

TRIP REPORT



Stories from the CARE Learning Tour to Kenya, August 10-17, 2024

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The delegation after meeting with Turkana County officials in Kakuma.

OVERVIEW

A bipartisan delegation of six U.S. Congressional Representatives and staff traveled to Kenya with CARE to learn about how U.S. foreign investments are enabling communities to thrive and find durable solutions to hunger and malnutrition in the region, even as they experience economic hardship, conflict, and humanitarian crises.

Kenya is currently facing a food insecurity crisis due to recurrent climate-induced shocks, ranging from flooding to droughts to desert locusts. These events are compounded by conflict, the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and the war in Ukraine, which has contributed to the current humanitarian catastrophe. The agriculture-dependent economy is vulnerable to climate shocks, such as the recent drought, which lasted for three years. Lack of water and pasture has killed millions of livestock, exacerbating food scarcity and local conflict between clans or tribes who are competing for limited

resources. The food insecurity crisis has been worsened by the country's rapid population growth – 2.9% per year – which increases demand for food and other resources like water, usable farmland, and livestock. In addition to increased school closures, rates of school attrition have increased as children leave to support their families.

As is often the case when resources are scarce, women and children in Kenya are disproportionately affected. CARE analysis shows the food security gap between men and women has grown nearly 10 times since 2018. 2023 reports show that 40% of Kenyan women—over 11 million—have experienced sexual or gender-based violence in their lifetime. Women and girls who are typically sent to collect water for the family must walk further and further to find fresh water sources, placing them at a greater risk of violence. Rates of child marriage have increased in rural Kenya as families struggle to get by due to the food crisis.

Over five days, the delegates visited humanitarian and development programs throughout the country, spending time with communities and seeing firsthand how they are impacted by hunger and poverty. They met with local leaders and community members to learn how communities have come together to build financial security after losing their livestock and subsequently, their financial stability. They spoke with mothers who have adopted new forms of livelihood to support both their own families and their neighbors. The group explored how emergency response must be paired with, and often evolves into, long-term development when crises and challenges like those facing the Kenyan people are recurring and protracted. Finally, they met with businesses that are working with smallholder farmers to create more equitable and resilient supply chains.

DAY 1

SETTING THE SCENE

The delegation's first full day in Kenya began with a briefing at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi led by Ambassador Meg Whitman and senior officials across the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), focusing on the U.S. government's humanitarian and development priorities in the region. The group then transferred to the National Museum of Kenya, where senior paleontologist Dr. Fredrick Kyalo Manthi led a tour on Kenya's prehistoric pastoralist origins, as well as the enduring legacy of land redistribution under British colonial rule. Finally, the delegation met with a panel of Kenyan civil society leaders, including Mwendu Kusewa, Assistant Country Director, CARE Kenya; Wangechi Wachira, CEO, Centre for Rights, Education, and Awareness; Gabriel Mbokothe, Livelihood and Private Sector Advisor, Catholic Relief Services Kenya; and Alvin Mwangi Youth Leader, CARE She Soars program. The speakers explained how factors such as climate change, gender inequality, and economic shocks have a disproportionate impact on women and young people across Kenya. Alvin highlighted the importance of including young people in the design stage of development programs that have a direct impact on youths to ensure their needs are being adequately addressed.

DAY 2

KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

The delegation spent Day 2 of the Learning Tour at the Kakuma Refugee Camp to learn about the drivers of migration in the region. There are nearly 547,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, with more than half originating from Somalia. As of June 31, 2024, the total population of Kakuma camp and the adjacent Kalobeyei integrated settlement is 283,861 refugees and asylum seekers. The delegation visited four key sites within Kakuma camp and the Kalobeyei settlement:

Reception center

At their first stop, run by Lutheran World Relief, the delegates observed the reception process for new arrivals at the camp. The reception center is the first point of entry for the approximately 500 refugees who arrive at Kakuma each week. They saw how families are entered into a biometric tracking system and given a core relief kit with the basic supplies needed for their initial stay at the reception center and two cooked meals a day, provided with support from the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) and USAID. Ideally, refugees spend 14 days at the reception center, but some may stay 3-12 months because of space and resource challenges caused by broad funding diversions after 2020. There is currently no space for relocation, nor are there enough resources for shelter materials for relocated families. Others have been in the reception center for 2+ years because they came from another camp or felt unsafe in Kakuma potentially due to imported ethnic tensions or crime.

Extended Distribution Point (EDP) and Food Distribution Point (FDP)

The delegation then toured a large warehouse where World Vision works with WFP to store food supplies that are sourced from within Kenya and donor countries around the world, including the U.S, Ukraine, Korea, and other East African countries. The facility has a storage capacity of 7,000 metric tons (MT). From here, the WFP team led the group through an adjacent center where, every month, WFP distributes a general food ration to refugees, consisting of cereals, pulses, vegetable oil, salt, and a nutrient-enriched flour made from soya and maize. Finally, the delegation sat down with members of the Food Advisory Committee, a group comprised of refugees tasked with providing oversight over the quality and quantity of food being distributed to the camp population.

Next, the delegation made its way to a hospital run by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which serves both refugee and host populations. They spoke to doctors and community health volunteers about the maternal and child health and nutrition services being offered free of cost there. In the nutrition stabilization ward, they learned how children under the age of five and pregnant and lactating women are monitored and treated for acute malnutrition. The center had 100 patients in July; admissions have doubled in the past three months and have exceeded the center's 35 bed capacity.



Wangechi Wachira, CEO of the Center for Rights, Education, and Awareness, a local NGO working to advance women's rights in Kenya.



The delegation touring the Kakuma reception center.



A table indicating how food supplies are rationed based on family size.



Rep. Grace Meng with members of the Food Advisory Committee in Kakuma Camp.

Kalobeyei Horticultural Farm:

Finally, the delegates made the 30-minute trip to Kalobeyei integrated settlement to visit the Nalingagor Horticultural Farm. Here, WFP supports a collective of 298 farmers from both the host community and the refugee camp. The farmers grow a variety of nutritious vegetables for personal consumption, as well as for sale at the local market. WFP and the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have provided capacity building training and initially provided seeds. Now, the farmers use their own seeds, saved from previous harvests or purchased with their user fees.



Sen. Chris Murphy in conversation with farmers from both the Kalobeyei refugee settlement and the host community.

DAY 3

ADAPTING LIVELIHOODS

On the third day of the Learning Tour, the delegation traveled to southern Turkana, where they spent the morning with community members in a village on the outskirts of the town of Kangelita. Delegates learned about how Concern Worldwide (CW) is working with the local government to support pastoralist communities transitioning to farming as a resilience strategy in the face of drought, which has decimated their previous farming system. The program involves the construction and

maintenance of a canal that supplies water to over 1,514 acres of farmland cultivated by around 500 farmers. The water is used for farm irrigation, household consumption, and raising livestock. The group heard from local farmers who explained how CW had trained them on modern farming methods and encouraged them to plant a variety of nutritious vegetables to address the problem of food insecurity. In the near future, Kangelita will receive support from the Feed the Future Sustainable Transformational and Accessible Water Interventions (STAWI) Activity, which will

line 2km of the canal to reduce incidents of silting and increase the longevity of the canal.

The group stopped in Lodwar, the capital of Turkana County, for a lunch panel discussion with representatives from Turkana's development sector, local government, and private sector. The conversation centered around multi-sectoral approaches to locally led development and featured development professional Ikeny Kapua, Turkana County government official Job Ronoh, and business leader Niva Lopetet.



The delegation engaging in a town hall discussion with community members in Kangelita.



Development professional Ikeny Kapua participating in a panel discussion on locally led development in Turkana, Kenya.



Sen. Chris Murphy greeting a local government administrator in Kangelita, Turkana.

DAY 4

INVESTING IN COMMUNITIES

The last day of program site visits began with a tour of VegPro, a vegetable processing, packaging, and exporting plant operating out of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. With implementation support from USAID's Feed the Future, VegPro has built partnerships with around 5,000 local smallholder farmers—35% of whom are women—across 10 Kenyan counties, providing them with a direct link to global markets. This has helped farmers cut out middleman brokers and increase their own profits. VegPro also supports farmers by training them on modern farming methods, installing solar powered water pumps and storage tanks, and managing transportation of produce from the farm to the processing plant. The delegates saw how nearly a thousand women work to process around 200 tons of produce each week, to then be shipped to destinations around the world, including upscale retailers such as Marks & Spencer in the UK.



Touring the VegPro vegetable packaging facility.

The delegation then made its way to Kajjido, about an hour and a half outside of Nairobi, to sit in on a meeting of a CARE-supported Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) group. This VSLA, which group members named, Namayiana Duat, is comprised of 15 to 25 people who meet weekly in a safe environment to contribute a set amount of money to a common savings pool. Members can then take out loans from the common fund at a relatively low interest rate. The women of Namayiana Duat demonstrated a typical VSLA meeting, then shared personal stories about how they have used their savings to pay for school fees, household necessities, small business ventures, and even food. Having access to credit was particularly important for members of this group when access to livelihoods was inhibited by the COVID pandemic and recent prolonged droughts. At the end of each year, they pay out the pot of savings and interest accrued from loan repayments to all members.

After the Learning Tour's final site visit, the delegation returned to Nairobi where they had a phone call with Kenyan president William Ruto to learn more about how the Kenyan government is tackling humanitarian and development challenges across the country.

DAY 5

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The delegation's final day in the country included a meeting with Prime Cabinet Secretary of Kenya Musalia Mudavadi to discuss the Kenyan government's commitment to upholding civil liberties and a closing lunch conversation with the CARE team to reflect on lessons learned from the trip. Finally, the delegation closed out the Learning Tour with a meeting with the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, Meg Whitman.



Stories from Kenya

Sara Kisakuyi was able to send her children back to school once they reopened after the pandemic, thanks to the income she earned through the VSLA program. She credits the program for giving her the ability to pay her children's school fees during a difficult time. Before joining the VSLA, Sara and the other women in Namayiana Duat had little agency in their households and minimal decision-making power. Now, as financial contributors, their husbands view them as equals.

Fellow member, Abigail Muteti, also praises the VSLA program for fostering cohesion in her household. She expresses gratitude to Lillian, a community resource trainer working with CARE, who not only taught the women financial independence but also provided gender-sensitivity training to both men and women in their community. As a result of the training, Abigail says her household is happier, and the husbands in her community now have greater trust in their wives. They even encourage the women to save and invest, giving them money to manage for their families' future.



"Well, we often hear about the lack of access to clean water, whether it's drinking or whether it's just for daily use. And we have seen how this problem especially affects women and girls and families. We have seen and heard about women walking many, many kilometers every single day just to get fresh water for their families. We have seen how when small farmers who have been assisted by U.S. investment and programs through organizations like CARE, how they have literally said that their families' and their children's nutrition have improved, and literally lives are being saved. And so, to be able to see firsthand how investments in organizations like CARE have helped children, families, women on the ground access basic needs like clean water, has been amazing."

—Representative Grace Meng

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Build upon U.S. leadership in combatting the global hunger crisis through flexible, reliable, and comprehensive funding

- The U.S. has been a global leader in humanitarian response through the International Disaster Assistance (IDA) and Migration Refugee Assistance (MRA) accounts. Funding to these accounts must be robust to meet rising global needs and maintain sectoral and geographic flexibility to meet the needs of families in crises. This includes funding humanitarian assistance appeals to address the “secondary” impacts, such as heightened protection risks and population displacement, of the food insecurity crisis.
- While working to address emergencies, the U.S. must break down silos between humanitarian and development programming to address food insecurity at the root.
- The U.S. must also pair investments in humanitarian funding with investments in development assistance, which helps address the long-term needs of vulnerable communities and supports their self-sufficiency.
- This starts with robust funding for several accounts through FY25 appropriations:
 - International Disaster Assistance – \$4.85 billion
 - Migration Refugee Assistance – \$4.21 billion
 - Development Assistance – \$4.77 billion
 - Global Food Security Strategy (Feed the Future) – \$1.2 billion
 - Nutrition – \$172.5 million
 - Food for Peace Title II – \$1.8 billion
 - McGovern-Dole Food for Education – \$265 million

Strengthen and reauthorize the international food aid programs in the Farm Bill

- The Farm Bill is a critical tool in fighting both acute and chronic hunger. Title III of the Farm Bill authorizes several important international food aid programs including Food for Peace Title II (emergency and non-emergency) and McGovern-Dole Food for Education.
- In the upcoming Farm Bill reauthorization, we must:
 - Strengthen Food for Peace Title II non-emergency programs and protect against increases in commodity levels that would make Food for Peace inoperable.



Delegates join the march to the VSLA meeting in Kajiado.

- Increase capacity building and resources for local smallholder farmers within McGovern-Dole.
 - Elevate gender across international food assistance programs by reporting on the disproportionate impact of the hunger crisis on women and girls, including sex-disaggregated data, and elevating women’s leadership,
 - By investing in savings groups (including VSLAs), agricultural loans, education on water management and risk management practices, amplifying resources for female farmers and increasing their participation in local and global decision-making spaces, non-emergency programs are proactively preventing future hunger crises. These programs change lives, but we know they could work even better. Through small technical changes, we can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs, reaching more people with comprehensive programs to save lives and build resilience.
 - We must recognize that women are on the frontlines of health and humanitarian action and support their leadership. This includes making fast, flexible funds available to partners, such as local women’s rights organizations, women-led organizations, and female first responders.
- ### Invest in gender equality to address needs and proactively prevent future crises
- Persistent gender inequities are both a cause and an outcome of unsustainable food systems. Women and girls play a transformational role in global food security but are held back by discriminatory laws, policies, and societal biases and restrictions that limit their participation, access, and influence across food systems. Women and girls must be acknowledged leaders and their equitable access to decision-making spaces must be ensured.
 - We must ensure that all food security analyses, policies, and response plans consider the particular challenges that women and girls face, as well as how their unique experiences position them to find solutions to global hunger best adapted to the needs of their communities and families. Of 86 hunger action documents written by the U.S. government, multilateral
- ### Empower local solutions to global challenges
- International programs are most successful when they are built on local knowledge, context, and expertise and led by those close to the participating communities.

organizations, and INGO's in 2022, 25% of the reports were gender unaware and 47% did not mention gender inequality at all. (CARE).

- The U.S. government should mandate the inclusion and integration of gender analyses across programming and investments to ensure that assistance is appropriately addressing inequities and reaching women and girls, who are often the most marginalized.
- The U.S. should also invest in programs and activities that proactively work to change harmful gender norms and inequities within society to mitigate and minimize gender disparities in crisis.

Support communities in building resilience to shocks and stressors

- While humanitarian programs address emergency needs, it is important to simultaneously continue to invest in the resilience of families to manage chronic challenges and bounce back from sudden shocks. U.S programs like Feed the Future and Food for Peace are stronger when they incorporate resilience-building activities that help communities weather the shocks and stressors that can lead to hunger and malnutrition.
- Climate- and water-smart agricultural practices help to build food systems that are sustainable, productive, equitable, and resilient. These principles emphasize the



A Concern Worldwide program staffer recounts the history of the Kangalita irrigation canal.

primary role of small-scale farmers and the importance of supportive institutions and access to markets, climate resilient agricultural practices (including livestock and fisheries), and environmental stewardship.

Incorporate multisectoral approaches in U.S. policy and programs

- Multisectoral programming that integrates livelihood; access to food and nutrition; gender; and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) has the most sustainable impact. We cannot address these issues in silos.

- Feed the Future is excellent at creating market linkages, as demonstrated at VegPro, but when it doesn't integrate nutrition and small groups savings programs, especially those that are women-led, into the model, it is leaving opportunity for impact on the table. As Congress provides oversight for the implementation of the Global Food Security Reauthorization Act (passed last Congress), it is crucial that a multisectoral approach to nutrition and VSLAs be integrated from the start.



If you are interested in learning more about CARE's Learning Tours program, please contact:

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