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The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative



Women group during the sense-making workshop – Rocrocdong Payam, Jur River County.

SENSE – MAKING WORKSHOP REPORT

JUR RIVER COUNTY

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Sensemaking Workshop Report

Jur River County

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Acronyms

APM	Area Program Manager
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GBV	Gender-based Violence
IPs	Implementing Partners
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
VSLA	Village Savings and Loan

Introduction

The Policy LINK team recently conducted a series of sense-making workshops in Jur River County. The payam-based sense-making workshops were organized to empower the community with the evidence they need to set their resilience priorities and conduct action planning and implementation that is consistent with USAID's four-year, scenario-based strategy for South Sudan, which uses a community-focused approach to help targeted households and communities move beyond a critical need for humanitarian aid and assume greater responsibility in shaping their future. Through this sense-making workshop, Policy LINK aimed to promote collaborative learning by equipping USAID Implementing Partners (IPs), community members, local government, and other stakeholders with the preliminary findings from the community resilience mapping exercise concluded on November 4, 2021. The community resilience mapping focused on different perspectives of how communities operate as a system and the critical institutions, structures, processes, and capacities available and relevant to the USAID South Sudan strategy. It explored how the communities and institutions organize themselves, cooperate, collaborate, and make decisions to remain shocked and stress-responsive, mitigate the impact of shocks, protect development gains, and facilitate a speedy recovery. This sense-making workshop allowed the community and stakeholders to make sense of the critical issues that emerged from the mapping, identify critical issues, prioritize, and offer locally-led solutions for addressing them.

The sense-making workshop employed the appreciative and facilitative leadership approach that allows Policy LINK to put the community first in the community resilience process by empowering communities through sharing the evidence for action planning and implementation of community-led resilience programs and setting the community-driven development agenda. The sense-making workshops started on November 27, 2021 and were concluded on December 17, 2021, at the payam level (three days per payam). The Policy LINK team plans to conduct a similar workshop at the county and state levels in mid-February 2022.

Purpose and Objectives

The overall purpose of the sense-making workshops was:

- To continue building momentum towards effective collaboration between the citizens of Jur River County and USAID IPs by preparing communities for joint integrated planning.

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Share the preliminary findings from the community resilience mapping exercise;
- Start a bottom-up approach to evidence-informed resilience priority-setting and decision-making by reviewing the community resilience mapping findings;
- Begin engaging citizens in dialogue for voicing aspirations and document the articulated resilience priorities, needs, and actions; and
- Select payam representatives for the county-wide workshop in January 2022.

PARTICIPANTS

The payam administration invited the participants for the workshops. The payam administrator was given the sole responsibility, as advised by the Jur River County Commissioner, to ensure inclusive participation of the four corners of the community. The Area Program Managers (APMs) urged them to select participants that conform to the set criteria.

The number of participants: 35 participants participated on each day of the workshop selected from specific community categories per day. The three-day workshop brought together 105 participants per payam over three days, which totaled 630 participants across the six payams of Jur River County.

Participants' composition: The three groups that formed each day of the workshops included Day 1: youth and private sector, Day 2: women group, Day 3: traditional and local authority. The civil society organizations (CSOs) were represented throughout the three groups.

DAY 1: Youth & Private Sector

The youth group consisted of both male and female youths. Though the majority were male, many female youth joined this group. Criteria demanded 20 youth and 15 from the private sector. This varied from one



payam to the other regarding the number of youth and private sector representatives selected. Among the youth, there was a representation of out of school, in school, employed, unemployed, representatives of youth union, youth leaders, and CSOs. Participants from the private sector included those involved in subsistence agriculture, commercial agriculture, fishers, boda-boda riders, restaurant owners/workers, open market vendors, members of chambers of commerce, members of the organized enterprise, brick making, charcoal burning, carpentry, building and joinery, mechanics, and leaders of persons with

disabilities. Two participants were selected for the county-level workshop, one from the youth and another from the private sector.

DAY 2: Women Group

The women group comprised women from many walks of life, including women working in the formal sector, single mothers, petty traders, farmers, and the unemployed. Five members per group were selected to make 35 participants. The women who attended also represented different bomas in the payams.

DAY 3: Local and Traditional Authority

The traditional authority group comprised elders, chiefs (black/red color¹), gol leaders (herdsmen), spear masters/spiritual leaders, members who sit on local courts /traditional courts, female chief, and payam administration. Five members were selected from each group to make 35 participants. In each group, the persons with disabilities were represented throughout.



¹ The Red color-coded chiefs are Executive Chiefs, while the black color-coded chiefs are the Sub Chiefs.

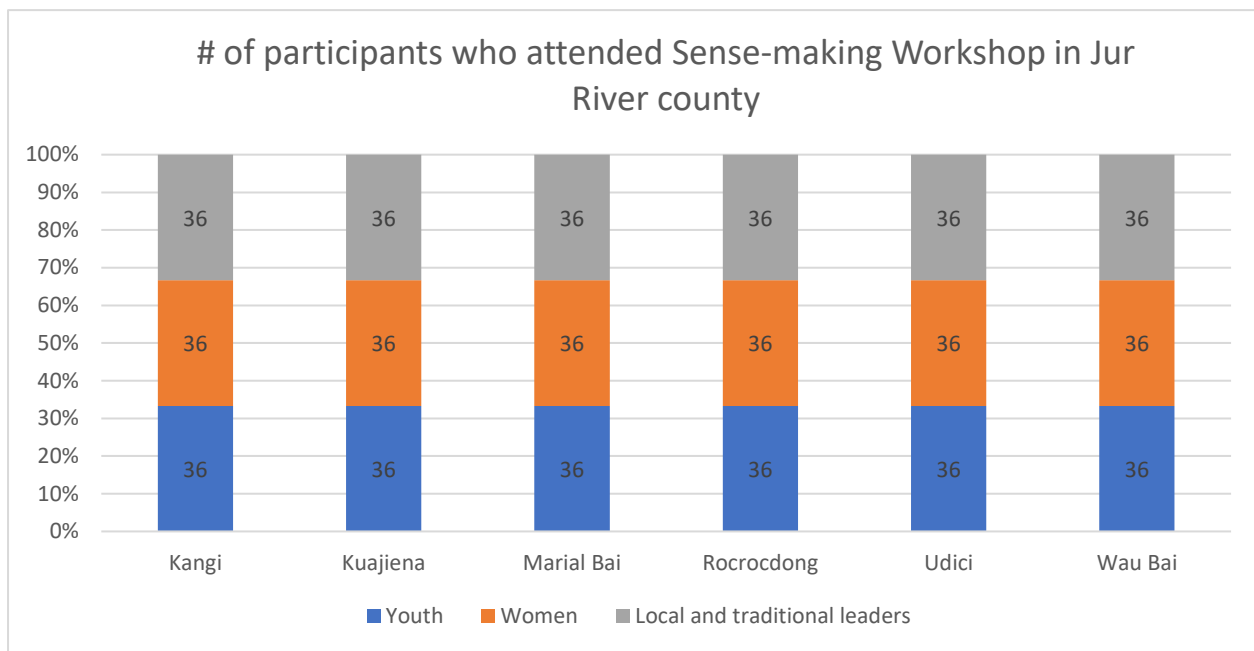


Table I. Breakdown of Participants by Demographic Group

LOCATION	PARTICIPANTS			Total	Female	Male
	Youth	Women	Local and traditional leaders			
Payam						
Kangi	36	36	36	108	51	57
Kuajiena	36	36	36	108	41	67
Marial Bai	36	36	36	108	38	70
Rocrocdong	36	36	36	108	32	76
Udici	36	36	36	108	55	53
Wau Bai	36	36	36	108	44	64
All Payams	216	216	216	648	261	387

Source: Policy LINK. Sense-making workshop

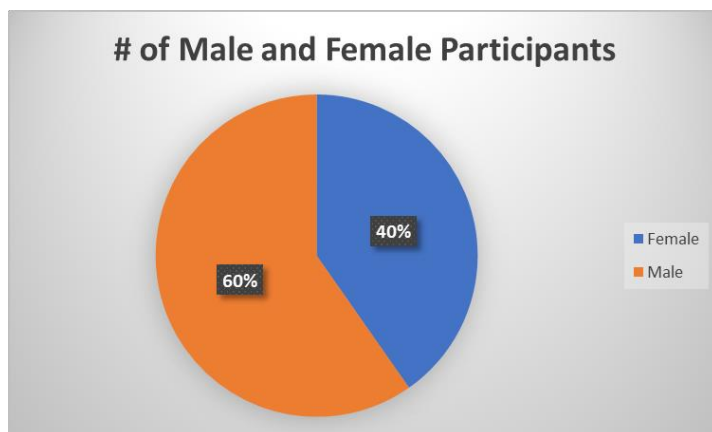
Figure 1. Breakdown of Participants by Demographic Group



Source: Policy LINK data. Sense-Making Workshop

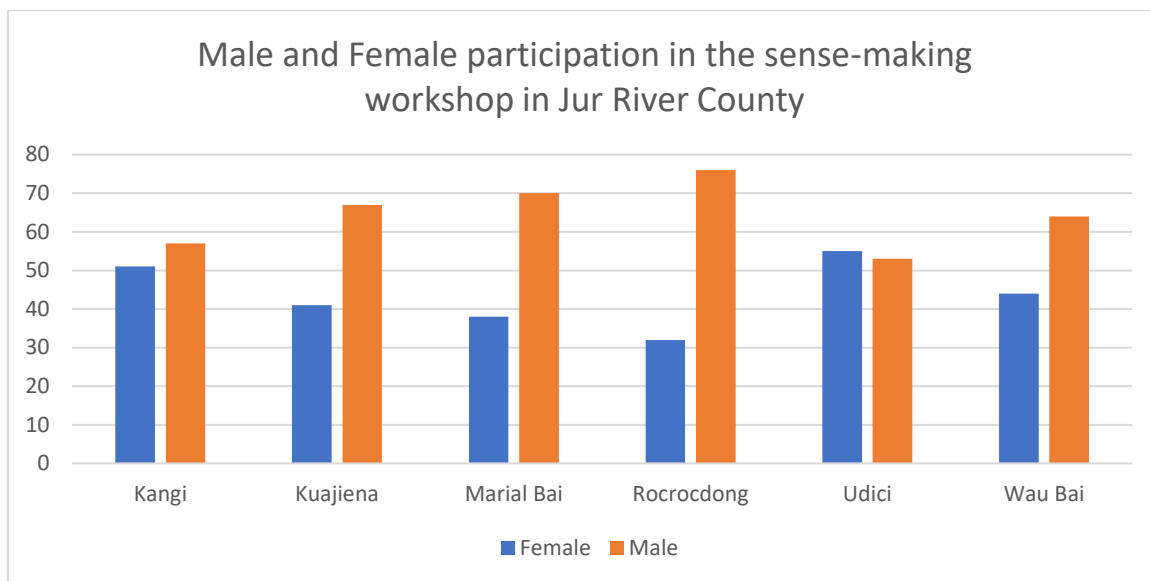
Figure 1 demonstrates the level of inclusivity achieved during the selection and participation of the community members in the sense-making workshop. All corners of the community per the categories are fully represented equally in these workshops throughout the six payams of Jur River County.

Figure 2. Breakdown of Participants by Gender



The figure above further underscores the gender dimension, though male still remains the highest number of participants in this workshop. Still, a significant number of female participants engaged in this process and have had the opportunity to have their voices heard.

Figure 3. Breakdown of Participants by Gender per Payam



Methodology

The following methodologies were employed during these sense-making workshops:

In-person presentations:

APMs, through the printed charts, were able to present the key findings from the community resilience mapping during the plenary session, followed by a question and answer sessions before group breakout sessions.

Group Discussions:

To facilitate an in-depth understanding that allows for responding to the questions in English, Luo, and Dinka languages, the participants of the sense-making workshops were divided into mostly five groups to discuss and translate questions and answer them. They then reported back the key points during the plenary session.



Sense-making Workshop Preparations

The Policy LINK team started this activity with a briefing of the commissioner, followed by a payam-level planning session where the payam administrators were assigned to lead the mobilization of the participants. The meeting brought the payam administrator, payam chiefs, Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC), and youth representatives/leaders. The APMs briefed the attendants about the plan and purpose of the sense-making workshops, the number of participants, and the selection criteria, requesting the payam

administrator to ensure selection based on the requirements and regional balance, and he should include the community leaders in the selection. For example, they were urged to involve the Paramount chief in the selection process of the chiefs, youth, and women leaders when selecting the participants representing their group in the workshop to ensure inclusivity and mitigation of conflict. This led to the successful selection of an inclusive group that represented the four corners of the community (local and traditional authority, private sector, and the CSOs).

The Policy LINK team also developed the following documents in preparation for the workshop: participant selection criteria, an agile training schedule, attendance form, transport/other payments allowance form, printings of the charts, and handouts in bulk.

The following items were provided to the participants besides allowances, facemasks, and hand sanitizers in compliance with the covid protocols: pens, flipcharts, marker pens, notebooks. Two large banners were displayed throughout the venue of the payams.

The Policy LINK team also worked with the vendor to provide tents, chairs, tables, and transportation services to transport, erect, and disassemble the tents, chairs, and tables a day before the work started, and after the workshop ended to transport the equipment to the following workshop location.

Daily Activity Summary

Arrival and Registration

Every morning, mostly at 9:00 am, the workshop started with the participants' registration, including reviewing the list of the participants provided against the selection criteria which was distributed to the payams administration during the initial workshop planning sessions to ensure that the suitable participant was selected and invited into the workshop. This was followed by issuing the facemasks and hand sanitizing for all the participants, including the facilitators and translators.

Starting time varies from one payam to the other depending on distances to the payam and the time taken to resolve issues around the participants lists.

Introduction and Opening

APMs led the process of introducing the team, including welcoming the payam administrators to give the opening and welcoming remarks. The payam administrators or their designees duly opened all the workshops.

Framing the Workshop

Once each workshop was opened, the APMs provided an administrative briefing that included how lunch and transport reimbursement would be paid, including the amount. In Udici, Rocrongdong, and Marial Bai payams, local arrangements were made for providing lunch and breakfast. Otherwise, lunch allowances were mostly paid during lunch break, and transport reimbursements were compensated after the end of the workshop. All participants were asked to sign the attendance and payment sheets before payment was effected.

During this time, APMs also emphasized COVID-19 standard operating procedures and why they must be observed; showing where the handwashing facilities, additional masks, and hand sanitizers could be found whenever needed.

APMs explained that Policy LINK would not provide funding for any ideas to manage expectations effectively during the workshop. Policy also explained that participants should be able to speak freely without fear,

there would be equal opportunity to contribute ideas, and Policy LINK would be reporting the outcome of the workshop to USAID and the USAID IPs.

Expectations and ground rules included:

- Certificate at the end of the workshop
- Distribution of visibility materials such as branded t-shirts.
- Transport reimbursement
- Lunch and break
- Keeping phones on silent
- Avoiding unnecessary movement
- Timekeeping; punishment for those who failed to keep time was singing and dancing

Participants were also asked to share their expectations and ground rules to help with the management of the workshop. The PL team further clarified expectations that could not be met at the workshop time; for example, providing certificates and t-shirts for the participants after the workshop was a few of the expectations that could not be met. Workshop purpose and objectives were also shared during this time.

Setting the Stage – Contextualizing Community Resilience

The purpose of this session was to elicit a common point of reference for community participants where APMs provided a deeper description of what USAID Policy LINK is, what we do that is different from other USAID projects, and Policy LINK’s approach to building community-led resilience. This session focused on the Policy LINK technical approach (Policy LINK’s technical process below).

Figure 4. Policy LINK Technical Process



Session 1.2: Shocks and Stressors Affecting Jur River County

The APM presented the findings on shocks and stresses that have affected Jur River County since independence, followed by a question and answer session, where participants critiqued the results (i.e., add, subtract, agree, and disagree with the findings that emanated from the survey). The majority of the participants approved the findings as facts that reflect the reality on the ground.

While in other payams, the below questions were answered in the plenary sessions, most of them were responded to in small groups of about seven members each. Each group was given sufficient time to

adequately answer the questions and then report out during a plenary session. Sometimes two to three or all questions were given to the group to answer depending on time available and the availability of those that can lead the session in recording the discussions and critical points for report out.

The following questions and answers were reported from the group discussions or during the plenary sessions.

Questions

1. List one to three actions that this community must take to reduce the impact of these shocks?

Violent conflict:

- Faith-based organizations to take the lead in peace promotion activities at the community and grassroots level

- Empowering the youth with vocational skills by encouraging them to join the Don Bosco training center would engage the youth in a positive activity which would reduce their tendency to play any role in conflict promotion



- The community, through the parents and teachers association, would establish youth peace clubs both at primary, secondary, and in all the youth associations and football clubs
- Establish theatrical activities for peacebuilding and social cohesion where skilled actors would present peace play and poetry competitions at payam and boma levels
- The community structures such as the chiefs, local government, youth, women, civil society organizations, and peace committee to take ownership of local solutions for regional conflicts
- The community would take the lead in promoting respect to the rule of law in collaboration with the county, payam, and bomas
- The community to take the lead in the promotion of a culture of acceptance among the community and between communities
- In collaboration with peacebuilding partners and the local government, the local community to encourage interclan, intertribal, and inter-community peace and conflict resolution workshops and dialogues
- Promote and plan for inter-community, intertribal, and interclan joint significant celebrations such as the county, harvest, Christmas, and independence days

- To mitigate conflict, the community would have to reorganize itself to become more responsive to conflict shock
- In coordination with cattle migrating communities, the community with its partners to lead awareness sessions and campaigns regarding the Marial Bai agreement
- The community and its partners to empower the peace committee to lead in conflict mitigation and resolution through grassroots level awareness campaigns and sessions regarding the role of the peace committee in conflict resolutions and mitigation
- Chiefs from conflicting parties to plan and convene joint regular peace and conflict mitigation meetings and coordinate during conflict and after any conflict
- The community in coordination with the local government and peace partners to promote and establish an information-sharing platform for effective response during conflict
- Peace committee to adopt peace messaging at the grassroots level (boma and villages)
- The community, through its structures, lobby the government of the state to initiate a disarmament campaign
- Increase social cohesion activities to reduce or curtail tribalism and clannism attitudes and behavior
- Coordination between the traditional courts, regular government courts, and police is critical in conflict resolution. This is related explicitly to criminals sent to jail by the conventional courts. Still, later the individuals are released from prison because of a lack of respect towards the traditional courts and chiefs.

Flooding:

- To ease flooding, the community has the workforce dig waterways and canals to reduce flooding
- The community has the workforce mobilize its human resources to construct dykes, but this needs support from partners to provide bulldozers or excavators for the construction of more stable dykes
- The community could promote early cultivation to reduce the impact of flooding on agricultural activities
- The community would promote and encourage communities living in lowlands to move to higher ground to reduce the impact of flooding on farms and dwellings
- During flooding, affected households to be encouraged and supported to move to nearby areas that are not flooded
- Flooding impacts households and communities' food security; the community would close the food gap or hunger gap by promoting a sustainable wild food harvesting/collection

Economic Shock:

- To reduce the impact of economic shocks, the community encourages adopting sustainable charcoal making business
- The community should adopt the ancestral wild food collection
- The community would reduce the impact of economic shock by hunting approved wild animals and encourage traditional ways of storing dry meat
- The community to adopt sustainable fishing activities (not to catch small fish) for both home and market to close the hunger gap
- The community and its partners to promote agriculture as the only viable means to reduce the impact of the economic shock

- To reduce the impact of economic shock, the community would encourage the collection of firewood and elephant grass for the market
- Construction of central grain storage facilities in the community with partners' support would help the community members adopt a seasonal grain collection and storage to serve as a buffer that would mitigate against economic shock.

Crop Pest

- Encourage early cultivation to reduce the impact of crop pest
- Use locally made mixed organic pesticides such as neem, hot pepper, or ashes to combat crop pest outbreaks
- In collaboration with its partners, the community would promote crop spacing methods that reduce the impact of crop pest
- Move the farms to other locations with fewer pest outbreaks
- The community with its partners to hold awareness sessions on the benefits of adopting and making a pesticide spray from boiled mahogany leaves/wood
- Encourage the community to make and use an organic boiled local tobacco spray to terminate and chase away the pests
- Community to promote planting local seeds because they are resilient to the local context environment

Livestock Disease

- Encourage, develop, and promote the adoption of treating humans and livestock with local herbal medicines
- Encourage and promote livestock vaccination in partnership and coordination with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

Fire

- Plan and implement a bushfire awareness campaign to discourage bush burning for purposes such as hunting or random bush burning in the forest to reduce the impact or mitigate wildfire destruction

Death of a family member:

- In coordination with the government and well-wishers, the community will support the construction of a bridge over Jur River to reduce the impact of people drowning

2. Name one activity that would allow for cooperation and collaboration between this community and the implementing partners?

- Planning and promoting peace dialogue meetings at the community and grassroots level
- Awareness creation and orientation of the local communities about the roles, objectives, and work plans of the IPs
- Joint resilience education and awareness at the payam and boma levels
- Joint work planning between the community and IP would facilitate cooperation and collaboration
- Organization, establishment, and awareness activities regarding the benefits of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs)
- Joint gender-based violence (GBV) awareness activities between the community stakeholders and the IPs

- To ensure greater community participation in local decision-making and increased collaboration and coordination with IPs, we encourage regular consultative meetings within the community stakeholders and IPs.

3. Name one activity that would allow for cooperation and collaboration between this community and other communities in the county?

- Cross or inter-community peace and dialogues workshops and training
- Promotion of inter-community youth competitions and games such as football
- Intercommunity business activity promotions such as weekly markets that move between communities
- Encourage and promote Inter-community marriages
- Joint quarterly cultural events, activities, and competitions such as (cultural dance competitions, county days, etc.)
- Agricultural benefits public awareness sessions
- Joint chiefs' conventions on peace and conflict resolution and mitigation meetings/workshops
- Construction of access roads between communities under food for assets programs

4. Name one activity that would allow for cooperation and collaboration between this community and the local government?

- Schedule regular social events and community awareness activities
- Schedule regular public meetings between the government and the community
- Peace committee to champion and lead the mitigation aspects of the causes of conflict between pastoralists and farmers
- Information sharing through the structures between the local government and the community would allow for and facilitate cooperation and collaboration
- Community integration meetings led by the traditional and local authorities
- Collaborative governance promotion activities such as community members participating in the local decision-making process
- Awareness and education of chiefs and law enforcement agencies on the Local Government Act
- Cooperation and coordination on issues related to forest and natural resource management through local community and government policy development sessions
- Customary law awareness and development
- Increase the participation of community members in the local decision-making process

Session 1.3: Resilience Capacities

The second session focused on the three main resilience capacities: absorptive, adaptive, and transformative; it was the most extended presentation with about 22 slides compared to the first session, with about 16 slides focusing on shock identification and exposure. The presentations framed the relevance of resilience capacities to USAID strategy and community-led resilience. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session, where participants are given a chance to critique the findings (i.e., add, subtract, agree,

and disagree with the results that emanated from the survey). The majority of the participants approved the findings as facts that reflect the reality on the ground.

Five small groups of 6-7 members each discussed the questions posed and reported them in the plenary. This time, it focused on resilience capacities: absorptive, adaptive, and transformative.

Questions

1. *Name one to three actions that this community must take to mitigate against conflict.*

- Activate Marial Bai Agreement between pastoralist and farmers
- Educate the community on the resolutions of the Marial Bai Agreement
- Compensation of damages related to cattle migration
- Discourage the culture of revenge and encourage the community to follow the rule of law related to homicide involving youths and women in conflict mitigation and resolution activities
- Strengthen the capacity of the law enforcement agencies
- Control alcohol consumption and distribution to mitigate conflict brought about by alcohol
- Church institutions to champion peace messaging during mass
- Lobby the government to include conflict resolution and peace studies in the curriculum for primary and secondary school
- Fair and transparent employment practices such as the one adopted by DAI will reduce or mitigate conflict around issue of employment mistrust
- Conflict sensitivity awareness training
- Community to promote and encourage coordination between the traditional courts, regular government courts, and police to mitigate and resolve conflict
- Promote, encourage, and plan chiefs' coordination meetings for peaceful coexistence

2. *Name one to three actions that this community must take to increase the absorptive capacity of households in this community for responding to shocks and stressors?*

- Promote the agricultural land expansion
- Through diversification of livelihood sources such as vocational training
- Increase the yield and storage of more food by adopting new improving practices
- Train and develop the VSLA groups in financial and investment management practices.
- Enhance the storage facilities to cope with and absorb the positive increase in yield
- Cultivate cassava because it has the potential to increase the absorptive capacity since it could continue to grow even off the season
- Seek payments from people you loan money or cattle to
- The ability of the community to construct dykes
- Train community members to practice sustainable wild leaves and food collection to reduce the hunger gap
- Fishing as a coping mechanism to absorb the shock

3. *Name one to three actions that this community must take to increase the adaptive capacity of households to recover from shocks and stressors?*

- Adapt to continuous farming such as practicing gardening during the dry season in the swamps and regular wet season cultivation
- Short term variety adoption to help the communities adapt to flooding and dry spells
- Early seeds distribution would increase the adaptive capacity and reduces community vulnerability to flooding
- Early land/farm preparation to increase the adaptive capacity with unpredictable rain
- Invite extended family members to help in the cultivation
- Group farming culture is encouraged because it reduces dependency and helps communities that are lacking tools such as ox plowing to increase the cultivated land area

4. *Name one to three actions that this community must take to increase the transformative capacity of households to recover from shocks and stressors?*

- Ox plowing adoption transforms the capacity of the community to produce more food
- Group farming adoption would transform and increase the area cultivated
- Provision of agricultural extension services would train the community in adopting improved ways and methods of farming
- Hire laborers to help during the cultivation period. This has the potential to transform the livelihood of communities by increasing the food security level of communities
- Sell cattle to hire farm laborers, ox plowing tools, and tractors. This is a mindset transformation that has the potential of changing the food security dynamic at the community level
- Seed banking awareness - adoption of this practice would reduce dependency on seed sourcing and distribution and would facilitate early cultivation if the rain comes early
- Increase the storage capacities to cater to increase in yield
- Inclusive participation of all community members in the decision-making process would transform community social cohesion
- Business development training at the grassroots level would develop the transformative capacity of markets
- By providing microfinance and cooperative societies development in the community would increase access to business finance
- Adoption of vegetable farming would transform the health and economic abilities of the local community
- Development of agricultural schemes that could stabilize the economy
- Youth development and empowerment through vocational and business training would increase the livelihood sources of communities
- Provision of extension services (agriculture and livestock) would educate the communities and help them transform by adapting to new ideas and revolutionizing agricultural and livestock sectors
- Fruit planting would increase the livelihood sources of communities and potentially its resilience capacity

- By mechanization of the farming industries through the adoption of tractors and ox plowing practices
- Fishing practices education and awareness would improve the sustainability practices of water resources at the community level, for example (no to fishing of small fish)
- Encourage and strengthen the VSLA loan practices via training in financial management practices
- Invest in new ideas in cattle rearing practices where an economic value is introduced
- Build access roads with our workforce (the community constructed seven access roads) this could increase peace activities between communities and reduce conflict

5. *What actions can the implementing partners adopt to increase the mobilization and participation of local communities in their resilience programs?*

- Implementing partners must use the existing community structures for mobilization; for example, ask the youth leaders to mobilize the youth and the women and traditional leaders to do the same for their relevant groups.
- Conduct regular consultation with the community leaders when planning and allocating resources to each area; for example, when planning for food distribution, the community leaders must be involved to allow for transparency and accountability.

Lessons Learned

The selection criteria were instrumental in ensuring inclusivity in selecting the participants for the sense-making workshop. The requirements must be precise, and authorities must receive a thorough orientation before applying for it to work.

Once the local traditional wisdom and systems are integrated, respected, strengthened, and allowed to be part of the programming, it lays the foundation for the sustainability of the programs that are being implemented.

It is essential to give enough time between payam workshops to help mitigate unforeseen logistical constraints.

Challenges

Limited time was allocated between the payam-level workshops, making it impossible logistically to maintain the schedule as initially envisioned.

Each payam context was different regarding access to catering services, which was unclear from the beginning, forcing the team to make last-minute changes and provide this service per payam differently depending on each context.

APMs had to conduct the facilitation of the workshop alone and at the same time take notes because of the limitation of time and human resources.

It was a windy and dry season where the use of flip chart stands proved challenging because the wind kept blowing them down. Eventually, one of the borrowed flip chart stands was broken.

The amount of material presented was overwhelming for the participants to process within the allocated time.