

# North Rift Regional Note



## Voices of the People: Impediments to Peace and Community Resilience in Kenya's North Rift Region

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My utmost gratitude goes to the Federal Foreign Office of Germany which supports the collaboration between Interpeace and the NCIC in the search for lasting peace in Kenya. It is through their support that this good work has been realised.

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# FOREWORD

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace are jointly working to improve community resilience under the devolved system of governance in Kenya. The North Rift peacebuilding programme emanated from the successes of the preceding Mandera Peacebuilding Programme. In a report entitled *Footprints of Peace: Consolidating National Cohesion in a Devolved Kenya, 2014-2018*, NCIC recommended adapting the participatory action research (PAR) approach, and lessons learned from the Mandera programme, as a model for locally-owned and locally-driven peacebuilding architectures in all of Kenya's 47 counties. In 2018, Interpeace and NCIC subsequently conducted a rapid fragility and resilience assessment in Wajir County and the North Rift region of Kenya, which unearthed significant peace and security challenges. As a result, the peacebuilding programme was scaled up in 2019 to include the Kerio Valley, traversing the five North Rift counties of Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo and Samburu.

On behalf of the people of the North Rift region, NCIC and Interpeace, we wish to thank the leadership of the region for allowing us to conduct this critical study. Based on Interpeace's experience of strengthening the capacities of societies to manage conflict in non-violent, non-coercive ways, and NCIC's constitutional mandate to address any form of discrimination against persons based on race, religion, and ethnic background, the two organisations are committed to nurturing peace in diversity among the people of the North Rift.

We should recognise, however, that the main responsibility of building and protecting peace in the region lies in the hands of the local communities and their leaders. NCIC and Interpeace can only facilitate the process; the ultimate guardians of peace are the people themselves. Of course, Interpeace and NCIC acknowledge the state of disequilibrium in the region, characterised by scarcity of resources such as water and pasture, recurrent cattle rustling, and persistent drought, all of which are existential conflict triggers. This makes it imperative for the region to build sustainable local peace infrastructures, tailored to this context of fragility. For this to happen, the target counties should make maximum use of the resources released by devolution while also tapping into the age-old peacebuilding traditions of the communities.

The same message needs to go out to the entire country. We, as a people, must put a premium on peace. Kenya's overall conflict fragility will decline immensely if North Rift Counties such as Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, and Samburu endeavour to prioritise peace and development, with requisite support from the national and county governments. The next step of the programme will involve joint implementation of the priorities for peace—as identified by the local population in the aforementioned regions and validated by a wide spectrum of stakeholders—in order to develop sustainable local peacebuilding infrastructures. We also envision that the lessons learned will be replicated in neighbouring counties and across the country.

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# ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACC	Assistant County Commissioner
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
ASTU	Anti-Stock Theft Unit
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CPI Kenya	Children Peace Initiative Kenya
CRA	Commission on Revenue Allocation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCI	Directorate of Criminal Investigations
EC	European Commission
FBO	Faith Based Organisation
FGD	Focus group discussion
GSU	General Service Unit
IDP	Internally displaced person
IMARA	Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Resilience in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
KDF	Kenya Defence Forces
KFS	Kenya Forest Service
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
KII	Key informant interview
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KVDA	Kerio Valley Development Authority
KWS	Kenya Wildlife Service
MoU	Memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIS	National Intelligence Service
NOREB	North Rift Economic Bloc
NPR	National Police Reservist
PAR	Participatory action research
RDU	Rapid Deployment Unit
ROSCA	Rotating Savings and Credit Association
SALW	Small arms and light weapons
SCI	Social Cohesion Index
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study presents the findings of the consultative phase of the North Rift Peacebuilding Programme, jointly implemented by Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace in the five counties of Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, and Samburu in Kenya's North Rift region.

The North Rift has been a crucible of conflict since precolonial times. One of the reasons is a history of marginalisation by both the colonial and independence governments of Kenya. The region is largely populated by nomadic pastoralist communities, between whom fierce competition for scarce resources every so often leads to violent ethnic clashes.

In this study, NCIC and Interpeace used a participatory action research (PAR) methodology to understand the factors that local communities in the region believe are driving the conflict. More specifically, the study sought, first, to objectively identify the fragilities impeding peace in the North Rift region and, second, to ascertain factors of resilience in communities that could be used to build peace in the region. Having identified the challenges, the study proceeded to develop a consensus among stakeholders on the impediments to peace, in order to prioritise appropriate interventions in the next phase of the programme. The ultimate goal of the North Rift peacebuilding programme is to help integrate grassroots aspirations for peace, building on local capacities, and provide a strategic link with decision- and policy-makers at the county and national levels. This approach marks a departure from past peace initiatives, which were largely top-down interventions mobilised to contain specific situations that had already escalated into violence. The repeated ineffectuality of government-brokered ceasefires and securitised responses to ethnic clashes led NCIC and Interpeace to recognise that a deeper analysis of the conflict dynamic is needed, that focuses on the views of local communities.

The local population identified four thematic areas that they believe are the most pressing challenges to peace in the North Rift Region. These are: (1) community socio-cultural and economic systems; (2) security and the rule of law; (3) governance and politics; and (4) environmental factors. These thematic areas were validated at a stakeholder forum that marked the conclusion of the consultative phase of research. The stakeholder forum was held on 21-23 December 2019 in Kapenguria, West Pokot County. A total of 150 participants from the five target counties attended the forum, the great majority of whom live in the region; some attended from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

After three days of deliberation, the participants identified eight issues that they consider to be the most pressing challenges to peace in the North Rift. These are: (1) illiteracy; (2) cultural practices that induce violent conflict; (3) the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; (4) weak policing and security provision; (5) impunity and political incitement; (6) contested borders and boundary disputes; (7) persistent droughts and famine; and (8) The identification of these eight priority impediments to peace provides a foundation that the NCIC and Interpeace, working in concert with the local communities, can build on to catalyse long-term peace in the region. The degree to which the NCIC can achieve the next steps towards lasting peace will hinge on NCIC's mandate and its capacity to influence policy- and decision-makers in Kenya, as well as Interpeace's experience of spearheading successful peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in other parts of the world.



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# **NORTH RIFT PEACEBUILDING PROGRAM LAUNCH**

## **OBSTACLES TO PEACE IN THE NORTH**

**KEFRI  
MARIGAT**

On  
**15TH**  
November  
2019

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## BACKGROUND



## 1.0 Introduction

The North Rift region is located in north-western Kenya, along the country's national borders with Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda. The region forms part of the famous cross-continental Great Rift Valley system, a series of contiguous geographic trenches that runs for approximately 6,000 kilometres from Lebanon in the Middle East to Mozambique in Southern Africa. In the context of this study, the North Rift Region refers to the five Kenyan counties of Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo and Samburu. These counties are among the least developed in Kenya, having faced marginalisation in both colonial and independent Kenya.

The British colonial administration<sup>1</sup> did not see economic value in northern Kenya. Inhabited by nomadic pastoralist communities and characterised by rough terrain and a harsh climate, the north was only deemed significant in securing the colony's territorial and administrative structures. A closed district policy was enacted and the entire northern region, stretching from the Ugandan border to the border with Somalia, was declared the Northern Frontier District (NFD). As a closed district, NFD was isolated from the rest of the colony and largely left underdeveloped (Aukot, 2008). Even colonial policing was limited to urban centres and the White Highlands.<sup>2</sup> It was not until after World War II that state policing was extended to cover the ethnic homelands designated as 'native reserves'. As for the NFD, indirect rule was adjudged to be the most effective way to govern. It was effected through local chiefs and a locally recruited force known as the Tribal

Police.<sup>3</sup> In reality, the NFD was largely unpoliced and military forces intervened only to crush violent conflicts or civil resistance (Mkutu, 2018). Contact between the government and the area's communities was minimal throughout indirect rule and taxation was enforced through the local chiefs who reported to colonial officials (Aukot, 2008).

Independent Kenya marginalised the region in similar ways, mainly by retaining practices that designated the five counties as 'closed districts' and enacting policies such as Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, which prioritised development in areas of high potential. Sessional Paper No. 10 ensured that the country's economic wealth remained in productive areas such as the former White Highlands. Its rationale was that Kenya's economy would grow rapidly if development funds were invested where they would produce the largest increase in net output. This approach favoured areas endowed with natural resources, fertile land, ample rainfall, effective transport, communications, and power facilities. Conversely, it condemned regions with less obvious potential to further economic marginalisation.

Nomadic pastoralist communities compose about 20% of Kenya's population but occupy an estimated 70% of Kenya's total land area in the vast arid and semi-arid rangelands of the former NFD (Ng'ang'a, 2019). The effects of past marginalisation and underdevelopment continue to be experienced in Kenya today. As Nderitu (2018) observed:

“

*There is a huge part of the country that has been neglected by subsequent Governments, from the colonialists to the present...it is almost as if a ruler was placed on Kenya, dividing the country into two, with the then Northern Frontier District defined as useless. This means that in different parts of Kenya, there are different styles to define opportunities for people in education, opportunities in business, opportunities in employment in public office and the disciplined forces. No country can take care of its economy unless it solves this issue.”*

<sup>1</sup> Kenya became a British protectorate in 1895, then a colony in 1920. It gained independence in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> The White Highlands was a general term for high-altitude areas of Kenya that possess a cool climate and some of the most fertile soils in the country. Given that agriculture formed the bedrock of the colonial economy, the British colonial government started to develop roads, rail lines and other infrastructure in the White Highlands. Between 1902 and 1961, the White Highlands were exclusively reserved for European settler farmers.

<sup>3</sup> The tribal police were professionalised in 1958 and renamed the 'Administration Police'. They still exist and operate across the country (Mkutu, 2018).



Competition for resources has aggravated conflicts in the region. The livelihoods of most inhabitants are built around their livestock. As a result, residents depend heavily on natural resources such as pasture, water, and vegetation. Reduced access to these resources and population growth have put the region's pastoralist communities under increasingly intense pressure, resulting in a high incidence of violent clashes. Moreover, boundary conflicts pit ethnic communities against each other at different levels. Clashes occur between communities, within counties, across counties, and even cross Kenya's national borders into Uganda, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. The resulting disruption of 'normal' migratory patterns leads to unsustainable use of natural resources that in turn causes environmental degradation.

Porous international borders—coupled with prolonged conflicts and the easy infiltration of small arms from neighbouring countries—make inter-community clashes particularly vicious and sophisticated. Other factors contributing to the severity of these clashes include the direct impact of the conflicts on livelihoods, the sometimes divisive role of ethnic elites and professionals, and incitement by political actors.

Conflicts further disrupt pastoral economies by restricting access to natural resources and marketing systems, thereby affecting development and the provision of essential services in the region. Social services and amenities are frequently paralysed. Education, for instance, is frequently interrupted by the flight of teachers from conflict-stricken areas and the relocation of communities from their settlements for fear of invasion. Localities so affected include Mukutani and Noosukuro in Baringo County, Suiyan and Kawap in Samburu County, and Kapedo. Conflict

also discourages communities and development agencies from investing, both in the short and long term. At local level, a lot of effort, funds and other resources are used to contain conflicts and mitigate post-conflict situations rather than channelled into development work. Interventions to mitigate conflict have been made by various stakeholders, including the government.

Kenya's 2010 Constitution provided for devolution and offered a legal framework for equitable distribution of resources in the North Rift.<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is reported that devolution has intensified supremacy wars in the region's five counties. Various ethnic communities have actively instigated violence to displace and disenfranchise others to their advantage. Non-state actors, such as faith-based organisations (FBOs), have facilitated community-owned processes of reconciliation and conflict transformation in the region, but peace has remained elusive. The discovery of oil, minerals and other natural resources was seen as a blessing but it has aggravated pre-existing conflicts in the region.

In summary, the achievement of peace in the North Rift has been hindered by ethnicism, divisive politics, and insufficient devolved funds for progressive development. This complex state of affairs easily waters down any positive impact that peacebuilders and development agencies make in the region. Unless conflicts are properly managed, pastoral livelihoods will continue to deteriorate and development projects remain a pipedream. It is therefore imperative to develop a locally-owned peacebuilding infrastructure that empowers the communities to influence decisions and policies that affect them.

## 1.2 Profiles of the North Rift Counties

The North Rift region is a distinct part of the now defunct Rift Valley province, which was Kenya's largest subnational unit. Eight county governments cooperate economically as members of the North Rift Economic Bloc (NOREB): Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Trans

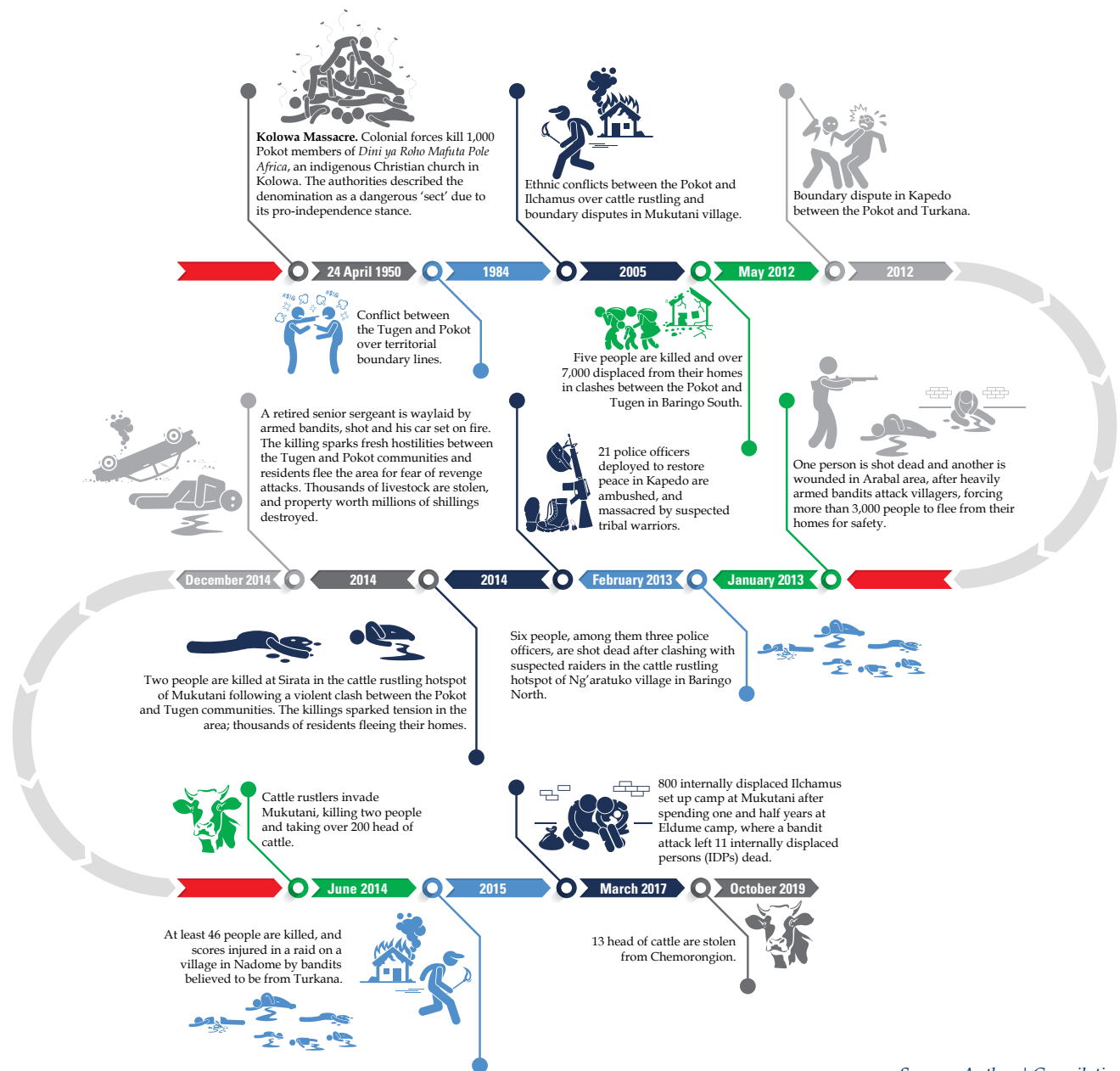
Nzoia, Baringo, Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, and Elgeyo Marakwet. However, this study does not cover all NOREB counties. It focuses on the five that are most prone to conflict, namely Turkana, West Pokot, Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, and Samburu.

<sup>4</sup> Kenya was initially a centralised state administratively divided into provinces and districts governed from the capital, Nairobi. Under the 2010 Constitution, which introduced devolution, these administrative units were abolished and counties became the primary subnational units.

**Baringo County.** Baringo County occupies an area of 11,075.3 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 666,763.<sup>5</sup> The majority are Tugen;<sup>6</sup> minority groups include Pokot, Turkana, Ilchamus, Endorois, Nubi, Ogiek, and Kikuyu. The primary economic activity is livestock keeping; bee keeping and honey harvesting are also significant. Baringo County has experienced perennial conflicts involving ethnic groups within the county and from the neighbouring counties of West Pokot and

Turkana. Conflicts provoked by cattle rustling, access to resources such as water and pasture, and political contestation have variously involved the Tugen, Pokot, Turkana, Ilchamus, Sengwer and Ogiek communities. Baringo has a score of 50% on the Social Cohesion Index (SCI),<sup>7</sup> falling short of the national SCI average of 56%. The most significant cases of violent conflict in Baringo County are summarised below.

Figure 1: Conflict Timeline of Baringo County<sup>8</sup>



Source: Authors' Compilation

5 All population estimates in this report are based on the findings of the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, carried out by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS).

6 The Tugen are part of a larger grouping of eight culturally- and linguistically-related ethnic groups collectively known as the Kalenjin. These are the Kipsigis, Nandi, Keiyo, Marakwet, Sabaot, Pokot, Tugen, and Terik.

7 The Social Cohesion Index (SCI) is a tool developed by the NCIC to measure the state of national cohesion and the impact of peacebuilding efforts in Kenya. Since 2014, the NCIC has used the SCI to evaluate the state of social cohesion in Kenya in order to establish the perceptions and realities of national resource distribution and so pre-empt conflicts and other threats to peace and national unity. Findings and trends are made public.

8 These events were identified by the NCIC's conflict monitoring mechanism. All such lists in this publication are indicative; they are not exhaustive

**Elgeyo Marakwet County.** Elgeyo Marakwet has an area of more than 3,050 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 454,480. The county is divided into three main topographical zones which run parallel to each other in a north-south direction. These are the highland plateau, the Marakwet Escarpment and Kerio Valley. The county has four sub-counties: Marakwet East, Marakwet West, Keiyo North, and Keiyo South. The county's capital and largest town is Iten, famous for its high-altitude training centres that attract world-class professional marathoners from Kenya and other countries. The largest ethnic groups in the county are

the Marakwet and the Keiyo; minorities include the Nandi, Kipsigis, Turkana, Maasai, Kikuyu, Sengwer, and Ogiek. The majority Marakwet and Keiyo communities were exclusively pastoralist but both have gradually adopted mixed farming as their main economic activity and now have a largely sedentary lifestyle. Other economic activities in the county include small businesses, tourism, and fluorspar mining in Kerio Valley. The level of social cohesion in the county is above the national average, standing at 57%.

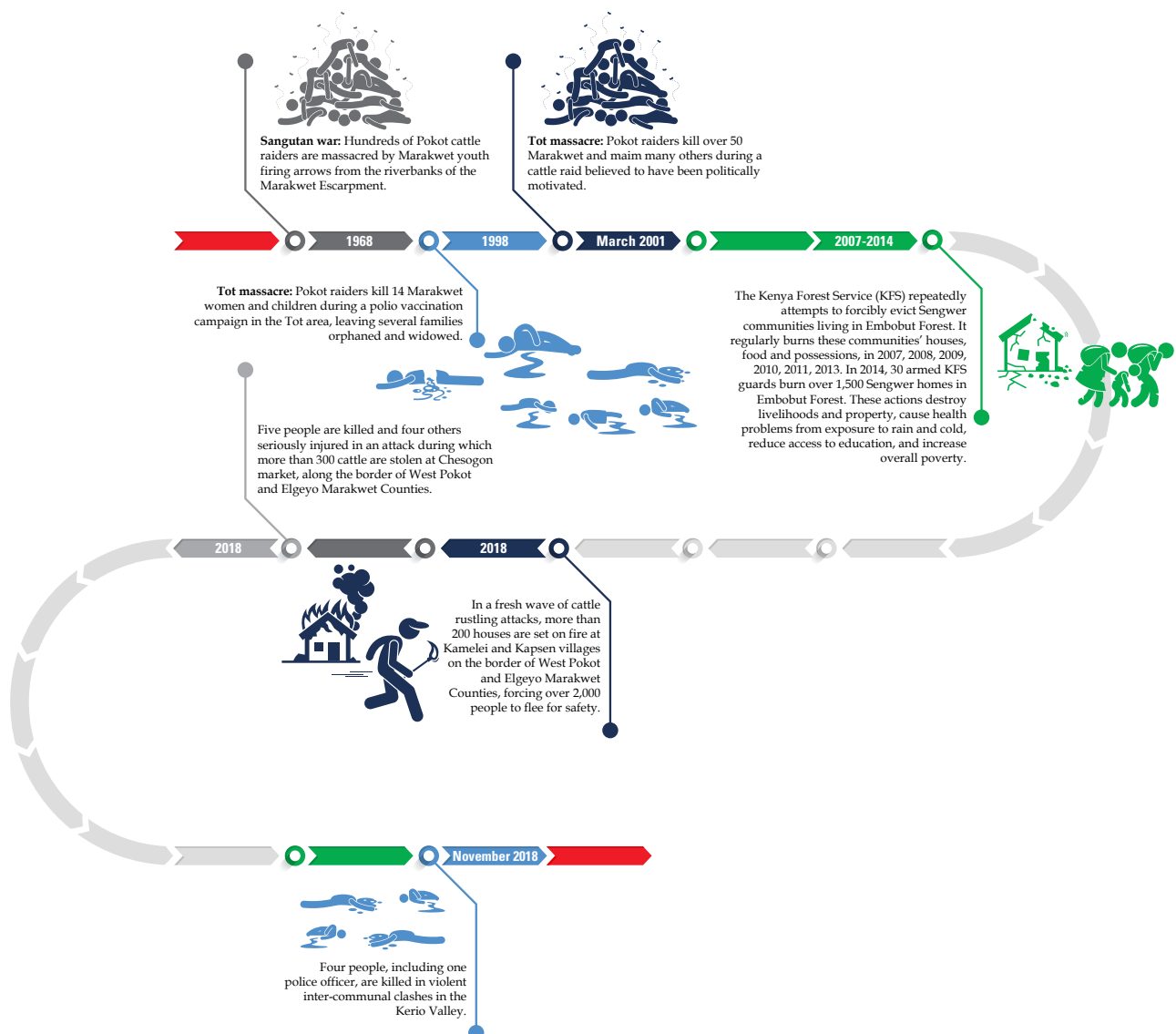


Figure 2: Conflict Timeline of Elgeyo Marakwet

Source: Authors' Compilation

**Samburu County.** Samburu covers an area of 20,182.5 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 310,327. Samburu are the largest population group; minorities include Rendille, Turkana, Borana, Somali, Pokot, Kikuyu, and Meru. The county's capital is Maralal and it is divided into three sub counties: Samburu North, Samburu East, and Samburu West. Most people in the county keep livestock. Several communities in Samburu West

and a few in Samburu North and East practise crop farming. The county's social cohesion index matches the national average (56%). Samburu county is partially arid and semi-arid. Key conflict triggers include cattle rustling by armed groups, ethnic conflicts caused by cattle rustling and land disputes, weak policing, and tensions with conservation authorities over crop destruction by wild animals.

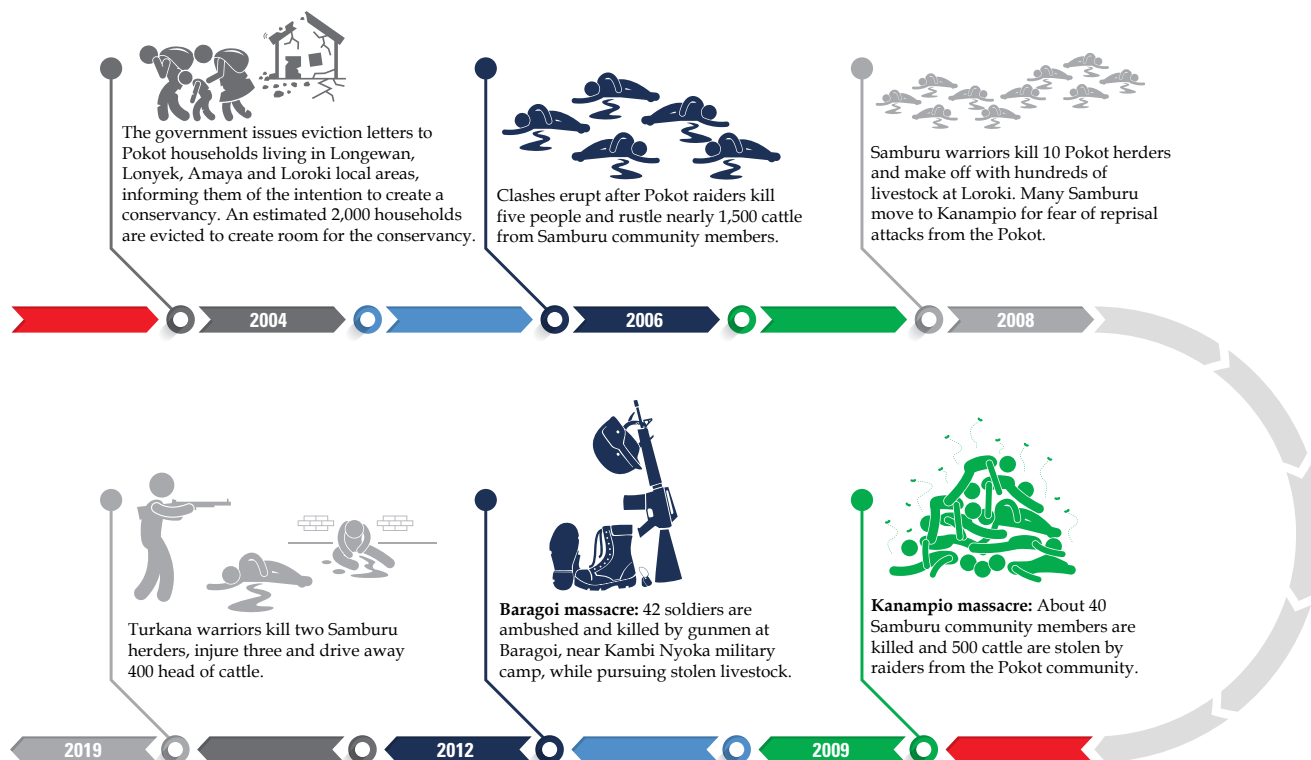


Figure 3: Conflict Timeline of Samburu County

Source: Authors' Compilation



**Turkana County:** Turkana is the largest county in the North Rift region and shares international borders with Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda as well as with the counties of West Pokot, Baringo, and Marsabit. It has an area of approximately 68,680 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 926,976. The largest ethnic community is Turkana; minority groups include Pokot, Ogiek, El-molo, Ngiteuso, Somali, and Murile. The county is administratively divided into six sub counties: Turkana

Central, Turkana North, Turkana South, Turkana East, Turkana West and Loima. The main economic activities include nomadic pastoralism, fishing, and tourism; related activities are weaving and small-scale trading. Tullow Oil and its partner, Africa Oil, discovered commercial oil reserves in Turkana's Lokichar basin in 2012. The county's Social Cohesion Index lies below the national average at 52%.

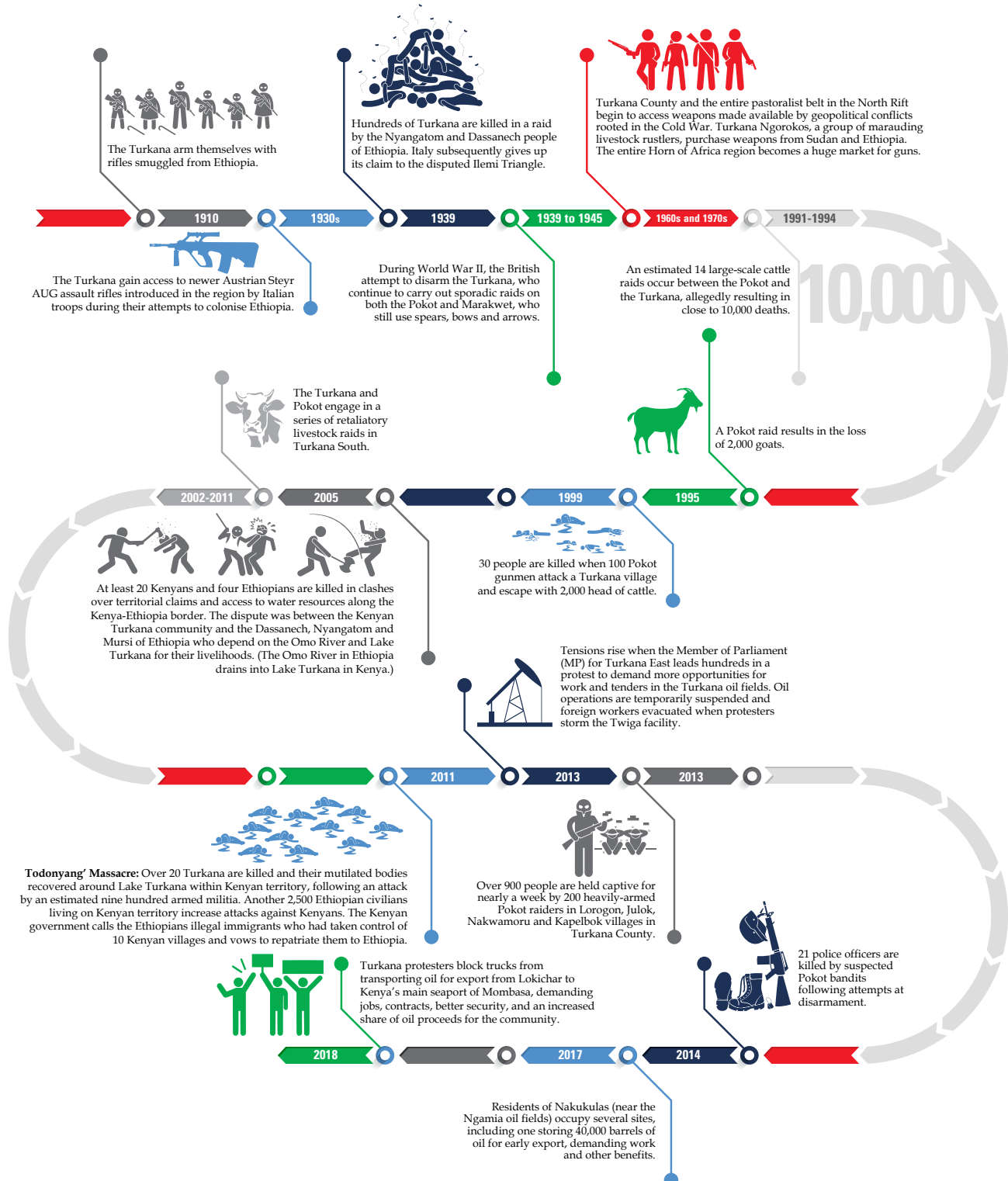


Figure 4: Conflict Timeline of Turkana County

Source: Authors' Compilation



**West Pokot County:** Situated along Kenya's border with Uganda, West Pokot county has an estimated land area of 9,169.4 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 621,241. The capital and largest town is Kapenguria and it is divided into four sub counties: Kapenguria, Sigor, Kacheliba, and Pokot South. Predominantly inhabited by the Pokot community, the county's minorities include the Sengwer and Turkana. The county's

economy is principally driven by livestock rearing and to a smaller scale agriculture. West Pokot County has a Social Cohesion Index of 51%, below the national average, and is highly prone to conflict. Key conflict drivers include competition for water and pasture, disputed land and territorial boundaries, and cattle rustling, all exacerbated by inadequate policing and ethnicism.

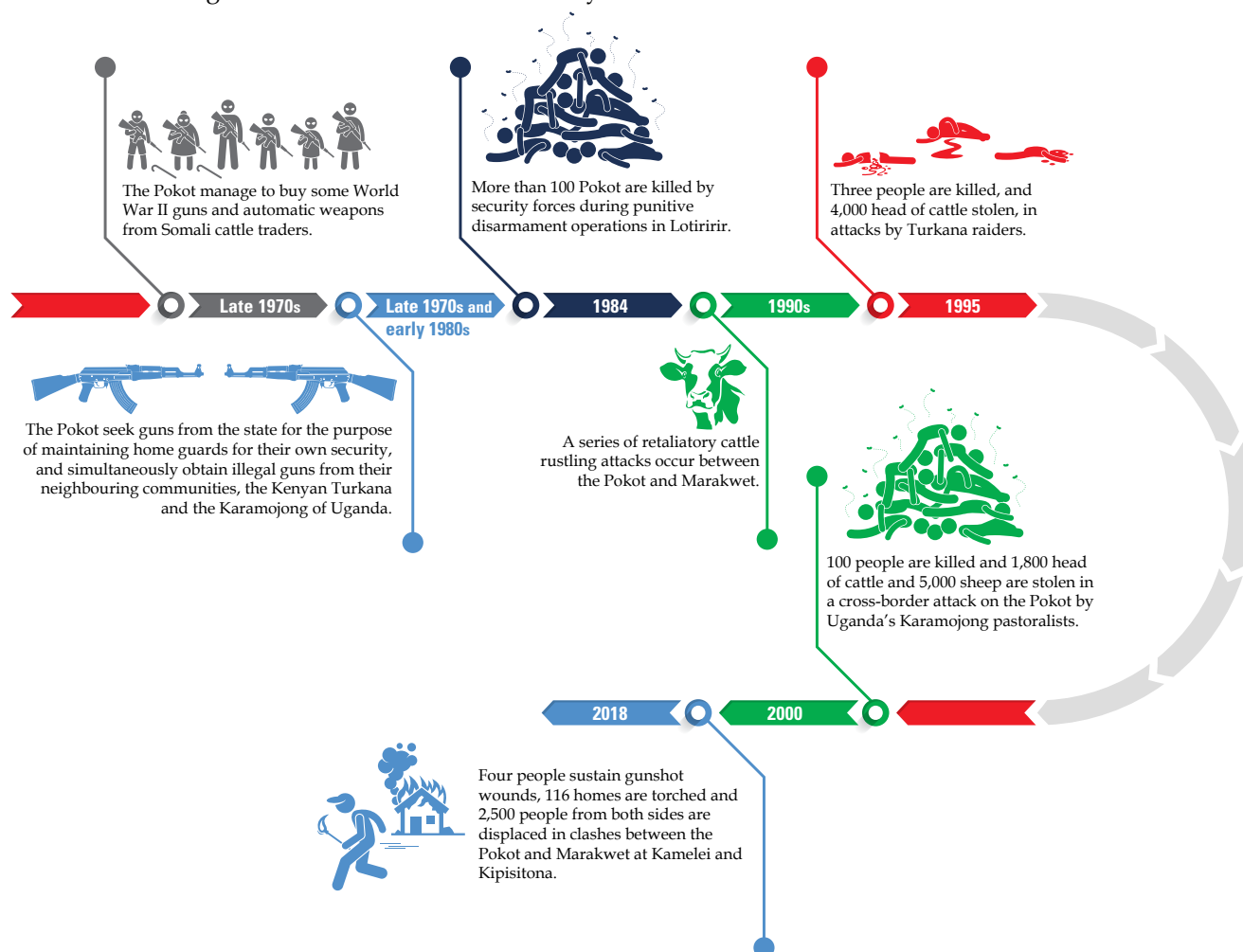


Figure 5: Conflict Timeline of West Pokot

Source: Authors' Compilation

### 1.3 Contextual Description of the North Rift Region

Although the five counties of the North Rift each have a unique profile, they share certain regional characteristics and trends that feed into the conflict dynamic. This research is guided by systems theory, which asserts that, in order to achieve sustainable conflict transformation, conflict analysis ought to reach beyond individual contexts and take into

consideration all the various parts of a system. Simply stated, systems theory considers conflict to be the outcome of many problematic elements in a society, which are inextricably linked. In line with this approach, a sound analysis of the North Rift region needs first to identify similarities the five counties share. This section highlights those similarities.



### 1.3.1 Physical Features

The North Rift is a highly diverse, geologically-active region with the following physical features:

- Volcanoes and hot springs, and permanent and seasonal rivers (including the Turkwell, Suam, Kerio, Suguta, and Nginyang').
- Lakes (including Turkana, Baringo, Bogoria, Logipi, and Kamnarok) as well as plains, swamps and islands.
- High altitude areas. These include the Tugen Hills, Kirisia Hills, and Paka; mountains include Mount Nyiro, Emuruangogolak, Silali, Korosi, Nyiro, Kulal, Mutelo, Ndoto Mountains, and the Matthews Range, a 150 km long mountainous stretch in Laikipia and Samburu County.
- Escarpments, such as the Elgeyo Escarpment.
- Valleys, such as the Kerio Valley and Suguta Valley. The Kerio Valley and Kerio River are significant geographical features in the region, bordered on the western side by the Elgeyo Escarpment, to the east by Tugen Hills, and further north by Tiaty Hills.

### 1.3.2 Climate and Vegetation

The region's climate is to a great extent influenced by altitude. The lowlands and plains have an arid to semi-arid climate with high temperatures and relatively low rainfall. This causes plenty of evapotranspiration, resulting in the continual deposition of salt and capped

soils. The highlands have a sub-tropical climate, with low temperatures, low evaporation rates and high rainfall. The lowland vegetation cover is largely indigenous acacia woodland that acts as the major water catchment for the entire region.

### 1.3.3 Economic Activities

The main source of livelihood for the Pokot, Samburu and Turkana communities is animal husbandry. These three communities derive 90% of their livelihood from livestock products such as milk, blood, hides and skins, as well as sales of livestock.

On the other hand, the Marakwet community of Elgeyo Marakwet County largely depends on crop farming for its livelihood. Farming in the region is rainfed, mainly involving the production of sorghum, finger millet and pulses. Other crops, including maize, potatoes, cassava, bananas, pigeon peas, groundnuts, and sweet potatoes, are cultivated on a smaller scale. The Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA), a government regional development body, introduced the production of fruits such as mangoes and pawpaw, which have proved exceptionally marketable. However, the potential for crop farming has not been fully exploited, particularly in West Pokot County, due to overreliance on rainfall. Some small-scale irrigation occurs along the Kerio River and other major rivers, used for cropping by the Marakwet and small sections of the Turkana, Pokot, and Samburu communities. Honey production and marketing are widespread in the North Rift and have the potential to grow. On average, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, Samburu and Baringo Counties currently produce 70,000 kgs of honey annually.

Mining operations are also practised in the region. Commercially viable oil reserves were discovered in Turkana County in 2012, and the first consignment of crude oil was exported by the national government in August 2019.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, an aquifer with 250 billion cubic meters of water, believed to be the largest in the world, was discovered in Turkana County. Hydrologists project that it could meet Kenya's water needs for 70 years. However, the water requires desalination to make it suitable for human and animal consumption. West Pokot County is known for its rich mineral deposits. These include alluvial gold and silver, found in the Turkwell and Muruny Rivers, and copper and asbestos at Kaptumet. The Sebit, Ortum, Muino, and Alale areas contain massive limestone deposits.

Other economic activities in the North Rift region include the making and selling of ornaments and basketry, predominantly by the Samburu, Pokot and Turkana communities. The sale of medicinal herbs to the Somali, for onward export to Saudi Arabia, is a growing cash crop industry in the region.

<sup>9</sup> Mining is not a devolved function in Kenya. All mineral extraction falls under the mandate of Kenya's Ministry of Petroleum and Mining.

### 1.3.4 Social Services

There has been a trend towards an increasingly sedentary lifestyle among the largely nomadic pastoralist communities that live in the North Rift. This trend has had both positive and negative effects on sustainable livelihoods. While it has increased access to services such as education, health and water supply, it has also put pressure on the rangelands around market centres and permanent water points.

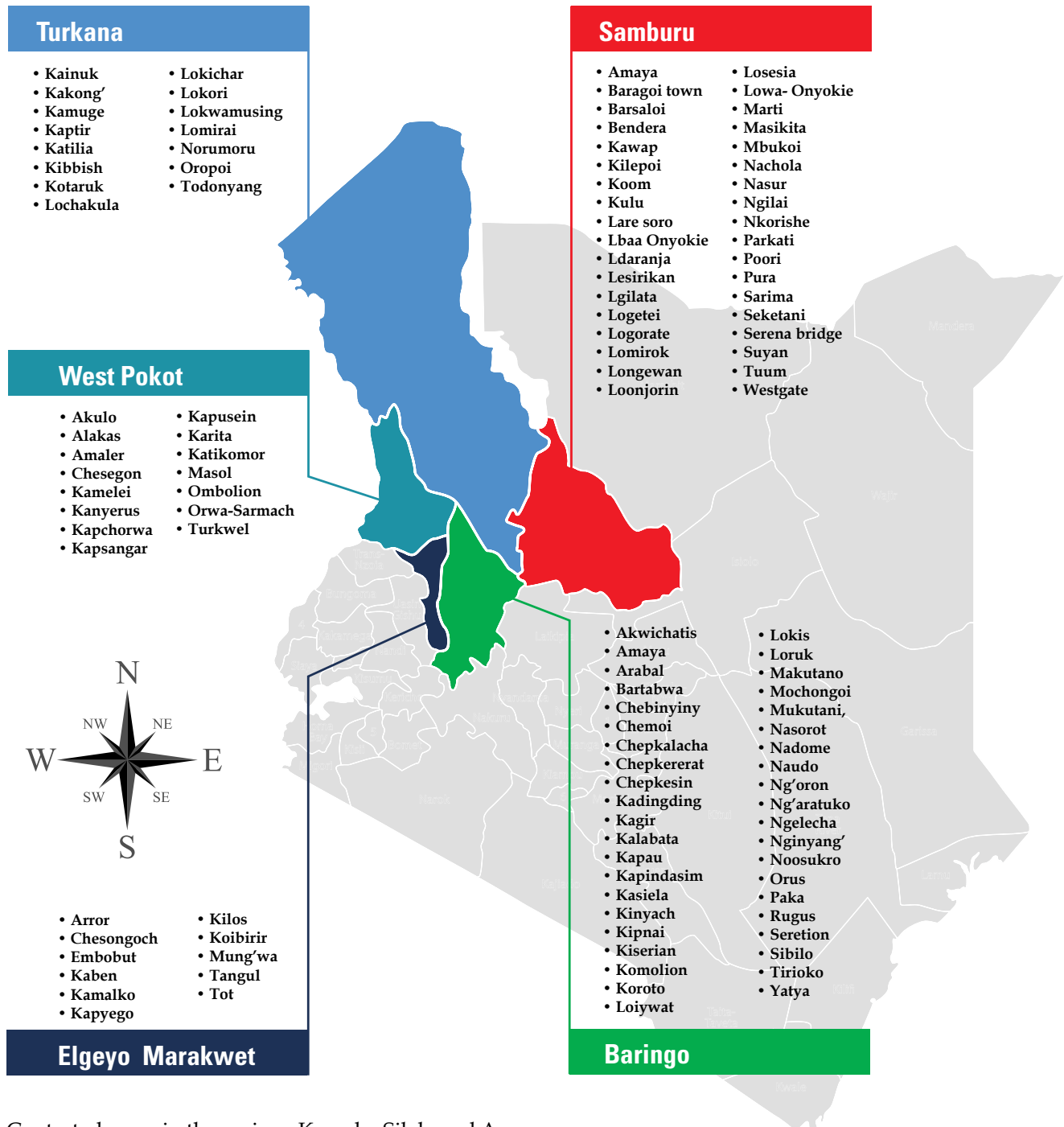
### 1.3.5 Key Conflict Corridors

Traditionally, all the pastoralist Nilotic communities in the North Rift believed that their deity had bequeathed to them exclusive ownership of all livestock. They did not see cattle rustling as a crime but rather an ordained duty to secure their livelihoods. As a result, for centuries, small-scale conflicts were prevalent in the region to acquire cattle and replace stock that had been lost during drought or to disease. An intentional effort was made to avoid loss of human life. Cattle rustling was carried out communally, using

School enrolments are rising, especially among the Marakwet, but less among the Samburu, Pokot, and Turkana. The number of health facilities has increased in all five counties due to the devolution of healthcare, but most remain underused due to their cost-sharing requirement, rampant insecurity, and cultural aversion among some communities.

traditional weapons such as spears, bows and arrows. The arrival of guns and other small arms aggravated this customary conflict between communities (Mkutu, 2005). Today, conflict has expanded beyond cattle rustling to include competition for resources, contestation over county boundaries, and battles for political supremacy, among other causes. Table 6 lists local areas in the five counties that have experienced violent conflicts or are currently experiencing high tensions between community members.





Contested areas in the region: Kapedo, Silale and Amaya.

Figure 6: The major conflict corridors identified in the five counties

Source: Authors' compilation.



## 1.4 Research Problem and Rationale

Several previous studies have concluded that the persistent cattle rustling, ethnic rivalries and conflict in the North Rift are fuelled by a mix of endogenous and exogenous factors. These include social, political, economic, security, and environmental factors. However, these causal factors keep mutating due to the dynamic nature of conflict. For instance, a new trend is the emergence of commercial cartels that organise large scale cattle rustling in the North Rift to supply commercial beef to their markets in distant urban centres across Kenya. The exploitation of the region's economic resources, such as the newly discovered oil in Turkana County—as well as minerals and other natural resources in other counties—has escalated conflicts.

Peace has remained elusive despite state efforts to stem the tide of conflict in the North Rift region. A key reason has been that local communities were not involved in identifying conflict triggers and potential solutions. It is against this background that NCIC and Interpeace undertook this study, which was designed to obtain a richer understanding of conflict causes by listening to the affected communities. The opinions of these communities, which suffer the conflicts and therefore understand them the most, are an essential element of any effort to formulate workable strategies for conflict transformation. The goal is to empower the communities to resolve their conflicts peacefully without recourse to violence, thereby nurturing an environment that is conducive to sustainable peace and development.

## 1.5 Objectives

The overall goal of this study is to create conditions in which there can be consensus about challenges to peace and factors of resilience in the North Rift region. Specifically, NCIC and Interpeace set out to:

1. Identify the impediments to peace in Turkana, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, and Samburu Counties.
2. Ascertain resilience factors among the communities in the region which could be building blocks for peace in the region.

## 1.6 Methodology

The study adopted a participatory action research (PAR) approach. Under this approach, researchers and participants work together to understand a problematic situation and change it for the better. PAR focuses on social change, often targeting the needs of

a group. The goal of PAR is to inspire communities to take a leading role in fostering mutually beneficial change. This section sets out the methodology the project used to gather, analyse, and present data for this study.

### 1.6.1 Sampling and Data Collection

The study used a descriptive research design, intended to provide an accurate portrayal of the conflict and resilience situation in the North Rift. While relying heavily on a qualitative approach, it drew on both primary and secondary data sources. Primary field data were collected through in-depth interviews, oral history, and focus groups with a range of actors. The literature reviewed included published books, government documents, reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), journals, unpublished conference papers, and electronic sources.

The study was conducted in the five North Rift counties of Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, Turkana, and Samburu, applying a multistage sampling procedure. The team selected specific sample locations using purposive sampling, taking account of the history of

conflict hotspots, the presence of multi-ethnic villages, administrative headquarters, and accessible and spatially distributed geographical areas across the region of study. It then applied probability sampling to ensure the sample was adequately representative, making it possible to generalise findings to the entire population. Random sampling helped to select targeted community members from identified conflict zones, including key cross-cultural leaders, people from different generations, political leaders, local peace actors, local officials, and representatives from networks and umbrella organisations.

Semi-structured key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were the main data collection tools. Both were organised around two fundamental questions:

- a. **What are the impediments to peace in the North Rift region?** This question sought to unravel the main challenges to peace in the region, from the perspective of local people and other stakeholders.
- b. **What is preventing things from getting worse?** This question was designed to identify resilience factors that might provide common ground, helping to build a foundations for conflict resolution mechanisms based on what local communities and other stakeholders believe are

the main challenges and best solutions.

Sixty FGDs were conducted in selected conflict hot spots, each with about 20 participants. A total of 1,169 people participated in FGDs. Following active sampling, 63 key informants were interviewed. Detailed note taking, audio and voice recording, and still photography were employed to capture respondents' views during in-depth interviews and FGDs.

## 1.6.2 Data Analysis and Validation

The data gathered were analysed using both descriptive and narrative techniques. The team adopted a fragility and resilience lens to better understand the conflict dynamic, and to enable participants to identify the most significant entry points for strengthening resilience factors. Acknowledging the highly contextual nature of resilience for peace permitted the team to position and articulate the places, forms, and manifestations of resilience in a framework that linked the five peace dimensions (economic, environmental, political, societal, security). Assessing fragility requires identifying risks, vulnerabilities, and their underlying causes.<sup>10</sup> Resilience for peace refers to the diverse endogenous attributes, capacities, resources and responses that potentially enable individuals, communities, institutions and societies

to deal peacefully with the impact of past conflict and violence, and prevent new and emerging patterns of conflict and violence.

The study began with a literature review to gather background information, followed by consultation in the field with community members and key actors. The aims here were to understand the forces driving conflict and fragility<sup>11</sup> in each county context, and identify actors, structures, actions, relationships, and processes that could prevent fragility from increasing and potentially create building blocks for shared peace. The team applied a fragility and resilience framework to analyse questions. This report is the output of the discussions that took place.



10 See European Commission (EC), *Resilience building and Humanitarian-Development Nexus*, at: [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/fragility-and-crisis-management/resilience-building-humanitarian-development-nexus\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/policies/fragility-and-crisis-management/resilience-building-humanitarian-development-nexus_en)

11 The team adopted the OECD's State Fragility Framework, modified to include a dimension on dealing with the past and trauma, which Interpeace has found is important for assessing fragility and resilience.

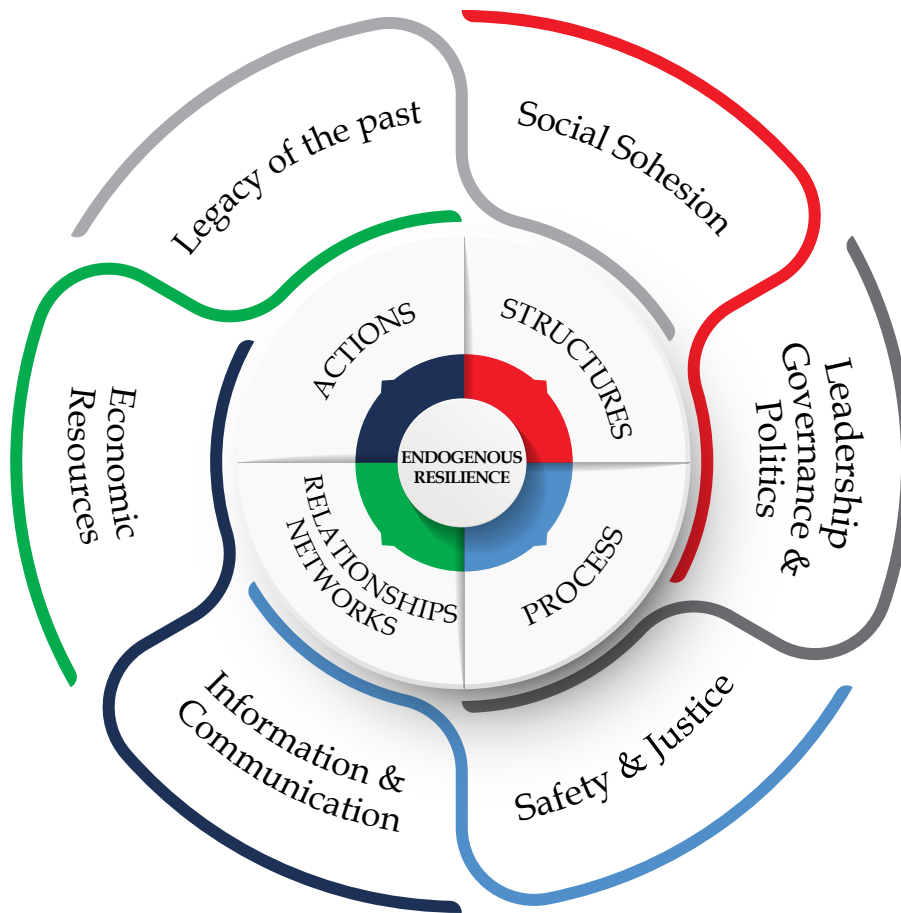
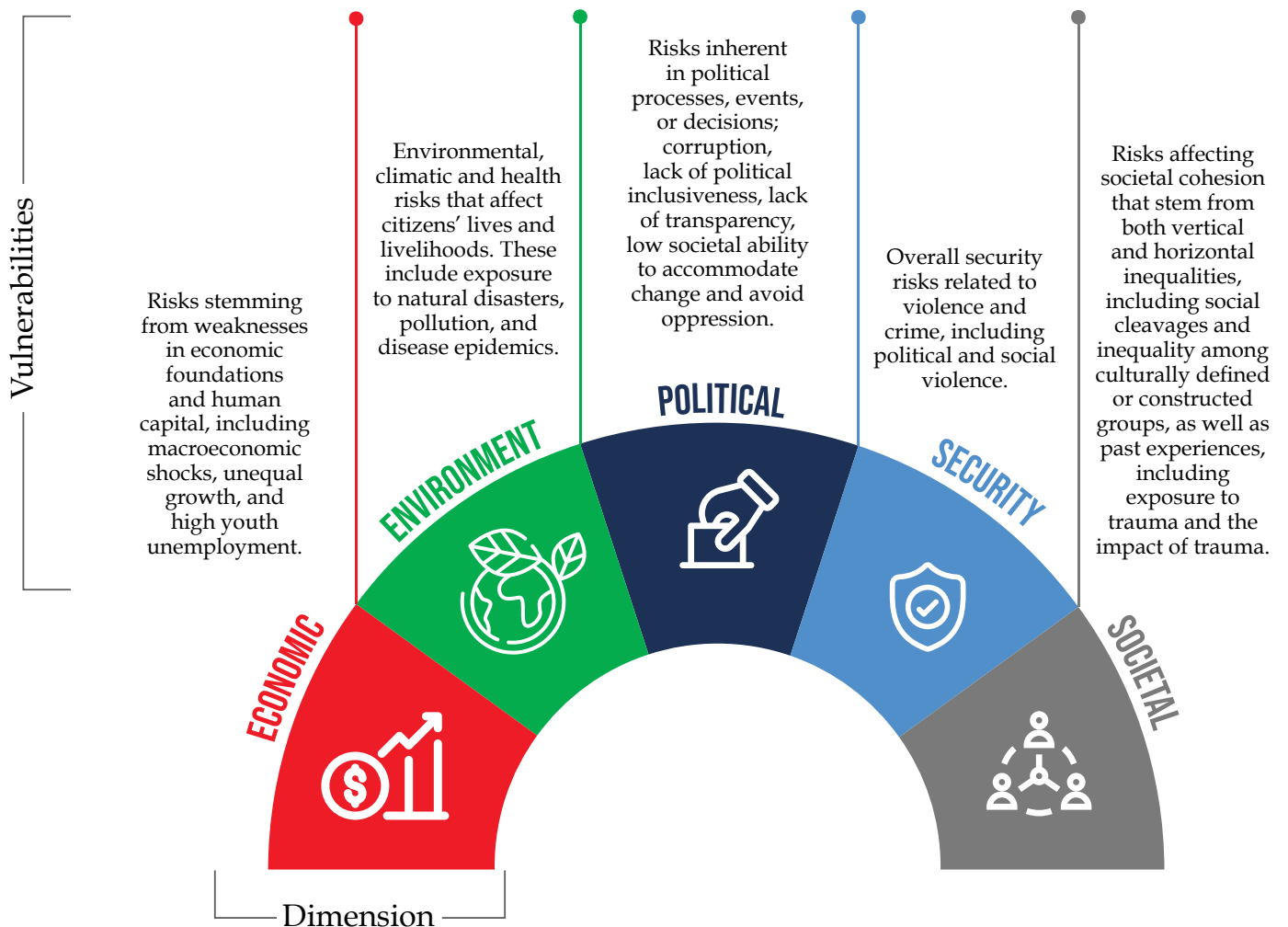


Figure 7: Framework for Analysis of Challenges and Resilience





The preliminary findings were discussed with community members, stakeholders, political leaders, and NGOs, as well as with NCIC and Interpeace. When sharing the preliminary findings of the study, community members and other stakeholders, such as civil society groups and state officials in the region, identified the challenges and ranked them by priority.

At the end of the study, stakeholders gathered for a

validation forum in December 2019 in Kapenguria, capital of West Pokot County. The three-day forum brought together 150 community representatives from the five Counties of Baringo, Elgeyo-Marakwet, West Pokot, Samburu, and Turkana to discuss and validate the findings of the research phase, and collectively prioritise interventions in support of peace that they would like to see taken.

### 1.6.3 Limitations of the Study

Although the study was carefully designed to ensure that its results accurately represent the views and opinions of the adult population of the North Rift region during the period of data collection, some unavoidable limitations emerged. They include: disruption due to waves of insecurity; the restricted availability of some respondents, especially political leaders; and the suspicion of some community members. For example,

it was difficult to access certain areas, including Napeitom in Turkana County and Ngilai in Samburu County, owing to insecurity. However, the sampling approach was designed to minimise potential selection biases. As far as possible, the team found replacement respondents and communities with profiles similar to those who could not be reached.

## 1.7 Summary of Research Findings

During the community consultative research phase, the research team listened to the views of the people and collated the main impediments to peace in the North Rift region in four issue clusters:

- a) Social economic systems.
- b) Security and the rule of law.
- c) Governance and politics.
- d) Environmental dynamics.

These issues, which were validated at the stakeholder forum held in December 2019 in Kapenguria, are discussed in greater detail in the chapters that follow.

In summary, eight priority issues for action were identified. They will form the basis for the programme's

focus in the next phase, when it seeks solutions for peace:

- 1. Illiteracy.
- 2. Cultural practices that induce violent conflict.
- 3. Proliferation of small arms and light weapons.
- 4. Weak policing and security provision.
- 5. Impunity and a politics of self-centeredness.
- 6. Contested borders and boundary disputes.
- 7. Persistent droughts and famine.
- 8. Conflicts between communities and conservation authorities.









# 02

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**COMMUNITY  
SOCIO-CULTURAL  
AND  
ECONOMIC  
SYSTEMS**

## 2.0 Introduction

The North Rift is inhabited by ethnically diverse communities, each deeply rooted in its cultural beliefs, values, and practices. Most reside on communally-owned land, governed by traditional elders. The region is mainly dominated by the Turkana, Pokot, Marakwet, Samburu, and Tugen ethnic communities. The region's

diversity is enhanced by minority communities, such as the Ilchamus, Endorois and Sengwer, and migrant communities from other parts of Kenya. This section presents socio-economic factors that the study found significantly contribute to the rampant conflict that occurs in the region.

## 2.1 Illiteracy

The study revealed that illiteracy has a cyclical relationship with conflict. This affirms Zakharia and Bartlett's (2014) assertion that the relationship is mutual and complex. It is complex in the sense that illiteracy provides fertile ground for conflict, and conflict in turn compounds illiteracy rates by undermining the conditions requisite for education. Respondents said that illiteracy contributes to conflict because an illiterate person is bound to perceive tradition from an ultra-conservative perspective, has limited openness to new information, and will tend to be less critical of stereotypes of 'others'. As a result, illiterate persons are easily persuaded to engage in acts of violence against other communities, even when merely instructed to so by their community or political leadership, and will not necessarily rationalise their actions.

Secondly, Zakharia & Bartlett (2014) posit that providing literacy programmes to one ethnic group but not another may result in resentment and gradually even violence. Participants in the research noted that some parts of the region had fewer government schools, which were located far apart. Unequal access feeds into a group's feelings of exclusion, deepening its hatred of other ethnic groups that are better provided.

Thirdly, Kenya's education system does not give consideration to the nomadic lifestyle, which is typical of the North Rift. Communities tend to pull their children out of school whenever they move in search for water and pasture, hoping to find other schools where they will settle. Even if other schools are located in their new settlement area—which is rare—the time spent walking to new destinations as well as the differences in syllabus coverage between schools affect the children. Many nomadic schoolchildren end up dropping out of school altogether, which helps to increase illiteracy levels in the region.

Illiteracy also restricts the livelihoods that people in the North Rift can engage in. As a result, cattle rearing continues to be the dominant source of livelihood, which increases the likelihood of cattle rustling. One

government chief said:

*"In my entire location, I am the only person who earns a government salary."*<sup>12</sup>

Munene and Ruto (2015) support the assertion that the region is characterised by high illiteracy levels owing to high dropout rates, interrupted learning, and because educational policy and practice are not aligned with the pastoral way of life. Many schools remain closed because most students are required by their families to herd livestock. Munene and Ruto further note that the more animals a family possesses, the less likely it is that children will attend school, and vice-versa. This resonates with the view of two elders, respectively from West Pokot and Baringo counties:

*"Children who are unable to herd and attend to domestic chores are the ones sent to school because they are considered slow learners and less supportive at home. But the intelligent and resourceful ones remain at home to assist their parents to herd cattle and perform domestic chores."*<sup>13</sup>

*"In Pokot, the rich livestock keepers with large herds of cattle, sheep, goats and camels do not take their children to school because they regard school as a place for the children of poor people who do not own livestock."*<sup>14</sup>

There is no gainsaying that conflict itself also increases illiteracy. It does so directly when schools are targeted and physical structures and material resources destroyed. In addition, children are frequently pulled out of school to join raiding parties. Violence also forces many people to leave their homes and move to areas with which they are often unfamiliar, where their children may not be able to easily attend school. In February 2018, fifty schools closed in Kerio Valley following vicious raids. A series of cattle raids starting in 2012 caused schools in Baringo North and Baringo South to be closed between 2013 and 2015.

12 Government Chief, key informant interview, Kolowa, Baringo County, 20 August 2019.

13 Tugen elder, focus group discussion, Loruk, Baringo County, 11 October 2019.

14 Pokot elder, focus group discussion, Nginyang, Baringo County, 11 October 2019.

## 2.2 Cultural Practices that induce violent conflict

### 2.2.1 High Bride Price

Most African cultures require the transfer of material bride price from the groom to the bride's family as a prerequisite for marriage. This study found that high bride prices in the North Rift fuel cattle raids. Prospective husbands are usually young men without consistent incomes. To attract girls and subsequently find the costs of marriage, they are compelled to organise raids with their agemates, typically with the approval of their elders. Research respondents mentioned that such raids become more frequent during the period of female circumcision because the

girls are ready for marriage on completion of their rites of passage.

*"If a youth wants to marry there is nothing to present to the in-laws. Because we, the Pokot and the Turkana, tend to marry many wives, sometimes as many as five or even up to 15. There are no cows to easily offer as bride price for all these women. Therefore, young men facing this challenge decide to go and steal cattle, and whenever they go, they go forcefully."*<sup>15</sup>

### 2.2.2 The Diminishing Role of Elders

During the study, the influence of elders emerged as a key factor in propelling conflict, for instance through cattle raids. Traditional authorities in many parts of the North Rift have great influence over their communities and are believed to possess supernatural powers. They function as courts that have broad and flexible powers to interpret evidence, impose judgements and manage processes of reconciliation. It was noted that the elders identify potential raid zones by examining goat

intestines and bless raiders in the hope of receiving a part of the spoils if the raid is successful. A shift in generational attitudes was also noted. Increasingly, young men downplay the advice and instructions of their elders. They consider themselves self-driven and are beginning to prove that they can organise their own groupings and meetings to plan and execute attacks against neighbours and sometimes members of their own communities.

### 2.2.3 Glorification of Warrior Masculinities

The study notes that conflicts in the North Rift region are exacerbated by the glorification of crime, through traditional dances that celebrate raiding achievements. Morans (young warriors) who participate in successful raids are feted and praised as heroes, which motivates them to participate in further cattle thefts and killings. Moreover, girls celebrate the morans with songs and dance. Focus groups in Orwa, West Pokot County,

agreed that young girls cheer and praise successful morans who return home with livestock raided from other communities, while young men who fail are taunted or at best ignored. This has a deep impact on the expectations of what it means to be a man. Celebration of the warrior identity in young men is a key conflict driver.

### 2.2.4 Regional Traditions of Cattle Rustling

Cattle raiding is a centuries' old tradition in the North Rift. It was traditionally perceived as a divine duty imposed by the deity, who had bestowed on the tribe ownership of all livestock in the world. Over time, this ancient practice has acquired criminal and political dimensions, creating a new system of predatory exploitation of pastoral economic resources in the region. Rustling is currently taking the form of commercially-organised banditry and political incitement. Economically powerful individuals fund large-scale livestock thefts for commercial purposes, while politicians incite violent clashes and cattle

rustling to destabilise and harm the livelihoods of supporters of their opponents (Pkalya, Mohamud, & Masinde, 2003).

In addition, high unemployment and inadequate economic opportunities in the region have driven many young men to take up illegal arms and resort to cattle rustling as a source of livelihood. Some communities rent out guns for cattle rustling, thereby commercialising the practice. The proceeds are also used to purchase arms and ammunition. The study demonstrated that elders and traditional values play a key role in promoting such practices. A Turkana

<sup>15</sup> Resident, focus group discussion, Orwa, West Pokot County, 19 August 2019.



resident expressed the attitude of Emurons (Turkana elders) quite succinctly:

*“Emurons bless warriors and perform rituals for them before they leave to carry out raids. When the booty is delivered, the emurons receive a share. The community has so much more trust in these leaders than in the government. However, politics has begun to dilute these systems. The political elite is eroding*

*this traditional authority of conflict management. The emurons are very influential personalities. They can influence the appointment of a government chief (administrator), determine the movement of grazing patterns and areas to attack in respective seasons. They have influence on the day-to-day community lifestyle and the community’s external relations. These systems are real but are ignored in most peacebuilding approaches.”<sup>16</sup>*

## 2.3. Ethnicism

Ethnicism, or ethnic balkanisation, poses grave challenges in the North Rift. The research demonstrated that communities possess strong affiliations to their respective ethnicities, making them vulnerable to conflicts. Focus group participants acknowledged that giving counties tribal names has exacerbated ethnic hatred. Children are raised with deep-rooted animosity to ‘other’ ethnic groups and in the belief that their own communities have more entitlements.

*“Before some of us were born, there was this ancient grudge. We found that the Turkana and the Pokot attacked and killed each other. So, this is something instilled in people. When a child is born, the parents use phrases like, ‘Be quiet, there is a Turkana here’ or ‘Be quiet, there is a Pokot here’ to scare the children. This ancient grudge began due to clashes at*

*waterpoints, each community wanting their animals to take water before the other, then it got to stick fights but later escalated to killings. So, I blame the ancient grudge where once a child is born, they are told any Turkana is an enemy of the Pokot, or any Pokot is an enemy of the Turkana.”<sup>17</sup>*

In addition, ethnicism reinforces a mindset that the majority communities in West Pokot, Turkana, Samburu, and Elgeyo Marakwet Counties (Pokot, Turkana, Samburu, and Marakwet respectively) are superior and deserve more resources. Minority ethnic communities residing in those counties are treated as inferior and less deserving of available resources. This highlights the NCIC’s call for the government to rethink the ethnic naming of Kenyan counties to boost the sense of inclusion of all resident communities.

## 2.4. A Cycle of Revenge Attacks

One of the most striking features of the conflicts in the North Rift is the pattern of retaliatory attacks among the various pastoralist communities living within and across the five counties. According to study participants from the restive Suguta Triangle, these revenge attacks sustain the bad blood, pain, and grudges felt by ethnic communities living in the region. The study found that revenge attacks entrench a communal bitterness that is passed down from generation to generation. Moreover, they are a major factor driving arms races between communities in the North Rift.

The cycle of revenge can be illustrated by the deadly clashes in 2000–2001 between the Marakwet and Pokot communities in the Kerio Valley. Following a severe drought in 2000, the Pokot sent some of their malnourished cattle to graze on the Marakwet side

of the Kerio Valley. Marakwet warriors responded by confiscating and slaughtering the cattle, asserting that they were not willing to take care of cattle that the Pokot would eventually repossess. In revenge, the Pokot killed a Marakwet policeman a year later, in 2001. In retaliation, the Marakwet stole more than 500 cattle from the Pokot in Cheptulel and Kibaimwa. The same month, Pokot warriors raided the Marakwet, killing 56 people and making off with thousands of cattle in what came to be known as the Murkutwo massacre (KHRC, 2001). In another example, a November 1995 raid by Pokot warriors on the Turkana resulted in the death of one herdsman and the loss of 2,000 goats. The following month, the Turkana mounted a retaliatory attack, killing three Pokot and making off with 4,000 head of cattle (Huho, 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Turkana man, focus group discussion, Kaakong, Turkana County, 18 August 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Pokot Elder, focus group discussion, Nginyang, Baringo County, 11 October 2019.



## 2.5. Media Sensationalism

Several participants said that sensational reporting by local, national, and international media fuelled the retaliatory violence that commonly occurs in the North Rift region. They referred to exaggerated reports of conflict in the region, and biased reports that portrayed the region as a crucible of endless violence and death. Participants cited a BBC documentary titled 'Valley of death' as well as national news features, such as Citizen TV's 'Bandit Economy' and 'Living by the Gun' and NTV Kenya's 'Rustlers Paradise'. They felt such programmes had branded the North Rift as a

perpetually bandit-prone and insecure region.

Participants also explained that, paradoxically, sensational media reports embolden ethnic warriors to engage in more violent activity because they believe such reports recognise their prowess on the battlefield. In a similar way, it was reported, social media stimulate conflict through the sharing of bellicose messages and photos. To protect their security, raiders also often make use of encrypted social media to plan and execute their raids.

## 2.6. Scramble for Mineral Territories

The North Rift region is endowed with natural resources, including oil, gas and other precious stones in Turkana, Baringo, and Samburu Counties. In the Suguta Valley, soda and salt deposits exist near Lake Logipi, while talc, chromite, niobium and tantalum are found around Baragoi. Graphite is found in Horr, and sillimanite near Kiengok Hill. There are also scattered deposits of various precious stones, including aquamarine, ruby-blue sapphire, garnet and amethyst, particularly around Baragoi, Nyiro and Barsaloi. The quantities of most of these minerals have not been ascertained to determine their economic potential. Quarry stone is found at Soita Ikokukyu. Clay round Maralal, Kisima and the Ndoto Mountains can be used to make *jikos* (charcoal stoves), tiles, and bricks. There are also large deposits of cement-bearing rocks, semi-precious stones, and oil along the Kerio Valley. Turkana County has rich deposits of construction sand and quarry materials, as well as gold at Nakwamoru and Makutano.

Discovery of these resources has led to competition as ethnic groups wrestle for control over territories that host them, both within and across counties. For example, the discovery of oil and other natural deposits in Turkana County intensified tensions between the Pokot and Turkana of Baringo County over the prospective construction of a geothermal power plant. In Samburu County, the Turkana community claims ownership of Parikati in Samburu North, which has geothermal potential.

One FGD participant remarked:

*"You know, there are resources. Like now in Turkana there is oil and gas which is being exported. There is geothermal power potential in Turkana East Subcounty. There is more geothermal potential in Silale, which has become a contentious issue between Baringo and Turkana Counties, which is why you have been hearing the territorial issue of Kapedo, which has remained unresolved to date."*<sup>18</sup>

## 2.7. Drug and Substance Abuse

During the study, it emerged that certain conflicts, particularly in the Kerio Valley belt, have been driven by abuse of drugs and substances such as marijuana and alcohol. Violence and even killings have been linked to claims of misbehaviour associated with substance abuse, including adultery between Marakwet men and Pokot women seeking to support their families.

Study participants mentioned that substance abuse blurs clarity of thought and decision-making, leading those involved to engage in violent activities.

*"Many youths have dropped out of school and are engaged in drug abuse. Some are smoking bhang, others are drinking alcohol and have become a threat to peace."*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ward administrator, key informant interview, Lokori, Turkana County, 13 October 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Marakwet woman, focus group discussion, Endo, Elgeyo Marakwet County, 15 September 2019.

## 2.8. Agropastoralism

While most communities in the North Rift region practise nomadic livestock keeping, those living in Kerio Valley, especially the Marakwet, live a more sedentary rural life characterised by small scale farming. Farming expanded in the 1990s when most communities, such as the Marakwet, abandoned livestock keeping due to the effects of vicious cattle raids. Their Pokot neighbours, on the other hand,

continued to rear livestock as their main livelihood, largely because crops cannot be cultivated in the harsh environmental conditions of West Pokot County. The study found that conflicts between farmers and herders frequently occur when the latter invade farmlands in search for water and pasture for their livestock during dry seasons.













# 03

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**SECURITY AND  
RULE OF LAW**



### 3.0 Introduction

The present time represents a watershed moment for the five North Rift counties. These previously neglected counties have recently acquired strategic and political relevance following the discovery of valuable natural resources, including oil, natural gas, a subterranean aquifer, and mineral riches. Harnessing these resources is proving to be a difficult task for the national government. One reason is that North Rift Valley communities are both heavily armed and for a long time have considered that their economic security is under threaten from 'others' (Bukari, Okumu, Onyiego and Sow, 2017). They are also generally suspicious of the government's recent interest in the region because historically it provided little security,

often deploying security agencies only to suppress violent conflicts by force (Mkutu, 2018). The depth of local suspicion is evident from the history of organised ambushes and massacres of police officers sent to quell violent conflict in the region.

The research findings of this study confirm that violent conflict and insecurity remain rampant in the region despite the many constitutional reforms that have been introduced to address and prevent conflict before it degenerates into violence. The rule of law is similarly ineffective in the region. This section discusses conflict issues that relate to security and the rule of law which research participants identified.

### 3.1 Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons

The study revealed that civilians in the North Rift hold plenty of illegal arms. Communities in this region generally own firearms to protect their families and guard their livestock from external aggressors. Decades of fluctuating civil war and armed conflict in the neighbouring countries of South Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda have facilitated the inflow of small arms and light weapons into the region. Sometimes communities loot these weapons from the security agencies. In two massacres of police officers, in Baragoi and Kapedo, for example, officers were ambushed, killed in scores, and their arms confiscated by the civilian attackers. The widespread civilian possession of arms is not only a security threat to other communities that are less well armed, but also impedes the effectiveness of the security agencies. For instance, in 1996 armed bandits shot down a military helicopter, killing the then provincial commissioner of the now defunct Rift Valley province and all 12 occupants of the helicopter. The 40-year-old provincial commissioner had fronted

plans to make pastoralist communities embrace crop farming; the intention was to curb cattle rustling and ethnic conflicts by reducing dependence on livestock (Oluoch, 2013).

It has long been agreed that livestock raids and ethnic rivalries in the region are a manifestation of pastoralist competition for water and pasture. Whereas elders were once the gatekeepers of communal institutions, however, today new actors are at the forefront of new forms of violent raid. Politicians and shrewd businessmen have emerged to exploit ethnic rivalries between groups and use them to mobilise raids. These political and business cartels facilitate raids by paying and arming warriors to carry out violent thefts of livestock for sale to urban areas (Bukari et. al, 2017). In some cases, influential politicians facilitate the secret supply of ammunition. Rogue National Police Reservists (NPR) from the region are also known to provide ammunition to their communities from their government-allocated supplies.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> NGO Worker, key informant interview, Sigor, West Pokot, 21 August 2019.

## 3.2 Weak Policing and Security Provision

As observed earlier, pastoral communities in the North Rift region possess arms to defend themselves and their livestock. The resulting insecurity, cattle rustling, and cases of outright banditry have turned some regional hotspots into virtual no-go zones. The Suguta Valley Triangle is one such area. Other highly insecure areas include Mukutani, Arabal, Baragoi, Amaya, Lomelo, Tot, Loima and Ombolion.<sup>21</sup> One elder from Elgeyo Marakwet County described the entrenched insecurity rather cynically:

*"There are no police here. There is nobody to provide security for us, only the chief and village elders who also lack police to accompany them. There is no police post which should be ensuring that peace prevails between we the Marakwet on the one side and the Pokot on the other side. So, we Marakwet and Pokot men deal with each other by the gun because there is no government presence. Whenever they take our property, we retaliate to recover it from them."*<sup>22</sup>

This said, various security agencies are present in hotly disputed areas such as Kapedo, including the General Service Unit (GSU), Anti-Stock Theft Unit (ASTU), Kenya Defence Forces (KDF), and Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU). Nevertheless, insecurity remains high. In addition, the presence of numerous security services is costly to local communities because they rely on police escorts to transport livestock, a service for which they need to pay. Participants explained during a focus group that not every member of the community is armed, leaving many vulnerable.<sup>23</sup>

The challenging geography of the North Rift and its poor infrastructure (lack of adequate roads and telecommunications networks) usually delay security responses when conflict occurs. Participants voiced concern over such delays, particularly when stolen livestock need to be retrieved. They said that responses were slow even when attacks took place close to security agency camps. For instance, the hotspot of Kapedo hosts a military camp as well as GSU and RDU units but this has not deterred attacks from happening in the area.

Participants also pointed out that security personnel generally abandon their pursuit of raiders and bandits

once they enter the Kamologon and Embobut forests on the border of Elgeyo Marakwet and West Pokot counties. Ironically, both forests are under the remit of the Kenya Forest Service (KFS), which would ideally coordinate efforts to flush raiders and bandits out. The Suguta Valley between Samburu, Turkana and Baringo Counties and the Paka Hills in Tiaty, Baringo County, are two other difficult areas to police. Highway banditry along major roads is also intensifying in the North Rift, especially along the Lodwar-Kitale road. The perpetrators of these crimes are hardly ever brought to book.

Some participants blamed delays in security response on the limited resources allocated to security agencies. The participants of one focus group recounted a recent incident where armed Pokot warriors shot Turkana women who were fetching firewood on the outskirts of Kapedo.

*"The government seems lethargic in protecting its citizens. In 2012, the government failed to respond after the killings of 42 security officers in Baragoi and the armed bandits went away with all the 42 guns of the slain soldiers."*<sup>24</sup>

*"In 1996, a government helicopter was shot down by bandits killing a Provincial Commissioner and his entourage, yet there was no response."*<sup>25</sup>

*"Since the disarmament of Kenya Police Reservists in Samburu County, local pastoralists do not fear the police because they consider them cowards."*<sup>26</sup>

Fear affects local leaders as well. Because they have experience of retaliatory killings, chiefs and other local leaders fear for their lives and are often hesitant to follow up on stolen livestock or expose known criminals. It was noted that people flee whenever there is a security operation, making adequate intelligence gathering difficult. An observation made during the field work is that the security agencies rarely leave their camps. When they do leave, they are usually on an operation, replenishing supplies or escorting civilian vehicles. In consequence, security agencies rarely interact with local communities and there are no safe spaces in which the two parties might build trust.

<sup>21</sup> NCIC conflict monitoring.

<sup>22</sup> Elder, focus group discussion, Mungwo, Elgeyo Marakwet County, 13 September 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Community member, focus group discussion, Kapedo, 5 August 2020.

<sup>24</sup> MP Samburu North, key informant interview, Baragoi, Samburu, 9 October 2019.

<sup>25</sup> MP Samburu North, key informant interview, Samburu County, 9 October 2019.

<sup>26</sup> MP Samburu North, key informant interview, Baragoi, Samburu County, 9 October 2019.

### 3.3 Banditry

The North Rift region harbours mafia-style bandits that have captured control of strategic areas in some counties. As a research participant from Pokot South observed:

*"Bandits have taken over Kamologon Forest and nobody can freely go in and out. They are a threat to security since they have carved out their own territory, where they govern themselves."*<sup>27</sup>

These bandits tightly control the areas they capture, establishing general rules by which all residents must live. Officials deployed to these areas are tactically destabilised or even made to leave by the bandits; they can only continue to work in their assigned areas with the bandits' approval and must operate to their rules. Administrative units that face this predicament include Loosuk location in Samburu County (running all the way from Amaya Triangle to

the Turkana County border) and Arabal sub-location (from Ng'elecha to Mukutani in Baringo County). Two government administrators deplored the situation:

*"I have several sub-locations in my location which are inhabited by bandits. I cannot access the areas except upon their invitation, and whenever I go there, I must abide by their rules and regulations. If I happen to pass a message from the government that displeases them, they order that I leave immediately."*<sup>28</sup>

*"I have 16 villages in my sub-location, but currently I am only in charge of one. The rest have been taken over by bandits who have formed their own territory and have made access impossible for security personnel. Nobody can go there unless with their permission. If you happen to go there without invitation or permission, you will be either killed or beaten thoroughly."*<sup>29</sup>



27 Elder, focus group discussion, Pokot South, West Pokot County, 12 September 2019.

28 Government Chief, Validation Workshop, Kapenguria, West Pokot County, 21 December 2019.

29 Government Sub-Chief, Validation Workshop, Kapenguria, West Pokot, 21 December 2019.







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GOVERNOR, TURKANA COUNTY

**Constitutional Implementation by County Governments**

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# 04

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**GOVERNANCE  
AND POLITICS**

## 4.0 Introduction

The research established that governance and politics play a central role in provoking and creating conflict in the North Rift. It confirmed the argument advanced by Scott-Villiers (2014) that the root of much violence in Kenya can be traced to partisan struggles to influence the balance of power and the distribution of economic resources. For his part, Rohwerder (2015) has proposed that the causes of Kenya's various conflicts are broadly related to its deep and persistent fault

lines with respect to socio-economic marginalisation and the manipulation of identities by elites to mobilise people politically. These multiple, overlapping conflicts “profoundly shape the nature of conflict and vulnerability of civilian populations to violence and require distinct responses” (Rohwerder, 2015). This section discusses the various ways in which governance and politics influence conflict in the North Rift region.

### 4.1 Politically-instigated Violence

Ethnic clashes instigated by politicians have featured in every electoral cycle since Kenya changed from a single party state to a multiparty democracy in 1991. In the North Rift, 1991 was the year in which the first acts of political violence were instigated by ruling party politicians against opposition opponents and their supporters. As Mutuma Ruteere observed in 2001, politicians who were known to have orchestrated the attacks were never brought to justice, senior civil servants who failed to stop the attacks did not face disciplinary action, and security officials who stood by during the attacks remained in service (Ruteere, 2001). Six election cycles have since gone by, yet politicians continue to incite varying levels of ethnic violence, and they and their enablers continue to do so with impunity.

FGD participants corroborated the observation that not much has changed since politically-incited violence

began in the 1990s. They confirmed that political leaders play a key role in inciting violent conflict by making inflammatory statements and manipulating communal and ethnic animosities in pursuit of their own political and economic interests. Participants added that impunity cascades down to the village level, where criminals are released from police custody by politicians seeking popularity and re-election. Politicians who buy guns and bullets to enable their communities to destabilise rival communities are also blamed for financing, supporting, and promoting conflict. Studies have further shown that some political elites arm their communities during the dry season to gain the upper hand in contests for limited resources. Livestock raids no longer occur in the traditional context of restocking, but rather reflect local ethnic politics and political competition between ethnic bigwigs (Bukari et al, 2017).

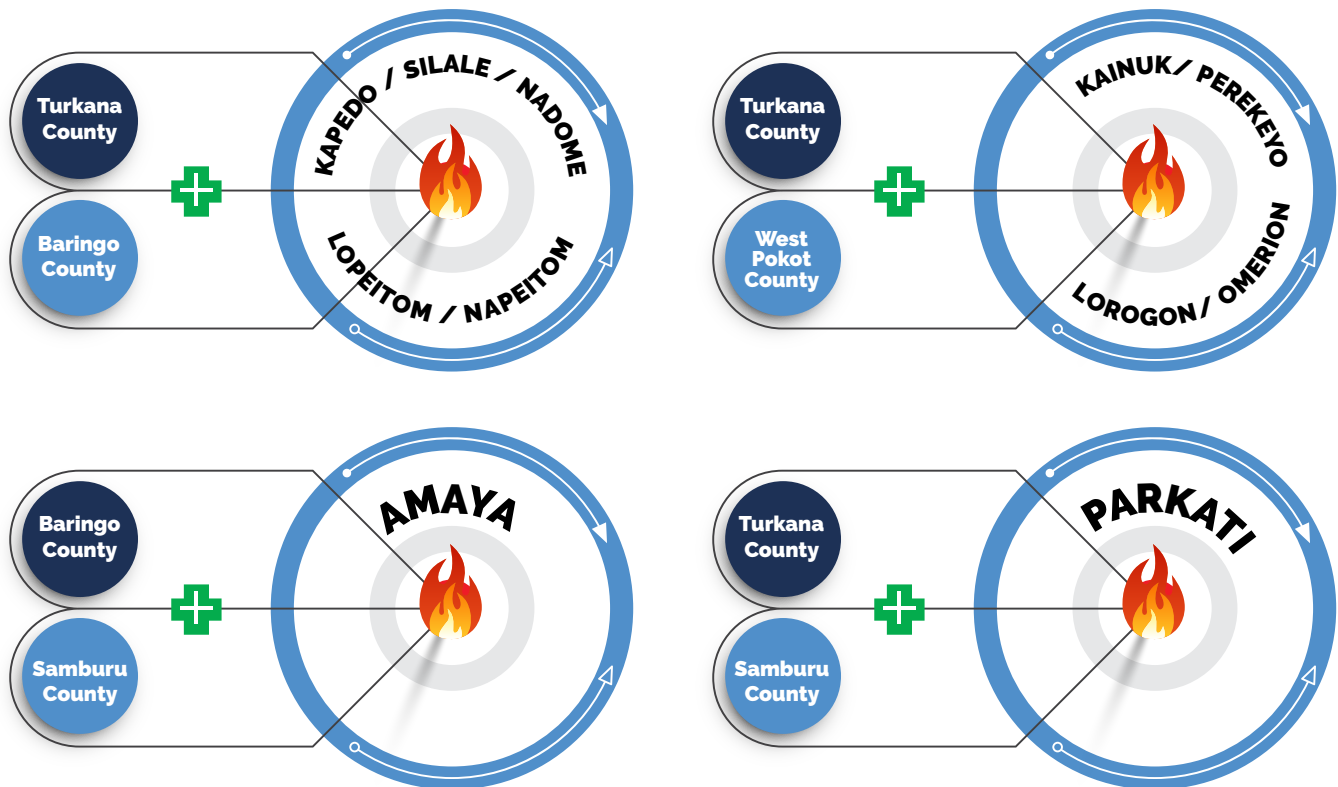
### 4.2 Land Disputes and Contested County Borders

Boundary conflicts are the most common type of land conflict in the North Rift region. They occur in urban, peri-urban and rural areas. They include private property disputes between individuals; disputes between entire ethnic communities and clans; conflicts between administrative units such as villages, locations, and counties; and claims made by citizens against the government over private or state-owned land.

Many community members in the North Rift consider that such land wrangles and the imprecision of certain county borders represent a critical threat to the devolution project. It is true that several county borders in the region have engendered multiple disputes, and in some cases, deadly communal clashes. To illustrate, Turkana County and Baringo County are in dispute

over border demarcation in Kapedo, Lopeitom/ Napeitom, Nadome and Silale areas. Kapedo is a division in Turkana County, whereas Kapedo East and Kapedo West sub-locations are administratively located in Baringo County. Turkana County and West Pokot County are similarly in dispute over Kainuk location (also known as Perekeyo) and Lorogon (also known as Ombolion). Turkana County and Samburu County are in dispute over Parkati sub-location.

Baringo County also has a boundary dispute with Samburu County over Amaya sublocation. The majority of Amaya's inhabitants are members of the Pokot community and it has two sub chiefs, one of whom reports to Samburu County while the other reports to Baringo County.



Source: Sketched from interviews with key informants and FGD participants.

**Figure 8: Identified Boundary Conflicts in the North Rift Region**

Participants confirmed that boundary conflicts among the five North Rift counties pit ethnic communities against each other, and sometimes even cause friction between administrative units within counties. Disputed boundaries within Baringo County include Mukutani/Makutano, where the Pokot oppose the Ilchamus, and Loruk, where the Pokot oppose the Tugen.

Within Turkana County, internal disputes have arisen between various clans of the Turkana community. Residents of Lokichar town are claiming pieces of Lomokomar land in hope of benefiting from the commercial oil find. The people of Lokapel area are struggling to fend off claims to land within their traditional boundaries. Elsewhere, the chiefs of Lokichada and Kapese disagree on the location of their boundary. In Elgeyo Marakwet County, inter-clan clashes between the Kapsiren and Kabishoi clans have occurred over a parcel of land in the Kerio Valley.

The study revealed that some separate administrative units, to which government administrative officers have been deployed, overlap. For example, two self-declared locations straddle the same geographical area in Baringo County: Mukutani, which is inhabited by the Ilchamus community, and Makutano, which is

inhabited by the Pokot. Similarly, Lochakulo location is claimed by the Turkana and Akulo by the Pokot: both locations lie along the Turkana-West Pokot border.

*"It's clearly known that the government employs and deploys chiefs, for example we have a location called Mukutani administered by a chief. However, the government has deployed another chief under the same area of Mukutani and named it Makutano Location."*<sup>30</sup>

These boundary conflicts and contested borders are rooted in several factors, including resource and infrastructure differences, for example with regard to schools and health facilities. One factor is the discovery in the region of oil, natural gas, and mineral resources in commercially viable quantities. The exploration and exploitation of natural resources, and new infrastructural development projects, have increased the value of previously unattractive real estate, raising the stakes for inter-ethnic and clan interests. Even where new resources have not magnified the importance of county borders, however, communities are very sensitive to administrative lines that locate rangeland and wells within a given county's jurisdiction. As one administrator observed:

30 Ilchamus Elder, focus group discussion, Mukutani, Baringo County, 25 October 2019.

*“There is a boundary dispute between the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) reserve and the local community living along Lake Kapnarok. This kind of conflict is replicated in Baringo, Turkana, Samburu, and Elgeyo Marakwet Counties, where communities are in conflict over undefined and unmarked borders and boundaries that separate counties, districts, divisions, locations and sub-locations.”<sup>31</sup>*

In some cases, the reported tensions between communities living along county borders are purely politically instigated. Certain political leaders vying for election or re-election often curry favour with voters by promising to extend their boundaries into other communities' lands, especially those containing minerals. They incite their ethnic bases to move in and occupy the land. This has been witnessed particularly in Turkana, Baringo, Samburu and West Pokot Counties. The research established that some political leaders even go as far as ferrying their communities

into already inhabited areas to register as voters and establish settlements.

Giving tribal names to counties has compounded the problem, because it leads majority communities to perceive minorities as 'settlers' or 'others' rather than residents with equal rights. A key example is Samburu County, where the Samburu majority has yet to accept the presence of the Pokot and Turkana in their midst. As a result, the Turkana and Pokot are marginalised and disadvantaged in the allocation of county resources. The aggressive behaviour of migrating pastoralist communities is partly to blame for such resentment. For instance, they tend to rename new places of settlement in their tribal languages, ignoring the original names.

Tensions over county borders and land disputes have a negative effect on county revenue collection. In that respect, the present situation differs from the situation before devolution, when the former district and provincial boundaries were properly surveyed and mapped by the national government.

### 4.3 Inequitable distribution of public resources

When the 2010 Constitution of Kenya was enacted, devolution was one of its most celebrated features. The creation of 47 counties heralded a new era of hope as administrative, financial, and political power moved from Nairobi to subnational units at the grassroots. It was expected that equitable distribution of resources would occur in all parts of the country. A few years later, Kinuthia and Lakin (2016) analysed how Elgeyo Marakwet, Baringo, and Meru Counties had distributed their decentralised resources within their constituent wards. They concluded that inequalities among wards were quite extreme within the counties they studied. Although all the counties had enacted laws that prescribe equitable resource allocation, the provisions of such laws tended to create equal sharing at ward level, disregarding the different capacity and needs of individual wards.

Similarly, much social and economic tension in the North Rift is caused by inequitable distribution of public resources. Inequities in daily living conditions are shaped by deeper social structures, processes, and practices that tolerate or promote the unfair distribution of and access to power, wealth, and other social resources. Figure 9 shows that the five North Rift counties were among the counties in Kenya that have the lowest equity score (NCIC, 2014). This can partly be attributed to the fact that these counties were also among those that received the lowest devolution fund allocations from the national government. This has exacerbated the region's tendency to experience ethnic competition, mistrust, and conflict.

31 Assistant County Commissioner, key informant interview, Barwessa, Baringo County, 20 September 2019.

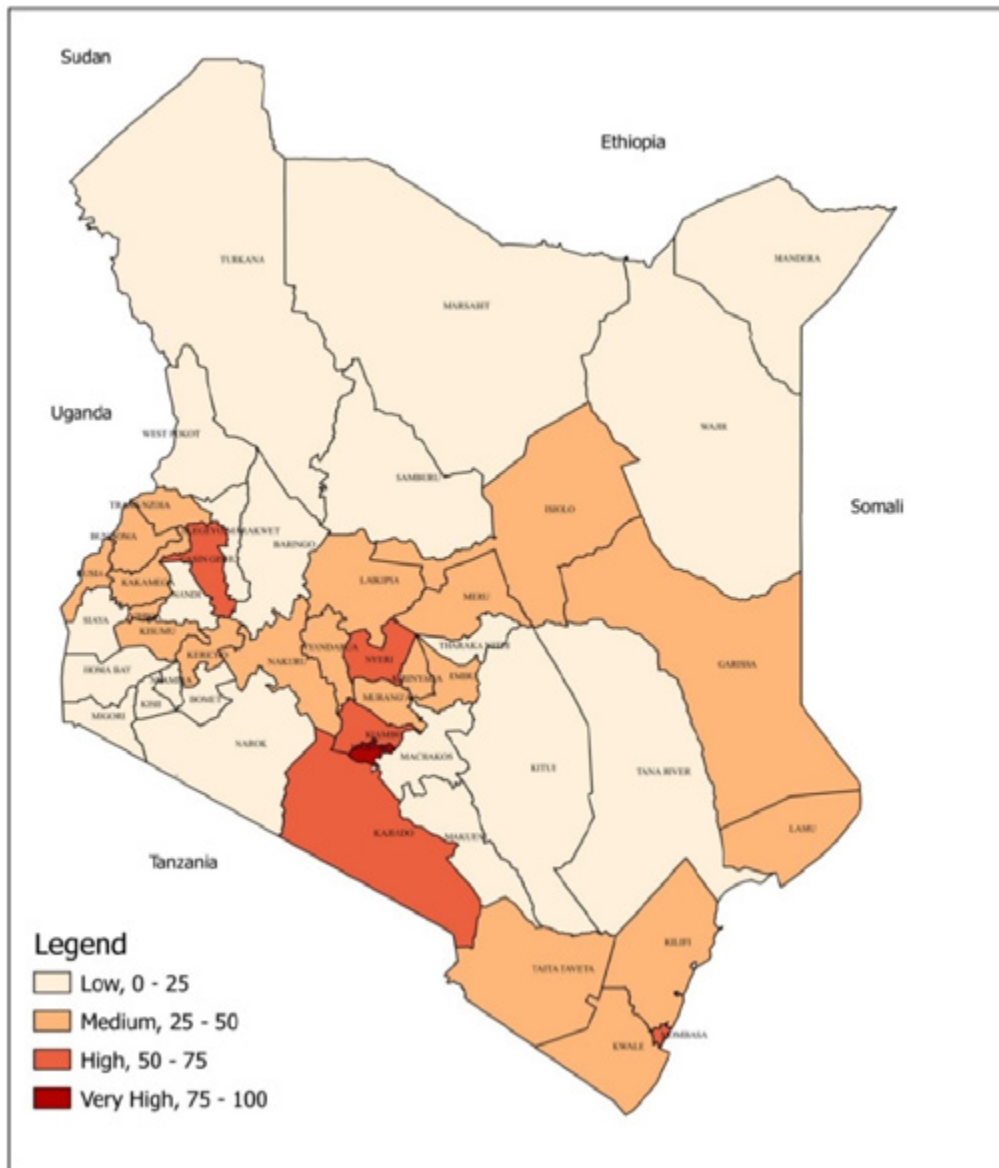


Figure 9: The Equity Index in Kenya by County

Source: NCIC (2014).

Many focus group participants expressed their belief that the national government deliberately discriminates against some counties in the North Rift. In addition to a low resource allocation, they said that the government issued national identification cards very slowly and had imposed vetting procedures that were more stringent than in most regions. Such experiences reinforce perceptions that the North Rift is not a national priority or is deliberately excluded. A key informant in Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County, declared, for example:

*"If Tiaty is not developed, problems will remain in this region. The place is neglected. You can move for even 100 km without seeing any government structure, not an Administration Police camp or police post, or even a school or houses. People just live in the bush. Most of the areas are unoccupied. It is not like down the valleys where some [small] farms exist. Tiaty is much more arid than the valleys. Most of the area is just shrubland with few residents, and a small number of trading centres that have people. There are fewer locations, fewer schools, and fewer security camps. People move freely, therefore the law of the jungle takes precedence."*<sup>32</sup>

32 County Commissioner of Elgeyo Marakwet, key informant interview, Iten, Elgeyo Marakwet County, 29 August 2019.









# 05

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**ENVIRONMENTAL  
FACTORS**

## 5.0 Introduction

The North Rift region is categorised in Kenya as arid and semi-arid land (ASAL). This environment strongly influences the availability and quality of natural resources for societies that rely heavily on nomadic pastoralism for their livelihoods—alongside some small-scale rainfed agriculture - and worsens conflicts

over control of water, pasture, and grazing land. The study identified a nexus between environmental factors and conflict, and found in particular that the growing impact of climate change is fuelling a gradual increase in resource conflict.

## 5.1 Persistent Droughts and Famine

The study found that rising temperatures and unpredictable rainy seasons have placed increased pressure on water resources, shrinking pastureland, reducing herds, and increasing competition for grazing land. Community members underlined that long periods of drought aggravate already scarce access to potable water, making every day a struggle for survival. Some participants suggested that this scarcity defines the nomadic culture of communities, explaining the common practice of trespassing on the grazing lands of other communities. When communities are forced to migrate to find greener pastures for their livestock, their stocks are raided, increasing conflict.

*“You know we Pokot are pastoralists. We rear cows and goats. But there is something that takes our animals. It is known as drought. When someone’s herd of goats grows to about 20 or 50, the drought*

*comes and clears the animals. When the animals are thus decimated, he has to look for a place with animals and bring them home.”<sup>33</sup>*

The study further found that overstocking leads to overgrazing which depletes soil nutrients and causes soil erosion. Deforestation also causes land erosion, while displacement of people to create room for development projects is a further cause of conflict since the displaced communities compete with their host communities for grazing land, as in the case of the minority Endorois community. Participants also drew attention to conflicts between pastoral and agricultural communities, because each needs land for different purposes. As the quality of land degrades due to overuse, communities fall into conflict as they struggle to sustain their livelihoods on a diminishing land resource.

## 5.2 Conflicts between Communities and Conservation Authorities

The North Rift region is home to several wildlife conservancies. The research revealed conflict between the conservancies and people living along Kerio Valley. It was noted that local communities have displaced wildlife at the Kapnarok National Reserve, which they use as grazing land and as a refuge during attacks.

Conflicts between conservationists and community members also arise when wild animals destroy crops and the communities respond by killing them. Participants observed that the presence of wildlife hinders school attendance because parents fear for the safety of their children.

<sup>33</sup> Pokot youth, focus group discussion, Nginyang, Baringo County, 11 October 2019.











# 06

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## RESILIENCE FACTORS



## 6.0 Introduction

Beyond researching the challenges to peace in the North Rift region, this study sought to identify the resilience factors that can sustain essential life-support functions when resident communities are caught in violent conflicts. In the context of conflict transformation, resilience can be described as the adaptive capacity of a community to shift to a new stable state instead of returning to an original state when coping with disturbances such as violent conflicts (Lu, Shikui and Shiliang, 2016). A conflict transformation process using the PAR approach requires feuding communities to acknowledge that *they* can shape the trajectory of positive change. They can do this when they make a commitment to understand each other's perspectives and concerns and candidly share their views. Only then can they begin to build trust—the cornerstone of sustainable peace—by recognising that

they have many more things in common than things that set them apart.

This chapter summarises the resilience factors that emerged from this study. Key among them is the recognition that drought, epidemics, violent conflict, and other calamities are experienced by all the pastoralist communities living in the North Rift. In addition, each community has internal traditional, democratic mechanisms that enable it to develop coping mechanisms when it faces adversity. A key element of this resilience is a community's capacity to adapt based on its agency, the assets available to it, and the institutional, political, and economic context. Going forward, the challenge is to understand how these resilience factors can be used to peacefully resolve conflicts between neighbouring ethnic communities.

## 6.1 Internal Traditional Mechanisms for Peace

A key finding of the study was that each pastoral community in the North Rift has internal democratic institutions led by a traditional council of elders. These ancient institutions have strong inbuilt mechanisms to ensure accountability, promote public participation, regulate individual behaviour, resolve disputes, and generally maintain peaceful and well-organised relations between community members.

Examples that emerged include *lapai* customary law, found among the Pokot and Turkana communities. *Lapai* is a restorative justice system exercised by a council of elders (known as the *Kokwo* among the Pokot and the *Ekuko* among the Turkana). If a community member kills a fellow community member, for instance, the council of elders arbitrates the dispute, often by requiring the killer's family or clan to make compensation (in terms of livestock) to the bereaved family. Reflecting the nature of the case, the council of elders may impose heavy or lighter penalties. It may, for instance, give the entire herd of a perpetrator's clan to the clan of the deceased in order to underline the gravity of a case and affirm the community's internal standards of justice, law and order. The Samburu impose the *ngirroi*, a fine of cows imposed in cases of murder. The guilty party secretly forces the cattle into the deceased person's kraal at night. A ceremony is afterwards performed to cleanse the community member who committed murder.

On occasion, elders from warring communities in the region have come together to perform rituals and prepare oaths designed to forge alliances and deter their communities from engaging in conflict. The research found that small but significant changes have occurred in traditional approaches to conflict. For instance, women in the region used to play a key role in inciting their sons and male youths in general to man up and join raids. Participants at a women's focus group in Sigor, West Pokot County, reported feeling that they felt compassion for the young men killed in raids and had decided to encourage them to cease the practice. They said that reformed warriors are now being welcomed to join women's rotating savings and credit associations (ROSCA), locally known as *chamas* or 'merry-go-rounds'. A ROSCA is an informal peer-to-peer banking and lending group in which individuals come together and agree to contribute a set amount on a regular basis (usually monthly). At each meeting, on a rotational basis, one member withdraws all the funds that have been collected. ROSCAs are a popular source of community finance in parts of the world where credit sources are limited. The women's ROSCA in Sigor has enabled some young men to purchase motorcycles and start a *bodaboda* (motorcycle taxi) business, keeping them from participating in ethnic conflict.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Community members, women's focus group discussion, Sigor, West Pokot County, 21 August 2019.



### 6.2.1. *Commemoration of Peace Accords: the Lokirama Case Study*

Numerous attempts have been made in the region to mediate mediation peace deals, but most do not last. One pact that has stood the test of time is the Lokirama Peace Accord, signed in 1973 between the Turkana of Kenya and the Karamojong of Uganda. Both groups are well-armed pastoralists who engaged for a prolonged period in violent raids against each other. Eventually elders from both sides realised that this violence was devastating both communities and they agreed to negotiate a peace arrangement. Turkana and Karamojong elders met at Lokirama, a village in Turkana whose name means ‘meeting point’. For nearly a month they negotiated the terms of a ceasefire and long-term agreement. After reaching an understanding, the elders in each community approached their respective district commissioners in Kenya and Uganda. The Accord was solemnised at a traditional ceremony in which the elders buried weapons of war such as guns, spears, bows and arrows, as well as symbols of peaceful coexistence such as honey, milk, and traditional beer, in a pit over which a monument was constructed. A bull was slaughtered to symbolise the end of hostilities between the two communities and the beginning of a new era of peace. To entrench continued cooperation, the elders swore to proactively involve the government and civil society organisations (CSOs), resolve disputes amicably, and encourage intermarriage to strengthen kinship ties. To date, the two communities have not engaged in conflict and the Lokirama Peace Accord has become

a model for peace agreements in the region (Bolton, Welty, & Kiptoo, 2020).

A key reason for the success of the Lokirama Peace Accord is that the communities hold a celebration at the monument each year to commemorate the Accord and reaffirm their commitment to it. The marble and cement monument in Lokirama bears the names of the elders and government administrators from both countries who facilitated the peace pact. In addition to the Turkana and Karamojong, other pastoralist communities, including the Pokot of Kenya and the Merrille, Nyangatom and Toposa of South Sudan, are usually invited to participate, and the ceremony is typically graced by Kenyan and Ugandan politicians and government officials as well as local and international CSOs and media outlets. In 2011, for instance, the commemoration was held on the International Day of Peace (September 21) and was attended by Kenya’s former President Daniel arap Moi, accompanied by a retinue of ministers, MPs, and top civil servants from both Kenya and Uganda. In 2019, the Accord gained a further boost when Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and his Ugandan counterpart, President Yoweri Museveni, signed an MOU to develop infrastructure for the communities on each side of the border. Its terms are designed to enhance their livelihoods and promote economic conditions for sustainable peace between the Turkana and Karamojong (Bii, 2019).

### 6.2.2. *The Role of Elders and Cultural Institutions*

Traditional elders remain revered members of communities in the North Rift. They are highly respected and play a vital role in brokering peace whenever conflicts or fights occur between communities. When seeking a truce emerges as the most logical action to take, the elders lead dialogues, rituals and traditional oaths that compel warriors in their communities to agree to a ceasefire. It is also the elders who reach out to their counterparts in rival communities to discuss the terms of a truce.

Looking back to the example of the successful Lokirama Accord, it is imperative that outside facilitators—whether they are from government, civil society, or international bodies—give elders and

community members leeway to drive peacebuilding processes. One elder who participated in the successful Lokirama negotiations curtly described the heavy participation of outside parties as “unhelpful”. He explained that elders and community members feel bound by agreements that are home-grown and do not feel bound by agreements that are driven externally. He attributed the long-term success of the Lokirama Accord to its customary approach, under which Turkana and Karamojong elders first agreed terms among themselves before reaching out to the government (Bolton, Welty, & Kiptoo, 2020). On this ground, the PAR approach adopted by the NCIC and Interpeace appears suitable for conflict transformation and peacebuilding in the North Rift region.

## 6.3. The Government as a Resilience Factor

### 6.3.1 Benefits of a National Security Presence

Participants in the research affirmed that the presence of the national government is a resilience factor. The deployment of state security agencies and officials, if they are deemed to be neutral in regard to ethnic conflicts, is perceived to be a positive factor. The study found that communities across the North Rift feel safer when national government structures are present, especially since national security is not devolved and official national security institutions are perceived to be neutral parties. In addition, the government's presence directly contributes to adherence to law and order, helps to create conditions in which citizens can practise their civil rights, and facilitates access to public services. These elements have given citizens some level of faith in their social contract with the government and in the government's potential to intervene constructively in the settlement of inter-community conflicts.

In this context, participants said that the office of the government chief, who represents the government at location level, was particularly useful. They cited cases where chiefs have used their links within the administration to coordinate with one another and the police, resulting in the recovery of stolen livestock and the arrest of perpetrators. The chief's office remains a key grassroots administrative unit that also resolves local community conflicts and enhances peaceful village relations. The national government has also deployed a range of security agencies and personnel to conflict-prone areas, such as Baragoi in Samburu County, to combat insecurity and restore law and order. These include Kenya Defence Forces (KDF),

the General Service Unit, the Anti-Stock Theft Unit, and special units such as the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) and the National Intelligence Service (NIS).

In Elgeyo Marakwet County, research participants reported that a recent operation, which led to the arrest of known criminals with illicit firearms, deterred people from participating in raids. A key informant used a Swahili language pun to describe the impact of the no-nonsense approach of the Rift Valley Regional Commissioner, George Ntembeya:

*"Ntembeya anatembea na mtu mmoja mmoja (Mr. Ntembeya is dealing with them one by one)."*<sup>35</sup>

Another government initiative dubbed 'Nyumba Kumi' (Swahili for 'ten households') has greatly improved sharing of information on security at grassroots level. Introduced nationwide in 2013, the initiative organises families living in the same area into clusters of ten households and encourages them to get to know each other better and share information. It is premised on the idea that, when community members know their areas and neighbours well, they can more easily spot untoward activities and report them to the security agencies. *Nyumba Kumi* also seeks to fight insecurity by creating a rapport between citizens and law enforcers. In the North Rift, security agencies have credited the initiative with helping them to foil planned attacks and generally improving peace in notorious hotspots.

### 6.3.2. Border Schools and Peace Schools

Border schools in the region accommodate pupils from conflicting communities. A well-known example is Kanyerus Peace School on the Kenya-Uganda border. Others are Katikomor, Akulo and Kanyerus Peace Schools. These schools bring together pupils from

warring communities and enhance cohesion through pupil interactions in school, in addition to encouraging trade and peaceful coexistence among the ethnic communities.

### 6.3.3 Peacebuilding Efforts by County Governments

Since the advent of devolution, North Rift counties have made peacebuilding an important part of their long-term development agenda. Several counties have launched initiatives and festivals in which they come together to showcase their cultures and bridge the divisions that have long separated them.

Perhaps the most prominent initiative is Tobong'u

Lore, Turkana County's annual tourism and cultural festival, organised every year since 2015 in the county capital, Lodwar. During the festival, the Turkana showcase various facets of their cultural heritage through song, dance, artefacts, food, costumes, and rituals, with the aim of attracting cultural tourists. In addition, the Turkana County Government uses the

<sup>35</sup> Community Member, focus group discussion, Aror, Elgeyo Marakwet County, 17 September 2019.

event to promote peace and reconciliation between North Rift communities that have historically feuded over livestock, natural resources and boundaries. All the North Rift counties participate in the three-day festival, which Turkana Governor Josphat Nanok calls an opportunity for the region to embrace new economic avenues and diversify its economic activities. Each edition of the festival has included Governors and delegations from the North Rift counties of West Pokot, Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet and Samburu, as well as representatives from as far afield as Tharaka Nithi, Uasin Gishu and Makueni. Chief guests at Tobong'u Lore have included Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, First Lady Margaret Kenyatta, Deputy President William Ruto, and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga. Foreign delegations are also typically in attendance, among them the Governor of South Sudan's Kapoeta State, Uganda's Minister of Karamoja Affairs, and delegations from Ethiopia. Tobong'u Lore is a deliberate effort by the Turkana County Government to gradually build peace with its five neighbouring counties in the North Rift, as well as

good cross-border relations with the three countries it borders (Uganda, South Sudan, and Ethiopia).

Another example is the Samburu Camel Derby, organised annually by the Samburu County Government in Maralal. Although the lead attraction is amateur camel racing, with awards for the winners, the main objective is to spread the message of peace among pastoralist communities that regularly fight over pasture and water. The theme of the 2019 Derby was 'Promoting peace through culture and sports'. Participants in the event typically hold public discussions of the common challenges they face, including insecurity, conflict, drought, education, and a deteriorating environment. The county has introduced a programme called the Integrated Management of Natural Resources for Resilience in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (IMARA) in partnership with World Vision. IMARA seeks to revitalise and preserve rangeland assets for the benefit of current and future generations by diversifying livelihoods and improving natural resource management and use in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands.

## 6.4. Socio-Economic Resilience Factors

### 6.4.1 Cross Ethnic Intermarriages

Although the North Rift is inhabited by different ethnic communities with longstanding rivalries, cross-community intermarriages do happen. Most were said to occur between the Marakwet and the Pokot; the Turkana and the Samburu; the Ilchamus and the Tugen; and the Pokot and Turkana. As one woman who is married with children to a man from a different ethnic group remarked:

*"When clashes intensify, we married women often remind our husbands that they are fighting their children's blood relatives. This encourages them to pull back and seek avenues for negotiated resolutions to conflict."*<sup>36</sup>

Her remark shows that intermarriages in North Rift ethnic communities can play a role in helping to support the fragile peace in the region.

### 6.4.2. Common Marketplaces

Shared trading centres and marketplaces bring warring communities together, because they need to trade goods and products with each other. Trading enhances the relationships between communities. Although there is almost always an undercurrent of latent conflict between pastoralists, and between pastoralists and semi-agriculturalists such as the Marakwet of the Kerio Valley, Sutton (1968) maintains that pastoralists have historically cooperated on

trade, because exchanging their products with agriculturalists and other livestock-keeping groups as an efficient way to leverage resources for their own welfare. Indeed, pastoralist communities in the North Rift tend to share resources with other ethnic groups within the region and across international borders, enabling them to gain access to seasonally available resources, especially during periods of scarcity.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Women's focus group discussion, Endo, Elgeyo Marakwet, 15 September 2019.

<sup>37</sup> NGO worker, key informant interview, Lodwar, Turkana County, 15 August 2019.



## 6.5. Peacebuilding Efforts of Non-State Actors

The activities and initiatives of non-state actors in the North Rift are another factor of resilience that helps ethnic communities in their efforts to secure a peaceful future. We refer here to the activities of NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), faith-based organisations, and peacebuilding actors.

Churches in the region periodically organise cross-ethnic church services to preach reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among the feuding communities. For instance, two Catholic churches, one at Chesongoch in Elgeyo Marakwet County, and the other at Kolowa among the Pokot of Baringo County, organise exchange programmes that enable believers from the two ethnic communities to come together to worship.<sup>38</sup>

NGOs are also making an important impact. Children Peace Initiative Kenya (CPI Kenya) has a programme in Samburu County that seeks to transform community relationships by twinning villages using children as peace ambassadors. Samburu children are taken to stay with Pokot families for a period of one week, during which they eat, sleep, play and herd animals

together. In the same way, Pokot children spend time with Samburu families. Although the impact is on a small scale, this programme has helped demystify the two communities to each other and has created bonds between Pokot and Samburu families. The programme has been praised as a model for peaceful coexistence, especially in countering the generational grudges and stereotypes that many members of feuding communities in the North Rift are exposed to from birth.<sup>39</sup>

Other organisations, including Mercy Corps, World Vision, the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), the Community Safety Initiative, the Kenya Red Cross, and ActionAid, have played a vital role in organising capacity building for peace workshops and safe spaces in which rival communities can discuss strains in their relationships. For instance, Mercy Corps has held several peace forums in Sigor, West Pokot County. These bring together the Turkana and Pokot communities, which have been involved in some of the most violent conflicts in the region, and help them begin to discuss the root causes of their disputes.



<sup>38</sup> Assistant County Commissioner Kolowa, key informant interview, Kolowa, Baringo County, 14 September 2019.

<sup>39</sup> NGO worker, key informant interview, Maralal, Samburu County, 4 October 2019.













# 07

**CONCLUSION AND  
WAY FORWARD**

This analysis has demonstrated the complexity of the conflict system in Kenya's North Rift region. The system is composed of a multitude of actors, factors and manifestations of conflict that together create a cyclic state of fragility. Sustainable peace requires legal and constitutional frameworks that must be constructed through a process of inclusive participation, especially if they are expected to be visionary and not merely end conflict but lay the foundation for democratic development. While short-term needs can be met through interim agreements on contentious issues, the ultimate reward of lasting peace requires a long-term commitment to participatory peacebuilding. Though participation may take many forms, it should allow the creation of a comprehensive agreement that draws on and recognises the history, grievances and aspirations of the local communities involved, and truly reflects their needs and vision. To succeed and stand the test of time, such peacebuilding processes should be gradual and community driven.

This study describes the consultative phase of the peacebuilding programme, which adopted a participatory action research (PAR) approach. The PAR approach seeks first to gain an in-depth understanding of a conflict from a grassroots perspective. Because local populations suffer most when violent conflicts erupt, it considers they are best placed to identify the key impediments to peace and the interventions that should be given priority when efforts are made to resolve their conflict's root causes.

The population of the North Rift region identified four thematic areas that they believe present the most pressing challenges to peace in the region. These are:

- (1) Community socio-cultural and economic systems.
- (2) Security and the rule of law.
- (3) Governance and politics.
- (4) Environmental factors.

These thematic areas were validated at a stakeholders' forum that marked the conclusion of the consultative phase. The stakeholders' forum was held on 21-23 December 2019 in Kapenguria, West Pokot County. A total of 150 participants from the five target counties attended the forum, the great majority of whom live in the region; some attended from the Kenyan capital, Nairobi. After three days of discussion and deliberation, the participants identified eight issues which they consider to be the most pressing challenges to peace in North Rift region. These are (1) illiteracy; (2) cultural practices that induce violent conflict; (3) the proliferation of small arms and light weapons; (4) weak policing and security provision; (5) impunity and political incitement; (6) contested borders and boundary disputes; (7) persistent droughts and famine; and (8) conflicts between communities and conservation authorities.

The identification of these eight priority impediments to peace provides a foundation that the NCIC and Interpeace, working in concert with the local communities, can build on to catalyse long-term peace in the region. The degree to which the NCIC can achieve the next steps towards lasting peace will hinge on NCIC's mandate and its capacity to influence policy- and decision-makers in Kenya, as well as Interpeace's experience of spearheading successful peacebuilding and conflict transformation processes in other parts of the world.

The next phase of the programme, which will also adopt the PAR approach, will focus on finding and implementing solutions to the impediments to peace identified during the consultative phase. NCIC and Interpeace will continue to facilitate the search for solutions to lasting peace in Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, West Pokot, Turkana and Samburu Counties, guided by recommendations made by the local communities of the North Rift Region.



Figure 10: Prioritised Challenges to Peace in the North Rift Region

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