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Baseline Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Report, County of Isiolo

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ACRONYMS

ASALs	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
BHA	Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance
CCO	County Chief Officer
CECM	County Executive Committee Member
CIDP	County Integrated Development Plan
CIMES	County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DFSA	Development Food Security Activity
DHIS	District Health Information System
DQA	Data Quality Assurance
EP	Economic Planning
GAIN	Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition
GDU	Governor Delivery Unit
IBTCI	International Business & Technical Consultants, Inc.
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ICT4D	Information Communication Technologies for Development
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MECAT	Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit
MEASURE Evaluation	Monitoring and Evaluation to Assess and Use Results Evaluation
MOH	Ministry of Health
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
Nawiri	Nutrition in ASALs within Integrated Resilient Institutions
NDMA	National Drought Management Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OCI	Organization Capacity Index
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
TWG	Technical Working Group
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive Summary

The Baseline Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment for Isiolo County conducted by Nawiri aimed to understand and quantify the functionality of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system within the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES) and determine its capacity to: (1) meet the system's performance objectives, (2) identify gaps, and (3) determine appropriate M&E interventions. Nawiri also carried out an Information Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) assessment in Isiolo county to: (1) understand the data collection platform each sector uses and (2) to facilitate the efficiency of M&E data collection activities. The M&E capacity assessment team included representatives from: The Economic Planning Department (EPD); the Department of Health; the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; the Department of Trade and Business; the Department of Information Communication Technologies (ICT); the Governor's Delivery Unit (GDU); National Drought Management Authority (NDMA); the Department of Education & Gender; and the Office of the County Secretary.

The assessment used a mixed methods approach that relied initially on a desk review of relevant documents and subsequently collected quantitative data using customized tools at the group and individual levels plus feedback of quantitative findings from study participants. Results of the assessment represent a snapshot of the areas of expertise and ranking of competencies in M&E within the M&E units of the Isiolo County stakeholders.

The summary of key findings of the M&E/ICT4D capacity assessments findings are presented as follows:

- The County M&E Unit within the Economic Planning Department usually develops the annual multi-sector M&E plan. This plan is developed in consultation with sector offices and kept with the County M&E Unit. However, there is a weak link between the County M&E Unit and the sector offices in terms of sharing the annual M&E plan as well as conducting joint monitoring visits and jointly using verification mechanisms.
- M&E activities are considered less important than other duties within the county government. Other county sectoral staff view the M&E team members as auditors. As a result, M&E activities are significantly under-resourced. For example, the M&E activities are managed by one delegated person/M&E focal person in addition to his/her main roles, with no clear definition of M&E roles and responsibilities. Much like the M&E capacity, the budget for M&E is extremely limited. Thus, there is no M&E unit in the different sector offices. The only M&E Unit with technical staff exists in the County Economic Planning Department.
- An M&E policy was drafted and is at the approval stage within the sector departments. The World Food Programme (WFP) is working with the Isiolo County Government reviewing, developing, and sensitizing upper management within the county government to convert the policy into a bill.
- The M&E technical staff of the County Economic Planning Department usually gathers quarterly progress reports using the reporting template developed and incorporated in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). Once the progress reports are submitted by sector offices, the M&E team of the Economic Planning Department consolidates the information to generate a quarterly progress report.
- The rollout of the electronic- County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (e-CIMES) should be supported by political or senior leadership to ensure the accountability and transparency of county government performance. Moreover, the e-CIMES enhances tracking the performance of activities using monitoring indicators, the financial monitoring/burn rate, procurement activities, bid processes, and the visualization of performance using the dashboard. As a result of leadership support in some counties (e.g., Machakos, Bungoma, Tana River Taita Taveta) the e-CIMES has been rolled out and is successful. The County team requested for a one-on-one meeting with the M&E Department of the National Government for a capacity-building session on the electronic county integrated M&E system (e-CIMES) and benchmarking session with one of the counties that have implemented e-CIMES.

- The county development sectors have many databases that are not linked in any way. The sectors understand the importance of linking the databases but do not have the resources/capacity or have not identified the responsible parties to oversee the integration. They would like these databases to be linked to one comprehensive county database for ease of accessibility and performance management.
- The M&E technical staff at the County M&E Unit have a good M&E system set-up. However, they need to strengthen their capacity in the following:

  ❖ Developing M&E plans.
  ❖ Conducting evaluation surveys.
  ❖ Developing survey protocols.
  ❖ Routine monitoring and database management.
  ❖ Ensuring data quality including the implementation of DQAs.
  ❖ Data analyses.
  ❖ Analytical report writing.

- The other sector offices need to strengthen their capacity in the following:

  ❖ Developing M&E plans.
  ❖ Routine monitoring and database management.
  ❖ Ensuring data quality including DQAs.
  ❖ Survey data analyses.
  ❖ Conducting trend analyses when using secondary information and data; and
  ❖ Analytical report writing.

In conclusion, the assessment participants developed an action plan to roll-out and strengthen the M&E system within the county sectors.

1.0. Introduction

The Baseline M&E Capacity Assessment for Isiolo aims to understand and quantify the CIMES's current M&E functions and capacity to meet its performance objectives, identify gaps, and propose a county-based M&E capacity development plan.

1.1. Program Overview

The *Nutrition in ASALs within Integrated Resilient Institutions (Nawiri)* Activity was awarded to Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and its partner agencies, including Tufts University's Feinstein International Center, Concern Worldwide, The Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN), International Business & Technical Consultants, Inc. (IBTCI), The Manoff Group, Village Enterprise, and local implementing sub-partners such as the Caritas network. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Nawiri Activity is a multisector package of services to support local institutions to sustainably reduce persistent acute malnutrition among vulnerable subpopulations of Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu, and Turkana Counties in Kenya. CRS leads the Nawiri consortium implementing in Isiolo & Marsabit counties, while Mercy Corps leads a second and independent Nawiri consortium implementing the project in Turkana and Samburu. Both consortiums share the USAID program name "Nawiri." The Activity is designed to have a robust research phase for the first two years (years 1-2) that will inform subsequent implementation and scale-up in years 3-5. The program is funded by the USAID Office of Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) Development Food Security Activity (DFSA).

County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES) is used for tracking the implementation of county policies, programmes and projects. It is used by the County leadership and senior management staff to verify activities in line with the targets set in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) as well as the efficient utilization of county resources. CIMES is based on the Result-based Management System for tracking, assessing, and reporting on outputs, outcomes, and resource utilization. Tracking of Government projects and reporting is coordinated by the M&E unit through the various M&E committees in the County and linked to the NIMES (National Integrated M&E System) through MED (M&E Directorate). Operationalizing CIMES is pegged on the staffing, resources, structures, M&E core tools (CIDP, Indicator handbook, policy) and the reporting structure across the committees.

Nawiri is collaboratively working with county governments to implement the following tasks: assess the status of the CIMES implementation; conduct ICT infrastructure assessments; procure and support the digitization of the M&E system; build user competencies; and support the county team to conduct regular performance reviews on implementation progress, successes, and challenges. Nawiri plans to build the capacity of departments to streamline other data collection and management systems (e.g., District Health Information System-2 (DHIS2), E-Surveillance, Water Management as a Service Platform) and accompany the county staff to inculcate a culture of data use for decision making and adaptive management by the various departments, county executive leadership, and the county assembly through regular data review sessions.

During scoping by CRS and its consortium partners, the Nawiri team discovered several gaps. There is a need for:
- Better staff distribution across specialized areas (e.g., Health, Economic planning, water, Agriculture, Trade and Gender)
- Suitable transport for adequate facilitation.
- Increased access to ICT facilities (computers, internet, and mobile devices);
- Adequate office space, stationery and equipment, and technical reference materials among others.

In 2020, the Nawiri M&E team conducted a courtesy meeting with the County Government M&E departments and the office of the County Secretary in Isiolo and Marsabit. The meeting aimed to understand how the county M&E system functions and what operational challenges were encountered in the roll-out of the CIMES. Moreover, the team gathered preliminary information about the county's M&E system, including the status of the CIMES, the scope of work of the county M&E Technical Working Group (TWG), detailed operational aspects on their progress, and challenges. During the visit, the County M&E Directorate appealed for support on the roll-out of the CIMES.

Effective implementation of the CIMES requires a robust M&E framework to provide evidence for the achievement of the policy objectives. Currently, the National and County Governments are rolling-out the e-CIMES to track the performance monitoring of the development sectors. The role of counties in service delivery requires them to have adequate and effective M&E systems to assess progress towards achieving sectoral objectives and targets.

By improving data demand and use, Nawiri is supporting the roll-out and implementation of the CIMES among the Nawiri County M&E department stakeholders listed in the textbox. Conducting a comprehensive and systematic multi-sector institutional M&E capacity assessment at the county level is important to build sustainable and systemic M&E capacity among the County Government Multi-Sector Offices. The baseline assessment contributes to understanding and quantifying the CIMES' M&E capacity to meet its performance objectives, identify gaps, and propose an Isiolo county-based M&E capacity development plan.

> **Box 1 - County Level CIMES Stakeholders**
> - Economic Planning Department
> - Governor's Delivery Unit
> - Department of Health
> - Department of Agriculture, Livestock & Fisheries
> - Department of Trade & Business
> - ICT Department
> - Department of Education & Gender
> - Office of the County Secretary
> - NDMA
> - Department of Water and Environment

1.2. General overview of the CIMES

A well-designed M&E system ensures the collection, analysis, and use of data for implementation and learning purposes. Nawiri adhered to the principle throughout program implementation that program data must be collected following quality standards defined by USAID BHA (validity, reliability, timeliness, precision, and integrity[1]), as outlined in the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP). The implementation team and relevant stakeholders analyze and present the data to senior management and policymakers in the county for decision-making. To establish a robust M&E system, specific competencies and capacities are required. In the exercise reported in this document, the latter was assessed based on the following competency dimensions:

- Technical skills.
- Managerial skills.
- Existence and quality of data systems.
- Available technology and fiscal resources; and
- Institutional experience.

At the county level, tracking progress towards the achievement of policies, programs, and projects outlined in the CIDP is undertaken through the CIMES. Analyzing the CIMES results helps demonstrate whether resources spent on implementing the CIDP investment programs lead to intended outcomes, impacts, and benefits for the county population. In this way,

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[1] USAID: Data Quality and Limitations November 23, 2018

the CIMES is being used to provide essential feedback to the county budgetary allocation and execution processes, thereby ensuring that future county budget preparation and execution processes maximize the possibility of achieving CIDP targets.

The CIMES also serves as a vehicle for building partnerships within County Governments, between National and County Governments, the private sector, civil society, and external development partners. Thus, the system improves stakeholder communication and help build stakeholder agreement on desirable poverty reduction outcomes and strategies. The CIMES provides an integrated structure and process for counties to engage stakeholders, plan, govern, manage and operate independently and yet in sync with one another.

The Nawiri M&E Plan stipulates that conducting an M&E capacity assessment and strengthening the County Government staff, together, is a grey area for the Nawiri interventions. The Nawiri team began working with the County M&E team to achieve the main objective: strengthen the capacity of County Governments to collect, analyze, and utilize accurate monitoring data regularly to be responsive to community needs. This objective will be achieved by supporting the rollout and implementation of the CIMES. The CIMES itself is an observation mechanism to be used by County Governors, County Executive Committee Members, and other senior management staff. It allows a regular flow of information throughout CIDP implementation and enables the detection of changes in status and utilization of resources allocated to CIDP priorities. Nawiri will work with County Governments to improve the CIMES rollout by establishing the status of implementation in each of the counties. In so doing, it will allow county staff to:

- conduct capacity assessments, including ICT and staffing for the CIMES implementation.
- support the procurement of ICT equipment and digitization of the system.
- build the capacity of county M&E staff to adopt open-source tools to collect, visualize and disseminate data; and
- conduct data quality assessments (DQAs) and quarterly reviews to reflect on implementation progress.

As the M&E consortium member in Nawiri, M&E team is providing support on the rollout and implementation of the CIMES in both Isiolo and Marsabit to improve data demand and use at County levels. As part of this effort, the Nawiri M&E team conducted the baseline M&E capacity assessment in Isiolo which is the focus of this report.

1.3. Objectives of Baseline M&E Capacity Assessment

The overall objective of the baseline assessment was to understand and quantify the functionality of the M&E system within the CIMES and determine its capacity to (1) meet the system's performance objectives, (2) identify gaps, and (3) determine appropriate interventions. The assessment will be used in monitoring and evaluating the success of strengthening the CIMES's M&E capacity. Specifically, the assessment focused on:

- ➢ Establishing baseline values for a set of M&E capacity areas.
- ➢ Understanding the status of performance in key M&E capacity areas, including organization and human resources, leadership in M&E, data collection, analysis, and reporting practices; learning from results and then practicing adaptive management.
- ➢ Identifying the status of data and information mapping exercise, ICT4D, including the ICT infrastructures.
- ➢ Determining existing gaps as well as identifying and prioritizing interventions to strengthen the CIMES.

Using baseline findings to develop capacity-building plans to strengthen the performance of county M&E functions.

2.0.   MECAT Assessment Methods

To assess the current monitoring and evaluation M&E capacities and systems in Isiolo County, the Nawiri M&E team adapted the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT) process. The MECAT's assessment process follows four methods: (1) desk review; (2) individual self-assessment; (3) group assessment; and (4) key informant interviews. Table 1 presents the methods, their associated tool, target group, and role in the Isiolo baseline assessment.

Table 1: MECAT Methods[2]

Method	MECAT-Specific tool	Target	Isiolo Baseline MECAT
Desk Review	Desk review guidance	Organizational documentation	General review conducted for both counties (Isiolo and Marsabit)
Individual Assessment	Individual assessment Excel workbook	Staff / Individual	Received via email
Group Assessment	Group assessment Excel workbook	Organization	Received via email

2.1. Desk Review

The M&E team conducted a desk review that included M&E capacity assessments of health sector units in 25 counties in Kenya, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) M&E capacity assessment covering different sectors done in Isiolo, and an assessment conducted by the Isiolo and Marsabit M&E teams in association with UNDP covering counties supported by the Frontier Counties Development Council. The main findings from this review are presented in Annex 1.

2.2. Individual Assessment

The individual assessment tool is an Excel workbook with questions that assess a person's M&E knowledge, skills, and competencies (Annex 2). The individual assessment tool contains five competencies: (1) M&E leadership; (2) data collection and management; (3) evaluation; (4) data analysis, dissemination, and use; and (5) general management. There are subdivisions in each competency, and each subdivision may have 2-10 items. The workshop attendees rank their skills per item using a six-point scale listed below:

1. **Entry**   Developing awareness/building knowledge; limited skills.
2. **Novice**   Limited experience, unaware of potential problems, unaware of questions
                       to ask.
3. **Proficient**   Applies knowledge routinely, basic skills, a moderate amount of experience.
4. **Skilled**   Solves problems that may arise, aware of questions to ask, and able to
                       access resources.
5. **Mastery**   Uses knowledge fluently and effectively; advanced skills; extensive experience.
6. **Expert** Anticipates problems, poses questions to field/stakeholders, and seeks solutions

The individual assessment Excel workbook automatically assigns a numerical value to the items scored (using a 5-point scale, where 0 is the lowest competency level, and 5 is the highest).

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[2] Source: MEASURE Evaluation: User Guide

2.3. Group Assessment

The group assessment uses an Excel workbook with questions that assess an organization's current M&E capacity and its ability to meet performance expectations (Annex 2). The MECAT Group Assessment Tool requires workshop attendees to follow a participatory approach to assess their department's M&E capacity in 12 capacity areas described below:

1. Organizational: Operates within a robust and integrated organizational structure for M&E.
2. Human Capacity for M&E: Deploys adequate and competent human resources to drive M&E.
3. Partnership and Governance: Operates within an effective partnership and governance mechanism.
4. Organization and M&E Plan: Is anchored upon an overarching county M&E plan.
5. Annual Costed M&E Work plan: Is delivered through a jointly agreed annual costed M&E plan.
6. Advocacy, Communication, and Cultural Behavior: Is sustained and promoted through advocacy and communication.
7. Routine Monitoring: Is driven by robust systems for routine monitoring.
8. Surveys and Surveillance: Incorporates investments to conduct periodic surveys and surveillance.
9. County and Sub County Databases: Promotes the use of unified and robust county databases.
10. Supervision and Auditing: Provides for routine supervision and quality auditing.
11. Evaluation and Research: Invests in evaluation and research.
12. Data Demand and Use/Learning from results: Promotes widespread data demand and information use as well as learning from information and then practicing adaptive management.

Each capacity area is subdivided into elements and each element contains items organized around four dimensions:

1. **Status:** Indicates the existence or otherwise of specific elements that constitute an M&E capacity area.
2. **Quality**: Measures the robustness of these elements relative to established norms or standards. This dimension indicates the degree of quality a specific task or deliverable meets according to established quality norms.
3. **Technical autonomy**: Assesses the ability of the institution to develop and execute M&E functions without depending on external support.
4. **Financial autonomy**: Assesses the ability of the institution to financially support specific M&E functions without depending on external funding.

The workshop attendees scored each element of the M&E capacity areas using a series of statements based on three categorical response scales:
*   A 3-point scale (Yes mostly, Yes partly, Not at all); A 4-point scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) or (Less than 1 year, 1–2 years, 2–3 years, Greater than 3 years); and A 5-point scale (Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Biannually, and Annually).

Together, the participants discuss the scale for each element. When they reach an agreement, they select the scale. The group assessment Excel workbook automatically assigns a numerical value to the element (using a 10-point scale, where 0 is the least, implying no capacity, and 10 is the highest).

3.0. Data Collection

3.1. Baseline Assessment Workshops

Two workshops were facilitated at the Saala Hotel Isiolo for this baseline assessment. The first workshop was conducted on October 06, 2020, during which the Nawiri M&E team presented the MECAT to the attendees. A total of 23 participants attended the first workshop: six were Nawiri M&E staff acting as facilitators and 17 were workshop attendees from the following departments within the county: the Economic Planning Department; the Governor's Delivery Unit; the Department of Health; the Department of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries; the Department of Trade and Business; the Department of ICT; the Department of Education and Gender; and the Office of the County Secretary (Annex 4: Participants list).

A second workshop was held on November 10, 2020, during which the Nawiri M&E team presented the assessment findings to the workshop attendees after which they worked together to develop the Isiolo county action plan (Annex 3). A total of 23 participants attended, four (4) of whom were Nawiri staff and acted as facilitators. The other 19 attendees were study participants from the departments mentioned.

Table 2: Workshop Participants

Participants	1st Workshop (10/6/2020)	2nd Workshop (11/10/2020)
Facilitators	6	4
Workshop attendees	17 EP (4) GDU (4) Department of Health (2) Fisheries Development (1) ICT (2) Agriculture (1) Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (1) County Secretary (1) Public Service Management (1)	19 EP (3) GDU (4) Department of Health (3) Fisheries Development (1) Education (1) ICT (2) Agriculture (1) Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Project (1) County Secretary (1) Public Service Management (2)
Total participants	23	23

3.2. Data received for MECAT

The instrument used to collect data was a Monitoring & Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT) adapted from MEASURE Evaluation[3], is a structured set of questionnaires that guides participants through a process to assess their own M&E competencies (individual assessment), and their organization's M&E capacities (group assessment).

Individual Assessment: After the workshop, the Nawiri team sent the MECAT individual assessment tool to 13 workshop attendees. The County Secretary staff was requested to complete the individual assessment because he oversees the work done by the CECM, CCO and department directors and always attend the workshops for buy-in from the county and his

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[3] MEASURE Evaluation, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is developed MECAT to strengthens health sector data collection, data quality, and the global capacity for research. This tool is adapted to Nawiri M&E capacity assessment for Isiolo County.

commitment to M&E. The Nawiri M&E team asked the participants to self-assess their competencies and submit the file back within three business days. 10 out of 13 workshop participants complied and sent the tool back.

Group Assessment: The group assessment tool should be completed collectively, and participants should arrive at rankings for each statement consensually. Because of time and competing interests at the county where the county teams are involved, they requested to be taken through the tool, then the tools to be shared with their directors who will then facilitate the group assessment. However, the validation of the capacity scores took place in the second workshop where the whole team discussed the findings and worked on the action plans together.

All the nine (9) departments received the assessment, but it was agreed that because they partially do M&E activities, it would be wise for the EP and GDU departments to conduct the group assessment. A total of 8 M&E participants assessed their department M&E capacity (4 participants from EPD and another 4 participants from GDU).

The two groups submitted the group assessment via email to the Nawiri M&E team, which were presented for feedback in the November 2020 workshop. The County Secretary and CCO worked together with the respective M&E technical teams and focal point persons. Results and findings from the analysis were relayed back to the same county sector focus group/program/M&E unit assessed. The team after validating their feedback started the discussion on action plans on capacity-building areas.

Table 3: Data Received

MECAT-Specific tool	Sent	Received
Individual assessment Excel workbook	13 individuals (EPD, GDU, etc.)	10 individuals
Group assessment Excel workbook	2 departments: EPD – group of 4 staff members GDU - group of 4 staff members	2 departments: EPD – group of 4 staff members GDU - group of 4 staff members

3.3. Agreement and Consent

Following ethical and data integrity guidance, the Nawiri M&E team explained to the study participants the purpose of the workshops, the use, and dissemination of data, and requested their agreement before collecting any information. The team clarified that no participants were obligated to participate and that they could also stop their participation at any point if they wished to do so. The participants agreed verbally to participate in the workshops.

4.0. Findings

4.1. Individual Assessment

The MECAT individual assessment tool has a summary page with that particular person's score for each of the 5 competencies described in section 2.2 of this report. Then, the Nawiri M&E team aggregated the scores from the individual assessment to estimate an average competency level among M&E staff in the Isiolo county, and plan training and M&E capacity building activities. However, this general picture of M&E competency levels in the Isiolo county needs to account for the different functions, mandates, and resources that the departments of the staff assessed.

Average M&E Leadership Competency Score

In terms of M&E leadership competency, the overall average score was 2.88, showing that they consider themselves between 'proficient' and 'skilled' in planning M&E systems and responses, identifying capacity building approaches, and building professional relationships with key M&E partners. The sub-division with the lowest average score was "integration of M&E activities." Thus, strengthening efforts should focus on implementing M&E activities, and ensuring the viability and quality of the partnerships to enhance coordination and collaboration.

Figure 1: Average Data Collection and Data Management Competency Score
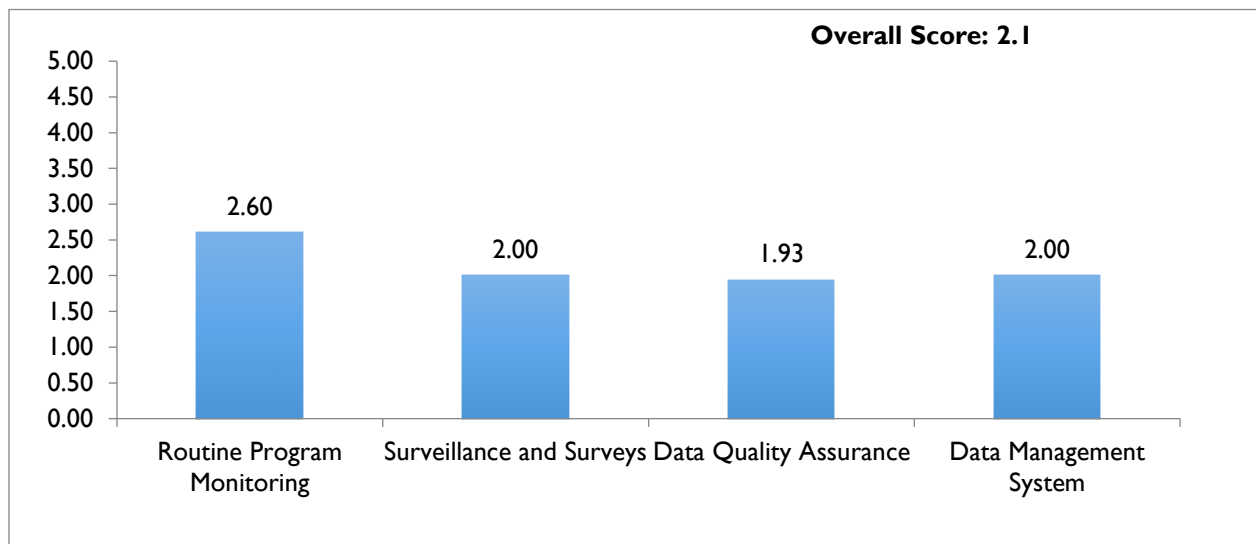

The workshop participants rated themselves lower in "data collection and data management" competency, on average. The overall average score was 2.1, which falls between 'entry' and 'novice' level. Capacity building is required particularly for data quality assurance.

Figure 2: Average Evaluation Competency Score
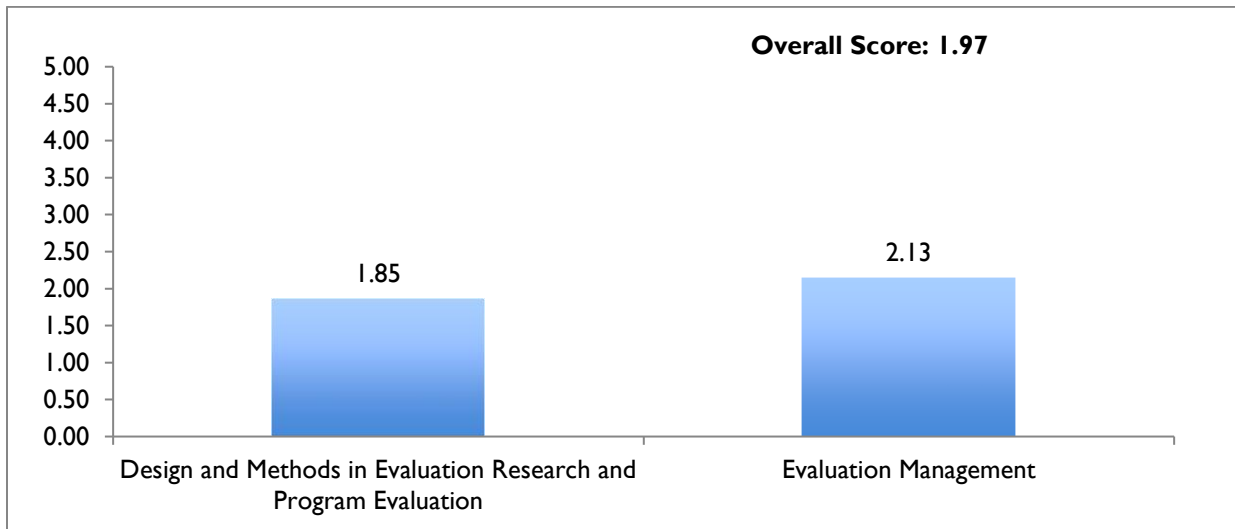
Similar to the previous competency, the participants rated themselves low in the "evaluation competency." The overall average score for this competency was 1.97, which fall between the 'entry' and 'novice' levels of proficiency. Particularly, staff considered their skills closer to the 'entry' level (1.85) for the "design of evaluation and research" compared to "evaluation management" (2.13). Capacity-building measures need to be put in place for the team to improve this competency.
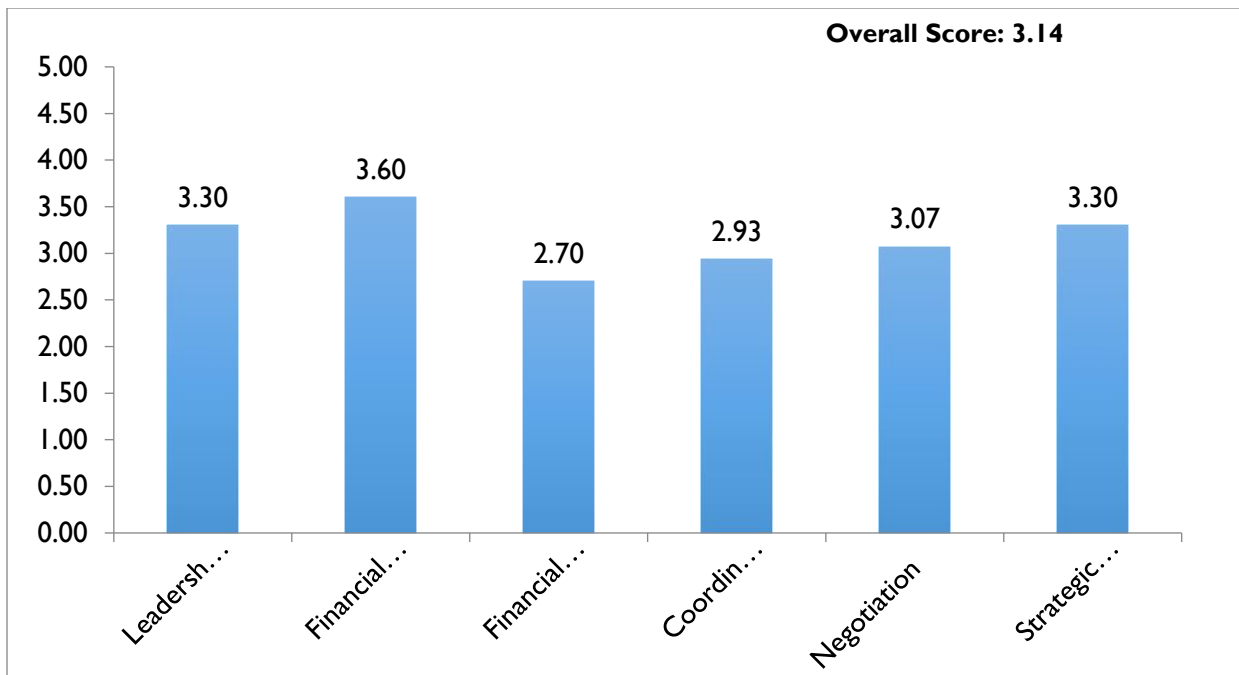
Figure 3: Average Data Analysis, Dissemination, and Use Competency Score
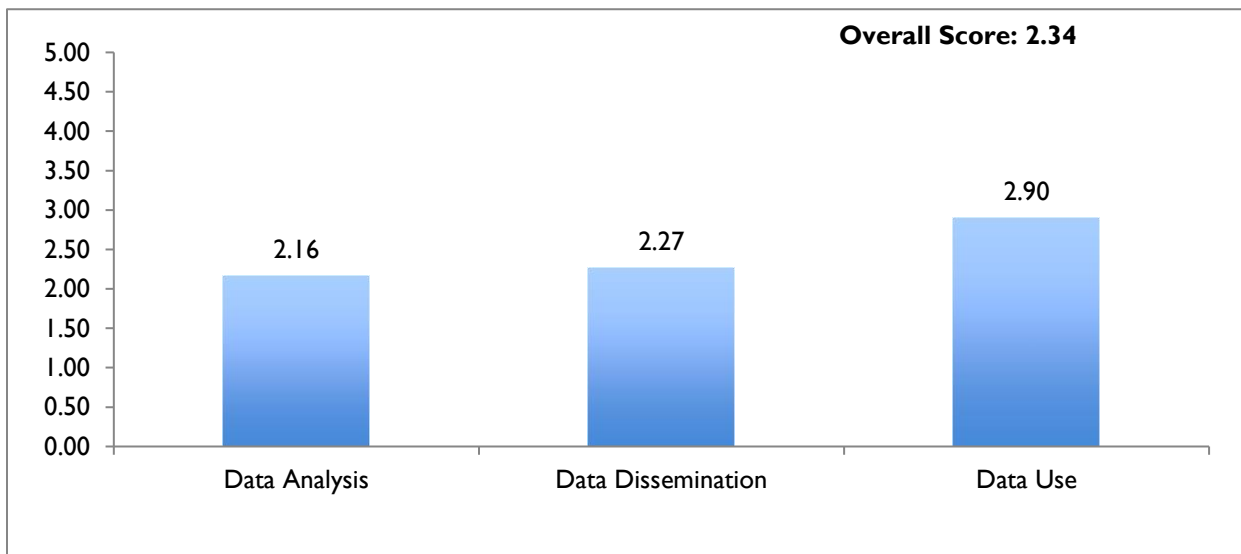
The overall average score for this competency was 2.34, which falls between 'entry' and 'novice' level. "Data analysis" and "data dissemination" had the lowest average scores compared to "data use." This indicates that the attendees consider more training in analysis and dissemination is needed.

Figure 4: Average General Management Competency Score

Overall Score: 3.14

	Leadersh...	Financial...	Financial...	Coordin...	Negotiation	Strategic...
Score	3.30	3.60	2.70	2.93	3.07	3.30

The "general management" competency had the highest overall average score (3.14) from all the five competencies self-assessed by the participants. This indicates that most participants consider themselves between 'proficient' and 'expert' in key areas related to team and resource management. The sub-division with the lowest average score was "financial monitoring."

4.2.   Capacity Areas of M&E System in Isiolo County

The adapted MECAT group assessment tool automatically generates useful dashboards and preliminary results from the scores populated by each department's M&E team. The dashboards show the distribution of the scores for each capacity area assessed by its four dimensions (status, quality, technical autonomy, and financial autonomy). Figures 6 and 7 provide a visual representation of the gaps in the M&E capacity areas for GDU and EPD respectively.

When participants rank the statement from the status dimension zero (0) the tool automatically ranks all other statements from the quality, technical autonomy, and financial dimensions as "0." If there is no procedure, tool, or guidance in place for that capacity, then the quality, technical or financial dimension cannot be assessed. This was the case for the scores received from these two groups. GDU ranked "0" for capacity areas 5 to 12, and EPD ranked 0 for capacity areas 7 to 12. Among the reasons provided by the attendees are:

- Lack of data management essential tools for collection, collation, analysis, and reporting of data including the software.
- No inventory of surveys and surveillances.
- Absence of the database.
- Lack of updated electronic databases for capturing and storing data.
- Lack of supportive supervision guidelines and tools.
- Lack of policy, procedures, organization data use plan and tools for data quality audits.
- Lack of finance and logistical support; and
- Lack of forums for dissemination and discussion of research findings.

Figure 5: Government Delivery Unit Scores
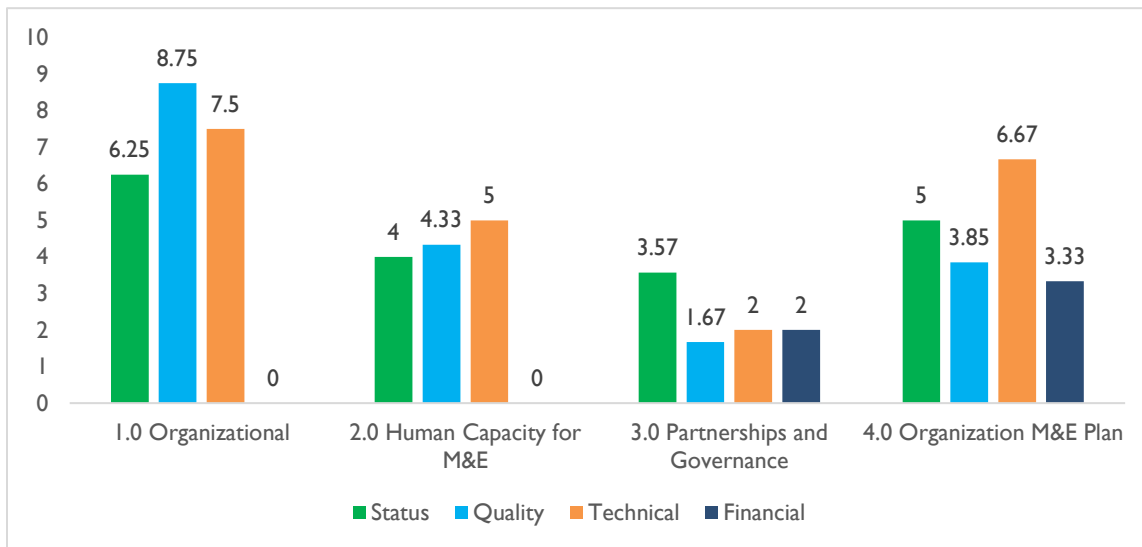
GDU staff scored the higher in organizational capacity compared to the other three capacity areas assessed. This indicates GDU staff consider that their department conducts organizational tasks (i.e., leadership, organizational values, roles and functions, organizational performance) at high quality, expect for the financial autonomy dimension. Human capacity and organization specifically for M&E got a mid-level score, while partnerships and governance scored the lowest (excluding capacity areas 5 to 12, which were ranked "0" for status). One additional point to mention from this graph is that the financial autonomy dimension scored the lowest across capacity areas.

Figure 6: Economic Planning Department Scores
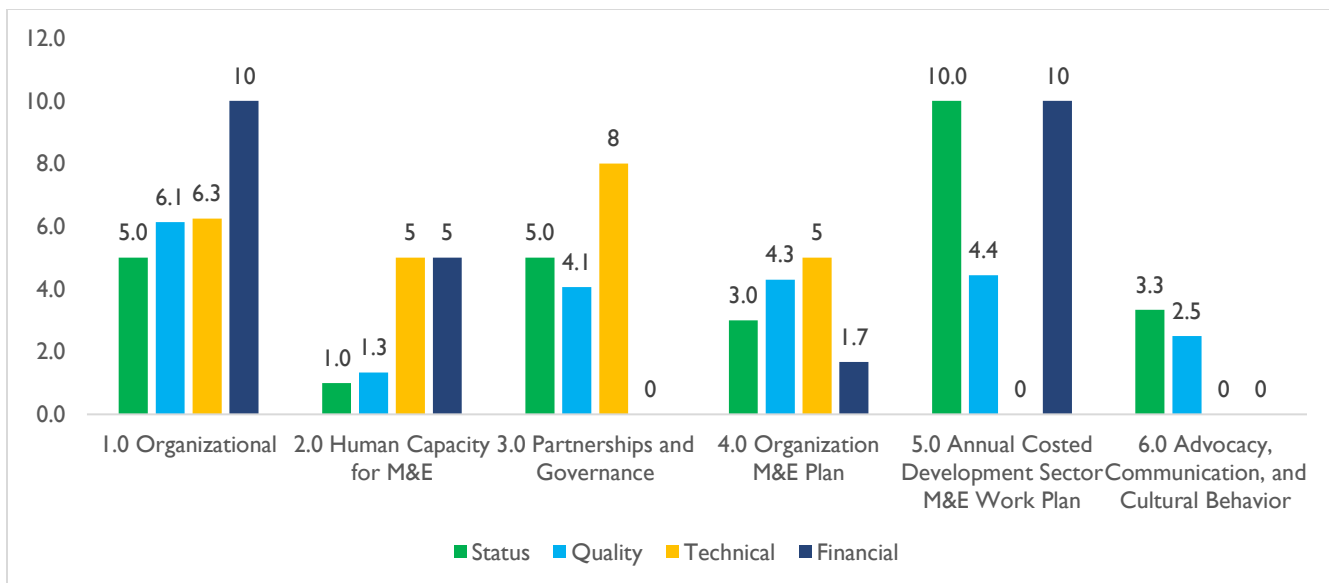
EPD staff scored capacity areas 1 to 6. The scores for the six capacities assessed follow a more even distributions around the mid-level (around 4 to 6 in a scale 1 to 10), showing that the department is positioned to undertake its institutional tasks but has room to improve. One thing to note is that EPD scored high on financial autonomy for organizational capacity (EPD staff stated that they have a budget for their activities).

Then, using the scores from the group assessment workbooks (EPD and GDU), the Nawiri M&E team calculated the combined group score for each capacity area and dimension (Table 4).

Table 4: GDU and EPD departments combined group scores

Capacity area	Status	Quality	Technical	Financial
1.0 Organizational	5.63	7.44	6.88	5.00
2.0 Human Capacity for M&E	2.50	2.83	5.00	2.50
3.0 Partnerships and Governance	4.29	2.86	5.00	1.00
4.0 Organization M&E Plan	4.00	4.08	5.83	2.50
5.0 Annual Costed Development Sector M&E Work Plan	5.00	2.22	0.00	5.00
6.0 Advocacy, Communication, and Cultural Behavior	1.67	1.25	0.00	0.00
7.0 Routine Monitoring	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
8.0 Surveys and Surveillance	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
9.0 County and Subcounty Databases	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
10.0 Supervision and Auditing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
11.0 Evaluation and Research	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
12.0 Data Demand and Use	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Finally, the Nawiri team used the combined group scores of each dimension to calculate an overall aggregate to serve as the baseline score (for example, for organizational capacity the scores for each dimension were, status=5.63, quality=7.44, technical=6.88, and financial=5.00. The simple average of these four numbers is 6.23). The overall aggregate score at baseline is illustrated in Figure 7. It does not include the capacity areas that had a score of zero.

Figure 7: Chart showing overall combined EPD and GDU scores at baseline

Strong leadership and enabling structures are critical for the proper implementation of any policy, and dedication to M&E at the county level depended on the presence of relevant policies articulating its importance. At the time of the survey,

the county EPD department and GDU department assessed the existing M&E framework in line with constitutional requirements for multi-sector operations.

- The two departments who conducted the group assessment had the following to report about: organizational competency, they scored above average (6.23), with quality, and technical scoring higher.
- In the human capacity for M&E, partnerships and governance, and organization M&E plan, the departments have people who are up to task stating that they internally and independently developed the mission statement.
- The departments' staff are able to collect, process, and analyse sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive data to analyse potential gender differences in health access/use/quality; but they rely on external assistance for support.

5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations

Results from the baseline assessment of Isiolo county's M&E capacity to perform M&E functions show that several opportunities are available to strengthen the county's department and the individual sector offices in their overall ability to collect and use data for decision making. Most performance areas that are critical for establishing status, quality, financial and technical capability need to be strengthened to realize the rollout of CIMES objectives. The ongoing finalization of the M&E framework and the commitment by the county M&E team presents key opportunities to address the gaps discussed in earlier sections.

In conclusion, the key findings of the M&E/ICT4D capacity assessments and the developed action plan are presented as follow:

- The County M&E Unit within the Economic Planning Department usually develops the annual multi-sector M&E plan. This plan is developed in consultation with sector offices and kept with the County M&E Unit. In terms of sharing the annual M&E plan as well as conducting joint monitoring visits and verification mechanisms, there is a weak link between the County M&E Unit and the sector offices.
- M&E activities are considered less important than other duties within the county government. Other county sectoral staff view the M&E team members as auditors. As a result, M&E activities are significantly under-resourced. For example, the M&E activities are managed by one delegated person/M&E focal person in addition to his/her main roles, with no clear definition of M&E roles and responsibilities. Much like the M&E capacity, the budget for M&E is extremely limited. Thus, there is no M&E unit in the different sector offices. The only M&E Unit with technical staff exists in the County Economic Planning Department.
- M&E policy was drafted and is at the approval stage within the sector departments. WFP in collaboration with Isiolo County Government is working together to review, develop and sensitize the executive to see the passing of the policy to the bill.
- The County M&E Unit, Economic Planning Department, the M&E technical staff usually gather quarterly progress reports using the reporting template developed and incorporated in the CIDP. Once the progress reports are shared by sector offices, the M&E team consolidates the sector quarterly progress reports from the different sectors.
- The rollout of the e-CIMES needs support from political and/or senior leadership to ensure the accountability and transparency of county government performance. Moreover, the e-CIMES enhances tracking of the performance of activities using monitoring indicators, financial monitoring/burn rate, procurement, bid processes, and visualization of performance using the Dashboard. As a result of leadership support in some counties, like

Machakos, Bungoma, Tana River, and Taita Taveta, where the e-CIMES has been rolled out and is successful. The team requested a one-on-one with the M&E Department National Government for a capacity-building session and benchmarking session with one of the counties that have implemented e-CIMES.

- The county sectors have many databases that are not linked in any way. The sectors understand the importance of linking the databases but do not have the resources/capacity or have not identified the responsible parties to oversee the integration. They would like these databases to be linked to one county database for ease of accessibility and performance management.
- The M&E technical staff at the County M&E Unit have a good M&E system set-up. However, they need to strengthen their capacity the following:

  - ❖ Developing sector M&E plans.
  - ❖ Conducting evaluation surveys.
  - ❖ Developing survey protocols.
  - ❖ Routine monitoring and database management.
  - ❖ Ensuring data quality including DQAs and data analyses; and
  - ❖ Analytical report writing.

- The sector offices need to strengthen their capacity the following:

  - ❖ Developing M&E plans.
  - ❖ Routine monitoring and developing database management systems.
  - ❖ Ensuring data quality including DQAs and survey data analyses.
  - ❖ Conducting trend analyses using secondary information and data; and
  - ❖ Analytical report writing.

- The M&E activities described in the CIDP (2018-2022) were geared towards addressing each county's mission and outlined key M&E activities, such as generating basic reports, data collection, and surveillance. M&E framework/policy was drafted and is under review for final approval within the involved sectors (e.g. Agriculture, Health, Trade, Education, etc.).
- The quality and financial capability scores were extremely low, indicating that staff members are not adequately trained to carry out data quality assessments (completeness, timeliness, accuracy, reliability). M&E capacity is limited due to a variety of factors; among them, M&E training is not available to staff and there is no TWG that meets to discuss the organization's M&E issues. The team reported that; *"The M&E unit needs technological, financial, and logistical support. Staff require more training on the M&E specifics, data collection, data processing, data analysis, and software.""* they added that financial resources are constrained.

The summary of identified capacity gaps and proposed recommendations are summarized in the action plan Annex 2.

Annexes

Annex 1: Conclusions Drawn from Desk Reviews

Gaps observed from the Desk Review:

- The counties do not have an M&E department/unit or M&E committee, but it is incorporated in the planning and economic development department.
- The Counties have not operationalized the CIMES.
- They lack facilitation to take the M&E policy document through the necessary public participation forums.
- Lack of capacity and sensitization on M&E in the County departments
- There is a weak M&E culture in the Counties with many taking the function of auditing
- Lack of M&E budget within the county.
- Logistical challenge especially in terms of vehicles needed to be used to carry out quarterly field visits.
- Inadequate staffing where the focal people from the various departments are usually busy and overwhelmed with other duties when needed to go for field monitoring visits.
- No designated official focal point persons from each department in charge of M&E.
- Turnover in leadership and frequent transfer of technical staff has also been a challenge. Most officers are also on contract so once the contract expires, they take off to other jobs with the skills acquired.
- Some CIMES committees such as County Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (COMEC) were established but have not been very active. The Sub County M&E committees were also established but the committees never took off. The functioning of COMEC has been compromised by the high staff turnover.
- Lack of proper reporting structures and systems
- No M&E champion.
- Lack of data quality assessment
- Fear of M&E by other departments as an audit.

Support required by the team

- Training/capacity-building of focal M&E persons selected from all departments
- Setting up/operationalization of the CIMES
- Sensitization of executive and county assembly members on Monitoring and Evaluation
- Capacity building of staffs on e-CIMES
- Assistance in formation and facilitation of different county M&E Committees.
- Pushing off the M&E policy to pass its approval
- Development of the M&E bill
- Departmental M&E officers should be recruited to work solely on the M&E function in the departments.

These findings were presented to the County team who agreed that it speaks about their issues. The Isiolo County team agreed to work hand in hand to operationalize the CIMES as well as to conduct M&E capacity assessment and work on a plan to build their capacities on the gaps identified.

Annex 2: MECAT

MECAT Individual
Assessment Tool_FIN/

MECAT Group
Assesment Tool_FINA

Annex 3: Isiolo County Action plan

Isiolo County MECAT
Action Plan.docx

Annex 4: List of Participants

Participants%20List-
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