during drought. Systems used to operationalize the warning information include: 1) weekly radio shows by the local FM stations such as SIFA FM and Radio *Jangwani* and Radio *Mchungaji* 2) monthly bulletins produced by the national drought management authority, 3) medical sentinel sites monitoring for spikes in anthropometric measures especially in regards to malnutrition, 4) water systems monitoring to gauge performance and utilization of water assets, 5) and weekly weather forecasts by the Kenya Meteorological Department. These serve to warn communities and institutions in Marsabit county on the impending drought. UNISDR (2009) has documented that drought early warning information should focus on advocacy, community sensitization, and support policy direction at all levels of governance.

The study argues that not all the warning systems get to residents to bolster community drought response mechanism. It was observed that monthly bulletins are elitist in nature and cannot be interpreted by an illiterate person at community level. Additionally, the warning mechanisms are one way and do not provide room for feedback especially on accuracy, timeliness and correctness of warnings issued. The study observes that the room for indigenous knowledge broadcast is limited and is often consumed and confined to a community or ethnic strata. Muyambo (2017) states that, indigenous knowledge should be compiled and shared with communities to make informed decisions for future response but fails to suggest appropriate mechanisms for wider reach and coverage. He further argues that the role of indigenous knowledge in both national and international discourses of disaster risk management is

growing. The study concludes that there is need to strengthen county expertise in resilience building with a focus on drought warning through consolidation and dissemination of unified messaging to communities. Yet, it also appreciates the integrated approach used in strengthening community resilience to drought through interdepartmental interventions and warning mechanism. Policy should be enacted that bolsters community capacity development in relation to drought early warning message and dissemination.

### **Financing of community managed drought resilience strategies in Marsabit**

In examining the financing of community managed drought resilience strategies in Marsabit, key informant accounts indicated financing was mainly through the exchequer (national government), county revenue collection, grants from institutional donors and the county annual budget allocated to the cohesion and disaster management unit, under the Marsabit county governors' office. Albeit the study observes the financing is left to departmental heads to allocate to lower devolved units in this case sub counties and wards. This hampers the direct engagement of both men and women in community selecting and prioritizing drought risk reduction strategies and measures. As a result, this impedes the setup and coordination of drought resilience strategies at community level as explicated in the county policy documents that envisioned to set up a fund that will support adaptation and community resilience strategies, programs, and projects (GoK, 2020). Elema (2018) aligns to this thought and indicated, "... for community finance strategy sustainability, there is urgent need for inclusive resource planning..." It is observed that budgetary allocation at county level exists, however, access to utilization reports proved difficult during the data collection period.

Sectoral departments such as water and agriculture in Marsabit reported to have mainstreamed resilience building interventions into their plans through an approach title "climate proofing of infrastructure". This was to mean financing of development projects that are not affected by recurrent climatic shock. In examining this further, a key informant noted:

*"The county government of Marsabit through the climate change act allocated 2% of its budget to emergencies and contingencies. This fund is utilized during emergencies to provide for humanitarian response and supports recovery."*

Considering the above observation, this study concurs with Wilhite (2014) who underscore the importance of policy development that holistically takes into consideration of the drought cycle by linking financing to preparedness planning. The study also fronts the argument.

*"...governments that focus more on response fail to avert crisis from the planning stage..."*

In terms of disaster financing at community level, national policies underscore the importance of building human capital, financing disaster risk reduction, and ensuring risk is reduced to an acceptable level. The Kenya climate change adaptation plan 2018-2022, the draft national disaster management policy and the ending drought emergency policy form examples of policies that advocate for inclusive disaster financing (GoK, 2012). Hence the study concludes drought risk financing in Marsabit is a function of both national and county-based policy guidelines. It asserts that drought risk financing of community resilience forms the backbone of resilience building at county and community level, and Marsabit county should influence financing mechanism to promote resilience to drought as a recurrent shock. Community financing for drought risk reduction is hinged on multi-sector projects governed by

various departments at ward level, which is the lowest unit of governance under devolution.

### **Policy gaps in community managed drought resilience strategies**

In evaluating policy gaps, a key informant indicated that the lack of a delimitation and clear definition of “emergencies and contingencies” in the emergency fund legislative document especially the Marsabit County Emergency Fund Act, 2014, left room for diverse allocation and utilization of the fund by the Marsabit county government. The study observes the budget holders (members of the county assembly) only focus on political expediency whilst distributing and allocating funds for drought response in Marsabit County. This was mainly through skewed allocation especially on relief services during response to drought. The Marsabit county annual progress report of financial year 2018/19, concurred by pointing several challenges to policy operationalization these include: political interference in departmental allocation and insufficiency of funding from the national government. The Marsabit county multi hazard plan identifies several hazards that affect the county. On the contrary, it fails to mention how for example drought response and recovery will be operationalized through funding. A key gap in the policy document is a lack financial commitment from both the county government and development partners especially regarding already developed contingency or preparedness plans. Additionally, the triggering mechanisms for funding is not clearly delineated in the multi-hazards contingency plan. At a lower governance level, the study identifies the ward level fund as an opportunity for supporting community drought strategies. While investigating opportunities for drought financing in Marsabit, a respondent from Concern Worldwide noted:

*“...In order to operationalize drought risk management at community level, ward level development funds, allocated at county level, should also be used to support drought response for resilience...”*

In addressing policy gaps for disaster response, UNISDR (2015) documented that local governments should expand community safety by reducing avenues of resource loss. It is observed that the residents of Marsabit should be educated to understand that service delivery in Marsabit especially on humanitarian intervention and development for resilience is the primary role of government. The public should demand accountability for all intervention implemented in the light of community drought risk reduction strategies. The study recommends for increased financial allocation to allow for improved human capital, and expanded community drought risk reduction strategies.

There is a gap in resource accountability, a key informant stated:

*“...The county government accountability system is too slow in picking misappropriation of funds at source...for example, the auditor generals’ report only expounds any misappropriation of funds after the closure of a financial year...”*

This study calls for accountability structure out to be strengthened to match expenditure within projects for drought response and resilience building.

On the administrative front, the directorate of drought/disaster management in Marsabit exhibits an immense shortage of staff from field observation and key informant interviews. This was mainly though a lack of technical staffing at sub county and ward level. in essence the gap leaves drought planning, response, and recovery at the mercies of the political class who influence resource allocation.



The study advocates for devolved staffing, to ensure community coping strategies are being fortified through county extension services.

### **Conclusion**

This study documented policy interventions that support community drought management strategies in Marsabit county. Findings show the county government of Marsabit has set up a disaster management directorate under the office of the governor. It is however, not well financed and staffed. The public should be educated to understand that service delivery in Marsabit especially regarding humanitarian action and development for resilience is the primary role of government at both levels of governance. This should not be rescinded to non-state actors (non-governmental organizations) in remote areas of the county. Additionally, community structures need to be actively involved in planning, budgeting, legislation, and implementation of county funded drought risk management strategies, as this will serve to strengthen community drought risk perception and risk aversion. The promulgation of resilience enhancing policies and legislation should be prioritized to help reap the benefits of drought risk financing at county level. This will in turn strengthen community resilience to drought. The study recommends for increased financial allocation to allow for improved human capital, and expanded community drought risk reduction strategies.

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