KENYA RED CROSS SOCIETY NATIONAL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT (N.S.D)

IMPACT STUDY CASE REPORT.

(KWALE, GARISSA, MANDERA, TAITA-TAVETA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) commissioned this study to assess the impact of National Society Development (NSD) support provided over the five-year period from 2021 to 2025. The core focus was to evaluate how these strategic investments affected the institutional capacity, volunteer engagement, and community trust within four specific counties: Kwale, Garissa, Mandera, and Taita Taveta. The overarching purpose of the research was to generate an evidence base that could guide institutional policies and strategies for achieving sustainable National Society Development and fostering locally led humanitarian action.

The NSD Impact Study confirmed that strategic investments led to significant strengthening of KRCS's institutional capacity and local presence. Gains in governance included the formalisation of elections and the strengthening of branch committees through trainings. Further, the digitisation of internal systems saw the successful deployment of the centralised Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, Navision, improving finance and procurement management, which has enhanced accountability and built trust for managing large grants.

Operational readiness was substantially boosted by major infrastructure development, such as the establishment and upgrade of Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs), multipurpose halls, and utilities. Logistics capacity improved significantly through the acquisition of new upgraded Land Cruisers across all focus branches, enhancing operational reach and emergency response capabilities. Financial sustainability efforts demonstrated progress, with branches like Kwale achieving 94% budget utilisation in 2023 and Mandera raising over Ksh 10.7 million through Income Generating Activities (IGAs) in the same year.

NSD support also resulted in a profound positive impact on KRCS's volunteer base and community perception. Extensive capacity building and skills development were provided to volunteers in areas such as disaster response, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI). This led to considerable growth in volunteer numbers (e.g., Taita Taveta grew from 720 to 1,093 between 2021 and 2024), thus improving confidence and readiness for emergencies. At the community level, KRCS cemented its presence and earned high community trust, being widely recognised as an effective and reliable first responder during crises. Accountability mechanisms were strengthened through the establishment of formal Complaints and Feedback (C&F) systems across branches, utilising tools like feedback boxes, toll-free numbers, and dedicated governance subcommittees.

However, the study identified critical challenges that threaten the sustainability of these achievements. A primary risk identified is the absence of a unified, detailed operational NSD framework for KRCS, which limits strategic alignment and partner coordination, causing external support modalities to appear "scattered". The long-term institutional

resilience is threatened by a heavy reliance on short-term, project-based funding, risking a potential backtracking on achievements if donor support diminishes.

Further, internal challenges include operational gaps, such as constrained logistics and delays in volunteer allowance payments, which actively demotivate the volunteer base. More seriously, volunteers reported risks related to internal conduct, including instances of favouritism, harassment, and unprofessional conduct by certain staff members, which negatively impacts volunteer retention. Additionally, system adoption remains uneven. While the Volunteer Membership Management System (VMMS) was established, volunteers reported it was "not effective" in some areas due to inadequate training and technical issues. Lastly, low budget utilisation rates in some counties (such as Taita Taveta at 41% and Garissa at 58% in 2023) suggest underlying systemic bottlenecks in execution or resource alignment.

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

KRCS considers the strengthening of its institutional capacity through National Society Development (NSD) a core priority. This commitment ensures sustainability, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of vulnerable communities. Over the past five years (2021–2025), KRCS has focused on advancing these objectives through strategic initiatives aimed at reinforcing its organisational resilience and effectiveness. It has implemented NSD programs supported significantly by partners, including the British Red Cross (BRC), Danish Red Cross (DRC), Finnish Red Cross (FRC), the International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Committee of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (ICRC).

NSD support aims at strengthening the institutional capacity to ensure the organisation remains sustainable, accountable, and responsive to the needs of vulnerable communities. This comprehensive support entails targeted investments across various enablers, including enhancing governance and leadership capacity through training and elections, professionalising internal systems and institutionalising accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, NSD focuses on building the technical capacity of staff and volunteers and establishing financial sustainability to advance locally led action.

1.2 Problem Statement

The impact study on NSD support to KRCS stemmed from a significant evidence gap regarding the tangible and lasting outcomes of substantial institutional investments. Over the period of five years (2021–2025), KRCS received considerable support from partners to bolster governance, volunteer management, and organisational capacity. However, evaluations and learning reports lacked consistent data on three critical areas: first, how these investments translated into measurable, sustainable improvements in branch functionality and community trust at the county level; second, the extent to which capacity-building changes have been sustained post-funding; and third, the specific impact of NSD on volunteer engagement and service delivery within marginalised and disaster-prone counties. This information deficit has made it exceedingly difficult for KRCS and its partners to justify continued investment, refine future strategies or adapt interventions to achieve greater long-term impact.

The Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) commissioned this study to assess the impact of National Society Development (NSD) support over the five-year period (2021–2025) on its institutional capacity, volunteer engagement, and community trust in four focus counties: Kwale, Garissa, Mandera, and Taita Taveta.

1.3 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The overall aim of the research was to understand the impact of NSD support received by the KRCS over the past five years. The specific objectives of the study are as outlined below:

- To assess the extent to which NSD investments have strengthened branch operational capacity in Taita Taveta, Kwale, Mandera and Garissa (using BDP benchmarks where applicable).
- To examine the impact of NSD support on volunteer engagement and retention, including whether branches have developed sustainable models for mobilising and managing volunteers post-support.
- To evaluate community perceptions of KRCS branches to determine whether NSD-supported changes have enhanced trust, confidence and service delivery at the local level.

SECTION 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data Collection Approaches

The methodology utilised a mixed-methods approach, where primary and secondary data collection and analysis were conducted. The fieldwork relied on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to gather perceptions. Participants, including KRCS leadership, branch staff, partners, government officers, volunteers, and community members, were assured that their participation was voluntary, confidential, and intended solely for research purposes.

2.2 Geographical Scope and Rationale of Study Counties

The study examined the impact of KRCS-NSD support in four focus counties: Taita Taveta, Kwale, Mandera, and Garissa over the past five years (2021 – 2025) due to significant NSD support advanced to these counties .

2.3 Data collection and targeted respondents

Primary data collection was conducted through key informant interviews (KII) and focused group discussions (FGD) with the Head of Regions, County Coordinators, KRCS Volunteers, Community members, and County government officials from the counties of focus. KIIs with partner national societies and KRCS-SMT were also conducted. A total of 12 KIIs and 10 FGDs were conducted.

Participant	Method	Number of Participants
Head of Regions	KII	1
County Coordinators	KII	3
Key stakeholder (County Government officials)	KII	4
Community Members and volunteers	FGD	10
Partner National Societies and KRCS-SMT	KII	4

Table 1: Description of participants

Secondary data collection was conducted through desktop reviews of Annual Reports for the focus counties and the Branch Development plan (2021-2023) progress report.

2.4 Sampling Design

The sampling strategy employed purposive sampling to ensure the inclusion of key stakeholders essential for assessing NSD impact, deliberately targeting staff, volunteers, community members, and county government personnel in these regions; in addition, several key personnel from the headquarters level were also engaged: Partner National Societies from British, Danish, Finnish Red Cross Societies, and KRCS Senior Management Team were also engaged. The sample was further stratified by county to allow for meaningful comparison between different contexts, particularly distinguishing between the coastal and north-eastern counties.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS

The findings were presented through a triangulation approach, combining secondary institutional documentation and primary qualitative data, aimed at ground-level verifications.

3.1 Assessment of Branch Operational Capacity

The support provided through the NSD proved critical in bolstering the organisational and operational capacity of the four focus branches in implementing their Branch Development Plans (BDPs) [1] . These were formulated following the 2021 Branch Organisational Capacity Assessment (BOCA).

3.1.1 Governance and Systems

NSD investments substantially strengthened KRCS governance and internal systems by formalising elections and enhancing institutional oversight. Governance elections were successfully conducted, adhering to the KRCS constitution and ensuring transparency and accountability. This process resulted in strong branch committees, exemplified by Kwale's diverse board members drawn from corporate sectors and local government, which reinforced strategic direction. Critical training and induction sessions for newly elected members on their roles, duties, financial management, and organisational risk management directly addressed historical leadership and integrity conflicts between governance and management.

Furthermore, branches institutionalised active committee engagement through regular governance meetings, typically held quarterly. Key functional sub-committees were established or reinforced, including those for Resource Mobilisation (to diversify income streams), Finance, Audit, and Enterprise Risk (to oversee accountability), and Complaints and Feedback (C&F), which formalised accountability to communities.

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[1] IFRC - BOCA

For instance, Mandera Branch held six governance meetings in 2023 in line with the KRCS constitution. This engagement in policy and planning is further evidenced by Mandera achieving a 100% utilisation rate in involving members in creating annual activity plans.

Further, the four branches have routinely held governance meetings, which have improved local leadership and governance.

3.1.2 System Digitisation and Accountability

A key focus of NSD investment was the modernisation and digitisation of internal systems to strengthen efficiency, accountability, and financial traceability. The transition to the centralised Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, Navision[2] replaced fragmented, Excel-based reporting thereby enabling robust procurement and finance processes, improving integrity, and building trust for managing large grants.

Volunteer coordination was enhanced through the Volunteer Membership Management System (VMMS), though adoption remains uneven due to limited training and technical challenges. Accountability was reinforced through Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) mechanisms, including feedback boxes, toll-free numbers[3], social media channels, and dedicated committees. Digitisation also extended to data management and reporting, through platforms like the 1-2-1[4] platform and Enhanced Single Registry[5] used for beneficiary registration and verification in projects such as Cash Voucher Assistance programming.

In addition, NSD successfully enhanced accountability across all counties by investing in and supporting digitised financial management systems (Navision) and procurement procedures, improving the integrity and traceability of transactions required to manage large grants.

3.1.3 Infrastructure Development

NSD support has driven major infrastructure development across the four focus counties, significantly boosting operational capacity and emergency response. Mandera achieved the most extensive upgrades, including a modern Emergency Operations Center (EOC), a multipurpose hall, renovated office spaces linked to a three-phase power supply, water and security enhancements, and new facilities such as a youth center and warehouse. Garissa strengthened its utilities with a three-phase power system, six VIP washrooms, office furniture, multipurpose tents and built a warehouse (ruble) and water projects like the solar-powered by Bula Jari system and rehabilitation of 12 boreholes, alongside a youth center for disaster risk management. Taita Taveta operationalised a fully equipped EOC for early warning dissemination, initiated office

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[2] Microsoft Business Dynamics 365
[3] Toll Numbers
[4] 121-platform
[5] Enhanced Single Registry (ESR)

construction for long-term growth, and maintained three satellite offices despite delays in consolidating branch functions. Kwale focused on developing and operationalising key revenue-generating initiatives, such as the greenhouse, briquette machines and a tree nursery, while managing a conference facility to support its resource base. These NSD investments are viewed to be impactful NSD support since they actively contribute to financial autonomy, which collectively enhances the preparedness, coordination and sustainability of the focus branches.

"...at least now we have systems and structures in place that enable the staff and volunteers to work in a serene environment"

"...It has improved our visibility because initially, we used to look like a vulnerable organisation. From the outward look, we support communities with mega projects, but if someone visits our offices, they wonder this is the same Red Cross that gives millions and millions of money to the community in form of food relief and cash transfers. At least the image has improved our visibility, also. "

Field Level Feedback

3.1.4 Logistics and Fleet Enhancement

Investment in logistics and mobility under NSD significantly improved emergency response and operational reach for branches, allowing them to manage vast areas. All the focus branches acquired new, upgraded Land Cruisers, addressing previous delays caused by vehicle shortages, accessibility to far-flanked areas, and increasing income generation through mileage recovery and hire. These enhancements collectively strengthened KRCS's capacity to respond quickly and independently, reducing reliance on external partners. However, gaps remain, including insufficient standby vehicles in the four counties with notable ageing fleets in Taita Taveta, which continue to drive high maintenance costs and limit operational flexibility.

"It has improved the branch response capacity because, if you have two vehicles, you can swiftly respond to disasters and go to these hard-to-reach areas to support the vulnerable communities"

County Coordinator KII

3.1.5 Resource Mobilisation

Resource mobilisation efforts across the four focus branches reflect a strong shift toward financial sustainability and income diversification, though success varies by county. Mandera demonstrated notable progress, raising over Ksh 10.7 million through core Income Generating Activities (IGA) in 2023 and sustaining growth in 2024, reinvesting revenue into infrastructure and hosting targeted fundraising events. Kwale combined efficient budget utilisation (94%) with diversified income streams from vehicle hire, conference facilities, and catering. Taita Taveta relied on IGAs such as merchandise

sales, first aid training, and equipment hire, while securing a major Ksh 68 million grant for the Integrated Food Security and Livelihoods-II project, despite low BDP utilisation (41%). Garissa focused on strategy development and implemented five IGAs, including first aid training, but remains constrained by resource gaps and moderate budget utilisation (58%). Collectively, these efforts underscore progress toward operational independence, though challenges persist in scaling high-impact projects and addressing logistical limitations.
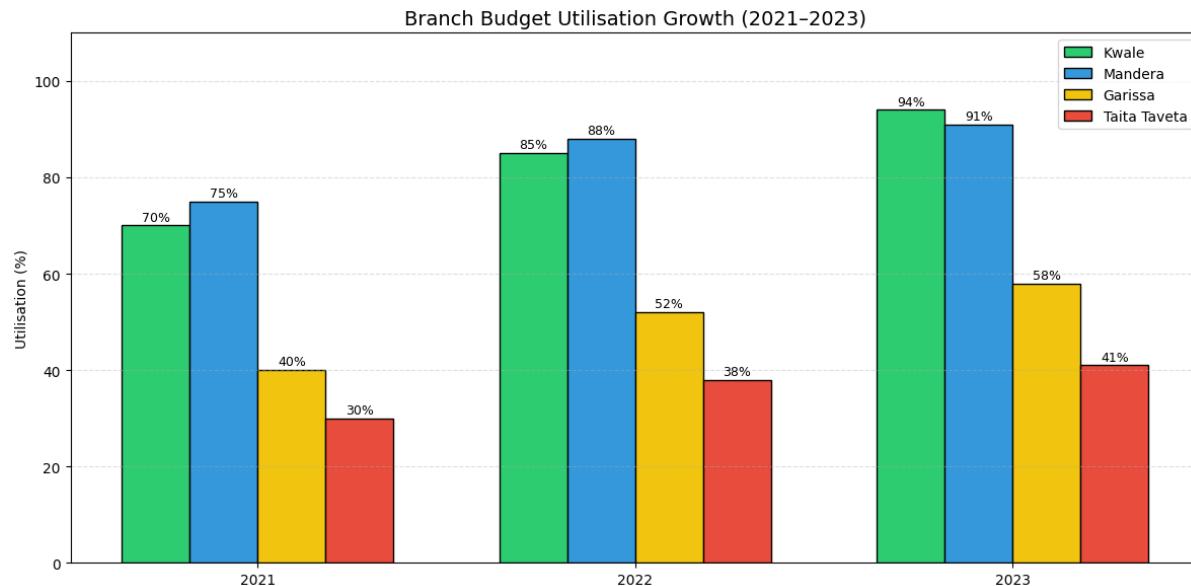
Figure 1:BDP Budget utilisation

Branch	Period	Metric	Amount Generated / Allocation	Key IGA Types
Mandera	2023	IGA Income Generated	**Ksh 10,792,685**	Conference Package, Office Rent, Mileage, Membership Recruitment
	2024	IGA Income Generated	**Ksh 3,792,685**	Office Rental (KES 900,000), Vehicle, EOC rental
Kwale	2023	Funds Raised (Total)	**KES 19,780,520** (out of KES 46,770,000 budget)	Mileage (KES 6.3M), Conference (KES 4.4M), Vehicle Hire, Catering
	2024	Target Achievement	**71%** (KES 16,790,955.50 achieved of KES 23,594,150 target)	Mileage, Conference/Hall Hire, First Aid/Fire Training, Merchandise

Taita Taveta	2020	Core Cost Coverage	**Fully catered core costs**	One-stop shop, Mileage recovery, First Aid sales, Membership, Donations
	2024	Project Funding Secured	**KES 68,000,000** (for IFSL-II project)	First Aid/Fire Training, Merchandise, Equipment Hire, Mileage recoveries
Garissa	2021–2023	BDP Utilization Rate	**58%** (Ksh 11,537,500 spent of Ksh 19,903,000 allocated)	First Aid Training, Vehicle procurement (Planned)

Table 2: Amount Generated vs IGAs

3.1.6 Challenges and System Gaps

Despite widespread improvements, challenges remain, often linked to insufficient resources and technological integration:

- **IT System Sustainability:** While NSD invested heavily in systems like VMMS, some volunteers lack adequate training on how to use them effectively, indicating technical and operational bottlenecks.

- **Risk Management:** While financial risk management improved with all payments being accounted for and keyed into Navision the low utilisation rate of some BDP budgets (e.g., Taita Taveta at 41% and Garissa at 58%) suggests underlying systemic issues in planning, execution, or alignment of resources.

- **Governance Capacity Gaps:** The Taita Taveta Branch initially struggled with limited capacity for comprehensive consultation, a challenge that was magnified by the heavy reliance of virtual platforms (Zoom) during the pandemic. Nevertheless, over time, the use of virtual platforms as a flexible meeting tool has improved the branch's leadership and governance capacity compared to pre-pandemic years.

3.2: Impact on Volunteer Engagement and Retention

The NSD support has had a profound impact on volunteer engagement, recruitment, and retention across the focus counties, primarily by investing in capacity building, structured systems, and motivational elements, though long-term sustainability remains a key concern.

3.2.1 Enhanced Volunteer Capacity Building and Skills Development

NSD investments significantly strengthened volunteer capacity through extensive training and skill development, enabling more effective humanitarian action. Volunteers received diverse training in disaster response, such as Red Cross Action Team (RCAT)

courses, epidemic surveillance, safer access, and aqua rescue, alongside health-focused programs like Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) and Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI). Institutional skills were also enhanced through financial management, governance, and data entry training. These efforts improved volunteer confidence, leadership, empathy, and community trust, with branch volunteers reporting greater readiness for emergencies like floods and road accidents. Capacity building further led to the formation of specialized surge teams, including Mandera's two National Disaster Response Team (NDRT) members, six Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) members, and six aqua rescue teams.

3.2.2 Recruitment, Growth, and Engagement Metrics

The strategic focus on volunteering under NSD led to significant growth and structured engagement across branches. Between 2021 and 2024, Taita Taveta expanded its volunteer base from 720 to 1,093, Garissa recruited 846 new volunteers, Kwale grew from 737 to 832, and Mandera added 223 youth volunteers rising to 1,400 in 2025. Engagement was formalised through regular dissemination sessions, RCAT operations, and youth involvement in climate and health initiatives, with Kwale holding weekly meetings for feedback and coordination. Volunteer welfare and retention were strengthened through awards, psychosocial support retreats, and leadership mentoring, enabling youth to assume governance roles. These efforts not only increased numbers but also enhanced motivation, resilience, and operational capacity across all branches.

3.2.3 Systems and Management Strengthening

NSD funds were utilised to implement systems aimed at professionalising volunteer management.

- **Volunteer and Membership Management System (VMMS):** This is a centralised system that was established and supported by partners like the Danish Red Cross.

- **Supportive Environment:** Volunteers noted improvements such as well-structured offices, logistic support (including vehicle acquisition, which improved outreach), and frequent mental health sessions.

3.2.4 Sustainability Challenges and Risks to Retention

Despite the strong gains, volunteers and leaders consistently raised concerns about the long-term sustainability of engagement, linking it directly to the continuity of donor funding.

- **Risk of Backtracking:** Volunteers widely perceive that the organisation is "Likely to backtrack on the achievements" in service delivery if donor funding is significantly reduced.

- **Logistical Dependence:** A concern was raised that constrained logistical support significantly limits the ability of volunteers to access and provide service

delivery to communities. This challenge was particularly evident in Kwale County, which reported operating with only one functional vehicle at the time of the study. This critical limitation was a direct consequence of the second vehicle having been involved in an accident a few months prior with no replacement provided, thereby making volunteer mobility and response capacity difficult.

- **Motivation and Allowances:** Delays in the payment of volunteer allowances was noted as a critical factor that demoralizes volunteers and risks creating a negative perception of the KRCS. This issue directly contributes to a reduction in volunteer motivation and engagement, which consequently leads to a decline in the number of active participating volunteers.

- **Systemic Gaps:** Technical and operational issues persist. Volunteers noted that the VMMS is "not effective" in some areas due to inadequate training, login issues, and technical challenges. Furthermore, a need remains for a dedicated digital hub or space for digital skills training for volunteers.

- **Internal Conduct Risks:** Volunteers explicitly raised concerns regarding favouritism within some branches, citing the biased allocation of activities and trainings, particularly those linked to allowances or external opportunities. More critically, issues related to Harassment and unprofessional Conduct were reported, where some female volunteers mentioned experiencing unethical treatment or pressure for personal relationships from certain staff members. This conduct was emphasised as being demoralising for volunteers and causing them emotional distress. To mitigate these risks, volunteers recommended that KRCS strengthen and enforce PSEA (Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse) mechanisms, emphasising the need for confidential reporting and accountability to address harassment and power imbalances.

3.3: Community Perception, Trust, and Accountability

The support provided through the NSD framework has had a significant and varied impact on Community Perception, Trust, and Accountability across the focus counties of Mandera, Garissa, Kwale, and Taita Taveta.

Overall, the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) is widely recognised as an effective and trustworthy humanitarian actor, largely due to its commitment to community engagement mechanisms, though issues concerning transparency and service delivery persist, notably in Taita Taveta and Kwale.

3.3.1 Community Perception and Trust

In the four counties, KRCS enjoys strong community trust and is widely regarded as reliable, effective, and accountable. The four KRCS branches are recognised as first responders during crises such as floods, droughts, and conflicts. The key informant interview of Mandera's County Disaster Management Office praises KRCS as "the best

in matters response." The organisation's neutrality enables access to conflict-prone areas where other actors cannot operate, ensuring timely interventions. Communities in Garissa and Kwale commend KRCS for transparency in aid delivery. Additionally, cash voucher assistance has been well-received for preserving dignity and offering beneficiaries choice in meeting essential needs.

3.3.2 Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Systems

NSD support strengthened Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) structures, a key strategic priority for KRCS, by establishing formal Complaints and Feedback (C&F) mechanisms across branches to ensure transparency and responsiveness. Garissa formalised its accountability function through a dedicated subcommittee and a database for tracking feedback, while Mandera set up a structured system and resolved 675 complaints in 2023 and 679 in 2024 through governance oversight. Kwale maintained quarterly committee meetings and offered multiple feedback channels, including phone, email, SMS, and walk-ins, while Taita Taveta recorded and logged complaints via calls and focal persons. These mechanisms, complemented by community involvement throughout the program cycle and diverse feedback platforms such as toll-free numbers, social media, and feedback boxes, have enhanced trust and accountability between KRCS and its stakeholders.

3.3.3 Perception Gaps and Challenges

In the four focus counties, NSD-supported changes have not uniformly translated into perceived improvements in service delivery and accountability at the community level, leading to significant mixed feedback.

- **Negative Feedback on Service Delivery:** Some community members noted "No changes in terms of service delivery" despite NSD support to the branches. While some believe KRCS provides assistance without bias, others alleged "bias during service delivery".

- **Communication Gaps:** Community members reported "Poor feedback and response to the community" and felt there was no clear channel of communication from the organisation. Some felt KRCS collects feedback but does not act on it or provide feedback to close the loop.

- **High Expectations:** The effectiveness of KRCS, particularly in its role as a key humanitarian actor, means it faces high expectations from the communities. These expectations sometimes outweigh the available resources, contributing to gaps in perceived satisfaction.

3.4 PARTNERSHIPS AND MANAGEMENT

The findings derived from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with Partner National Societies (PNS), alongside insights from KRCS Senior Management, reveal a consistent

perspective on the effectiveness, sustainability, and risks associated with the NSD support provided to the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS).

3.4.1 Alignment with Strategic Priorities and Significant Results

Partner National Societies affirmed that their NSD support strongly aligned with the KRCS Strategic Plan 2021–2025.

Stakeholder	Key Findings on Alignment and Significant Results
Danish Red Cross (DRC)	DRC support is seen to be in alignment with the KRCS strategic priorities in areas such as resource mobilisation, youth programming, capacity strengthening and branch development through the construction of infrastructure. The most significant results are recognised in capacity strengthening of staff and systems by supporting transparency and accountability mechanisms, and the continued upgrading of the VMMS. However, the sustainability of these gains is viewed as vulnerable because much of the current NSD work is "*project-based.*" For true sustainability, the DRC suggests that NSD must be viewed as an overarching KRCS priority with increased local ownership and supported by multiple partners for continuity.
British Red Cross (BRC)	The BRC support for NSD is seen as aligned with the KRCS strategic priorities. This includes branch and regional capacity strengthening through infrastructural development of physical structures, governance and people development (including elections, induction and volunteer support), as well as supporting institutionalising Cash Voucher Assistance (CVA). The most significant results of this NSD support from the BRC is the strengthening of Branch Capacity and Governance, thereby cementing KRCS's presence in communities countrywide. However, achieving deeper alignment is limited by the absence of a specific, detailed operational NSD plan for the KRCS, which makes the current support modalities appear "scattered", leading to coordination challenges among partners.
Finnish Red Cross (FRC)	FRC support aligns with KRCS priorities focusing on climate, disaster and health (specifically Sexual Reproductive Health and Gender-Based Violence), alongside Early Warning Early Action in climate programming. FRC considers multi-hazard responses (epidemics and floods) to be the most significant NSD support because of their direct impact on the community. The most effective modalities of support are financial and technical assistance. However, FRC noted a key limitation: they are not aware of branch NSD activities and cannot measure the sustainability of gains

	without a baseline. FRC emphasised that the localisation agenda needs to be prepared, with the community at its center and acknowledged the significant risk to NSD efforts from dwindling funding resources due to the shift in donor priorities.
KRCS Senior Management	KRCS ensures donor alignment with its strategic priorities through its Processes, Systems and Structures. Alignment is achieved by implementing Branch Development Plans (BDPs) to provide partners with clear branch priorities and adopting a strong Financial Management System (Navision) across all 47 counties. Navision has provided a robust, traceable system capable of accounting for huge disbursements, which has built donor trust and enabled KRCS to become a grant manager. The greatest impact in NSD support received is seen in investment in Human Resource Capacity, Systemic Digitisation (Navision) and investment in Physical Structures and Fleet, which enhances the branches' effectiveness in response. The organisation views all modalities of NSD support as interdependent and critical building blocks, with volunteer support being considered the foundational strength. A significant challenge to sustainability and locally-led action remains the persistence of the traditional donor-beneficiary dynamic and the reliance created by short programming periods.

3.4.2 Effectiveness of Modalities and Local Capacity Building

Both internal management and partners highlighted the interconnected effectiveness of various support modalities, emphasising that financial resources coupled with technical guidance and governance strengthening were essential building blocks.

- **Interdependence of Support:** KRCS management emphasised that all support modalities (financial, technical, governance, and volunteer support) are critical and interdependent, functioning as building blocks. For instance, organising a team (volunteer support) and setting up the governance structure requires financial investment.

- **Financial and Technical Assistance (PNS View):** DRC noted that funding, coupled with technical assistance (provided by technical leads at the country office and HQ), supported a more coordinated engagement. FRC also found financial and technical support to be the most effective in advancing NSD.

- **Governance Support:** Governance training was deemed critical in addressing historical issues of leadership and integrity conflicts between governance and

management, significantly reducing these conflicts through induction of newly elected leaders.

- **Advancing Localisation:** Localisation is defined by DRC as shifting power to the national society, encompassing coordination, financing, partnership, and capacity strengthening. KRCS management affirmed that localisation entails strengthening local branches and volunteers so that communities can lead the response.

3.4.3 Sustainability Challenges and Risks

A consensus emerged that sustainability is complex, non-linear, and faces immediate risks, predominantly around funding stability.

Challenge/Risk	Details and Context
Funding Instability and Dependency	The sustainability of NSD is threatened because initiatives often appear "project-based" rather than core institutional priorities, requiring more intentional and multi-donor investment. The core risk is dwindling resources and shifting donor priorities, which limit support for organisational development.
Short-Term Programming	Sustainability is undermined by the humanitarian model of short, emergency-focused funding, even for initiatives that require multi-year programming (like livelihoods or complex infrastructure), leading to losses when funding ends abruptly.
Need for Standardised Systems	There is a need for a standardised approach across the country, particularly for volunteer management, to ensure volunteers are intentionally equipped.
Lack of Clear NSD Vision	A risk identified is the lack of clarity on the NSD vision or a clear "journey map," which makes it difficult for partners to align their support strategically.
Localisation Barriers (Mindset)	A significant barrier to locally led action is the historical programming model, which created a culture of reliance and tokenism, where complex solutions are prioritised over indigenous ideas and local monitoring.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 CONCLUSION

NSD support received in the period 2021 – 2025 has significantly strengthened KRCS by modernising systems, enhancing governance and improving operational efficiency. Key

achievements include: transitioning to robust digital platforms like Navision and VMMS, formalising governance structures, and investing in critical infrastructure such as Emergency Operations Centers and physical branch offices, which partners recognise as "very significant" in cementing KRCS's presence countrywide. Volunteer engagement grew through structured recruitment, specialised training, and recognition mechanisms, fostering locally led humanitarian action. Community trust and accountability improved through transparent interventions and formal feedback systems, though perception gaps persist.

Further, the potential for deeper collaborations is constrained by a notable strategic planning gap. Partners affirmed that the absence of a specific, detailed operational NSD plan for the KRCS limits closer alignment, causing support modalities to appear "scattered" and creating coordination challenges among contributing partners. Ultimately, sustainability remains a major challenge due to heavy reliance on short-term, project-based funding, which risks diminishing volunteer engagement and threatens long-term institutional resilience.

4.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

To sustain and build upon KRCS's organisational achievements, the following recommendations should be considered:

I. Financial Sustainability and Resource Mobilisation

To ensure the long-term viability and resilience of KRCS operations, a shift from reliance on external short-term funding to self-sustaining mechanisms is essential. This starts by prioritising the securing of multi-year financing and developing innovative models to move beyond dependence on short-term, project-based funding. Key to sustainability is the diversification of income streams, which requires expanding and investing in Income-Generating Activities (IGAs).

II. Volunteer Engagement, Retention, and Management

To ensure the continued effectiveness and sustainability of the workforce, the KRCS must focus intensely on its volunteer base. Key efforts include the completion of the standardisation and strengthening of volunteer management and retention systems, notably including the full operationalisation of the Volunteer Management and Membership System (VMMS). This must be coupled with continuous capacity building through specialised training, recognition mechanisms, and the provision of adequate support. Finally, to truly embody the spirit of locally led action, the National Society must strategically focus investment on indigenous ideas and locally led humanitarian initiatives, simultaneously ensuring robust support for volunteer safety and security, such as the provision of necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

III. Operational and Infrastructural Readiness

To ensure the KRCS can deliver swift and timely humanitarian services, operational and infrastructural readiness must be prioritised. This involves the completion and maintenance of all planned infrastructure projects, including the establishment of Emergency Operations Centers (EOCs), youth spaces, and safe spaces within KRCS branches. Concurrently, the National Society must secure an adequate fleet of necessary specialised emergency vehicles to ensure timely access to remote areas and disaster zones, a challenge highlighted by the Kwale Branch. Furthermore, to enhance resource sharing and operational capacity, the KRCS should strategically adopt the approach of devolving services to the ground and concentrating on sustainability projects to increase local visibility, supported by forging strategic partnerships with the private sector philanthropists (e.g., Base Titanium) for enhanced resource mobilisation.

IV. Governance, Strategy, and Accountability

To maintain institutional stability and maximise the impact of NSD investments, KRCS must prioritize strengthening its strategic and governance frameworks. A critical step is to finalise and implement a unified, specific, and detailed operational NSD framework to clearly guide National Society priorities, resource deployment, and the streamlining of technical assistance, thereby resolving the observed coordination challenges among Partner National Societies (PNS).

V. Community and Context-Specific Needs

Future efforts must reinforce the KRCS's ability to deliver sustainable, locally led humanitarian action by strengthening the link between the branch and the community. This requires enhancing accountability through community sensitization on feedback mechanisms and ensuring the effective closure of feedback loops. It is also vital to support comprehensive youth empowerment initiatives, including the establishment of youth-led resource centers, entrepreneurship programs, and digital training. Finally, the National Society must prioritize addressing complex context-specific gaps, reinforcing its role in areas such as local insecurity, conflict resolution, and public health needs.