

HANAANO PROGRAMME

Ethiopia • Kenya • Somalia



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The brief has been produced as part of the Hanaano Programme, an Irish Aid-funded multi-sectoral initiative to prevent Child Wasting in the Mendera Triangle implemented by Concern Worldwide, RACIDA, LLG, PC and IGAD

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Hanaano Programme Natural Resource Management (NRM)

A learning brief on Cross-Border NRM based on the cross-border learning event held in February 2025 in Mendera County, Kenya



Government
of Ireland
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RACIDA
Building Resilient Communities for Sustainable Development



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Cover Image: *Newly cultivated farms by the trained groups in Mandera.*

Photo: Concern Worldwide

Mandera Triangle Nutrition Context

Child wasting in the transboundary area of the Mandera Triangle/Cluster persists and often exceeds emergency levels despite significant efforts by many actors. The Mandera Triangle has some of the highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition in the Horn of Africa, which at the peak of the 2020–2023 drought saw the prevalence of global acute malnutrition at 35%, more than double the World Health Organisation (WHO) emergency threshold (15%).¹ This situation can be linked to the Triangle's long history of conflict as well as its poor access to healthcare, low economic growth, food insecurity, limited water, and the absence of adequate sanitation and hygiene. Prevalence of global acute malnutrition within and around the Triangle has been at critical levels for much of the last three years. In 2023, wasting was expected to affect 500,000 children in Somalia, 945,000 in Kenya and 1,638,763 in Ethiopia as a whole.²

Hanaano forms part of a long-term strategic investment by the Irish Government to address Child Wasting and support the Global Action Plan Child Wasting which means 'to nurture' in Somali is a three-year initiative designed to reduce child wasting in the Mandera Triangle by addressing its root causes including food security, health and care practices. The programme integrates natural resource management, livelihoods, WASH, social and behaviour change and gender equality and conflict sensitivity approach to reduce the prevalence of child wasting in communities in the Triangle.

Mandera Triangle Natural Resource Management Context

The Mandera Triangle/Cluster, where the borders of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia meet, includes extensive arid and semi-arid lands that are inhabited by mobile pastoralists looking for pasture; refugees, seasonal cross-border labourers; persons engaged in cross-border economic activity, undocumented migrants, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and communities hosting refugees and IDPs.³

The region faces increasing climate variability, environmental degradation, and heightened competition for resources, which contribute to ongoing conflicts, food insecurity, and economic challenges. While households, communities, and systems were previously equipped to deal with normal climate-variability, accelerating climate change in extended droughts and severe floods are the main drivers of inter-group competition, food security and malnutrition. These issues are worsened by deforestation, the spread of invasive plant species, and unsustainable natural resource management (NRM) practices. A scoping study by the Hanaano programme show that traditionally pastoralist communities along the Dawa River have shifted toward farming, casual labor, and petty trade, driven by push factors such as drought, conflict, and livestock loss as well as pull factors such as access to services, markets, natural resources, and transportation.

The Mandera Triangle relies heavily on shared natural resources, particularly water, pasture, and forests, which are essential for the livelihoods of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities.

To deepen the understanding of the evolving livelihoods and natural resource management context and implications for livelihoods and drivers of acute malnutrition context the Hanaano programme under IGAD's leadership convened a cross-border learning event that involved government representatives from Ethiopia, Kenya Somalia.

This learning brief highlights key initiatives undertaken by governments and partners to tackle NRM challenges in Belet Hawa (Somalia), Dolo Ado (Ethiopia), and Mandera County (Kenya). It draws on insights gathered during a learning event held in the Mandera

1 Mandera County SMART survey , 2022

2 Kenya <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/resources/resources-details/en/c/1155147/>

3 Interpeace (2021) Cross Border Health Policy and Practice Report Mandera https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/2021-Cross-Border-Health-Policy-and-Practice-Report-Mandera_PRINT.pdf

Triangle from February 24 to 27, 2025. Additionally, the brief outlines the actions that local governments and partners in the region plan to implement based on these insights and suggests a path forward to enhance sustainability and collaboration.

Current NRM Initiatives and Specific Country Actions Informed by Lessons Learned

Current NRM initiatives and actions were presented by both local government authorities and Hanaano programme partners from each cross-border area with the objective to share the current scale, approaches, and activities within NRM in their context. Hanaano partners and local government authorities attending the event were then asked to reflect on what lessons they can take from other cross-border actors.

Beled Hawo District, Dolo Region, Somalia

Key current NRM action by local government	By Hanaano programme partners – Lifeline Gedo
Implementation of community-led rangeland restoration programs	Training local communities on sustainable agriculture and climate resilience
Strengthening local policies on water and land use management	Support for tree-planting initiatives to combat deforestation
Establishment of conflict resolution mechanisms for resource-sharing	Establishment of alternative livelihood programs to reduce over-reliance on pastoralism
Construction of small-scale water harvesting structures	Provision of solar-powered water systems for rural communities

Drawing lessons from Ethiopia and Kenya as presented in the NRM learning event, the local government of the Belet Hawa district, in collaboration with its partners, will:

1. Enhance community involvement in natural resource management (NRM) to improve the sustainability of NRM projects. This will boost community participation by utilizing existing groups and establishing new NRM groups.
2. Facilitate the creation of traditional resource-sharing agreements to mitigate potential conflicts over natural resources, both locally and across borders.
3. Increased investment in water conservation infrastructure, including boreholes and surface water sources such as rivers and water pans, alongside improved enforcement of land-use policies to combat illegal deforestation.

Cross-border learning is essential for advancing NRM; however, proactive follow-up on these insights is more critical.

Dolo Ado Woreda, Somali Region, Ethiopia

Key current NRM action by local government	By Hanaano programme partners – Pastoralist Concern
Development of early warning systems for climate-related disasters	Capacity-building programs for local institutions on NRM governance.
Expansion of afforestation and soil conservation project	Promotion of drought-resistant crops and fodder banks.
Strengthening policies on grazing land management and livestock movement.	Support for climate adaptation projects, including irrigation schemes.
Establishment of community-led resource management committees.	Conflict resolution training to mitigate disputes over water and grazing land.

Taking lessons from the other cross border actors' presentations, representatives from Dolo Ado District, left motivated to take the following actions:

1. Improve coordination among stakeholders and effectively implement policies. Although strong natural resource management (NRM) policies are in place, their execution is often slow or insufficient.
2. Integrate early warning systems with NRM by utilizing existing frameworks that encourage proactive measures to ultimately bolster community resilience.
3. Place renewed focus on promoting alternative livelihoods to alleviate pressure on grazing lands and reduce reliance on pastoralism.
4. Incorporate lost indigenous knowledge and practices into conservation initiatives in partnership with local partners and communities
5. Improve irrigation infrastructure as this will help diminish dependence on rainfall. A key priority will be to formalize agreements between communities and local governments to ensure long-term sustainability.

Mandera County, Kenya

Key current NRM action by local government	By Hanaano programme partners - RACIDA
Development of county-level policies for water conservation and sustainable land use	Funding and technical support for reforestation and land rehabilitation projects
Strengthening cross-border cooperation on resource management	Introduction of innovative water conservation technologies
Implementation of afforestation programs to restore degraded lands	Training farmers on sustainable agricultural practices
Promotion of community-based natural resource governance structures	Supporting peace dialogues to integrate security measures into NRM governance

Mandera County, informed by insights from Dolo Ado and Beled Hawo, will aim to:

1. Enhance community participation in decision-making to foster ownership of Natural Resource Management (NRM) projects. This initiative will support the formation of more community-led NRM groups.
2. Partner with IGAD and other Hanaano collaborators to improve cross-border cooperation in addressing transboundary resource conflicts and to promote continuous learning.
3. Strengthen legal frameworks that enforce environmental conservation and protection policies. Improved land-use planning will help mitigate conflicts over natural resources, while capacity building for local government officials will enhance the implementation of NRM policies.

Overall, Lessons Learned & Key Insights

1. The Importance of Community Engagement in NRM within the context of Livelihoods in Transition

- Community-led approaches foster greater ownership and long-term sustainability of natural resource management (NRM) initiatives. With the increasing frequency and severity of droughts in the cross-border region—alongside increasing agricultural livelihoods along riverbanks—the need to support and resource community-driven NRM efforts is growing. These initiatives help ensure actions are relevant to local contexts and inclusive of vulnerable groups pursuing diverse livelihood strategies, enabling their meaningful participation in NRM governance.
- **Understanding of evolving livelihoods in the context of NRM governance:** Hanaano programme data shows that vulnerable community members—particularly those in the bottom 50% of the wealth index—often engage in multiple, overlapping livelihood strategies to meet basic needs. These households face significant time, labour, and resource constraints, which can limit their participation in community-based initiatives. A deeper understanding of the evolving livelihood profiles in these areas is essential to ensure that interventions are appropriately designed, targeted, and inclusive of the most at-risk populations.
- **Strengthening resource-sharing agreements:** With a shift from mobile pastoral livelihoods to more diverse and sedentary strategies—such as agriculture, livestock keeping, small enterprises, and wage labour—traditional resource-sharing and conflict resolution mechanisms may have weakened. Strengthening, re-establishing, or adapting these traditional agreements to align with the evolving livelihoods context is vital for reducing conflicts over essential resources like land and water. Pre-existing **local governance structures** should be leveraged rather than creating new parallel systems.

2. Policy Implementation Gaps

- From the group work and plenary discussions, it became clear that while **NRM policies** exist such as those governing land and water use, their enforcement and execution remain weak.
- **Lack of coordination** between government agencies and partners slows policy implementation. Greater efforts should be made to link the NRM activities of communities, national and international NGOs, and local authorities to ensure alignment in actions and ensure a widespread coverage of support.

3. Climate Adaptation & Diversification of Livelihoods

- **According to the Hanaano baseline survey**, while many households in the Mandera Triangle still keep livestock, a purely mobile pastoralist livelihood is no longer viable for much of the most vulnerable population. Environmental degradation, climate shocks, and insecurity have reduced the feasibility of traditional pastoral mobility. As a result, **alternative livelihood options**—such as **climate-smart agriculture**, **small-scale enterprises**, and **access to microfinance and savings mechanisms**—are becoming increasingly important to supplement the now more sedentary and reduced herds. **Local authorities and implementing partners** have a critical role in supporting this transition by promoting and enabling diversified, sustainable, and context-specific livelihood strategies that respond to changing realities on the ground.
- ~ **Investing in drought-resistant crops and fodder banks** can reduce pressure on grazing land in the face of recurrent drought.
- ~ The Hanaano baseline found that while 70% of respondents engaged in agriculture along riverbanks, only 22% had access to irrigation. Investment in **water conservation infrastructure** (boreholes, water pans) is essential to reducing drought and climate-related vulnerabilities that are key to reducing climate vulnerability and ultimately child wasting.

4. Conflict Resolution & Cross-Border Cooperation

- **NRM conflicts are often cross-border**, requiring **harmonized policies** and joint planning between Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia.
- **Local peace dialogues** integrated into NRM governance help mitigate resource-based conflicts.
- Strengthening **early warning systems** linked to NRM policies can enable **proactive** responses to climate shocks.

Way Forward

IGAD, through the Hanaano program, seeks to enhance cross-border collaboration in natural resource management (NRM) governance and policy harmonization by establishing the Mandera Triangle Cross-Border Natural Resources Management Coordination Forum. This platform will facilitate cross-border learning and synergy while advocating for increased resource allocation for NRM from stakeholders as well as local, national, and regional governments. IGAD has drafted the Terms of Reference (ToR) for this initiative.

Recommendations:

From the discussions throughout the learning event, recommendations emerged for both the government and NGO stakeholders to take forward to advance sustainable natural resource management in the cross-border area.

1. Strengthen Inclusive Community Participation in Natural Resource Management (NRM)

- **Establish and reinforce inclusive, community-led NRM groups across all three regions**, ensuring they are well-resourced, trained, and supported to lead locally appropriate climate and environmental actions.
- Improve understanding of **evolving livelihood dynamics in dryland and pastoralist contexts** to inform more context-appropriate and inclusive NRM interventions.
- **Ensure meaningful participation of the most vulnerable groups**—including young, pregnant and lactating women, women children under five, low-income households, and people with disabilities—by ensuring the representation of their perspectives

in decision-making processes within community NRM groups and district level planning.

- **Facilitate community-driven identification of NRM priorities**, so that interventions respond to the diverse needs of households practicing varied livelihood strategies (pastoral, agro-pastoral, agricultural, wage labour, etc.) and are more likely to reduce resource-based tensions.
- Involve **indigenous knowledge** and traditional leaders in conservation efforts.
- Train local communities on **sustainable land use, afforestation, and rangeland restoration**.

2. Improve Policy Implementation & Coordination

- Ensure clear **implementation strategies** for existing NRM policies.
- Strengthen **NRM coordination mechanisms** between local governments and partners.
- Increase **capacity-building efforts** for local government officials on environmental governance.

3. Enhance Cross-Border Resource Management

- **Harmonize policies** across Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia for shared resource governance.
- Strengthen **cross-border conflict resolution** mechanisms tied to NRM.
- Establish **regional data-sharing platforms** for climate forecasts, resource availability, and disaster preparedness.

4. Increase Investments in Climate-Resilient Infrastructure

- Expand **small-scale water harvesting** and **solar-powered water systems** to reduce dependence on erratic rainfall.
- Promote **drought-resistant crops, irrigation schemes, and soil conservation projects**.
- Scale up **alternative livelihood programs** to reduce reliance on pastoralism.

5. Institutionalize Cross-Border Learning & Sustainability

- Establish the **Mandera Triangle Cross-Border NRM Coordination Forum** as a permanent platform.
- Secure **long-term funding and policy support** for cross-border NRM initiatives.
- Encourage **peer learning visits** and exchanges between communities managing similar NRM challenges.

6. Develop community-based monitoring systems to track the effectiveness and sustainability of NRM interventions and ensure that feedback from local stakeholders informs ongoing implementation.

- Build the **capacity of local institutions and partners to conduct regular joint assessments** and learning reviews across the three countries to support evidence-based planning and policymaking.
- Promote **adaptive management approaches that allow for course correction** based on seasonal variability, community feedback, and emerging risks (e.g., climate or conflict-related).

THE HANAANO PROGRAMME is a multi-sectoral, collaborative initiative aimed at tackling child wasting in the Mendera Triangle—a region facing chronic vulnerability. Funded by Irish Aid and implemented by Concern Worldwide, the programme operates in partnership with IGAD, Tufts University, RACIDA, Pastoralist Concern, and Lifeline Gedo. By addressing the root causes of malnutrition—including food insecurity, limited access to healthcare, and inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services—Hanaano works to strengthen community resilience and improve child health and nutrition. Through this integrated and locally driven approach, the programme contributes to long-term, sustainable development in one of the region's most underserved areas.



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