

THE COMBINED PROJECT NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROJECT DESIGN CO-CREATION REPORT

MARCH 2024

INTRODUCTION

The collaborative process of co-creation targeted key stakeholders for interviews and insights gathering. This involved conducting Focus Group Discussions with representatives from diverse segments of the community, including men, women, youth, children, and persons with disabilities (PWD) within the project intervention area.

The Key Informant Interviews were aimed at individuals from various sectors, including representatives from the National Police Service, Department of Health Services (with a focus on mental health and public health focal persons), Children's Department, County Department of Youth, Culture and Sports, County Department of Gender, and representatives of persons with disabilities.

These stakeholders have been actively involved in implementing MIDRIFT's project interventions. By involving them in the co-creation exercise, MIDRIFT sought to integrate their insights regarding emerging issues in violence prevention and response, as well as identify potential areas for future collaboration.

Discussions with these stakeholders encompassed MIDRIFT's current approach in addressing security and mental health issues in Nakuru County, areas for improvement in this approach, and their perspectives on emerging issues and innovative strategies for MIDRIFT's next project phase.

Focus Group Discussions delved into concerns regarding safety and security, considering the unique impacts on different demographic groups. Participants shared ongoing community initiatives addressing these challenges and explored potential collaborations with MIDRIFT. Recommendations for addressing these issues underscored the importance of community-driven approaches.

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

1. MOST EFFECTIVE ASPECTS OF MIDRIFT'S CURRENT APPROACH IN ADDRESSING ISSUES RELATED TO SECURITY, MENTAL HEALTH, YOUTH, PWD & CHILDREN

SECURITY

Community engagement has proven effective in enhancing security. For example, MIDRIFT's intervention involving former members of the Confirm gang has resulted in positive outcomes, with some former gang members reintegrating into society and participating in productive economic endeavors. Similarly, the initiative to involve youth in sports from various units in NTE and NTW in November 2023 yielded successful results, notably improving security during the festive season of November and December 2023. This improvement was not coincidental but rather a direct consequence of collaborative efforts between MIDRIFT and the National Police Service (NPS) to empower youth through sports.

During the electioneering period, MIDRIFT organized dialogue forums between different ethnic groups, such as the Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Maasai, Kipsigis, and Ogiek communities, contributing significantly to maintaining peace, particularly during elections. Additionally, inter-sub-county forums between communities in Njoro and Narok North provided a platform for addressing communal tensions and fostering reconciliation.

MIDRIFT's strength lies in its ability to convene stakeholders from various sectors to facilitate collaboration among community members, security agencies, and local authorities in addressing security challenges. Therefore, targeting violence-prone areas like Baringo and Njoro and conducting community dialogues therein is advantageous.

MENTAL HEALTH

The strategy involves targeting households to provide support for mental health services, with a particular emphasis on survivors of gender-based violence. Capacity building initiatives have been implemented to train Community Health Promoters (CHPs) in mental health, equipping them with skills in Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Problem Management Plus (PM+). Awareness and sensitization campaigns, such as observing World Suicide Day and World Mental Health Day, have yielded significant impact. These initiatives have led to heightened awareness of mental health services and an increase in individuals seeking treatment for mental health issues. MIDRIFT has engaged in collaborative efforts to address mental health interventions, including training referral networks and streamlining the referral process. Support groups have been established for clients who have completed PM+ sessions, providing them with ongoing support and encouragement.

PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES (PLWD)

MIDRIFT has been a strong advocate for the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), with a particular focus on women with disabilities. An example of this advocacy is seen in the support provided to Damaris, who ran for office in the previous election. This underscores the organization's commitment to promoting inclusivity and representation within the community.

2. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN MIDRIFT'S APPROACH TO ADDRESSING (SECURITY, MENTAL HEALTH, YOUTH, PWD & CHILDREN

PEACE AND SECURITY

It is imperative to have interventions that specifically address the needs of women, especially considering that they are often victims of domestic violence. Women are also typically well-informed about the occurrences within their households and communities, including crimes committed by their sons or husbands, such as theft, defilement, or robbery. As perpetrators of crime often come from homes where women wield influence, targeting women in matters of peace and security through sensitization and direct intervention can foster healing within households. Empowering women to take action can help prevent and address violence in the home.

Similarly, there is a critical need to intentionally target Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in violence prevention efforts. PWDs face unique challenges during violent situations, as they may encounter difficulties in escaping danger. For instance, a visually impaired individual may hear violence occurring in their surroundings but lack the visual ability to identify and avoid it. Therefore, it is essential to provide attention and support to PWDs to ensure their safety and well-being, given their vulnerability in such situations.

MENTAL HEALTH

MIDRIFT should prioritize the training of additional Community Health Promoters (CHPs) in Psychological First Aid (PFA). Additionally, fostering collaboration with the Department of Health on global mental health awareness events, such as World Mental Health Day, World Suicide Prevention Day, Mental Health Awareness Week, and International Day Against Drug Abuse, is crucial. Involving County personnel in PFA supervision sessions, even if conducted quarterly, would ensure that the County Department of Health remains informed about community mental health trends.

Efforts should be made to address the needs of children affected by developmental disorders like autism. Many of these children are confined at home and may be perceived as burdens by their families and caregivers. CHPs trained in PFA or PM+ can play a pivotal role in identifying such children within the community and connecting them with support services available in county hospitals and special schools. Additionally, establishing support groups for families caring for children with special needs and mental disabilities would provide an opportunity for other stakeholders to offer additional assistance.

MIDRIFT must collaborate closely with members of the Community Health Committee (CHC) from the linked health facilities in our intervention areas. CHCs play a crucial role in bridging services and activities between the community and health facilities. Their responsibilities include mobilizing the community to participate in community dialogue and action days, raising awareness, advocating for community health and healthcare needs, monitoring facility-level quality improvement, and mobilizing resources. CHCs also gather community feedback through community scorecards and quality modeling. Involving the CHC in MIDRIFT interventions will enhance the reach and impact of the MHPSS intervention.

3. HOW, DO YOU ENVISION MIDRIFT WORKING DIFFERENTLY TO BETTER ADDRESS THE GAPS?

PEACE AND SECURITY

Empowering households, with a focus on women, is vital for building a solid foundation for families. When mothers are informed about security and mental health, it enhances the overall well-being of the household. Following sensitization efforts within families, interventions can be extended to schools in informal settlements. Collaboration with the National Police Service (NPS) can further strengthen these efforts.

NPS and MIDRIFT can collaborate on school interventions aimed at raising awareness among students about security issues in slum areas. The objective is to deter involvement in criminal activities and underscore the dangers of remaining silent or benefiting from crime. These interventions should specifically target students who may have been recruited into gangs, involved in drug trafficking, or engaged in other criminal activities.

In addressing land issues, MIDRIFT can partner with legal and land stakeholders to educate the Njoro community about their land rights. Involving representatives from the Ministry of Lands in sensitization efforts would provide additional insights and credibility to the process.

Engaging with bar owners and collaborating with the county government on licensing and operations of bars is essential. Simultaneously, educating the community about the risks associated with illicit brews can help mitigate social and health-related issues.

MENTAL HEALTH

Facilitating collaboration among the Department of Health, National Police Service (NPS), and National Gun Owners Association (NGAO) to address mental health issues among security personnel is imperative. MIDRIFT can utilize platforms such as Dialogue Days and Action Days to disseminate more awareness on mental health. Supporting the Community Health Committee (CHC) in community-based surveillance is crucial.

The CHC employs a system known as the Surveillance Event Based System (SEBS), which enables them to monitor incidents and alert Community Health Extension Workers (CHEWs) via toll-free USSD messages. This innovative approach facilitates swift responses to community issues, including fires and floods. Therefore, by training Community Health Committees (CHCs) in Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Problem Management Plus (PM+), they will be equipped to report mental health issues within their communities. Conducting evaluations on client progress after completing session 6 is essential. Tracking down clients six months after the PM+ intervention and assessing their progress will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the intervention.

4. WHAT ARE THE CURRENT EMERGING ISSUES IN (SECURITY, MENTAL HEALTH, YOUTH, PWD & CHILDREN SECURITY

Recruitment of children into criminal gangs has become a concerning issue in areas like NTE and NTW, where young children aged between 7 to 15 are being targeted. Criminal gangs are infiltrating schools, highlighting the need for both community and school-level interventions to prevent children from being drawn into criminal activities.

The rising consumption of illicit brews and second-generation liquor calls for focused efforts on tracking down the brewers and addressing the root causes of this trend.

In Njoro, land conflicts and ownership battles, particularly in areas like Sululu, Nessuit, and Mauche, have led to government intervention through placing caveats. Empowering communities in these areas with knowledge about land rights and land tenure is essential to mitigate conflicts. Additionally, livestock theft remains a persistent concern that needs to be addressed.

The plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) continues to be a pressing issue in Njoro, particularly among those evicted for the conservation of the Mau Forest. IDPs, scattered in areas like Lare, Njoro, and Nessuit, are still awaiting compensation. Their displacement exacerbates community instability and conflicts, leading to ongoing demands for justice at the District Commissioner's offices.

MENTAL HEALTH

There is a troubling surge in drug abuse among youth and adolescents, resulting in mental health issues stemming from the detrimental effects of drugs on their developing brains. Moreover, there is a concerning increase in suicide cases within this demographic, underscoring the pressing need for awareness campaigns to educate them about the support services available.

Despite the presence of mental health services in facilities such as Nakuru Provincial General Hospital, Gilgil, Naivasha, and Molo, the referral process for mental health services remains convoluted. This is primarily due to the community's lack of understanding about mental health issues and the stigmatization of individuals with mental health problems. It is imperative to conduct awareness campaigns to educate communities about the mental health services available at community-level hospitals. This would alleviate the burden on major facilities and facilitate smoother access to mental health care for those in need.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITY & CARE GIVERS

Caregivers of individuals with disabilities, particularly children with mental disabilities, are encountering notable mental health difficulties. The responsibility of care frequently leads to emotional strain, occasionally manifesting in instances of violence towards the vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, occurrences of violence are occasionally left unreported by the caregivers, underscoring the necessity for enhanced support systems for both caregivers and individuals with disabilities.

Persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, are subjected to sexual violence, often without recourse as families and caregivers resort to informal justice mechanisms.

CHILDREN

Children with disabilities, whether mental or physical, are particularly vulnerable to violence due to their lack of understanding of their own vulnerabilities. Implementing activities such as sports specifically tailored for children with disabilities would be beneficial in mitigating this risk. Online sexual exploitation and abuse in Nakuru County is on the rise, especially during school holidays, with adolescents and college students being the primary targets. Unfortunately, such cases are often underreported, making it difficult to apprehend the perpetrators.

Teenage pregnancy is a significant factor contributing to high dropout rates among students, further compounded by challenges in reintegrating teen mothers into the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) system. Education stakeholders must advocate for support systems to facilitate the seamless reintegration of teen parents into the education system, ensuring they receive equitable access to education.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

PEACE AND SECURITY

During the Focus Group discussion, participants were asked about the challenges they face as a community. The following issues were identified as affecting the communities in Nakuru Town East, Nakuru Town West, Njoro, and Naivasha. Among these, cross-cutting issues such as unemployment and drug and substance abuse were highlighted.

NAKURU TOWN EAST, NAKURU TOWN WEST AND NJORO SUB COUNTIES

The community in NTE, NTW, and Njoro raised several pressing issues.

- **Drug and substance abuse** were highlighted as leading to impaired judgment and false confidence among youth, often resulting in their involvement in violent, criminal, and immoral activities. Additionally, drug and substance abuse were noted to cause significant harm, tearing families apart, incurring unnecessary expenses, and contributing to cases of gender-based violence.
- **Unemployment** was identified as creating a conducive environment for crime and violence within the community.
- **Limited infrastructure further exacerbates these issues.** For instance, the lack of effective rehabilitation systems for individuals addicted to drugs and alcohol perpetuates cycles of criminal behavior and violence. Additionally, inadequate street lighting increases insecurity, with drug-using youth taking advantage of the darkness to engage in violent robberies. The community suggested the need for more police posts and regular transfers to reduce instances of police bribery.
- **Insufficient empowerment programs for youth were also mentioned.** The absence of such programs and mentorship opportunities leaves youth vulnerable to negative influences, including peer pressure and exploitation by politicians. Without proper guidance and support, they may resort to risky behaviors and become susceptible to manipulation.
- **Limited access to information on policy processes and governance,** coupled with corruption and lack of transparency in public service delivery, further alienates youth from participating in decision-making processes. This results in resentment and distrust toward authorities.
- **Poor governance, inequalities, and under-representation of youth** in governance structures were highlighted as fostering feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization. This can potentially lead to social unrest and conflict, particularly if grievances are not addressed through legitimate channels. Instances where police officers collude with known gang members and warn them of police raids were cited as examples of governance failures exacerbating the situation.

NAIVASHA

- In Naivasha, **unemployment** has led to a rise in drug abuse among youth as they seek ways to cope with their situation. The effects of drug abuse have contributed to insecurity and gender-based violence within households. These unemployed youth are often exploited by politicians to incite chaos and disrupt peace in the community. Additionally, unemployment drives some youth, and sometimes children, to resort to theft as a means of survival.
- **The high cost of living** has made basic necessities unaffordable for residents, leading to stress and anxiety. This inflationary pressure further strains households financially. Consequently, the dependence of women on men for financial support creates tensions, particularly when needs cannot be met, sometimes resulting in violence.
- **Out-of-school youth and children** pose a challenge to community peace. When youth or children drop out of school or do not attend, they are prone to unruly behavior, disrupting peace in the community. Out-of-school children often harass their peers who are still attending school, leading to conflicts not only between children but also between their parents. These vulnerable children are easily exploited by drug peddlers to distribute hard drugs, putting their lives at risk. If caught, they often face mob justice from the community.
- **Alcoholism and mental health issues** are prevalent among men in the community, contributing to dysfunctional behavior and strained relationships within families.

BARINGO

- Drug and substance abuse within households and families leads to cases of GBV. For instance, if the father is addicted to alcohol, when he comes home at night intoxicated, he assaults his wife in the presence of their children.
- Banditry causes tribalism within community members, as members view each other through the lens of their tribes and treat each other with enmity.
- Historical marginalization by the national government
- Weak (hard approach) strategies by the national government in curbing conflicts
- Cultural motivation of the raiders (e.g. to acquire dowry payments, due to masculinities whereby a man without livestock has no respect and voice in the society).
- Political violence

- Poverty, is has led to increased child labor where parents allow their children to attend schools on specific days like on Mondays and Fridays when there is school parade and inspection, on the remaining days of the week they work or steal to fend for the families especially if both parents are alcoholics. This level of child exploitation has led to conflict between the children and their parents.
- Poor parenting practices contributes to inter-communal violence, as fathers train their sons to be cattle rustlers as a survival technique hence contributing directly to the increased violence
- FGM is a direct leeway to early marriage because it is believed that FGM signifies transition from being a girl to becoming a woman and any female that disagrees with the practice is beaten and treated as an outcast to silence them from “negatively influencing culture”
- The mindset of the youth (morans/ herders) perpetuating the violence, is a violent mindset and majority of whom are unschooled.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

There are several interconnected socio-economic challenges that lead to insecurity in intervention areas. In the five regions targeted (NTE, NTW, Njoro, Naivasha and Baringo) Poverty and unemployment have led to people seeking unlawful ways to sustain their households like theft, robberies and banditry. The high cost of living has caused tension at the household level that sometimes has led to gender-based violence.

Drug and substance abuse was mentioned as a negative coping mechanism to deal with stress and anxiety of unemployment and high cost of living. Out of school children and youth are exploited to peddle drugs in NTE, NTW, Njoro and Naivasha. In Baringo, in addition to drug abuse, banditry fuels inter communal conflicts. Poverty and poor parenting drives up child labor furthering conflicts in the community. FGM drives up child marriage and in turn early pregnancies in Baringo county.

Another cross-cutting issue is poor governance that is characterized by under-representation of youth in positions of power leading to feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalization leading to conflict.

HOW PEACE & SECURITY AFFECTS DIFFERENT GROUPS

The participants were asked to mention how the above challenges uniquely affect different groups such as women, men, youth, children and PWD in their community. Their responses are summarized below

WOMEN

- Women may face additional burdens related to early pregnancy and high rates of school dropouts, which impact their educational and economic opportunities.
- Negative societal attitudes toward women undermine their potential, when some men express skepticism about women’s capabilities in leadership roles. This perception of inadequacy of women is exacerbated by men’s insecurity about female leadership thus, men cannot support their wives in leadership roles. Career women face neglect from their husbands simply because they are earning more income.
- Unemployment is challenging for some women as some of them resort to peddling drugs or even drug abuse as a coping mechanism for their frustrations.
- In cases where women become the bread winner due to their husband’s inability to provide, can lead to emotional distress for the woman if she is in a household where she can’t express her frustrations.
- Women endure domestic violence but tend not to speak in fear of what the society will say and stigmatize them. Some women are targeted to be sexually abused and harassed especially single mothers who are defenseless in the community and the women in the streets who are mentally challenged and have no one to fight for their rights.
- The high cost of living has led women to pursue various employment opportunities to earn a living and others engage in prostitution which exposes them to health risks. In addition, women are left with the burden of raising kids alone in a household where the husband is alcoholic.

YOUTH

- Limited access to empowerment and mentorship opportunities hinders youth's ability to fulfill their potential and contribute positively to society.
- Unemployment and substance abuse increase the likelihood of youth engaging in criminal activities and violent behaviours.
- Lack of representation in governance structures and exploitation by political actors undermine youth's trust in democratic processes and institutions, leading to disengagement and apathy.
- Inadequate rehabilitation systems have hindered youth's ability to reintegrate into the community and lead fulfilling lives, perpetuating cycles of dependency and violence.
- Neglect and discrimination of male youths, particularly in terms of mental health challenges and access to support services, can lead to feelings of isolation and inadequacy.
- Drug abuse has significantly diminished the productivity of youths and men in the society.
- Lack of role models in the comm have led to the youths to seek role models in the social media platforms and are mostly Misled by celebrities' lifestyles and they end up not fulfilling their purpose but follow the steps of the celebrities
- Mental health issues, due to the high late consumption of drugs they have been mentally affected and can't think straight

MEN

- Limited access to opportunities for education and employment may contribute to feelings of frustration and hopelessness among men, potentially driving them towards engaging in risky behaviours such as substance abuse and criminal activity.
- Politicians often exploit men for their own agendas, using them as pawns in political games. This exploitation can deepen feelings of disenfranchisement and distrust towards societal institutions among men. In cattle rustling tycoons are the ones compelling the young men to tender for the cattle being fought for by the Moran's.
- Unemployment in men has driven them into drugs n alcohol consumption and this impairs their ability to fulfill their roles in household and community.
- Men are usually reluctant to speak out, could be because of their ego or they are concerned about societal judgment, despite being considered the heads of their households.
- Cultural norms discourage men from expressing their emotions or seek mental health support leading some to resort to violence towards their partners rather than confronting their own insecurities or challenges.
- The lack of recognition and appreciation for men's contribution, both at work and at home, can lead to emotional suppression and a false expression of toughness, even when facing difficulties. In addition, society favors women more than men and they feel neglected and end up being alcoholic as a coping mechanism.
- Instances of domestic violence or sexual abuse among men is often silenced due to societal expectation of masculinity, thus male survivors of GBV are unable to speak out or seek support.
- Some men struggle with low self-esteem and fear that voicing their grievances, perpetuating a cycle of silence and internalized struggles. Also, childhood neglect and ongoing societal pressures contribute to men's difficulties in fully embracing their roles in adulthood.
- Cattle rustling disrupts male presence in their homes, they are not sleeping in their homes, sleeping in forests. families left behind are suffering without men in homesteads, Children are suffering and hovering in the community looking for shelter, Women losing their men and left to fend for their families.
- Neglect; Elderly men are often neglected and marginalized, left to fend for themselves without adequate support or attention from society, an example of a man for Arabal roaming in town (Marigat)

CHILDREN

- School dropout and lack of access to education; and support services perpetuate intergenerational cycles of poverty and marginalization, limiting children's prospects for a better future. Discrimination against special needs children by parents further compounds these challenges. In communities where poverty is prevalent, boys are often compelled to engage in activities like fishing to provide for their families. Additionally, early pregnancies and exposure to drugs and substance abuse have adverse effects on children's physical, emotional, and cognitive development, further exacerbating the issue.
- Insecurity and violence expose children to trauma and adverse experiences, adversely affecting their mental health and overall well-being.
- Child labour and neglect; with many children forced into labor at a young age, particularly if their parents pass away or are unable to provide for them. Some children are coerced into socio-economic activities to sustain their families' basic needs, sacrificing their education and childhood.

- Poverty in the homes is a barrier to education, as many parents cannot afford school fees. Free education initiatives are recommended to provide disadvantaged children with opportunities for a better future. The economic constraints faced by families often result in children being forced to drop out from education and compelled to engage in labor instead to support their families.
- Displacement; due to banditry or environmental factors disrupts families' lives, leading to loss of livelihoods and orphanhood among children. The breaking banks of Lake Baringo caused displacement of many families and rendered so many children orphans since they lost their parents during the episode.
- Drug and substance abuse; Most of the children are involved in the sale and use of drugs and harmful substances both in school and in the community.
- Poor parenting practices and parental neglect-some parents most especially those with special needs children neglect them and deny them access to education. Some of the parents get drunk and ignore the needs of their children.
- Neglect of the boy-child; Most interventions in Baringo are female centered resulting to a sense of neglect among the males. Erosion of good morals when children, especially young boys, are recruited and forced to participate in inter-communal war.
- FGM practices -once the school going girls undergo the FGM rite of passage, they are considered women and married off despite their young age, mostly in the adolescence stage. This deters them from proceeding with education and causes GBV especially if the mother is against the marriage. The women are silenced when such decisions are made by the men. In actual sense, most of the girls end up in abusive marriages because of their vulnerability and zero empowerment.
- Cattle rustling- a prevalent issue in community disrupts livelihoods. Most households depend on the sale of milk to afford basic needs and this is greatly affected when the herds are stolen by the neighboring communities during cattle rustling.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

- Access to disability services; Difficulty accessing disability card numbers and government services intensifies the existing barriers to inclusion and participation in society for PWDs. The infrastructure in the informal settlements is not disability friendly. PWDs may be given accessibility tools, for example wheel chairs but the drainage patterns make it impossible for them to navigate them.
- Stigma; Stigma remains a significant issue, especially for the deaf and mute community, as they lack interpreters during gatherings, preventing them from feeling fully included. Some parents warn their children against interacting with those with disabilities, perpetuating feelings of rejection and stigma. Additionally, special needs children often face discrimination from their fathers, leading to emotional distress for both the children and their mothers. Group sensitization within the community structures could raise awareness about PWD issues and combat stigma.
- Lack of mentorship & empowerment; Lack of mentorship and empowerment opportunities may further marginalize PWDs, limiting their ability to advocate for their rights and access opportunities for personal and professional growth.
- No representation in governance; Govt have not created enough job opportunities for the PWDS in the govt offices. There is no representation of PWDs in the government, the rules and laws are being imposed on them by people who are not PWDs and are acting in self-interest with no input from the PWDs. There is need for civic education because most PWDS always ask for tokenism to participate in public participation.
- Unemployment; Economic sustainability for PWDs is lacking as there is limited opportunities for them to earn a livelihood hence, there needs to be economic empowerment for PWDs
- Insecurity; poses a significant threat to PWDs, especially during bandit attacks, as they are often unable to run or seek safety independently. Special needs kids are not able to run during bandit attacks, they are often left stranded with no one to give them direction. Sometimes they even run towards the attackers and end up being the most affected, if not murdered. Their livelihoods are affected in that they must close work early to arrive home safely and lack of security lights was affecting them.
- Exclusion; PWDs are not included in public barazas. The chiefs exclude them when disseminating information about chief barazas. Most PWDs don't seek public participation due to the timing of public involvement being given late and very last minute. They need prior notice to arrange themselves for public involvement. Local churches could be used as a platform for sharing awareness of PWDs and stopping the stigma of PWDs in the community.

EXISTING COMMUNITY STRATEGIES THAT MIDRIFT CAN BUILD ON

The participants were asked about what initiatives are you currently undertaking to mitigate these challenges and how MIDRIFT collaborate with the community and support these existing efforts. The participants highlighted various activities aimed at addressing the specific issues faced by them (women, men, PWD, youth and children). These initiatives include:

NTE, NTE AND NJORO SUB COUNTIES

- Some participants mentioned working with Nyumba Kumi, although some objected citing concerns about its effectiveness, particularly in NTE (Bondeni), citing gaps in the selection of Nyumba Kumi leaders. However, they agreed that working with community reporting structures provided by the government (Chief, Police etc.) would be best to address community concerns.
- One participant stated that she tries to create a safe space for her peers to speak out on issues that affect them and also advocates for sexual reproductive health and create awareness of safe sex practice. They also conduct school programs in partnership with other organizations to capacity build children on mental health, drug abuse, and other related challenges.
- Youth Engagement initiatives; Efforts include creating awareness and engages male youth in empowerment opportunities on gender-related issues specifically affecting men. Another participant also mentioned that they create awareness and talk to young single mothers and encourage them to take up family planning and join support groups. Another community initiative '*Drugs Ni Noma*' that addresses drug abuse among youth; '*Linda mtaa initiative*' that encourages youth to play an active role in ensuring peace and security; '*Toa Taka Initiative*' that engages the youth in environmental conservation and is supported by the county government. Furthermore, there's advocacy for the reformation of criminal gangs members which which supported by the area MP Nakuru East.

NAIVASHA

- Elderly Feeding Program and Counseling: One participant runs a feeding program for the elderly, providing them with counseling and caregiving support. They also work closely with young mothers, offering moral support and encouraging women to express themselves to alleviate stress and depression.
- Support for HIV-Positive Individuals and Vulnerable Children: A participant works with an NGO that takes care of those who are H.I.V positive and the vulnerable children. His includes funding education and the vulnerable in the community also talks with the drug users and encourages them to quit without blaming or criticizing them. In additions she deals with the women whose rights are violated by their spouses.

BARINGO

- The government, in collaboration with the police and select community members, takes action against those practicing FGM. Community sensitization programs are conducted to educate individuals about the harmful effects of FGM.
- Police officers are deployed across various areas of Baringo to enhance security for community members. They patrol town centers and villages.
- State programs provide assistance to orphans and displaced families in Baringo, offering basic necessities to those in need.
- Local security structures, including chiefs and village elders, work with community members to maintain village security. They encourage reporting of any suspicious activities to ensure the safety of residents.
- Community members come together to provide resources and support to families affected by disasters.
- Local churches serve as platforms for raising awareness and combating stigma surrounding persons with disabilities (PWDs). Efforts are made to raise awareness among PWDs about available funds like the UWEZO FUND and NGAFF FUND, and they are encouraged to apply for them.
- Women are targeted for empowerment through skills training for economic independence, particularly in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) cases involving PWD children.

OTHER SUPPORTING ORGANIZATIONS:

- Organizations like Dandelion Africa, Girl Child Rights, and World Vision have interventions in Baringo aimed at promoting peace and security. The Kenya Red Cross Society provides assistance to disaster-stricken families, including food, bedding, and psychological support.
- UNICEF provides support in areas such as food supply, tent distribution, children's education, and sensitization efforts.
- GOUF offers empowerment programs, social services, child funds, and assistance with bus fares.
- Child Fund focuses on water supply, school construction, fluorosis management, talent development, and community development programs.
- CEGE conducts civic education, advocates for children's rights, and supports social justice centers and collaborative courts for gender and development.

AREAS OF STRENGTHENING MIDRIFT WORK (WHAT CAN WE DO BETTER?)

- **School Clubs:** MIDRIFT can take the lead in establishing clubs within schools, fostering unity, and promoting initiatives for social behavior change. Capacity building sessions for club members to empower them to be change makers. In addition, introduction of public health forums for students and children in schools as they are prone to early marriages and pregnancies and joining of gangs in their local areas. It was also suggested that the children already induced into the gangs should be involved in forums that encourage change.
- **Enforcement against Perpetrators:** In collaborating with the government, MIDRIFT can implement strict measures and issue stern warnings to perpetrators of violence, ensuring accountability and justice.
- **Parental Sensitization:** Conducting awareness programs to educate parents on effective parenting practices to help prevent the formation of dysfunctional families and promote positive family dynamics.
- **Equal Access to Education:** MIDRIFT should advocate for and ensure equal access to education for all children, including those with special needs, to promote inclusivity and provide opportunities for every child to thrive.
- **Training and Mental Health Support Services:** Offering training and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services to children in Baringo can help address mental health challenges and promote overall well-being.
- **Reluctance of males to seek counseling or mental health support services due to stereotypes,** MIDRIFT can create safe spaces for their participation.
- **Religious beliefs sometimes undermine** the impact of mental health issues, therefore, MIDRIFT can have targeted awareness campaigns within religious communities.
- **The community's insufficient knowledge** about mental health and mental illness MIDRIFT can create awareness to bridge this gap.
- The need to have PM+ helpers and PFA providers in the same forums to facilitate direct referrals of their clients.
- GBV survivors who have gone through the **PM+ intervention** should have additional trainings to help them sustain and build on the skills learnt.
- Have **a long-term follow-up on clients** who've completed PM+ e.g, after 3 months just to monitor their progress and reassure them that they have ongoing support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Participants were invited to share their recommendations for tackling the mentioned issues and suggest community-driven approaches they believe could make a meaningful impact on the state, non-state, and private sectors.

TO STATE ACTORS

- **Youth Empowerment and Representation:** The participants stressed the importance of ensuring adequate representation of youth in governance structures to address their concerns effectively and promote their participation in decision-making processes.
- **Education Reform:** Recommendations include restructuring the education system to reduce dropout rates, with a focus on creating funding systems to address fee balances and prioritize student retention. Incorporate strategies that will ensure that special needs children have to access education just like the normal kids. In addition, encourage peer to peer counseling in schools and churches because that is where future perpetrators are bred. The earlier the intervention, the better, while the kids can still be nurtured with the right mindsets that do not prompt the survival mode.
- **Law Enforcement and Support for Male Youths:** Suggestions involve empowering law enforcement agencies to support male youths instead of profiling them, aiming to address underlying issues and provide necessary assistance rather than punitive measures.
- **Accessibility of Health Services:** There's a call for bringing health services closer to the community to enhance accessibility, ensuring that individuals can access necessary medical care more conveniently.
- **Community Safety Measures:** Participants highlight the need for repairing streetlights in NTW to improve community safety and enable effective patrolling by community leaders and law enforcement personnel.
- **Creation of Safe Spaces:** and facilities for victims of gender-based violence, early pregnancies, and drug abuse to seek help and support.
- **Support for Talents and Recreational Facilities:** recognizing and supporting youth with talents in the community to minimize drug use and insecurity issues. Additionally, participants propose building social halls, libraries, sports fields, and other recreational facilities to engage youth and prevent idleness.
- **Law Enforcement and Security Measures:** collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies and community members to curb drug abuse, banditry, and crime through reporting, surveillance, and inter-communal dialogues.
- **Awareness and Sensitization:** raising awareness and sensitization campaigns on various issues, such as FGM, good parenting, mental health, and rights of persons with disabilities, to promote positive behavioral changes and eradicate harmful practices.
- **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** capacity building, financial literacy, and empowerment initiatives to equip community members, especially youth and persons with disabilities, with necessary skills and knowledge to demand for their rights, advocate for change, and improve their livelihoods.
- **Disarmament; prioritize disarmament of community members to curb banditry.** There is also need to increase community surveillance by encouraging community members to report any suspicious ongoing. There is need to ensure that the police are well catered for when deployed to Baringo a hardship area, to give them the best conditions to execute their roles/duties/mandate.

TO NON-STATE ACTORS

- **Sensitization of Male Youth on Mental Health:** By sensitizing male youth on mental health issues and forming support groups, the community can address stigmas surrounding mental health and provide a safe space for youth to seek help and support.
- **Empowerment of Youth with Alternative Means of Livelihood:** to address unemployment and economic challenges faced by young people. By providing training, resources, and opportunities for entrepreneurship or vocational skills development, youth can gain financial independence and contribute positively to their communities
- **Introduction of School-Based Programs for Awareness:** These programs can raise awareness, provide support, and equip students with necessary life skills to navigate challenges effectively.
- **Community Dialogue Forums:** These gatherings will foster community engagement, participation, and collective decision-making in addressing local issues and promoting social cohesion.
- **Utilization of Existing Community Structures;** Like chiefs' barazas while engaging local leaders such as Chiefs, MCAs, and MPs to raise awareness. These leaders can play a vital role in advocacy and education to address community needs.
- **Support for Grassroot Caregivers, Children Homes, and Daycares:** Supporting caregivers, children's homes, and daycares by offering resources, training, and counseling, these initiatives can enhance the well-being of caregivers and ensure quality care for children especially for women in flower farms.

- Empowerment of Women with Information; Empowering women and supporting vulnerable children emphasizes the importance of gender equality and child welfare. By providing access to information, education, and support services, women and children can overcome barriers and thrive in their communities. Counseling Sessions; and facilitated places for community enables individuals to access mental health services and emotional support locally. These initiatives promote mental well-being, resilience, and social connectedness within the community.

TO THE PRIVATE SECTOR

- The private sector can play a crucial role in creating awareness of critical issues by forming partnerships with local communities and organizations. These partnerships can amplify outreach efforts and enhance the dissemination of important information.
- By encouraging the reporting of incidents within the community, the private sector can contribute to improving safety and security. This can involve setting up reporting mechanisms and fostering a culture of accountability within the community.
- Providing financial support is essential to fund awareness campaigns, infrastructure development, and the provision of essential services.
- Provision of Safe Spaces and Counseling Services: Establishing safe spaces, such as youth resource centers, and offering counseling services can address the mental health needs of community members. These initiatives create environments where individuals can seek support and guidance.
- Collaboration in Sports Initiatives: by supporting sports programs, the private sector can contribute to crime reduction and community integration.
- Identifying and addressing specific community needs, such as banditry, improving infrastructure, and providing access to education and sanitary products to girls, demonstrates a targeted approach to community development.
- The private sector can support rehabilitation services for individuals affected by various challenges, including substance abuse, mental health issues, and social exclusion. This assistance can facilitate the reintegration of individuals into the community and promote recovery.


ABOUT MIDRIFT HURINET




MIDRIFT HURINET is non-profit organization that was founded in 2008 whose main mandate is to empower citizens, the state and non-state actors to inculcate a culture of Human Rights, Peace & Security and Good Governance.

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