Interpeace
ORGANISATION INTERNATIONALE
POUR LA CONSOLIDATION DE LA PAIX

NATIONAL COHESION AND INTEGRATION COMMISSION KENYA
PAMOJA

MARSABIT COUNTY
Rapid Conflict Assessment

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This report has been prepared by Interpeace's Kenya programme in partnership with the National Cohesion and Integration Commission.

Introduction

On the 4th of July at 5pm, a man wearing a mask killed two school girls and a boda boda driver at the gate of Little Angel school, near Jirime Hotel, one of the main hotels in Marsabit town. The day before, a herder was murdered less than two kilometers away. Sadly, these incidents are not isolated but have become the norm. Marsabit is far from the capital and the media have barely noticed what has been happening; its problems have attracted little political attention. Yet the county, particularly Saku Subcounty and Marsabit town, is currently the most volatile in Kenya.

In May 2021, Interpeace and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) presented their peacebuilding work in Mandera and selected places in Wajir and the North Rift. Recognbising its relevance, NCIC commissioners, representatives of Marsabit County government and the County Commissioner invited Interpeace to assess the situation in Marsabit county and start a programme of work there that could replicate some of the successes of Mandera in a context that is in every way as volatile as Mandera was five years ago. Those who made this request underlined that it was critical to act urgently, because violence in Marsabit is escalating and large-scale massacres are very likely to occur in the absence of a concerted effort to change the dynamic.

Responding to this request, Interpeace deployed a research team to conduct a rapid conflict assessment. The team was asked to assess the context, advise on whether Interpeace and the NCIC needed to engage, and identify potential entry points for engagement.

Background

Marsabit County borders Ethiopia to the North, Wajir County to the East, Isiolo County to the South, Samburu County to the Southwest and Turkana County to the West. The county also shares boundaries with Wajir and Mandera. It has four sub-counties: Laisamis, Saku, North Horr and Moyale. Marsabit is estimated to have a population of 459,785,[1] of whom 53% are male and 47% female. The primary groups residing in the County include: Gabra, Rendille, Borana, Samburu, Turkana, Burji, Dassanech, Waata, Garre, Sakuye, El Molo, Konsos and Somali. Situated in the Chalbi Desert belt, Marsabit County is predominantly arid and semi-arid. Its communities mainly engage in pastoralism. However, Saku sub-county has a forest that provides arable land for cultivation and farming. Other economic activities include beekeeping and mining.

Scope and scale of conflict and violence

Marsabit experiences daily acts of violence, including murders, property and livestock theft, and occasional armed confrontations between conflicting communities. The roots of its cyclic violence date back to the pre-independence period, but violence has escalated since 2005. After a Gabra man was found dead, suspicious that Borana were responsible for the killing, Gabra raiders stole 700 goats from Borana living nearby. On 12 July 2005, Borana raiders then killed approximately 76 Gabra residents of

1 2019 Kenya Population and House Census (2019), Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. At: http://housingfinanceafrica.org/ app/uploads/VOLUME-I-KPHC-2019.pdf.

Turbi town in retaliation, a third of them schoolchildren.[2] After this event, known as the Turbi Massacre, revenge attacks reportedly caused several Borana deaths. The Borana and Gabra are the largest groups in the county. Historically, sporadic violent incidents had occurred, primarily over land and pasture rights. Since 2005, several large-scale violent confrontations have entrenched animosity between the two communities and led to a generalised state of insecurity in the county. Marsabit made headlines during both the 2013 and 2017 electoral cycles when heavy fighting with sophisticated weapons led the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) to employ air power to stop the fighting.[3] As noted, concerns about violence rose again In July 2021.[4]

In Marsabit, local respondents confirmed to the research team that urgent action was required to avoid serious violence. During the week the team spent in Marsabit, several killings occurred every day. The situation was described as very volatile, with daily reports of stolen livestock, armed robberies and violent attacks. It was reported that individuals had been shot while watching television, and schoolchildren shot after leaving school. In the past, violent confrontations had usually taken place outside Marsabit town, but this was no longer the case. Within the town, the situation appeared to be deteriorating rapidly. At sunset the streets cleared and by 8 or 9 pm, well before the COVID-regulated curfew, were largely empty. Every single person consulted for this study confirmed that the conflicting communities are armed to the teeth and stockpiling arms in anticipation of violence. Rumours and hate speech are prevalent, and it is believed that tensions will rise in the run-up to the 2022 election. All individuals the research team encountered said that they were afraid.

In consultation with local stakeholders, the research team mapped hotspots in which violence is prevalent, escalating or latent.

Figure 1. Map of conflict hotspots.

2 See: www.aljazeera.com/news/2005/7/13/scores-killed-in-kenya-tribal-massacre. The exact number is unclear. For an assessment by the Institute for Security Studies, see: https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenyans-sacrificed-territory-and-votes-marsabit-county.

3 https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/kenyans-sacrificed-territory-and-votes-marsabit-county.

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPt5grESnIo.

Objectives and methodology

The main purpose of this assessment was to identify factors of fragility and resilience in Marsabit county: the main drivers of conflict, and evidence of resilience in the response of affected communities. The secondary purpose was to understand where previous interventions had succeeded and failed and why they had not been able to achieve sustainable peace or improve social harmony.

This rapid conflict assessment is based on a literature review and the findings of a seven-day visit. The research team consulted leaders from different groups, youth leaders, women elites, political and religious leaders, local peace actors, local officials, civil society organizations, and local residents. It convened seven focus group discussions (FGDs), each involving 12 persons, and interviewed 15 key informants. Due to limits of time and the level of insecurity, and because assessments by independent organizations were available, the team used purposive sampling to select participants. The study has significant limitations. The team only spent seven days in the field, which means that important perspectives and dynamics were undoubtedly missed. At the start of any intervention, we recommend that a more thorough participatory assessment should be undertaken, to analyse the conflict dynamics in more detail, and identify resilience factors and potential community solutions. This inquiry will need to take place alongside efforts to broker a ceasefire and foster trust and collaboration.

Summary of Key Findings

The research team listened both to members of the elite and members of the public in a bid to understand what is driving conflict in Marsabit county. The team found dozens of factors, but five stood out.

1. Ethno-politicisation

It emerged vividly that the population of Marsabit perceive everything through the lens of ethnicity. An 'us' versus 'them' mentality is so deeply entrenched that it has reshaped the way history is told, altering among other things who is reported to belong and not belong in certain areas. Social fragmentation is exacerbated by the politicisation and radicalisation of ethnic identity. The Borana believe that Saku sub-county should be theirs alone; the Gabra believe that North Horr should be exclusively Gabra. Ethno-politicisation has created the feeling that communities face an *existential* threat. People express fear that they will be forcibly removed from their lands, and at the same time spread narratives that justify the forced removal of other ethnic groups from certain areas.

2. A zero-sum approach to power and resources

Inequality is perceved to be determined by representation in national and county governments. Communities believe that, if the top leaders are not from their community,, they are or will be completely marginalized. In addition, they take a zero sum approach to use and ownership of land and access to land, including grazing areas and water sources.

3. Unresolved individual and collective grievances

Past and present injustices have been left unresolved and unaddressed. These grievances fester and drive discourses of fear and hatred. They are employed to justify retaliatory attacks and fuel patterns of cyclical conflict that divide communities even more and entrench their grievances more deeply.

4. Government inaction

Respondents expressed growing frustration at the slow response of the government and the security forces when attacks occur. This has severely undermined trust and cooperation between security officials and the communities. The communities believe that national and county political interests compromise the neutrality of the government and its commitment to finding sustainable solutions and peace in the county. This drives mistrust of government actions and mistrust of peace processes.

These areas are discussed further below.

INITIAL ACTION IS URGENTLY REQUIRED

1. To curb inflammatory and dangerous discourses.

Narratives that alienate and dehumanise justify violence and create the perception that threats are existential.

2. To suppress hate-speech and rumour-mongering during elections.

Election periods create political volatility and are a space in which hate speech can flourish.

3. To prevent communities from arming and forming militias.

When communities stockpile weapons and ammunition and form armed militias, it creates a highly combustible environment and conditions for violence.

4. To halt daily violence and killings.

Levels of violence in Marsabit have been very high for years, and for months Marsabit town and surrounding areas have experienced daily killings, armed robberies and communal raids.

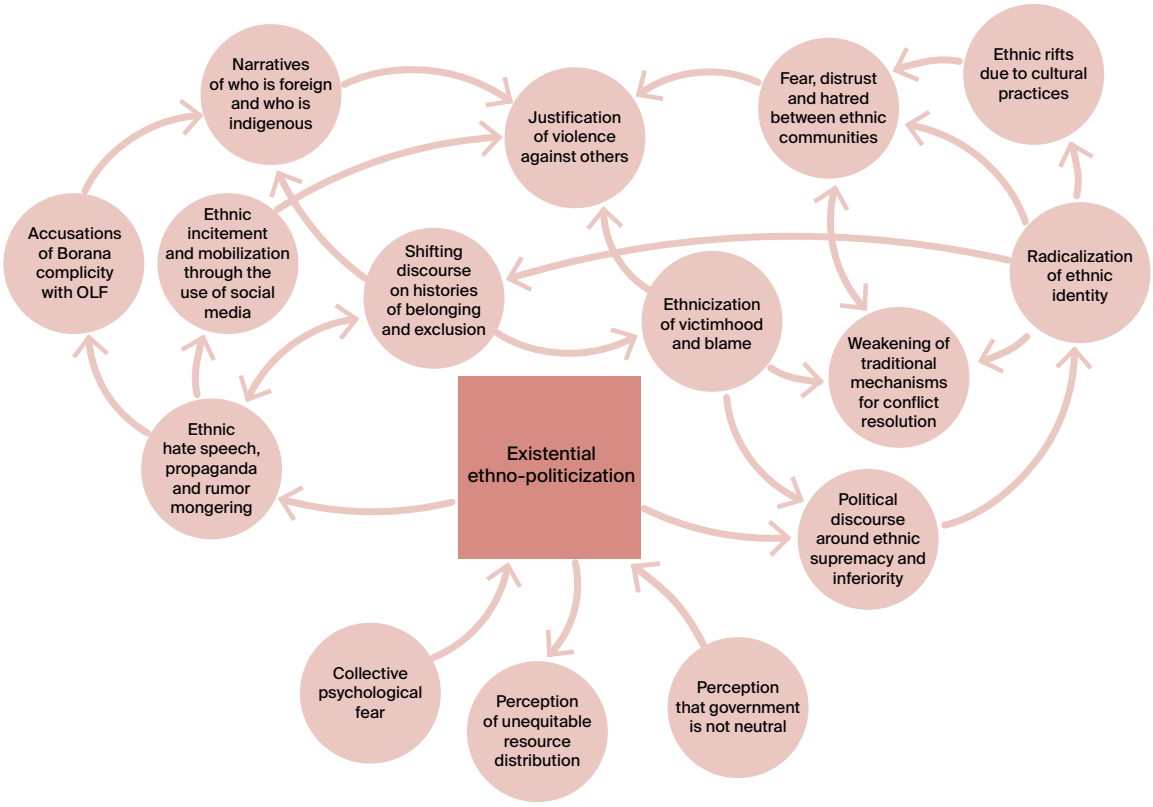
5. To counter the danger of escalation.

All these factors significantly increase the risk that an already extremely violent situation will escalate. People fear a recurrence of large scale massacres and attempts at ethnic cleansing.

Ethno-politicisation

Ethno-politicisation

Figure 2. Conflict map of ethno-politicisation.



Radicalisation of ethnic identity

The radicalisation of ethnic identity is evident in the 'us' against 'them' narrative that is pervasive throughout the county. It is visible, for example, in the system of economic preference and clientelism.5 According to respondents, ethnic groups are obstructed from patronising the businesses of rival ethnic communities. Teachers are barred from schools in which children of another ethnicity predominate. Marsabit town itself is divided into neighborhoods almost exclusively occupied by one group. Grazing patterns are designed in a manner that ensures one ethnic group has exclusive access.

5 Scott-Villiers, P., Ondicho, T., Lubaale, G., Ndung'u, D., Kabala, N., and Oosterom, M. (2014). Roots and Routes of Political Violence in Kenya's Civil and Political Society: A Case Study of Marsabit County. IDS Evidence Report 71. Brighton: IDS.

Weakened traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution

Ethnic radicalisation is exacerbated by the absence of neutral spaces in which communities can interact and engage. The years of rift between Gabra and Borana have marginalised voices of reason. Those who seek to cooperate with people from different ethnic groups are perceived to be traitors. Even cultural elders, who were once responsible for negotiating with other communities and rallying their communities for peace, have become politicised. As one participant said: "Our elders are as good as non-existent, they have become stepping stones for politicians who hold no good motives, rendering our cultural practices useless".[6]

"Communities here are highly polarised to the extent that even peace committees' areas dominated by a single clan are compromised, and thus behave like 'clan negotiators' rather than being neutral peace builders."

Focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.

Shifting histories of belonging and exclusion

Historically, the Gabra and Borana had a symbiotic relationship and coexisted peacefully for over four centuries. They shared grazing lands, political alliances, and common social functions.7 However, respondents from the Gabra and Borana communities gave the team contradictory descriptions of who 'owns' the land and who is 'foreign'. Both Gabra and Rendille communities acknowledged they had previously cohabited peacefully with the Borana but simultaneously claimed that the majority of Borana are people from Ethiopia who had been mobilised to displace their communities. This re-telling of history lies at the center of discourses that claim certain groups are expansionist and want to oust other groups completely. The Borana allege that the Gabra want to displace them from Saku highlands, historically known for its fertile ground and good farming, rainfall and grazing. The Gabra accuse the Borana of being jealous of the vast land they occupy in North Horr, an area they say was "deliberately neglected"8 until recently, when freshwater deposits were discovered and boreholes made the area more suitable for livestock. The ethno-politicisation of belonging, e.g., Borana believing that Saku sub-county should be theirs alone, Gabra believing that North Horr should be exclusively Gabra, has created feelings of existential threat and narratives that can justify the forced removal of ethnic groups from certain areas.

Ethnic rifts deepened by cultural practices.

Animosity between the Borana and Rendille depends less on a narrative of expansion and displacement and more on cyclical violence linked to the Rendille practice of 'moranism'. The Rendille typically hold circumcision ceremonies to mark the transition to adulthood of males (morans). These ceremonies take place every ten years or so and culminate in the expulsion of newly circumcised men from their family homes. Left to fend for themselves, they often engage in cattle raiding to acquire the resources they need to marry, build a home and earn a living.[9] This tradition has become a source of tension in recent years between the Rendille and other communities, including the Gabra in areas where there are few Borana. It is alleged that the practice has escalated from theft of one or two to theft of doz-

6 Member of County Assembly-Turbi, key informant interview, Turbi village, 21 June 2021.
7 Njoka J. M. (2011). Politics and Ethnicity: The Search for a Solution. In Kumssa A., Williams J. H., Jones J. F. (eds), Conflict and Human Security in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.
8 Member of County Assembly-Bubisa, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 21 June 2021.
9 Elder, focus group discussion, Songa village, 22 June 2021.

ens of cattle and even to murder. This evolution has shocked other communities who rely on cattle to educate their children, pay hospital bills and run political campaigns. The consultations revealed that, although it is a challenge for many communities, the political alliance between the Gabra and Rendille has increased revenge attacks and acts of retaliation against the Borana community, who perceive them as part of a wider agenda to 'displace' them.[10]

Ethnicisation of victimhood and blame

This sense of threat is manifest also in the narratives of victimhood and blame that are widespread among groups in the county. When narrating past events, individuals often focused on the injustice and violence that members of their community have experienced, brushing over or failing to acknowledge any acts of violence they have themselves committed. When they acknowledged their implication in violence, respondents tended to justify it as retaliation. And while almost everyone agreed that peace initiatives have generally not been implemented, no participants could point to the cause of failure, still less admit that their communities might have played a role in it. The ethnicisation of victimhood and blame directly contributes to the ethnicisation and thereby decriminalisation of crime. Acts of crime are no longer the acts of individual criminals, but are in a way regarded as acts of war from one community onto another. This then also justifies retaliations against any member of the group that the criminal hails from, which directly contributes to the cyclical nature of violent conflict in Marsabit.

Political discourse around ethnic supremacy and inferiority

The perceptions of looming existential threats are further exacerbated by political discourses that affirm ethnic supremacy and inferiority and spread ethnic hate, propaganda and rumours. Over the years, some communities that competed for political power have surrendered dominance to others, causing feelings of resentment and fear.[11] Communities believe that the community in power benefits from office by settling resources and jobs on its members. Each community is afraid it will lose if another community becomes more powerful. These attitudes were evident in reluctance to accept the victory of REGABU (a Rendile, Gabra, Burji political coalition) in the 2013 elections and the victory of the Borana in the 2017 elections.

Hate speech, propaganda and rumourmongering

During both those elections (as during preparations for the 2022 elections) hate speech and propaganda were used to drum up fear and rouse support. Politicians used social media, radio and other forms of communication to incite community members to attacks members of competing communities. Some of the youth consulted allege that elders and political leaders put them under irresistible pressure to organize such attacks. If they object, they face being ostracised or called a traitor. In some cases, the youth themselves actively propagated ethnic hatred on social media and volunteered to carry out attacks. Women reported that, when villages lose livestock through banditry, the village women incite their men to retaliate and recover the animals.[12] Because no-one admits that they know about or participate in incidents, rumours spread, deepening fear. And because violence is so prevalent, rumours are often borne out soon after they begin to circulate.

10 Elder, focus group discussion, Badasa, 22 June 2021.
11 Czuba, Karol (2018). Ethnic Politics in Marsabit. 10.13140/RG.2.2.17317.19683.
12 Ibid.

Conclusion

In summary, the radicalised ethnic identity, the recasting of histories of belonging combined with hate speech and rumormongering have created a situation in which participants perceive their community as a victim of the action of the other community's collective effort to drive them out, thereby creating a sense of existential threat and a need to defend oneself. In this context, neutral spaces in which differences can be negotiated have largely disappeared. People who try to promote peace are frequently regarded as traitors and in this environment hardliners and hardline narratives thrive, which means that there are few opportunities to exit the current cycle of violence. In the context of the upcoming election, this contributes to a very volatile situation.

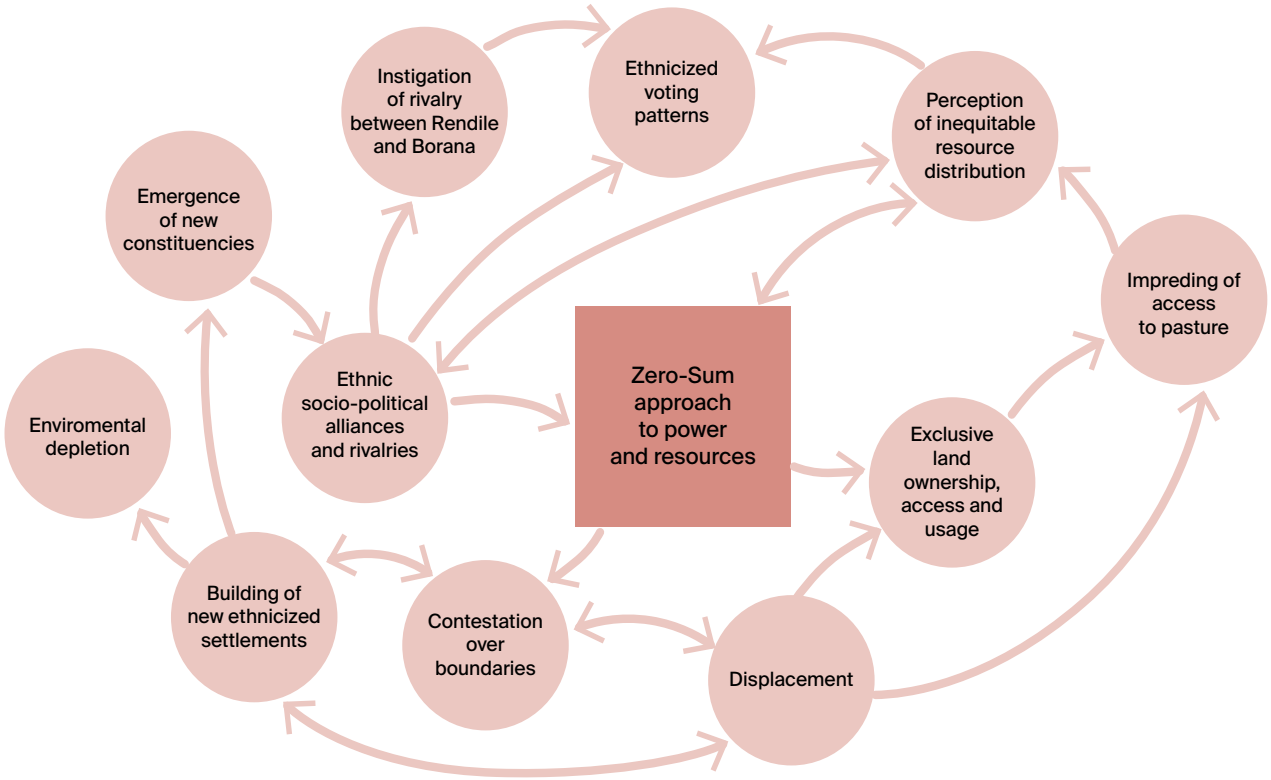
"The Gabra got more influence during Yattani's reign and just as the Boranas were recuperating from 5 years of 'exclusion' at the county government by winning the gubernatorial seat, Yattani was appointed as the national Cabinet Secretary for labour, then treasury. The power struggle that ensued between him and the incumbent governor is still eminent to date."

Interfaith leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20th June 2021

A ZERO-SUM Approach to Power and Resources

A ZERO-SUM Approach to Power and Resources

Figure 3. Zero sum approach to power and resources.



Perception of inequitable distribution of resources

Almost all the individuals consulted perceived that resources in Marsabit County are inequitably distributed. Before the 2010 constitution, the communities shared water and land for grazing. There were no established settlements since pastoralist communities moved with their animals in search of pasture; they resolved conflicts through the council of elders.[13] The 2010 constitution introduced devolved government; resources were decentralised and shared equally across the 47 county governments. While many of those consulted agreed that services such as education improved, devolution created new challenges for land and resource management and transformed conflicts in Marsabit County. Local people came to believe that representation in government determined who receives resources and who is marginalised.

13 Youth leader, Focus Group Discussion, 20th June 2021.

Emergence of new constituencies

In 2013, during the first devolved government, the governor was Ukur Yattani, from the Gabra community. In 2017, Mohamed Mohamoud Ali, a Borana, won the governorship. The communities believe that, when other communities had tenure, their needs were ignored and all resources went to the community in power. This winner-takes-all approach fuels competition for office. After Ukur Yattani lost the governorship in 2017, he was appointed Cabinet Secretary for Labour and Social Protection and then for National Treasury and Planning.[14] Other communities saw his appointment as a ploy to secure resources for the Gabra. They believed he influenced the government's decision to create two new constituencies (Turbi and Dukana) and that they would receive more government resources than other constituencies.[15] The result is that both the Gabra and Borana feel they are marginalised.

Exclusive land ownership, access and usage

The creation of constituencies is not just a matter of political interest; it has consequences for communities' livelihoods. Historically, the pastoral communities in Marsabit County shared grazing rights on terms facilitated by community elders.[16] The establishment of ethnic settlements created competition for land and water. The communities now believe that areas that are predominantly occupied by one community should be exclusively used or accessed by that community. In North Horr sub-county the population is largely Gabra; in Moyale and Saku sub-counties it is mainly Borana; and in Laisamis sub-county it is Rendille. People believe that if a member of another community lives among them, an enemy is in their midst who may attack them at any time.[17] Respondents suggested, for example, that the Gabra, together with the government, plan to completely oust the Borana from North Horr, pointing out that many Borana have been internally displaced from Funan Qumbi, Funan Ninga and Rawana villages in Walda, some by choice and others fleeing violence.[18]

The same thinking influences land sales. Communities in conflict cannot sell land to each other because that would bring an enemy into the community. They can therefore only sell land to investors or members of allied or neutral communities. Members of one ethnic group have been killed simply for passing across land that another community claims is theirs. In Badassa the people of Songa village must make a long detour route through Marsabit National Park when they go to Marsabit town because it is too dangerous for them to pass through Badassa.[19]

Contested boundaries

Many respondents claimed that the creation of new settlements and shifting administrative boundaries were political acts to promote the expansion of the other group at eht cost of their own.

. Participants said that if clear boundaries were marked, creating permanent forms of ownership, it would ease tensions associated with access to land and resources. At present, neighboring ethnic groups claim different boundaries and as a result believe that other communities are occupying their territory or trying to drive them out.

The establishment of two new sub-counties in November 2020, Turbi and Dukana in North Horr, disrupted the grazing patterns of the Borana that stretched from the Borana zone in Ethiopia to Moyale, Saku, and Isiolo. According to the com-

14 Asamba, M., 'Ukur Yattani named acting Treasury CS', The Standard, 24 July 2019.
15 Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.
16 Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.
17 Ibid.
18 Borana elder, focus group discussion, Walda village, 22 June 2021.
19 Church leader, focus group discussion, AIC church in Songa, 21 June 2021.

munity, the sub-counties were established without public participation, and are part of a plot to expand Gabra territory at Borana expense. New settlements have also affected cattle movement.[20] In addition, the government has never shown communities the boundaries that the colonial government established.

Several boundaries are currently contested. They include:

- Turbi and Forole, moved from Moyale sub-county to North Horr sub-county.[21]
- Saku-North Horr border. The residents of Saku believe that North Horr sub-county is eating into Saku. Shur, believed to have been in Saku, has been moved to North Horr sub-county.[22]

Ethnic socio-political alliances and rivalries and ethnicised voting patterns

In an effort to protect themselves against so-called expansionism, communities have formed political alliances with a view to securing their land rights by establishing constituencies that will block other groups from accessing resources they perceive to be theirs. As noted, this breaks with an older tradition of cohabitation and has made politics more competitive. Because the Borana are the largest group, the Rendille, Gabra and Burji formed an electoral alliance (ReGaBu) which in 2013 successfully elected the Governor (CS Yattani, a Gabra), the deputy Governor (a Burji) and the Senator (a Rendille). The Borana vote was split between two candidates (Guyo Goba and Chachu Tadicha).[23] In 2017, Ukur Yattani then lost the Governorship to Mohamed Mohamud (a Borana), deepening the divide and confirming perceptions that those who capture power obtain the region's resources.

Conclusion

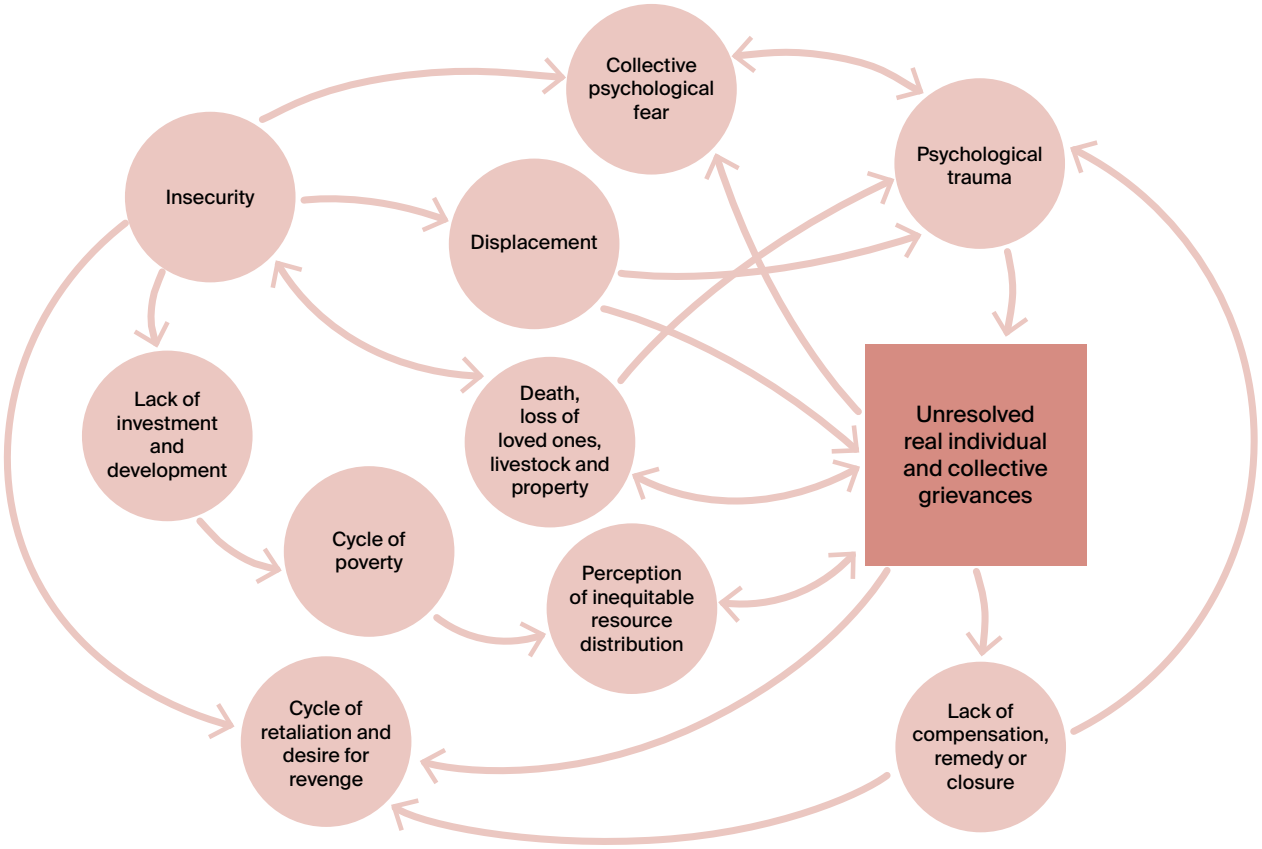
The zero-sum approach to resources and power is creating a situation in which communities find increasingly fewer spaces to interact peacefully. It prevents groups from obtaining resources they need to feed their livestock and access economic opportunities, and it makes ethnic political rivalry an issue of near existential importance. This zero-sum approach to power and resource sharing is now central to politics in the county and in the context of the coming elections creates a very combustable situation.

20 Ibid.
21 Saferworld (2015). Marsabit County Conflict Analysis. Saferworld.
22 Key informant interview, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.
23 Czuba, K. (2018). Ethnic Politics in Marsabit. ReliefWeb.

Unresolved Individual and Collective Grievances

Unresolved Individual and Collective Grievances

Figure 4. Unresolved individual and collective grievances



Loss of life, loved ones, livestock, livelihood and property

The scale of violence in the county is such that most people have been directly or indirectly affected. One focus group participant suggested that "in the last six months almost 100 lives have been lost".[24] The consequences have been grim. Loss of breadwinners has thrown many families into poverty. Theft of livestock, on which most pastoralists rely for economic security, has had a similar effect. Interviewees observed that many families have sold their animals cheaply because they are afraid of attacks by rustlers.[25] In some cases, attackers burn properties to ensure the victims do not come back. Young men, who are expected to lead fighting and to look after livestock, are at highest risk. Widows are vulnerable because women normally depend on men to provide for them. Orphans do not receive support from any official state system. Those who are fortunate are taken in by family members. Girl children often take up casual labour, which exposes them to exploitation and even trafficking. Fami-

24 Former Counsellor, Focus Group Discussion, Walda village, 23rd June 2021.
25 Key Informant Interview, Marsabit town, 19th June 2021.

lies that lack male children are ousted by the family or clan because, culturally, men inherit property.[26] While communities fundraise for families that face trouble, these funds are often insufficient and can only sustain families for a short time.[27]

Displacement

Entire communities have been displaced. Resources have become scarce, especially in areas where internally displaced persons (IDPs) resettle. Walda hosts IDPs from Funan Qumbi, Funaninja and Rawana villages as well as its own population. At a time when COVID protocols should be observed, schoolchildren sit on the floor because there are not enough desks, and some have dropped out. Forced to abandon their properties and businesses, IDPs are impoverished. When violence and expropriation occur, the communities believe that justice is applied selectively.[28]

Psychological trauma

The violence and its consequences have traumatised the people of Marsabit. Though most have been exposed to violence directly or indirectly, they do not have access to any form of psychological support. Victims deal with their trauma alone or with the support of their immediate families. The widespread and sporadic nature of attacks, and their persistence, has normalised violence.

"People often have depression, trauma and stress, there is no programme that helps them to restart their life. If there is no such programme there is no-one caring about them. So this leads them to revenge, which is almost a necessity."

Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit Town, 20 June 2021.

Collective psychological fear

Trauma is not confined to those directly affected. All the communities feel collective anxiety. Due to the cycle of retaliation and revenge, they live in permanent fear of attack. Members of the community that carried out the last attack move about carefully; their animals cannot graze freely; in some cases they sell their livestock to avoid being targeted for retaliation.[29] In Songa village, some people leave their houses and sleep in the church because they feel it is safer.[30] In Marsabit town, where killings do not target a single group, everyone is afraid they may be the next victim. Town residents make sure they are home before 7pm to avoid being caught in crossfire or in an untargeted attack.

Their collective fear has led communities to stockpile firearms in anticipation of conflict and to protect themselves. They do not feel they can afford to rely on the government and security apparatus to protect them. They also anticipate violence during the election season in 2022.[31] It should be noted that the communities are also anxious when peace meetings are held, because they believe that attacks often occur immediately afterwards.

26 Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.
27 Ibid.
28 Former counsellor, focus group discussion, Walda village, 23 June 2021.
29 Marsabit residents, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.
30 Pastor, focus group discussion, AIC Church, Songa village, 22 June 2021.
31 Deputy County Commissioner, key informant interview, County Commissioner's Office, 21 June 2021.

Lack of compensation, remedy or closure

Historically, communities in Marsabit resolved conflicts through the elders. Elders' decisions often involved reparations in livestock. This was a remedy and a method of closure that stemmed retaliatory attacks. However, that tradition has been undermined, the government has not set up an alternative arrangement, and currently no compensation system is operational. Victims who seek justice therefore have few options. Communities have returned to retaliation, which has generalised fear. Perpetrators are not punished for their acts of violence or theft; but innocent people may be killed or lose their property when revenge is taken. This state of injustice compounds the trauma of victims.

Cycle of retaliation and desire for revenge

The cycle of violence is therefore fuelled by unresolved grievances, trauma, collective fear, and the virtual absence of justice. When a community is attacked, it retaliates, perpetuating a vicious cycle. Communities are in a position to retaliate because they know that the security response will be slow, because police and military camps are in towns, not in the villages that are insecure.[32] They are tempted to retaliate partly because they believe that the government is biased against them. Those who retaliate know that they will eventually be attacked in their turn; they therefore live in anxiety, because retaliatory attacks are not always launched immediately .

Conclusion

The unresolved collective and individual grievances have contribute to profound feelings of injustice, a sense of hatred against other groups and neglect by the state. This in turn contributes to collective trauma and fear, which contributes to a desire for revenge, which will only deepen and prolong this cycle of violence in Marsabit.

32 Key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Role of women

According to the women's group, when families lose their livestock through banditry, village women incite the men to retaliate and say they will move to the rustlers' communities because they are more manly. In Borana culture, women acquire prestige through ownership of cattle, so they encourage their men to raid after attacks. Women are involved in the smuggling of firearms from Ethiopia and Somalia. The weapons are used by the bandits as well as the militias.

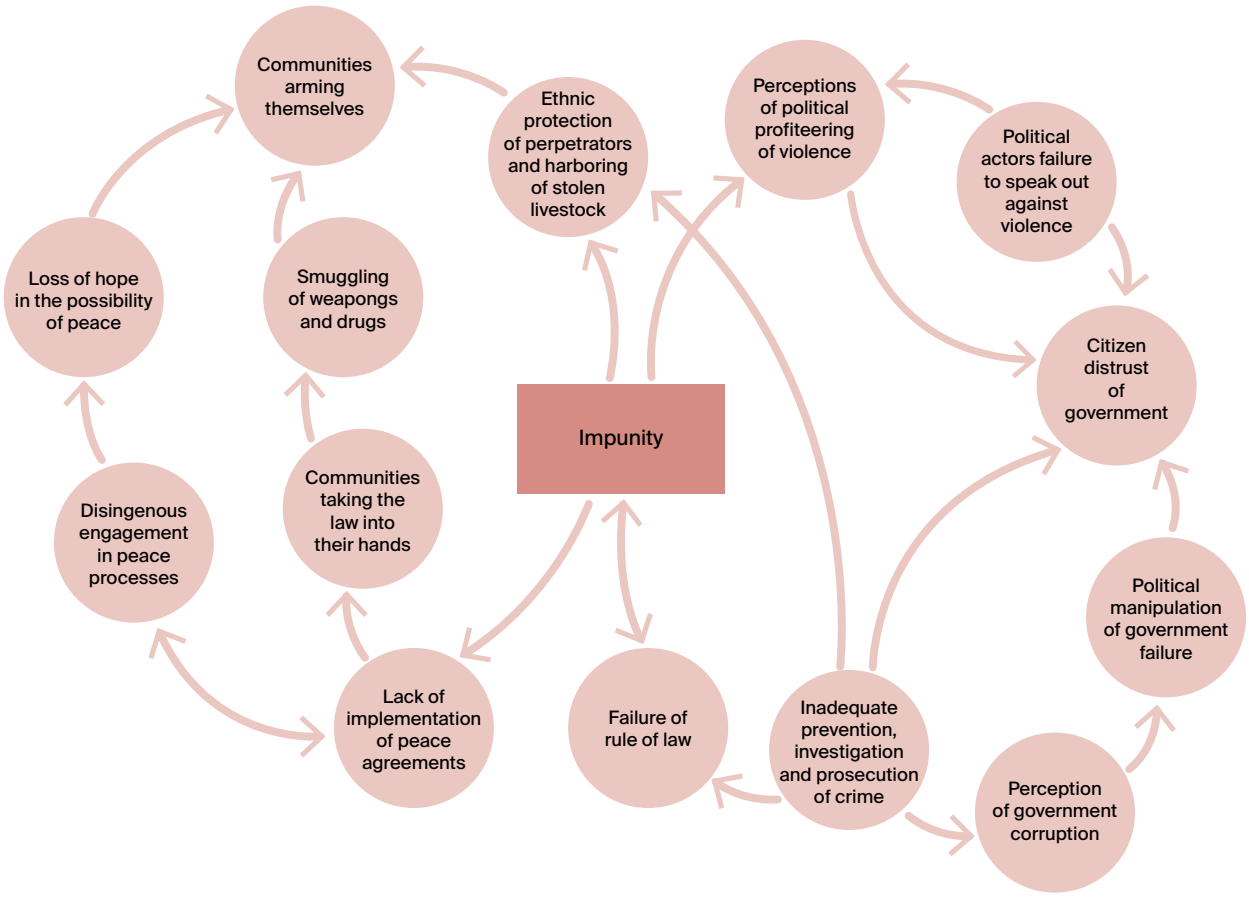
Burji women have held demonstrations after attacks and to protest the slow response of the police. This too encourages men in their community to retaliate. The women said that retaliatory attacks are necessary because the security forces do not respond on time.

Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Impunity

Impunity

Figure 5. The dynamics of impunity



Ethnic protection of perpetrators and harbouring of stolen livestock

Historically, cattle rustling and livestock theft have always taken place between the Borana, Gabra and Rendille. The team's research confirmed that rustlers can commit crimes, even on a large scale, knowing that their communities will keep their actions secret. Some livestock thefts are also community-initiated.

This 'mtu wetu' ('our own') attitude has hindered cattle recovery and made it difficult to identify and arrest those involved in raids, because they are protected and hidden. Banditry has increased because of this impunity but also because communities consider it to be a way of marking their territories and punishing attacks by other communities. The practice of protecting perpetrators also means that communities cannot easily resolve their conflicts with other communities, and further deepens resentments.[33]

33 Area Chief, focus group discussion, Turbi village, 23 June 2021.

Tampering with police records was another concern. When police arrest perpetrators, senior government officials sometimes bribe the police to release them on the basis that 'this is our person'. In some cases, the police are bribed to reveal who in the community revealed the perpetrators, which increases fear and further erodes trust in the security agencies.[34]

Many young men have joined ethnic militias groups that guard community land against perceived intruders. It is these groups that carry out retaliatory attacks. Respondents recognised that, if they become large and are not controlled, such militias represent a menace to the community. They have allure because many young men are poor, have few employment opportunities, and need resources to marry; culturally, in addition, young men want to prove their maturity. Some youth also join militias because they have been victims of previous attacks.

It is unclear whether banditry is a criminal choice or reflects a community desire to defend and mark its territory. In either case, it nourishes social division, since communities rather than individuals are held responsible for thefts and homicides. This attitude is reinforced by the fact that communities do not surrender those who commit raids, or the livestock they steal. Nor do chiefs report people who drive stolen livestock through their areas.[35]

The communities do not recognise or acknowledge that their actions drive the conflicts that keep them in fear.

"The ethnicisation of crime is a problem. People say that they are taken up the peace, the elders know the people who do the raids, the elders are protecting them. It is difficult for the police to identify. When someone has been caught by the police, there is no witness, there is no evidence for someone to be convicted, there is no support. If you go to police and ask how many people have been captured during the ethnic clashes and captured with illegal arms have been convicted, so how will you get peace in this county."

Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.

Unresolved past injustices

Communities are also stuck in vicious cycles of violence because past injustices have never been resolved, leaving deep-seated ethnic grievances. Stories of past injustices are passed down to the next generation, perpetrating ethnic hatred and distrust. Most significant episodes of violence have not been resolved: the perpetrators remain at large and the communities who suffered harm have received no compensation.

The events that surrounded the 2005 Turbi massacre, in particular, have shaped relations between the Garba and Borana.[36] Over the years hundreds of lives and thousands of livestock have been lost. Victims have no safe spaces in which to air their grievances or forums for public healing, which means that many of the past wounds remain fresh.

"One of the elements for justice is to give up the people who have done a lot of the violence. There is no convicting of people who have done the act. Also, there is no specific department that deals with the victims. There is no programme for them."

Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

34 Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 19 June 2021.
35 Ibid.
36 Mwangi, O. G. (2006). Kenya: Conflict in the 'Badlands': The Turbi Massacre in Marsabit District. Review of African Political Economy, 81-91.

Failure of the rule of law

Security is not adequate to prevent crimes or to respond after they happen. The police visit locations where violence has occurred and sometimes take bodies for post-mortem, but communities are increasingly unwilling to cooperate with the authorities because they believe the police and justice systems will not arrest perpetrators of crimes and violence. After livestock thefts, the police do not respond at all or act slowly, so that stolen animals are long gone by the time they arrive. When perpetrators are arrested, respondents believed that politicians bribe security officials to release them. This weakens any desire within the community to report perpetrators.[37]

Smuggling of weapons and drugs

Firearms are smuggled across the vast and porous border between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia. Numerous interviees agreed that it is easy to acquire untraceable firearms and ammunition for them. They said that women play a critical role in cross-boarder weapon smuggling.[38]

Militias and attackers are using increasingly sophisticated weapons. This sometimes means that bandits are better armed than the security forces, notably the police. This is likely to be one reason why the police respond slowly. It was alleged that politicians and other powerful actors finance and supply bandits and that there could even be organized cartels. We cannot confirm this.

"Everybody at the moment is arming themselves in pretext to defend themselves, even in town"

Youth representative, focus group discussion, Walda village, 23 June 2021.

Communities are arming themselves

As mentioned, the three groups in conflict are not only arming themselves but forming armed militias. It was unclear how well organized these are, but we were told that vigilante groups are active in various parts of Marsabit town in the evening and during the night, and that sometimes they shoot at each other. Of particular concern to Gabra respondents, and to a lesser degree the Rendille, was the suggestion that the Borana are supported by the Ethiopia-based Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). This allegation strengthens the narrative that the Borana are foreign and is used to justify the formation of counter militias. The Borana do not necessarily deny that OLF has a presence in Kenya, but claim the OLF is a security threat to them to. They say that the OLF is not in Kenya to protect Borana communities, but to use Kenya as a refuge.

In summary, it is clear that all the conflicting ethnic groups are forming militias, that these receive support in terms of food and weapons, and that they could escalate the scale and gravity of conflict.

"War is being financed by the politicians. The guns that are being used are machine guns. Guns cost 1.5 million. Who can afford that? Everyone is a pastoralist and has 1, 2 or 3 cows. They can't afford the guns. When the leaders stop financing the conflict, the war will stop."

Youth representative, focus group discussion, Walda village, 23 June 2021.

37 Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.
38 Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Disingenuous engagement in peace processes

It was apparent that the communities associate peace processes with violence. Not only has participation in peace processes been disingenuous in the past, but people believe that important peace meetings are often followed by increased violence. They think peace processes have become a precursor of clashes.

Efforts to build peace have not been genuine or sustained. Most peace interventions were described as cosmetic enterprises that happen in fancy hotels and involve political leaders who talk peace one day and instigate violence the next. The lack of cooperation between chiefs worsens this state of affairs. Some chiefs were said to say nothing when members of their community steal livestock but to shout loudly when other communities rustle.

There is a hidden truth that when political leaders come for peace meetings, they come with their political mind for the peace. And even villagers, they come with their own peace. The people who are coming to the peace meetings, are the ones that are behind the violence".

Interfaith group, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Failure to implement agreements

Nor have past peace agreements processes been implemented. To date, no peace agreement has been followed by a sustained effort to bring conflicting groups together, provide safe spaces for communal healing, offer reparations to victims, or strengthen the rule of law, etc. For example, an 11-point peace resolution was agreed at a process initiated by the interfaith group but only one point has since been resolved. Failures of implementation have demoralised those working for peace.

Many of the peace talks involved high-level leaders and took place in hotels, out of sight of ordinary citizens. A more inclusive process is required, that involves members of the communities in conflict in mediation and sensitises the public, so that communities understand the content of peace agreements and support them.

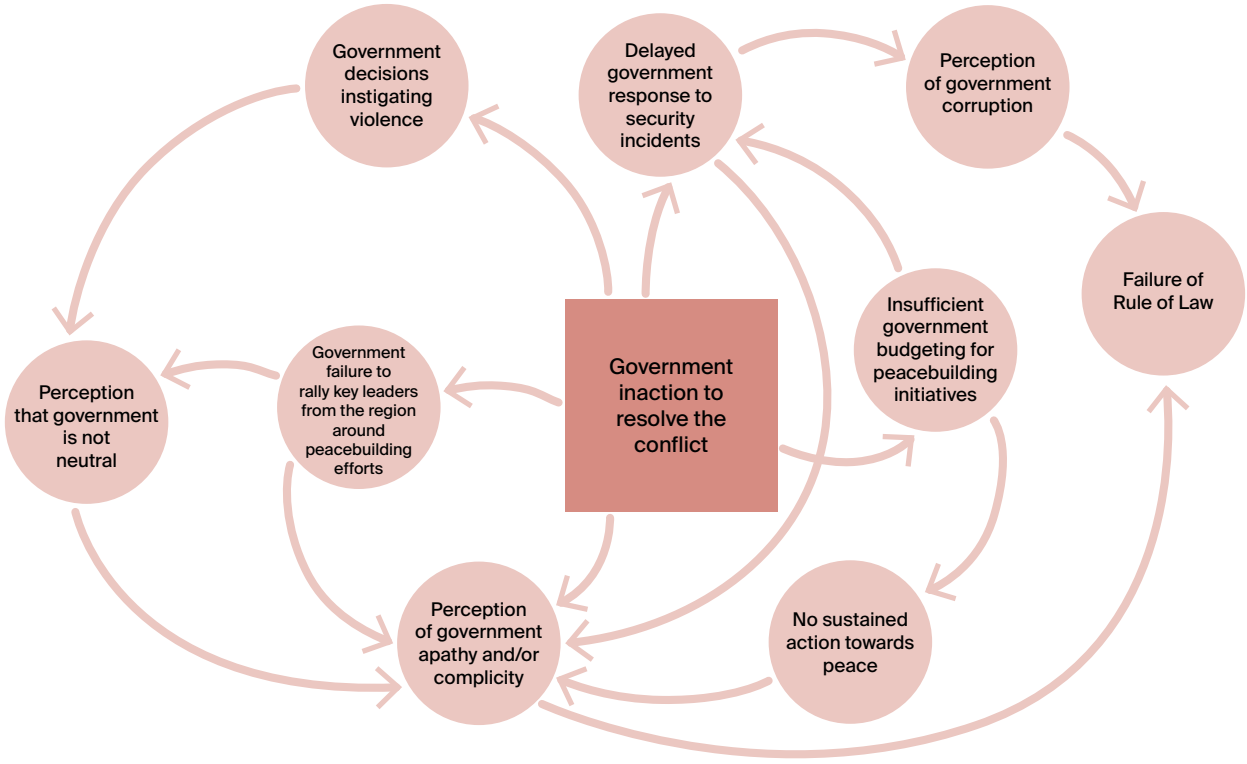
Conclusion

Impunity remains an underlying cause of conflict in Marsabit. Very weak application of the rule of law drives perceptions that criminals walk free while victims lack access to restorative justice. This negatively impacts citizen's trust in the government's willingness to put an end to the violence and drives a perception that communities must take the law into their own hands. It also leads to ethnic protection of perpetrators of violent crimes and the ethnic harboring of stolen livestock, which leads to the overall ethnicization of crime, cycles of retaliations against any member of the other group and the stock piling of weaponry. This inturn amplifies the pervasive insecurity in the county.

Government Inaction to Resolve the Conflict

Government Inaction to Resolve the Conflict

Figure 6. Government inaction to resolve the conflict.



Government has underfunded peacebuilding

Government inaction in Marsabit is most clearly visible in the underfunding of peacebuilding efforts. While the county government has a directorate for peace, cohesion and disaster management, it is so poorly funded that it cannot fuel vehicles to visit areas affected by violence. Nationally-mandated bodies equally do not have the resources to establish a permanent presence. While NCIC and others have organized meetings and have made numerous outreach visits, local communities believe that the failure to fund a sustained effort to build peace indicates that the central and county governments have no interest in addressing the violence.

Slow official response to security incidents

As noted above, many respondents criticised the slow response of security agencies and their failure to arrest and prosecute. One stated that it is common to hear the police say that they do not have vehicles to visit affected areas or that they lack fuel. Another said that the chain of command hinders rapid response. Importantly, not only the police were seen to be lax. Those who attack Borana and Rendille settlements often take routes through Marsabit national park, and both the Kenya Wildlife Service and Kenya Forest Service were said to allow this to happen. Specialised units that have specific mandates to curtail criminal violence, such as the General Service Unit, the Border Patrol Unit, and Anti-livestock Theft Units, and even the Kenya Defence Forces (which have a large base in Marsabit) were said to be ineffective, despite their mandates and equipment, which includes helicopters and armoured vehicles. As noted earlier, many respondents reported that corruption undermines the effectiveness of police and justice institutions[39] and many consider the government is not neutral.[40] The security agencies were also accused of leaking critical information to rival communities, putting informants at risk. Some went so far as to suggest that officers delay their response to allow warring communities to retaliate.

"The security apparatus and politicians have a responsibility to ensure the areas are safe but they fail at it. Thus, people choose to get justice on their own terms through retaliatory attacks. The elders also instigate because they are aware when the attacks are being organized and launched yet they do not say anything to prevent the attacks from being carried out."

Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021

Government failure to rally key leaders from the region around peacebuilding efforts

Despite escalating conflict in Marsabit, senior political leaders have not made a concerted effort to come together across the ethnic divide and campaign for peace. The central government has failed to intervene; key political actors (such as the Treasury CS, the county governor and area MPs) have not toured areas affected by violence to preach peace; the speaker of the county assembly has failed to bring together members of the assembly to debate the issue; no effort has been made to agree a Marsabit specific code of conduct for the coming elections. High-level peace meetings have been held in Nanyuki and elsewhere, but those to whom we spoke alleged that the political leaders who preach peace at these events seperately promote ethnic hatred on other platforms, and are not held to account.

Lack of sustained action towards peace

For years, State and non-State actors have fostered peacebuilding initiatives in Marsabit County. As noted earlier, few of these have been followed up. New leaders do not help when, instead of working with previous initiatives, they start new initiatives of their own that disrupt work in progress. A majority of the respondents underlined that peacebuilding processes did not involve members of the public, let alone victims of violence and communities that live in hotspot areas.

"Previous peace initiatives have not worked because those carrying out the initiative do not involve people in the grassroots in the villages. Once the reports are written, implementation is not followed up on. The initiatives of the religious leaders have not been fully

39 Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.
40

effective because they do not involve the people in the village enough."

Youth leader, key informant interview, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Government underfunding has been mirrored by the absence of international initiatives. A very large programme funded by UNDP concentrated on the cross-border dispute in Moyale with Ethiopia, but left the main conflict area around Saku unaddressed. Other funds available for peacebuilding tend to be elements of livelihood or humanitarian projects, or to focus on specific groups (for example, a project on women, peace and security funded by UNWOMEN). No comprehensive long-term peace programme works in a sustained way across national government, county government, civil society and the communities.

A number of cosmetic peace initiatives and numerous peace meeting were described, but the failure to follow them up means that many of those we met had lost hope in their value. Peace meetings are generally seen as futile, and have even acquired a negative connotation because local communities believe they tend to precede attacks. Respondents were ready to make a renewed effort, but urged us that more of the same will not work: any new peacebuilding initiative must be fundamentally different from previous ones.

Conclusion

The government inaction to protect the people of Marsabit and safeguard peaceful coexistence is both a reality and a perception. While it goes to far to say that the government has done nothing, the pervasive insecurity and lack of sustained efforts to bring peace and security does indicate that the government has not done enough. This compounds perceptions that the government is not a neutral actors, that they are behind some of the violence and it has contributed to a loss of hope that peace is even possible. Perceptions that the government will not do enough to provide protection and bring peace, in combination with perceptions that peace is no longer possible make the option to arm and defend oneself more desirable, thereby driving a perpetuation of armed violence.

"People in the communities also need to be involved in making of these peace agreements and the implementation processes for there to be sustainable peace. There needs to be sensitisation and public education of these peace initiatives to ensure the community members in the ground are conversant with the peace initiatives being carried out."

Women's group, focus group discussion, Marsabit town, 20 June 2021.

Urgent Need for Action

Urgent Need for Action

1. Inflammatory and dangerous discourses.

The research team came across narratives and discourses that promote violence. They say who belongs in places and who does not, who is foreign and who is not, and justify trying to remove communities from certain areas. These discourses are associated with perceptions of existential threat that drive much of the current displacement.

2. Hate-speech and rumour-mongering in the context of elections.

Hate-speech and rumour-mongering are rampant. Communities are increasingly receptive to messages that confirm perceived threats and feed their anger and hatred. As elections approach, campaigning is likely to intensify fear and incitements of hate. The widespread belief that politics is a zero sum game will heighten electoral competition, making the situation even more volatile.

3. Community armament and forming of militias.

Every responent admitted that communities are arming and have formed militias and vigilante groups to defend themselves. The stockpiling of arms and ammunition and formation of armed militias significantly increase the risks of escalation and serious violence.

4. Daily incidents of violence and killings.

During exploratory research between 19 and 24 June 2021, killings and violence occurred every day both in Marsabit town and on its outskirts. Businesses were disrupted and education hindered. The population is deeply afraid because anyone can be targeted. Shortly after the research team left, nine violent incidents occurred on one night, practically triggering a violent confrontation between vigilante groups.

5. Danger of escalation.

The above factors significantly increase the risk that an already extremely violent situation will get worse. The next step could be full-out skirmishes between armed groups from both sides, and potential massacres and attempts at ethnic cleansing. Those with whom we talked believed such an escalation is entirely possible. There is a very urgent need for a sustained peacebuilding intervention. Steps should also be taken to prevent further violence by increasing the presence and response of security actors.

Preliminary Recommendations

Preliminary Recommendations

These recommendations are based on a rapid conflict assessment and have not yet been validated by a comprehensive participatory process. For this reason, they should be considered preliminary recommendations. Please note further that the short-term, medium-term and long-term recommendations focus on the needs of a peacebuilding initiative led by NCIC and Interpeace. Based on experience in Mandera, the North Rift and Wajir, we have demonstrated that measures like those below can help to significantly lower insecurity and violence and in the long-run can contribute to sustainable peace. While a substantial investment is required to implement all the recommendations proposed, the cost of not intervening far outweighs the cost of a long-term, sustainable and comprehensive peacebuilding programme.

1. Initiatives that stem violence in the immediate term.

This rapid assessment was done in late June. Since then, several initiatives have been taken, some of which have already improved the situation and brought a; temporary calm to Marsabit. On 20 July 2021, in the week of Eid al-Adha, no shootings took place in Marsabit town. Some of the changes were a direct outcome of NCIC and Interpeace advocacy. It must be emphasised, however, that, while very important, these changes cannot replace a sustained peacebuilding intervention, which continues to be urgently needed.

A. Draw national attention to the conflict in Marsabit.

When the assessment was conducted, the situation in Marsabit was largely invisible in Kenya and was not a priority. Discussions in parliament considered specific incidents rather than root causes, the conflict had little profile in the media, and it had not been condemned by the president or other important political officials. Two weeks after the assessment, NCIC and Interpeace held an urgent meeting to discuss actions that needed to be taken at once. These included drawing national attention to the issue at several levels, most importantly in the highest echelons of government and in the media. The following week, NCIC commissioners met President Uhuru Kenyatta to present our joint analysis of the situation and urged him to act. Subsequently, the President brought together Marsabit political leaders and urged them in very strong terms to work together to bring peace to Marsabit. This gave a very important sign to the people of Marsabit that the government cares about their plight, and represented an important shift in the government's response. Second, NCIC contacted several media companies and asked them to start reporting the conflict. Reporting on Marsabit has increased, which has lifted national awareness of the conflict. Going forward, it is important to make sure that reporting is conflict-sensitive and is not sensationalist. News coverage needs to be balanced. It should not report ethnic and political leaders who only condemn violence when it is committed against their group. In the longer term, coverage should help to build trust between people.

B. Increase the presence and effectiveness of security interventions to stop killings and promote the rule of law.

On 9 July, the Office of the Inspector General of the National Police Service issued a press release that expressed concern about the situation in Marsabit and indicated that "the National Police Service has since deployed a Multi-Agency team of highly specialized security officers led by the General Service Unit with firm and uncompromising instructions to restore peace and order".[41] The increase in security forces and the deployment of a multi-agency team temporarily stabilised the situation in Marsabit and is a first important response to the weak rule of law that is described in this report. Law enforcement will be crucial in the run up to the election, but will not resolve the root causes of conflict.

C. Design a sustained peacebuilding intervention.

In addition to immediate action, a sustained peacebuilding intervention will be needed to build an approach that is holistic and engages actors at the levels of track 1 (government and senior leaders), track 2 (civil society and community leaders), and track 3 (conflict-affected communities). As the agency with the strongest government mandate, NCIC is best placed to lead these efforts, but it will need support from international partners and other stakeholders with a strong mandate, such as the County Government, the National Steering Committee for Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, the Frontier Counties Development Council, and others. NCIC and Interpeace have already come together to design a programme of work that they have shared with relevant donors.

2. Short-term action. September 2022 – August 2023.

In the short-term, there is a need to rapidly deploy a peacebuilding team on the ground that will have a permanent presence and will focus on peacebuilding priorities in the run-up to the 2022 elections. Its priorities should include the following:

A. Broker a community-centred (track 3) ceasefire between the Borana and Gabra, and Borana and Rendile.

While a sustained peacebuilding programme that focuses on all tracks is needed in the long-term, in the short-term the main priority is to broker a ceasefire at community level between all the key decision-makers at grassroots level. This requires meeting communities across Marsabit to: discuss what is driving conflict; map all conflict hotspots and identify conflict drivers in each; map conflict actors (those who sanction and execute raids and revenge attacks); and identify peace actors and key influencers. Simultaneously, intra-community meetings should be held to agree the priorities for peace, nominate key power brokers at community level who can leverage peace, and bring them together in intercommunity meetings to negotiate a community-centred ceasefire and action plan to reduce violence and revenge attacks.

41 Press Release: Communal Conflicts in Marsabit, Office of the Inspector General of the National Police Service, 9 July 2021

B. Establish, train and resource an inclusive ceasefire monitoring committee.

In the community-led ceasefire, one action point will be to create an inclusive ceasefire monitoring committee that includes representatives from each of the groups. This committee will sensitise the wider community to the ceasefire agreement, persuade their communities to respect the conditions of the ceasefire, and be first responders when the ceasefire is broken, in order to prevent the cycle of retaliation from restarting.

C. Work at the track 1 and track 2 level to form a coalition of influencers who will consistently speak out against violence and debunk myths.

Hate speech and rumour-mongering are common in Marsabit: though many influential leaders are trying to build peace, they have no platform to do so or have become demotivated because nothing they have tried so far has really worked. Given an appropriate platform, this group can play an important role in promoting peace and preventing further violence. They include religious leaders, cultural leaders, members of the county assembly, influential business people and professionals, members of the county government, and civil society leaders, among others. It is important that this group presents a united voice across ethnic divides, speaks out against violence, and, very important, starts to debunk myths that justify violence. They should challenge fake news and promote an alternative narrative that inspires positive relations and does not create suspicion, ethnic friction, fear or hatred.

D. Work on a county specific code of conduct for election campaigning that stops hate speech and incitement to violence.

NCIC is working on a national code of conduct to prevent hate speech during the election. Considering the extent of political competition and hate speech in Marsabit, a specific code of conduct for the county should be prepared, which all political competitors should sign in the run up to the 2022 election.

E. Monitor and address hate speech and rumour mongering in the run up to the election.

NCIC has a unit responsible for monitoring and addressing hate speech. This unit might need reinforcement by language experts who can monitor hate-speech in Borana/Gabra and Rendille. There should be close collaboration with courts to ensure they follow up promptly whenever the NCIC indicts candidates or others for political hate speech.

3. Medium term action. September 2023 – August 2024.

A. Conduct participatory action research into resilience factors and impediments to peace.

The research will aim to agree peacebuilding priorities and strategies. Its process should be inclusive and participatory, involving communities, women and youth, civil society organizations (CSOs), political actors, and other key stakeholders. Focus group discussions and forums at intracommunal level will discuss what a comprehensive peace agreement and process needs to focus on. The process will be completed by several inter-communal forums, analysis, preparation of a report, and a validation process that will bring together all the key stakeholders.

B. Expand the peacebuilding infrastructure at county level.

The first step will be to form a CSO peace actors platform to coordinate and promote peacebuilding initiatives in Marsabit County. The forum should include repreesentatives of the county government and county commissioner's office. It will: support adoption and implementation of the peacebuilding bill or plan of the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC), with a specific implementation strategy for Marsabit county; advocate for a line in the Marsabit County budget to support peacebuilding activity; map existing infrastructure; establish youth and women's committees under the ceasefire monitoring mechanisms; establish inter-village peace committees for villages on conflict fault lines; revive an elders' forum, in which elders of all communities can meet regularly to discuss the revival of conflict mitigation and peacebuilding structures; and create ethnically diverse business fora.

C. Build trust and confidence between groups.

The programme will: create regular dialogue groups composed of actors from different ethnic groups and provide a budget to these groups to: organize cultural and sporting festivals across ethnic lines; work with groups to organize ceremonies (for example, to arrange reparation payments, or return livestock) and take other measures that will restore trust between groups; introduce peace dividend initiatives, where possible, through which communities can share resources or work together across ethnic faultlines to generate income; start a community pod-cast and radio show that challenges existing narratives and reports exampls of harmonious cooperation between groups and current examples of harmonious living; and employ cultural tools, such as community theatre, to bring people and communities together.

D. Building trust and confidence between communities and government.

Communities have largely lost their trust in the government's resolve to support peace. The county government needs to establish a transparent dialogue with communities to discuss policy issues, resource sharing across wards, and community priorities for long-term peace. In particular, the security services need to meet with communities to discuss conflict management and promote trust. Such sessions will give communities opportunities to voice their grievances, discuss conflict prevention measures, and decide how communities can collaborate with the police to hold perpetrators of violence to account. The police should also meet regularly with the ceasefire monitoring committee to decide how they can work together to hold perpetrators of violence to account and prevent conflict from escalating.

E. Work on agreements to share and manage resources, particularly relating to pastoral migration and pastures.

The programme will revive, modernise and contextualise past arrangements and cultural practices for resource management and sharing, notably those that relate to pastoral migration and pasture. In the past, Borana, Gabra and Rendille applied elders' agreements when they shared pastures and water sources; during the conflict, these arrangements have all but died out. At least some structures can be revived, but they will need to be modernised and adapted to cope with the current environment of fear and distrust.

F. Reach out to victims and work with ethnic groups and government on remedy and reparation options.

Years of violent conflict and targeted and indiscriminate killings, armed robberies and violent raids have created a large cohort of victims and survivors, most of whom continue to carry significant trauma. This group has generally been overlooked by previous peace initiatives. All respondents commented that outreach to victims has been absent or very limited, and no programmes provide remedy and reparation, or mental health and psychosocial support. While the medium timeframe will be too short to roll out a full programme of reparations, healing, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), steps to initiate such work should be taken during this phase. The programme should: reach out to victims; assess levels of mental health and the need for psycho-social support; carry out trauma-sensitive research to understand the types of violation and abuse that victims have suffered and the remedies, reparations and healing needs that must be provided. Victims/survivors are not a homogeneous category of people. Their needs differ widely according to the violations and injuries they have suffered, and their gender, age, status, etc.

G. Reinvigorate intercommunal spaces to promote cohesion.

Where possible, the programme should promote a return to normalcy. It should: open roads; support communal markets in which people from different groups can trade and work together; create reconciliation villages or other spaces in which people from different groups can mix and start to live together in harmony. Where possible, it should promote the return of displaced people and support efforts to reintegrate returned IDPs into their communities. To ensure that interaction promotes social cohesion, efforts to reinvigorate intercommunal spaces should be combined with activities such as healing by trained community facilitators.

4. Long term action. September 2024 forward.

A. Transitional justice

Building on the medium-term phase, the programme will roll out a transitional justice programme that provides space for truth-telling and communal and government-sponsored reparation and healing. Transitional justice is also likely to include a further roll-out of healing spaces, communal dialogues, commemoration activities, symbolic gestures, public apologies, etc.

B. Mental health and psycho-social support.

Years of violence have created significant mental health and psycho-social support needs. The programme will engage MHPSS experts to design appropriate interventions, map MHPSS needs, and identify key actors. It will encourage the Ministry of Health to strengthen implementation of MHPSS in Marsabit County.

C. Livelihood diversification and modernisation.

As a result of the conflict, many pastoralist are stepping out of partoralist livelihoods. This creates opportunities to decrease dependency on pastoralism and promote other, inclusive livelihoods. The introduction of zero-grazing and other modern livestock methods can also improve livelihoods and increase interethnic collaboration, thereby reducing competition for water and pasture.

D. Return of displaced communities.

The programme will press for the complete return of displaced communities to their areas of origin, and strengthen healing and peace infrastructures in all places of return, to promote social harmony, reduce the insecurity of returning IDPs, and encourage other IDPs to return.

E. Transforming civic engagement and promoting participatory governance.

Distrust of government and perceptions that government is not neutral are key drivers of conflict. The programme will promote civic engagement and participatory governance, helping to increase the trust of citizens in government performance and helping to ensure that government policies and practices reflect citizens' needs.

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