



FEED ^{THE} FUTURE

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

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY- LED RESILIENCE: LESSONS FROM SOUTH SUDAN

Volume III – Collaboration and Mutual Accountability

*Good practices for equipping communities with the information
to address resilience priorities*



South Sudan

PUBLICATION DATE: JUNE 2022



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



I. Background

In South Sudan, USAID integrates humanitarian, peacebuilding, and development assistance to promote household and community resilience. USAID’s goal is to strengthen the foundation for a more self-reliant South Sudan. It does so through four Development Objectives.

- DOI: Meeting basic needs of communities in crisis, while decreasing aid dependence,
- DO2: Household resilience increased in targeted areas,
- DO3: Improved social cohesion in targeted areas, and
- DO4: Government of South Sudan more responsive to its citizens.

The USAID Policy LINK Activity supports the achievement of these objectives by promoting collaborative governance, facilitative leadership, evidence-based decision-making, and the convergence of community and donor resources for joint work planning in five of the 13 counties encompassing the USAID Resilience Focus Zones: Akobo, Budi, Jur River, Kapoeta North, and Wau.

Policy LINK uses a five-step participatory planning process to help communities identify and implement a community-led resilience agenda. These five steps outlined in the figure below include:

1. Inclusive and participatory community and other stakeholder engagement,
2. Evidence gathering for resilience decision-making,
3. Sense-making workshops for articulating resilience aspirations and identifying priorities,
4. Local action planning for driving the development of a bottom-up community action plan, and
5. Joint work planning for alignment and better targeting of USAID investments.

About the Policy LINK USAID/South Sudan Activity

Stakeholder Engagement
Community engagement establishes a foundation of trust for cooperation and coordination.

Joint Work Planning
County-level action plan serves as the basis for multistakeholder work planning with USAID implementing partners and other local partners.

Gathering Evidence
All Policy LINK work is anchored in the principle of evidence-informed decision-making.

Sense-Making Workshops
Sense-making workshops empower community representatives to use evidence to voice aspirations and identify resilience priorities.

Local Action Planning
Payam-level action planning workshops confirm payam-level resilience priorities and identify, select, and send delegates for participation in the county-level workshop that finalizes a coherent local community action plan.

¹ Policy LINK is a global Feed the Future program to advance leadership and collaboration for better policy systems

II. Introduction

This Resource Guide series aims to provide guidance on good practices for building community-led resilience based on the experiences of Policy LINK in South Sudan. This third volume focuses on building collaboration and mutual accountability. It reflects lessons learned from conducting county-level sense-making workshops, county-level local action planning workshops, and joint work planning (Steps 3-5 in the five-step process). This guide offers good practices in building collaboration and mutual accountability within the four corners of the community (traditional authorities, local government, private sector, and civil society). The guide also builds on the good practices outlined in Resource Guide Volumes I and 2.

While the main audience for these Resource Guides is USAID implementing partners operating in South Sudan, the good practices may be helpful to anyone seeking to build resilience in South Sudan (or in similar contexts elsewhere), including community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and local governments.

III. Building Collaboration and Mutual Accountability through County-level Sense-making, Local Action Planning, and Joint Work Planning Workshops

Previous volumes in this Resource Guide outlined the process for stakeholder engagement, payam-level sense-making workshops and payam-level local action planning workshops to inform community-level decision-making on resilience priorities with evidence from the community mapping exercise.

The county-level sense-making, local action planning, and joint work planning workshops described in this volume brought together community delegates from the payam-level workshops with county authorities, USAID Implementing Partners (IPs), and state-level stakeholders to present the evidence and articulate county-level resilience priorities and action planning goals. Using an appreciative and facilitative leadership approach, Policy LINK facilitators aimed to promote collaborative learning through the three-day Jur River County-Level Sense-Making Workshop and establish mutual agreement and accountability around actions to mitigate priority shocks through the four-day Wau County-Level Local Action Planning Workshop. The three-day Wau County and Jur River County Joint Work Planning Workshops built upon an inclusive and participatory process that began at the payam level and worked up to the county level. The joint work planning workshop provided an opportunity for community representatives, USAID IPs, and local government officials to produce a coherent plan for effective collaboration and mutual accountability between the community and IPs.

Sense-Making Workshop (county-level)

Purpose: Continue building momentum towards effective collaboration between the communities and USAID IPs by preparing county authorities, state stakeholders, and USAID IPs for joint integrated action planning.

Objectives:

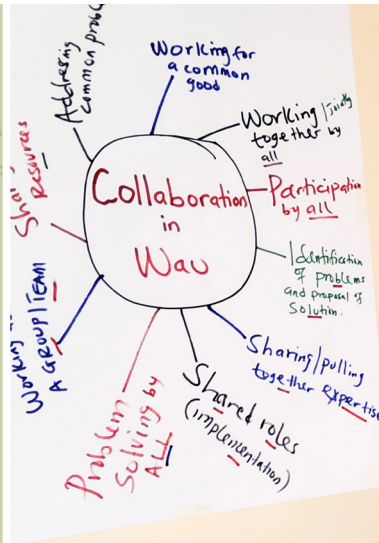
- Share the preliminary findings from the community resilience mapping exercise,
- Continue a bottom-up approach for evidence-informed resilience priority-setting and decision-making by reviewing the community resilience mapping findings,
- Begin engaging county authorities, state stakeholders, and USAID IPs in dialogue for voicing community aspirations and document the articulated resilience priorities, needs, and actions, and
- Prepare county authorities, state stakeholders, and USAID IPs for the county-wide joint work planning.

Local Action Planning Workshop (county-level)

Purpose: Produce county-level resilience priorities and a county Resilience Action Plan.

Objectives:

- Prepare community representatives to work better together, and gain skills and confidence to work with USAID and other donor IPs,
- Foster collaborative governance approach among the community representatives,
- Produce a coherent county-wide, shock-responsive Resilience Action Plan, and
- Enhance participatory learning among the community representatives in building community-led resilience.



Joint Work Planning Workshop

Purpose: Facilitate dialogue that promotes effective and meaningful collaboration between the community, local government, and IPs in the county in order to better prepare for, mitigate, and respond to shocks and stressors.

Objectives:

- Build mutual trust and lay a foundation for collaboration by creating a safe space and opportunity for sharing information between IPs and community representatives,
- Facilitate conversations between IPs and community representatives about potential opportunities for collaboration on Community Resilience Action Plans, and
- Enhance evidence-based decision-making and learning among IPs and community representatives in the county.

IV. Good Practices in Building Collaboration and Mutual Accountability

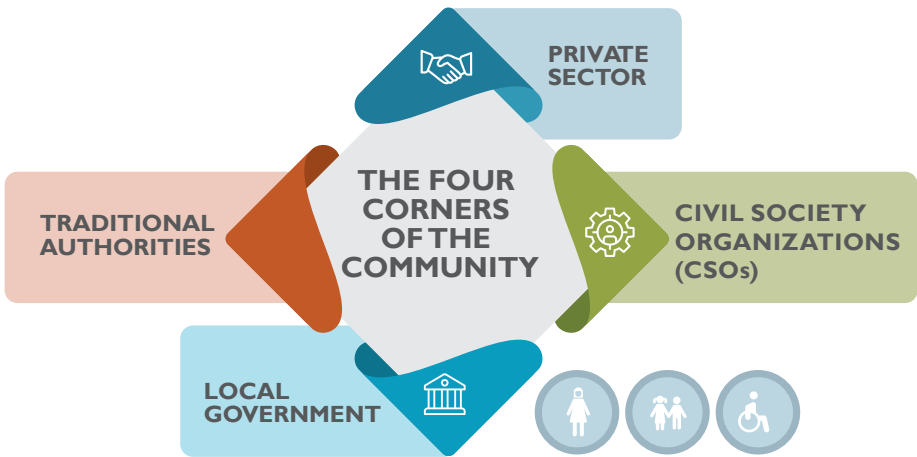
This section of the Resource Guide contains good practices, based on Policy LINK’s experience in South Sudan. The practices are organized into the following themes: (1) Guiding Principles, (2) Workshop Planning and Design, and (3) Ongoing Actions to Sustain Collaboration and Mutual Accountability.

Guiding Principles

Through the design and implementation of the county-level sense-making, local action planning, and joint work planning workshops, Policy LINK has identified the following guiding principles:

- **Involve the community from the start.** Involving the community from the start encouraged community members to take the lead in determining their development paths. For example, when recruitment for the enumerators, representatives from the different stakeholder groups were present during the interviews. This built confidence and trust between Policy LINK and the community, which translated into high levels of support from the community for what Policy LINK was doing. This participatory process helped to build agency among the community towards building their resilience capacity.
- **Engage the four corners of the community.** The four corners of the community are defined as the traditional authorities (i.e., paramount chiefs and boma chiefs), local government, civil society, and the private sector. Beginning with the initial stage of the participatory planning process – Stakeholder Engagement – Policy LINK intentionally engaged all four corners of the community. If the local traditional wisdom and systems are integrated, respected, strengthened, and allowed to be part of the programming, it lays the foundation for trust and the sustainability of the programs that are being implemented.

Traditionally in South Sudan, the four corners have not been fully represented when IPs have engaged with the community and certain sectors of the community did not receive information about IPs’ actions, which led to incorrect assumptions about the role of the IPs. Including all four corners from the start also creates transparency and helps to manage expectations.



- **A shift in mindset away from dependency on aid and toward self-reliance is critical to success.** In order for the local action planning and joint work planning workshops to be successful, participants must recognize their capacity to influence change in their communities. Specific workshop sessions should be dedicated to helping participants reach this realization. The recognition of self-reliance and responsibility for one’s own destiny is necessary for mutual accountability to take hold and pave the way for community-led resilience.

Workshop Planning and Design

The success of the workshops can be attributed to thoughtful and thorough planning and design. The good practices listed below should be considered when planning and designing participatory planning workshops.

1. *Convene the right people for success*

The selection criteria for the Jur River County-Level Sense-Making Workshop 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 those criteria.

Selection criteria for the Jur River County-Level Sense-Making Workshop included departmental directors of the county department offices, which were pre-selected; the community development committees (CDCs) from all of the payams, including a chairperson from each along with the executive director; and leadership from the **four corners of the community** (local government; traditional authorities, including the county paramount chief; civil society, including youth leadership, county-level youth leaders, women leaders of the entire county; and the private sector, including trade union leaders and the chamber of commerce). From the state level, participants were selected from the line ministries that were important to the resilience work in the county, and from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC).

The objectives of the Jur River Sense-Making Workshop were fully achieved because the department directors of all the relevant line ministries were in full attendance from day one. Findings shared at the sense-making workshop were related to each department in the county and thus valuable to each department.

The selection criteria for the Wau County Local Action Planning Workshop included different reps from the community at the boma level, including five delegates from the payam-level workshops; three USAID IPs; and short-term technical assistance (STTA) from the Wau Civic Engagement Center (CEC).

The Wau County and Jur River Joint Work Planning Workshops included representatives from the four corners, local and state-level government officials, and IPs. The joint work planning workshop also included director generals from line ministries at the state level that were related to the shocks that were identified as the most impactful. The Commissioner of the county, the Chief Executive Director, and representatives from the RRC and NBS also attended.

The County Commissioner was very engaged and pointed out to the county department directors to note the findings that applied to their department. The County Commissioner pledged to form a County Emergency Preparedness Committee, which is an indication of his relentless support to build the resilience capacities of the communities in the county.



2. Start mobilization of government participants early and at the highest level of authority

For the Wau County Local Action Planning Workshop, a target of 35 participants was determined based on a calculation of representation from the four corners and from each payam. However, the Wau County Local Action Planning Workshop experienced an increase in attendees starting on day two, which impacted planned group work and discussion sessions.

After attending day one and realizing the importance of the workshop, the government institutions mobilized more participants to attend the workshop, thus increasing the number of people from day two onwards. The high turnout was an indicator that early mobilization of the government participants should start from the highest level of authority, informing the Governor and line ministers so that they can delegate the appropriate director generals to attend the workshops.

Potential challenges to government officials' participation in workshops in the remaining counties of Akobo, Budi, and Kapoeta North

Although county-level workshops have not been held in Kapoeta North nor Budi, challenges are anticipated with ensuring all the relevant government officials and staff attend. Both counties are very far from the state capital. The cost of getting director generals to the county-level workshops will be higher and must be factored in because of the distance from the capitals.

Similar challenges are anticipated with planning the Akobo county-level workshops. The geographic challenges around transportation and logistical planning are similar to Kapoeta North and Budi.

3. Develop a workshop agenda that is agile and flexible

Through the implementation of the sense-making, local action planning, and joint work planning workshops, it became apparent that additional time was needed for community discussion to allow for consensus building. The workshop organizers and facilitators often needed to adjust the timing of sessions to accommodate the necessary discussion. In planning for these types of participatory planning workshops, organizers should develop an agile agenda that creates room for any further deliberation and discussion when needed. For example, when developing the agenda, allocate more time for sessions that will require discussion among participants (one to two hours each) and less time for presentation-based sessions.

Organizers and facilitators should also be flexible with the agenda and prioritize sessions based on what they want to achieve in case the agenda needs to be modified because of time overruns or because certain concepts require more time than expected. Ultimately, it will be up to the facilitator to guide the sessions and ensure there is sufficient time for discussion and for comprehension.

If possible, it may be helpful to plan for a full additional day to accommodate overruns in session discussion. For example, if the workshop is originally planned for three days, it could be beneficial to set aside a fourth full-day or half-day to complete any sessions that were delayed from previous days. However, it may be challenging for participants to commit to a four-day workshop given stakeholders' other commitments.

Other factors may influence the timing of the workshops and should be factored into planning and design. For example, some of the workshop locations required traveling out to remote areas to conduct the workshops. In these situations, one to two hours of travel time was budgeted which meant that the workshop started later than ideal and needed to wrap up in time for the organizers and facilitators to travel back each day. The level of literacy and preferred language of communication of the participants can also impact the length of the workshops. If translation is required then additional time should be allocated to each session.

4. Socialize the five-step participatory planning process with relevant stakeholders

Socializing the five-step participatory planning process with relevant stakeholders was very important to the success of the workshops and the overall process. Socialization increased the level of buy-in and increased the level of collaboration among the different stakeholders. It was important to socialize the process from the state level down to the county and payam level. Socialization began during the community mapping and included relevant offices, such as the NBS and RRC. It was helpful to visit the different government offices and explain the objectives of the process; this brought everyone to the table to understand the objectives right from the start. It was also important to gain support from the RRC at the state level. If the data is being collected for driving decision-making it is important that everyone is aware of the process and the results of the data collection are shared with the stakeholders.

5. Play the role of a facilitator

The role of Policy LINK during this process was that of a facilitator that helped to guide the process. The objective is for the communities to generate the decisions and actions through a community-driven process. It was important to maintain the involvement of the community throughout the process. And to manage expectations from the community of what IPs will do. By playing the role of a facilitator, it put the power with the community.

6. Hire STTA from the local community

A good practice that should be replicated for any participatory workshops is hiring facilitators and support staff from the local community. Using facilitators from the community, who understand the community very well, helped to deliver a workshop that factored in the important context of the area. This also helped to build trust among participants and enabled a safe and open environment for participants to share their ideas and speak their minds. It is important to hire STTA from the local community whenever possible as they are uniquely aware of the knowledge and context of the area.

7. Work with and through local authorities and communities during the planning stage

As Volume I stated, it is important to understand and work through county authorities, community institutions, and traditional authorities. It is especially important to collaborate with local authorities and communities related to challenges on the ground. For example, in Akobo where there is insecurity around cattle raiding and violence, it was important to understand the local context for safety reasons. Local authorities were able to provide guidance and support during the planning stage. To be successful, one must have a very good level of collaboration with the local authorities to help guide activities.

The engagement approach was important to the success of the workshops as it led to attendance from critical line ministries (see Good Practice No. 1: Convene the right people for success). Regular engagement with the County Commissioner and the Executive Director in Jur River yielded the attendance of county department heads at the sense-making workshop, which led to a productive and successful workshop.



8. Utilize participatory planning processes to foster mutual accountability

Policy LINK's experience in South Sudan demonstrated that involvement in participatory planning processes empowers communities to make decisions and commitments about their future. Starting at the payam level to identify representatives from the bomas and engaging them throughout the workshops to prioritize shocks and suggest potential actions that could offer solutions to the shocks facing their communities created a sense of ownership and empowerment within the community.

The community's participation in the process also built their capacity to articulate their problems, propose potential solutions, and identify actors who can help achieve these actions, including local resources. The participants' engagement led to a revelation that they could manage their own destiny and not wait for a donor to fix the situation. By identifying actions and steps that the community can take to respond to shocks they were able to take ownership and accountability for helping to achieve the outcomes and actions they articulated. They were able to change their mindset from exclusive dependency on humanitarian support and were able to commit both their human and natural resources to solutions.

“The two workshops didn't only give us information and knowledge on resilience, but rather capacitated us to practically apply these skills and knowledge on identification of challenges, planning for solutions and execution of relevant actions.”

— Baggari Women's Rep.

9. Design the workshop to be solution-oriented

The design of the agenda was instrumental in making the workshops more solution-oriented. Policy LINK designed the workshops to be participatory and to encourage participants to think about and identify their existing capacities that could be brought to bear on the problems they are facing. The workshop organizers did this through a series of well-planned questions that challenged participants to **change their mindset** from expecting humanitarian aid to identifying solutions that the community can help achieve. The agenda included ample question and answer sessions and group work. The Civic Engagement Center (CEC) staff helped with facilitation and provided translation to ensure all participants were able to actively contribute to solution generation. The organizers were mindful of the audience and their level of education. They took care to use terms that were not confusing but were easy to understand, and they asked several questions, when necessary, to help participants understand the role they can play in resolving their problems.

Reaching consensus through sharing resilience stories

During the Wau County Local Action Planning Workshop, the delegates from different payams were distributed into five thematic groups to discuss resilience priority actions. During this session, the delegates shared resilience stories and experiences and exchanged views on what each of them regarded as a priority in his/her payam. Through this process, the delegates achieved consensus on resilience action prioritization and their role in implementing those actions to address identified shocks in each payam. They were also able to identify areas of opportunity for collaboration with partners, donors and government to provide technical expertise, services and resources that cannot easily be sourced within the community. This demonstrates the PfRR metaphor of **Community First But Not Alone**.



Ongoing Actions to Sustain Collaboration and Mutual Accountability

The following good practices are recommended actions to enable continued collaboration and mutual accountability beyond the Policy LINK-facilitated workshops and engagement.

10. Create a platform to engage

To continue the momentum from the joint work planning workshops, it will be important for IPs and local communities to continue communication and engagement at both payam and county levels. IPs can benefit from the synergies with other IPs to address particular challenges, while local communities will have the opportunity to engage directly with the IPs working in their communities. IPs can leverage existing platforms provided through county or payam-based meetings. Workshops and training opportunities provided by IPs will enable IPs and communities to continue building on the identified opportunities for collaboration and priority actions to actualize their local action plans.

11. Build on existing community-based structures

Sustaining future collaboration between IPs and local communities will require that current formal or informal community-based structures are built moving forward. In the absence of formal structures like community development committees, IPs are encouraged to engage and build on existing structures such as community action groups, CMDRR groups, and community representatives. For example, there is a USAID mechanism operating in Wau which consists of local civil society organizations (CSOs) that could be a good platform for all IPs who plan to engage the communities in Wau county. Given the potential contextual and operational challenges of operating in South Sudan, building and strengthening vertical and horizontal coordination involving the community-based structures would be of great benefit to IPs.





12. Leave the doors open for collaboration

During the joint work planning workshops, representatives from all four corners of the community and IPs were brought together. The community representatives had an opportunity to share their local action plans with IPs, and IPs had an opportunity to inform the communities of their programs and plans in the county. The sharing of information between IPs and the community created transparency and accountability. It also helped to manage expectations from the community by clarifying the what, where, and when of IP support.

With this knowledge and information, the community and IPs can monitor and learn from each other and effectively adapt their actions for achieving the stated goals they have set.

While Policy LINK's role was that of a facilitator and convener of this workshop, these types of joint planning sessions could continue through the existing county and payam-level meetings. Furthermore, the members of the community that participated in these workshops (from the payam-level workshops to the joint work planning workshop) identified ways to take this information back to their respective payams and share details on the overall process through radio talk shows, their churches, mosques, and during traditional court sessions.





USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

