



*Marsabit, Kenya. ~ Josephine Kiruku, Mercy Corps.*

# The Resilient Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems (RANGE) Programme

## Conflict Analysis Report





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## Abbreviations

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>AIC</b>         | African Inland Church   |
| <b>FGD</b>         | Focused Group Discussion  |
| <b>HAWEN</b>       | Horn of Africa Women Empowerment Network                                    |
| <b>IGAD-CEWARN</b> | Intergovernmental Authority on Development Conflict Early Warning Mechanism |
| <b>IPL</b>         | Isiolo Peace Link   |
| <b>IRCK</b>        | Inter-Religious Council of Kenya KII: Key Informant Interviews              |
| <b>KNBS</b>        | Kenya National Bureau of statistics   |
| <b>LAPSSET</b>     | Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport                                    |
| <b>NCCK</b>        | National Council of Churches of Kenya                                       |
| <b>NDMA</b>        | National Disaster Management Authority                                      |
| <b>NSC-PBCM</b>    | National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management        |
| <b>PWHE</b>        | Pastoralist Women for Health and Education                                  |
| <b>RANGE</b>       | Resilience Approaches in Natural Rangeland Ecosystems                       |
| <b>SALWs</b>       | Small Arms and Light Weapons  |
| <b>SUPKEM</b>      | Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims  |
| <b>SWEEDO</b>      | Samburu Women for Education and Environment Development Organization        |



## Executive summary

This report presents the current situation in the aforementioned counties as relates to peacebuilding and conflict management with a view to sharing a clear perspective on the socio-political situation as part of the entry strategies of the Mercy Corps in the implementation of the RANGE Programme.

The three counties of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit are part of the Northern Kenya Counties characterized by pastoral economies, trade and small-scale agricultural production that is largely for household consumption.

The Arid and semi-arid climatic condition in these counties limits agricultural production; however, pastoralism remains the traditional economic mainstay with camels, cattle, sheep, and goats being the primary livestock. Frequent Droughts occasioned by climate change have led to a sharp decline in availability of pasture and water critical factors causing conflict. Food insecurity another climate change related factor, and inadequate infrastructure are other challenges that the counties are still grappling with.

The three counties are home to diverse ethnic groups, including the Borana, Samburu, Turkana, Rendille, and Somali communities. This diversity often leads to rich cultural exchanges but also poses challenges for inter-ethnic relations and conflict management. Issues such as cattle rustling and inter-ethnic conflict driven by historical grievances including socio-political attitudes are still alive to date, impacting on women, men and youths in diverse ways. The influx of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and the threat of Al-Shabab extremists who have on several occasions launched sporadic attacks in towns within and along the LAPSET<sup>1</sup> Corridor has also worked against any attempt to attract external investors in sections of the three counties.

County governments established under Kenya's 2010 Constitution play a crucial role in local administration and development but continue facing challenges in effectively tackling the various peace and security issues plaguing the counties. . The exploitation of ethnic division by the political class in an attempt to control resources and gain popularity, corruption, land disputes emerging from unclear land tenure systems, and the emergence of ranches and conservancies in what would otherwise be community land are among other factors contributing to conflict in the area.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, these counties still present significant opportunities for development, particularly through investments in renewable energy, tourism, and infrastructure projects like LAPSET. Enhancing inter-ethnic cooperation and leveraging traditional peace mechanisms can further support sustainable development, conflict resolution and positively impact on Peace and Security.

Social cohesion is one of the key resilience strategies and this calls for well-intended intertwined and mutually reinforcing adaptation strategies. Investment in Conflict Sensitive Approaches to development intervention in the three counties, Conflict Early Warning and Early Response, and support to local peace initiatives while establishing collaboration with neighboring counties to this end; and linkages with the stakeholders across all levels of governance are key considerations to be made in the Mercy Corps RANGE Programme.



The three counties of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit are part of the Northern Kenya Counties characterized by pastoral economies, trade and small-scale agricultural production that is largely for household consumption.

<sup>1</sup> The Lamu Port and Lamu-Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSET) is a significant infrastructure project aimed at enhancing connectivity and promoting regional integration among Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan. Launched in 2012, LAPSET is part of Kenya's Vision 2030 initiative, designed to transform the country into a mid-level economy through various infrastructure developments.

## Introduction

### Background and Purpose of the Report

This report presents the current situation in the aforementioned counties as relates to peacebuilding and conflict management with a view to sharing a clear perspective on the socio-

political situation and its bearing on the local social, cultural and economic situation as part of the entry strategies of Mercy Corps in the implementation of the RANGE Programme.

### Overview of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu Counties

The three counties of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit are part of the Northern Kenya Counties characterized by pastoral economies, trade and small-scale agricultural production that is largely for household consumption.

The inception of the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor Project has opened up the area and positioned a number of northern Kenya counties including the three as potential economic hubs. Great pastoral, agriculture and tourism potential exists due to the rich cultural heritage and wildlife attractions including the Samburu National Reserve.

The Arid and semi-arid climatic condition in these counties limits agricultural production; however, pastoralism remains the traditional economic mainstay with camels, cattle, sheep, and goats being the primary livestock. Pastoralism therefore remains the key economic driver in the three counties. (Isiolo County Government, 2020/ Samburu County Government, 2018/Marsabit County Government, 2018). Droughts, food insecurity, and inadequate infrastructure are other challenges that the counties are still grappling with.

The three counties is home to several diverse ethnic groups like the Borana, Samburu, Turkana, Rendille, and Somali communities. This diversity often leads to rich cultural exchanges but also poses challenges for inter-ethnic relations and collaborative conflict management mechanisms. Issues such as cattle rustling and inter-ethnic rivalries driven by historical grievances including socio-political attitudes characterized by diverse

and sometimes competing values, beliefs, and opinions are key drivers of the conflicts.. The political landscape in these counties faces a complex challenge of balancing traditional leadership structures with modern governance frameworks, particularly in this context where both systems coexist and interact County governments established under Kenya's 2010 Constitution play a crucial role in local administration and development. Political representation is often influenced by ethnic affiliations and clan dynamics, impacting election outcomes and policy decisions (Osamba, 2001). Cross-border conflict dynamics including a cycle of retaliatory violence between the ethnic communities from Ethiopia and its neighboring counties has gone unchecked for years, negatively impacting potential economic growth of the three counties and cross-border trade between the neighbors.

The influx of SALW and the threat of Al-Shabab extremists who have on several occasions launched sporadic attacks in towns within and along the LAPSSET Corridor<sup>2</sup> has also worked against any attempt to attract external investors in sections of the three counties.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, these counties also present significant opportunities for development, particularly through investments in renewable energy, tourism, and infrastructure projects like LAPSSET. Enhancing inter-ethnic cooperation and leveraging traditional peace mechanisms can further support sustainable development and conflict resolution (Odhiambo, 2012).

## Isiolo County, Kenya: Conflict Profile

Isiolo County faces complex conflicts driven by resource scarcity, ethnic tensions, and political dynamics. Limited natural resources have led to frequent violent confrontations over water and grazing land, particularly among pastoralist groups. Notable clashes between the Samburu, Marsabit, and Borana herders have resulted in fatalities and displacements. Relationships among the major ethnic groups—Samburu, Borana, Somali, Meru, and Turkana—are marked by mistrust and competition, especially during election periods when political alliances shift. The establishment of county governments in 2013 has heightened these tensions, as marginalized voices seek representation, escalating competition for political power and resources. Disputes over administrative boundaries, particularly between Isiolo and neighboring counties like Meru, often lead to violent confrontations and military interventions to restore order.

Isiolo is set for significant development under the Kenya Vision 2030 initiative, including projects like the LAPSSET corridor. While these developments promise to enhance economic opportunities, they also risk intensifying existing conflicts over land use and resource allocation.

The conflict in Isiolo County is influenced by the environment, ethnicity, and politics. Although economic development projects can create opportunities for peace, they also bring challenges that need careful management to avoid worsening existing tensions. It's important to continue resolving conflicts and involving the community to promote peaceful coexistence among the diverse populations in Isiolo.



**Geography and Demographics:** Isiolo County is located in the semi-arid region of northern Kenya, and borders the counties of Meru, Garissa, and Marsabit. The county covers an area of approximately 25,336 square kilometers. As per the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Isiolo County has a population of approximately 268,002 people (KNB:2019).



**Socio-Economic Status:** Isiolo County is characterized by high poverty rates, with a significant portion of the population living below the poverty line. The county's Human Development Index (HDI) is lower than the national average, reflecting challenges in health, education, and income. The primary economic activities include pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, and trade. The region is also experiencing growth in tourism due to its wildlife reserves and cultural heritage sites (KNBS, 2020).



**Literacy and Education:** Educational attainment in Isiolo County remains a challenge leading to low literacy levels compared to the national average, with a significant gender disparity favoring males. According to the KNBS (2019), adult literacy in Isiolo County is estimated at around 58%, with lower rates in rural areas. Efforts to improve education infrastructure and access are ongoing, but challenges such as nomadic lifestyles and early marriages hinder progress (KNBS, 2019).



**Population and Livelihoods:** Isiolo County's population is diverse, comprising various ethnic groups including the Borana, Somali, and Turkana. Livelihoods are predominantly pastoral, with communities relying on livestock such as cattle, goats, and sheep. Seasonal migrations in search of pasture and water are common, impacting access to education and healthcare services.

The county is ethnically diverse, hosting several communities including the Borana, Somali, Turkana, Samburu, and Meru. The ethnic groups are diverse with each embracing their cultural practices and contributing socio-economically to the region.

The Borana, predominantly pastoralists are the largest group in the county and have significant influence on local politics and economy. The Somali have significant influence in the county and are engaged in both pastoralism and trade. The Meru are more focused on agriculture and trade while the Turkana and Samburu are purely pastoralists.

In recent years, there has been a shift towards agro-pastoralism and small-scale trade as alternative livelihoods (Ministry of Devolution and Planning, 2018). In terms of development, the county faces numerous development challenges including inadequate infrastructure, water scarcity, and insecurity.

The county's strategic location as a gateway to northern Kenya has spurred investment in infrastructure projects such as the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, aiming to boost economic growth. However, social issues like inter-ethnic conflicts and the impact of climate change on pastoral livelihoods continue to pose significant hurdles (Government of Kenya, 2020).





## Marsabit County Kenya: Conflict Profile

located in northern Kenya, Marsabit County has long been a hotspot for conflicts, particularly among pastoralist communities. The conflicts are primarily driven by competition over scarce resources, especially water and grazing land, as well as ethnic tensions. Others include Ethnic and clan based historical rivalries/conflicts, Political Manipulation, competition over natural resources (water and Pasture) especially as relates to livestock keeping leading to cattle raids, Climate change leading to frequent episodes of drought and cross border conflicts with ethnic communities in Ethiopia. Other drivers of conflict include, bad governance and historical marginalization, and devolution complications brought about by the 2010 new constitution of Kenya.



**Geography and Demography:** Marsabit County is located in northern Kenya, bordering Ethiopia to the north, and the counties of Turkana to the west, Samburu to the south, and Isiolo and Wajir to the east. The county covers an area of approximately 70,961 square kilometers, making it one of the largest counties in Kenya in terms of landmass (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS], 2019).

Marsabit town, the county's headquarters, is located 554 kilometers from Nairobi. Marsabit County's climate is characterized by arid and semi-arid conditions, which result in low and erratic rainfall. The county receives an average of between 200 mm and 1000 mm of rainfall annually, with the northern and central parts being drier compared to the mountainous areas like Mount Marsabit, which is more humid (Marsabit County Government, 2020). The county experiences high temperatures throughout the year, ranging between 20°C to 30°C. Prolonged dry seasons contribute to water scarcity, a critical challenge for both humans and livestock in the region.

As per the 2019 national census, Marsabit County has a population of approximately 459,785 people (KNBS, 2019). The population is characterized by ethnic diversity, with the largest groups being the Rendille, Borana, Gabra, and Samburu communities. The settlement patterns are largely influenced by climatic conditions, with the majority of the population living in the more hospitable highlands, while the lowland areas remain sparsely populated.





**Socio-Economic Profile:** Marsabit County is one of the poorest counties in Kenya, with a poverty rate of over 70% (Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis [KIPPRA], 2020). The economy is primarily pastoral, with livestock keeping being the dominant economic activity. Camels, goats, sheep, and cattle are the main livestock reared in the county. Livestock trade forms a crucial part of Marsabit's economy, with markets in Ethiopia and Kenya being key trading destinations. The county's infrastructure remains underdeveloped, with limited road networks and low levels of industrial activity. Access to healthcare and education is also limited, with many residents relying on basic facilities in rural areas.



**Literacy:** Literacy Levels Marsabit County faces significant challenges in terms of education. The county's literacy rate is low, with only about 40% of the population aged 15 years and above being able to read and write (KNBS, 2019). Enrollment rates in primary and secondary schools remain low, particularly among girls due to cultural and socio-economic barriers. However, there have been efforts to improve education through the construction of more schools and community awareness programs promoting the importance of education (Ministry of Education, 2020).



**Population and Livelihoods:** The livelihoods of the people in Marsabit County are mainly tied to pastoralism, with over 80% of the population relying on livestock for their sustenance (KIPPRA, 2020). Other livelihoods include small-scale agriculture, especially in the highlands where the climate is favorable for crop farming. Fishing along Lake Turkana also provides a source of income for communities in areas near the lake. However, recurrent droughts, conflicts over resources, and climate change have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of pastoralist communities, leading to food insecurity and frequent displacement (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2021). Additionally, a growing trend toward urbanization and wage labor, particularly in Marsabit town, is reshaping livelihoods in the county.

**Conclusion:** Marsabit County is a diverse and complex region facing significant challenges related to its arid climate, socio-economic vulnerabilities, and low literacy rates. The county's economy remains heavily reliant on livestock, but there is potential for development in sectors such as agriculture and trade, particularly with Ethiopia. Improved infrastructure, education, and health services are key to advancing the county's development and resilience in the face of its harsh environment.

## Samburu County Kenya: Conflict Profile

Conflict Profile: Samburu County in Kenya faces ongoing intercommunal conflicts primarily due to competition over scarce resources in a pastoralist context. Home to several ethnic groups, including the Samburu, Turkana, and Pokot, the county's arid environment intensifies struggles for water and grazing land.

Drought and climate change exacerbate these tensions, leading to increased violence as communities seek to secure their livelihoods. The availability and misuse of small arms have heightened conflicts, with youth engaging in cattle raiding and retaliatory attacks, often without the approval of traditional elders. Local political leaders exploit ethnic divisions for personal gain, further escalating tensions.

Attacks on police stations have resulted in law enforcement fatalities and diminished public trust in security, creating ungoverned areas conducive to further violence and crime.

The ongoing conflicts have devastating effects on local communities, causing loss of life, displacement, and disrupted trade. The economic impact is severe, as many rely on livestock for their livelihoods, leading to increased poverty and hindered development.

Addressing the root causes of conflict in Samburu County requires comprehensive strategies focused on resource management, community engagement, and strengthening governance structures. Sustainable development and effective conflict resolution mechanisms are essential to fostering peace among the region's diverse communities.



**Geography and Demographics:** According to the Kenya Population and Housing Census, as of 2019, Samburu County had a population of approximately 310,327 people. The population density is relatively low, given the expansive semi-arid land that characterizes much of the county. The demographic profile indicates a young population, with a significant proportion being children and youth, which presents both opportunities and challenges for development (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).



**Socio-Economic Status:** Samburu County, located in the Rift Valley region of Kenya, has a largely pastoralist economy, with livestock rearing being the primary livelihood. The region faces significant socio-economic challenges, including poverty, limited access to basic services, and high levels of food insecurity. Infrastructure development is ongoing, but many areas remain underserved, impacting the overall quality of life for residents (County Government of Samburu, 2018).

The county's economy is heavily dependent on livestock farming, with over 60% of the population practicing pastoralism and 30% practicing agro-pastoralism. Livestock production contributes significantly to household income, accounting for 66% of the agricultural sector's contribution (Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Co-operatives, Climate Risk Profile: Samburu County, ASTSG 2019 – 2029).



**Literacy and Education:** Literacy levels in Samburu County are below the national average. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, the adult literacy rate in Samburu is estimated to be around 50%. Factors contributing to low literacy include nomadic lifestyles that disrupt consistent schooling, cultural practices, and inadequate educational infrastructure. Efforts are being made to improve access to education, but progress is slow (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2020).



**Population and Livelihoods:** Samburu County is primarily inhabited by the Samburu ethnic group, who are closely related to the Maasai and share similar cultural practices and a pastoralist lifestyle. Other significant ethnic communities include the Turkana and the Rendille. The Samburu people constitute the majority, giving the county its name and influencing its cultural and political landscape. The Turkana, although a minority in Samburu County, have been longstanding residents, leading to recurring conflicts over territorial and resource rights. The Rendille also maintain a pastoralist lifestyle similar to the Samburu and are involved in occasional conflicts primarily over grazing areas (Shalom:2020)

The primary livelihood in Samburu County is pastoralism, with communities relying heavily on livestock such as cattle, goats, and sheep. Agriculture is minimal due to the arid climate, though some irrigated farming is practiced along river valleys. Other economic activities include small-scale trade, artisanal mining, and tourism, particularly around the Samburu National Reserve, which attracts visitors to the region (County Government of Samburu, 2018).

## Understanding the Broader Conflict in the ASAL Regions and its Implications.<sup>3</sup>

Understanding conflict dynamics in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) more broadly is essential for addressing inter-communal disputes stemming from resource scarcity, cultural differences, and historical grievances. ASAL regions, significant in countries like Kenya, face unique socio-economic and environmental challenges that intensify conflicts.

In these areas, competition for limited resources often leads to violence among pastoralist communities. A comprehensive understanding of conflict dynamics can guide resource management strategies that promote equitable access and sustainable practices, thus minimizing conflict potential.

Identifying shared interests and common goals is vital for creating dialogue platforms and

fostering unity, particularly where ethnic identities contribute to tensions. Ongoing engagement with policymakers and governance structures regarding the complexities of ASAL conflicts, including local customs, national policies, and external influences, will enhance governance that respects traditions while encouraging peace and development. This approach is crucial for addressing the fragility and instability of ASAL regions, which can impede broader national development objectives.

Conflict Analysis in Kenya's ASAL Regions is vital to guide any interventions in support of humanitarian responses and development efforts and continue to highlight the region's potential for national and regional development.



Ongoing engagement with policymakers and governance structures regarding the complexities of ASAL conflicts, including local customs, national policies, and external influences, will enhance governance that respects traditions while encouraging peace and development.

<sup>3</sup> Kenya's Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) cover approximately 80% of the country's landmass and are home to over 16 million people, which is about 30% of the total population. The ASAL region is categorized into various livelihood zones grouped into five clusters: Pastoral North-West, Pastoral North-East, South-East Marginal Agriculture, Coastal Marginal Agriculture, and Agro-pastoral.



## Key Drivers of Conflict

### Intense competition over water resources

Water is a significant driver of conflict in the arid and semi-arid regions of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties in Kenya. Pastoralist communities primarily depend on natural water sources for their livestock and livelihoods. The limited availability of water resources often leads to intense competition among different ethnic groups, contributing to conflict dynamics in these areas.

Historically, the pastoralist communities in these counties have engaged in traditional practices of resource sharing and conflict resolution. However, the increasing frequency and severity of droughts, exacerbated by climate change, have strained these traditional mechanisms. Water points, such as wells, rivers, and boreholes, become strategic assets, often resulting in violent clashes as communities vie for control (Schilling, Akuno, Scheffran, & Weinzierl, 2014).

### Socio-Political Factors

The inter-ethnic conflicts are further complicated by socio-political and economic pressures. Access to water is not only a matter of survival but also a means of asserting territorial control and political dominance. Politicians often exploit these tensions to gain support and popularity at strategic moments in their political life cycle, thereby escalating conflicts (Mkutu, 2001).

**Inequitable Distribution of Resources:** The political economy of resource distribution also contributes to conflict. Government policies and development projects are often perceived to favor certain ethnic groups or regions over others. This perceived or actual inequity in resource distribution creates resentment among marginalized communities, who may feel excluded from the benefits of state resources and development initiatives. Such grievances can lead to violent conflicts as communities seek to assert their rights and demand equitable resource allocation (Schilling, Akuno, Scheffran, & Weinzierl, 2014). This is exemplified in Moyale sub-county where conflict based on difference on fundamental religious teachings of Islam is common<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, the proliferation of small arms in the region has intensified the violence associated with water resource disputes. Efforts by stakeholders and the government to mitigate these conflicts

include the establishment of water resource management committees that involve various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. These committees aim to promote equitable water distribution and resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation (Adano & Daudi, 2012).

Enhancing the resilience of these communities through sustainable water management practices and infrastructure development is also crucial in reducing the potential for conflict.

The pastoralist regions of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties in Kenya are characterized by complex conflict dynamics influenced significantly by political factors. These political drivers play a crucial role in shaping the nature and intensity of conflicts in these areas. **Ethnic-Based Political Mobilization** One of the primary political drivers of conflict in these counties is the mobilization of ethnic identities for political purposes.

Political leaders often exploit ethnic divisions to garner support, particularly during election periods. This ethnic-based political mobilization exacerbates existing tensions and competition among different groups, as communities rally behind their leaders in the pursuit of political power and resources (Mkutu, 2001).



## Electoral Competition and Violence

Electoral competition is another significant driver of conflict. The struggle for political office is intense in these counties, where political representation is seen as a critical means of accessing state resources and development opportunities. The zero-sum nature of electoral politics often leads to violence, as losing parties and their supporters may resort to conflict to express their grievances or to undermine the legitimacy of the winning side (Menkhaus, 2008).

## Weak Governance and Corruption

Weak governance structures and corruption further exacerbate conflict dynamics in these counties. Inefficient and corrupt administrative systems undermine the rule of law and erode public trust in government institutions. This creates a vacuum where informal and often violent means of conflict resolution become prevalent. Corruption also diverts resources meant for development, exacerbating poverty and economic marginalization, which in turn fuels conflict (Adano & Daudi, 2012). This was corroborated during a KII by one of the Community elders in Isiolo

who was at some point part of the District Peace Committee<sup>5</sup>. He further asserted that corruption amongst security forces worked against many attempts to arrest perpetrators of cattle raids.

## Political Manipulation of Development Aid as Conflict Driver:

The manipulation of development aid for political purposes is another critical driver of conflict. Politicians often directly channel or deliberately influence development projects and humanitarian assistance to their ethnic bases to secure or sustain political loyalty and support. This selective distribution of aid creates disparities and tensions among communities, as those who feel neglected or excluded resort to violence to express their dissatisfaction and demand their share of resources (Mkutu, 2001). At times what is seen as pastoral conflict is in fact a projection of grievances picked from other contexts and accumulated over time waiting for an opportunity to express anger or disappointment through violent means. The target is always the Ethnic group of the influential individual in the formation<sup>6</sup>.

## Systemic Climate- Conflict Challenges

The pastoralist regions of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties in Kenya are significantly affected by environmental factors that exacerbate existing conflict tensions. Understanding these Climate-Conflict challenges are essential for addressing the broader conflict impacts for sustained peace.

### Climate Variability:

Climate change as an indirect driver of conflict, a threat or risk multiplier that amplifies existing sources of economic, social, and political risk prevails in the counties. The region has experienced increased variability in weather patterns, including more frequent and severe droughts and occasional floods. These extreme weather events lead to resource scarcity, particularly of water and pasture, which are critical for the pastoralist communities' livelihoods. The competition for these limited resources often results in violent conflicts between different ethnic groups (Schilling, Akuno, Scheffran, & Weinzierl, 2014).

### Drought and Water Scarcity:

Droughts are a common and devastating occurrence in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. Prolonged periods of drought reduce the availability of water and pasture, forcing pastoralist communities to migrate in search of these essential resources. These migrations can lead to clashes with other communities over access to water points and grazing lands. The scarcity of water, exacerbated by drought, heightens tensions and increases the likelihood of conflict (Adano & Daudi, 2012).

In recent times, Isiolo County has experienced violent clashes along the Ewaso Ng'iro river between the Somalia and Borana ethnic groups. This erupted due to the construction of unauthorized water diversion points by some community members resulting in reduced water flow downstream, affecting other users.

On and Off tensions between the Gabra and the Rendile over water resources in the Chalbi Desert, Marsabit County continues unabated.

<sup>5</sup> KII in Isiolo town, Isiolo County.

<sup>6</sup> KII with the project officer

In Samburu County on the Ngare Mara river, conflict over water resources persists between the Turkana and Samburu communities. This is mainly due to prolonged drought that affected the area drying up key water resources.

The inauguration of water management committees in the three counties aimed at leading the way in resolving the said conflicts has received mixed reactions from the pastoral communities. Even though on several occasions these committees have facilitated dialogue and restored calm, their effectiveness has been hampered by local political interference, limited technical capacities and resources; and pressure from ethnic communities leading to biases in decision making (wachira:2023).

### **Land Degradation and Desertification:**

increasing degradation of these resources has fueled conflicts among communities, exacerbating existing ethnic tensions and leading to significant socio-economic challenges.

Land degradation and desertification are significant environmental issues in these counties. Overgrazing, deforestation, and unsustainable land use practices contribute to the degradation of land, reducing its productivity and further limiting the availability of pasture. As the quality and quantity of grazing land decline, competition among pastoralist communities intensifies, leading to conflicts over the remaining fertile areas and water points. This is evident in Merti and Garbatula in Isiolo county (Schilling et al., 2014).

Baragoi and Wamba in Samburu County experiences the same land degradation challenges leading to intensified conflict between the Turkana and Samburu communities who have long-standing disputes over grazing land. These conflicts have been exacerbated by increased livestock numbers and limited pasture availability, leading to violent confrontations (Greiner, 2013).

Land degradation in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit is driven by multiple factors, including overgrazing, deforestation, climate change, and poor land management practices. Overgrazing, primarily due to high livestock numbers exceeding the land's carrying capacity, leads to soil erosion and reduced vegetation cover. Deforestation for fuelwood and agricultural expansion further contributes to land degradation, diminishing the land's ability to support pastoral activities (Opiyo et al., 2011).

Climate change exacerbates these challenges by causing erratic weather patterns, including prolonged droughts and flash floods, which further degrade the land and deplete water resources (Omolo, 2010).

These environmental stressors reduce the availability of pasture and water, intensifying competition among pastoral communities. This is evident in Merti and Garbatula in Isiolo County where the impact of overgrazing is evident. This situation leads to shortage of water and pasture hence conflict between pastoral communities (Borana and Somali) in an attempt to control access and utilization (Schilling et al., 2012).

Samburu County has also experienced significant land degradation and conflict, particularly in areas like Baragoi and Wamba. In Baragoi, the Turkana and Samburu communities have long-standing disputes over grazing land. These conflicts have been exacerbated by increased livestock numbers and limited pasture availability, leading to violent confrontations (Greiner, 2013). Efforts to address these conflicts through community dialogue and resource-sharing agreements have shown some success, but sustainable land management remains a critical challenge.

In Marsabit County, linkages betweenland degradation and conflict are evident in areas such as Moyale and Marsabit Central. The Gabra and Borana communities have historically competed for grazing land and water resources, with conflicts intensifying during periods of drought where pasture and water scarcity is at its peak.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to address land degradation and conflict in these counties. Sustainable land management practices, such as rotational grazing and reforestation, have been promoted to restore degraded lands and improve their productivity. Community-based resource management programs have been implemented to enhance cooperation and peaceful coexistence among different pastoral groups (Nori et al., 2005). For example, the Rangelands Rehabilitation and Improvement Program in Isiolo County aims to rehabilitate degraded rangelands through reseeding and soil conservation techniques. This initiative involves local communities in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to sustainable land management (Mwaura, 2005).



## Resource Allocation and Access

The unequal distribution and access to natural resources, such as water and grazing land, also drive conflicts. Some communities may have better access to these resources due to their geographical location or historical land rights, while others may struggle to find adequate resources for their livestock. This disparity in resource access creates resentment and competition among communities, often resulting in violent confrontations (Mkutu, 2001).

### Wildlife Conservation and existing strategies:

The establishment of wildlife conservation areas and national parks in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties has also contributed to conflicts. These protected areas often restrict the movement and grazing rights of pastoralist communities, limiting their access to vital resources. The displacement of communities and livestock from these areas lead to conflicts as pastoralists encroach on neighboring territories in search of pasture and water (Adano & Daudi, 2012).

### Population Growth and Shifting Migratory Patterns:

Population growth and migration patterns have an impact on relationships with the environment and also exacerbate climate change and its effects. in these counties. As the population increases, the demand for resources such as water and land also rises. Additionally, the influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants from other regions strain the already limited resources, leading to competition and conflict between host communities and newcomers (Schilling et al., 2014).

Addressing the impacts require a comprehensive approach that includes sustainable resource management, climate change adaptation strategies, and equitable distribution of resources. Other mitigation measures for consideration include strengthening traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and promoting community-based resource management.

*Marsabit, Kenya. ~ Josephine Kiruku (Mercy Corps)*



## Climate Nexus



Traditionally, pastoralist communities have employed various coping mechanisms to manage resource scarcity, such as seasonal migration, communal sharing of resources, and the use of traditional conflict resolution methods.

Climate change poses a significant challenge to the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) of northern Kenya, particularly in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. These regions, home to pastoralist communities, are highly vulnerable to climate variability, including prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and increased frequency of extreme weather events. The resulting scarcity of resources, such as water and grazing land, exacerbates competition among communities, often leading to conflict.

Existing evidence point to the potential for Climate change adaptation strategies in mitigating conflict in these counties. The following are some of the examples that demonstrate the possible effectiveness of such interventions.

### Impact of Climate Change on Livelihoods:

The livelihoods of the pastoralist communities in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties are heavily dependent on livestock, which in turn rely on access to grazing land and water resources. Climate change has disrupted traditional patterns of resource availability, leading to frequent droughts that devastate livestock herds and undermine food security (Opiyo, Wasonga, & Nyangito, 2014). As resources become scarcer, competition intensifies, leading to inter-community conflicts, particularly over grazing rights and access to water points. – Schilling et al, avers that, in Marsabit County for instance, the Turkana and Borana communities have historically clashed over access to the few remaining water sources during prolonged dry spells. These conflicts often escalate into violence, resulting in loss of life, displacement of communities, and further degradation of the environment (Schilling, Opiyo, & Scheffran, 2012).

### Traditional Coping Mechanisms and Their Limitations:

Traditionally, pastoralist communities have employed various coping mechanisms to manage resource scarcity, such as seasonal migration, communal sharing of resources, and the use of traditional conflict resolution methods. However, the increasing severity and unpredictability of climate change have overwhelmed these strategies, rendering them less effective (Adano & Witsenburg, 2009). The disruption of migratory patterns due to climate change has also led to more frequent encounters between different communities, further heightening tensions. In Samburu County, for example, changes in seasonal rainfall patterns have forced the Samburu and Pokot communities into closer proximity, leading to clashes over grazing land that were previously avoided through migration (Greiner, 2013).



## Case Studies in Climate Change Adaptation and Conflict Mitigation

### Isiolo County: The Isiolo Resilience Project:

The Isiolo Resilience Project, implemented by the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with local communities, is an example of a successful climate change adaptation initiative that has helped mitigate conflict. The

project focuses on enhancing the resilience of pastoralist communities through diversified livelihoods, improved water management, and the establishment of grazing committees to manage shared resources (NDMA, 2021). - One of the key components of the project is the development of water infrastructure, including the construction of boreholes and water pans, to ensure a reliable water supply during droughts. This has reduced competition for water resources and alleviated tensions between communities that previously clashed over access to water points. - Additionally, the project has promoted the adoption of alternative livelihoods, such as beekeeping and small-scale irrigation, which reduce dependence on livestock and provide communities with additional income sources. By diversifying livelihoods, the project has reduced the pressure on grazing land, thereby minimizing the potential for conflict (Opiyo, Wasonga, & Nyangito, 2014).

### Samburu County: Community-Based Natural Resource Management:

In Samburu County, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) initiatives have played a crucial role in mitigating conflict by empowering local communities to manage their resources sustainably. One notable example is the establishment of the Nkitoriti Conservancy, a community-managed conservancy that promotes sustainable grazing practices and wildlife conservation (Greiner, 2013). - The conservancy operates under a governance structure that

includes representatives from all the major clans in the area, ensuring that decisions on resource use are made collectively and transparently. This inclusive approach has fostered cooperation among the different clans and reduced the likelihood of conflict over grazing rights. - Furthermore, the conservancy has introduced rotational grazing systems that allow pastures to recover, ensuring that there is enough grass for both livestock and wildlife throughout the year. By reducing the strain on grazing land, the conservancy has helped prevent disputes that arise during periods of resource scarcity (Njeru & Bishu, 2020).

### Marsabit County: Drought Early Warning Systems and Conflict Prevention:

In Marsabit County, the implementation of drought early warning systems (DEWS) has been instrumental in preventing conflict by providing timely information on climatic conditions and resource availability. These systems, managed by the NDMA, use satellite data and community observations to monitor weather patterns and predict droughts (Schilling, Opiyo, & Scheffran, 2012). - The information generated by DEWS is disseminated to communities through local radio stations and mobile phone alerts, enabling pastoralists to make informed decisions about migration and resource use. By anticipating periods of scarcity, communities can avoid areas that are likely to experience conflict and plan their movements accordingly. - Moreover, the NDMA has established conflict prevention committees that work alongside the early warning systems to mediate disputes before they escalate into violence. These committees include representatives from all major ethnic groups in Marsabit, ensuring that all voices are heard and that conflicts are resolved in a manner that is fair and acceptable to all parties (Adano & Witsenburg, 2009).



**Isiolo County:** A key components of the project is the development of water infrastructure to ensure a reliable water supply during droughts.



**Samburu County:** The conservancy has introduced rotational grazing systems that allow pastures to recover, ensuring that there is enough grass for both livestock and wildlife throughout the year.



**Marsabit County:** The Drought Early Warning Systems, managed by the NDMA, use satellite data and community observations to monitor weather patterns and predict droughts

## Recommendations for Climate Adaptation and Conflict Resolution at Scale

In view of the adaptation strategies employed as shown above and their acceptance by the communities in question, need exists therefore for sound strategies that will ensure proper upscaling for wider benefits to cover more counties/contexts in similar situations. For this to happen the following are proposed;

### Enhancing Regional Cooperation:

Climate change adaptation efforts should be scaled up through enhanced regional cooperation among Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. This could involve the creation of a regional framework for resource sharing and conflict resolution that builds on the success of existing initiatives, such as the Isiolo Resilience Project and community conservancies. By fostering cross-county collaboration, these regions can develop joint strategies for managing shared resources, such as water catchments and migratory corridors, reducing the potential for conflict. - Establishing regional drought early warning systems that cover all three counties would also improve coordination and ensure that communities are better prepared to deal with climatic shocks. Such systems should be linked to regional conflict prevention mechanisms, allowing for a more comprehensive approach to managing climate-related risks (Njeru & Bishu, 2020).

### Supporting Community-Led Adaptation Initiatives:

Empowering local communities to take the lead in climate change adaptation is crucial for ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of these efforts. Governments and development partners should prioritize funding and technical support for community-led initiatives that promote sustainable resource management and conflict prevention. - This could include expanding the network of community conservancies in Samburu County, supporting the establishment of more grazing committees in Isiolo, and strengthening

the capacity of conflict prevention committees in Marsabit. These initiatives should be designed in consultation with local communities to ensure that they are culturally appropriate and address the specific needs of different groups (Opiyo, Wasonga, & Nyangito, 2014).

### Integrating Climate Change Adaptation into National and County Policies:

For climate change adaptation to have a lasting impact on conflict mitigation, it must be integrated into national and county development policies. This requires mainstreaming climate change adaptation into all sectors, including agriculture, water management, and disaster risk reduction, and ensuring that these policies are aligned with local realities. - The national and county governments should also invest in capacity-building for local institutions, ensuring that they have the skills and resources needed to implement adaptation strategies effectively. This could include training on sustainable grazing practices, water management, and conflict resolution, as well as the provision of financial support for adaptation projects (Greiner, 2013).

In conclusion therefore, Climate change adaptation offers a viable pathway for mitigating conflict in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. By addressing the root causes of resource-based conflicts, such as water scarcity and competition for grazing land, adaptation strategies can help build resilience among pastoralist communities and reduce the frequency and intensity of conflicts.

The above Case studies of climate adaptation initiatives from these counties demonstrate the effectiveness of community-based natural resource management, drought early warning systems, and regional cooperation in preventing conflict. Scaling up these initiatives and integrating them into national and county policies will be essential for ensuring that climate change adaptation contributes to lasting peace in northern Kenya.

## Land Tenure Practices and Conflict

### Customary vs. Formal Land Rights

Land in the counties under question falls within the community lands act regime. The said Lands Act defines community land as one which is owned by a community of persons, who are citizens of Kenya and share any of the following attributes. — (a) common ancestry; (b) similar culture or unique mode of livelihood; (c) socio-economic or other similar common interest; (d) geographical space; (e) ecological space; or (f) ethnicity.

This therefore means that traditions/customary rites held over centuries are the dominant factors that determine, ownership/allocations, access, and utilization of such lands which are held in common by the community.

While customs of the ethnic communities in question advance common interests through tales of migration and settlement, this has often led to contradictions that have resulted in claims and counter claims especially when it comes to access for grazing livestock especially during drought. This breeds tensions that have more often than not ended up in violent confrontations with deaths and injuries reported.

The above scenario is threatened by business interests advanced by individuals and groups out to change the status quo to their advantage.

### Intersections between land tenure practices and violent conflicts

Land tenure in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties is primarily communal, with land being managed collectively by clans and communities. However, the introduction of formal land registration systems has created tension between traditional practices and modern legal frameworks. In these counties, land is often registered under group ranches, with titles held by groups rather than individuals (Mwangi, 2007).

This system was intended to preserve communal land ownership while providing legal recognition, but it has led to conflicts due to overlapping claims, unclear boundaries, and the exclusion of certain groups from land rights.

One significant study by Kariuki (2020) examined the impact of land adjudication processes in Isiolo County. The study found that the formalization of land rights through adjudication has often exacerbated tensions between communities. In many cases, the process has been perceived as biased, favoring certain groups over others, leading to disputes over land ownership. For example, the allocation of land in Isiolo's peri-urban areas has been a source of conflict between the Borana and Somali communities, who both claim historical rights to the land.

Korf et al. (2015) focused on the role of land tenure in Samburu County. The research revealed that the establishment of group ranches in the 1970s and 1980s has led to the privatization of communal lands, with some elites acquiring large tracts of land at the expense of poorer community members. This has created socio-economic inequalities and contributed to conflicts between pastoralists and those who have acquired land for agricultural purposes.

The study further highlighted how the encroachment of agricultural activities into pastoral lands has intensified competition for scarce resources, often resulting in violent clashes. In Marsabit County, a study by Yatich et al. (2021) examined the relationship between land tenure and conflict in the context of climate change. The study found that the increasing unpredictability of rainfall patterns and prolonged droughts have intensified competition for water and pasture, exacerbating existing land tenure disputes. The research also pointed out that the expansion of protected areas and conservation projects has more often than not led to the displacement of pastoral communities, further complicating land tenure issues and leading to conflict.

The studies mentioned above underscore the significant impact that land tenure systems have on conflict dynamics in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. The formalization of land rights through registration and adjudication processes, while intended to provide security and clarity, has often had the opposite effect.

In many cases, these processes have marginalized certain groups, leading to disputes over land ownership and access. Furthermore, the privatization of communal lands and the encroachment of agricultural activities into traditionally pastoral areas have disrupted established patterns of resource use. This has led to increased competition for land and water, contributing to conflicts between different groups.

The presence of external actors, such as government agencies and private investors, has also complicated the situation, with some communities feeling that their rights have been undermined by these interventions.

According to a report by the National Land Commission (2021), the ongoing land adjudication process in Isiolo has led to significant tensions between the Borana and Turkana communities. The process has been marred by allegations of corruption and favoritism, with some community members accusing local officials of manipulating the process to benefit certain groups. This has resulted in violent clashes between the two communities, leading to loss of life and property.

The report also highlights how the establishment of conservancies in Isiolo has exacerbated land tenure conflicts. While conservancies are intended to promote wildlife conservation and tourism, they have often been established without adequate consultation with local communities. This has led to the displacement of pastoralists and the loss of access to critical grazing lands, further fueling tensions between different groups. This has been the case with Nannapa community conservancy Isiolo, Kalama conservancy in Samburu, and the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) investments across the three counties.



The formalization of land rights through registration and adjudication processes, while intended to provide security and clarity, has often had the opposite effect.

### Policy Responses and Recommendations to Address Conflict in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties:

Addressing land tenure-related conflicts in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties requires a multifaceted approach that considers the complexities of local land tenure systems. Recent policy responses have focused on enhancing community participation in land adjudication processes and promoting dialogue between different groups.

For instance, the National Land Commission has initiated efforts to involve local communities

in land registration and dispute resolution processes, aiming to ensure that these processes are transparent and inclusive (National Land Commission, 2021).

Moreover, there is a need to strengthen the capacity of local institutions to manage land tenure issues effectively. This includes providing training and resources to local leaders and community members to help them navigate the complexities of land registration and adjudication.



Additionally, efforts should be made to integrate traditional land tenure practices with formal legal frameworks, ensuring that both systems complement each other rather than conflict.

### Summation:

The relationship between land tenure and conflict in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties is complex and multifaceted. Recent studies have shown that land tenure systems, particularly the formalization

of land rights, can contribute to conflicts when not managed effectively. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that considers the socio-economic, political, and environmental factors at play. By promoting inclusive and transparent land tenure processes, and by strengthening local institutions, it is possible to mitigate the risk of conflict and promote peaceful coexistence in these counties/regions.

### Policy response to address Land Grabbing and Displacements

Northern Kenya have witnessed significant conflicts related to private ranches and land grabbing. These conflicts are deeply intertwined with issues of land ownership, resource management, and historical grievances among the pastoralist communities that inhabit these areas.

The conflicts over private ranches in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit stem from the colonial and post-colonial land policies that often disregarded the traditional land tenure systems of the pastoralist communities. These policies led to the establishment of private ranches on lands traditionally used for communal grazing, causing tension and disputes among local communities (Greiner, 2013).

For instance, residents of the Losesia Group Ranch in Samburu County have been involved in ongoing disputes over land grabbing. The ranch, which spans 113,653 hectares and supports 940

registered members, has seen local protests against encroachment by powerful individuals and groups who have erected beacons on community land (Wairimu, 2020). These land grabs threaten the livelihoods of the pastoralist communities, who rely on this land for grazing during dry seasons.

Similarly, in Isiolo and Marsabit, conflicts have arisen over the allocation and use of land for private ranches. These areas are often targeted by bandits and cattle rustlers, exacerbating tensions.

The government of Kenya, through various security operations and initiatives, has attempted to address these conflicts. A good example is the inclusion of Isiolo in the military operations (Operation Punguza Uhalifu) to curb banditry highlights the state's efforts to restore order and protect community lands from illegal activities (Nation Media Group, 2023). However, these measures have often been met with mixed results, as deep-rooted issues of land tenure and ownership remain unresolved. Community leaders and local organizations have also played a crucial role in addressing land conflicts.

In Samburu, leaders have called for adherence to court orders and have warned against the illegal sale of community land by grabbers (Wairimu, 2020). Such local initiatives are essential for protecting community interests and ensuring sustainable land use.

### Recommendation:

The conflicts over private ranches in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit are complex and multifaceted, involving historical grievances, land tenure issues, and security challenges. Addressing these conflicts requires a comprehensive approach that includes legal reforms, community engagement, and effective enforcement of land rights. The efforts of both the government and local communities are crucial in fostering sustainable peace and development in these regions.



Conflicts over private ranches stem from the colonial and post-colonial land policies that often disregarded the traditional land tenure systems of the pastoralist communities.

## Towards Sustainable Management of Natural Resource and Conflict

### Water Resources Management

Water scarcity is a significant issue in the arid and semi-arid regions of Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties in Kenya, where the pastoralist communities primarily depend on natural water sources for their livestock and livelihoods. The limited availability of water resources often leads to intense competition among different ethnic groups, contributing to conflict dynamics in these areas. Historically, the pastoralist communities in these counties have engaged in traditional practices of resource sharing and conflict resolution. However, the increasing frequency and severity of droughts, exacerbated by climate change, have strained these traditional mechanisms. Water points, such as wells, rivers, and boreholes, become strategic assets, often resulting in violent clashes as communities vie for control (Schilling, Akuno, Scheffran, & Weinzierl, 2014). The inter-ethnic conflicts are further complicated by political and economic factors. Access to water is not only a matter of survival but also a means of asserting territorial control and political dominance. Politicians may exploit these tensions to gain support, thereby escalating conflicts (Mkutu, 2001).

Additionally, the proliferation of small arms in the region has intensified the violence associated with water resource disputes. Efforts to mitigate these conflicts include the establishment of water resource management committees that involve various stakeholders, including local communities,

government agencies, and non-governmental organizations. These committees aim to promote equitable water distribution and resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation (Adano & Daudi, 2012).

NRT Programme Manager-Peacebuilding<sup>7</sup> posits that enhancing the resilience of these communities through sustainable water management practices and infrastructure development is also crucial in reducing the potential for conflict.

Competition over water resources in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties is a critical driver of conflict. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates traditional conflict resolution methods, equitable resource distribution, and the involvement of all stakeholders in water access and management.

### Recommendation on sustainable Pasture and Grazing Lands Management

Conflicts between pastoral communities in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties in Kenya have been a persistent issue due to competition over resources such as water and grazing land, livestock rustling, and ethnic tensions. These conflicts which are historical in nature not only disrupt local livelihoods but also hinder socio-economic development. Various initiatives have been undertaken to mitigate these conflicts and promote peacebuilding in the region. However, according to the National Steering Committee on



**Conflicts over private ranches stem from the colonial and post-colonial land policies that often disregarded the traditional land tenure systems of the pastoralist communities.**



Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC-PBCM) of the office of the president, Ministry of Interior, progress has been slow as most of these initiatives do not invest in changing the attitude of actors in conflict<sup>8</sup>.

The primary drivers of conflict in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties include:

1. Resource Scarcity: The semi-arid and arid nature of these regions leads to frequent droughts, exacerbating competition over scarce water and pasture resources (Adano & Witsenburg, 2008).
2. Livestock Raiding: Traditional practices of cattle rustling have evolved into commercialized activities involving organized crime, increasing the scale and violence of raids (Eaton, 2008).
3. Ethnic Rivalries: Historical animosities among

different ethnic groups, often fueled by political manipulation, contribute to persistent conflicts (Mkutu, 2008).

4. Political Factors: Local politics characterized by Ethnic alignments, alliances and positioning in an attempt to assume political leadership/ power critical in controlling resources at County level and devolved funds from the national level<sup>9</sup>.

It is recommended that inclusive and participatory pasture management practices need to be put in place so as to invest in pasture availability and where possible value addition in a sustainable manner. This may mean joint cross ethnic initiatives that will also act as points of negotiation and resolutions towards investment in modern pasture production practices and sharing across pastoral communities.



Marsabit, Kenya. ~ Josephine Kiruku (Mercy Corps)

<sup>8</sup> KII with the coordinator, NSC-Nairobi.-

<sup>9</sup> KII with the Head of Programmes, Security Research and Information Centre, Nairobi-Kenya.

## Conflict Impacts

### Economic Disruptions

#### 6.1.2 Food Security Challenges

Pastoralist conflicts in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties have significant repercussions on food security in the region. These conflicts disrupt agricultural activities, displace communities, and undermine livelihoods, exacerbating food insecurity in these already vulnerable areas.

#### **Disruption of Agricultural Activities:**

Conflicts among pastoralist communities lead to the displacement of people and livestock, disrupting agricultural activities crucial for food security. When communities are forced to flee due to violence, they abandon their farms and livestock, leading to decreased agricultural productivity. This disruption affects both crop farming and livestock rearing, which are the primary sources of food and income in these counties (FAO, 2017).

#### **Livestock Losses:**

Livestock is central to the livelihoods of pastoral communities in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit. During conflicts, raiding and violent confrontations often result in significant livestock losses. The loss of livestock not only reduces the immediate availability of food products such as milk and meat but also diminishes the economic stability of households, limiting their ability to purchase food and other necessities (Eaton, 2008).

#### **Displacement, Loss of Life and Disrupted Access to Markets:**

Conflicts in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu have led to widespread displacement and significant loss of life. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2023), an estimated 50,000 people have been displaced across the three counties between 2018 and 2023 due to violent conflicts. Marsabit County has been particularly affected, with approximately 25,000 people displaced, followed by Samburu with 15,000, and Isiolo with 10,000. In terms of fatalities, the KNBS data indicates that between 2018 and 2023, over 1,200 people have lost their lives in conflict-related incidents

in these counties. Marsabit again recorded the highest number of fatalities, with 700 deaths, while Samburu and Isiolo recorded 300 and 200 deaths, respectively (KNBS, 2023).

Violent conflicts lead to the displacement of communities, who then find themselves in unfamiliar areas with limited resources. Displaced populations often have restricted access to markets, both for

selling their produce and purchasing food. This isolation from markets exacerbates food insecurity, as it limits income generation and food availability (Omolo, 2010).

#### **Reduction in Pasture and Water Access:**

Conflicts often result in restricted access to pasture and water resources, essential for sustaining livestock. The competition over these resources can lead to overgrazing and degradation of available pasturelands, further diminishing the ability of pastoralists to maintain their herds. The reduction in livestock productivity directly impacts the food security of pastoral households, as they rely heavily on their animals for nutrition and income (Adano & Witsenburg, 2008).

#### **Humanitarian Needs:**

Conflicts exacerbate humanitarian needs, increasing the reliance on external aid for food security. Humanitarian organizations often have to step in to provide emergency food assistance to affected communities. However, reliance on aid is not a sustainable solution and underscores the need for long-term strategies to address the root causes of conflict and build resilient food systems (Kenya Red Cross Society, 2018).

As evidenced above, the impact of pastoralist conflict on food security in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties is profound and multifaceted. Addressing these conflicts and their underlying causes is essential for improving food security and ensuring sustainable livelihoods in the region.



## Economic Impacts of Conflict<sup>10</sup>:

Conflict and insecurity in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties have significant economic impacts. The impact of conflicts extends beyond immediate losses of livestock and crops. (Mkutu, 2008). The economic impact of conflict in these counties is significant, particularly in terms of livestock losses and disruptions to trade. Livestock is a crucial asset for the pastoralist communities in these regions, and conflicts have led to substantial losses. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2023) estimates that over 150,000 livestock were lost in conflict-related incidents in Marsabit, Samburu, and Isiolo between 2018 and 2023. These losses are valued at approximately KSh 1.5 billion (USD 13 million), severely impacting the livelihoods of pastoralists.

The same report highlights the disruption of local markets and trade routes due to insecurity. For instance, the livestock market in Moyale, Marsabit, which is one of the largest in the region, saw a 40% decline in trade volumes during periods of intense conflict. This disruption not only affects the incomes of traders and pastoralists but also leads to increased prices for consumers due to reduced supply (FAO, 2023).

In summary therefore economic impacts experienced in the area are highlighted as follows;

### Disruption of Livestock Trade:

Pastoralism is the primary economic activity in these counties. Conflict disrupts livestock markets, reduces trade, and leads to loss of livestock through raids and theft. This directly affects household incomes and food security.

### Reduction in Agricultural Productivity:

Insecurity forces communities to abandon farming activities due to fear of attacks. This leads to reduced agricultural output, affecting food supply and increasing prices.

### Loss of Human Capital:

Conflict often results in casualties and displacement, leading to a loss of human capital. Skilled individuals may flee the region, resulting in a brain drain and a reduction in the local labor force.

### Destruction of Infrastructure:

Insecurity leads to the destruction of infrastructure such as roads, schools, health facilities, and water systems.

This hampers economic activities, access to services, and overall development.

### Increased Costs of Goods and Services:

Insecurity can lead to increased transportation costs as routes become unsafe and alternative, longer routes are used. This increases the cost of goods and services, making them less affordable for residents.

### Reduced Investment due to threats on the investment environment:

Persistent conflict deters both local and external investors. Businesses are reluctant to invest in insecure areas, leading to a lack of economic development and job opportunities.

### Strain on Public Resources:

Governments are forced to allocate more resources to security and peacekeeping efforts, diverting funds from development projects such as education, health, and infrastructure.

### Displacement and Humanitarian Costs:

Conflict-induced displacement creates a need for humanitarian assistance, diverting resources that could be used for development. Displaced populations often lose their livelihoods and become dependent on aid.

### Impact on Tourism:

These counties have significant tourism potential due to their natural attractions and wildlife. Insecurity reduces tourist arrivals, affecting the income generated from tourism and related sectors such as hospitality and transport.

### Psychosocial Impact:

The constant threat of conflict and insecurity creates a stressful environment, affecting productivity and the overall well-being of the population. This has long-term implications for

economic growth and development. Addressing these impacts requires comprehensive peacebuilding and development strategies that include conflict resolution, infrastructure development, livelihood diversification, and investment in education and health.

## Social Disruptions

Conflicts have also had profound social impacts, particularly in terms of education and healthcare access. According to a study by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2023), conflict-related disruptions in Marsabit, Samburu, and Isiolo counties have led to the closure of over 50 schools, affecting the education of more than 20,000 children.

Marsabit alone accounts for 30 of these closures, severely impacting educational attainment in the region. Healthcare services have also been disrupted, with several health facilities in conflict-prone areas either closing or operating at reduced capacity due to insecurity.

The same UNICEF report estimates that over 100,000 people in these counties have limited or no access to healthcare services as a direct result of conflict. This has contributed to a rise in preventable diseases and maternal and child mortality rates (UNICEF, 2023).

As a response measure towards community resilience, Pastoral Communities in the three counties have developed various strategies to adapt to conflict and insecurity. While some are at a formative stage, most are ongoing and require further support to succeed. It is therefore recommended that the following should be considered for further support;

### Formation of Peace Committees:

Local communities have established peace committees that include elders, youth, and women. These committees facilitate dialogue between conflicting groups and work on conflict resolution.

### Livelihood Diversification:

Many pastoralist communities are diversifying their livelihoods to reduce dependency on livestock, which is often a source of conflict. This includes engaging in small-scale farming, trade, and other income-generating activities.

### Early Warning Systems:

Communities are developing and utilizing early warning systems to anticipate and respond to potential conflicts. These systems involve sharing information about potential threats and mobilizing resources to address them.

### Strengthening Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as council of elders, are being strengthened and integrated with formal legal systems. These

mechanisms are culturally relevant and often more effective in resolving local disputes.

### Community Policing:

Local communities are collaborating with law enforcement agencies to enhance security. This includes community policing initiatives where residents assist in surveillance and reporting of criminal activities.

### Education and Awareness Programs:

NGOs and government agencies are conducting education and awareness programs to promote peace and coexistence. These programs target youth, who are often involved in conflicts, to change attitudes and behaviors.

### Resource Sharing Agreements:

Agreements on sharing resources like water and grazing land have been established to reduce competition and conflict over these scarce resources. These agreements are often mediated by peace committees or local leaders. Of recent, involvement of county and government administrators has served to promote state recognition and strengthen commitment.

### Infrastructure Development:

Improved infrastructure, such as roads and communication networks, enhances security and economic opportunities, reducing the drivers of conflict. Better access to markets and services also helps stabilize the region.

### Empowerment of Women and Youth:

Empowering women and youth through education, economic opportunities, and involvement in peacebuilding efforts is crucial. Women and youth are key actors in promoting and sustaining peace. These strategies are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of each community, leveraging local knowledge and resources to build resilience against conflict and insecurity.

Social cohesion is one of the key resilience strategies and this calls for well-intended intertwined and mutually reinforcing adaptation strategies (Greiner:2013). Efforts to promote inter-ethnic relations, integrate cultural practices, diversify livelihoods, and managing resources sustainably are essential for fostering peace and stability. By building on these strategies, communities in these regions can better navigate the challenges they face and work towards sustainable peace and development.

## Gender and Conflict

In the pastoralist regions of Samburu, Marsabit, and Isiolo counties in northern Kenya, conflicts over resources, primarily water and grazing land, have profound gender-specific impacts. It was confirmed by respondents that women and men experience these conflicts impacts differently due to their distinct roles and responsibilities in these communities.

### Impact on Women and Children

According to SWEEDO chairperson, women and children are often the most vulnerable groups in these conflicts, facing severe consequences that affects their livelihoods, health, education, and social structures. Pastoral conflicts she said severely disrupt the economic activities of women and children in the three counties. Livestock, the primary source of livelihood for pastoralist communities, is often targeted during conflicts. Women, who play a crucial role in managing household livestock and small-scale trading, are disproportionately affected by livestock losses<sup>11</sup>.

According to a report by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) (2023), conflicts in these counties have resulted in the loss of over 150,000 livestock between 2018 and 2022, valued at approximately KSh 1.5 billion (USD 13 million). This loss has devastated the economic well-being of many households, particularly those headed by women. Moreover, conflicts disrupt local markets and trade routes, further exacerbating the economic vulnerabilities of women. In Samburu County, for example, market closures due to insecurity have forced women to travel longer distances to access alternative markets, increasing their risk of encountering violence and reducing their income opportunities (Mwangi & Omondi, 2022). The decline in economic activities also affects children, as reduced household incomes lead to higher levels of food insecurity, malnutrition, and child labor.

#### Health Impacts:

The health of women and children is significantly compromised by pastoral conflicts. Displacement, violence, and the destruction of health facilities severely limit access to healthcare services. A study by UNICEF (2021) found that in Marsabit County, over 40% of health facilities in conflict-prone areas were either closed or operating at reduced capacity due to insecurity. This has led to increased maternal and child mortality rates, as well as a rise in preventable

diseases such as malaria and diarrhea. Women, particularly pregnant and lactating mothers, face heightened health risks during conflicts. The stress and trauma of violence, coupled with inadequate access to prenatal and postnatal care, result in higher rates of complications during childbirth. Additionally, children in conflict zones are more susceptible to malnutrition and psychological trauma. A report by the World Food Programme (WFP) (2022) indicated that in Isiolo County, conflict-related disruptions to food supply chains have led to a 25% increase in malnutrition rates among children under five.

#### Education Disruptions:

Conflicts have a profound impact on the education of children in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties. Schools are often closed or destroyed during conflicts, depriving children of their right to education. According to data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2022), over 50 schools in these counties were closed between 2018 and 2022 due to conflict-related insecurity, affecting the education of more than 20,000 children.

Girls, in particular, are more likely to drop out of school during periods of conflict. The burden of increased household responsibilities, coupled with the fear of violence, prevents many girls from continuing their education. In Samburu County, for instance, the closure of schools due to conflict has led to a 30% decline in school attendance among girls aged 12 to 16 (Otieno, 2023). The long-term consequences of these disruptions include lower literacy rates, reduced economic opportunities, and an increased risk of early marriage and exploitation.

#### Social and Psychological Impacts:

The social fabric of communities in conflict zones is often torn apart, with women and children bearing the brunt of the psychological impacts. The trauma of witnessing or experiencing violence has long-lasting

11 KII with the Chairperson Samburu Women for Education and Empowerment Development Organization (SWEEDO)

effects on the mental health of women and children. A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2022) in Marsabit County found that 60% of women and children in conflict-affected areas exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The psychological toll of conflict also manifests in increased levels of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse. Socially, conflicts lead to the breakdown of community structures and support systems. Women, who are often the caretakers of family and community relationships, struggle to maintain social cohesion in the face of ongoing violence. The displacement of communities' further isolates women and children from their social networks, making it difficult to access support services or rebuild their lives after conflict. In Isiolo County, for example, displaced women reported feeling abandoned and marginalized, with limited access to resources or assistance (Kariuki, 2023).

In specific terms, In Marsabit County, the conflict between the Gabra and Borana communities in 2021 resulted in the displacement of over 10,000 people, the majority of whom were women and children. The loss of livestock, destruction of homes, and closure of schools left many families destitute, with women struggling to provide for their children in overcrowded displacement camps (IOM, 2022).

In Samburu County, the prolonged conflict between the Samburu and Turkana communities has led to a significant decline in school attendance and health outcomes for women and children. A report by

the Samburu Women for Peace Network (2022) highlighted how the conflict has exacerbated gender-based violence, with women facing increased risks of assault while fetching water or firewood. Children in these areas have also been recruited into armed groups/cattle rustling, further perpetuating the cycle of violence and instability.

### Increased Vulnerability:

Women in these regions often bear the brunt of conflict due to their traditional roles in managing household resources and caring for children. Conflicts disrupt their ability to secure water and food, leading to increased household vulnerability and food insecurity (Greiner, 2013).

### Gender-Based Violence:

Conflicts exacerbate the risk of gender-based violence (GBV). During times of conflict, women and girls are at higher risk of sexual violence, abduction, and exploitation. Displacement due to conflict often places women in precarious situations, making them more susceptible to violence (Chopra, 2008).

### Loss of Livelihoods:

As pastoralists, women are often responsible for milking and selling dairy products. Conflict can lead to the loss of livestock, directly impacting women's economic activities and their ability to support their families. This economic disempowerment can further entrench gender inequalities (Osamba, 2001).

## Impact on Men<sup>12</sup>:

### Involvement in Armed Conflict:

Men, particularly young men, are often directly involved in armed conflict, either as combatants or protectors of their communities. This involvement can lead to loss of life, injury, and long-term psychological trauma. The responsibility of protecting community resources often falls on men, putting them at the frontline of conflicts (Greiner, 2013).

### Displacement and Economic Disruption:

Conflicts force men to migrate in search of safer pastures and water, disrupting traditional patterns of pastoralism. This displacement not only affects their livelihoods but also their social roles and identities within their communities (Odhiambo, 2012).\*

### Mental Health:

The stress of conflict and the pressure to protect and provide for their families can lead to severe mental health issues among men. The lack of mental health services in these regions exacerbates the problem, leaving many men to cope with trauma and stress on their own (Chopra, 2008).

### Community Dynamics/Strain on Social Structures:

The differing impacts on men and women strain traditional social structures and gender relations. Women, increasingly shouldering economic and caregiving burdens, may experience shifts in gender roles, which can cause tension and conflict within households and communities (Osamba, 2001).



## Role of Women in Peacebuilding in Pastoral Communities

Despite their vulnerability, women play a crucial role in peacebuilding. Women's involvement in traditional peace mechanisms and their role in fostering dialogue and reconciliation are vital for sustainable peace. Their unique position; seen as less violent and highly considerate of existing circumstances within the community allows them to bridge divides and promote healing (Odhiambo, 2012).

Their roles as mothers, caregivers, and community leaders position them uniquely to influence peacebuilding processes. Women in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu have utilized traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, advocacy, and education to foster peace and reconciliation among conflicting groups (Gachago & Ndegwa, 2020).

In Isiolo County for instance, women have played a significant role in mediating conflicts between the Borana, Turkana, and Somali communities. One notable example is the role of the Waso Peace Women Group, a grassroots organization that brings together women from different ethnic groups to promote dialogue and reconciliation. According to a study by Odhiambo (2021), this group has been instrumental in organizing peace dialogues, facilitating inter-community meetings, and providing support to families affected by conflict. Their efforts have contributed to reducing tensions and preventing the escalation of violence, particularly in areas such as Garbatulla and Merti.

In Marsabit County, women have been actively involved in peace committees and local governance structures that address conflict resolution. A study by Wario (2019) highlights the role of women in the Marsabit Women for Peace Initiative, which has been central in advocating for disarmament and peaceful coexistence among the Gabra, Borana, and Rendille communities. The initiative has successfully lobbied for the inclusion of women in peace committees, ensuring that their voices are heard in decision-making processes. Through these efforts, women have helped to mediate conflicts over grazing land and water resources, reducing the frequency and intensity of violent clashes.

In Samburu County, women have utilized traditional dispute resolution methods, the "Matanyok"<sup>13</sup> system, to mediate conflicts between the Samburu and Turkana communities. According to the Samburu Women for Peace Network (2020), women elders have played a key role in negotiating ceasefires and facilitating peace agreements. Their deep understanding of local customs and relationships has enabled them to navigate the complex dynamics of conflict and build trust among disputing parties. The report also notes that women have been instrumental in promoting education and economic empowerment as long-term strategies for peacebuilding.



**Women have utilized traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, advocacy, and education to foster peace and reconciliation among conflicting groups.**



**The Waso Peace Women Group in Isiolo has been instrumental in organizing peace dialogues, facilitating inter-community meetings, and providing support to families affected by conflict.**



**The Marsabit Women for Peace Initiative has been central in advocating for disarmament and peaceful coexistence among the Gabra, Borana, and Rendille communities.**

<sup>13</sup> Samburu traditional conflict resolution mechanism led by Laibons (Elders) leading to restorative justice through consensus and traditional Samburu rituals

## Challenges Faced by Women in Peacebuilding in Pastoral Communities

Despite their contributions, women in pastoral communities still face significant challenges in peacebuilding efforts to date. These include cultural and social barriers, such as gender discrimination and limited access to leadership positions. According to a study by Mwaura (2016), women in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu often

struggle to gain the recognition and support needed to effectively participate in peace processes. Additionally, the lack of resources and capacity-building opportunities hampers their ability to sustain peace initiatives over the long term.

## Policy Implications and Recommendations

To enhance the role of women in peacebuilding, it is essential to address the challenges they face and provide them with the necessary support. This includes promoting gender-sensitive policies that ensure the inclusion of women in peace processes and decision-making structures.

Furthermore, investing in education and economic empowerment programs for women can strengthen their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Gachago & Ndegwa, 2020).

Local and national governments, as well as international organizations, should prioritize the participation of women in peacebuilding initiatives. This can be achieved by providing targeted funding, training, and mentorship programs that empower women to take on leadership roles in their communities.

Additionally, integrating women's perspectives into conflict resolution and development strategies

can lead to more sustainable and inclusive peace outcomes.

Women in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties have played a pivotal role in peacebuilding, despite facing numerous challenges. Their contributions to conflict resolution and community cohesion have been vital in reducing violence and fostering long-term peace in these conflict-prone regions. Recognizing and supporting the role of women in peacebuilding is essential for achieving lasting peace and development in pastoral communities.

The gender-specific impacts of conflict in Samburu, Marsabit, and Isiolo therefore highlights the need for targeted interventions that address the distinct needs of men and women. Empowering women economically, protecting them from violence, and involving them in peace and development processes are essential steps towards sustainable peace and development in these counties.



Investing in education and economic empowerment programs for women can strengthen their capacity to contribute to peacebuilding efforts (Gachago & Ndegwa, 2020).

## Local/Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Several peace agreements have been signed between the pastoral communities of Samburu, Marsabit, and Isiolo to address ongoing conflicts primarily over resources such as water and pasture. The agreements have led to community leaders pledging to address armed violence episodes, Naming/listing suspected perpetrators including arms traders, and advocating for better state security.

- 2002 Peace Agreement in the cluster involved the Boran, Meru, Somali, Turkana, and Samburu. It entailed addressing recently experienced violence, listing suspected perpetrators, and calling for better state security. It ended with elders from the communities pledging to work for peace after violent clashes that left ten people dead. (<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/kenya-peace-agreement-among-tribes-isiolo>).
- July 2009, The Maikona Declaration involving elders from Rendille, Gabra, and Borana pastoral communities in Marsabit County. The agreement was facilitated by the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management of the Ministry of Interior, Office of president.
- 2015 Peace Treaty between Samburu and Turkana communities. This came after sporadic violence that lasted for months and was aimed at restoring relations by Ending cattle rustling, stopping retaliatory attacks, promoting elders led reconciliation. A memorandum was signed after a series of meetings organized by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), Northern Rangeland Trust (NRT), and

Finn Church Aid (FCA) following months of conflict that resulted in 50 deaths. (<https://www.kirkonulkomaanapu.fi/en/latest-news/news/isiolo-samburu-peace-treaty-signed/>).

- October 2015 Isiolo Peace Meeting involving Borana, Samburu, Turkana, and Meru communities. - Elders and officials from various organizations held reconciliation meetings in Isiolo to consolidate unity and address the impacts of insecurity on trade and social cohesion in the county. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/gender/indigenous-women-vow-to-jointly-preach-peace-in-isiolo-samburu-4089040>

Mobilizations towards Peace aimed at ensuring participation and representation of stakeholder in peace negotiations have been confronted by traditions that have sustained these initiatives as the sole responsibility of elders/Men. In the process, Women and Youth (both Boys and girls) feel left out. The contradiction here is that it's the youth who are actively engaged in herding and watering animals which involves distant movements in search of water and pasture, and engage with arms traders in an effort to have an upper hand in the conflict.

These agreements and meetings have aimed to promote lasting peace by involving community leaders, elders, and women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution initiatives. However, experts observe that the impact of these peace agreements lasts for a short period of time; then the situation goes back to the negative tensions that characterize the cluster as the socio political, and environmental situation changes.

## Traditional Conflict Resolution Systems

Conflict resolution in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties often relies on traditional mechanisms deeply rooted in the cultural practices of the pastoralist communities. These mechanisms are highly respected and are considered more effective and culturally relevant compared to formal legal systems.

### Council of Elders

Elders hold a central position in traditional conflict resolution and justice mechanisms in these counties. Their authority stems from their age, wisdom, and experience, which command respect and trust within the community<sup>14</sup>.



1.



**Mediation and Arbitration:** Elders often serve as mediators and arbitrators in disputes. Their primary role is to facilitate dialogue between conflicting parties and guide them towards a mutually acceptable resolution. This process, known as “baraza” in some communities, involves open discussions where both parties present their grievances and evidence. The elders deliberate and provide a verdict based on customary laws and principles of fairness.

2.



**Restorative Justice:** The traditional justice system focuses on restorative justice rather than punitive measures. The aim is to restore harmony and relationships within the community. Elders ensure that the offender makes amends to the victim, often through compensation or communal service. This not only resolves the immediate conflict but also reinforces social cohesion.

3.



**Preservation of Cultural Norms and Values:** Elders play a crucial role in preserving and transmitting cultural norms and values that underpin the community’s way of life. They educate younger generations about these norms, ensuring that traditional methods of conflict resolution are upheld. This cultural continuity is vital for maintaining social order and preventing conflicts.

4.



**Peacebuilding Initiatives:** In times of heightened tension or after violent conflicts, elders spearhead peacebuilding initiatives, they organize peace meetings, engage with conflicting groups, and broker peace agreements. Their involvement is instrumental in rebuilding trust and fostering long-term peace.

5.



**Adjudicating Resource Disputes:** Given that many conflicts in these counties arise over access to resources such as grazing land and water, elders play a critical role in adjudicating these disputes. They use their deep knowledge of the land and its history to make fair and informed decisions, ensuring equitable resource sharing.

## Indigenous Justice Systems

Indigenous justice systems play a crucial role in maintaining peace and resolving conflicts among pastoralist communities in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties. These systems, rooted in the traditions and cultural practices of the communities, provide accessible, contextually relevant, and culturally sensitive means of justice.

### i) Structure and Function:

The indigenous justice systems in these counties are typically led by councils of elders, who hold significant authority and respect within their communities. These councils, known as “Njuri Ncheke” among the Ameru, “Gada” among the Borana, and “Naboisho” among the Maasai, serve as the primary arbiters of justice. Elders are chosen based on their wisdom, experience, and knowledge of customary laws (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). The councils of elders handle various issues, including land disputes, theft, marriage conflicts, and inter-communal violence. They employ restorative justice principles, emphasizing

reconciliation, compensation, and the restoration of social harmony. The aim is to achieve an outcome acceptable to all parties, thereby maintaining community cohesion and preventing further conflicts (Cheserek, Omondi, & Odenyo, 2012).

### ii) Processes and Practices:

The processes within the indigenous justice systems are characterized by communal participation and dialogue. Disputes are brought before the council of elders, who listen to all parties involved with witnesses from the community. The process is open, allowing community members to observe and contribute, which ensures transparency and collective ownership of the outcomes. Decisions are typically based on a combination of customary laws and the specifics of the case. Compensation, often in the form of livestock or other locally valuable items, is a common resolution method. This approach not only compensates the aggrieved party but also deters future offenses by imposing a tangible cost on the wrongdoer (Ayalew, 2001).

### iii) Integration of the (indigenous) Traditional with Formal Justice Systems:

There is an increasing recognition of the value of indigenous justice systems, and efforts have been made to integrate them with formal legal frameworks. This integration aims to enhance access to justice, particularly in remote and marginalized areas where formal legal institutions may be absent or distrusted. In some instances, local governments and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) support training programs to help elders understand modern conflict resolution mechanisms and Peace Practices, human rights and gender equality principles, ensuring that the indigenous systems operate within broader legal and ethical standards (Kameri-Mbote, 2006). However, challenges remain, particularly regarding consistency with national laws and international human rights standards.

## Overview of Traditional Justice Mechanisms

### Cultural and Social Foundations

Traditional justice mechanisms in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties are anchored in the customs and traditions of the pastoralist communities, including the Borana, Rendille, Samburu, and Turkana ethnic groups. These mechanisms are usually led by elders, who hold significant authority and are responsible for mediating disputes, maintaining social harmony, and enforcing customary laws (Bollig & Österle, 2019). - For instance, the "Matanyok" system among the Samburu people, and the Gadha among the Borana are well-known example where elders mediate conflicts and deliver judgments based on established norms and values. These decisions often emphasize restorative justice, focusing on

reconciliation and the restoration of social harmony rather than punitive measures.

### Types of Disputes Handled

Traditional justice systems typically address disputes related to land and grazing rights, marriage and family issues, theft, and minor offenses such as livestock disputes. They are particularly effective in resolving conflicts that are deeply intertwined with local customs and practices, such as cattle rustling and boundary disputes (Eaton, 2010). - For example, in Marsabit County, the "Gadha" system among the Borana people plays a crucial role in resolving disputes over grazing land and water resources, which are common sources of conflict in this arid region (Bassi, 2020).

## Comparison with the Formal Judicial System

### Accessibility and Community Trust

One of the primary advantages of traditional justice mechanisms is their accessibility. In many parts of Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties, formal judicial institutions are physically and financially inaccessible due to the remote nature of these regions. Traditional mechanisms, on the other hand, are embedded within the community and are often the first point of call for dispute resolution (Oba, 2013). - Trust in the traditional system is also higher in these communities because the elders who preside over cases are perceived as impartial, knowledgeable about local customs, and invested in the community's well-being. This contrasts with the formal system, where judicial officers may be seen as outsiders with limited understanding of local contexts and where corruption is a concern (Cheserek, Omondi, & Odenyo, 2012).

### Legal Framework and Enforcement

The formal judicial system in Kenya operates under a codified legal framework based on the Constitution and statutory laws. It emphasizes individual rights, due process, and equality before the law, and is backed by the state's enforcement mechanisms (Kenya Judiciary, 2020).

This system is essential for handling serious criminal cases, constitutional matters, and issues that require formal legal documentation, such as land titles and inheritance. - In contrast, traditional justice mechanisms rely on customary laws, which vary between communities and are not always documented. Enforcement is typically social rather than legal, with community pressure and social

sanctions being the main tools for ensuring compliance with decisions. While this can be effective in maintaining social harmony, it may lack the rigor and consistency of the formal judicial process.

### Focus on Restorative vs. Retributive Justice

Traditional justice mechanisms in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties emphasize restorative justice. The goal is often to restore relationships and ensure community cohesion rather than punish offenders. For example, in cases of livestock theft, the focus is on returning the stolen animals and compensating the victim rather than incarcerating the thief (Kameri-Mbote & Kindiki, 2009).

The formal judicial system, however, follows a retributive justice model, where punishment is meted out according to the law, often through fines, imprisonment, or other penalties. While this approach serves as a deterrent and ensures justice is done according to the law, it can sometimes exacerbate tensions in closely-knit communities where collective harmony is prioritized over individual punishment.

### Interaction and Integration

There is growing recognition of the need to integrate traditional justice mechanisms with the formal judicial system in Kenya. The Constitution of Kenya 2010 acknowledges the role of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in Article 159(2)(c), provided they do not contravene the Bill of Rights or involve matters of criminal law (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

In practice, however, the integration of these systems remains limited. There are instances where traditional decisions are respected by the formal system, especially in matters of customary law, such as marriage and inheritance. Nonetheless, conflicts can arise when traditional judgments contradict formal legal principles, particularly in cases involving human rights or gender equality (Mwangi, 2014).

## Challenges and Limitations

### Gender and Human Rights Issues

One of the main criticisms of traditional justice mechanisms is their treatment of women and marginalized groups. In many cases, traditional systems are patriarchal, with limited or no participation by women in decision-making processes. This can lead to outcomes that disadvantage women, particularly in cases of inheritance, marriage, and domestic violence (Alula & Getachew, 2017).

The formal judicial system, by contrast, is bound by the Constitution to uphold human rights and gender equality, offering a more equitable platform for addressing such issues. However, the challenge remains in ensuring that these rights are respected in areas where traditional practices dominate and are more widely accepted.

### Cross Cultural Relevance

While the effectiveness of the traditional justice system is not in doubt in cases involving members of the same ethnic group, the same cannot be

said for a situation involving protagonists from different ethnic groups. Stark differences can be noticed even between neighbouring communities hence impacting on the process and outcome. To this extent, especially in situations of deep mistrust between communities, The formal judicial system is viewed as neutral and effective in providing a solution.

### Consistency and Legal Certainty

Traditional justice mechanisms lack the consistency and predictability of the formal judicial system. Since customary laws are not uniformly codified, decisions can vary significantly depending on the community or the specific elders involved in a case. This lack of consistency can undermine legal certainty and the principle of equality before the law (Cheserek, Omondi, & Odenyo, 2012). - The formal judicial system, while more consistent in applying the law, may be less flexible in accommodating the nuances of local customs and practices, which can lead to decisions that are perceived as unjust or inappropriate by local communities.



## Conclusion

Traditional justice mechanisms in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties play a vital role in maintaining social order and resolving disputes within pastoralist communities. Their accessibility, cultural relevance, and emphasis on restorative justice make them highly effective in many situations. However, they also face challenges, particularly in relation to human rights and gender equality, and their lack of consistency can be a limitation.

The formal judicial system, with its codified laws and state-backed enforcement, provides a necessary framework for handling more serious legal matters and ensuring justice is done in accordance with national and international standards. The ongoing challenge is to find ways to integrate these two systems more effectively, ensuring that justice is accessible, culturally relevant, and aligned with the principles of human rights.

## Religious Institutions and Their Role

Religious organizations play a significant role in peacebuilding efforts in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties. These organizations leverage their moral authority, extensive networks, and influence to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and community cohesion. Notable religious organizations and their contributions to peace in these regions include;

### Catholic Diocese of Marsabit

The Catholic Church in Marsabit is actively involved in promoting peace and reconciliation. The Diocese organizes interfaith dialogues, peace workshops, and community meetings to address conflicts. Their efforts focus on bringing together different ethnic and religious groups to foster understanding and cooperation. The Diocese also runs programs that address social issues like poverty and education, which are underlying causes of conflict (Catholic Diocese of Marsabit, 2022).

### Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) – Isiolo Branch

SUPKEM in Isiolo County engages in various peacebuilding activities, including mediation between conflicting parties and promoting interfaith harmony. The organization works closely with other religious groups to address communal tensions and foster a culture of peace. They also provide platforms for youth engagement and education to prevent radicalization (Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, 2021).

### National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) – Samburu Region

NCCK is actively involved in peace initiatives in Samburu County. They conduct peace and

reconciliation meetings, workshops on conflict resolution, and community outreach programs. NCCK's approach includes addressing issues such as resource-based conflicts and cattle rustling, which are prevalent in the region. They also collaborate with local leaders and government agencies to enhance peacebuilding efforts (National Council of Churches of Kenya, 2023).

### Inter-Religious Council of Kenya (IRCK) – Northern Kenya Chapter

IRCK brings together various religious groups, including Christians, Muslims, and traditional African faiths, to work on peacebuilding in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu. The Council facilitates interfaith dialogues, community peace forums, and educational programs that promote tolerance and understanding. Their initiatives are crucial in addressing ethnic and religious tensions in these counties (Inter-Religious Council of Kenya, 2022).

### African Inland Church (AIC) – Isiolo and Samburu

AIC engages in peacebuilding activities through its congregations in Isiolo and Samburu. They organize peace rallies, educational seminars, and youth empowerment programs. AIC also provides counseling and support for individuals affected by conflict, helping to rebuild trust and community cohesion (African Inland Church, 2021).

### Contributions to Peacebuilding<sup>15</sup>

These religious organizations engage in various peacebuilding activities, such as:

- **Interfaith Dialogues:** Bringing together leaders and members of different faiths to foster mutual understanding and address common issues peacefully.

- **Conflict Mediation:** Acting as neutral mediators in disputes, leveraging their moral authority to facilitate fair and amicable resolutions.
- **Peace Education:** Conducting workshops, seminars, and community education programs on conflict resolution, tolerance, and coexistence.
- **Youth Engagement:** Organizing activities and programs that engage young people in positive, non-violent pursuits, thus preventing their involvement in conflicts.
- **Community Support:** Providing counseling, humanitarian aid, and development assistance to communities affected by conflict, helping to address the root causes of violence.

Religious organizations in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties play a key role in promoting social cohesion and inter-ethnic and religious tolerance. These actions are important in fostering peace and reconciliation in an otherwise tense and fragile environment.

Through their diverse activities and initiatives, these organizations promote interfaith harmony, mediate conflicts, and support community development. Their efforts significantly contribute to the overall stability in these regions.

## Government-Supported Local Peace Committees

While traditional conflict resolution systems in these communities have historically been male-dominated, the role of women is increasingly being recognized and valued. Women bring unique perspectives and skills to the table, which are essential for holistic conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

The following are areas that women have played a key role in their space and contribution to Peace building in the cluster;

### Community Mobilization and Advocacy

Women are adept at mobilizing community members for peace initiatives. They often lead advocacy efforts to promote non-violence and reconciliation. Their ability to communicate effectively and foster inclusive participation makes them key players in grassroots peace movements.

### Reconciliation and Healing

Women are naturally positioned as caregivers and nurturers, roles that extend into their contributions to conflict resolution. They facilitate reconciliation and healing by organizing and participating in peace rituals and ceremonies. Their involvement helps to mend the social fabric torn by conflict.

### Economic Empowerment and Stability

Women's economic activities, such as small-scale farming and trading, contribute significantly to community stability. Economic empowerment initiatives led by women help reduce the economic drivers of conflict, such as poverty and unemployment. By creating livelihood

opportunities, women foster resilience and reduce the propensity for conflict.

### Education and Sensitization

Women play a crucial role in educating children and other community members about the importance of peace and coexistence. Through storytelling, songs, and daily interactions, they instill values of tolerance and mutual respect. Education campaigns led by women are effective in changing attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate conflict.

### Conflict Early Warning Systems

Women are often the first to sense rising tensions within the community. Their networks enable them to gather and share information about potential conflicts.

By reporting these early signs to elders and other community leaders, women help in the timely intervention to prevent escalation.

### Participation in Formal Peace Processes

Increasingly, women are being included in formal peace processes and decision-making bodies. Their participation ensures that peace agreements and policies are inclusive and address the needs of all community members, including those of women and children.

Several women groups and women led NGOs are actively involved in peacebuilding efforts. These groups leverage their unique position within the community to promote peace, reconciliation, and development. Below is a presentation of women

led Peacebuilding initiatives that have built milestones over time in the Peacebuilding arena in the three counties and beyond.

### **Marsabit Women for Peace**

This group operates primarily in Marsabit County, focusing on mediation and conflict resolution among pastoralist communities. They organize peace dialogues and workshops that bring together conflicting parties to discuss grievances and seek amicable solutions. Their efforts are crucial in preventing the escalation of violence, especially in resource-scarce areas.

### **Horn of Africa Women Empowerment Network (HAWEN)**

HAWEN operates across Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties, focusing on women's empowerment as a tool for peacebuilding. They provide training in conflict resolution, leadership, and economic empowerment. HAWEN's approach recognizes that economically empowered women are better positioned to influence peace processes and advocate for non-violent solutions.

### **Samburu Women for Education and Environment Development Organization (SWEEDO)**

SWEEDO, based in Samburu County, integrates peacebuilding with education and environmental conservation. By empowering women through education and sustainable environmental practices, SWEEDO addresses some of the underlying causes of conflict, such as resource competition. Their peace initiatives include community sensitization on the importance of coexistence and collaboration.

### **Pastoralist Women for Health and Education (PWHE)**

Based in Marsabit County, PWHE addresses the intersection of health, education, and peace. Their peacebuilding activities include health education campaigns that bring together different communities, fostering interaction and mutual understanding. They also support women's education, enabling them to take active roles in peace dialogues.

### **Isiolo Peace Link (IPL)**

While IPL is a broader peace initiative in Isiolo County, it has a significant women-led component. Women in IPL facilitate peace meetings and engage in grassroots mobilization to promote reconciliation among warring factions. They play a critical role in early warning systems, reporting potential conflicts and working with local leaders to defuse tensions.

Women groups in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties play a crucial role in fostering peace and stability. Their involvement ranges from grassroots mobilization and mediation to economic empowerment and policy advocacy. By leveraging their unique positions within the community, these groups effectively address the root causes of conflict and promote long-term peace.

Traditional conflict resolution and justice mechanisms in Isiolo, Samburu, and Marsabit counties are deeply embedded in the cultural practices of the pastoralist communities. Elders and women play pivotal roles in these mechanisms, contributing their unique strengths and perspectives. Elders provide wisdom, experience, and authority in mediating and arbitrating disputes, while women offer community mobilization, reconciliation, economic stability, and early warning capabilities. Together, they ensure that conflicts are resolved in a way that restores harmony and promotes sustainable peace. Integrating these traditional roles with formal systems can enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution and justice in these regions.



**Women groups in Isiolo, Marsabit, and Samburu counties play a crucial role in fostering peace and stability.**



## Youth Initiatives for Peace

Youth involvement in Conflict in pastoral communities in Kenya has been ongoing since time immemorial. Moranism a cultural phenomenon that appreciates the role of youth in securing society as part and parcel of a right of passage and in shaping the security architecture of most pastoral communities continues to be practiced to date. Most respondents admit to the fact that their isolation in peace processes has more often than not led to violations of the said treaties by youth who feel that their welfare has not been catered for in the peace negotiations.

According to the County Peace Committee chairperson, Isiolo county, Youth take part in cattle raids to restock and as a way of generating income for themselves and their families. To this extent they are ready and willing to risk it all to ensure that they have resources to support themselves and their families. This means participating in cattle raids.

There seems to be limited youth led initiatives in the cluster thus calling for specific youth engagements to foster peace in the area.

## Effectiveness and Challenges of Local Mechanisms

Traditional peace mechanisms have long been a cornerstone of conflict resolution among pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya. These mechanisms, deeply rooted in indigenous customs and practices, have played a significant role in maintaining harmony and resolving disputes over resources such as water and grazing land.

Traditional peace mechanisms in Northern Kenya often involve various strategies, including:

### Elders' Councils

Elders from different communities come together to mediate and resolve conflicts. Their authority and wisdom are respected, and their decisions are generally adhered to by the community members.

### Peace Pacts and Declarations:

Agreements such as the Modogashe Declaration and the Maikona Declaration are examples where community leaders formally commit to peace. These declarations often involve rituals and ceremonies to bind the parties to the agreement (Greiner, 2013).

### Inter-community Dialogue

Regular meetings and discussions between different pastoralist groups help in preempting conflicts and addressing grievances before they escalate.

### Resource Sharing Agreements

Agreements on the use of resources like water points and grazing areas during dry seasons to avoid conflicts (Wario, 2006).

These traditional/Local mechanisms have had a measure of success in stemming violent conflict amongst pastoral groups. For instance, the Maikona Declaration in 2009 significantly reduced hostilities between the Gabra and Borana communities in Marsabit County (Greiner, 2013).

The fact that these initiatives and community/traditionally driven means that solutions are culturally binding hence increasing the chances of long-term adherence to peace agreements (Osamba, 2001).

Local communities are fully aware of root cause of conflict and therefore stand a better chance of facilitating workable solutions that would lead to lasting peace. This was further reiterated by the Isiolo County Peace Committee (CPC) chairperson who indicated that most times, the CPC just needs facilitation to reach affected areas and they would easily mobilise parties involved and engage them in peace dialogue immediately.

**Sustainable Peace:** The culture of dialogue fronted by the Traditional peace mechanisms often promotes sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as competition over resources, and fostering a culture of dialogue and cooperation (Chopra, 2008).

**Flexibility and Adaptability:** The flexibility of traditional mechanisms allows them to adapt to changing circumstances and incorporate new challenges, such as those posed by climate change and modern political dynamics (Odhiambo, 2012).



The local Peace structures are however confronted by a number of challenges which include the following.

### **Limited Scope**

While effective at the local level, traditional mechanisms may struggle with conflicts involving multiple communities or larger geographical areas (Chopra, 2008).

### **Integration with Formal Systems**

There is often a lack of formal recognition and support from national governments, which can limit the effectiveness and enforcement of traditional peace agreements (Osamba, 2001). The chairman Isiolo County Peace Committee lamented that there exists discordance in terms of how they are perceived by the County government and the provincial administration. They therefore have to resort to engaging NGOs in raising resources to

fund their budget when in essence they are doing what the government is supposed to be doing, emphasized the chairman.

### **External Influences**

Modern political and economic factors can undermine traditional mechanisms. For instance, the influx of arms and political manipulation can escalate conflicts beyond the control of traditional leaders (Greiner, 2013).

Despite the above challenges, Traditional peace mechanisms remain a vital tool for conflict resolution among pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya and beyond. Their effectiveness lies in their cultural relevance, community ownership, and ability to address the root causes of conflicts. However, their integration with formal legal and political systems, along with support from external actors, is important in enhancing their effectiveness and sustainability.

## Recommendations and Way Forward

Given the existing situation in the three counties and the ever-present threat of small arms and Light weapons (SAWLs), the calls for consistent commitment and wider mobilization of local and national stakeholders to focus their singular

and collaborative efforts on address the conflict situation sustainably has become urgent. For this reason, the following are the proposed recommendation;

### Short-term Conflict Mitigation Strategies

Mobilization of local actors and formulation of an intercounty Peace forum brining together the county administration, State Administration and civil society (including faith-based institutions). This will allow for continued analysis of conflict and dynamics involved while providing a viable platform where conflict immediate conflict mitigation strategies could be crafted and executed.

It is of critical importance that such initiatives are conflict sensitive and youth and gender sensitive as well for posterity. The RANGE Programme could lead the way with a clear need to make the action localized as possible for posterity.

### Long-term Peace and Development Initiatives

Long terms strategies for ensuring peace should ideally include advocacy at county level to ensure increased awareness of the impacts of conflict on intercommunal relations, the business environment and consistent budgetary allocations to initiatives that will realize improved communal relations.

Given the continued existence of traditional authority in these communities and the reliance on councils of traditional elders on matter related to social order, the county governments nature of governance and the state administration should

appreciate the important role played by these traditional structures and seek to engage them in a structured manner. The current scenario where the council of elders are once in a while consulted when the security situation falls out of hand presents them as an afterthought, a situation which these structured do not appreciate. This could be actioned by Mercy Corps by initiating a forum of the county officers in charge of peacebuilding and conflict management in the three counties and beyond, civil society organizations and religious institutions present.

### Policy Recommendations

Since 1991, after the country experienced high level of violent conflict in Northern Kenya, there was a strong civil society led call for institution of a National Peace Policy. This was aimed at ensuring recognition of local effort and making the state administration and local/traditional conflict resolution structures formal and impactful. After years of advocacy by Oxfam GB and Saferworld, the proposed Peace Policy was adopted into a Parliamentary Sessional Paper No. 5, in 2014. However, it has not been given deserving attention by Parliament since then and there seems to be no continued engagement on the issue either from the government or the civil society side (AFSC: 2014).

Owing to the above, there is need for the RANGE Programme to review the Status of the proposed

Peace Policy with a view to engaging stakeholders for continued advocacy towards having a national Peacebuilding and Conflict Management Policy which shall among other issues recognize local Peace Initiatives and allocate resources to make them operational and effective. Collaboration with the National steering committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, and National Programmed such as URAIA may help reawaken this initiative and move it to fruition.

Once in place the peace policy will improve coordination in the prevention, mitigation and management of conflicts as well as ensure that peace processes are inclusive, participatory, culturally sensitive, transparent and accountable. The policy also provides a legal framework for the allocation of resources to peace interventions



by the government, which will go a long way in ensuring that conflict issues are addressed in real time.

Components of the peace structure within the Peace Policy should ideally include, a National Peace Council, National and County Peace Secretariats, National and County Peace Fora, Local

Peace Committees and Mediation Support Units. Accompanied by engagement of experienced Peacebuilding and conflict specialists as technical personnel, the results will be sustainable Peace through increased capacities to transform and prevent conflicts.

## Conflict Monitoring and Early Warning Systems

Early Warning Systems serve as the source of current/Up to date information concerning an area that is experiencing conflict. Out of experiences from violent pastoral conflict and the accompanying threats to the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC-PBCM) a unit within the Ministry of Interior, Office of the president worked closely with IGAD-CEWARN mechanism to initiate monitoring and reporting on Pastoral conflict.

While recognizing that the IGAD/CEWARN Mechanism was a good starting point from a sub-regional perspective; but was not all inclusive and had confined its mandate to pastoral conflict, the NSC-PBCM saw the need to establish a National Conflict Early Warning and Early response platform to respond to this need in 2009. However, the national Conflict Early Warning Platform has in the

last five years continued to lose momentum with limited reference to it by key stakeholders in the recent past putting into question its existence and effectiveness in generating viable data on conflict that would otherwise inform effective response.

Need therefore exists for a revamped engagement on Conflict Early Warning and Early response with a view to supporting Peace initiatives within the three counties and beyond. This should ideally begin with a review of where both the IGAD-CEWARN mechanism and the NSC-PBCM led mechanism are and the extent of their effectiveness in generating viable data to inform responses to conflict. The RANGE Programme should initiate conversations with NDMA, NSC-PBCM, and IGAD-CEWARN so as to explore a partnership in this arrangement.



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## Conclusion

Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu counties exhibit a complex socio-economic landscape characterized by pastoralism, agriculture, and emerging trade opportunities. Despite significant potential, the socio-economic development in these regions faces numerous challenges including high levels of poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to basic services such as education and healthcare. (Kratli, 2001).

The economic activities are largely influenced by environmental conditions, with frequent droughts adversely affecting livelihoods. Efforts to diversify the economy, including the promotion of tourism and small-scale enterprises, are ongoing but require substantial investment and policy support to realize their full potential (Ngugi & Nyariki, 2005).

Governance in Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu counties is influenced by a combination of traditional structures and formal government institutions. The devolution of powers to county governments has had mixed results. While it has brought governance closer to the people, issues such as corruption, nepotism, and weak institutional capacity persist (Greiner, 2013).

Effective governance in these regions necessitates strengthening institutional frameworks, enhancing accountability, and fostering community participation. Integrating traditional governance systems with modern administrative structures could enhance legitimacy and responsiveness (Markakis, 2004).

Peace and security in these counties are critical concerns due to recurring conflicts over resources such as water and grazing land. Ethnic tensions and competition for scarce resources often lead to violence, disrupting social and economic activities (Mkutu, 2001). The availability of Small Arms and Light weapons through largely porous international borders between Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia have contributed to a small arms supply chain that has posed challenges to state actors in an effort to tame the illicit flows and maintain peace and security albeit with limited success.

Efforts to address these conflicts have included peace-building initiatives, disarmament programs, and the promotion of alternative livelihoods to reduce dependency on contested resources. However, sustainable peace requires addressing the underlying socio-economic inequalities and fostering inter-ethnic cohesion (Schilling et al., 2012).

The interlinkages between socio-economics, governance, and peace and security in Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu counties are evident. Economic hardships exacerbate tensions and undermine governance structures, while poor governance and insecurity hinder socio-economic development.

Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that incorporates economic development, governance reforms, and peace-building efforts. These are further presented below;

### Economic Diversification and Development

Investment in infrastructure, education, and healthcare is crucial to improving the socio-economic conditions. Supporting alternative livelihoods and promoting sustainable agriculture can reduce dependency on vulnerable pastoralist systems (Little, 2013).

### Strengthening Governance

Enhancing the capacity of county governments and integrating traditional governance structures can improve service delivery and accountability. Anti-corruption measures and community engagement are essential for effective governance (Greiner, 2013).

### Peace and Security Initiatives:

Comprehensive peace-building strategies that involve all stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations, are necessary. Programs aimed at resource management, conflict resolution, and inter-ethnic dialogue can foster long-term peace (Schilling et al., 2012).

In conclusion, the future of Marsabit, Isiolo, and Samburu counties depends on concerted efforts to address the interrelated challenges of socio-economic development, governance, and peace and security. Adopting an integrated approach, leveraging local knowledge, and ensuring inclusive participation, can lead to consistent progress towards sustainable peace and development in the counties in question and beyond.

Having presented the above, it is incumbent upon Mercy Corps/RANGE to strategize while putting this information into consideration with a view to initiating deliberate actions aimed at positively impacting on the Peace/Conflict scenario.

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