



VOICES FOR ACTION

*Looking at food and nutrition security
through the eyes of the Maasai community*





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About the African Population and Health Research Center

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is a leading pan-African research organization based in Nairobi, Kenya. The institution conducts high quality, policy-relevant research on population, health, education, urbanization and related development issues across Africa. APHRC actively engages policymakers and key stakeholders to achieve measurable policy impacts and ensure decision making across the continent is informed by rigorous, scientific evidence.

APHRC has conducted numerous projects in the health sector focused on these areas:

- Maternal, newborn and child health and nutrition
- Non-communicable diseases
- Health systems
- Infectious diseases
- Environmental health

APHRC at a glance



Executive summary

Food and nutrition security exists when all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life¹. In Kenya, millions of people are food insecure, particularly those living in arid and semi-arid regions, despite the right to food being one of the fundamental human rights stipulated in the Kenyan Constitution.

The African Population Health and Research Centre (APHRC), in collaboration with the Unit of Nutrition and Dietetics, Ministry of Health; the County and Sub-County health management teams of Kajiado, Kenya; and McGill and Loughborough universities, conducted a public engagement project in Kajiado County: a semi-arid area in Kenya. The project was implemented in two specific communities: Oloika and Lenkobei between April 2016 and February 2017, and funded by Wellcome Trust. It aimed to understand the food and nutrition security in the Maasai community, with a particular focus on pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as mothers of children under the age of five.

We used participatory public engagement methods, working together with the community to identify their challenges with regards to food and nutrition security and explore possible solutions. We built the capacity of the community members to express themselves in a participatory manner, including through photo-voice,² and participatory videos.³ We also spoke at length with individuals, groups and communities together. With photo-voice, we taught community members in Oloika and Lenkobei to use cameras to tell their stories, using

pictures and words to explain their own experiences with food insecurity.

Key findings are aligned with the four pillars of food security: food availability, accessibility, utilization and stability, illustrated by images captured by the community members. The findings show that environment, economic empowerment and socio-cultural factors all play a role in limiting food availability and access. That there is little arable land and the area is generally arid, with frequent droughts, together with the pastoralist culture of the Maasai people, has hindered crop farming, leading to a lack of food in the community. A lack of water, too, was identified as a chronic challenge. Finally, the disempowerment of women inhibits their ability to make decisions about food access – also contributing to food insecurity.

We developed this book as a call to action: to address the deficits wrought by a lack of food and nutrition security in Maasai communities. Government and community, faith leaders and civil society, donors and partners: all must commit collectively to support the community in finding alternatives to supplement the pastoral lifestyle. Pursuit of drought-resistant crops and innovative approaches to farming such as irrigation should be a collaborative effort between the ministries of agriculture; livestock and fisheries; water and irrigation; and other stakeholders with expertise. And critically, women must be supported to learn, and to lead. Responding to a household's nutrition needs must involve the entire household: including the women.

¹ Rome Declaration on World Food Security. World Food Summit, 1996.

² **Photo voice** is an innovative participatory engagement method of facilitating participation by a group. The group generates photographic work that captures their lived experiences through their eyes.

³ **Participatory Video** is a participatory approach in which a community or small groups creates their own videos in relation to critical issues in their lives. This gives the community a chance to explore issues, voice their problems, and come up with solutions through creative stories.



Participatory action research methods: training on photovoice

Photovoice: Community members were trained on use of a camera, which they then used to take pictures about their daily lives. The pictures depicted specific themes - in this case, issues around food and nutrition insecurity. Later, the community members discussed and developed captions linking the pictures to the various themes.

*Mothers being shown how to
operate the cameras.*



*Later, they discuss the pictures they
took and develop captions.*



Participatory action research methods: community members take pictures and record videos

Participatory video: Community members developed a script to dramatize the challenges they face in their daily lives. They then acted out the script, depicting first-hand their experiences with food and nutrition insecurity. This was recorded on video for later dissemination.



Community members record videos to dramatize the challenges of food insecurity.



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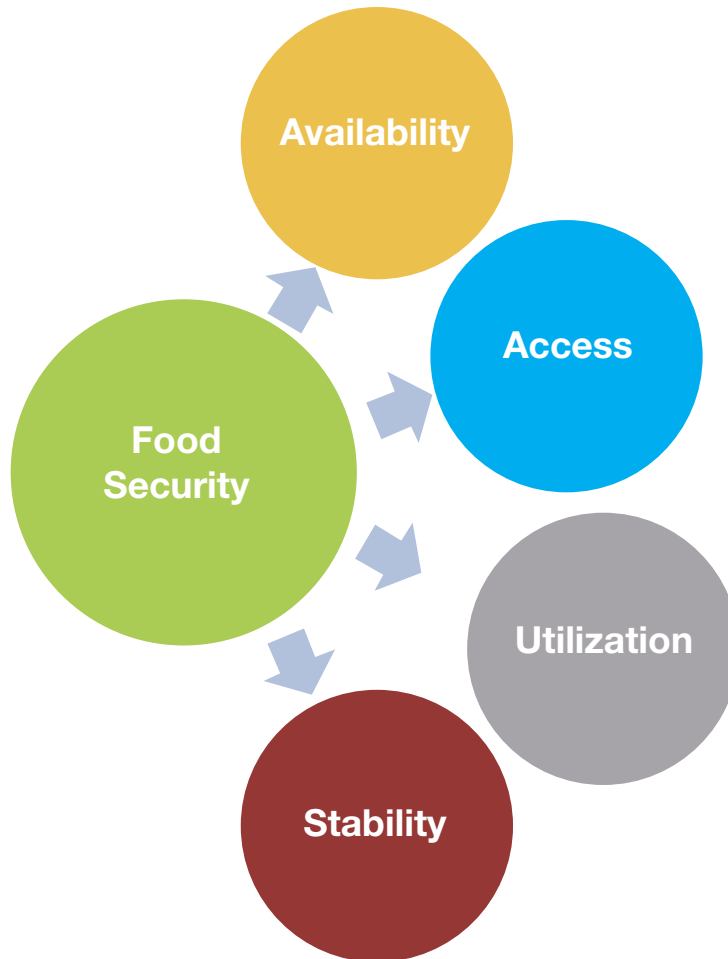


Maasai women take pictures of their surroundings and community.



Key findings from Voices for Action

The findings have been organized in four themes, which are the four pillars of food security.



1 Availability
Refers to sufficient quantities of appropriate food being physically available. The food may be from own production, commercial imports or food assistance.

2 Access
This means that there is adequate income and other resources to obtain sufficient and appropriate food through home production, purchase and gathering among other practices. Lack of access to adequate and diversified diet results in various forms of nutrition problems.

3 Utilization
Refers to the use of the food and is linked to an individual's health. It is affected by appropriate food processing and storage practices, adequate knowledge and application of nutrition and child care principles, as well as adequate health and sanitation services.

4 Stability
This encompasses the sustainability of the other three pillars.



1. Key findings: Food availability



Food availability is mainly hindered by environmental and economic factors. There is little arable land due to harsh climatic conditions. This makes it difficult for crop farming and limits availability of food in the community

Food adequacy within the household is influenced by the number of livestock owned. Livestock are a source of food for the household and a source of income, which enables purchase of food items. The more livestock the household owns, the stronger their perception of food adequacy.

During drought the selling of livestock to purchase food is affected. The lack of pasture results in emaciation of the animals and reduces their market value, which affects the amount of money available for food purchases.





Small numbers of livestock have an impact on food availability

"These few goats are the only resource the family has and therefore they cannot sustain their need for a balanced diet due to the level of poverty."

(Community health volunteer - Community dialogue)

Maasai translation

Ore ele marei naa kuna tare ake eeta neitodolu ajo ketii osina ele marei niaaku imebaiki enkinyiangunoto endaa naishiiakino tooseseni lenye.





Drought affects food availability

"In Oloika the livestock are emaciated due to the effects of drought and cannot be sold. Milk production is therefore very low affecting the people in the area."

(Community Health Extension Worker - Interview)

Maasai translation

"Ore toloika, keisasin inkishu tenkaraki olameyu niaku imemirayu nemeeta sii kule niaku ore iltungana lena murwua nenyamal naleng."





Diversifying food sources away from livestock can improve food availability

"People living in Shompole need to be advised on how to farm crops that do well in their area. There is need for community awareness on the importance of planting vegetables and their nutritional benefits."

(Community representative - Key informant interview)

Maasai translation

Keishaakino neitengene eneiku teneiremisho neutakini indaiki naishaakino enkulupuoni enkop enye.

Eisidai sii teneitengeni enkishaa eunoto oondaiki oo tipat enye.



2. Key findings: Food accessibility



Physical access

- The community relies on the major markets located in Shompole and Kiserian for purchase of foodstuffs such as flour, grains and vegetables.
- Both markets are located far from the Oloika and Lenkobei communities. Shompole is approximately 21 km away and Kiserian is 85 km away. The available means of transport means are unreliable, which further limits access to market produce for many in the community.
- The Shompole market is held only once a week, which limits the availability of food, especially vegetables, on the other days of the week.

Economic access

- Livestock are the main source of livelihood. The reliance on livestock affects the accessibility to food for households especially during drought periods when livestock become thin and emaciated. Community members experienced reduced incomes as they would be unable to sell their livestock.
- Other types of employment are not reliable, which leads to irregular income and food accessibility challenges.





Drought weakens livestock, which affects their sale

"During the dry season animals are very weak and cannot be sold thus we end up not having money to buy food."
(Older fathers - Focus group discussion)

Maasai translation

Ore enkata olameyu naa kesusu inkishu neiaku imemmirayu. Niaku naa keitodolu ajo immeetae iropiyani naainosiki endaa.





Limited employment opportunities impact economic access

"When men lack jobs their households have a big problem because women do not have good sources of income and this makes families poor. The community no longer depends on livestock due to the effects of drought and this has affected the family's access to food."

(Young women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore ake peyie eeku imeeta irpayiani isiaitin, neitodolu ajo kenyamalu irmareita neisulaki teniaaku imeeta si ninche inkituuak irkasin. Ore oshi tekuna olongi, naa imeramat irmaasai inkishu enaapa tenkaraki ilameeuyutin. Ore tenkaraki nemeekure eramati inkishu kumok oleng, neitanyamal ina inkera ontomono.





Unstable jobs limit economic access

"This young man works in this barber shop. He sometimes lacks customers and ends up not getting paid. He goes home with no money nor food. His family depends on him because his parents are jobless."

(Young women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore ena esiai enye emirare naa kiasita aasaki olopeny ena aji embaranare. Ore kulie katitin naa nemetum ilainyanyak niaku naa kelo ang meeta endaa arashu impisai naayaki ormarei lenye hoo naa ninye.





Women's participation in economic activities is low but rising

"Nowadays women provide great support at the household level as they also do small businesses unlike in the past when they were not allowed to...their work was to bear children and look after animals..."

(Community Health Volunteer - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore oshi taata intomono naa kenyokita sii niche irmareita lenye aas imbiasharani nemetiu enaa apa meishori metaasa.





Business enterprises that women engage in are small

"This woman is selling cooking oil to be able to provide for her children. In most cases, women have no good sources of income and do minor jobs to support their families."

(Young mothers – Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore ena pisha neitodolo entomononi namirita eilata nayierishoreki peyie etum aitotioi nkera enyenak. Ore inkatitin kumok naa ekenyok aas isiaatin naijo kuna peyie etum aataramt irmareita lenye.



3 . Key findings: Food utilization



- Food usage within households is linked to availability of water. Lack of clean water influences how food is utilized at home especially with regards to food preparation.
- Water scarcity is especially serious during drought periods. This causes women in the community to travel long distances to access water.
- Rivers act as the main water sources even though they are not clean and are shared by human beings as well as livestock.
- In times of scarcity, food sharing plans may put some family members at risk of inadequate food.

For example, in such times, children eat food from one plate, hence the younger ones may not have enough. Women are also often the very last to eat, which may mean that they do not get enough food.





Limited access to clean water affects meal preparation

"We only have one jerrycan and some of us don't have donkeys to carry our water so we can only get 20 liters, which the family uses in the household for cooking, cleaning and livestock. The water is not enough for all of our needs."
(Older women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Oltoo obo ake itum lenkare naa ninye engorita inkishu, onkera, peyie eyirishoreki nitukishoreki. Nemebaiki ina are nena siiatin pookin.





Children may have to share inadequate food

“(These) children are eating together because the food is not enough for individual plates.”
(Older women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore tene nkidolita nkera naainosita endaa tesaani nabo amu mmeetae endaa naorikini isanini epookin ngae.





Obtaining water from unsafe sources affects meal preparation

“A person is fetching water and another woman is bathing her child using the same water. This means water is not safe and needs to be treated by boiling or treatment tablets since it is contaminated and can cause diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea and other water-borne diseases.”

(Community Health Volunteer - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Lele oltungani ogira aoku ekare naa nena enkitok nagira sii ninye aituku enkerai enye teilo reyiet obo. Niauku ketodolu ajo imeserian ina are peyie eoki. Niaku keishaakino peyie engasi aitokitokie arashu epiki irkieek oitobir amu teneme nejia kelelek eyaau imoyiaritin ekare elototo oonkshuak.





Few meals for children due to many demands on mothers

"When I go to fetch water along the river, it takes time because there are many people and very little water. I get home late in the evening and my children spend the day alone with no food nor water."

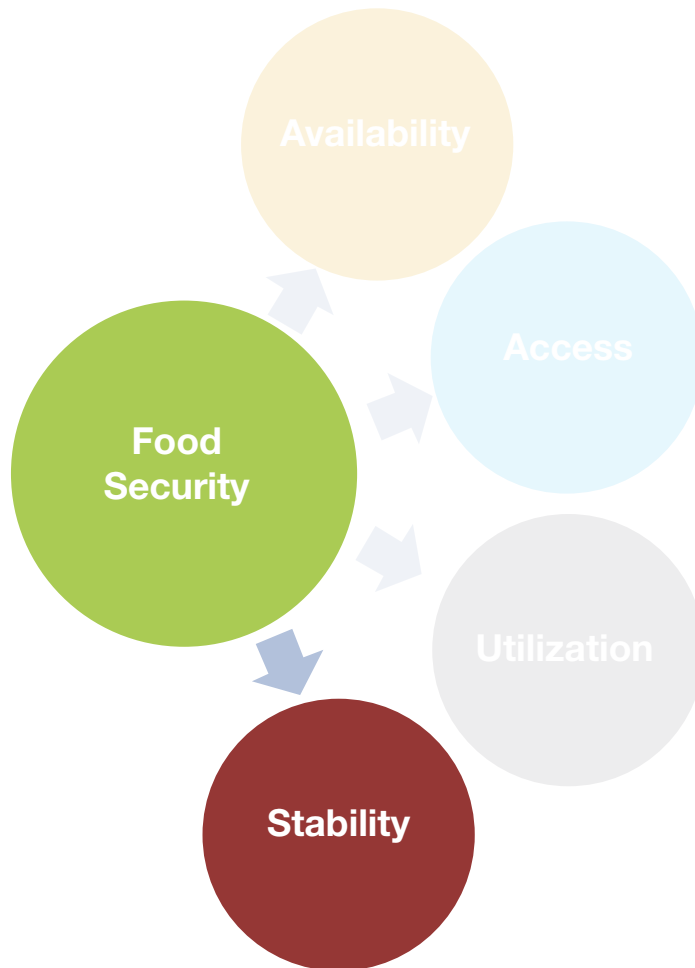
(Older mothers - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Immeeta intomonok pooki isirkon ooirot. Ore oshi tenalo aoku enkare naa kaya errishata sapuk amu eikumok iltungana naa kiti duo ake ninye enkare. Kiaku alo ade atum enkare ade emuto oleng natunguyie duo inkera ainie tiang aa ninche ake oopeny meeta endaa nemeeta enkare.



4. Key findings: Food stability



- Households in the community are not food secure and stable if they have few livestock in comparison to households with higher numbers of livestock.
- Homes are also seen to be food unstable when the men who are in charge of buying food are largely absent and not available to buy the food.
- Migration leads to food instability as the population is forced to migrate away from food sources in search of pasture for their livestock during drought periods.





Migration destabilizes access to food

"Yes it happens. People migrate very far and businesses lack customers to purchase their commodities."
(Older women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Kesipa akiaasa. Ekiidurr iltungana aapuo enelakua aas enkinyianga oemirrare kake elau ilainyangak oomirake imasaas enye.





Migration affects food availability and accessibility, leading to food instability

"Migration affects us because when we move away from the market we cannot access food produce."
(Younger mothers - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore enaidura naa keitanyamal iyiok amu ekilamari oleng aalam osokoni niauku imikitum indaiki pooki nikiyieu.





Seasonality affects food availability and accessibility

"We have land to cultivate but we only benefit during the rainy season since there is water shortage during the dry season. Currently all the vegetables and fruits supplied here are either from Kiserian or Ngurumani."

(Key Informant Interview – Chairman, Lenkobei)

Maasai translation

Kesipa ekiaataa enkop kake enkata ake enchan ake kidupo tenkarake keetae enyamali eknkare tenkata olameyu..... niaku ore tinaka naa pesho ake. Ore tenarishata naa ore impuka ormatunta likiaata naa kiserian orashu nkuruman enguaa.



Socio-cultural issues influencing food security

- 1 Women are not empowered to make decisions on food purchases in the home as this is considered to be the man's responsibility. When men are away, there is insufficient food.
- 2 The cultural practice of denying pregnant women adequate food to prevent them from getting big may contribute to delivery complications. However, this practice has diminished with time.
- 3 Cultural preferences in sharing of food may lead to women skipping meals during times of scarcity.
- 4 Other socio-cultural issues include women not being allowed to farm as individuals. They can only do this in groups according to men in the community.
- 5 Pregnant women are overworked even though they may not receive adequate nutrition.





Pregnant women are overworked and underfed

"Pregnant woman looking after livestock, carrying water and she is probably expected to come back in the evening and cook. This is risky for the child and mother's health. She needs to rest but she has no option."

(Young mothers - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Idolita egira aaramat inkishu enye, nenapita enkare neidimayu ade naa ninye engorita eyiarare enkaji enye tenteipa. Ore ena naa enyamali tebiotisho entomononi oenkerai enye.





Pregnant women are overworked and underfed

"This woman is expectant and has been looking after livestock and now going to fetch water. She may have woken up early in the morning and taken only tea spending the whole day hungry."

(Community Health Volunteer - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore enakitok naa kenuta netii sii shoo.eidimayu neinyio duo tenkakenya oleng naa olturunki ake enoto nelo aarru endama pooki meeta ai daa nainosa.





Female-headed households are highly vulnerable to food insecurity

"In families where women are widowed, they are the sole bread winners. In such families, if the woman does not have an income, she is unable to buy food and they sleep hungry. In such scenarios, children and pregnant women are the most affected."

(Older women - Photovoice)

Maasai translation

Ore inkatitin kumok naa intomonok naingorita imareita lenye. Ore kulie katitin naatae inkolia naa kenyamal amu ore ake tenelau endaa nepukoo ilo marei ina along. Intomonok naanuta taa oshi nanyamal oleng tenia rishata.



Recommendations

- The community provided some key recommendations on how to address some of the challenges they face
- They also identified stakeholders they would want to support them strengthen their food security

Government agencies

Support food and nutrition security:

- Provide food aid to poor families
- Support income generating activities:
- Supply of seeds to plant and cultivate crops, farming equipment, farming and irrigation training
- Provide market stalls for mothers and improve the roads to increase accessibility to the markets
- Women representatives to support women groups and assist in registration certificates so that they can access loans
- Knowledge and economic empowerment of women and girls as decision making in the household is seen to improve with education

Strengthen water security:

- Construct reservoir dams or sink boreholes where appropriate
- Provide storage tanks and water treatment solutions
- Create awareness on the consequences of drinking dirty water and how to make the water safer for home use

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

- Provide training on farming methods and supply farming equipment as well as seeds
- Create awareness within the community on benefits of taking care of pregnant women
- Empower women in the community by providing entrepreneurship training; markets to sell their produce (such as beads); and, financial assistance to enable them to start businesses
- Distribute water treatment solutions such as Water Guard within the communities



Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)

- Community self-help groups to encourage their members to save especially during the rainy season
- Create awareness on other income generating activities that the community can participate in
- Support in creating awareness on proper food and nutrition practices for pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as children under five years
- Create awareness on the need for communities to take girls to school

Community leaders

- Create awareness on importance of feeding and taking care of pregnant women in the community
- Encourage community to save more when there is rain so as to use the money for food during drought
- Appoint a committee that will maintain the water infrastructure e.g. water pipes
- Create awareness on the need for community members to separate water sources for animals and humans.
- Educate on water treatment methods e.g. by boiling to avoid water-borne diseases
- Sensitize community on the importance of girls education
- Encourage communities to harvest rainwater for household use

Other key players: private sector engagement

- Conduct trainings on income generating activities and irrigation
- Provide water to the community in water tankers or bowsers

Other recommendations

- Value addition of dairy products to increase shelf life.
- Enhance market of livestock and livestock products.



Conclusion

- Addressing the four pillars of food security among pastoral communities living in arid areas will require concerted efforts from the stakeholders. This includes members of the communities and their representatives, government agencies and non-governmental organizations.
- It is important for these communities to take up alternative sources of livelihood. This will reduce over-reliance on livestock trading which is affected by environmental conditions and hinders attainment of household food security.
- Cultivation of crops for food availability is minimal. Adoption of farming using drought resistant crops with support of irrigation should therefore be supported.
- Gender empowerment is needed to overcome the cultural barriers that have limited the role of women in decision making in the households.



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