



County Government of
West Pokot



Eradicating Extreme Poverty in West Pokot by 2025



Policy Priorities & Lessons from the Development of Kenya's First County Poverty Graduation Policy in West Pokot

Introduction

This paper reflects on what was achieved in 2020 since the West Pokot County Government, and partners embarked on a journey to scale up poverty graduation resulting in an approved county poverty graduation policy and maps out a pathway for policy implementation. Like the policy process itself, the paper uses key dimensions for achieving systemic change at scale that comprise Wasafiri's Systemcraft¹ approach to present the lessons.

The paper is intended to be a resource for the county government of West Pokot and other county governments interested in approaches to graduation, national government stakeholders (such as those involved in the roll out of the Kenya Social Economic Inclusion Programme (KSEIP) economic inclusion pilots), development partners and practitioners.

The paper was developed as a joint effort, through interviews and brainstorming sessions with people involved in the project. It aims to capture the experience of the county government's Technical Working Group, which has driven the process of developing the policy, and Wasafiri and Village Enterprise staff who have supported it.² The Technical Working Group comprised of representatives from the departments of Agriculture, Livestock, Trade, Finance, Public Service Management, Social Services and Legal Department of the County Assembly.



"Today I unveiled Poverty Graduation Policy for West Pokot which will provide a roadmap and guarantee a significant milestone in the management and implementation of actions to end extreme poverty within the County. It was formulated through a participatory process involving all stakeholders in strategies for poverty alleviation". Hon. Prof. John Krop Lonyangapuo, Governor West Pokot County, 30 September 2020.

A pathway to ending extreme poverty in West Pokot

The county government has committed to use this policy to guide the elimination of extreme poverty in West Pokot (which is currently estimated at 26.3% or 170,000 people³) over the next 5 years.

West Pokot is the first county in Kenya to develop a policy for a county wide approach to ending extreme poverty which will link together development investments that are currently not well coordinated and fragmented, reduce wastage, improve effectiveness and increase sustainability. This will require strong leadership and coordination mechanisms to track progress and sustain commitment.

Project overview: Village Enterprise in partnership with Wasafiri Consulting is undertaking a 15-month project funded by the Open Society Foundations' (OSF) Economic Justice Programme. The project aims to support the County Government of West Pokot to develop a coherent approach to scale up graduation from extreme poverty and integrate it into interventions that will seek to realize social and economic inclusion of the extreme poor.

¹ Systemcraft is an approach designed by Wasafiri to help leaders tackle complex problems see Systemcraft - Wasafiri Consulting (wasafirihub.com)

² The authors would like to thank several members of the county government for the time and energy they have dedicated to this project alongside their ongoing roles and to the time they gave to interviews to help produce the contents of this paper.

³ Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey (KIHBS), Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2017.

LONG-TERM VISION: ERADICATE EXTREME POVERTY IN WEST POKOT 26.3% TO 0% WITHIN 5 YEARS

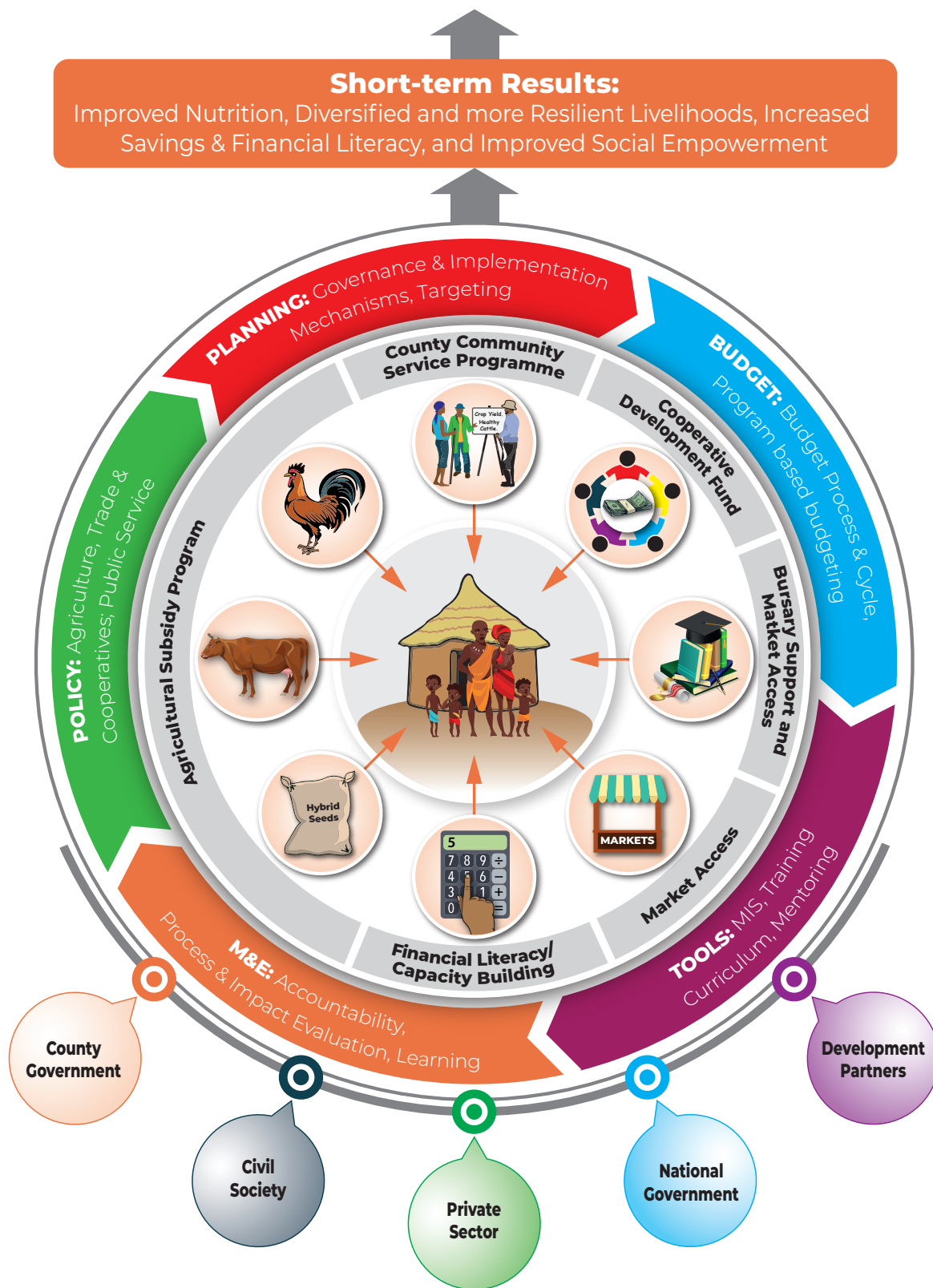


Figure 1: The key elements of a graduation approach needed to end extreme poverty in West Pokot

Figure 1 above highlights the theory of change incorporating some of the existing county programmes that will be used to deliver the policy alongside new initiatives that will need to be developed to actualise the poverty graduation approach.

Effective targeting to end extreme poverty

In a context of finite resources, effective targeting is critical. This means moving away from an approach of equality to one of equity, focusing the resources on the households who most need them. The poverty graduation approach is proven to work with the extreme poor. In a context where over a quarter of the population are identified as extreme poor⁴ it requires sophisticated targeting to differentiate between levels of poverty. There are also population segments that are both extremely poor and profoundly vulnerable (and dependent on external support) who may not be appropriate candidates for graduation programming and will continue to need long term support from social protection programmes.

The county government is currently in the process of adapting Village Enterprise's targeting tool⁵. It will then be important to pilot the adapted tool. National government tools such as the Harmonised Targeting Tool (HTT), developed for retargeting the National Safety Net Programme, will also be important to consider in order to ensure consistency. To be future fit, data systems should aim to be compatible with the government's Enhanced Single Registry (a social registry) as it is gradually established and rolled out in the coming years.

Layering of existing poverty eradicating interventions within extremely poor households

Six of the interventions in the diagram above are all existing West Pokot county government programmes that are resourced. These currently include education support such as bursaries to secondary school children and adult literacy programmes and livelihoods support such as provision of improved seeds and breeds of cattle and poultry as well as a cooperative development fund and market access initiatives. Currently these programmes are available to a majority of West Pokot residents. The graduation policy aims to

shift this and to use these resources more deliberately to support the extreme poor to graduate from extreme poverty.

In West Pokot, the development of complementary capacities are needed for financial literacy and mentoring. Civil society graduation partners have a great deal of experience in these areas and can provide and help adapt resources and training to build capacities in these areas. Additionally, the county government has an impressive adult literacy programme and the trainers implementing this will be a valuable resource for providing training in financial literacy and in mentoring. Agricultural extension workers will also combine mentoring with their existing roles.

"A coordinated approach at the county level will build a platform for the county and national stakeholders to elevate and better target their investments and to encourage the engagement of new donors."

County Graduation Policy

Resources

As can be seen above, many of the resources needed to implement this policy are already available. Realising the policy's vision will therefore require effective retargeting of existing programmes and adding a few missing elements. The latter can be achieved through training key staff, recruiting staff with relevant skills on poverty graduation or partnering with organisations that have the capacities such as in financial literacy training in the short-term with a view to these functions being taken over by the county government in the long-term. A similar process is planned with

⁴ The above survey does not identify the exact location of the extreme poor households so mapping of where of poverty will also be needed.

⁵ The Poverty Probability Index (PPI®) is a poverty measurement tool that determines the likelihood of a household living below poverty line guided by 10 country and program specific questions about a household's characteristics and asset ownership.

the national government in the context of the KSEIP economic inclusion pilots where a technical assistance provider is developing training resources and building capacities in these areas that are typically not available in government currently.

Other county government resources are also allocated equally across the county such as the Ward Development Funds. Ward allocations total 400 million Kenyan Shillings per year (approximately \$3.7 million). Such funding could potentially be reprogrammed and allocated according to poverty levels and targeted more clearly on poverty reduction efforts. Such pro-poor budgeting could go a long way to realising the policy goals within current resource envelopes, this highlights the importance of public awareness, support and good leadership is critical. The policy also lays out plans to ensure that external stakeholders target their resources within the framework of the policy. As stated in the County Graduation Policy *“A coordinated approach at the county level will build a platform for the county and national stakeholders to elevate and better target their investments and to encourage the engagement of new donors.”*

Strategic investments in IT hardware and software are needed to facilitate targeting and to enable the establishment of more effective monitoring and management information systems. A special unit may be needed to oversee this work within the Finance and Planning Department. This unit could also oversee the development of guidelines for implementation and the development of an operation manual to guide departments as they implement the policy. A pilot programme with external technical assistance support may be a good platform for learning by doing for the county government.

Effective monitoring

An appropriate Management Information System is an essential component of the policy. It is needed to support efficient and cost-effective monitoring and to inform targeting and set standards. These are areas where the county government has identified that it currently lacks capacity and would like external support. In part this gap will be addressed with support

from the OSF technical assistance initiative through adapting some of the tools that Village Enterprise use to monitor their graduation work, but additional capacities and systems are needed.

The policy requires development partners to commit to common performance standards including for financial management and reporting. This policy will help coordinate the existing fragmented efforts at poverty reduction into a coherent plan against which progress can be tracked.

The coming year will be a crucial period in planning and resourcing the implementation of this policy while continuing to build a wider constituency of public and political support behind it. Leadership is required to carry forward a policy shift from equality to equity. It will be a challenge to move away from universal offerings and effectively target those who most need the support to escape extreme poverty. A clear targeting tool is essential to enable effective targeting and to build trust in the system. It would be strategic to link to national government work in this area and use similar tools to ensure that data gathered is compatible with the emerging social registry and county MIS.

Key milestones during the year are highlighted in **Figure 2** below. It is essential that initial actions to adjust existing programmes take place that can give momentum to bigger efforts and harder decisions that follow.

County assembly approval in early 2021 and subsequent budget allocations will help insulate the implementation of the policy from disinterest or negative behaviours that may result from future change in County leadership.

Nonetheless, sustaining the momentum in the context of any changes in leadership will be critical and can be ensured through the adoption of the policy into law with automatic annual budget allocations. Critical to this will be steady demonstrations of success as policy implementation delivers results for the extreme poor in West Pokot enabling the County to reach Kenya's Vision 2030 to eliminate extreme poverty.

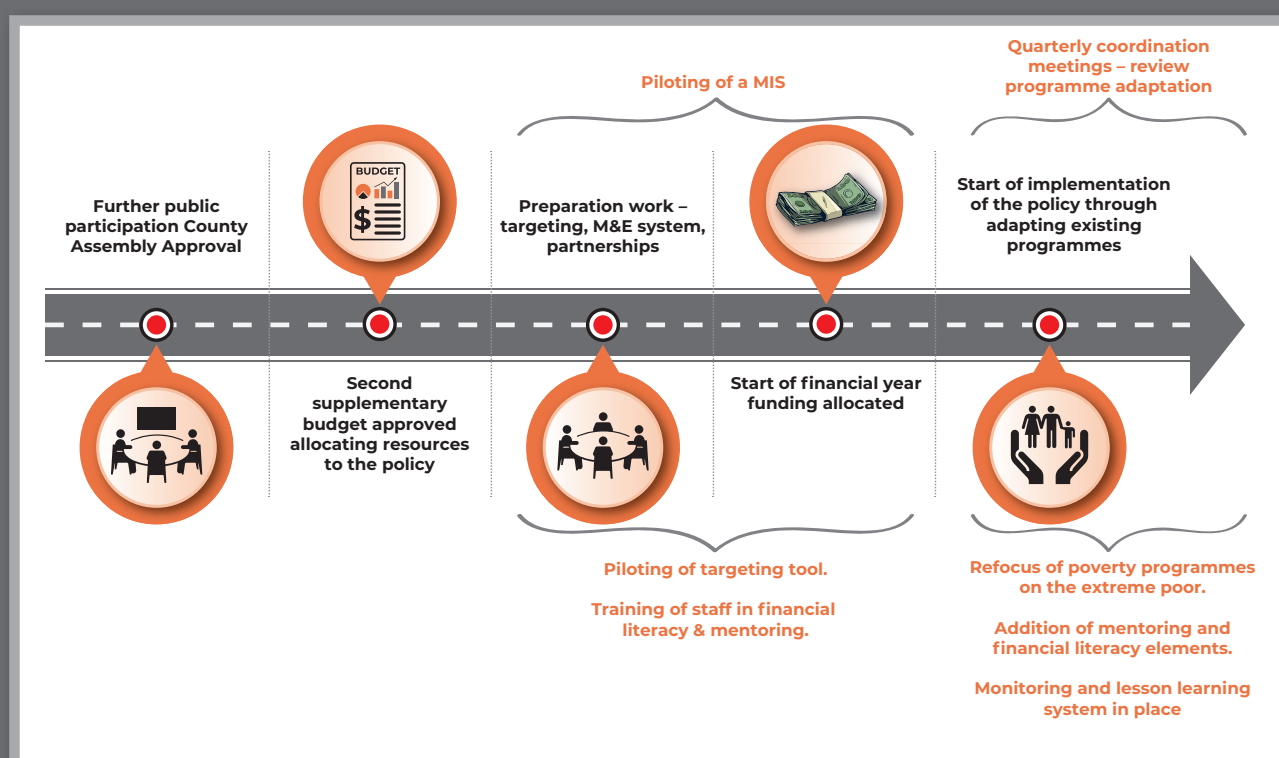


Figure 2: Roadmap for the West Pokot Graduation Policy 2020

Lessons learnt from the implementation of 12 months in the life of creating Kenya's first county government graduation policy

1. Get organised

A key component of success has been the creation of appropriate structures populated with the right people working in the right positions at the right level. The crucial structure in the development of the policy has been the Technical Working Group (TWG) staffed by technical staff from line ministries within the county government and partners. A first workshop in January 2020 secured the interest of key staff from across county and national government departments and included the Leaders of the Minority and the Majority from the County Assembly. This has been critical for ensuring their engagement from the first steps and has helped to ensure future County Assembly approval of the policy. Now the policy is approved a Steering Committee will oversee its implementation composed of CECs from relevant departments and absorbing members of the TWG.

From its initiation, the graduation policy process has been aligned with the Department for Finance and Economic Planning. This was a strategic positioning considering the mandate of this office to ensure county government initiatives benefit the poor, its control of budgets, oversight of programmes and spending across the county. This positioning has been critical for ensuring the leadership's understanding of poverty graduation approaches and commitment to the process. This Department additionally houses the county government's monitoring and evaluation function. It also has good links to development partners and is well placed to identify potential avenues for financial support.

Effective management of group dynamics has been important to ensure the smooth functioning of the group. Inevitably some movement of key staff during 2020 between ministries affected momentum at

different stages of the process. However, ensuring that the TWG drew stakeholders from across a range of government departments, whilst anchoring it centrally in planning and finance, ensured that the process could continue despite staff changes.


2. Set a direction of travel together

A key strength in this policy development process has been that it has been grounded in a home-grown, rigorous and participatory process. The county government has strong ownership of the process and the product. In contrast, many past policies have been written with technical assistance from external consultants who often conduct the drafting in isolation and then submit a completed document to government stakeholders for endorsement.

This undermines ownership and builds no lasting policy development skills. In the case of the graduation policy, capacity was built within the TWG, which then served as a multi government agency platform which led the joint drafting of the policy word for word, with external technical support⁶ providing a guiding and mentoring function. This approach has ensured that the end result is owned and well understood by those who will implement it. This has also served to build dedication towards realising its goals.



“A key strength of this project has been the capacity it has built in the art of policy making amongst the political class in West Pokot. Now these stakeholders are able to work on any policy development processes⁷.” Benard Biegon, Director of Planning, West Pokot County.



“When we look at the document, we can recognise our own sentences, we know the content of the policy inside out, this instils true ownership.” John Poriot, Director of Budget, West Pokot County

3. Build interest and commitment among decision-makers and change the incentives for policy action

A year ago very few stakeholders in the county government had heard of the concept of poverty graduation and now there is a complete county policy for it. This has been achieved through a year (2020) with unparalleled distractions. Success has hinged on building understanding on what a poverty graduation approach involves, convincing stakeholders of the value of the approach and its scientifically proven track record in achieving results, gathering evidence on existing programmes in Kenya and globally that could form part of a graduation approach and through building wider government and civil society understanding and ownership. Fundamental to this is building recognition that addressing extreme poverty⁸ cannot be achieved by one ministry alone and a cross sectoral approach is needed.

At times, the concept of poverty graduation met with resistance. The notion of providing multiple investments to priority households in a context of limited resources and high levels of overall poverty is not politically appealing. This has necessitated creating understanding of the sustainable nature of the impact of the approach and acceptance of it as time-bound investment with a strong track record of results. Sensitisation and capacity development with the public and the county leadership will continue to be needed going forward.

⁶ TA support has been provided by Wasafiri and Village Enterprise in policy development and approval processes and in the graduation approach.

⁷ All quotes are from members of the county government and the technical working group.

⁸ Households and individuals whose monthly adult equivalent total food and non-food expenditure per person is less than Ksh 1,954 in rural and peri-urban areas and less than Ksh 2,551 in core-urban areas respectively are considered to be hardcore poor or live in “hardcore or extreme poverty”. Source: Basic Report on Well Being in Kenya, 2018; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics.

4. Harnessing collective intelligence on graduation and policy processes

A weakness of the policy development process has been the relatively limited investment in building wider awareness of poverty graduation approaches, and the proposed policy content across the county. The essential element of public participation has largely come in the later stages of the policy engagement and formulation process. Enhanced public participation will continue to be integral to build wider understanding and popularise the policy.

Policy development processes require careful balancing and prioritisation. If the initial investment had been heavily centred on creating wide ownership across the county, the incredible progress made in the last 9 months may not have been achieved. Building out understanding and ownership takes time and involved resources we didn't have. Stakeholder groups must be prioritised. Inevitably the sequencing of engaging stakeholders brings challenges in generating

consensus. This could have derailed progress if over-invested in, too early in the policy process. The fact that a small team with influence in the county, drove the process was vital to making swift progress. However, building wider awareness and ownership is now critical to ensure public and political support and resources for implementation, from the county government, citizens and other development programmes that can be leveraged.

This project is an example of **good collaborative development practice** facilitated by experimental and flexible funding. Driven by appropriate structures with key, engaged and influential stakeholders that journeyed from the initial scoping of graduation work in West Pokot have been critical ingredients to success. These factors have combined with the home-grown and participatory nature of the process which prioritised the building of commitment amongst key stakeholders before now moving towards wider public buy-in.



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