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Strengthening Community Collaboration Strategy for Food Security and Social Transformation: The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Isiolo County, Kenya



Strengthening Community Collaboration Strategy for Food Security and Social Transformation: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Isiolo County, Kenya

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Abstract
Faith-based organisations (FBOs) are important non-state actors in food security interventions because they connect communities with resources, knowledge, public institutions, and local social networks. Yet food insecurity persists in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands, raising questions about whether FBO-community collaboration is a genuinely shared process or an occasional program activity. This study examined the influence of FBOs' community collaborative strategy on food security and social transformation in Isiolo County, Kenya. A concurrent transformative mixed-methods research design was used. Questionnaires were completed by 36 leaders from 13 qualifying FBOs, and qualitative evidence came from four focus group discussions with 36 community representatives and 11 key informant interviews with agricultural officers. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, Pearson product-moment correlation, and thematic analysis. Of the 36 leaders, 83.3% disagreed that FBOs engage communities in problem-posing and shared solution-finding, and 69.4% disagreed that stakeholder partnerships and formal community collaboration policies were adequately established. Responses on cross-sector partnerships were mixed: 58.3% disagreed and 36.1% agreed that such partnerships exist. Nevertheless, community collaboration indicators correlated strongly with faith membership, chamas (community savings groups), table banking, and savings and credit cooperative membership ($r = .8166$ to $.9547$). Collaboration therefore operates mainly through existing social-capital structures, and its transformative potential depends on institutionalised shared decision-making. FBOs can strengthen food security and social transformation by formalising partnerships, establishing regular problem-posing forums, and working through trusted community institutions.

Introduction
Food insecurity remains a persistent development concern in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), where recurrent drought, constrained livelihoods, poverty, environmental pressures, and weak adaptive capacity interact to affect household and community wellbeing. According to Ekiru et al. (2020), food security cannot be addressed only through the delivery of material assistance; it also



requires institutions capable of coordinating knowledge, resources, local priorities, and collective action.

Empirical studies support the relevance of collaborative approaches but leave important questions unresolved. Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma (2024) found that collaborative decision-making and knowledge exchange among farmers and other actors can contribute to sustainable food security in Uganda. Ingutia and Sumelius (2022) similarly reported that cooperative networks can improve women farmers' access to productive resources, markets, and information in Kenya. March and Failler (2022) emphasised the importance of stakeholder partnerships and integrated resource management in African food systems. Conversely, studies focused on household, market, or structural determinants of food insecurity have often paid less attention to the institutional mechanisms through which communities and development organisations collaborate (Babatunde et al., 2020; Nakasone & Suvedi, 2021; O'Hara & Toussaint, 2021).

A further gap concerns the role of community collaboration as a deliberate community engagement strategy within Faith-Based Organisation interventions. Existing literature often treats collaboration as a programme condition, an institutional characteristic, or a component of collective action rather than examining its specific indicators, such as problem-posing, shared solution-finding, stakeholder partnerships, community collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships, as a coherent strategy connected to both food security and social transformation. There is particularly limited empirical evidence from Kenya's ASAL counties on how FBOs institutionalise collaboration and whether existing community social-capital structures help explain the relationship between collaborative practice and development outcomes.

The present study addresses this conceptual, contextual, and empirical gap by examining FBOs' community collaboration strategy in Isiolo County. The focus on FBOs is deliberate because they constitute a distinctive category of non-state actors whose community presence, faith networks, service mandates, and relationships with public and civil-society institutions provide an institutional setting in which community collaboration can be examined as both a development practice and a participatory process (Marshall & Van Saanen, 2007; Salamon, 2020). The study was guided by the objective: to investigate the influence of FBOs' community collaborative strategy on food security and social transformation in Isiolo County. The corresponding research question was: How does the community collaborative strategy adopted by FBOs impact food security and social transformation in Isiolo County?

The study therefore examines whether FBOs' community collaboration strategy is sufficiently structured to support shared decision-making and collective action, and how collaborative practices relate to existing social-capital structures through which communities organise economic and social activities.

Empirical Literature Review

Community Collaboration Strategy: Concept and Dimensions

Community collaboration strategy refers to deliberate processes through which communities, Faith-based organisations (FBOs), government agencies, and other stakeholders jointly identify problems, mobilise resources, make decisions, and implement solutions. In contrast to generic institutional collaboration, community collaboration emphasises the active participation of community members in shaping responses to problems affecting their livelihoods. In this study, the strategy is examined through four dimensions: problem-posing and shared solution-finding, stakeholder partnerships, community collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships. These dimensions reflect movement

from consultation toward shared responsibility, collective action, and institutionalised cooperation. The approach is consistent with Freire's (1970) emphasis on dialogue and collective problem-solving and Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory, which recognises the importance of involving relevant actors in decisions affecting their interests.

Community Collaboration Strategy and Food Security

Empirical studies demonstrate that collaborative processes can strengthen food security through knowledge exchange, resource mobilisation, collective decision-making, and coordinated responses. March and Failler (2022), for example, emphasised stakeholder partnerships, local governance, and integrated resource management in strengthening food security and livelihoods within African small-scale fisheries. O'Hara and Toussaint (2021) similarly highlighted structural inequalities affecting food access and the importance of community-centred responses, although their study did not specifically examine structured community collaboration.

Other studies have largely examined food insecurity through socioeconomic, environmental, and conflict-related factors. Babatunde et al. (2020) identified household and socioeconomic characteristics as important determinants of food security, while Lei (2022), Sweeney et al. (2019) and Pacillo et al. (2021) associated food insecurity with conflict, drought, food prices, and declining agricultural productivity. Although these studies provide important explanations of food insecurity, they give limited attention to how community collaboration can facilitate collective action and coordinated responses to such challenges.

More directly, Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma (2024) demonstrated that collaborative decision-making and knowledge exchange among farmers and other stakeholders can contribute to sustainable food systems in Uganda. Ingutia and Sumelius (2022) similarly found that cooperative membership among women farmers in rural Kenya improves access to productive resources, markets, and agricultural information. These studies demonstrate the contribution of collective institutions to food security, but they do not specifically examine community collaboration as an FBO-led engagement strategy involving problem-posing, stakeholder partnerships, collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships.

Community Collaboration Strategy and Social Transformation

Community collaboration can also contribute to social transformation by strengthening dialogue, participation, collective agency, social networks, and local ownership. Collaborative decision-making enables communities to articulate shared concerns, exchange knowledge, and participate in developing solutions. Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma (2024) demonstrate the relevance of such processes through collaborative knowledge exchange among farmers and other stakeholders, while Ingutia and Sumelius (2022) illustrate how cooperative structures can enhance collective economic participation and access to resources.

However, much of the existing empirical literature measures the outcomes of community collaboration through food security, livelihoods, resilience, or institutional performance rather than explicitly examining social transformation. The literature therefore provides limited evidence on whether community collaboration functions as a transformative engagement strategy through which communities strengthen collective agency, social networks, and local institutions. This gap is particularly relevant where community structures such as faith groups, chamas, table banking groups, and SACCOs provide platforms for collective participation and economic action.

Faith-Based Organisations as Facilitators of Community Collaboration

Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) provide an important organisational context within which community collaboration strategy can be facilitated. Their community presence and faith-based networks can provide platforms for mobilising people, sharing information, linking communities with government and other development actors, and supporting collective responses to food insecurity. Evidence from community-based and collaborative approaches indicates that such networks can strengthen collective action, resource mobilisation, and access to information and services (Ingutia & Sumelius, 2022; Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma, 2024). The literature further suggests that community collaboration becomes more meaningful where communities participate in decision-making and where relationships among communities, government, and other development actors are sustained through structured arrangements (March & Failler, 2022; Tweheyo et al., 2024).

However, existing studies provide limited empirical evidence on how FBOs specifically operationalise community collaboration as an engagement strategy. Much of the available literature examines community collaboration through cooperative membership, stakeholder partnerships, collective decision-making, or broader institutional arrangements rather than examining community collaboration as a deliberate strategy employed by FBOs (Ingutia & Sumelius, 2022; March & Failler, 2022; Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma, 2024). Consequently, limited attention has been given to whether FBOs establish structured problem-posing forums, formal stakeholder partnerships, community collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships that enable communities to participate as co-creators of food security solutions. This gap is particularly significant in the ASAL context, where effective responses to food insecurity require coordination among communities, FBOs, government agencies, and other development actors. The presence of partnerships alone, therefore, does not necessarily demonstrate a meaningful community collaboration strategy; rather, meaningful community collaboration requires mechanisms through which communities participate in identifying problems, developing solutions, and sharing responsibility for implementation.

Synthesis and Empirical Gap

The literature demonstrates that community collaboration, cooperative networks, stakeholder partnerships, and collective decision-making can contribute to food security through knowledge sharing, resource mobilisation, and collective action. However, most studies examine generic collaboration, cooperative membership, or institutional partnerships rather than community collaboration as a deliberate FBO engagement strategy. Furthermore, the literature gives less attention to the relationship between community collaboration and social transformation, particularly through community-based social-capital structures.

The present study therefore focuses specifically on FBOs' community collaboration strategy, operationalised through problem-posing and shared solution-finding, stakeholder partnerships, community collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships. It examines how this strategy relates to food security and social transformation within the ASAL context of Isiolo County, Kenya. This focus addresses the conceptual and contextual gap by moving beyond community collaboration as a general programme characteristic to examine it as a structured community engagement strategy.

Theoretical Framework

The study integrates Stakeholder Theory, Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and the Theory of Participatory Democracy. The three perspectives are treated as complementary rather than as separate explanations. Together, they connect the actors involved in community collaboration, the processes through which they participate, and the governance arrangements through which decisions are made.

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) holds that organisations should recognise and engage parties that are affected by, or can affect, organisational objectives. Applied to food security, the theory positions community members, FBOs, government agencies, local organisations, and other development actors as relevant stakeholders whose interests and knowledge should inform intervention design and implementation. Community collaboration consequently requires more than inviting stakeholders to activities; it requires arrangements through which their contributions can influence decisions.

Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 1970) contributes the concepts of dialogue, problem-posing, conscientisation, and praxis. From this perspective, communities are not merely recipients of solutions designed elsewhere. Through dialogue and collective reflection, they can identify problems, interrogate their causes, and participate in developing responses. Community collaboration therefore becomes transformative when it creates opportunities for communities and FBOs to co-produce knowledge and action.

Pateman's (1970) Theory of Participatory Democracy complements these perspectives by emphasising participation as a process through which people develop civic competence and capacity for collective decision-making. In the present study, participatory governance is therefore linked to institutional arrangements such as regular multi-stakeholder forums, documented partnership policies, joint planning, and shared responsibility. The three theories intersect around a common proposition: FBOs provide an institutional platform; stakeholders bring knowledge, interests, resources, and lived experience; dialogue enables joint problem identification; and participatory governance structures convert that interaction into shared decisions and collective action.

This integrated framework informed the interpretation of community collaboration strategy indicators. Problem-posing represents the dialogical process emphasised by Freire; stakeholder and cross-sector partnerships represent the network of actors emphasised by Stakeholder Theory; and community collaboration policies and recurring joint forums represent the institutionalisation of participation emphasised by Participatory Democracy Theory. The framework therefore connects actors, participation, decision-making, and governance rather than treating the theories as unrelated perspectives.

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guiding this study positions community collaboration strategy as a structured engagement strategy through which Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) work with communities and other stakeholders to address food security challenges and contribute to social transformation. The framework is derived from the study's theoretical perspectives, particularly Stakeholder Theory, Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, and Participatory Democracy Theory, which collectively emphasise stakeholder inclusion, dialogical engagement, shared decision-making, and collective action. In this framework, community collaboration strategy is understood not simply as the occurrence of joint activities, but as an institutionalised process through which communities and other actors participate in identifying problems, mobilising resources, developing solutions, and coordinating action.

Community collaboration constitutes the central construct and is operationalised through four indicators: community problem-posing and shared solution-finding, stakeholder partnerships for resource mobilisation and collective response, policies supporting community collaboration, and cross-sector partnerships for integrated solutions. These indicators represent increasing levels of institutionalisation of community collaboration, from direct dialogue and joint identification of problems to formal partnerships and cross-sector coordination. The framework therefore assumes that meaningful community collaboration requires more than communication or consultation; it requires



structures through which communities and stakeholders can participate in collective decision-making and action.

The framework further recognises the role of existing community social-capital structures, including faith membership, chamas, table banking groups, and SACCOs, as important institutional and relational structures through which collaborative engagement can be organised and sustained. Rather than assuming that community collaboration operates independently of these structures, the framework examines the relationship between community collaboration indicators and existing community networks. This reflects the study's proposition that FBOs' community collaboration strategy may strengthen and utilise existing social relationships and collective economic structures in responding to food security challenges.

At the outcome level, the framework links collaborative engagement and community social-capital structures to food security and social transformation. Food security encompasses the capacity of communities to address challenges relating to the availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability of food, while social transformation concerns strengthened participation, collective agency, social networks, and community capacity to respond to shared challenges. The framework does not assume a simple linear causal relationship; rather, it provides an analytical lens for examining whether and how institutionalised collaboration is associated with community structures and broader development outcomes. The framework therefore guided the study in examining whether FBOs' community collaboration practices are sufficiently institutionalised to facilitate collective responses to food insecurity and contribute to social transformation in Isiolo County. It also provided the basis for examining the relationship between specific community collaboration indicators and existing social-capital structures. The empirical findings subsequently assessed the extent to which the relationships proposed in the framework are reflected in the experiences of FBO leaders, community representatives, and agricultural officers.

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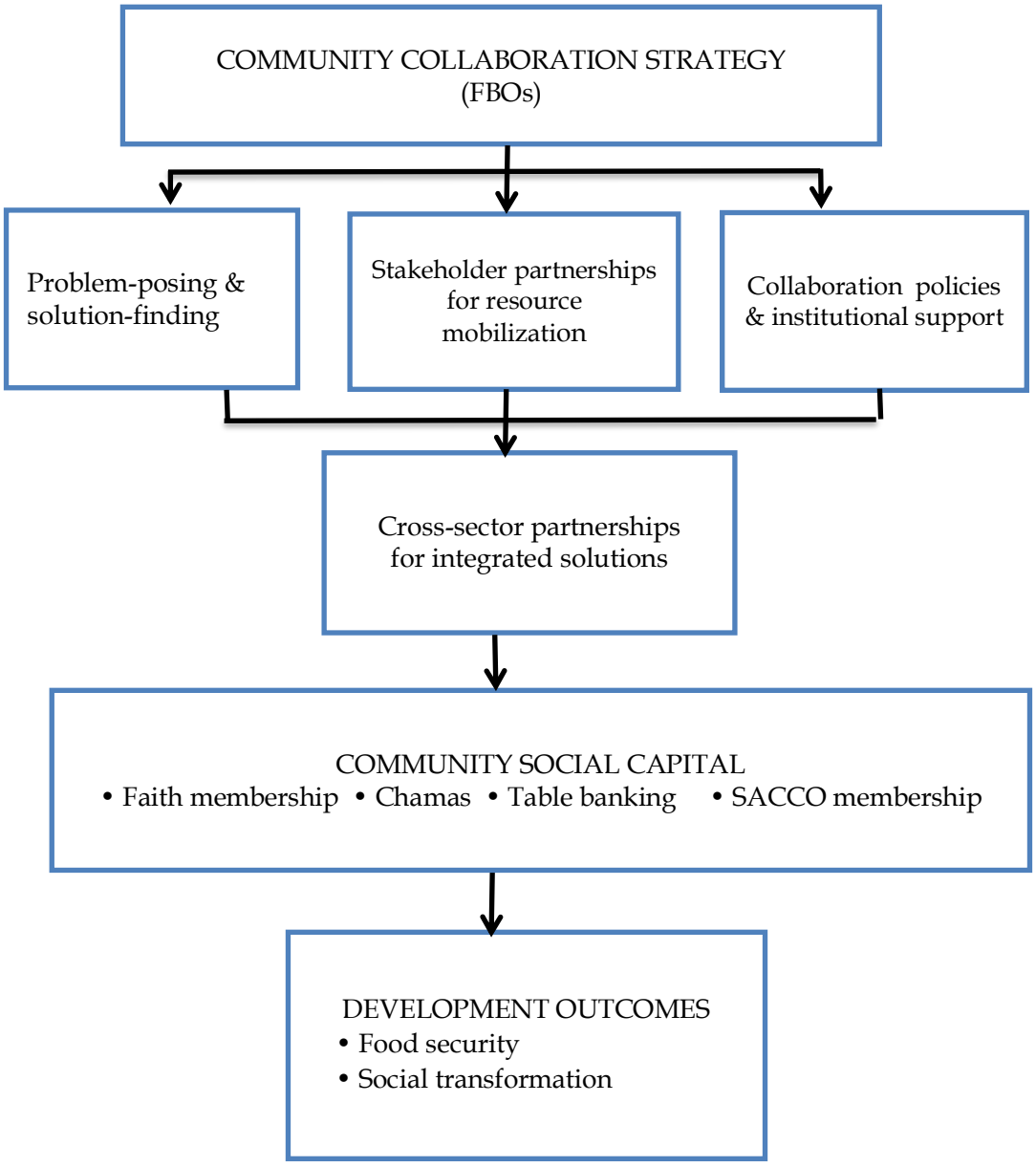


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Researcher (2026).

Method

Research design

The study adopted a concurrent transformative mixed-methods design in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected during the same phase and integrated during interpretation. The design was appropriate because the study sought both measurable patterns in collaborative practices and contextual explanations of how community collaboration was experienced and organised within FBO-community relationships.

Study population

The study was conducted in Isiolo County, an ASAL county in Kenya. The sampling frame obtained from the Isiolo District Social Office contained 42 FBOs. Thirteen FBOs met the study's inclusion criteria: they had operated for at least 10 years in Isiolo County and had an explicit food security focus. The criterion was applied to ensure that the study examined organisations with sufficient institutional experience and a direct mandate relevant to the research question rather than organisations whose presence in the county was recent or whose activities were unrelated to food security.

Sampling and Sample Size

The eligible FBOs had 40 leaders in the positions of project manager, assistant manager, or project coordinator. Twelve FBOs had three leaders each, and one FBO had four leaders, giving a target population of 40 questionnaire respondents. The sample size was adjusted using the finite population correction because the population was below 10,000. First, the Cochran-type calculation for a large population was $n_0 = Z^2p(1-p)/d^2 = (1.96^2 \times .50 \times .50)/.05^2 = 384.16$. The finite population correction was then applied: $n_f = n_0/[1 + (n_0/N)] = 384.16/[1 + (384.16/40)] = 36.23$, which was rounded to 36. Thus, 36 FBO leaders constituted the questionnaire sample. This calculation provides the basis for the n = 36 reported in the quantitative tables rather than treating the number as an arbitrary selection.

The qualitative component comprised 11 key informants purposively drawn from 10 administrative Wards and the County representative. Additionally, 36 community representatives who participated in four focus group discussions with nine participants each were purposively sampled. Community representatives included women, youth, smallholder farmers, and persons with disabilities. The qualitative participants were therefore distinct from the 36 FBO leaders who completed the questionnaire.

Instruments and Pilot Testing

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, a key informant interview guide, and a focus group discussion guide. The community collaboration construct contained four five-point Likert-scale indicators: community engagement in problem-posing and shared solution-finding; stakeholder partnerships for resource mobilisation and collective response; policies supporting community collaboration; and cross-sector partnerships for integrated solutions. Content and face validity were established through expert review and piloting with senior FBO managers. The pilot process was used to identify ambiguous wording, improve clarity and sequencing of items, and confirm that the questions corresponded to the study constructs before the final instruments were administered. Construct and criterion validity were assessed in accordance with established social-science instrument procedures (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018).

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha on the full quantitative sample of 36 respondents and 28 questionnaire items covering the five community engagement strategies. The calculation followed $\alpha = [k/(k-1)]\,[1 - (\Sigma\sigma^2_i/\sigma^2_t)]$, where k is the number of items. The reliability output reported an average

inter-item covariance of 1.404168 for 28 items and a scale reliability coefficient of .9948. Substituting into the alpha computation produced α = .9948, which was above the .70 level commonly used as an indicator of acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951; Mugenda & Mugenda, 2018). The result indicates a high degree of internal consistency among the items used in the broader questionnaire.

Data collection

Two trained research assistants supported questionnaire distribution and collection and facilitated the focus group discussions. The researcher conducted the key informant interviews with agricultural officers. Ethical approval was obtained from Tangaza University's Institutional Scientific and Ethics Research Committee, and data collection was authorised through a NACOSTI research licence and relevant county-level permissions. Participants provided informed consent, participation was voluntary; and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

Data analysis

Quantitative responses were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation. Frequencies and percentages were used to summarise the four community collaboration indicators, while Pearson correlation was used to examine relationships between community collaboration indicators and social-capital structures, which included faith membership, chamas, table banking, and SACCO membership. Qualitative data from the FGDs and KIIs were analysed thematically. The quantitative and qualitative strands were integrated during interpretation so that numerical patterns could be considered alongside participants' accounts of community collaboration in practice.

Results

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative findings on Faith-Based Organisations' (FBOs') community collaboration strategy and its relationship with food security and social transformation in Isiolo County, Kenya. Findings are organised around the four dimensions of community collaboration strategy, which include problem-posing and shared solution-finding, stakeholder partnerships, collaboration policies, and cross-sector partnerships; followed by their association with community social-capital structures. Quantitative findings are presented using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation analysis, while qualitative findings from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are used to provide contextual explanations of the observed patterns.

Community Collaboration Indicators

Table 1 presents the responses of the 36 FBO leaders. Frequencies are shown alongside percentages to make explicit how the reported percentages were generated from n = 36. For example, 30 of the 36 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that FBOs engaged communities in problem-posing and shared solution-finding; 30/36 × 100 = 83.3%, reported as 83.4% in the original analysis because of component rounding.

Table 1: FBOs' Community Collaborative Strategy Indicators

Indicator	Strongly disagree n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Not sure n (%)	Agree n (%)	Strongly agree n (%)
Problem-posing and shared solution-finding	10 (27.8)	20 (55.6)	4 (11.1)	1 (2.8)	1 (2.8)
Stakeholder partnerships for resource mobilisation and collective response	15 (41.7)	10 (27.8)	2 (5.6)	5 (13.9)	4 (11.1)
Policies supporting community collaboration	15 (41.7)	10 (27.8)	2 (5.6)	4 (11.1)	5 (13.9)
Cross-sector partnerships for integrated solutions	8 (22.2)	13 (36.1)	2 (5.6)	6 (16.7)	7 (19.4)

Note. n = 36. Percentages were calculated as frequency ÷ 36 × 100. Source: Researcher (2026).

The quantitative evidence indicates that problem-posing and shared solution-finding received the weakest endorsement. Thirty respondents (83.4%) selected either strongly disagree or disagree. Similarly, 25 respondents (69.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that stakeholder partnerships for resource mobilisation and collective response were established, while the same proportion reported that FBOs did not have policies supporting community collaboration. Responses concerning cross-sector partnerships were more mixed: 21 respondents (58.3%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, compared with 13 (36.1%) who agreed or strongly agreed. The pattern indicates variation across organisations, with cross-sector linkages more visible than formalised problem-posing and policy arrangements.

The qualitative findings provide context for these patterns. Key informants and focus group participants described community collaboration as taking place mainly through occasional multi-stakeholder meetings, joint activities, and personal relationships. One key informant characterised community collaboration as "informal and dependent on personal relationships rather than institutional agreements." Participants therefore distinguished between having contacts with other actors and having an institutional arrangement for joint decision-making.

Community Collaboration and Social-Capital

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients between the four community collaboration indicators and selected social-capital structures: faith membership, chamas, table banking, and SACCO membership. The analysis sought to establish the strength and direction of the relationships between FBO-community collaboration and existing community-based social networks and collective structures.

Table 2: Community Collaboration and Social-Capital Correlations

Community Collaboration Indicator	Faith membership	Chamas	Table banking	SACCO membership
Problem-posing	0.8495	0.8166	0.8650	0.8332
Stakeholder partnerships	0.9107	0.9196	0.8926	0.8676
Community Collaboration Policies	0.9036	0.9103	0.9004	0.8590
Cross-sector partnerships	0.8659	0.9547	0.8811	0.8990

Note. All coefficients were statistically significant at $p < .001$. Source: Researcher (2026).

The correlation analysis shows strong positive associations between the community collaboration indicators and existing social-capital structures. Within the social-capital subset presented in Table 2, the coefficients ranged from .8166 to .9547; the broader correlation matrix reported in the parent thesis contained coefficients from .7835 to .9938, with the strongest association between cross-sector partnerships and chamas ($r = .9547$). Stakeholder partnerships were also strongly associated with faith membership ($r = .9107$) and chamas ($r = .9196$), while community collaboration policies were strongly associated with faith membership ($r = .9036$), chamas ($r = .9103$), and table banking ($r = .9004$). These results indicate that collaborative practices are closely connected to institutional and relational structures through which community members already organise.

Discussion

The findings are consistent with Bowen et al. (2020), whose engagement continuum distinguishes routine communication and consultation from transformational engagement based on co-equal partnership and joint problem-solving. The relatively low endorsement of problem-posing, partnership policy, and cross-sector coordination suggests that the collaboration observed in the study context had not consistently reached the institutional depth associated with transformational engagement. The finding also extends Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma (2024), whose study demonstrates the contribution of community collaborative decision-making and knowledge exchange to sustainable food security, by showing that the institutional structures enabling such community collaboration require explicit attention in FBO-led interventions.

The finding can also be interpreted through Stakeholder Theory. Where partnerships depend primarily on personal relationships, the participation of affected actors may vary with individual staff networks rather than with organisational governance arrangements. Formal partnership policies and recurring forums can make participation more predictable by establishing who participates, what decisions are shared, and how responsibilities are allocated. Similarly, Freire's emphasis on problem-posing suggests that community collaboration is strengthened when communities participate in defining the problem rather than simply responding to solutions already formulated by organisations. Pateman's participatory perspective further indicates that repeated opportunities for meaningful participation can strengthen the capacity of actors to engage in collective decision-making.

The strong associations between community collaboration indicators and social-capital structures should be interpreted as associations rather than evidence of causation. The cross-sectional design and modest quantitative sample do not establish that community collaboration caused changes in food security or social transformation. Rather, the findings indicate that where community collaboration



indicators receive stronger endorsement, social-capital structures also tend to receive stronger endorsement. This interpretation is consistent with Ingutia and Sumelius (2022), who emphasise the role of cooperative networks in improving access to resources, and with Salamon (2020), who highlights the importance of civic networks and inter-organisational coordination in nonprofit effectiveness.

The pattern also supports the post-hoc interpretation developed in the parent thesis: community institutions and social networks may function as channels through which engagement processes become sustained. Faith groups, chamas, table banking groups, and SACCOs already have meeting routines, trust relationships, and forms of collective organisation. FBOs may therefore strengthen community collaboration by working through these structures rather than creating parallel platforms. This interpretation is consistent with the broader argument that sustainable community food systems require locally embedded institutions capable of maintaining collective action beyond individual projects (Meenar, 2019; O'Hara, 2021).

The objective of the study was to examine the integrated relationship among FBOs, community collaboration, food security, and social transformation. The findings suggest that community collaboration is best understood as a facilitating mechanism rather than as an isolated determinant of food security. Problem-posing, partnerships, policies, and cross-sector coordination can create the institutional conditions for collective action, but their contribution to food security depends on how those processes connect communities to productive resources, knowledge, local institutions, markets, public services, and adaptive capacities.

This interpretation is particularly relevant in Isiolo County, where food security is affected by environmental and socioeconomic conditions that cannot be addressed by a single organisation. Community collaborative arrangements can allow FBOs to connect community knowledge with agricultural extension, local governance, livelihood initiatives, and community-based economic institutions. Tweheyo, Wambede, and Nyangoma (2024) similarly show that collaborative decision-making can combine stakeholder knowledge with indigenous practices to support sustainable food systems. The present study adds that the effectiveness of community collaboration depends on whether these relationships are institutionalised sufficiently to support continuity, shared responsibility, and joint problem-solving.

Social transformation is reflected in the study through social participation and community-based economic structures, including faith membership, chamas, table banking, and SACCOs. The strong associations reported in the results suggest that community collaboration is embedded within social relationships that can support collective agency. This is consistent with the participatory orientation of Freire (1970) and Pateman (1970), in which meaningful participation involves people developing the capacity to influence decisions affecting their lives. It also accords with Marshall and Van Saanen's (2007) observation that faith and development processes operate through institutions, relationships, and values rather than through material interventions alone.

At the same time, the results caution against equating the presence of social networks with effective collaborative governance. The strongest social-capital associations coexist with relatively low endorsement of formal community collaboration policies and problem-posing processes. Thus, communities may possess strong networks without those networks being systematically incorporated into FBO planning and decision-making. The practical implication is that FBOs should strengthen the interface between existing social-capital and formal programme governance.

Implications for FBO Practice

The findings suggest four practical areas for strengthening community collaboration. First, FBOs can institutionalise regular multi-stakeholder problem-posing forums in which communities, FBO staff, government officers, and other relevant actors jointly identify food security challenges and agree on priorities. Second, partnership arrangements can be documented through clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms rather than relying mainly on personal relationships. Third, FBOs can develop feedback and joint-review processes that allow communities and partners to assess whether agreed actions are addressing identified priorities. Fourth, FBOs can intentionally connect formal community collaboration mechanisms to existing chamas, table banking groups, SACCOs, faith networks, and other trusted community institutions. These measures respond to the observed gap between the existence of social networks and their systematic incorporation into collaborative governance.

Conclusion

The study examined the influence of FBOs' community collaborative strategy on food security and social transformation in Isiolo County. The quantitative results show that problem-posing, stakeholder partnerships, and formal community collaboration policies received relatively low levels of endorsement among the 36 FBO leaders surveyed, while cross-sector partnerships produced more mixed responses. Qualitative evidence similarly indicated that community collaboration often operated through informal relationships and selected joint activities rather than consistently institutionalised mechanisms.

At the same time, collaboration indicators were strongly associated with faith membership, chamas, table banking, and SACCO membership. The evidence therefore suggests that community collaboration is closely connected to social-capital structures that can provide platforms for collective action. These associations should not be interpreted causally, but they indicate the importance of examining the institutional pathways through which community collaboration may contribute to food security and social transformation.

For FBOs, the central implication is the need to move from community collaboration, understood as occasional coordination, toward community collaboration supported by explicit structures for shared decision-making. Regular problem-posing forums, documented partnership policies, cross-sector coordination, and deliberate engagement with existing community institutions can provide such structures. Future research should use longitudinal and comparative designs to examine whether institutionalised collaboration produces measurable changes in food security and social transformation across Isiolo and other ASAL counties.

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