

# Nawiri FY24 Q3 Humanitarian Stories

## Crafting Dreams: Nawiri Empowering Youth Through Boat Making in Turkana's Lake Zone



In the sweltering heat of Todanyang village, next to the humming shores of Lake Turkana, 23-year-old Nabokat Katodi diligently plies his craft. With meticulous care, he pounds nails and twists screws into a lengthy plank of grevillea wood. The rhythmic sound of his work, "ta ta ta," harmonizes with the gentle lull of the lake's waves caressing the sandy shoreline. This daily ritual has become his norm for nearly three weeks, as he keenly takes guidance from his two trainers, honing his skills in wood boat making. Among the cohort of twenty-three young men enrolled in boat-making through the Nawiri Ujuzi Mashinani Program, Nabokat exemplifies the transformative power of skill development initiatives, empowering adolescent boys and young men to craft their futures with purpose and precision.

Growing up on the shores of Lake Turkana, it seemed inevitable for Nabokat to follow the path of the fishermen who thrived in his community. "I've been a fisherman for as long as I can

remember," he admits, a hint of bashfulness in his tone as he chuckles. Despite his experience, he's never had a boat of his own, relying instead on borrowed vessels for each fishing expedition. This arrangement came with a cost: for every fish caught, Nabokat and his fellow fishermen had to pay Kes.5 ( \$0.039) to the boat owner, significantly eating into their earnings. "On a good day, I could catch around 100 fish, selling each one for Kes.25 (\$0.19), totalling Kes.2,500 (\$19.38)," he explains. "But Kes.500(\$3.88) would always go back to the boat owner as payment." This cycle left Nabokat and others like him struggling to make ends meet.



*Nabokat saws a plank of grevillea wood, used to make boats*

When the Nawiri Ujuzi Mashinani initiative reached the community, offering opportunities for skill development, Nabokat was thrilled. "Nawiri presented us with various courses, including masonry, tailoring, bike repair, and wood boat making," he recalls. With his background in fishing and the persistent challenge of boat ownership, Nabokat and 23 other young men eagerly signed up for boat-making training, seeing it as a chance to break free from dependency and carve out a more sustainable livelihood.

Ujuzi Mashinani supports out-of-school adolescents and young adults aged 10-29 by improving their health, nutrition, and socio-economic opportunities. Operating in 22 training centers in Turkana County, the program has enrolled 749 students and selected 44 master trainers from remote villages to teach various trades, aiming to reduce persistent acute malnutrition through community empowerment.

Kennedy Midira, one of the two master trainers selected by Nawiri for the wood boat-making training, sheds light on the program's structure: "The boat-making training goes on for one month, happening six days a week," he says. "We get our wood from Kitale to make the boats. The youths come at 8 a.m. and go home at 4 p.m. from Monday to Friday. On Saturdays, they start at 8 a.m. and finish by noon, so they can rest until Monday." He says, instructing Nabokat on the size of wood to saw.

When questioned about the cost-benefit analysis of the program, Kennedy emphasizes the economic advantages. "A single boat in the market can range from Kes.75,000 (\$ 581.40) to about Kes.150,000 (\$1,162.79) ," he notes. "This is expensive for many fishermen. By

encouraging them to make their own boats using locally available wood, we can reduce the costs. Furthermore, if they choose to sell these boats, the profits will be good,” he finishes.

In just three weeks, the group of young men have accomplished an impressive feat; constructing two boats, one powered by a motor and the other a sailboat. With their momentum, they eagerly anticipate completing another boat before the one-month training timeline draws to a close. For Nabokat, the impact of Nawiri on his life has been profound. "I can now make boats," he beams, contemplating his newfound abilities. "I want to make and maybe sell boats, invest, and take care of my family, making sure they have their basic needs met, including nutritious food."



*Nabokat with his two boat making master trainers*

Beyond boat-making, Nabokat has gleaned invaluable insights from Nawiri's comprehensive approach. "I've also gained essential life skills and basic numeracy through weekly boy group sessions," he explains. "Thanks to Nawiri, I've received education on health and nutrition, knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, and even learned proper food handling techniques after fish harvesting." With each lesson learned, Nabokat is poised to navigate a brighter future, equipped with both practical skills and knowledge to thrive in his community.



## Transforming Elelea: USAID Nawiri's Impact on Food Security and Community Resilience in Turkana South



"Harvesting maize from my 1-acre farm shows the success of USAID Nawiri's efforts to improve food access in our remote village of Elelea. In the past, long droughts stopped our crops from growing, and the invasive plant *Prosopis* took over our farms. I lost my entire farm and didn't feel motivated to clear the *Prosopis*. But now, with Nawiri's support, I'm harvesting maize, which brings new hope and productivity," says Naroo Loyoro, one of the 1,300 participants benefiting from the 650-acre Elelea Irrigation Scheme.

Our recent visit to the Elelea Irrigation Scheme in Turkana East coincided with the harvesting season. Joyful men and women were busy with various farm activities, including harvesting maize, drying it, and protecting maturing crops from birds. Mr. Josephat Lokai, Chairman of the Elelea Irrigation Scheme, shared the community's journey. "This farm started in 1981 with support from the Turkana Rehabilitation Program. Despite various development partners' support, we struggled to achieve food independence due to successive droughts affecting the water levels in River Kerio, our primary water source. By the time USAID Nawiri intervened, we had lost most of our farms to water shortages and *Prosopis* invasion."

James Apuyo, the sub-county Crops Officer for Turkana East, highlights the collaboration between USAID Nawiri and government officers to teach farmers the best agroecological practices. “The goal of Nawiri in addressing malnutrition and the County government’s commitment to address the broader food security challenge for the community presented a better opportunity for collaboration between the county Department of Agriculture and the Nawiri Program. Through our collaboration, we have supported communities in land reclamation interventions while rehabilitating the water canal system in the farms.”

Apuyo further notes that educating the community on agricultural best practices has been transformative. “Instilling knowledge to the community on the best agricultural practices has been a game changer in our collaboration with USAID Nawiri. Our concerted efforts have focused on enabling the community to have a clear understanding of how they can maximize the use of their land to obtain good yields while maintaining their farms from any possible secondary invasion by Prosopis. More to that, our emphasis has also extended to the need for individual responsibility in ensuring all the water canals crossing their farms are always functional while tasking the role of desilting main water intakes to the rest of the farmers in the respective sections of the farm.”



*John Apuyo, the sub-county crops officer  
inside the Elelea irrigation farm*

During our visit, pest management emerged as a significant challenge in achieving food security.

To address this, the resilient livelihoods team, along with county agriculture officials, adopted integrated pest management approaches including crop rotation and using neem tree concoctions to prevent crop attacks, hence ensuring the use of locally available organic options.

M.s Naroo Loyoro, who takes care of her four grandchildren, expresses happiness and confidence that her household's food needs



*Ms. Naroo Loyoro harvesting maize from her 1  
acre farm in readiness for consumption in Elelea  
farm*

are met. “Recently I harvested four bags of sorghum which I make flour for porridge and *ugali* (a staple African dish made from maize flour and water) or prepare them as grains then add beans and vegetables to make it more enjoyable for my household. As I harvest my maize farm, I am confident that my household food needs are well catered for for the next few months as I work on the next planting season. My plan for the next planting season is to do mixed farming by having the various crop varieties in the farm from cereals, beans, cowpeas, and various vegetable varieties to diversify my household.”

The program implementation shows promising signs of reducing malnutrition in Turkana South and East zones previously affected by insecurity and lack of diverse nutritious foods. According to a SMART survey, Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates in Turkana South dropped from 41.4% in June 2022 to 32.7% in June 2023. This reduction is attributed to emergency response interventions, investments in crop and livestock production, strengthening community structures, and building government frontline workers' capacity.

Beyond large-scale cereal production, the resilient livelihoods team, in collaboration with the County Department of Agriculture and the community, is preparing to plant 70 acres of vegetables and 30 acres of pasture. This will enhance dietary diversification and increase milk production at the household level and eventually lead to reduced persistent acute malnutrition.



## Empowering Youth Through Beekeeping: USAID Nawiri's Impact in Kagitankori



Our journey to engage with the USAID Nawiri-supported Transforming Masculinity groups brought us to Kagitankori village in Turkana South, known for its tranquil setting beneath sprawling acacia trees, ideal for beekeeping. Here, idle youths found transformative opportunities.

In the village, we met a group of 24 dynamic young men in their regular weekly meeting, mentored and transformed by the program. They stood out with their confident demeanor, articulate communication skills, and deep knowledge spanning health, nutrition, life skills, and literacy. Driven by unity, these youths have embraced beekeeping wholeheartedly, managing over 50 hives with essential training from the Turkana County Department of Livestock on apiary management and beekeeping as a profitable venture.

David Etukutan, mentoring the Twiga B Boy Group, reflects on their journey: "USAID Nawiri's arrival was pivotal for us, turning our beekeeping aspirations into reality. Initially, our traditional methods led to honey contamination, affecting its quality and market value. With Nawiri's guidance, we now employ hygienic harvesting practices, minimizing disturbance to bees and



*David Etukutan, the mentor for Twiga B boy group showing the honey produce plus wax harvested from their beehives*

ensuring high-quality honey." He emphasizes that the shift to more efficient and hygienic procedures, facilitated by USAID Nawiri's capacity building, has significantly improved their honey's marketability and pricing while ensuring hive retention for future harvests.

Kerry Lomuria of the Twiga B Boy Group highlights personal changes due to the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA) introduced by USAID Nawiri. Through the VSLA, he accessed loans for his livestock business

and received monetary support during illness, enabling him to seek medical care in Lokichar town.

Our investigation into Kagitankori's thriving honey business led us to Daniel Esekoni, who has dominated beekeeping for two decades. USAID Nawiri's beekeeping interventions spurred local youths to join, securing 40 hives through development partnerships. Esekoni supports them in marketing honey to meet growing demand in hotels and supermarkets. Esekoni not only mentors new beekeepers but also aids in packaging and market connections, leveraging his experience to save time and resources in seeking new markets. With honey selling at Kes. 800 per kilogram and bee wax at Kes. 1,300, the addition of beehives under USAID Nawiri's Household Economy activities promises increased household income for these motivated youths.



*Daniel Esekoni, a male, dominant in beekeeping, supports the group in packaging and market linkages*

As we equip Boy groups with beehives and equipment, Nawiri is confident in their ability to engage effectively in honey production. Discussions with these groups highlight their interest in leveraging the VSLA to



expand beekeeping activities, augmenting individual incomes. Beyond beekeeping, our engagement fosters literacy and functional skills among initially illiterate youths. Aligned with our goal of sustainably reducing malnutrition, training sessions emphasize health and nutrition, empowering young men to drive positive community change.

## **Atome Lowat: A Mother Championing Community Sanitation and Fighting Malnutrition in Turkwel**



Meet Atome Lowat, a determined 30-year-old mother of five who stands out as a champion for Community Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) and a crusader against acute malnutrition in her village. Despite facing challenges like inadequate clean water and cleaning supplies, Lowat has embraced the CLTS approach, which empowers communities to assess and address open defecation and find their own sanitation and hygiene solutions. This method encourages local knowledge, technology, and innovation to drive change.

Lowat, from Konyipad village in Kaichemeri of Turkwel ward, is an inspiration to her community. As a member of Nawiri's Rural Entrepreneur Access Project (REAP) for Nutrition (R4N) Aderait group, and a dedicated farmer, she joyfully shares how the program's interventions, particularly through anchor models, have helped tackle malnutrition. Through R4N, she and her peers have participated in informative sessions on various health topics.

"We now understand the importance of good hygiene and sanitation in reducing acute malnutrition in our area. Despite lacking adequate clean water and hand-washing detergents, we use ashes as an alternative," says Lowat.

Lowat recounts how her community had been hit by diarrhea outbreaks, affecting two of her young children. With the help of USAID Nawiri, they were enrolled in a supplementary feeding program and assigned a Community Health Promoter. This promoter educated them on health and nutrition, dispelling cultural misconceptions. Trained to use the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference tape, Lowat can now detect malnutrition cases.

Her farming business has also become a cornerstone of her efforts to improve her community's health. Producing vegetables for both consumption and sale, Lowat has improved her family's diet from one meal a day to three. The income from her produce helps cover school fees and purchase other food varieties for her family.

Through her initiatives, pregnant women in her community now have access to five out of the ten recommended food varieties, and children under five have access to at least five of the seven recommended varieties. Lowat has observed a reduction in malnutrition cases in her village and believes the interventions will sustainably reduce persistent acute malnutrition (PAM) rates.

To enhance access to quality health services and increase knowledge for preventing and treating malnutrition, USAID Nawiri collaborates with Community Health Officers like Ignatius Lotira Lolea. With program support, Lolea has seen significant improvements. "Our community has been transformed in terms of nutrition, water sanitation, hygiene, breastfeeding, and kitchen gardens thanks to the training we received through the program," Lolea explains. He adds that 77 out of 85 households have fully embraced CLTS, with the remaining few sharing a single unit.

Atome Lowat's tireless efforts and dedication have made her a true champion in her community, leading the way in improving sanitation and fighting malnutrition, and transforming the lives of many in Turkwel.



## Weaving a Path to Nutrition: Basketry Diversifies Livelihoods in Lokitoeang'aber



In the small village of Lokitoeang'aber, which means "the tree for the women" in Ng'aturkana, a group of women gather under a large tree, weaving baskets and mats while singing traditional songs. The array of completed baskets, varying in sizes, shapes, and colors, is a testament to their hard work and determination.

Among these women are Joyce Epu Natit and Patricia Musee Lopus, both in their mid-twenties and mothers of young children. As members of the USAID Nawiri-supported Apiaro Girls Improving Resilience through Livelihood and Health (GIRL-H) group, they have mastered the art of basket weaving.

"Our aspiration as a group is to have our own building, a mass production house to display our baskets," Joyce shares with a smile. "We sell most of our products to tourists, both local and foreign. Foreign tourists particularly love baskets made from fine leaves, the soft yet sturdy 'nkaguruguræ' species."



*Joyce (in the middle) weaving a basket along other Nawiri participants*

The GIRL-H group, specializing in basketry and catering, owes much of their success to the Loropio Value Village, a popular tourist destination that also offers market opportunities and catering classes. In addition to weaving, the women engage in small-scale businesses such as selling fish. These business ventures have accumulated their Village Savings and Loan unit up to Kes.100,000. "A basket sells for around Kes. 1,000, depending on the variety and added value through different colors. A 10-gram color addition costs about Kes. 100," says

Patricia Lopus.

Joyce's journey also highlights the impact of these initiatives on health and nutrition. Her four-year-old son, Desmond Eweet, once suffered from malnutrition. "Eweet was malnourished, but thanks to USAID Nawiri's health and nutrition lessons, he is now in good health. We learned about the importance of a balanced diet, water, and hygiene practices," Joyce explains.

Hellen Akiru, a middle-aged resident and non-participant of the USAID Nawiri program, attests to the community-wide impact. "The program has really helped our young people. They aren't just making baskets; they're learning new skills and working on activities that are changing their lives. It shows that teaching new ways of thinking and doing things really works."Akiru notes.



*Hellen Akiru, showcases her finished weaved product*

On health and nutrition, Akiru appreciates the food demonstrations provided by the program. "We've learned how to prepare fish balls, an opportunity we wish to explore more despite the lack of markets," she says.

Through basketry and related activities, women like Joyce and Patricia are not only diversifying their livelihoods but also ensuring their households have access to nutritious foods. This initiative is a beacon of hope, showing how traditional crafts can transform lives and bolster community health.



## Challenging Cultural Norms: Nawiri Empowering Morans to be Change Agents in the Fight Against Persistent Acute Malnutrition



The branches of the acacia trees stretch and tangle, casting shade and a cool breeze over Arsim, a village in Samburu North sub-county nestled under rolling hills adorned with short, thorny bushes and grass that is slowly transitioning from green to an almost ivory color—a sign of the imminent drought season that frequently plagues the people of Arsim. Just twelve months ago, the village was but a cluster of scattered manyattas and a few stone houses. Today, thorny branches, acting as fences, enclose small demarcated pieces of land nurturing various crops, including harvested maize stalk, pawpaw trees with hanging orange fruits, branches of leafy amaranthus growing together, healthy sukuma wiki (kales), and spinach plants.

At one of these farms, we meet 21-year-old Lmampilin, deeply engrossed in fixing one of the makeshift sprinklers in high demand in the village, especially with the mushrooming of the crop farms. It's an exciting display of creativity for a moran who has never stepped into a classroom. Lmampilin is one of the seven morans in the Namaiyana BOY group challenging cultural and

traditional beliefs about the role of the morans in the community by embracing the adoption of positive behaviors promoted by USAID Nawiri. He is among approximately 3, 867 morans supported by the program who are engaging in crop production as an alternative source of livelihood, abandoning raiding that has claimed the lives of his peers.



*Lmpampilin Langoiya displaying some of the vegetables they grow and sell at the BOY group farm in Keree village, Samburu North sub-county*

"I first saw green leafy vegetables when I was 15 years old when the Red Cross established a farm here. That's the first time I saw sukuma but I never ate," reminisces Lmampilin. When Nawiri started its interventions in Samburu County three years ago, morans were not involved in activities other than taking care of livestock and protecting their villages, mostly from banditry attacks. Additionally, most of them never stepped into a classroom so couldn't read or write, which are essential skills for not only holding simple conversations in

English and Kiswahili, but also for engaging in business transactions.

"We did not do much. Mostly we would just take care of the village. We did not have any knowledge of growing vegetables, and we would not even read. But now, thanks to Nawiri, I can grow and sell vegetables and read M-Pesa messages," mentions Lmampilin, excitedly and meticulously reading to us an M-Pesa message from one of his vegetable sales.

The USAID Nawiri program intentionally includes morans in the fight against malnutrition since they play key roles in the multifaceted factors contributing to PAM. For instance, they conduct cattle raids that significantly contribute to insecurity in the Samburu North region. Hence, the program provides alternative livelihoods through crop production, allowing morans to consume healthy foods, sell the surplus, and steer clear of raiding. Furthermore, morans are perpetrators of teenage pregnancies, another key contributor to PAM. Through basic literacy skills and life skills sessions, they are taught sexual reproductive health and its importance in preventing teenage pregnancies and diseases.

Today, the Lmpampilin and the Boy group sell vegetables averaging Kes.300 per day. This money is used to buy food not grown on the farms, for personal expenses, to contribute to the VSLA, and they have big plans to purchase seeds through accumulated savings.

"I had to drop out of school to allow my younger siblings to continue with education, which is traditionally expected of me as the firstborn. These farms have enabled me to be creative and create a makeshift sprinkler that is more durable than the original one. The money I get from its sales and the farms enable me to sustain myself and family, something I couldn't previously do," remarks Lmampilin.

As our interview progresses, an interested buyer calls out to him to purchase some amaranth. Excitedly, he starts plucking the vegetables as he tells us of other markets they access to sell their vegetables; nearby schools can buy vegetables for the students, and they take the produce to a nearby market that is two km away. This not only increases the consumption of nutritious food by the community, but also makes it available at an affordable cost. Lmampilin is a perfect example of the importance of involving all community members in promoting nutrition outcomes by introducing alternative livelihood opportunities and changing attitudes toward dietary diversity through social behavior change approaches.

As of the Smart Survey or monthly screening in June 2024, the GAM rates at Arsim stand at 3.4%, which is an improvement from 14% in June 2023.



## Building Bridges: The Role of Hybrid Committees in Lowua's Sustainable Future



In the rugged terrain of Northern Kenya, communities strive to survive amidst climatic conditions and occasional conflicts over scarce resources. In one such region, nestled between rocky outcrops and thorny bushes, lies Lowua village in Samburu County. Here, the challenges of food insecurity, harsh climatic conditions, and conflict have long plagued the communities, leaving them vulnerable to the harsh realities of resource scarcity. Residents depend on the Barsaloi Health Facility, located about 10-15 km from the village, for healthcare services.

Amidst this adversity, a beacon of hope emerged when USAID Nawiri rolled out a series of integrated interventions in the village. Central to these efforts are the hybrid committees who have significantly transformed households, making them more resilient and self-reliant by bringing together various system actors for collective prosperity.

The hybrid committees are dedicated to promoting peaceful coexistence with neighboring communities. Chief James Leshipan, a member of these committees, has utilized multiple



*Chief James Leshipan during the interview in Louwa village in Samburu*

trainings and workshops focusing on holistic environmental and natural resources management, peace and conflict resolution skills, participatory rangeland management, holistic rangeland management, and nutrition messaging related to rangeland management. His adeptness in these areas has enabled him to effectively manage conflicts and employ his skills on numerous occasions.

"During a USAID Nawiri workshop held in Wamba, we were instructed on

using non-violent conflict resolution techniques . Approximately two weeks later, an incident occurred in my village involving civilians stealing two police guns. I applied negotiation techniques and successfully recovered the guns from the community peacefully," Chief James explained.

These efforts by the hybrid committees have played a critical role in ensuring peace and cohesion stability within the community, which is a major building block of a prosperous society. Through their work, the committees have overseen ongoing development initiatives and are committed to continuing this role even without the support of Nawiri.

In pursuit of the sustainable reduction of PAM, Nawiri has additionally supported Louwa in crop production through producer groups. These groups ensure the availability of nutritious food within the community by conducting numerous training sessions on smart farming and climate-smart agriculture, benefiting the community throughout Samburu County. "Several years ago, no one would have believed that food production was feasible in Lowua. The training in climate-smart agriculture has empowered the community here to grasp the techniques, despite the arid nature of this land," stated Chief James Leshipan.

Effective rangeland management and conflict resolution are also crucial roles played by the hybrid committees in mitigating PAM within pastoral communities. The state of the natural resource base directly influences both land and animal productivity. Optimal forage quality leads to enhanced livestock nutrition, thereby boosting reproductive performance and subsequently increasing the nutritional, social, and economic significance of herds to households.

"The hybrid committees have been instrumental in advancing the development of this village. We have observed that with organization, we can effectively manage our pasture and grazing areas. This, in turn, ensures that prolonged droughts do not disrupt the supply of milk within households, leading to a healthier community," the Chief emphasized.

Through the tireless efforts of the hybrid committees, Lowua village stands as a testament to resilience and renewal, showcasing how integrated interventions and community cooperation can pave the way for a brighter, more sustainable future.