



Pastoralist Parliamentary  
Group



Drylands Learning and  
Capacity Building Initiative  
for Improved Policy and  
Practice in the Horn of Africa

## DISCUSSION BRIEF: Towards peace and security in dryland Kenya: the demand for a new approach

Sarah Gibbons, November 2014<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

On-going conflicts and insecurity in Kenya are challenging the nation's ability to achieve its economic and developmental goals. In the drylands, conflicts and violence are highly complex and multi-layered: Although they *'may appear limited and localized to pastoralist dryland areas, (they) may be fuelled by drivers (from) institutional, political-economic and social spheres operating at national, regional and even global levels.'* (Pavanello and Scott-Villiers. 2013, p.1).<sup>2</sup> Institutional factors driving conflicts include contested borders, weak land tenure rights, and failures of policing and justice; political-economic factors include extractive commercial enterprises without adequate benefit sharing, land alienation, divisive politics and corrupt local administrations; whilst social factors relate to historical marginalisation and exclusion, as well as issues of identity, gender and ethnicity (Humphreys 2005; Young 2007; Boege et al. 2008; IADC 2009; Beswick 2010; Bueger et al. 2011; Hickman 2011; Mengisteab 2011; Williams 2011, in Pavanello and Scott-Villiers 2013, p.4)<sup>3</sup>.

The multi-layered and inter-twined nature of dryland conflicts goes some way towards explaining why maintaining sustainable peace is so challenging, with efforts to build peace at one level impacted and negated by processes at another. For example, despite a long-term process of building peace in Kenya's northern counties, destabilising forces from across the national borders, as well as manipulation from political leaders emanating from the country's transition towards devolution, have fuelled recent violent outbreaks of conflict. The conflicts in Wajir and Mandera Counties, between people from the Degodia and Garre clans, are examples of this, and have left many dead and scores displaced. The conflicts are fuelled by historic clan tensions but are exacerbated by political manipulation. Near the Ethiopian border the area is further destabilised by the presence of armed opposition groups, and the flow arms from neighbouring Somalia, creating an increasingly militarised society. Similar inter-ethnic conflicts have also erupted in Marsabit, Pokot, Turkana and Samburu counties in the recent past.

Kenya's military engagement in Somalia has also had profound effects on insecurity across the country, with terror attacks becoming increasingly common; particularly in coastal regions, North Eastern Kenya, and around major cities such as Nairobi. Security, governance and development vacuums in the peripheral dryland areas that border Somalia have enabled armed groups, weapons and jihadist ideology to gain ground in Kenya; not only destabilising these peripheries, but also causing threat to the country as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> Written by Sarah Gibbons, DLCI consultant from material provided by the Pastoral Parliamentary Group (PPG).

<sup>2</sup> Pavanello, S. and Scott-Villiers, P. (2013). 'Conflict resolution and peace building in the drylands in the Greater Horn of Africa'. Brief prepared by a Technical Consortium hosted by CGIAR in partnership with the FAO Investment Centre. Technical Consortium Brief 6. Nairobi: International Livestock Research Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid



This discussion paper looks at recent efforts to build greater peace and security, outlines the weaknesses and gaps within existing strategies, and outlines the calls for a new approach. Some core principles for a revised approach to building peace and security in dryland Kenya are put forward, as well as the current national and regional opportunities to ensure sustained peace becomes a reality.

## Recent government strategies for peace and security

The Government of Kenya has undertaken a number of peace building and conflict management efforts in the drylands, particularly in its North Eastern provinces many as a response to the post-election violence in 2008. Often efforts have focused on ‘peace building from below’ and the involvement of communities in maintaining and negotiating peace, building on the strengths of customary institutions. District Peace Committees (DPCs) were established mainly in in the North East as hybrid multi-stakeholder institutions— based on successful home-grown peace efforts undertaken in Wajir during the 1990s<sup>4</sup>.

DPCs have been established across the country following the passing of the *National Accord and Reconciliation Act* in 2008, with the aim of bringing responsibility for peace closer to the people, and to create linkages between State and customary institutions. DPCs were judged to have had a positive effect in maintaining peace in some areas during the post-election violence of late 2007. ‘*In Kenya, District Peace Committees kept post-election violence from spreading to the normally volatile Northern and Coast provinces during early 2008, (whilst) Rift Valley and Nyanza, where these structures did not normally exist, experienced large-scale violence.*’(UNDP)<sup>5</sup>.

A National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peace Building and Conflict Management has been established in the Office of the President since 2001, and is responsible for formulating a national policy on conflict management and for coordinating all peace efforts in the country, including DPCs. The NSC also doubles as the Kenya Conflict Early Warning Early Response Unit (CEWERU) under IGAD’s Conflict Early Warning and Response mechanism (CEWARN).

In an effort to curb the flow of arms into the country, Kenya has ratified the *Nairobi Protocol on the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa*. In 2003 it established a Kenyan National Focal Point, and developed a national action plan and *National Policy on Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs)*. This policy was finalised in 2009, but is yet to be adopted.

In 2011 Kenya also drafted the *National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management*. This policy lays out clear measures ‘*that increase the potential for peaceful coexistence, and human security, as precursors for sustainable development*’. It also lays out the institutional framework at national, county and local levels for implementing the policy in line with the Constitution; but, as with the *National Policy on SALWs*, it is yet to be enacted, and is awaiting approval from Parliament. In 2013 Kenya drafted a *National Disarmament Action Plan*, as a strategy for arms collection over a 3-year period.

## Challenges within the existing peace and security system in Kenya

<sup>4</sup> The Wajir Story, Wajir Peace and Development Association, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> [www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/operations/.../districtpeace](http://www.ke.undp.org/content/kenya/en/home/operations/.../districtpeace)



Despite the efforts towards new strategies and policies, significant weaknesses and gaps occur within the peace and security system in Kenya. The complexity of conflicts in the drylands requires a more multi-layered and multi-sectoral approach, as well as the political will and commitment of different actors across the country to implement the policies and strategies. Issues and challenges that urgently need to be addressed include:

**1. The over emphasis on local peace building/communities:** Previously local communities and their traditional institutions were responsible for managing conflicts. Whilst there continues to be a significant place for citizens in developing a culture of peace, greater emphasis on the responsibilities of both the State and political leadership is now required. The abilities of the communities to use traditional means of negotiation and dialogue are being curtailed by modernisation, education (influencing the dynamics between elders and youth), the availability of firearms, and the commercialisation of the previously cultural practice of cattle rustling. The result is a growth of conflicts in what is termed ‘the predatory sphere’<sup>6</sup> where violence and crime is driven by economics, but is enabled by gaps in, and selective application of, laws and norms within the civic and traditional spheres. Conflicts in the drylands are being transformed away from traditional resource-based incidents, and are driven by economic and political gain. They thus require more complex, coordinated responses involving both customary and State authorities.

Specific challenges also occur with regard to District Peace Committees in dryland areas, which, due to the progressive sub-division of districts, became increasing mono-ethnic and lost their capacity to create relationships across ethnic groups. Where peace and security systems are confined to a single district there is no mechanism for dealing with issues that span administrative boundaries. The new county administrative structure in Kenya can provide a mechanism under which a number of ethnic groups can be brought together to ensure multi-ethnic collaboration, particularly if inter-county coordination is enabled. The increasing availability of SALWs is an example of how issues, such as disarmament or licensing, if tackled only in a single country, will have limited effect unless linked to wider root causes and influences.

**2. Lack of coordination:** The emphasis given to community-led peace building has meant limited linkages or collaboration between community peace building and national security/judicial structures. Security, as the remit of the national government, is geared towards conflict response rather than prevention. It focuses on the army and its reactionary ‘security operations’ after a major incident, with few links made to local people or to the root causes of conflict. This frequently results in ‘on-the-ground’ security responses that are either poor or counter-productive. National responses also suffer from a failure of intelligence, problems with corruption in firearms issuance, and poorly resourced or trained police officers. District Peace Committees are not attached to State security or justice systems, with no efforts made to explore the role that local communities can play in maintaining security, or to appreciate the importance of security and justice as a means of developing cultures of peace.<sup>7</sup> With the transition to devolution, disagreements continue on the role of the county level in the provision of security.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> This term is one of three conflict spheres noted in the National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management – Traditional Sphere, Civic Sphere and Predatory Sphere.

<sup>7</sup> Peace Committees established in Wajir in the 1990s were a notable and important exception to this in two respects: 1) the DPC was a sub-committee of the District Development Committee (DDC), chaired by the District Commissioner; 2) elders involved in the peace structures were invited to attend security meetings. In this way the security and peace apparatus were brought together.

<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000128027/experts-present-opposing-views-on-devolving-of-security-operations> and <http://allafrica.com/stories/201409030859.html>



At the same time, despite recognition by African leaders<sup>9</sup> of the prevalence of conflict in areas that are subject to high levels of poverty, and the significant threat of this inequality to national cohesion, there are few mechanisms to embed conflict sensitivity into development or investment planning. Links between peace and development have traditionally considered only the impact of conflict on development—i.e. insecurity limiting investment and destroying infrastructure. Little is done to understand the potential of peace for development, or conversely the lack of it, to fuel conflict. This understanding is increasingly essential in light of the new focus on investment and development in the north of Kenya, and the exploitation of high value resources, such as oil and gas. It is also important as a counter to the efforts by extremist groups to radicalise vulnerable, disaffected youth in the drylands.

**3. Political manipulation/commitment:** The political leadership displayed its commitment to peace and security through the *Naivasha Declaration* in 2008,<sup>10</sup> but there remain disincentives to peace that are often stronger than incentives. Devolution has increased the amount of economic and political power at stake; and elected political leaders will often side with their own communities during conflict, rather than looking for the real cause or evidence. Rumour and mistrust create on-going cycles of violence due to leaders' lack of faith in the State's ability to protect people, but also due to the political and financial gains that can be made from ensuring victory for one's own group.

**4. The normalisation of conflict in pastoral areas:** It is arguable that a higher level of violence and suffering is tolerated in the northern parts of Kenya as it is regarded as normal. In many places judicial systems are not well developed and cattle raiding (for example) is often not viewed as a criminal activity, but as a cultural practice. This decriminalisation of behaviour as being culturally *normal* provides a level of impunity that results in an array of other violent behaviour also being seen as culturally sanctioned and acceptable. There is a risk that this absolves the State of its responsibility to protect its citizens, with conflicts that are viewed as 'traditional' or 'cultural' becoming the remit of the local leadership to manage.

**5. Lack of institutional structures:** The delay in passing the *National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management* is having an impact on the level of funds and other resources being allocated to the development of institutions for peace building. This includes the National Steering Committee, which continues to be under-resourced. Despite a clear architecture being laid out in the policy, until it is approved it is unlikely that attention will be given to creating the security, and inter-county peace structures, that are necessary to tackle on going conflict and insecurity.

## The calls for a new approach

With the continued eruption of violent conflicts across the drylands of Kenya, calls have been made for a radical shift in the way in which peace and security are promoted and maintained. The ***National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management*** recognises the lack of coordination and collaboration, and the need to mainstream peace and security with development and governance issues, with current responses to conflict being '*ad-hoc* and reactive'. The *Peace Building and Conflict Management Strategy* developed in 2009 by the State Ministry for Development of Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands (MDNKOAL) and the Ministry of Provincial Administration and Internal Security, also calls for a coordinated approach that unites the State, citizens, political leadership and neighbouring countries in

<sup>9</sup> The Common African Position on post-2015 sustainable development goals includes a 5<sup>th</sup> pillar on peace and security due to '*their inextricable link to development*', and recognises the need to pay close attention to the numbers of people living with or recovering from high levels of violence, in an effort towards sustainable development that will leave no-one behind.

<sup>10</sup> The Naivasha Declaration was signed by senior government representatives, and MPs in 2008 to recognise the essential role of the State in providing security to its citizens.





useful in addressing systemic drivers of conflict, as will efforts to enable inter-county coordination and collaboration—particularly around developmental planning or security issues (such as mass displacement and cattle rustling). Strengthening county governments’ knowledge of and engagement with the CEWARN system will also allow these considerations to be taken up to cross border levels, where drivers of conflict have considerable impact.

- 2) **Integrate peace and security.** As stated above, peace is often considered the domain of local communities, and security the domain of the State. This is in part due to the divisions in the mandates of the national and local governments, but also the understanding of what constitutes security, which in most cases is ‘reactionary measures when conflicts erupt’. In reality, security is an inherent part of maintaining peace, and as such peace and security efforts need to be integrated. Integration requires agreements by County Governors and Commissioners on the mandate of both within the devolved structure, and the strengthening of mechanisms through which communities can play a role, such as through community policing initiatives. Judicial systems also need to be established that citizens have confidence in, without ignoring traditional values of problem solving and relationship building. Counties and national government need to ensure resources are provided to improve collaboration and intelligence amongst the judiciary, the police and communities.
- 3) **Integrate peace building within other sectors.** It is particularly important, given the extensive investment plans being rolled out across the ASALs, that peace building is integrated within development and governance. There can be no security in the face of rampant corruption as it enables the flow of arms, criminality, inequality and resource capture. Political leaders, such as MPs and Senators, must be encouraged to adopt collaborative leadership approaches that unite their constituents and promote fairness and equality in the access and allocation of resources; rather than those which fuel conflicts and divisions. Without fairness, security and justice becomes a personal responsibility enabled by the availability of small arms. Mechanisms for fairness include development efforts such as county integrated development, land use plans, and investment decision making; as well as governance processes that ensure the adoption of inclusive participation and transparency principles in all decision making, enhancing meaningful engagement of citizens.

All these issues require an integrated, coordinated, long-term approach to peace building across the ASALs of Kenya, and the country as a whole. Previous peace building and conflict management efforts have been small in scale and duration, emerging as a result of a specific event and then discontinued. Work on peace building must be integrated within the focus on resilience, and must align with frameworks and strategies developed for this. Focus must also be given to the role of all actors: communities, CSOs, the State, political leaders, as well as neighbouring countries in the region through the IGAD mechanisms provided. The architecture laid out in the *National Policy on Peace Building and Conflict Management* provides the mechanism for this coordination with the guidance of the *National Peace Council*, as does the call for the development of a national campaign within the *EDE Common Programme Framework*. This campaign would be a key entry point for civil society, and ensure that all actors seeking to build peace are working within the same framework of action.

## Conclusions and way forward

Kenya is well positioned to move forward with a new, concerted effort in addressing the continuing challenge of conflict and insecurity, through the provisions within the Constitution and the various national and regional policy frameworks and guidelines recently drawn up. To reduce the threat insecurity poses to economic growth, it is







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