



ACUMEN RESEARCH

# INSTITUTIONAL PROFILE



# Contact Us

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ACUMEN RESEARCH

“YOUR BRIDGE TO RESEARCH AND INFORMATION”



# Introduction

**A**cumen Research Solution is a leading research consulting organization registered in Kenya and Somalia, focusing on ensuring food security, diverse livelihoods, and a sustainable society in the Horn of Africa region. Their holistic approach addresses challenges in conflict, arid, and semi-arid regions, as well as urban and rural areas, with both short and long-term support for business development, environmental impact assessments, capacity building, and more. The organization is committed to generating evidence from local communities to develop innovative solutions for fragile environments, promoting sustainable food security and environmental conservation. Acumen operates in Kenya and Somalia, with a growing focus on other East African countries, and is supported by motivated professionals aiming to strengthen human and institutional capacities.

Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, with an office in Mogadishu, Acumen leverages experienced staff and a network of consultants for diverse research assignments. Over a decade, they've collaborated with various clients, including governments, NGOs, and the UN, contributing to information generation, innovation, and policy development focused on environmental resources, livelihoods, and food security across the region.



 Where we work



### Mission

To carry out high-quality scientific research for setting research, policy, and development agendas and for stimulating innovations, facilitating technology transfer, capacity building, and institutional development in the Horn of Africa region.



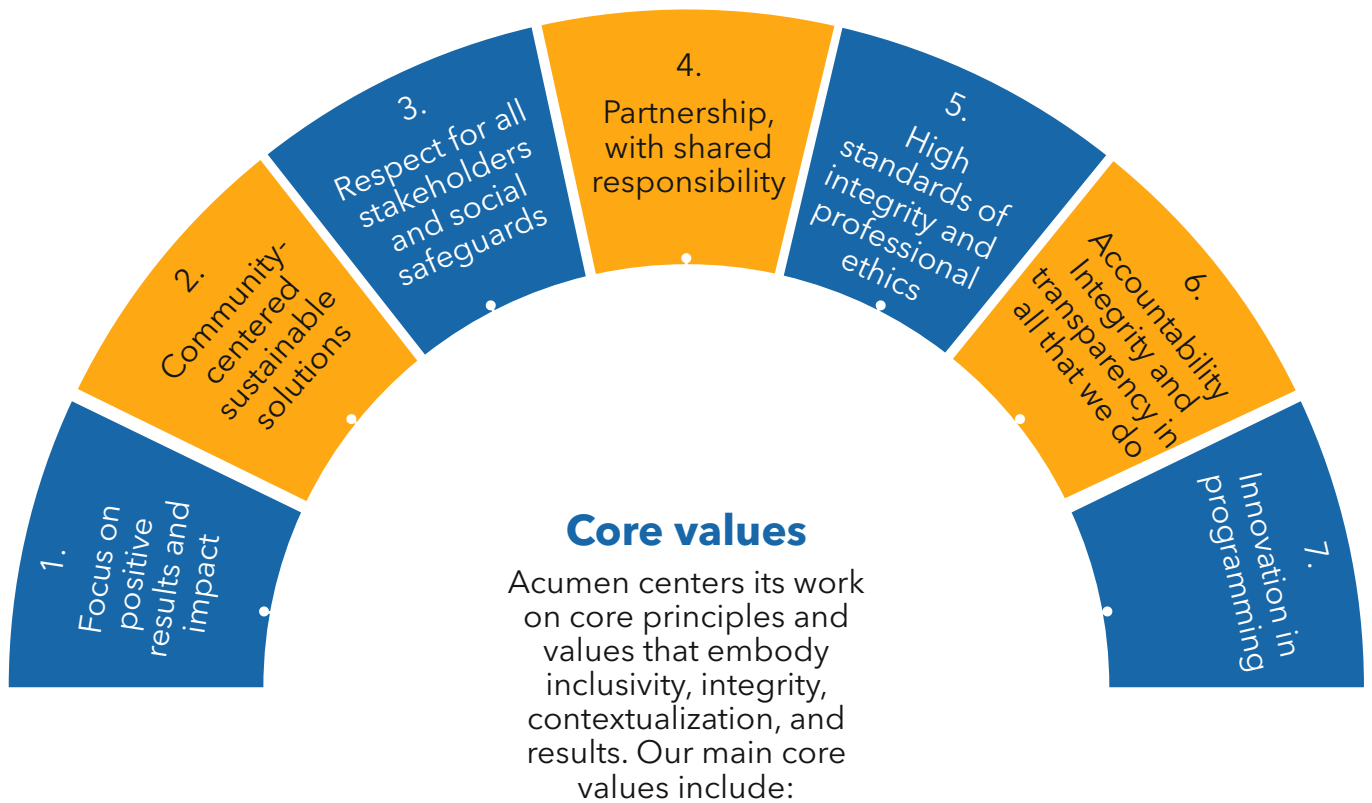
### Vision

An African continent where everyone attains the full right to survival, protection, development, and participation essential to a long, decent, and healthy life.



### Goal

Contribute to improving the living standard of the vulnerable communities in arid, semi-arid, and conflict regions in the Horn of Africa through community mobilization, community, and institutional (public and private) capacity building, advocacy & strengthening of institutions, policy advocacy, and dialogue, and data and information search and packaging.



### Strategic Focus Areas

Food and nutrition insecurity

Value chain development

Livelihood development and diversification

Environmental and natural resource management

Monitoring and Evaluation

## Whom we support

Our program and support initiatives across the Horn of Africa—comprise a mix of technical, implementation, and logistical support articulated above targeting governments, donors, implementing partners, CSOs, and communities in the Horn of Africa countries. In addition to cutting-edge research, and third-party monitoring, Acumen also specializes in project management and implementation with partners and government agencies. We have a special focus on health, nutrition, WASH, and other resilient building initiatives targeting vulnerable populations such as children, women, and IDPs in urban as well as rural and remote areas in the country. We also have a special advisory unit that provides high-level professional technical support and assistance to governments, partners, donors, and CSOs in areas of research, assessments and surveys, training and capacity development, policy and strategy in thematic areas across our programming sectors.



## OUR APPROACH



### COLLABORATION

We work with local experienced researchers, CBOS, and line ministries that have vast experience in the work we are focusing on. To acknowledge and understand the root causes for systemic changes we join forces and form partnerships for greater impact with non-profits, private, public, and community leaders.



### ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

We use an adaptive management system such that research expertise, learning, and evidence from farmers in the fields combined with our longstanding experience of international development are integrated to inform our processes.



### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Acumen adopts a sustainable approach that is need and rights-based that ensures full community involvement in all stages of the project's lifecycle.

Sustainable programs are designed in a way that mobilizes indigenous and local resources to solve local problems.



### INSIGHTS

Our precise statistical analysis together with highly competent and experienced staff ensure effective and robust research, evaluation, and surveys that provide clients with insights for information-driven decision making to research and developmental questions at hand.



# RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

## 1. Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Acumen Research supports clients with research, as well as formative and summative program evaluation to help them shape, improve, and transform programs for greater effectiveness. We offer a full suite of innovative and flexible methodologies to help clients develop measurable indicators, rigorous information collection, insightful performance analysis, and program effectiveness to drive informed decisions on issues that matter profoundly to their success.

Whether performing an insightful, early-stage evaluation or a data-rich, long-term evaluation, Acumen Research applies highly rigorous methodologies to help clients determine how a program measures up and find methods by which clients can improve programs. We develop and implement flexible, mixed-method approaches that blend qualitative and quantitative methods to conduct program assessments—determining not just whether a program works, but how it works, why it works, and where it can work best—and create a study with long-term value for our clients.

Through demand-driven, rigorous evaluations and robust monitoring systems, our work supports adaptive management and learning, enabling the use of evaluation evidence in decision making to improve the execution and successful

delivery of results. Our monitoring and evaluation professionals have deep practical experience in designing and implementing quantitative and qualitative evaluations that rely on a mix of methods to support generation of evidence-based findings. We have experience in delivering site-specific and complex multi-partner programme and portfolio level evaluation and learning assignments across a wide range of sectors. These include livelihoods and resilience, climate change and sustainable land use, governance and democracy, civil society, gender and human rights, peace and security and economic growth (trade and private sector development).

At Acumen Research, our tailored, unique program evaluations use a combination of traditional and state-of-the-art analytic methods and tools, including:

- Evaluability assessments
- Implementation evaluation
- Logic models
- Program content reviews
- Randomized control trials
- Propensity score matching
- Quantitative analysis of designs
- Synthesis of mixed-method research
- Case studies
- Ethnographic studies
- Social network analysis
- Secondary data research

## 2. Third Party Monitoring (TPM)

**T**hird-Party Monitoring has become an essential monitoring and evaluation tool for many agencies working in hard-to-access areas. Our independent monitoring and verification services help give our partners confidence that reported results are reliable, ensuring that programmes are achieving the expected outcomes and delivering for end users. Our systems-based approach to data quality helps build stronger partner and in-country monitoring systems and reduces duplicative and extractive third-party data collection.

In fragile environments, Acumen Research can provide a meaningful contribution to the broader monitoring and evaluation toolbox, as well as increase accountability of donor spending, by offering; a mixed methods approach based on Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), household surveys (HHS), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), direct observation, and social media analysis, high-quality training to enumerators in the field, and research quality assurance. We always provide TPM services in collaboration with a network of local experts, including enumerators, data entry staff and analysts. By effectively measuring performance, our TPM services contribute to new project designs, sector and country portfolio strategies, and to broader strategic revisions that contribute to maximizing development effectiveness and improved delivery of services for beneficiaries.

Our TPM work enables our clients to understand what works and what doesn't, in near real time, prompting adaptive programming, continuous improvements, and better results overall. Our monitoring work captures the information related to programme achievement to date, challenges, opportunities, risks, and future strategy development. For donor agencies, we also offer the option of verifying monitoring information from your implementing partners. For humanitarian, stabilization and development management programming, we can also provide baseline research and a source of primary field data to inform programming and help verify partner reporting.

### 3. Surveys

Surveys are powerful tools to develop a better understanding of the target audience and stakeholders. With a rigorously designed and implemented survey, firms, government agencies, and non-profits can harness invaluable information to help inform their strategic, financial, and operational decision making. However, if design and implementation aren't optimal, survey research can lead to ill-informed decision making based on unreliable and invalid information, and with serious consequences for operations, performance, and competitive advantage.

Our survey development team will provide you with a customized approach based on your research goals, sampling frame, intended output, and, of course, timeline. We'll develop a solution specific to your organization, your survey research needs, and your sector to provide statistical consulting and analysis support for the entire survey research process. Whether you need assistance with specifying the initial survey, developing the sampling plan, conducting psychometric tests for reliability, validity, and power, or analyzing the collected data—or each of these steps—we'll develop a plan to meet your specific needs.

### 4. Data Visualization & Dashboards

The digital world has opened up new and exciting possibilities for collating, analyzing and visualizing data. At Acumen Research, we know how to apply innovative technologies to complement other methodologies and better inform decision-making. Applying digital technologies allows us to deepen our understanding of the impact of policy and programmes on people, society and the environment.

When done well, data visualization can be an effective tool in helping us identify patterns, generate insights and tell the story behind data. Interactive dashboards can take these concepts a step further. Our in-house capabilities allow us to tailor visualizations to the diverse needs and preferences of our partners, utilizing infographics, animations, maps and a wide range of charts. We develop bespoke dashboards that allow partners to intuitively explore complex data sets or share their impact with others in an accessible way.

Our digital services range from remote data collection (e.g. mobile phone surveys) to make the most of existing data (e.g. demographics, social media, satellite imagery) or applying advanced analytical techniques (e.g., modeling impact, sentiment analysis). Digital also includes the enhanced visualization of findings, using technology to support user interactions with a dataset and dashboards for performance management. In all our work, we are careful to consider the implications and limitations of technology, including the ethical implications, and those voices that are excluded or marginalized by the digital world.





# PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

**A** cumen Research helps program managers demonstrate the value of funding through rigorous analysis of performance and investment management. We work with clients to develop a clear plan for successful program outcomes by integrating planning, budgeting, and operations. By drawing measurable connections from budget processes to program outcomes, we enable clients to make better decisions, manage costs, and achieve their goals. We partner with governments and non-governmental organizations to develop performance-based metrics that measure and communicate the effectiveness of their programs and public investments. We enable program managers to achieve long-term program success in environments that demand optimal performance under tight budgets, strict regulatory mandates, and unforgiving marketplace pressures. Whether we are addressing high-profile programs in energy, healthcare, or disaster recovery, our program management experts bring a multidisciplinary approach to achieve success.

We integrate the thoughtfulness of a research institute with the practical delivery skills of a larger development consultancy, underpinned by a deep understanding of the local context. We offer a smarter, evidence-based and adaptive approach to project and programme management. Our feedback loops and capacity to manage projects and programmes remotely help our clients plan and manage resources effectively in a rapidly changing environment.

Our integrated approach to performance management enables clients to harness the collective potential of their people, processes, and technology into tangible value. Our performance management services include:

- Addressing critical human capital issues through skilled workforce analysis and development
- Developing consistent evaluation criteria to shift the focus from tactical outputs to substantive outcomes
- Linking individual performance to organizational success by helping managers identify gaps in staffing and develop new training requirements

With Acumen Research as a trusted partner in program management, our clients are able to address the many essential elements of success including:

- Implementation of best practices in strategy, planning and governance
- Effective stakeholder engagement and change management
- Knowledge management and training

# Economic Growth & Development

## 1. Economic and Financial Analysis

Understanding the costs and benefits of alternative policy options enhances efficiency, minimizes unintended consequences, and ensures policies align with agency goals. Our economists are experts at estimating and communicating the costs and benefits of environmental, social, health, financial, and law enforcement projects, policies, and regulations. We excel at quantifying the benefits and costs falling outside the bounds of market activity that are not readily monetized but often critical to decision making..

Economic impact analyses are crucial for planning, providing insights into employment, income, and business development associated with planned public and private investments. To ensure that project costs are fully recovered fairly and equitably, we conduct studies to assist government and other clients in determining appropriate policies. We also national as well as local jurisdictions, and industries assess and improve their competitive position and develop strategies to attract businesses and formulate economic development plans.

To accomplish these, Acumen Research uses numerous analytical tools and methods to ensure our economic analyses capture important differences among populations as well as communicate how populations across region, age, gender, income, race, and ethnicity are impacted by each potential policy option. By employing advanced modeling techniques and statistical tools, our economists and data scientists leverage data to help our clients answer difficult policy questions. We employ state-of-the art data cleaning, data harmonization, and data analysis methods to turn data into insights. We also routinely leverage our broad industry expertise to model complex systems to simulate the impacts of policies and regulations on the environment, human health and safety, impacted industries, and the broader economy.

## 2. Value Chain Analysis & Development

A value chain is a set of linkages between a number of independent enterprises involved in the production, processing, trade, consumption and disposal of a particular product or service. Each phase adds value and the whole chain aims to satisfy the demand of the final consumer and to increase profits for the actors involved through increased efficiency and competitiveness.

Value Chain Assessment is key to the success of any firm with the process extending across all stages of the software life cycle. A clear-cut understanding of value-chain means gaining an overall knowledge of company's financials, consumer & supply base, processes and organizational strategies. This definitely needs to be looked upon in a multi-angle perspective. When assessing the viability of any business venture or project, we consider relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. We help you seize value-addition investment opportunities that may be otherwise overlooked.

Acumen Research uses a systemic approach to value chains, by including all actors inside and around a value chain, such as (financial or technical) business providers and the institutional environment. We believe that a healthy and strong value chain is a diverse value chain, including different sized companies and different groups of people.

Our Consultants actively works together with our clients, including governments, companies and NGOs, to identify the most promising value chains and intervention opportunities. We analyze the selected value chains and give advice on how to develop the value chains. We offer coaching, training, capacity building for different actors, and facilitate and develop multi-stakeholder partnerships.

We work effectively in environments comprising many stakeholders, such as governments, farmers, industry (i.e. processing companies and input/service suppliers), cooperative groups, non-government organizations and community members. We are skilled at quantifying economic impacts for decision makers and helping clients assess risks. We ensure all possible prospective value chain development opportunities are included and that linkages between them are well understood.

### 3. Youth Employment & Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a transformative option to unlock income generation. Through entrepreneurship, young people can achieve economic security and independence. They are critical to future economic development and key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. When youth-led businesses thrive, they create new jobs, shape local communities, and drive economic growth.

At Acumen Research, we believe that providing young people with opportunities for employment and enterprise development is essential for creating sustainable, inclusive, and prosperous communities. Our services are tailored to strengthen entrepreneurial management skills, increase innovation capabilities, integrate sustainability, develop skills and human resources, and enhance productivity among small, medium, and large enterprises. We provide high-quality capacity building, value-added services, and access to key resources for sustainable enterprise development. We focus on developing sustainable enterprises across various sectors to compete effectively in the regional and global markets.

Our comprehensive range of end-to-end services supports organizations to carry out end-to-end value chain optimization, implement better and more efficient processes, address stakeholder concerns, and accomplishing their growth objectives. Our private sector development solutions are founded on the need to create more robust ecosystems and businesses across nine pillars as indicated in the section below. Together, we focus on sustainable and inclusive entrepreneurship, equipping underserved young people with the skills, confidence, and connections they need to beat the odds and become successful, responsible business owners.



# Capacity Building, Training and Institutional Development

## 1. Capacity Development and Training

Building capacities of government and other crucial actors is fundamental for the implementation of the global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Only when governments at national, regional and local levels are able to develop and enact integrated policies with multiple stakeholders from the public, civil, academic and private sector will results be achieved.

We help our clients improve performance through assessing and building capabilities, capacities, motivation and commitment at individual, organizational and institutional levels. This may mean building individual capability (skills, high-value knowledge and wider competencies) and wider organizational capacity. To ensure the sustainability of interventions, we help our clients improve individual and organizational performance.

Our approach to capacity development is centered on context-specific, locally driven and collaborative solutions to complex problems that allow for greater adaptability and are more sustainable. Acumen Research has been bringing these principles of adaptive management into the design and practice of our capacity development interventions for many years.

## 2. Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Trainings

Building capacity in monitoring and evaluation in organizations and individuals allows maximum resource use, particularly when establishing programs in challenging environments such as developing countries. Acumen Research enables clients to build capacity in program monitoring and evaluation in areas such as public health, social services, and education, determining performance indicators and standardized data elements.

Our experience in monitoring and evaluation across sectors enables benefits clients seeking to build their internal capacities and helps clients keep their programs on target. We train senior program staff, field workers, and trainers within organizations to define and implement studies and evaluations that are meaningful and lead to actionable results and improved outcomes.

In addition to training and technical assistance for building monitoring and evaluation capacity, Acumen Research provides strategic services to help clients:

- Manage change and communicate developments to grantees or awardees
- Adjust data collection systems or indicators to reflect program changes
- Produce report snapshots to show continued progress
- Leverage existing resources to expand capacity in monitoring and evaluation
- Successfully implement school improvement and reform initiatives

# Governance & Stabilization

Effective governance and accountable institutions are critical to alleviating poverty and achieving sustainable results in all sectors. Governments, development agencies and policy-makers all work together to promote sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Acumen Research partners with governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), the independent media, and local communities to strengthen democratic governance systems. Through our work, we aim to increase inclusive, accountable and participatory planning and decision-making at all levels - contributing directly to SDG 16.

Our approach to governance seeks to identify and foster engagement between citizens and their government, recognizing that both the supply of and demand for good governance is necessary to initiate change. In doing so, we empower leaders, recognizing that locally owned solutions have the greatest potential for sustainability.

Some of the services we offer include:

- Capacity and organizational development for CSOs, electoral bodies and parliaments
- Grant and fund management for CSOs
- Development of independent media
- Decentralization and local government management
- Institutional and policy reform aimed at enhancing sustainable performance and public service-delivery
- Improved public financial management and advance thought leadership on approaches to overcoming policy and institutional constraints to economic competitiveness, socioeconomic development, and poverty reduction. Our team of recognized PFM experts is one of the few who have carried out PEFA assessments.



# Climate Change, Resilience & Environment

Climate change is one of the greatest contemporary threats to equitable and sustainable development. The impacts of climate change are being felt soonest and most severely by the poorest and most vulnerable in society who have done least to contribute to the changing climate and who are amongst the least resilient to climate impacts and related disasters. Urgent action is needed at all levels to support climate change mitigation and minimize the severity of future climate impacts.

Our experience has highlighted the increasing need for action in this field and we strive to make a significant change towards greater resilience through all of our projects. We work in partnership with a wide range of clients from multi- and bi-lateral donors, to national governments, foundations and private sector organizations. We have expertise engaging on climate and environment issues from the international policy level to the regional, national and community levels across four continents.

We recognize that consideration of livelihoods and the needs of people are central to the successful management of natural resources and protection of the environment, which remains our greatest and most important resource.

Services we can offer:

- Technical analysis, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of climate and environment interventions
- Design and implementation of nature-based solutions to climate change
- Adaptation and resilience planning, including disaster risk planning and management
- Vulnerability, hazard and risk assessment
- Energy planning and integration of renewable energy into national energy policies
- Accessing finance for climate change interventions
- Environmental assessments and due diligence
- Environmental education, training, capacity building & awareness raising
- Solid waste & waste water management.

# Information Technology (IT) Services

## 1. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Services

ERP consulting encompasses advisory services aimed at implementing ERP software or maximizing the value of the existing one. ERP tool is designed to unlock your business potential and our Consulting Services project management team focusses on business outcomes not technology outputs. To minimize the stress associated with migrating to or implementing a new system, you'll need strong ERP project management with careful planning to steer the change management process. And because implementing these systems and process is greatly simplified when business and IT work together and communicate effectively, our consultants work with your teams as a trusted business advisor, to help you realize that value, and leverage long-term benefits.

Our expertise in business strategy and ERP software strategy development allows to bring clarity and foresight to the business-technology plan relationship. Our professional team can evaluate the current effectiveness of your ERP software and align strategies to maximize performance potential. Our knowledgeable consultants will guide your team through our process to ensure your organization selects the right software solution. Our experts can assist your ERP project team from install to implementation to support for most sophisticated software solutions.

Our ERP consultants help you lay the groundwork for automation and business process improvement with an ERP solution:

- Determine the value of the ERP project with a cost-benefit analysis and a business case analysis
- Analyze your business environment and identify gaps in the current business processes
- Map out the to-be business processes
- Conduct system analysis
- Conceptualize the ERP software solution
- Conduct change readiness evaluation
- Create a shared project vision with a project team
- Plan out the ERP software selection process
- Negotiate contracts with ERP vendors



## 2. GIS Mapping Services

**G**IS gives us the ability to map, model, query and analyze large quantities of data stored both outside of and within a relational database according to its geographical location. We can then assign a series of attributes to each spatial feature. Extensive levels of information offered by GIS technology offer clients a fundamental tool for managing all aspects of a project. GIS mapping provides an additional dimension in data analysis through the visual representation of spatial relationships. GIS consulting services aid clients to make more informed decisions whether they are deciding where to open a new store or office, or determining the best path for a pipeline right-of-way.

Acumen Research provides practical geospatial mapping solutions regardless of the scale. Whether it's analyzing a single parcel, a state, or the nation, the diverse experience and backgrounds of our GIS consulting team allows us to achieve the best results with our GIS services. Through geospatial visualization, our clients make better informed decisions, enhance internal and stakeholder communication, fulfil statutory requirements, and manage resources and assets more efficiently. Our drawings and output comply with our corporate image and are in accordance with our accredited quality assurance.

Our GIS services can help clients turn data into high quality visual representations of spatial information. These enable our clients to make better informed decisions and easily communicate concepts to regulators, professionals and laymen alike.

## Political and Economic Analysis

Acumen considers political and economic analysis as a means to translate ideas in policy and programming into agreed-upon outcomes. Acumen analysts purposefully deploy their political economy knowledge to influence relevant political actors to define and achieve policy and programmatic objectives. Acumen's effective engagement is built upon the strong relationship it has with the various political actors. This relationship has been developed and nurtured with integrity, impartiality, and credibility in approach and interactions.

## Sample Projects Done

Organization	Description of Assignment	Date	Location
County Government of Wajir	Developing an M&E policy framework for County Government of Wajir	2021	Wajir
County Government of Wajir	Preparation of Wajir County Medium Term Debt Management Strategy Framework (MTDMST)	2020	Wajir
Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA)	Development of Civic Dialogue Guidelines and Training for EISA	Aug 2019 -Jan 2019	Baidoa & Mogadishu
Somali Stability Fund	End line Assessment on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Investment in Jubaland State in Somalia Re-integration of , IDPs/Refugees Governance & Stabilization	September 2019	South-central Somalia
ZAMZAM Foundation	Final evaluation of Somalia Community Recovery Support Project	Jan 2020	Galmudug Region, Somalia
ZAMZAM Foundation	Needs Assessment on Food Security, Nutrition and Public Health in Jowhar, Adale, Balcad (middle Shebelle region);Baidoa, Buurhakaba(Bay region) and Kismayo(Lower Juba region)	June 2020	Somalia
NIWETU & Wasfiri Consulting Group	Midline Evaluation of NIWETU Countering Violent Extremism Project	Feb- March 2019	Mandera & Wajir Kenya
Danish Demining Group	Conflict Sensitive Development	Jan –Feb 2019	Mandera & Wajir Kenya
Safeworld	Police Advisory Committees from Somalia Training	Sept 2018	Nairobi Kenya
UNICEF	Editing and writing services	July 2016-date	Nairobi
DFID & Wasfiri consulting group	Evaluation of DFID Kenya Improving Community Security Programme	May-June 2018	Mandera & Wajir
IOM	Human Trafficking and Illegal Migration Baseline Survey	March - April 2018	Somaliland and Jubaland, Somalia
ADESO	Mid-term Assessment for Somalia Resilience Action Consortium (Stream Consortium) Programme	Jan 2018	Lower Juba

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

*Assessing performance using  
indicators that ensure project  
success and sustainability*