



Semi-Arid Resilience Network Annual Report 2024

Strengthening Community Resilience and Advancing Gender Equality



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Executive Summary

The Semi-Arid Resilience Network (SARN) has made significant strides in promoting community resilience, gender equality, and social protection across Garissa County and beyond. This report outlines our key achievements, challenges, and lessons learned from January to December 2024. Our core interventions have focused on ending Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), strengthening community-led peace and governance efforts, and building local capacity for resilience and sustainable development.

Through strategic partnerships with government agencies, donors, and local stakeholders, SARN has reached thousands of community members, fostered change and strengthened gender and social protection initiatives. Our work has been anchored in the Africa-Led Movement (ALM) to End FGM/C, Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG), and USAID Resilience Learning Activity (RLA) initiatives.

Introduction

The Semi-Arid Resilience Network (SARN) is a dynamic NGO dedicated to empowering communities in Kenya's semi-arid regions. Operating in Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Isiolo, and Tana River counties, we champion sustainable, community-driven solutions that align with county development priorities, Sustainable Development Goals for Vision 2030 and Agenda 2063. To achieve this, SARN focuses on Youth Development, SRH and GBV, Social Protection, Policy and Governance, Climate Action and Resilience, Alternative Livelihoods, Research, Partnership and Knowledge Management. Around the county, SARN works with community members to find out practical, innovative ways in building community structures in strengthening the resilience on the emerging threats.

In all we do, SARN Garissa works with community members, survivors, women and girls, youth in building community resilience against evolving needs.

Vision

To be a leading institution that promotes the resilience of community structures

Mission

Promoting community-driven resilience and sustainable well-being through community-based approaches.



ALM Mother-to-daughter engagement on FGM in Omar Village

Component 1: Gender Based Violence and Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) Support

The Semi-Arid Resilience Network (SARN) continues to play a pivotal role in strengthening community resilience against Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and improving access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Through its FCDO-funded partnership under The Girl Generation – Support to the Africa-Led Movement (TGG-ALM) to End FGM/C, SARN has implemented high-impact interventions to shift harmful social norms and empower women, girls, and communities to take a stand against Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C).

Project Objectives

- Amplify the voices of women and girls by equipping them with advocacy skills and creating safe spaces for survivor-led campaigns against FGM/C.
- Strengthen community dialogue through intergenerational conversations, religious engagement, and male championing efforts to challenge and eliminate harmful practices.
- Enhance policy enforcement mechanisms by working closely with local law enforcement, government agencies, and health professionals to improve reporting, survivor support, and legal action against FGM.

Project Activities & Implementation

1. Mother-to-Mother Support Groups

- a) Established 10 community-based support groups, where mothers openly discuss FGM's harmful health and psychological effects, reinforcing peer-driven advocacy.
- b) Sessions held monthly, with discussions documented and used as case studies to inform anti-FGM messaging strategies.

2. Mother-to-Daughter Safe Spaces

- c) Facilitated intergenerational dialogues where mothers and daughters engaged in structured discussions to debunk myths about FGM.
- d) Conducted 5 sensitization sessions, equipping young girls with knowledge on reproductive health, consent, and legal rights.

3. Religious Actors' Engagement

- e) Organized 6 monthly sessions with religious leaders, focusing on theological perspectives and Quranic teachings that challenge the misconceptions surrounding FGM.
- f) Engaged 50 religious leaders, empowering them to become advocates for change within their congregations.

4. School-Based Exchange Forums for Girls

- g) Created safe discussion spaces for school-going girls to voice their experiences and concerns about FGM practices in their communities.
- h) Integrated anti-FGM clubs within schools, fostering peer-led learning and advocacy.

5. Cutter-Centered Dialogues

- i) Facilitated 4 dialogue sessions with former FGM practitioners (cutters), supporting their transition into alternative livelihoods.
- j) Mobilized 20 cutters to become anti-FGM champions, disrupting ongoing FGM practices in their communities.

6. Survivor-Centered & Psychosocial Dialogues

- k) Conducted 10 sessions in 4 hard-to-reach villages, engaging 210 survivors who shared their lived experiences to educate the community on the long-term effects of FGM.
- l) Strengthened existing safe spaces, ensuring trauma-informed care and first-line support for survivors.

7. Engagement Forums with Law Enforcement & Local Chiefs

- m) Hosted multi-sectoral discussions with police officers, chiefs, and local administrators to enhance community reporting mechanisms for FGM cases.
- n) Strengthened collaboration between law enforcement and health service providers to

ensure survivors receive immediate medical and legal support.

8. Male Youth Engagement on Anti-FGM Advocacy

- o) Conducted 3 forums targeting young men, equipping them with skills to champion the rights of women and girls.
- p) Encouraged male participation in family-led anti-FGM dialogues, fostering a shift in community attitudes.

9. Capacity Strengthening of Community Health Promoters (CHPs)

- q) Trained 40 CHPs and healthcare workers on FGM case management, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and survivor-first response protocols.
- r) Integrated anti-FGM messaging into routine community medical outreach programs, ensuring SRH services are accessible at the grassroots level.

10. Activation & Mobilization of the Anti-FGM Steering Committee

- s) Facilitated multi-stakeholder Gender Technical Working Forums, mapping FGM cases and strengthening inter-agency coordination.
- t) Ensured legal and policy frameworks were disseminated to community actors, improving awareness and enforcement mechanisms.

11. Sensitization on Anti-FGM Policies

- u) Educated survivors, social actors, and community focal persons on existing legal frameworks, empowering them to take a proactive role in early warning and reporting.

Key Achievements

1. Strengthened Community Resilience & Dialogue Platforms

- Successfully conducted 10 community-led Mother-to-Daughter safe space sessions, reaching 150 mothers and 150 young girls, leading to increased awareness and commitment to ending FGM.
- Established 10 Mother-to-Mother support groups, fostering joint advocacy efforts within villages and reducing cultural reinforcement of FGM practices.

2. Empowerment of Religious Leaders as Advocates

- Engaged 50 religious leaders, equipping them with alternative theological perspectives to counter traditional pro-FGM narratives.
- Enabled faith-based advocacy that influenced broader social norms within communities.

3. Capacity Building for Health Workers & CHPs

- Trained 40 CHPs and healthcare workers in MHPSS, first-line FGM case management, and survivor response protocols.
- Strengthened the delivery of community-based healthcare services, improving early intervention and survivor care.

4. Increased Male Involvement in FGM Prevention

- Facilitated 3 male youth forums, encouraging active male participation in advocacy and fostering family-led anti-FGM commitments.
- Inspired a cultural shift, positioning men and boys as allies in ending FGM.

5. Transformation of Cutters into Change Agents

- Engaged 20 former FGM practitioners, supporting their transition into alternative livelihoods, effectively reducing the supply chain of cutters in the community.
- Created a ripple effect, where former cutters actively discouraged FGM and influenced household-level decisions.

6. Establishment of an Anti-FGM Advisory Committee

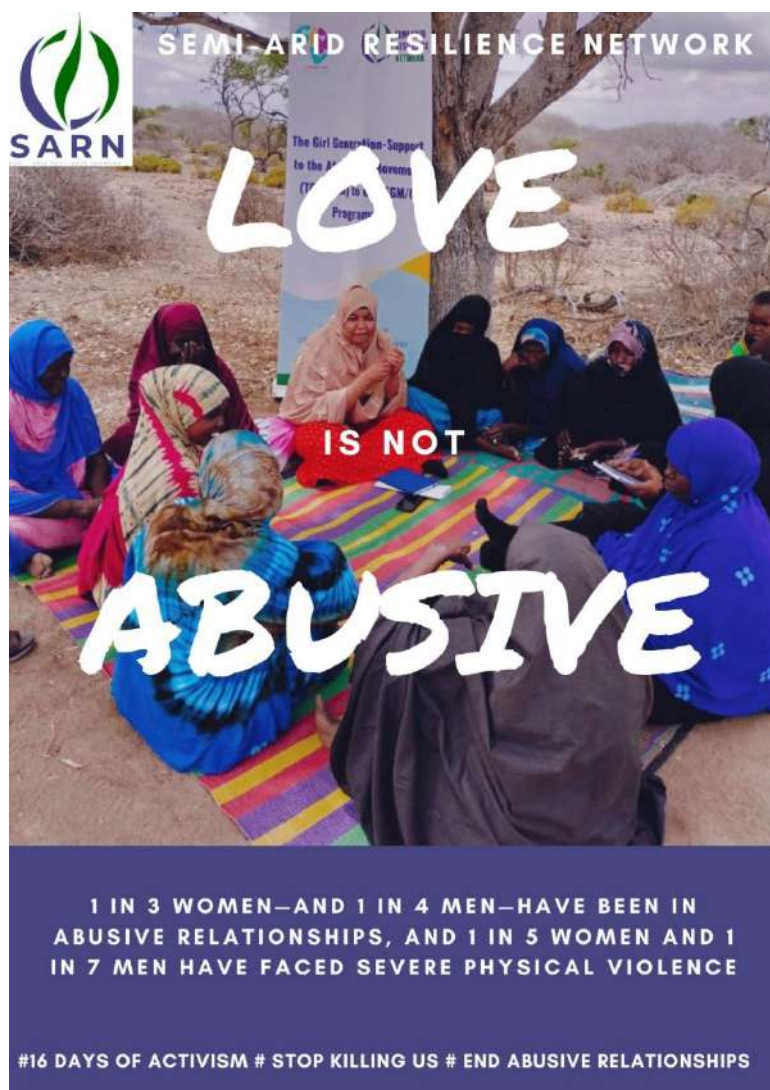
- Activated a 30-member committee in Fafi sub-county, composed of healthcare workers, survivors, local administration, and CSOs, ensuring the sustained implementation of the Garissa Anti-FGM and Social Protection Policy.

7. Survivor-Led Advocacy & Safe Space Expansion

- Conducted 10 survivor-centered dialogue sessions, reaching 210 community members in hard-to-reach villages.
- Strengthened existing safe spaces, improving access to psychosocial support, legal aid, and survivor-centered care.

8. Enhanced Policy Awareness & Law Enforcement Collaboration

- Hosted engagement sessions with police officers and chiefs, leading to improved reporting and legal action against FGM perpetrators.
- Created a coordinated referral system, linking survivors to medical, psychosocial, and legal services.



Through this initiative, SARN has made significant strides in shifting social norms, enhancing survivor support systems, and integrating FGM/C prevention efforts into governance frameworks. Moving forward, SARN aims to:

- Scale up alternative livelihood programs for cutters and survivors, ensuring economic sustainability and long-term social change.
- Strengthen inter-agency coordination to enhance policy implementation and survivor protection mechanisms.
- Expand digital and radio advocacy efforts, reaching wider audiences to reinforce anti-FGM messaging.
- Continue engaging male champions, religious leaders, and law enforcement, ensuring holistic and community-driven solutions to FGM elimination.
- The success of this program demonstrates the power of community-led advocacy, paving the way for a future free from FGM/C in Garissa County and beyond.



ALM mother-to-mother support activity in Arba Dawolo Village



ALM Male youth dialogue on FGM in Omar village



ALM Religious leaders dialogue on FGM in Bura town



ALM FGM Survivor-centered psychosocial support activity in Madax Geesi



ALM FGM survivor-centered psychosocial support activity in Dalsan Village

Component 2: Promoting Inclusive Development in Garissa County – UNDP Grants

The Inclusive Development Project aimed to bridge the gap between marginalized groups and development decision-making, ensuring that women, girls, youth, and vulnerable communities in urban informal settlements and the ASAL regions of North-Eastern Kenya actively participate in shaping national and county development plans.

This initiative focused on enhancing community engagement mechanisms, empowering grassroots voices, and advocating for policy reforms that reflect the needs and priorities of historically excluded populations.

Through this initiative, SARN has laid a strong foundation for inclusive governance, where community participation is recognized as a key driver of sustainable development. Moving forward, SARN will continue advocating for policy reforms, strengthening community-led governance structures, and working towards long-term resilience for women, girls, and vulnerable communities in Garissa County. Below are the details of the activities under this component.

Project objectives

- Strengthen community feedback mechanisms within sector working groups, ensuring that women, girls, and youth influence policy formulation and social development priorities.
- Facilitate inclusive dialogue platforms to advocate for policy shifts that prioritize the needs of marginalized populations, particularly in disaster risk reduction (DRR), economic empowerment, and gender-based violence (GBV) prevention.

Project activities

Establishment of a Community Feedback Mechanism

- Developed and implemented a structured feedback system that enabled community members, local leaders, and policymakers to exchange views and influence the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP).
- Provided training sessions for local CSOs, youth representatives, and women's networks on how to effectively contribute to decision-making spaces.
- Developed policy briefs and position papers capturing the voices and concerns of marginalized groups, which were presented to the county leadership and sector working groups.

Community Dialogues on Inclusive Development

- Conducted 10 community engagement dialogues across key sub-counties, reaching a total of 300 community members (110 women, 190 men).
- Trained local leaders, women, and youth groups on policy engagement strategies, enabling them to effectively advocate for social protections, DRR policies, and economic empowerment programs.
- Facilitated interactive workshops on gender-responsive planning, providing women and girls with skills to engage with government-led policy forums.

Coordination of Development Partners & County Government Engagement

- Strengthened multi-stakeholder collaboration between CSOs, county government, and development agencies, ensuring that the County Steering Group (CSG) prioritizes issues affecting women, youth, and vulnerable populations.
- Facilitated discussions that led to the mainstreaming of social protection measures into emergency and humanitarian response planning.
- Supported county-wide GBV sensitization campaigns and the distribution of dignity kits to women and girls in emergency situations, particularly those displaced due to conflict and climate-induced disasters.

Key Achievements

1. Strengthened Community Participation in Development Planning
 - Successfully institutionalized a community feedback mechanism, ensuring that marginalized voices are actively represented in local policy discussions.
 - Facilitated the integration of community-driven priorities into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDP), making local governance more responsive to social needs.
2. Increased Capacity of Women, Girls, and Youth in Policy Engagement
 - Conducted 10 high-impact community dialogues, equipping 300 individuals (including women, youth, and men) with advocacy skills to push for inclusive policy reforms.
 - Increased awareness and participation of local communities in DRR, social protection, and economic empowerment initiatives, ensuring that these populations are no longer passive beneficiaries but active agents of change.
3. Strengthened Multi-Stakeholder Coordination for Social Protection
 - Fostered stronger linkages between local development actors, county government officials, and humanitarian organizations, leading to more effective policy coordination and resource allocation.
 - Facilitated the distribution of dignity kits and GBV prevention materials, directly enhancing the safety and dignity of women and girls affected by emergencies.
4. Enhanced Resilience and Disaster Preparedness Among Vulnerable Communities
 - Ensured that community concerns on disaster preparedness and economic empowerment were formally recognized and integrated into county disaster risk reduction policies.
 - Strengthened local emergency response mechanisms, ensuring that marginalized communities receive timely and inclusive assistance during crises.



UNDP Project Inception meeting



UNDP data collection activity in Garissa town



UNDP Duty Bearer activity in Benaney



UNDP peace dialogue with local security committee in Modogashe Town



UNDP duty bearers' peace dialogue in Modogashe town

Component 3: Policy and Governance

In this thematic focus SARN in partnership with Resilience learning activity with funding from USAID is working with and supporting Garissa County and development partners on joint work planning.

Fostering Effective Collaboration for Collective Impact through Joint Work Planning -USAID Grants



USAID and County Government Implementing Partners inception meeting in Garissa County

As part of its policy and governance initiatives, SARN, in partnership with USAID's Resilience Learning Activity, has played a pivotal role in strengthening collaborative governance structures in Garissa County. Through Joint Work Planning (JWP), SARN has facilitated multi-stakeholder engagement, resource pooling, and co-planning to enhance collective impact and sustainability in local development efforts.

JWP brings together local communities, county and national governments, development partners, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure alignment, efficiency, and complementarity in addressing development priorities. The process minimizes duplication of efforts, enhances multi-sectoral coordination, and strengthens local government capacities for long-term sustainability.

Project objectives

The overall goal of this initiative is to design and facilitate the next phase of the Joint Work Planning (JWP) co-creation process for Financial Year 2024/2025 and FY 2025/2026. This involves coordinating USAID Implementing Partners, County Governments, and Ward Development Committees in collaboration with Kenya School of Government (KSG) and the Council of Governors (CoG).

Specific objectives include:

- Conduct a desk review of JWP processes from FY 2021 to FY 2024, analyzing best practices, financial contributions, and impact.
- Facilitate the co-creation of JWP for FY 2024/2025, consolidating county government and USAID Implementing Partner (IP) priorities.
- Conduct validation and endorsement sessions for the finalized FY 2024/2025 and FY 2025/2026 JWP plans.
- Organize joint field visits and Pause-and-Reflect sessions to track progress, address challenges, and document lessons learned

Project activities



1. Desk Review of Joint Work Planning Processes (FY 2021–2024)
 - Conducted a comprehensive analysis of JWP implementation over four years, assessing the effectiveness of multi-stakeholder collaboration, financial contributions, and governance alignment.
 - Produced learning briefs and reports documenting best practices, challenges, and recommendations for enhancing JWP execution.
2. Co-Creation of Joint Work Planning for FY 2024/2025
 - Facilitated a structured co-creation process that brought together county government officials, USAID IPs, and development partners to align priorities and strategic goals.
 - Developed a consolidated JWP framework that reflects community needs, government policies, and donor-funded interventions to ensure sustainability and impact.
3. Validation and Endorsement of JWP for FY 2024/2025
 - Conducted county-level validation workshops where stakeholders reviewed, refined, and endorsed the JWP framework.
 - Strengthened inter-governmental coordination to enhance the implementation and accountability of the joint plans.
4. Joint Field Visits and Pause-and-Reflect Sessions
 - Organized joint field monitoring visits to assess progress in JWP implementation and document impact in real-time.
 - Facilitated Pause-and-Reflect sessions, allowing partners to evaluate ongoing activities, identify challenges, and adapt strategies for improved outcomes.
5. Desk Review of Joint Work Planning Processes (FY 2021–2025)
 - Conducted a broader review of JWP processes to inform the next phase of planning for FY 2025/2026, ensuring the initiative remains aligned with government and donor priorities.
6. Validation and Endorsement of JWP for FY 2025/2026
 - Facilitated a stakeholder consultation process, leading to the endorsement of FY 2025/2026 Joint Work Plans, ensuring continuity and sustainability.

Key Achievements

1. Strengthened Collaboration Between Development Partners and County Government
 - Successfully facilitated multi-stakeholder engagement, ensuring that USAID Implementing Partners, the County Government, and development actors co-create and align their development priorities.
 - Engaged key stakeholders, including the Kenya School of Government (KSG) and the Council of Governors (CoG), to enhance institutional collaboration and policy coherence.
2. Evidence-Based Learning and Policy Influence
 - Produced comprehensive learning briefs and desk review reports, capturing insights from FY 2021–2024 JWP implementation, strengthening future policy planning and resource allocation.
 - Provided county government and development partners with analytical insights to enhance decision-making and program efficiency.
3. Development of Joint Work Planning Framework for FY 2024/2025
 - Successfully facilitated the 1st co-creation process for FY 2024/2025, ensuring a consolidated approach to addressing development challenges.
 - Established a structured framework for joint resource mobilization and impact tracking, reducing duplication and maximizing investment.
4. Strengthened Accountability and Learning Through Field Monitoring
 - Implemented joint field visits and Pause-and-Reflect sessions, allowing real-time adaptation of strategies to improve program effectiveness.
 - Enhanced county-level monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity, ensuring that local stakeholders actively participate in progress tracking.



USAID-RLA Co-creation workshop



USAID-RLA Co-creation workshop

Challenges & Mitigation Strategies

Challenges	Mitigation Strategies
Resistance from some religious leaders regarding anti-FGM messaging.	Strengthened engagement with progressive faith leaders and developed faith-based advocacy messages.
Lack of rescue centers for girls escaping FGM.	Advocated for increased funding for safe spaces and emergency shelters.
Cultural stigma discouraging survivors from seeking legal aid or psychosocial support.	Conducted community sensitization campaigns and trained local champions to promote safe reporting mechanisms.
Delayed funds disbursement affecting implementation timelines.	Strengthened internal financial planning and contingency strategies.

Lessons Learned

- Engaging religious leaders is crucial in shifting harmful social norms.
- Survivor-led advocacy is powerful in changing community attitudes toward FGM/C.
- Data-sharing and digital tools (GIS) enhance program coordination and effectiveness.
- Sustained community dialogues are necessary to demystify myths and promote lasting change.

Recommendations & Way Forward

Based on the key learnings and achievements from the program implementation, the following recommendations will guide the next phase of strengthening community resilience and eliminating FGM/C:

1. Expand Alternative Livelihood Programs for Cutters and Survivors
 - Develop income-generating activities (IGAs) and vocational training to provide economic alternatives for former cutters and survivors.
 - Establish community-led microfinance initiatives such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) to empower women economically, reducing financial dependency that sustains harmful practices.
2. Strengthen Referral Pathways for Survivors
 - Enhance case management systems to ensure seamless referral for psychosocial support, medical assistance, and legal aid for survivors.
 - Train healthcare workers and CSOs on trauma-informed care and survivor-centered approaches to improve accessibility and effectiveness of support services.
 - Establish multi-sectoral referral mechanisms, linking local administration, law enforcement, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to enhance survivor protection and justice systems.
3. Enhance Government Partnerships for Increased Investment in Community Safe Spaces
 - Advocate for county and national government budgetary allocations to strengthen rescue shelters, community safe spaces, and emergency response mechanisms.
 - Collaborate with development partners and private sector actors to mobilize funding and technical expertise for safe shelter expansions and survivor reintegration programs.
 - Integrate safe spaces into local health and education systems, ensuring survivors receive holistic care, counseling, and reintegration support.
4. Scale Up Radio and Digital Advocacy for Wider Reach
 - Expand radio talk shows, community forums, and digital campaigns to reinforce behavior change messaging on the harmful effects of FGM/C.
 - Leverage social media platforms, SMS-based outreach, and localized storytelling to engage youth and grassroots activists in driving community dialogue and advocacy.
 - Strengthen partnerships with media houses, local influencers, and religious leaders to amplify anti-FGM messaging at the regional and national levels.
5. Continue Engagement in Governance Initiatives for Policy Integration
 - Advocate for stronger policy enforcement by engaging local authorities, policymakers, and law enforcement agencies to uphold anti-FGM laws and child protection policies.
 - Support Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and community leadership structures to integrate FGM/C prevention efforts into County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).
 - Strengthen gender-sensitive governance frameworks, ensuring community voices, particularly those of women and girls, influence policy formulation and implementation.

By implementing these recommendations, the program will enhance sustainability, scale impact, and drive policy reforms that strengthen community-led solutions in the fight against FGM/C.

Conclusion





The Semi-Arid Resilience Network (SARN) remains committed to building resilient, gender-equitable communities through strategic interventions in FGM/C prevention, peace-building, and community empowerment. Our impact over the past year has demonstrated the power of community-led initiatives, and we look forward to furthering our mission in 2025 and beyond.



European
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