

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Taya Weiss wrote this monograph while a consultant to the ISS Arms Management Programme. She has travelled extensively throughout Africa and has worked on gender, small arms and development issues in South Africa and the United States.

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## GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

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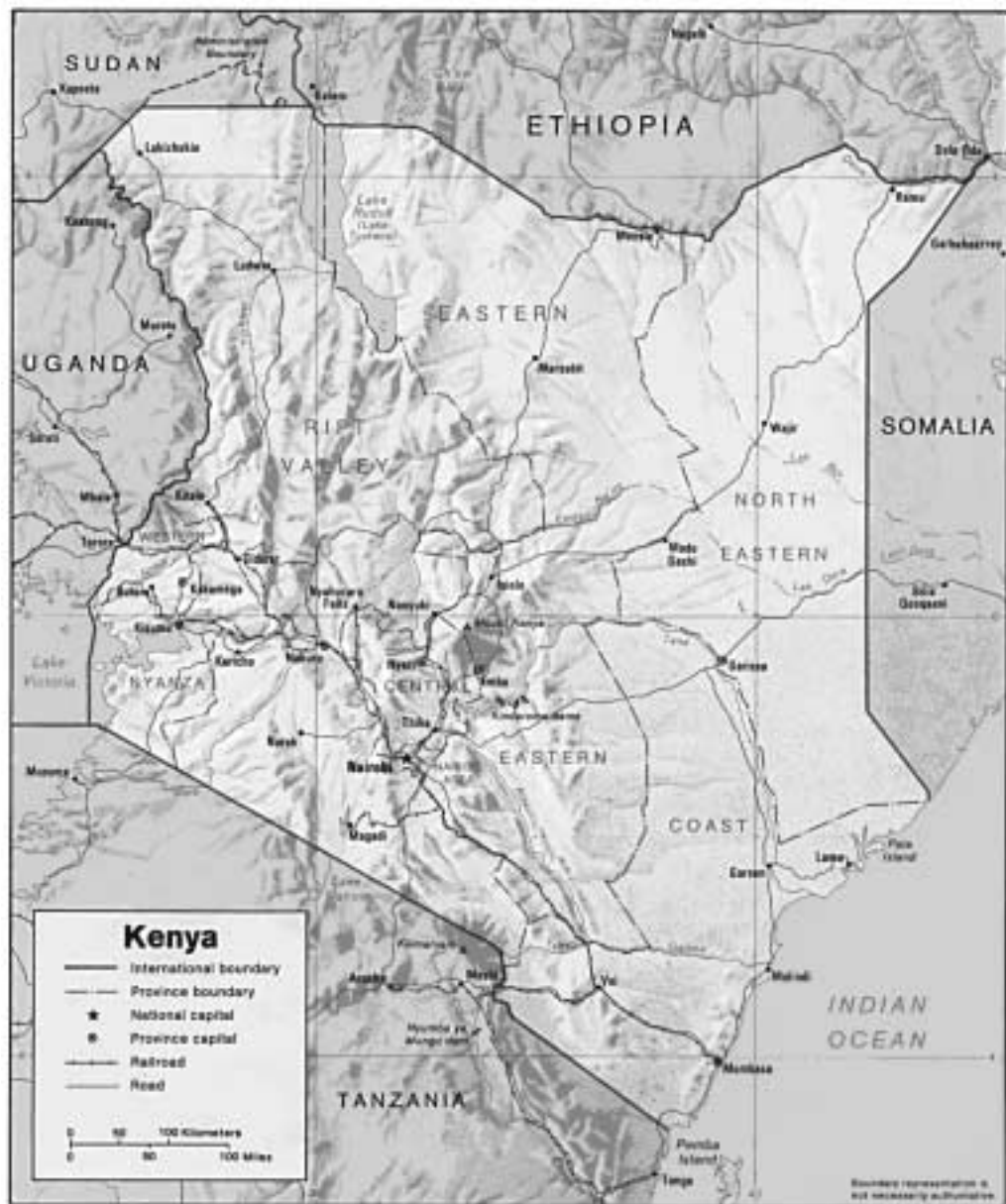
- Arid Lands** Officially, the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP). A World Bank funded project administered through the Office of the President that began as an emergency response to drought and has evolved into a full-scale sustainable development plan.
- Baraza** Community gathering or meeting. Often called by the chief of a location to give or discuss official government news. Also used as a platform by local peace builders.
- CBO** Community-based organization. Similar to an NGO, a CBO is not authorized to receive or disburse large amounts of funding because of the lack of accounting capacity.
- DDC** District Development Committee. The district-level, government-led committee on development issues. Particularly influential in areas where the Arid Lands Project is inactive, since it serves a similar purpose to a DSG.
- DSC** District Security Committee. The district-level, government-led committee on security that excludes NGO and CBO participation unless in the form of one-way conflict briefings by non-government fieldworkers.
- DSG** District Steering Group. Organized through the Arid Lands Project, district-based committees consisting of NGO and CBO representatives dealing with development and other issues pertinent to Arid Lands activities.
- LWF** Lutheran World Federation. Manages the refugee camp at Kakuma on behalf of UNHCR.
- NCCK** The National Council of Churches, Kenya. A major facilitator of local peace work in the North Rift region.

- NGO** Non-governmental organization. An organization registered with the government but operating outside of government structures that receives and/or disburses funding for projects according to a specific yearly plan of objectives.
- Northern Frontier District (NFD)** Delineation of northern Kenya by the colonial government, including Moyale, Marsabit, Isiolo, Garissa, Wajir, Turkana, and Mandera. Continued use of this delineation led the Moi government to place the NFD under a ‘State of Emergency’ until 1992.
- Oxfam GB-K** Oxfam Great Britain, the Kenya Programme, funds local peace work in various areas across Kenya. It is also specifically concerned with small arms reduction community education.
- SALW** Small arms and light weapons. Defined in the United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, A/52/298, August 27, 1997, p 12. The report defines small arms and light weapons according to their actual use in conflicts being dealt with by the United Nations: specifically, those being manufactured to military specification for use as lethal instruments of war (i.e., clubs, knives, and machetes were not included). Based on these criteria, the weapons addressed in the report were categorised. Small arms comprise revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Light weapons comprise heavy machine guns, hand-held under-barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles, portable launchers of anti-tank missile and rocket systems, portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems, and mortars of calibres less than 100mm. Ammunition and explosives comprise cartridges for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, and explosives. Citing the “other forums” in which the international community was dealing with landmines, the panel chose not to include them so as to avoid duplication of efforts.
- UNHCR** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Responsible for overseeing the refugee camp at Kakuma in Turkana.

## LIST OF MAPS

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Kenya country map	7
Wajir District map	72
Mandera District map	80
Tana River District map	91



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Illegal small arms proliferation and trafficking in Africa happens in a context far removed from traditional definitions of the state and state control. Where marginalized communities form part of ‘unofficial’ economies, conflict easily thrives under the policy-making radar. Local peace building groups have grown as a grassroots opposing force to ‘low-level’ conflict, offering conflict resolution and small arms demand reduction strategies where more ambitious state-sponsored projects fail. There is currently a lack of dialogue between governments that regulate small arms and the local peace builders who reduce the demand for them, although such communication can pave the way to new forms of human security. Policy makers and donors can learn from the challenges and realities of small arms work in areas outside of traditional government control to plan interventions that fall on the spectrum between the more common supply-side regulation and emergency response.

This research examines local peace building and small arms demand reduction work at the organization level in five diverse areas of Kenya. By looking at strategies, challenges, and successes of community-based organizations, NGOs, and local peace committees, and juxtaposing them with the successes and failures of relevant policy, a gap in demand-side measures at the policy level becomes evident. Demand-based interventions diverge from what one NGO fieldworker called “traditionally despotic” measures of addressing gun proliferation and allow more creative security policies with the potential to shrink gun markets from the bottom up.

Factors fuelling the demand for guns include identity-based conflict, availability, economies on the margins, and lack of education and development. Mainstreaming small arms reduction and awareness into other areas of government and policy will be the first step towards alleviating the major factors driving small-scale gun economies. Governments and donors can:

- provide alternative economies through stimulus projects and development,

- create and promote school and adult education curricula based on proactive conflict resolution and peace building,
- integrate adult literacy drives into disarmament initiatives, and
- fund cross-cultural and youth activities that divert potential gun users from violence. Some communities have succeeded in decreasing the buyer side of the market on a local scale using variations on these ideas, indicating that partnerships between local peace builders and policy-level decision-makers could effect even more widespread change.



# CHAPTER ONE

## METHODOLOGY

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### Objectives of the Research

1. To find and document local-level programmes and groups which include a small arms demand-reduction component.
2. To analyse the success or failure of these measures within the organization's stated goals.
3. To assess the relevance of such programmes and measures to policy making.

### Key Terms

There are two kinds of key terms used in this research: the terms used to conceptualise the fieldwork and the terms used during the fieldwork when talking with participants. The terms 'demand' and 'demand-reduction measures' sometimes proved too difficult to translate into participants' native languages. We often substituted the term 'root causes' of conflict to refer to demand. We also, at times, avoided using the word 'gun' or 'guns' (*bunduki* in Kiswahili) since for many people that implied that we might be working for the government. The terms 'peace', 'peace building', and 'conflict' were safer options that often got the result of gun-related responses. The following are the terms used to conceptualise the problem.

**Demand.** Refers broadly to the 'buyer' side of the gun market (as opposed to manufacturers and suppliers). Buyers include individuals, militias, gangs, armies, and crime syndicates. Demand factors influencing buyers include state failure to provide security, civil conflict, systemic violence, and availability of guns. The assumption is that as long as demand goes unchecked, no amount of control over supply can adequately address proliferation.

**Demand-reduction measures.** Any project, policy, or activity with a focus on buyers or potential buyers, with the specific aim to prevent gun acquisition or

use. This includes, for example, the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution, youth education and alternatives to violence, and positive environmental and resource management.

**Supply-side measures.** Current policy focus on regulating guns by targeting manufacturers and dealers and regulating the transfer of SALW shipments.

## Research Framework and Methods

The reduction of demand for weapons has been a difficult area to prioritize at the national, regional, and international level precisely because it is so seemingly far-reaching. While recommendations have been made to incorporate a demand-side view into anti-proliferation policy work, the assumptions on which these statements rest have been largely theoretical. The goal of this research was to look at case studies where local groups are successfully integrating demand-side approaches to peace building and small arms reduction, and to determine the policy implications of their work. Concrete examples provide a way of validating the hypothesis that small arms policy should incorporate a balance of supply and demand measures.

The research was carried out in Kenya for several reasons. First, Kenya is one of ten signatories to the Nairobi Declaration (March 2000), a regional initiative aimed at curbing small arms proliferation in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. This ambitious collective framework provides for the involvement of civil society in enhancing security. Second, Kenya has a well-developed civil society and network of peace building groups, many with a specific small-arms component. Sharing porous borders with Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Somalia, much of remote Northern Kenya has what one interviewee called “a government of churches”: the prevalence of religious and other civil society organizations in the absence of government institutions. Finally, with the end of former President Daniel arap Moi’s 27-year rule, a new government in Nairobi has prioritized the country’s traditionally marginalized areas in its public agenda. If all politics is local, then all peace is political; a government committed to addressing the specific problems of the borderlands is a prerequisite for change.

The fieldwork took place during nine weeks from July to September 2003. The result is an organization-level survey of small-arms reduction practices. This report does not try to represent the views of individuals or try to capture entire communities’ perceptions of small arms proliferation. Rather, it profiles

the practices of a select number of community-based organizations (CBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and peace committees, some of which are affiliated with or integrated into local government structures.

To determine which organizations would be included in the survey, we identified key partners working in the peace and conflict sector in Kenya. The National Council of Churches Kenya (NCCCK), the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC), and Oxfam GB-Kenya were instrumental in distributing an initial questionnaire to their grassroots partners in the field. The responses to these questionnaires painted a preliminary picture of the types of organizations operating in different regions of Kenya. We selected a representative sample of groups from the returned questionnaires. The aim was diversity across approaches and target groups, the urban-rural divide, and a focus on or deep awareness of the problem of small arms proliferation in the organization's mission statement or objectives.

As with any research, there were pitfalls and unforeseen circumstances. Many of the areas in which the survey was conducted are in the midst of unpredictable conflicts. Travel plans for the fieldwork portion of the study hinged on factors as diverse as the mood of security personnel at key roadblocks and the conditions of *luggas*, seasonal riverbeds across which vehicles had to pass. Because of the vastness of the northern regions of the country and the unreliability of modern means of communication, there were instances where on arrival at a group's offices it was learned that they had left the day before to conduct a rural training session a hundred kilometres away - on foot. The array of organizations included in this research is not scientifically representative of Kenya as a whole or its marginalized communities. However, the profiles presented do provide new insight into the way local groups approach peace building, conflict resolution, and the reduction of demand for small arms.

All of the organizations profiled in this report were visited by one of two researchers in Kenya between July and September 2003. Interviews were conducted with key staff and, when possible, with members and individuals from the organization's 'target group'. In some cases, focus groups with members and individuals from the target group were held to better facilitate discussion and the sharing of ideas. Materials published by the organizations, including brochures, annual reports, and situation reports were collected and used in characterizing its work and tactics. Interviews, both formal and informal, were also conducted with donor agencies responsible for funding peace and conflict resolution work at both the national and grassroots levels.

Interviews with organizations and committees were structured as open dialogues. The following questions served as guidelines for the information that was to be gathered over the course of the discussion.

### ***Set 1: Understanding the organization's approach***

*Questions for organizational leaders and/or members:*

- When was the organization started?
- Why was it started?
- Who started it?
- What are the objectives of the organization? (For a committee: What is the purpose of the committee?)
- What are the main projects or activities?
- Describe the target community where the organization operates.
- What role(s) does the organization play in the community? (i.e., facilitator in times of conflict, education, awareness building, etc.)
- What is the organization's target group within the community and why?
- How does the organization reach the target community?
- How often does the organization do activities directly with the target group?
- What are the main challenges facing the organization?

### ***Set 2: Assessing the gun problem from the organization point of view***

*Questions for organizational leaders and members:*

- Is there a problem with guns in your community?
- How would you describe the gun problem?

- How many people in the community own at least one gun?
- Who owns the guns? (i.e. youth, elders, clan)
- What is the main reason that people own guns?
- What is the main reason that people use guns?
- Who has traditionally been responsible for security/safety in your community?
- Who is responsible now?
- Who should be responsible for security/safety in your community?
- Are you aware of national (government) or international policies on security and guns that affect your community?
- Do you think such policies are effective, ineffective, or make the problem worse?
- Since the organization began its activities, do you think the gun problem has improved, stayed the same, or become worse? Why?
- Do you believe that your projects or activities reduce the need for guns within the community? Why or why not?

In general, interviews were conducted confidentially, although some organizations were agreeable to being named in the report. Therefore, while quotations from interviews are used extensively in this monograph, the person being interviewed is rarely identified. Transcripts of all the interviews remain at the offices of the Institute for Security Studies.

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed again that this research does not purport to represent the views of communities or even of entire organizations. The goal was to profile successes and challenges in local demand reduction and peace building in Kenya, and to move the research and policy debate on the existence and efficacy of demand-based anti-proliferation measures to the next level. Many questions are left unanswered, but the emerging dialogue between local actors and policy makers has the potential to change the face of human security in addressing them.

## CHAPTER TWO

# FROM THE INTERNATIONAL TO THE LOCAL: POLICY CONTEXTS

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### **International small arms policy**

The 1997 United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms provided the first definitive framework for addressing small arms and light weapons proliferation. In the section entitled “Nature and Causes of Excessive and Destabilizing Accumulations of Small Arms and Light Weapons,” the report laid the groundwork for what could have become a balanced supply-and-demand approach to fighting proliferation:

“The variety of different causes [of proliferation] is usefully categorized by demand and supply factors... Accumulations are always a combination of both factors but the predominance of either demand or supply varies by subregion and State, as well as by time period.”<sup>1</sup>

Despite the clause about subregion and state, the report found that all regions shared certain common problems, including insecurity, weapons culture, and youth recruitment into violent activities. Subsequent research in Africa has reinforced this idea, especially with regard to youth recruitment.<sup>2</sup>

The report goes on to define the concepts of insecurity, weapons culture, and cultures of violence, specifically focusing on the way these factors drive demand. State-level failure to provide security is cited as a major cause of demand-based proliferation:

“When the State loses control over its security functions and fails to maintain the security of its citizens, the subsequent growth of armed violence, banditry and organized crime increases the demand for weapons by citizens seeking to protect themselves and their property.”<sup>3</sup>

This kind of demand is especially prevalent in the context of pastoral areas, where ‘personal security’ was the most frequently cited reason for the possession and use of illegal small arms. The people who use the ‘self-defence’ justification are not necessarily interested in using guns to further criminal

activity or violence as a tool for personal gain. They simply see no other option where governments fail to provide functional alternatives. The stockpiling and purchase of guns even with the intention only to use them in self-defence, however, can quickly escalate inter-tribal or district-level arms races which culminate in the use of the weapons aggressively, for example in cattle raids.

Culturally, the report acknowledges that “possession of military-style weapons is a status symbol, a source of personal security, a means of subsistence, a sign of manliness and, in some cases, a symbol of ethnic and cultural identity.” This weapons culture results in an increase in demand mostly “when a State cannot guarantee security to its citizens or control the illicit activities in which these weapons are utilized”.<sup>4</sup>

Despite these strong and persuasive arguments for the importance of demand as a cause of small arms and light weapons (SALW) proliferation, the report’s recommendations both to reduce the destabilizing effect where there was already an excess of weapons and to prevent such accumulation were supply-side measures. These include increased guidelines for arms transfers, adapting national laws and regulations, imposing licensing requirements, marking and safeguarding weapons, and restricting manufacture.<sup>5</sup> In its failure to carry demand factors over from the section on causes to the list of recommendations, the Experts’ Report set an example for the supply-side focus that has characterized every policy response since. Supply-side measures assume the desire and ability of government to control its territory, establish and protect clear borders in every sense, and enforce laws through a formal system of courts. It is becoming increasingly clear that markets in the borderlands are subject to a different set of laws and locally based systems of control that exist and operate outside of government control and, often, knowledge.

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) met in Bamako, Mali in 2000 to develop an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, in anticipation of the 2001 UN Conference on Small Arms.<sup>6</sup> Using the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium and the 2000 Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, among other African regional initiatives, as a starting point, the Bamako Declaration put demand reduction strategies on the policy map. While carefully reaffirming the values of sovereignty, non-interference, and the right to individual and collective self-defence, the signatories emphasized that “the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons... sustains conflicts...promotes a culture of violence...has

adverse effects on security and development...and is both one of supply and demand." It goes a step further in suggesting that the problem should be dealt with not only by controlling suppliers, but also through:

"the promotion of measures aimed at restoring peace, security and confidence among and between Member States, the promotion of structures and processes to strengthen democracy, the observance of human rights, and economic recovery and growth, the promotion of conflict prevention measures, and the promotion of solutions that include both...supply and demand aspects."<sup>7</sup>

In August of 2001, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted the Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Materials in the SADC Region. Like the Bamako Declaration, the SADC Protocol focuses mostly on supply-side interventions, but also acknowledges the key relationship between limiting the availability of weapons and maintaining stable peace processes and post-conflict situations. Article 13 specifically mentions public education and awareness programmes to "encourage responsible ownership and management of firearms, ammunition, and other related materials."<sup>8</sup>

The July 2001 UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects and its adopted Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, provided the first forum in which internationally recognized political declarations were discussed and accepted. The focus is on suppliers; the goals are centred on putting into place "adequate laws, regulations, and administrative procedures to ensure the effective control over the export and transit of small arms and light weapons."<sup>9</sup> The Programme of Action does refer to five general areas of demand reduction effort: promoting dialogue and a culture of peace, public awareness and confidence-building programmes, humanitarian and health development, security sector reform, and conflict prevention and resolution. However, discussion of these areas is extremely vague compared to that of supply-side measures, indicating a lack of political will to implement them.

## **Regional policy: The Nairobi Declaration**

The Nairobi Declaration of March 2000 was signed by Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania. It is, at its



core, an attempt to form a regional partnership between governments, multi-lateral agencies, and civil society groups. Its signing also indicated a collective desire and will to adapt international and African initiatives at a more practical level. The Declaration has a practical agenda for action and an implementation plan. The implementation plan had a three-year timeline beginning in 2001 through 2003, but the First Ministerial Review Conference in Nairobi in August 2002 adopted a revised timeline to reflect the realistic factors impeding quick progress.

The Declaration recognizes that small arms and the markets that trade in them are not limited by national borders in East Africa and the Horn, and that civil conflicts, weak state presence on national borders, and economic troubles are key contributors to the problem of proliferation. The strategies involved in combating illegal small arms trafficking include the establishment of broad-based consultative mechanisms at the national level known as National Focal Points (NFPs), as well as the improvement of national laws and regulations governing the manufacture, trade, acquisition, possession and use of arms. At the regional level, the Nairobi Declaration proposes co-operative monitoring and control of small arms transactions and the general strengthening of sub-regional cooperation between national intelligence, security, and police forces. Information exchange through jointly available databases and cross-border public awareness programmes also have a role in the vision of a future region harmonized in its approach to the negative effects of illegal guns.

This ambitious framework contains excellent theory but has been more difficult to implement in practice.<sup>10</sup> There is little mention in the document itself about how the main principles could be integrated into the mandates of already-active regional economic and development initiatives such as the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC). The mandates of the regional security operations covered by the Eastern Africa Police Chiefs' Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) also fail to be a focus. The varying political, economic, and development situations of the signatories have rendered the regional plan for synchronized coordination difficult because of the inconsistent efforts at the national level. Some have argued that national progress and bilateral agreements should be the foundation of what will grow into a more regional approach, thus allowing the NFPs more freedom to function without the necessity of lock-step regional movement. In his writing on weapons destruction, Khadiagala writes:

“Bilateral mechanisms that would serve as building blocks for a strong regional arms control regime are missing from the Nairobi

Declaration. Principles and mechanisms formulated at a regional level should draw on bilateral efforts, which are more focused and likely to achieve results.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***National and local policy: Arid lands and borderlands***

Kenyan law with regard to legal firearm ownership is extremely stringent. Very few Kenyan citizens, especially those living in remote areas, meet the criteria for a gun license and can afford to pay the associated fees. Arms control laws are also very strict in prohibiting and punishing unauthorized civilian ownership of guns, yet national laws have failed to check the proliferation and sale of small arms throughout the country. In both urban and rural communities, guns are for sale according to local market prices: between July and September 2003, the cheapest price for an AK-47 with one full clip of ammunition could be found in the markets of Eastleigh just outside of Nairobi. The gun dealers there are mostly of Somali origin, and bring supplies across the border by hiding them with other goods or by bribing underpaid border officials. AK parts are smuggled inside dead goats placed in trucks of livestock, and ammunition is packed sporadically in shipments of plastic containers. One of the most expensive places to purchase the same commodity was in Baragoi in the Samburu district, where presumably more risk was involved in the transportation over difficult roads, and the demand was high because of constant tensions between the Turkana and Samburu tribes.

The problem of small arms arguably has the most impact in the pastoral regions of Kenya, or those covered by the World Bank-funded Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP). This programme began with the severe droughts in 1990 and 1991, when the World Bank offered assistance. The initial funding was for five districts and covered only emergency drought recovery, a ‘quick fix’ for a problem of environmental degradation and competition over scarce grazing resources that clearly needed longer-term attention and investment. Phase I of the official ‘Arid Lands’ project had as its objective the inculcation of resilience to drought’s effect on vulnerable pastoral communities in ten districts.

The establishment of Arid Lands offices through the Office of the President (thereby granting them direct access to political action through the executive branch) led to a comprehensive, community-based approach to drought management that grew to include some conflict prevention aspects. The District Commissioner in each district sits as the chair of a District Steering Group

(DSG) that coordinates stakeholders to develop a similar approach and avoid overlap. The DSGs include NGOs and civil society groups. At the national level, donors and government officials meet on a regular basis to coordinate larger-scale efforts. Some communities include a more political component, with Members of Parliament sitting on the steering group, but there is considerable autonomy as to how the local groups are run.

Phase II of the Arid Lands project is just beginning, and will expand to include semi-arid areas. There will be an increased focus on the issues around environmental and resource management, including gender equality in funded programmes and a greater focus on conflict in the development context as part of the problem. Community-driven development will be marked by a shift from relief projects to economic self-sustainability and education. HIV/AIDS education, alternatives to pastoralism, and managing insecurity will all be built into future programmes.

The Arid Lands project, while not focused directly on small arms, is significant because it overlaps directly with the rural areas affected by proliferation. In the district-level government, the District Steering Groups mirror what are known as District Security Committees (DSCs). The DSGs assembled through Arid Lands are open to civil society participation and input, but most District Commissioners interviewed affirmed that security committees are different. Although many of the same civil society groups are working on both resource management and conflict, they are not included in coordinating security because they are not 'vetted' by the government. This exemplifies the rift between government and local civil society on issues of arms control and management. One District Commissioner, when asked about illegal guns in his area, replied that "illegal guns will not be tolerated," although on a practical level it seemed by the level of firearms trafficking happening both inside and outside urban areas that this was an impossible statement to act upon.

Kenyan government strategy in the past has largely centred on coercive weapons collection by security forces, with occasional presidential amnesties to encourage voluntary surrender. The coercive approach is still largely used even though it has been proven ineffective as a long-term policy. The continued proliferation of small arms in areas targeted for government disarmament, such as the Turkana district, have indicated that until the root causes of gun ownership are addressed, forceful removal of weapons from communities that fear for their security does not prevent the black market from providing replacements. One study of small arms proliferation in the North Rift Province identifies the problem of government intervention as follows:

“Where the State fails or is unable to provide [basic] security to its people, logic demands that the people seek alternative means to meet these challenges. In the North Rift, communities have resorted to self-arming owing to the widespread insecurity and the availability of small arms in the region... When the Government’s credibility is this deeply challenged, no community leader can make his or her community hand over illegally acquired arms for destruction. As has happened in the past, people simply reject the idea.”<sup>12</sup>

In interviews, pastoralists often referred to coercive weapons collection as ‘forced upgrades’ because the only net effect is the need to replace seized guns with the newer models now available on the market.

While there may be a rift between civil society and government on the need to democratize human security, there is nothing short of a chasm between communities and government regarding the need for civilians to defend themselves using guns. Every community has its own myth or fable about how and when guns arrived, with each tribe accusing another for having them first. There are very few facts that can be established regarding the influx of small arms to Kenya: usually these are limited to wars in neighbouring countries. In 1979, the overthrow of Idi Amin in Uganda led to open season on arms caches and ammunition depots on the Kenya-Uganda border. In 1983, the conflict in Southern Sudan began to escalate, leading to an increased trade in the instruments of war. Nonetheless, it has not been determined which tribe, if any, first began acquiring and using small arms for cattle raids. The final fact, rarely disputed even by the government, is that adequate state protection does not extend to the borderlands, and therefore people living on or outside the edges of ‘the nation’ arm themselves to avoid being killed or having their property stolen.

As a solution to this problem, the government tried arming citizens as Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) in more remote areas. Unfortunately, the uses of such weapons in places like West Pokot and Marakwet in the Rift Valley are reportedly indistinguishable from the uses of illegal weapons. The KPR consists of men who are, by most accounts, more loyal to their tribe and to local politicians than to the distant national government, and their arms are an extension of their political loyalties. In a recent update issued by the Kenya National Council of Churches, an article quoted Internal Security Minister Dr. Chris Murungaru as saying that police reservists would be disarmed for being “partisan in their fight against crime.” The report also said that “Dr. Murungaru, who was on a tour of the North Rift region, also said the government would no longer entrust the security of its people on non-uniformed officers and

armed civilians.”<sup>13</sup> The chairman of the Anglican Justice and Peace Commission, Kitale diocese, confirmed that most reservists had been known to lend their guns to raiders who use them for attacks instead of keeping security. He also said that some politicians used the weapons to gain political mileage, often by ensuring that their constituencies were excluded from national government operations to repossess illegal firearms.

### **All politics is local, all peace is political: a peace worker’s story**

I was born in 1970, to the Sabey tribe. From 1977 to 1979, when I was a young boy, I remember seeing the conflict between the Sabey and the Pokot. The Pokots would come and we (the women and children) would go up to the caves with the animals to sleep there where it was safe. The women would wail. They fought with bows and arrows then, I never saw a gun. Even the home guards were not armed, but they were very serious about duty. One time a man neglected his shift and he was beaten in front of his children, then fined a goat and a jerry can of local brew.

I remember hearing that one of our great warriors had been killed by the Pokot and I really felt it. I was happy when our warriors came with Pokot cows to divide among themselves. It was a source of pride and a big part of our culture. Now, with guns, things are different. I never thought I would end up doing peace work. We thought that was something for the government. We also knew there was something called the UN that should help the government and keep them in line. Things are different now. We know that everything is local.

While governments and policy makers are busy debating top-down intervention strategies, locally based CBOs, NGOs, and peace committees take a different approach to both small arms and conflict. They ask different questions about why people are buying into both guns and conflict. These local peace builders form their own associations, walk for miles to facilitate inter-tribal dialogue among conflict-ridden clans, and are the first to rush in to hot zones when conflict breaks out. Largely unrecognized at the policy-making level, they have made a huge impact in increasing security. This is especially, but not exclusively true in places where the government is so far away, people do not know which country they live in. Increasingly, national-level policy in the African context should and, of necessity, will become more inclusive of these people’s perspectives.

## Notes

1. United Nations Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, A/52/298, August 27, 1997, p 15.
2. A McIntyre and K Aning, Politics, war, and youth culture in Sierra Leone, *African Security Review*, 11(3), 2002. See also K Peters and P Richards, Why we fight: Voices of youth combatants in Sierra Leone," *Africa*, 68(2), 1998.
3. UN Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, op.cit. p 21.
4. Ibid. p 16
5. Ibid, p 21–23.
6. Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons, 1 December 2000.
7. Ibid, Paragraph 2
8. Protocol on the Control of Firearms, Ammunition, and Other Related Materials in the SADC Region, Blantyre, 14 August 2001.
9. Report of the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, Programme of Action, New York, 9–20 July 2001 (A/Conf.192/15).
10. G Khadiagala, "Protection and Poverty: Community Weapons Collection Experiences in Northern Kenya", Oxfam GB, undated.
11. Ibid. p 3.
12. J Kamenju et al. *Terrorized Citizens*, SRIC, 2003, p 6.
13. The Update on Peace and Development, Issue 122, April 30, 2003.

## **Introduction to the Case Studies**

The case studies included in Chapters Three through Seven are organized according to geography. They profile organizations working on demand-based solutions to small arms proliferation, and quote local peace workers in response to current gun policies and policy-level understandings of peace and conflict. In the conclusion, there is a discussion of the primary underlying factors driving demand that emerged in this research, across geographical regions and the urban-rural divide.

## CHAPTER THREE

# NAIROBI

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### **Nairobi and Environs**

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, is located in the central-southern part of the country. Built on what used to be a swampy watering hole for the Maasai, it was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that it began its life as a stopping-over point on the British railway between Mombasa and Uganda. By 1900 it had become a town with real buildings instead of only tents, and now it is the biggest city between Cairo and Johannesburg. With a population of around 2 million, it is also home to some of Africa's most overcrowded and filthy urban slums. Many areas around the capital house urban poor, but Nairobi also hosts international markets at the crossroads of cultures. Cheap goods from Dubai via Somalia, livestock from Northeastern Kenya, and affordable international call rates characterize commerce. In both low- and middle-income areas, gang affiliation and ethnic differences sow division and enforce conflict zones.

A few kilometres from the four- and five-star hotels of the central business district, living conditions verge on the inhumane. No sewage facilities combined with a high water index mean that raw waste flows in and around dwellings and openly through streets and paths where pedestrians walk and children play. The problems associated with urban slums all over the world apply to those around Nairobi, including Mathare, Korogocho, Kibera, Kasarani, and Starehe. Population density is extremely high, but impossible to measure with any accuracy because most residents are squatters living in makeshift shacks or in buildings owned by absentee landlords that are verging on collapse. However, estimates place the population living in slums as 60 per cent of the Nairobi total, occupying only 5.8 per cent of all land used for residential purposes. Some areas have been placed at 63,000 people per square kilometre population density.<sup>1</sup>

Compounding the problems of resource development and service delivery is the fact that most slums are located on state-owned land with only temporary and sometimes illegal lease agreements. The occupants of the land are provided with Temporary Occupation Licenses by the provincial administration,



and the structures are not recognized by Kenya's legal and official policies. Because they may be demolished at any time by the city council and because there is no possibility for legal land ownership with its attendant rights, structures in the slums (even multi-storey buildings made of brick and mortar) are constructed in the cheapest way possible without conforming to the official minimum housing standards. Tenants usually enter into informal agreements on a room-by-room basis, with an average of five people inhabiting a single room.<sup>2</sup> Landlords seek to maximize their profits in the shortest possible time frame, constructing as many rooms as possible regardless of the effect on sanitation or the environment.

Even in the 'nicer' areas outside of the CBD, markets for drugs and guns thrive along with markets for livestock and other commodities from north and east of the city. Peter Little describes Eastleigh, located east of the city on the way to Kasarani and Starehe, as a kind of cosmopolitan merging of legal and illegal markets, borderlands and mainstream:

"One needs only to visit Eastleigh, Nairobi to see how the formal (legal) and informal (illegal) merge in complex ways. The shopping area itself, which is widely noted to have the busiest commercial avenue in Nairobi, attracts middle- and upper-class shoppers from around the city and other parts of the country. They come to shop for bargains and, in some cases, to purchase counterfeit identification cards and the like. Up-scale brands of fashion, electronics, and other consumer items can be purchased at 20 to 30 per cent below price elsewhere in town and services, such as internet and phone, can be obtained at a fraction of normal costs... Similar to the cross-border commerce in northern Kenya, the prevalence of illegal trade and its tight integration into daily practice serves to legitimize it. Little official effort is made to halt it, in part because many officials who are supposed to control illegal commerce receive 'rents' (bribes) from it. There is an ill-defined, baffling sense about Eastleigh that inhibits categorization, but nonetheless captures the essence of the new kind of commerce."<sup>3</sup>

Guns, too, thrive in the Eastleigh market, as described below by peace builders living and working in the area.

Rent conflicts are the most protracted and violent in the slums. Disputes around matters of slum tenancy have almost no reference in national law. There is no protection for tenants, who are subject both to the whims of landlords and the unpredictability of market forces. Conflicts in Kibera,

Kawangware, Korogocho, and Mathare in particular have been documented by the group PeaceNet, which characterizes them as follows:

“[Slum dwellers] do not identify conditions of deprivation that subject them to such kind of a livelihood. Instead, they turn against each other, coalescing around various identities as either tenants or landlords, where housing conflicts are concerned or along ethnic lines, when perceived ‘ethnic interests’ are at stake, or along gang lines, among other identities.”<sup>4</sup>

In the first quarter of 2003, Mathare Valley slums experienced violent confrontations over rent disputes. Petrol bombs were used by gang members and hundreds of shacks burned down, leaving thousands homeless. According to one report, raiders reportedly threw stones on the iron sheet roofs of shacks, then hid in wait for those who came out to investigate. They beat their victims, securing some of the shacks from the outside and setting them on fire. Police called in to control the violence were attacked and their vehicles hit with stones and petrol bombs.<sup>5</sup>

Informal economies thrive, as gangs and power brokers fight for control over resources (such as territory) and markets (such as drug monopolies). Even in the context of rent violence, gangs compete to collect rent from heavily populated areas, and then keep the income instead of passing it on to landlords as promised. This leads to landlords hiring gang members and outside groups to collect rent, creating a cycle of violence but a lucrative market for those with guns to use or hire.

## **Nairobi Youth Network for Peace (NYNP)**

The Nairobi Youth Network for Peace (NYNP) was started in February 2002 when a group of young people from Nairobi met for a conference in Limuru to share and exchange ideas and experiences on pressing issues behind conflicts and insecurity in Nairobi. Before the Limuru Workshop, there had been consultative meetings with PeaceNet (a Kenyan NGO), Oxfam GB, and NCCCK, all financial contributors to the Network, on how to expand peace activities for youth. Oxfam had previously sponsored the Kibera Youth Programme for Peace and Development (KYPPEDE) and wanted to work in other areas.

Both the young people and donors agreed that youth are both perpetrators and victims of the rampant insecurity and violence in the slums, and the young

people noted that they had been sidelined in peace building and conflict management despite being blamed for high levels of crime. They workshop resolved that if the youth can be aggressors, they could also be peace agents, giving birth to the NYNP.<sup>6</sup> The Network is a forum made up of group membership from eight geopolitical regions of Nairobi. General members elect regional representatives that form a Steering Committee entrusted with coordinating the implementation of joint projects. The Steering Committee operates as the secretariat. Regional focal points include the Centre for Youth in Sustainable Development, Westlands; Kasarani Starehe Youth, Kasarani and Starehe; Kibera Youth Programme for Peace and Development, Lang'ata; St. Joseph Church, Kamukunji; Soweto Urban Development Association, Embakasi; Chellepe Theatre Group, Makadara; and Guadalupe Youth, Dagoretti.

The NYNP vision reads: "In trying to inculcate a culture of peace and non-violence among the inhabitants of Nairobi, NYNP envisions a peaceful and safer city for all people irrespective of ethnic, gender, and racial or economic affiliation." The organization's broad objectives are:

- To promote participation of youth in peace-building and decision making
- To establish structures to respond to and manage disasters
- To research, document, and disseminate positive information among the youth
- To promote capacity building in the field of peace building, active non-violence, networking and communication
- To create awareness and education, lobbying and advocacy (on peace, human rights, and development issues).

In 2003 the Network has grown to over 40 member groups. It has been successful as a forum bringing together different youth groups and institutions with a focus on organizations dealing with development, human rights, and peace issues. It has also fulfilled a crucial role as a research and documentation vehicle, in particular with the launch of a report in July 2002 on violence in Kibera during December 2001. The report, entitled "Quest for Human Dignity: Kibera Violence" enlisted members of KYPPEDE and PeaceNet to conduct interviews monitoring community violence with landlords, tenants, 'opinion shapers,' political party leaders, and speakers at the tenants' gatherings in the slums. The report gave voice to Kibera residents outside of mainstream media coverage.

## **“An Idle Mind is the Devil’s Workshop”: Youth and Guns in the Nairobi Slums**

### ***Interview with youth from slums east of Nairobi***

Here in Kenya, for some time while we were still in school, that is the late 80’s and early 90’s, the youth were not much involved in crimes. It was the older middle-aged men. But from 1991 to 1992 there was no employment and most of us were learned university leavers, form four leavers and a few form three dropouts. After some had gone to university, finished form four, some had even gone to colleges, we got into the job market but there were no jobs. Our parents feel that after education they should do away with us because we are adults and should fend for ourselves.

You want to wear shoes, nice clothes, if a boy has a girlfriend he wants to entertain her, he wants to go to discos, but what can he do when there is no job? These youths have known one another since childhood, they live in the same neighbourhood, have been friends for a long time and you know an empty mind is the devil’s workshop. So they see this man who has been parking here two or three times and works with Kenya Airways and they know Kenya Airways employees have money. They organize the next month end. They lock him up and rob him. After they succeed in two or three attacks, they feel that this is their job. So they organize a gang. Then in 1991-1992 the guns came in. They felt that robbing or car jacking these days means you have to have a gun and they started buying.

The other problem is corruption in the government. Most of the industries where the young people could have gone to do casual jobs were closed down and there was nowhere to look for work. Other parastatals were closing down too. If you look at our magazines they advertise for jobs but will want five years experience and you are just fresh from university. Where will you get that experience? These are the challenges hitting our youth.

Another thing is the video halls everywhere and they show a lot of American movies with organized gangs. So after watching, the youth go to practice it then do it live and succeed and are considered heroes. Gangs do it the way they see it in the movies. They have even opened these shows for kids. These are contributing a lot to crime among the youth because

one can afford five shillings, they go and watch these movies and instructional videos it is like a training session. Even the police know, when they want to catch thugs they just raid a video hall and will get at least one to five thugs. Why? Because these people will rob at night, sleep up to eleven o'clock, have lunch then go to the video halls for two hours, then at around 5 or 6 o'clock, they go to hijack cars just like they see in the videos.

Mainly it is economics and it is also a kind of fashion, or if you want to be considered as tough. So it is an urban culture thing in a sense. If your gang is to be recognized as the best, they call them 'oteros', they must have guns and the more sophisticated guns you have the greater the respect.

## **Kasarani Starehe Youth (KASTA)**

A member group of the Nairobi Youth Network for Peace, KASTA itself is comprised of smaller member groups located throughout the two neighbouring constituencies of Kasarani and Starehe. KASTA was started in 1989 after a workshop following violence between the two places, which are separated by a road. The road had become a dumping place, with each side blaming the other for the environmental damage. People in the market complained to the city council that the garbage was emitting bad odour and bringing flies. The city council stopped everybody from dumping there, which left both sides without a place to dispose of trash. Violent fights began erupting among the youth, with an increase in the number of the weapons in the area as gang members and others bought, rented, or stole guns to engage in the conflict. After another clash, this time between residents and the city council, KASTA was formed to give youth from both places a forum to reconcile differences and engage in joint projects.

The group's objectives are to:

- Unite the youth and try to change the image of the youth within Kasarani and Starehe
- Create income-generating activities to sustain the youth in their needs and rehabilitate them.
- Request groups that do training to come and train our members, and teach our members to train each other

## **Understanding the gun problem, in their own words**

### ***Interview with youth peace workers***

**Question:** Is there a problem of guns in this area?

**Answer:** There are a lot of problems of guns, which have caused a lot of insecurity, a lot of deaths and a lot of destruction.

**Question:** Can you describe the problem?

**Answer:** In our locality we have this market down here where they bring goats and sheep that are transferred from Isiolo and Mandera along the borderline. When they arrive in the morning and they start offloading, you will see one that looks like it is dead. All of a sudden people just come and grab it and run with it. After some investigation you will learn that it was slaughtered and stuffed with guns inside and then sewn back. This is the method they use to transport guns. Secondly, the way they transport bullets. Mandera and Isiolo are very dry. They use lorries to transport water from the water points to those sides. When coming back, half the jerry cans will be full of bullets and the other half will be full of water. So if the police check, they will find the jerry cans with water and let them through and the bullets will be transported all the way to here. When they get here they are sold cheaply. The black market name for the bullets is 'mawe' (stones) or 'mbegu' (seeds). Even guns sometimes are sold from 1,000 to 1,500 Kenya shillings and that is a deal.

**Question:** What kind of guns are they?

**Answer:** There are AK-47s, G3s, etc.

**Question:** They are sold for 1,500 shillings [around US\$20]?

**Answer:** That is why they are using them to rob small things like mobile phones or small businesses like retail shops.

**Question:** So they are cheap and readily available and make the crime problem worse?

**Answer:** Yes. Yesterday our two friends left K1 to go home. Immediately they boarded a 'matatu' (taxi) and they were robbed at gunpoint at

2 o'clock during daytime. Also, thugs come in groups of 20 to plots (flats). Fifteen of them will have guns, and they will rob the whole plot. Even if you are 100 residents you cannot defeat them because they have all sorts of guns big and small, and they also wear bullet proof [vests]. If you make a small mistake, they do not hesitate to finish you off.

The other problem is the police. If you inform the police about a person in possession of a gun, he will go and get a bribe. For instance if Florence is my friend and I know she has a gun, and CJ is a policeman. If I tell him that she has a gun, he will go to her, and because she has money, she will bribe him and [he will] tell her who reported her and so she comes back to you for revenge. There is no security of information. Instead of people who have guns being arrested, they bribe their way out and come for revenge. You may know that your neighbour has a gun and that it will kill your brother somewhere else, but you can do nothing about it.

**Question:** How many people do you think own guns in the community if you had to guess?

**Answer:** Let's say three-quarters. Twenty out of 100 people [sic] have guns because any organized gang group or thugs would have at least one or two guns.

**Question:** So the people owning or using guns are mostly gangs? Are there people who are not criminals or won't commit criminal acts that own them for security?

**Answer:** There are those who are licensed. The big traders nowadays may apply for guns due to this insecurity. But these are legal guns. But the problem is a businessman may have that gun and his may not be a clean business so he could be lending out his gun to be used somewhere else. There is also the issue of the criminals who have these guns and the police who too have guns. The police may have them for security, but after some violence has taken place you find that it is the policeman who was in possession of the gun, he is one of the thugs. You can imagine that this policeman may be involved in illegal guns supply or use of guns in an illegal manner. There are three categories of people who have guns and also reservists.

**Question:** Do you have reservists here?

**Answer:** Yes, very many of them...

**Question:** You work with the youth. Are they a kind of a target group for using guns?

**Answer:** Very much. Like those ones who shot [our friend's] brother, we were being told that they were so young one could not imagine them with guns. They were between 15 and 18 years of age.

**Question:** Do they own them or are they given [guns] to use?

**Answer:** There are two types of ownership, I own a gun so I lend it out, and there are those who form or organize themselves as a gang, and they contribute money and buy guns as their tool of work. It is like the way we would organize and buy a computer. That is how they work.

**Question:** So for the most part the youth with a gun probably does not own it legally himself but as part of a gang or group.

**Answer:** Yes. They work in groups of five or ten in a gang. They are very well organized and they commit crimes as a general way of making money. Just to mention, the most lucrative gun business is car jacking. I believe it was most of these young people we talk to and they even share with us what they have done. Young people do most of the car jacking in Nairobi from these slums, especially Kasarani and Starehe. They car jack [then] go around in the vehicle committing crimes. After harassing people and robbing them, they dump the vehicle somewhere and disappear.

### ***The Effectiveness of Demand Reduction Efforts***

Both the KASTA and the NYNP staff feel they are making significant strides in reducing the demand for small arms in Nairobi. A group of young men, when asked why they engage in peace building activities and even garbage collection rather than joining a gang where they would have money and status answered that in return for their choices, they feel safer. They said, "We all know many people who have died from these things [guns]. We support each other to stay together and stay safe." Some neighbourhoods in Kasarani and Starehe have markedly changed in the past five years because of the efforts of some young men to interrupt the cycle of violence and create a new culture of work rather than violence.



## **Peace and Demand**

### ***Youth worker from Kasarani***

In peace building we ask when do we have peace? Is peace only the absence of war? Peace is very broad. When I am hungry, I am not at peace with myself. When I don't have shelter I am not at peace with myself. When there is insecurity outside even when I have a shelter and I am scared someone might come to kill me I am not at peace with myself. With peace building, everything is about peace and acting on violence. After looking for alternatives we must harmonize.

How do we harmonize our members? Maybe we are in a group and I am working but they are not. So I am living better than they, will they have peace with me? No they will come and drop me (attack). In case of coming together we should do something which will bring peace. Maybe we can get something to eat, like most of the people in this group are single men, so they can come together and share a little money and pay for a small room and at least have a decent place to live.

From these activities we are trying to cater for our members' needs from special needs, to psychological needs and even environmental needs because if the environment is clean we have peace with ourselves. Before we started rubbish collection if you can remember, every now and then in our area we would find aborted children dumped everywhere. Here you are caring about humanity and you see a child who has been thrown away because there is a lot of garbage heaps. Imagine a dog just rotting outside your door? After we cleared these garbage heaps we do not even find a dog that has been thrown away in our neighbourhood. At least we have catered for peace within our environment.

What I would say about government policies in Kenya is that most of them are made in high hotels, even policies that concern the youth, but the youth on the ground are not involved. They believe that guns are found in the slums and yes, they are, and most of the slum boys and girls are using them but they do not involve the youth in the slums when making those policies. How do you eradicate something without going to its source? They go and sit in those high hotels and invitations are sent to those in high places only they don't involve people at the grass root level and pass these policies. They have a policy about guns but they do not share it with the

'wananchi' (citizens). These policies are ineffective because they do not involve people at the grass root level.

Because of our misinformed public the reception of such policies becomes negative. Even if the policy is well intentioned they will not to make use of it. They are telling us in the media to give information to the police if we have any. The police come and ambush and start actually swooping on people and people take this as harassment. In the real sense the police are doing the correct thing. That is why we are saying that before any policies are initiated, the stakeholders should be involved first in making decisions. In a way we are saying that they use a lot of money to put in defence clearing these things, proliferation and other things, for instance these small arms campaigns. You just see in TV if you are fortunate enough to have one but they don't involve the people on the ground. If they can come to the people on the ground, talk to them, call 'barazas' (public meetings), prepare charts and put them up everywhere. Even those who don't know how to read will ask those they are with who know to read to share the information. Also, if there was trust between the police and the public, this gun issue would be eliminated once and for all.

## Notes

1. Tenancy and Sanitation Provision in Informal Settlements in Nairobi: Revisiting the Public Latrine Option. *Environment and Urbanization*, vol. 9, no. 2 Oct. 1997
2. Ibid.
3. Little, p166.
4. PeaceNet, *Quarterly Peace Monitor* vol. 3 no. 1 2003 p 50.
5. Ibid.
6. Workshop minutes in *Youth Peace Talk* newsletter, vol. 1 no. 1

## CHAPTER FOUR

# EASTERN PROVINCE

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The Eastern Province of Kenya stretches from the districts of Makueni and Kitui in the south of Kenya to Marsabit and a long stretch of border with Ethiopia in the north. Shaped like a narrowing stripe through the centre of the country, it is also home to some of the most volatile areas in what was once known as the Northern Frontier District (NFD). The pastoral communities of northern Kenya have a long history of violent conflict that has contributed to significant loss of life and property, increased levels of poverty, and has adversely affected social and economic activities of the over 500,000 people in the region over the last three decades.

Historically, raids and fights among pastoral communities spared human lives, especially those of women and children. Recently, the changing nature of localized conflict has become more violent and resulted in greater loss of life. Raids are no longer conducted with traditional weapons or under traditional mores, but increasingly with the use of sophisticated weapons that have devastating effects.

Nearby borders with Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia put northern Kenyan districts in the thick of violent conflicts and instability. Protracted civil conflict in all three of these unstable neighbours contribute to the steady flow of small arms into the region. Far from becoming passive victims of this regional small-arms trade, some Kenyans in the isolated north have seized the economic opportunity to join an easy market by facilitating or participating in illegal trafficking. The decision to run guns, made in the context of little government presence and few other alternative sources of income to pastoralism, is often one based not on malice or ideology, but on simple opportunism. Automatic guns are now easily available to local communities, where they increase the frequency and intensity of inter-tribal skirmishes, but also serve as protection from cross-border raids that have been subject to little control from the police of any Nairobi Declaration signatory.

Frequent cross-border conflict led both the colonial and independent governments of Kenya to take drastic actions against the people of northern

Kenya. Under the Colonial government, northern Kenya (or the NFD as it was then known) was delineated as a buffer zone between the fertile Kenya Highlands and the Abyssinian Plateau, placing it between lucrative farmland and the Italian invasion. Following the devastating Somali '*shifita*' skirmishes that lasted until 1978, Kenyan security forces were empowered to enter and search households without warrants, seize any property, or detain any person they deemed a suspect. The six pastoral districts of Marsabit, Moyale, Isiolo, Wajir, Garissa, and Mandera were put under a state of emergency until 1992. Only volunteers and missionaries were allowed to operate freely.

In the northern part of Eastern province, including Marsabit and Isiolo, ethnic groups including the Boran, Gabra, Rendille, Samburu, Ariaal, Turkana, and Dasanetch depend on livestock and livestock products for their livelihood. There are frequent cattle rustling raids and conflict over farmlands, grazing areas, and water points. Among the fighting communities, diverse social, cultural and political factors have been identified as contributing to the conflicts in the district. Population pressure and competition over resources are especially volatile during droughts. Banditry and cattle rustling lead to vicious cycles of score-settling and one-upmanship for control of small pieces of territory. Poor dialogue between different ethnic groups and the deliberate sowing of division by political figures result in tribal animosities and violent confrontations. The widespread availability of modern weaponry from across the borders and within other Kenyan districts has made automatic rifles and other small arms and light weapons an integral part of the culture of masculinity. With the escalating degradation of natural resources and a longstanding tradition of political isolation from 'the nation' of Kenya, guns are increasingly seen as necessary not just for self-defence and protection, but for political control and economic survival.

## **Marsabit**

The Marsabit district in the Eastern Province occupies the extreme part of northern Kenya. It borders Ethiopia and the Moyale district to the north, Turkana District to the west, Samburu District to the south and Wajir and Isiolo Districts to the east. The district, with an area of 69,430 sq. km including 4,125 sq. km covered by Lake Turkana, is the second largest in the country after Turkana. The population is estimated at 125,000. Marsabit belongs to the ASALs ("Arid and Semi-Arid Lands") of Kenya. Extremely dry conditions limit the use of over 90 per cent of its area to livestock keeping, mostly organized in the form of nomadic pastoralism. Returns from this type of land-use are low and consequently poverty is rampant.

As a result of inter-ethnic conflict over resources between the Rendille, Gabra, Samburu, Boran, Turkana and Dasanetch, about 60 per cent of the range areas are unutilized and most of the traditionally nomadic communities prefer to settle near 'security zones' such as trading centers. The concentration of settlements exacerbates land degradation. The national parks, game reserves, forest reserve and the Mt. Kulal Biosphere Reserve are protected areas within which no farming activities are permitted, contributing to resource conflicts.

The risks involved in the pastoral lifestyle are extremely high. On one hand, they are caused by natural disasters, particularly by long drought periods. On the other, they arise from conflicts between different migrating groups, who are competing for the use of key resources, mainly water and grazing. Natural and human-made causes for such risks are closely inter-linked; the more adverse the natural conditions, the more frequent and intensive the conflicts arising out of competing demands on key resources. The World Bank-funded Arid Lands project in the Office of the President has both learned from and proved this fact with monthly district reports tracking natural conditions and conflict indices.

One major trait in social organization developed to cope with such conditions is the high significance of weaponry and its use in indigenous cultures. Although there are differences in detail in this regard between nine major ethnic groups, the general socio-cultural traits exhibit a high degree of similarity. All ethnic groups have a basic age group organization within which the young men, commonly known as '*morans*', are responsible for safeguarding their group's property, especially livestock. To shoulder such responsibility, they undergo elaborate training in the use of small arms during the early *moran* stages.

'Modernisation' of weaponry accessible to the local population can be dated back to the so-called Shifta War against groups of Somali origin in 1964. Traditional weaponry was gradually complemented and then replaced by small arms, particularly the infamous AK-47 assault rifle. The current price for an AK-47 amounts to three heads of cattle. Only 20 years ago it was ten times as much.

The increased influx of small arms is taking place at a point when other factors are making violent conflicts even more likely than in the past, as explained by two problem complexes. First, migration patterns have changed. Long and severe droughts in 1992-94 and 1998-2001 initiated these movements. The

expansion of land use for sedentary agriculture or other purposes in the few areas of the district where this is possible also encroached on traditional grazing reserves for the nomads, forcing them to find other alternatives.

Secondly, settlement patterns have changed. Increasingly, families settle permanently near markets and other central locations where they have easier access to basic services. Herds are often moving with only the *morans* (and no elders or other members of the tribe) present to make decisions. The traditional control of the elders over the warrior age groups has been weakened considerably. The absence of families has removed one of the few factors that force *morans* to seek alternatives to violence when it comes to conflict resolution. Consequently, the potential for conflicts to turn violent has increased numerically as well as with regard to scope.

### ***Pastoralist Shelter Organization (PSO) and Peace and Reconciliation Committee***

The Pastoralist Shelter Organization (PSO) is a locally registered community-based organization (CBO) and acts as the secretariat for the Peace and Reconciliation Committee. The arrangement of an NGO or CBO being the major organiser and stakeholder in a Peace Committee is a common one in northern Kenya. Such organizations already have the infrastructure and influence to call meetings, although the supposed independence of the Committee can be compromised. (See the section on Garissa in Chapter Five for another example of this arrangement.) A leaders' meeting held in the district in 1998 recommended the formation of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee, which is now managed by the PSO. The objectives of the committee at the time were to:

- Reconcile the warring communities in the district
- Stop the raiding of livestock
- Create awareness among the communities on the role of politicians in the conflicts, who were seen to have taken advantage to fuel conflicts for their own reasons.

At the inauguration of the committee, its major activities were to create a rapid-response mechanism that could respond to the conflicts, especially cattle raids, create awareness, facilitate inter-ethnic meetings, and educate the

Kenya Police Reservists (KPR) who had been accused of engaging in highway banditry and cattle rustling. Since then, the major activities of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee (PRC) have changed to accommodate new perspectives on conflict. While they still facilitate peace building, they also create awareness among specific target groups such as women and youth. Actions have also expanded to include cross-border conflict resolution in neighbouring districts and with groups in Ethiopia.

The major role of the PRC is facilitation and education in peace and reconciliation in order to start, encourage and maintain dialogue. The Committee also encourages the volunteering of peace and security information for cooperation with the government. The majority of the communities involved in the peace and reconciliation activities are the pastoralists, agro-pastoralists, the business community, and communities living along the Isiolo-Marsabit Road as well as the KPR. Elders, youth, and women are treated as special categories given that the youth are the ones mainly involved in banditry activities, the women have the necessary information on conflicts, and the elders have traditional conflict resolution skills.

The Peace and Reconciliation Committee comprises 12 members at the locational level, three members per location at the divisional level and one member from each location at the district level. The representatives at the locational and divisional levels live among the communities holding locational meetings every two weeks, one meeting every two months at the divisional level, and quarterly meetings at the district level.

The major constraints facing the Committee include the large size of the district, which has extremely poor communication that hampers the efficient reporting of cases as well as reaction time to conflicts. Another setback, according to the group, is the laxity among the government and police administration who are slow to act on information provided to them, particularly on early warning of potential conflicts.

The Committee estimates that at least 70 per cent of the families they work with own firearms, which are mainly bought and owned at the family level. They identify the main reasons why families own guns as:

- Self-protection for self and property, particularly livestock
- Absence of effective government presence, hence lack of government protection

- Threat of guerrilla attacks from neighbouring Ethiopia
- Criminal activities like highway banditry
- Political assassinations using firearms, which have recently become 'fashionable'

Traditionally, the warriors were responsible for ensuring the safety of the community, complementing the little-felt government machinery. The elders were responsible for the overall security of the community but were never involved in the actual fighting. The experiences of the PRC point to the need for communities to be more involved and responsible for their security, starting with elders at the village level. The elders feel that they should be empowered to enforce the resolutions arrived at by the Peace and Reconciliation Committees.

Within the Committee, there is no awareness of any national or international instruments on gun control. Some of those interviewed said that even if there was awareness, there is little or no impact of any of these instruments at the grassroots level, given the limited presence of enforcing authorities, including the government. The communities are more familiar with the perceived 'high-handedness' of government interventions using the police, Provincial Administration (PA), the military, or the General Service Unit (GSU) personnel.

The Peace and Reconciliation Committee feels that it has positively contributed to conflict resolution, illegal arms management (providing checks and balances on illegal arms proliferation), and general peace building activities as evidenced by the significant reduction in livestock raids in the district. Highway banditry along the Isiolo-Marsabit road has all but disappeared, and farmers have returned to their farms. Importantly, the price of weapons has gone down as a result of reduced demand. Landmines are available from KSh 1,000 and hand-grenades from KSh 500, but the most important price is that of an AK-47 standard rifle, which has gone from KSh 60,000 down to KSh 15,000. Communities are now selling their firearms to the neighbouring Isiolo and Samburu districts as they no longer need them.

Gun ownership, however, has become a source of employment. Security, once thought to belong only in the domain of state and police, has become commercialized in Marsabit. Gun owners escort livestock across district boundaries and guard commercial enterprises in the district for a fee. In a separate but equally lucrative trade, gun ownership has led to indiscriminate



poaching of wildlife for game meat and sale of animal parts. There are also criminal elements still involved in banditry.

To address these setbacks, the Peace and Reconciliation Committee is encouraging the communities and especially the youth to engage in alternative income generating activities like curing and selling hides and skins. The Committee searches for strategic partners interested in development activities that enhance peace and peaceful coexistence, such as the creation of water pans to provide water and create employment for the would-be conflicting communities. In the absence of willing donors, soft loans are sometimes the only method to help spur economic diversity and development projects. Youth are encouraged not only to participate in income generating activities, but also to form sporting groups that will pull them away from violence.

### ***Catholic Peace and Justice Commission (CJPC)***

The Development Office of the Diocese of Marsabit which hosts the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission (CJPC) was previously run from the Diocese of Maralal until the campaign for an office in Marsabit started in 2001. The CJPC office in Marsabit was finally realized in 2003 and was officially inaugurated in September 2003 by the Bishop of the Diocese of Marsabit.

The objectives of the CJPC are threefold and include:

- Capacity building for the people on peace and justice issues
- Lobbying and advocacy targeting the community but using the Catholic fraternity as the entry point into the larger community
- Promoting peace and reconciliation in the district.

The major activities of CJPC include:

- Facilitation of training workshops on peace and reconciliation
- Identification and facilitation by qualified consultants to address specific issues as identified by the communities
- Facilitation by qualified (human rights) lawyers to advise on issues related to justice and human rights

- Advocacy through lobbying and peaceful demonstrations to create awareness of specific issues as identified by the communities.

The primary entry point for the CJPC activities in the district is through the various priests who make announcements and mobilize the catholic fraternity through church sermons. The Catholic faithful are then encouraged to reach out to the rest of the community in the district who are not necessarily Catholics. The CJPC staff based in Marsabit town endeavour to make two-day visits to each parish five to six times a year.

The community where the CJPC operates can be described as mainly pastoralists with a small number of agro-pastoralists to be found on and around the Marsabit Mountain, Hurri Hills and Loiyangalani. All these communities are generally illiterate and their economy is based on livestock. There is a growing group of business entrepreneurs involved in general merchandising. The major challenges facing the CJPC in Marsabit are similar to other organizations in Northern Kenya: the sheer size of the district coupled with its poor infrastructure makes communication to outlying areas difficult, and the organization's young status has made it difficult to attract donor funding.

In the areas where the CJPC works, nearly all the herders and livestock owners possess illegal firearms, although the *morans* and other youth are the ones who use the weapons. Most of these firearms are bought and owned on a clan basis. Ownership can be further broken down into specific '*foras*' (grazing units) in a clan. The clan and/or the *foras* decide on the number of guns to own for their defence. The migrating clans/herders can also decide on the number of firearms to have depending on the security along the migratory routes. Firearms are also owned individually by the business community to protect their businesses or by individuals using the guns for criminal activities.

In traditional settings, before the 'rise of the state', community security was entrusted to the elders, with the youth acting as their 'soldiers'. It is the opinion of the CJPC that the responsibility for securing and maintaining security should again be entrusted to community-level decision-making, although the Provincial Administration would have a significant complementary role. Because the role of the state in providing security is already significantly compromised, legitimising community participation in safety and security measures would be a positive step. In the modern community model, women and youth as well as elders are important players, although all three groups require education and awareness building around how to both promote peace and negotiate conflicts non-violently.

According to the CJPC, besides self-protection, firearms are increasingly being used to settle ethnic and clan scores, mainly incited by the local politicians. The perception of local political involvement is widespread among peace builders in the Eastern Province, and seems largely based on past electioneering tactics that included the tacit approval of community armament. Although the law and the national government policy regarding illegal gun ownership and use has been very strict, there are areas of gun policy that are unclear. There appear to be no clear rules and regulations on the arming and the use of firearms by the home guards or the KPR. Arming of home guards appears to have assumed political and clan dimensions and is “seriously biased.” One peace worker in Marsabit described the political dimension by saying, “Over the years because of politics, the tribal or political interests have arisen. Politicians want the votes from certain groups, and they tend to create ethnic problems.” The police presence in the district is insignificant. The few law-enforcement officers available cannot cope with the magnitude of the problem in the district.

The CJPC sees itself playing a major lobbying and advocacy role to reduce or minimize the gun problem in the district through awareness creation and education of the communities. In order to reach as many people as possible, the CJPC office in Marsabit has identified parish-based Justice and Peace Representatives in every parish to represent the CJPC at the grassroots level.

### ***Community Initiatives and Facilitation Assistance (CIFA)***

The Community Initiatives and Facilitation Assistance (CIFA) is a local CBO initiated in 1999 and starting project activities in 2000. CIFA was created in order to take over activities of another regional development organization, Farm Africa, which was phasing out its activities in the district. CIFA's main objectives and activities revolve around the following development aspects:

- Development of the pastoral communities in general
- Support of animal health services to improve the quality and output of livestock
- Conflict resolution and peace building activities
- Promoting gender issues in the district
- Good environmental management, mainly water and pasture resources

CIFA activities are centred on Karacha, Hurri Hills and the Mountain areas of Marsabit district and in Moyale district. The same activities are also carried out with partners in Ethiopia through its cross-border programme. In all these activities, the target communities are the pastoral groups as well as agro-pastoralists in these areas. CIFA acts as a facilitator aiming to build the capacity of and empower communities to promote rational utilization of available resources.

According to CIFA, the gun problem in Marsabit and Moyale districts greatly influences their development work. They believe that communities arm themselves for the following reasons:

- Socio-cultural traditions (pastoral communities were always armed but coexisted peacefully with their neighbours)
- The culture of revenge by communities who have previously suffered from attacks by their neighbours
- The need to balance armed strength with traditional raiding enemies from other districts like Wajir who are heavily armed and exploit Marsabit and Moyale districts
- The availability of large quantities of arms available from the fallen governments of Somalia and Ethiopia
- The existence of similar communities living across the borders, e.g. Borans straddling the Kenya-Ethiopia borders facilitating the arming of their kin in Kenya.

Guns previously owned and used for protection are being used to carry out criminal activities. Attacks and counter-attacks across the districts result in significant numbers of casualties on all sides. However, it is thought that the continuing conflict resolution and peace building activities are bearing fruit, with the communities finally appreciating the need to live in peace.

Traditionally, before the rise of the state and state-based security, communities policed themselves and entrusted elders with various tools and instruments to prevent and mitigate conflicts. These traditional conflict management mechanisms have since broken down or been watered down by the government. There is need for communities to play a greater role in maintaining security, and the government systems should play a complementary role to

the traditional forms of governance. Especially where government presence is unable to provide security or conflict management, the most pragmatic option may be granting legitimacy to councils of elders or other community-based efforts to build peace and settle conflicts.

Although CIFA as an organization is familiar with a number of government rules and regulations on gun ownership and use, it is its opinion that these instruments do not reflect the community needs and nor were they formulated with the communities. As a first step, the governments need to understand why the communities are armed and then develop its policies accordingly. Unfortunately, there is little trust and goodwill existing between the communities and the government and enforcing unilateral government policies will always be difficult.

### **In their own words: one peace worker on the role of the government**

Previously, there were traditional leaders right from the village up to the pasture lands and they were solely entrusted with powers to manage all the community's affairs and they had respect of agreeing or accepting laws. It is now getting complicated because the tendency of the government and its policy is not allowing most of these communities to effectively use their rules and methods that may not be in line with the government's policy. They do not appreciate the views of these leaders on how they can go about issues of peace and so on.

**Question:** From your experience, who do you think should be responsible for security?

The community should play a bigger role. They can be part of the government machinery and the government structure is supposed to accommodate the views of these communities, then the two can come together and come up with impeccable solutions. For example, the forum we have just had here, there was no representative from the government and here we are talking about the vital role the government is supposed to play. If we do not work together all of us then it becomes very complicated. Really when this peace issue was started in Marsabit it became very difficult to kick off, simply because some government officers, sorry to say, saw it as a threat. Then after that there were the cattle rustling issues, community projects, and people proceeded to raise funds to give to the Peace Commission

and asked them to ensure they did what was required of them. So government could not come on board and even the reports they gave to the Provincial Administration were bad.

CIFA recommends the development of gun control and management mechanisms in consultation with the communities. These could include simple things such as the registration of firearms already in the possession of citizens and the undertaking of extensive community campaigns to raise the level of awareness on the gun problem.

CIFA activities that contribute to gun control in the district include:

- Establishment of water pans and pasture management in order to minimize conflicts and subsequent violence that involve the use of firearms
- Support for conflict resolution and peace building activities
- Establishment and support of cross-border committees to recover stolen livestock

To reach its target communities, CIFA has a professional staff but also relies on external consultants. Work plans are developed and coordinated from the CIFA office in Marsabit except for the programme in Ethiopia (environment and peace building) where CIFA's facilitation is largely funding of partner activities. A cross-border committee is responsible for overseeing these activities.

The main setbacks facing CIFA include the vastness of the district and its poorly developed infrastructure. The illiteracy levels in the district are very high, which makes it very difficult to create sufficient awareness among the communities. There are also natural calamities such as endemic droughts, which affect development activities, forcing CIFA to engage in relief work. In order to address the question of insufficient staff, CIFA trains its staff in diverse fields of work. For example, the livestock-trained staff is also encouraged to attend training in conflict resolution. This way, the few people available can respond to various demands. CIFA illustrates a small-scale example of employing tactics that could also work on a policy level: mainstreaming peace and conflict issues in development, and the 'farming out' of activities to partner groups in areas where CIFA's competency or capacity is lacking. It also represents an instance where traditionally government-related security activities, such as recovering stolen livestock, has been taken over by independent local groups.

## Isiolo

Isiolo borders Marsabit to the north, Garissa to the southeast, Wajir to the east, Tana River and Meru districts to the south, and Samburu and Laikipia to the west. The district covers an approximate area of 26,605 sq. km. Most of the land in the district is flat, low-lying, featureless plain resulting from weathering and sedimentation. The plains rise gradually from an altitude of approximately 200 metres above sea level at the Lorian Swamp in the northern part of the district to about 300 metres at the Merti plateau. There are four major rivers in the district: the Ewaso Nyiro, Isiolo, Kinna and the Bisan Adhi. The Ewaso Nyiro drains into the Lorian Swamp and is the main source of water in the district. The plains along the Ewaso Nyiro (referred to as the Chaffa) are the main grazing areas for the pastoralists during the dry season.

The town of Isiolo is often referred to as the 'gateway to the North' of Kenya, and is quite cosmopolitan in its ethnic mix. Significant numbers of Borana, Somali, Turkana, Samburu, Meru and Kikuyu use the town either as a home base or a frequent trading stop. In the western finger of the Ewaso Nyiro, one finds significant concentrations of the Samburu and the Turkana communities. During the dry seasons, Somali herdsman from Wajir and Garissa enter the district from the northeastern side.

Nomadic pastoralism is the major economic activity in the district, with herders raising cattle, sheep, goats, camels and donkeys. There is limited rain-fed and irrigation agricultural activities in the wetter areas of the districts along the rivers. Hostilities to the east have limited the market for pastoralists to areas in the west and in the highlands centres of Meru district. Banditry cases have severely limited infrastructure development. Isiolo, therefore, is vulnerable to both drought and insecurity. The Somali Shifta wars in the 1960s are sometimes cited as the start of Isiolo's troubles. During and after the Shifta war, the government confiscated many livestock as punishment for the insurgency. Continued insecurity and the collapse of regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia have resulted in continuous infiltration of illegal firearms.

Guns are usually owned by the community and are the responsibility of the elders who monitor their use and punish those who misuse them. The guns are used in conflicts in the district. The various communities are usually given early warning signals to prepare their weapons for use in impending conflicts. Every community has its 'Commanders' who are identified by the elders. In conflict situations, it is these commanders who are responsible for the firearms.

Traditionally, the elders were responsible for maintaining security of the communities. In most cases, the guns are also in the custody of the elders and the youth have to justify why they want the guns and bullets. There is still a strong presence and responsibility by the elders for maintaining security in the community. The elders work alongside the Provincial Administration. The communities at large are also involved in security matters by providing information on criminal activities.

Insecurity along the Garissa-Isiolo road has also cut off large chunks of potential grazing land. This has led to large concentrations of livestock along the riverine forest of the Ewaso Nyiro with subsequent overgrazing. The increasing irrigation in the upstream of the Ewaso Nyiro has resulted in reduced water supplies for many pastoralists downstream. This leads to migration to insecure and conflict-prone areas. According to the organizations working on peace and conflict in Isiolo, the major causes and factors contributing to conflicts in the district include:

- Endemic drought and a poor resource base
- Influx of pastoralists from other districts
- Contentious land tenure issues
- Unsustainable natural resource use
- Easy access to illegal firearms
- General poverty and limited economic opportunities
- Marginalization, neglect and general poor governance by the central government
- Lack of trust of the Provincial Administration with accusations of corruption and tolerance of criminal activities for personal gains
- Lack of trust among the communities
- Cultural alliances of communities with relations outside the district who support them during the conflicts
- Divisive politics based on the negative exploitation of ethnic and cultural differences
- Erosion of traditional governing systems and the rebellion of the youth.



### ***Peace and Reconciliation Committee (PRC)***

The objectives of the Peace and Reconciliation Committee are to promote and ensure lasting peace in the district, reconcile the warring ethnic groups, research root causes of the problems leading to conflicts, and draw up a peace strategy for the district. The PRC has successfully brokered peace among several of the conflicting communities, has engaged in negotiation and reconciliation, and facilitated the return of over 3,000 stolen livestock. A rapid response team was crucial to the success of these activities, making itself available to go into 'hot zones' whenever a conflict erupts or in response to early warning signals.

The PRC targets the following groups within the district for peace work:

- Elders, who are primarily used to broker peace given their knowledge and power to 'curse' those who do not adhere to the resolutions
- Youth, who are involved in the actual violence
- Women, who have been known to incite the youth to engage in violent conflict through hero-worshipping of 'brave warriors'
- Civil society organizations involved in the mobilization and sensitization of the communities in the areas where they are working
- The government, from whom goodwill ensures legitimacy of the activities of the Committee
- Inter-faith groups: it has been established that religion plays a significant role in the lives of the communities in the district and it is for this reason that it is used as an entry point for promoting conflict resolution and peace building activities
- Schools, another powerful vehicle for promoting conflict resolution and peace building activities where the school-going youth can be specifically targeted
- Politicians, because they are the "main contributing parties to violent conflicts in the district."

To reach its target communities, the PRC works through elders. The local chiefs are also involved in all extension activities. The Peace and

Reconciliation Committee comprises 12 representatives at the locational level (there are six locations in the district), four members from each location at the divisional level and two members from each division at the district level. There are also four *ex-officio* members representing the County Council, religious leaders, and the Provincial administration.

### **Roots of conflict, in their own words (PRC)**

The escalation of conflicts in Isiolo District can be traced to 1992, when the then-sitting local Member of Parliament (MP) brought in people from the Wajir and Mandera districts in order to boost the numbers of voters in his favour. The same thing on a smaller scale happened in 1997 but this time, the settlers were asked to leave and return to their districts of origin after the general elections. To ensure that the eviction took place, the help of the Boran community in the district assisted by their brethren from Marsabit and Ethiopia, was solicited. The forceful evictions resulted in violent conflicts and in October 2000 the District Administration, with support from the local elders and opinion leaders, formed the Peace and Development Committee, which later changed its name to the Peace and Reconciliation Committee in order to reflect more correctly the thrust of its activities.

The major challenges facing the Peace and Reconciliation Committee in Isiolo district are, according to the leadership, “fluid boundaries which expose the district to interference from the neighbouring districts.” The theme of boundaries arises again around the separate but interdependent ethnic groups, most of whom possess at least communal small arms for use in violent conflict. Poverty has led to frustration and desperation, particularly among the youth who are easily recruited into conflict. The Committee maintains that political manipulation is behind most outbreaks of violence, with politicians delineating and pushing youth and ethnic ‘boundaries’ to retain control and political dominance in their constituencies.

The magnitude of the gun problem can be illustrated by the large number of losses in human life, livestock and the extensive destruction of property as a result of violent conflicts. While most of the firearms are illegal, there is also selective armament of different ethnic groups by the state through the Home Guard programme. The Peace and Reconciliation Committee has contributed

to the reduction of conflicts and the use of firearms in conflicts as evidenced by the institutionalization of control mechanisms of livestock movement. Previously, control and monitoring was difficult given the fact that there are no set tracks or routes for driving animals, and *morans* were the ones on foot with the livestock and carrying guns. The new system involves transportation of the livestock in trucks, which are easier to monitor and control.

Unlike in Wajir, the Committee in Isiolo has strived to criminalize the misuse of firearms according to constitutional (rather than traditional) practices. It has advocated holding individuals accountable for their crimes, as opposed to attributing the responsibility to their clans. Fifty firearms have been voluntarily surrendered with the promotion and adoption of interventions, such as peace building activities that reduce the need for armaments by the communities. The Committee has relied on various declarations that have brought together other districts, such as the instrumental Modogashe Declaration reached after negotiations between all the districts in the Northern and Northeastern provinces.

The most interesting aspect is the agreement and acceptance of the PRC as the major stakeholder in the illegal gun business. The leadership maintains an inventory of everyone who has a gun in the district and can trace and punish any offenders. Many in the community have come forward voluntarily for this neutral 'registration' process. The Committee is of the opinion that security should be a joint activity between the Provincial Administration (government) and the community. While the government has the primary responsibility of maintaining law and order, the community can participate by providing information and the maintenance of what they call "good neighbourliness." There will be a need for extensive capacity building among the community for them to effectively participate in these activities. Such capacity is envisaged in the proposed pilot community-policing project to be implemented in the district.

To enhance gun control in the district, the PRC recommends that:

- The rights of every community be recognized under the Constitution of Kenya
- The unemployment situation in the district especially among the youth be addressed
- The creation and promotion of income generating alternatives be promoted

- Already-held firearms in the district are legalized by registering them and letting the community control their use
- Strict and objective enforcement of the existing laws on gun control is undertaken
- The involvement of the community in the development of rules and regulations and their respective enforcement is initiated.

### ***Mandate the Future – Youth Network (MTEF)***

The Mandate the Future – Youth Network (MTEF) is a local community-based organization registered with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services since 2000. Its creation following a workshop to combat desertification, facilitated by the Environment Liaison Center International (ELCI). The ELCI encouraged the youth in Isiolo district to form a youth forum primarily to address environmental conservation issues. Since its formation, the MTEF has also engaged in peace education, and advocacy and awareness creation on the prevention and management of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

MTEF draws its membership from among the youth from various communities living in the district including the Somali, Meru, Turkana, Borana and the Samburu. The youth are especially targeted in the peace-related activities because they are easily manipulated to participate in violent conflicts. The activities of the MTEF include environmental conservation and management through awareness creation, dryland management, and the publication of a newsletter. They also engage in peace education through training of youth and women groups on insecurity. Advocacy, peace walks, and community campaigns seek to educate groups that are removed from the more mainstream work like that done by the Peace and Reconciliation Committee.

Another target group for MTEF activities is women, with an aim of identifying key focal persons who can talk to sons and husbands involved in conflict. The policy makers are targeted through the existing district fora such as the District Development Committees (DDCs), District Security Committees (DSCs), District Environment Committees (DECs) and the District AIDS Control Council.

The central division of Isiolo district is the one most affected by conflicts and it is here that MTEF concentrates its activities. The MTEF staff is 'part and par-

cel' of the communities and lives with them. The members are mandated to carry the outreach work to their respective 'Manyattas'. Once in a while MTEF holds 'Peace Days' that bring together the conflict affected communities through rallies and processions. The Provincial Administration is represented in these activities.

In addition, MTEF has held various awareness creation sessions on the gun problem in the district. It has also been involved in the encouragement of income generating activities for the youth to minimize their involvement in violent conflicts. Since its involvement in these activities, the MTEF has succeeded in transforming some of the youth from gun abusers into development workers.

The main challenges facing MTEF include:

- Lack of appropriate incentives for use in exchange programmes for those surrendering their firearms
- Lack of adequate knowledge and capacity to manage and sustain the peace already secured or to intervene when the conflicts are raging
- Weak government policy and lack of assurance of security in general
- Suspicion and lack of trust among the communities themselves and with the government machinery
- Lack of capacity and mandate to identify and apprehend the criminals among the communities.

### ***Friends of Nomads International (FONI)***

The Friends of Nomads International (FONI) is an NGO registered in 1998 with the objective of promoting and creating awareness on the Kenyan Constitution, land tenure issues, and civic education in Isiolo district. FONI is trying to revive traditional systems of natural resource management among the different ethnic groups in the district. Its entry point is through the facilitation of activities aimed at mitigating resource conflicts. FONI is a member of the Community Policing Forum and the PRC. Its activities give special focus to women and children. FONI also works very closely with the Provincial Administration.

### **Understanding the gun problem: In their own words**

The gun problem in the district is serious and very complex. The gun problem is simply a question of bad governance, where the government security systems have failed. There is selective justice in the district. The government has commercialized security for their own interests, whether financial or political. This is evident where even reported cases are not followed up and/or criminals are reportedly released in suspicious circumstances due to corruption of those responsible for jailing them.

The communities have, therefore, little confidence in the government and have armed themselves primarily for self-protection. These guns are, however, later used to perpetuate criminal activities. The guns are easily available since the fall of the Somali and Ethiopian regimes in the early 1990s.

Over time and following the bloody violent conflicts, the communities have indicated their willingness to get rid of the guns. The illegal use of guns has resulted in devastating losses of life and property and curtailed business in livestock which is the economic mainstay in the district.

To demonstrate the community willingness to get rid of the illegal guns, a significant turning point was evidenced following the Modogashe Declaration that resulted for example in the removal of all police escorts in the Northeastern Province. This was achieved following an order issued by the then Provincial Commissioner to remove all the road barriers in the district. The PC knew all the clans and also knew the area, and threatened to sack all the government administrators where conflicts were reported. He claimed there would be no more impunity hitherto enjoyed by people who incited and fuelled conflicts in the province.

The gun problem in Isiolo district as well as in other parts of the NFD is also influenced by the existence and operations of the Ethiopian militia, the Oromo Liberation Force (OLM) that operates from bases in Kenya. Ethnic differences in the region also play a key role in the illegal gun problem.

Depending on the community, the guns may be individually owned but all of them are communally controlled. Individual owners include the big herders who have guns to protect their livestock. There are also groups who acquire guns with criminal intent. The gun trade is complex. People initially hired to escort livestock from other districts sell the guns alongside the livestock and trade a significant number of firearms.

According to FONI, the challenges facing gun control and management include:

- Mechanisms necessary to legalize illegal guns already held by the community
- Providing an innovative framework for policing in pastoral areas
- Lack of capacity among the civil society to conceptualize and develop appropriate approaches to gun control
- Inadequate involvement of grassroots based organizations
- Lack of knowledge and capacity to localize national policies, which has resulted in 'boardroom' approaches by the government and other external development agencies.

### ***Isiolo Inter-Religious Council (IIC)***

The Isiolo Inter-Religious Council (IIC) was founded in early 2002 after training supported by the Muslim Consultative Council, Kenya Catholic Secretariat, the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) and an NGO called *Chemi Chemi ya Ukweli* (in Swahili, literally, 'Wellspring of Truth'). The training focused on the improvement of relations between the Muslim and Christian communities following past violent conflicts. The objective of the IIC is capacity building in peace building, conflict management, and mediation and networking. The mission of IIC is to empower the community initiatives through inter-religious dialogue, and its vision is a peaceful Isiolo.

To achieve its objectives, the IIC undertakes to:

- Create awareness on peace issues among communities
- Conduct training on peace building and conflict resolution
- Demonstrate that religion irrespective of the individual faiths is a connector.

The target groups of IIC activities include:

- Youth, who are involved in the actual fighting in the district
- Leaders, who are usually accused of inciting the conflicts

- Community at large since they are the main victims of violent conflicts and should take charge of the peace processes
- Women, who are the most affected by the violent conflicts.

According to the IIC, the gun problem in the district has been brought about by:

- The influx of people from neighbouring districts who come with weapons
- Insecurity in the district that has led people to arm to protect themselves and their property
- Poverty because guns are seen as a way to generate income
- Bad politics leading to armament of communities to protect their ethnic and political interests
- The instability in the neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia.

The outreach programme of the IIC uses the following avenues to reach its membership:

- Seminars and workshops organized by the three inter-religious stakeholders
- *Barazas* (community meetings) either convened by the Provincial Administration or by any one of the three stakeholders
- Mosques and churches through their respective sermons, preaching and faith teachings
- Processions and marches as the opportunities avail themselves.



## CHAPTER FIVE

# NORTHEASTERN PROVINCE

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The Northeastern Province is one of the most historically marginalized areas of Kenya. From colonial times through the reign of the Moi regime, the arid area encompassing nearly 700km of largely unmarked border with Somalia has been excluded from nation building and development because of the pastoral lifestyle and Somali culture of its inhabitants, and the remote reaches of its geography. Most of the province is normally hot and dry throughout the year except for some erratic, scarce, and unpredictable bimodal rains, which fall in March and April and October through December. Scarce rains coupled with frequent droughts and harsh temperatures have dictated pastoral nomadism as the economic mainstay over generations. The inhabitants of the district are predominantly Somalis, an ethnic group that is distinct in language, culture and lifestyle from other Kenyans.

### **The Shifta War<sup>1</sup>**

#### ***From Wild Barrel, Incompatible Regimes, a PeaceNet publication***

The Outlying Districts Ordinance of 1902, under the colonial government, restricted the movement of Africans in and out of the marginalized NFD (Northern Frontier District). The NFD was declared a closed area, and a pass in the form of a red card was required for residents as proof of legitimate residency. The Outlying Districts Act was only repealed in 1997.

Because of the restrictive legislation and the complete lack of development in the NFD, the inhabitants of Somali origin gravitated towards their counterparts across the colonial border in the Republic of Somalia. Similar culture and clan structures formed the basis of political alliances. A commission set up in 1962 found that 87 per cent of Kenyans of Somali descent were in favour of seceding from Kenya. They completely boycotted the independence elections.

Soon after, the Shifta War rebellion broke out, with Somalis fighting to secede from Kenya and join Somalia, and the Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta of KANU (Kenya African National Union) taking extra measures to quell the uprising. The government invoked Section 85 of the Constitution to declare a State of Emergency. Under the Public Security Act, the Northeastern Province and “Contagious districts regulations” of 1966 came into force, allowing the president to make regulations amending the operations of any written law.

The armed forces were allowed to use unlimited force against anyone attempting to cross international borders. Police brutality was not only allowed, it was also sanctioned and ignored by official policy that refused to require investigation into prisoners’ cause of death while in custody. The authorities were no longer required to keep or make public records of detention, causing many detainees to simply ‘disappear’. It became a death-penalty offence to be in possession of a firearm or to be seen with someone who had a firearm. Harboring ‘criminal elements’ was punishable by life in prison.

The Shifta War ended in 1968, but the State of Emergency and the treatment of the NFD ‘citizens’ as hostile enemies continued until as recently as the last elections, in which a new government defeated the long-standing reign of Daniel arap Moi, Kenyatta’s KANU heir. More than one generation of NFD residents was militarized and grew to perceive state security institutions as the ‘enemy’. This distrust is evident in the success of traditional laws and the use of elder councils for resolving conflict outside of any government system of justice or policing.<sup>2</sup>

Customary laws, or ‘*Heer*,’ regulate daily affairs in the nomadic population, which lives according to the traditional Somali way of life. However, Somalis are Muslims and so the ‘*Heer*’ is only valid as long as it does not contravene Islamic teachings. Islamic ‘*Sharia*’ law always takes precedence. Each clan acts as the enforcer of its own ‘*Heer*’, and force or the threat of force backs up the morals and ethics of the law. Though legally most land in the province is ‘Trust Land’, each of the clans attach a traditional claim to their respective grazing areas.

In pre-independence Kenya, the Colonial Administration drew boundaries along territorial grazing areas as a way of enhancing their administrative laws, a move

they saw as restoring peace among different pastoral groups. The colonial government invoked the Special District Ordinance Act of 1934, which empowered the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) to define grazing and water boundaries. The Native Ordinance Act was used for the implementation of this concept. Each clan was restricted to its traditional grazing territory and strict surveillance was put in place to enforce the order. Trespassers were punished through arbitrary stock-fines. The colonial grazing boundaries established areas for clans, which over time and by virtue of use, became part of the informal legal system and the attendant threat of force.

The system of customary exclusiveness is no longer in use since Kenya gained independence. However, clan members still identify closely with their traditional grazing territories and use their legal systems to enforce what had earlier been common practice. The colonial policy of tribal separation attempted to resolve a situation in which water and grazing rights were acquired largely through force, according to the relative strength of different groups, but has left a legacy of conflict.

Immediately after independence, grazing restrictions were withdrawn and adherence to clan territories broke down. This triggered pastoral migration across the district and international boundaries resulting in increased human and livestock numbers in the province. Pasture and water resources were utilized in a free-for-all manner, a scenario that led to the current state of insecurity and tribal clashes over resources.

## **Garissa**

Garissa district borders Wajir district to the north, Lamu to the south, Tana River and Isiolo districts to the west, and Somalia to the east. The district has a population of approximately 254,000 and hosts about 126,000 refugees from Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia and Zanzibar. The Somalis of Garissa are of the Ogaden clan within the larger Darood sub-tribe.

Garissa has a long and, in Kenya, infamous history of insecurity brought about by banditry and raids in which various clans attack each other for supremacy, competition, and control of limited natural resources. In the recent past, the situation worsened due to the collapse of the Republic of Somalia and the instability in Ethiopia. Beginning in 1991, insecurity increased, manifested by increased highway banditry and hijacking, raiding and stock thefts, robbery and looting, intimidation, physical injury and mutilation, rape, and murder.

The insecurity in the district reduced the resource base of the pastoral communities by pushing them into a more sedentary lifestyle. The conflicts further affected the socio-economic well being of the communities mainly through:

- Reduced viability of livestock and increased incidence of animal malnutrition, morbidity and mortality
- Reduced commerce and trading activities leading to further depression of livestock values and markets
- Unavailability, scarcity and high cost of basic commodities
- Increased isolation of the district from the rest of the country
- Reduced investments and few and poor employment opportunities
- Reduced educational opportunities
- Family separations
- Increased numbers of families living in destitution in the peri-urban settlements
- Loss of hope and confidence
- Diversion of scarce resources, for example more funds directed to purchase of firearms for self-defence reducing capital expenditure on welfare
- Increased malnutrition, morbidity and mortality particularly among vulnerable groups, especially children and women.

After the 1997 general elections, an inter-clan war erupted between the two local clans, the Auliyahan, and the Abduwak, over watering points. Hundreds of people and livestock were killed, maimed, and property stolen or destroyed, rendering thousands of people destitute and displaced from their traditional homesteads. According to the District Security Committee (DSC), the problem of insecurity could be attributed to:

- Traditional, structural, and socio-economic tensions over resources and political representation

- Increased premium on services and opportunities due to the endemic droughts and the influx of refugees
- Increased tensions and proliferation of illegal small arms leading to increased banditry, opportunistic crimes and inter-clan feuds
- Limited resources from the central government for both civil and security services rendering the civil administration and the police incapable of effectively managing the new scale and complexity of insecurity
- Civilians taking the law into their hands with clans and families arming themselves for self-defence
- Weak traditional authority structures over defensive militias, resulting in escalated inter-clan hostilities and banditry.

### ***Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI)***

The Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI) is a local NGO that has facilitated the peace and reconciliation activities in Garissa district since 2000. The Peace and Development Committee is implemented as a core activity of the PPDI. The objective in 2000 was primarily to secure peace in the district, and by 2003 the objective had largely been achieved. The next important step in securing and maintaining the peace in the district is the identification, initiation and implementation of development activities in the district.

The main source of conflict according to PPDI is the competition over natural resources – access, user rights, and ownership – including water and pasture. The problem of water and pasture are brought about by the endemic droughts that plague the district. The location-based peace and development committees (subsets of the district-level group) have formed grazing committees that negotiate for grazing rights in the different livestock migratory areas.

The main stakeholders in the development activities in the district include the PPDI, elders from across the district who participate in the Peace and Development Committee, the Provincial Administration (represented by the District Commission, District Officers, and Chiefs) and development partners based in the district. The Divisional Representatives are trained by the PPDI and they in turn are asked to train their sub-committees at the division

and locational levels. It has been noted that more support is needed at the divisional level in order to facilitate their work at the grassroots level.

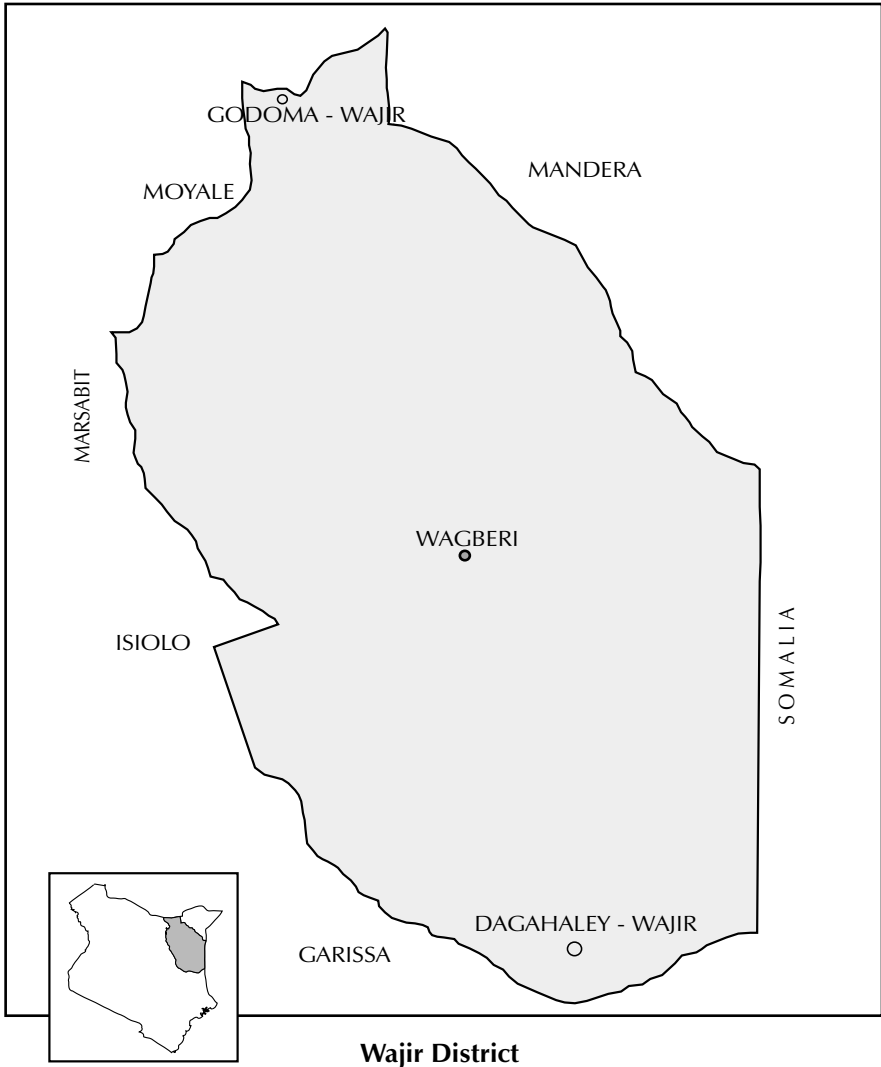
The membership of the Peace and Development Committee is drawn from the different locations and divisions in the district. Unfortunately, given the sheer size of the district; it is usually difficult to bring together all the members of the committee together for meetings on a short notice. To overcome this setback, the Peace and Development Committee sees a need to form a small management committee at the district level with members who can quickly be brought together for meetings and for the day-to-day running of the committee.

To date the peace and development activities have been facilitated as one of the activities of the PPDI. It is, however, necessary that the PPDI acquires a separate identity. As a distinct entity the PPDI can enhance its bargaining power at the district level. Members can sit in the District Development Committee (DDC), the leadership of the organization can operate an independent bank account, write proposals, negotiate for funding, and provide other services to the district as an NGO separate from the government-based Peace Committee.

Besides awareness creation to the community on the problem of illegal small arms, the Peace and Development Committee has been involved in facilitating the surrender of firearms. In 2003 alone, the Dadaab sub-committee has facilitated the surrender of 40 illegal firearms (25 from Dadaab and 15 from Fafi and Lagdera areas). One of the issues that came out during the surrender of the illegal firearms is the need to offer incentives in form of development activities in order to reduce the demand for firearms. The communities also indicated the need for such development initiatives to specifically target women as a special category, given their important role in the peace processes in the district.

Following the relative peace that has been achieved in the district, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) intends to undertake a development project to ensure that the conflicts do not erupt or recur. The project, which has pledged funding in the six-figure range, will address water, livestock and small arms issues. This one-year pilot project, if successful, will be replicated in 20 other districts in the country. The lessons will then be used to design similar interventions in other UNDP programmes worldwide. The specific project activities will be implemented and prioritized by the Peace and Development Committee, as separate from the PPDI.

## Wajir



Wajir is bordered by the Manderla district and Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the east, Eastern Province to the west, and Garissa district to the south. There are three major clans of Kenyan Somali: Ajuuran, Degodia, and Ogaden. Similar to the other districts in the Northeastern Province, Wajir's politics and economy are characterized by ties to southern Somalia and by the nomadic

pastoral lifestyle accompanying the arid climate. Many organizations working on peace and conflict issues do so on both sides of the Somali border. Wajir is also well known for being the site of the 1993 Al Fatah Declaration, discussed at greater length in the Introduction.

## **Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPRDC)**

The Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) evolved as part of the larger movement for peace and reconciliation in the district beginning in 1993 with the Al Fatah council of elders. In 1984, fighting between Somalia and Ethiopia resulted in arms proliferation in the region, and clan-based killing that evolved as an extension of that conflict. In 1991, the influx of Somali refugees after the state collapse made the situation even worse. Finally in September 1993, elders from all clans came together as part of what is now known as the Wajir Peace Process. Representatives from all clans including minor ones not directly involved in the conflict came together in Wajir town to negotiate a settlement that would stop the bloodshed. While they had a measure of success with the Al Fatah Declaration, still used as the basis for most conflict resolution in the district today, there was a gap in participation. Women and youth were not involved, and there were no government stakeholders on board.

In 1994, women and youth formed their own structures (Wajir Women for Peace and Development and Wajir Youth for Peace and Development). The common objective was to restore peace. As part of the growth of these other peace groups, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee formed and was inclusive of business, politicians, and all stakeholders, including women and youth. It is registered as a CBO, but is working to attain NGO status so that it can apply directly for grants from larger donors. Presently, much of its funding is filtered through sub-contracts with larger NGOs such as WASDA (see below).

The major activity of the Committee is community education, facilitated through workshops and *barazas*. Other activities include rapid response for conflict intervention and intervention teams based on early warning signs, peace education in schools, lobbying and advocacy for survivors of violence, cross-border activities across local and international borders. On policy issues, the WPDC lobbies through the District Steering Group (DSG) and has communicated with the Pastoral Parliamentary Group. Four Members of Parliament from Wajir are members of the Committee.



## Local peace, larger policy: In their own words

### *Interview with a Wajir local peace builder<sup>3</sup>*

**Question:** Do you wish you could influence national and international policy? Do you feel capacitated to make your experiences known at a higher level?

**Answer:** Here in Wajir, guns are not used as much anymore. The border is calm and quiet. But these ideas are not reaching the national and international level of policy making. We have written a play on small arms, but have not found any channels through which to perform and share our success. People's reasons for owning guns are mostly insecurity. There are has been little helpful government intervention, even historically. Maybe one security official for three or four thousand people. Also, government violence has been there: rapes and beatings against local people. So we own guns to protect both against our enemies and the government. Now, the [local] government does not act without WPDC support. But when the government fails, it must work with community-level institutions.

The government even supports the Al Fatah Declaration because it saved lives and healed wounds. We say, one may not place a value on human life, but we can restore the relationship between communities. Parting with cattle and camels is costly, so "an eye for an eye", where a killer's family has to compensate for the death of the victim, leads to forgiveness.

**Question:** What about human rights?

**Answer:** Is it the life of one person, or the lives of the whole community that matters more? The community health and well being is more important than one person's wrongdoing or even one person's death. The government supports this because it is expedient for peace. Losing camels is a painful and powerful, effective deterrent to further crime. It works. But we do not offer cash for arms surrender. People even use traditional weapons in conflict now despite the presence of guns because they are aware and afraid of the consequences. Gunshots are hear up to 80km away, and reports are made. When the government is being supportive, people who use guns are actively punished. Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, Marakwet, even Karamojong are learning and training with us, and replicating the Wajir efforts at traditional problem solving elsewhere. But still, we have no resources to influence policy. We are spreading our beliefs through grassroots work.

## Wajir South Development Association (WASDA)

Professional and business people from Wajir South registered WASDA as an NGO in 1993 on the behalf of the Wajir community. Its purpose is to supplement government efforts in development. WASDA aims to support the improvement of the livelihoods of pastoral communities in Wajir district and in lower Juba in southern Somalia. The organization operates in areas inhabited by pastoral communities who are highly dependent on livestock for their social and economic well being. Animal health, education, water and social services are poorly developed due to logistical difficulties, insecurity, resource constraints, cultural biases and, according to WASDA, “inappropriate policies on pastoral development.”

### Marginalization of Pastoralism in East Africa

#### *From the Pastoral Steering Committee’s “Wajir Manual for Development Practitioners”*

A number of factors have been suggested as responsible for the long term decline of pastoralism in the region:

**State structures:** Loss of autonomy of pastoral groups and incorporation into state structures. Restrictions on mobility for administrative, security, and political reasons.

**Drought and conflict:** Droughts have become more frequent and protracted in recent decades. Insecurity and conflict has also been a significant factor in pastoral in most East African states. In particular, change in nature and severity of raiding, forcing households out of the pastoral sector.

**Sedenterisation [sic]:** Discouragement of nomadic lifestyle, development approaches which encourage cultivation, expansion of settlements, move from nomadic to more sedenterised [sic] herding.

**Land tenure:** Land tenure regimes which do not recognize customary institutions governing control and access. Expansion of agriculture into pastoral grazing land, especially into dry season grazing areas bordering rivers. Privatization of pastoral land and growth of game reserves.

**Internal differentiation:** Increased social differentiation, classes of rich pastoralists emerging who combine livestock holding with political and administrative office.<sup>4</sup>

For pastoralists to take advantage of their resources, there is a need for programmes that can enable their basic human rights to education, water, and health. WASDA seeks to realise this goal through training, monitoring, development of physical facilities, awareness creation, and initiating or strengthening existing community structures. Board members and staff, all of whom are trained in various disciplines, run the organization. The board is responsible for long-term policy and planning, and management focuses on implementation of activities and services.

WASDA's vision is of a "prosperous pastoral society at peace with itself and its neighbours from all generations." Core values are listed as those key points that will guide 'service delivery' and include:

- Sincerity and honesty
- Equity and fairness
- Accountability and transparency
- Commitment and cooperation
- Professionalism and voluntary service
- Conservation of environment
- Upholding the sanctity of human life
- Gender sensitivity
- Acting as a non-profit organization

While other NGOs certainly can be assumed to espouse these qualities, WASDA is one of the few that has put them on paper as an informal contract with its staff. The level of organization and funding support is much higher than the WPDC. The flow of funding in Wajir goes through the larger NGOs, who in turn contract out peace work to the WPDC, which is capacitated to do community education in areas outside of simple development work.

WASDA believes in the close interlinking of conflict and development work. Conflict and peace issues are both critical to the path forward for development. In the words of one WASDA staff member, "We need very, very local

people on the ground who know the clan histories and even people's lineages. Access and control of resources are often along clan lines. For eight months, we were prevented from training community health workers in Somalia because of guns: only males with guns were loud about being trained. Specific knowledge of the laws, rules, and so on are needed on that side to make things work. Otherwise, you can be fired on just for blowing dust on people while driving to a training site."<sup>5</sup> WASDA staff said they would like to find ways to illustrate how donors should budget peace building as more than just an afterthought to development work.

### **WASDA case study: The Burder pan**

#### ***From WASDA records***

#### **Resource based conflicts and relationship with development: How WASDA is influencing local peace and the demand for guns.**

Burder is a relatively new settlement with a high livestock population in Wajir South. It has no developed infrastructure, (e.g. public utilities including human and livestock health services, permanent water sources and education services). Two attempts were made to drill a borehole in the area but in vain, no underground water was found.

As a result of the increasing demand for water, the heavily silted Burder pan came under intense pressure from area pastoralists. The heavy silting was due to the poor management and lack of proper conservation measures. This led to acute shortages of water, forcing settled and pastoral communities to migrate with their livestock, leading to the closure of the primary school. It also created misunderstanding and conflicts on the use of the already scarce water resource. The water shortage at times resulted in livestock deaths, the nearest permanent water source being Kulaley which is 70 kms away. During dry seasons, the town depended on water transported by vehicle from Wajir, which is 86 km away. The community members were constantly seeking assistance from government departments, NGOs and other well-wishers in the form of fuel, vehicle, and other overhead costs.

As a result of the recurrent problem, the disadvantaged Burder community approached WASDA and requested intervention. WASDA responded by sourcing funds from ECHO through CORDAID to desilt, expand, and fence

the pan, and put pan management structures in place. The community was sensitized: a pan management committee was trained and the pan was desilted manually in September and October of 2002. A total volume of 6,000 cubic metres of sand was removed, making the pan one of the largest water harvesting facilities in the district.

The project brought an alternative source of income through payments for manual labour, which enabled members of the community to buy food and clothing and to spare the animals that otherwise would have been sold. A few people started small-scale businesses from the cash generated, while some bought small numbers of livestock. The pan is currently well managed, properly used and has sustained the community. There are no more reports of livestock death, and disruption to learning because of school closures is unheard of. The long-standing problem of water trekking is now history in the lives of the Burder community. Clan infighting has reduced, making the area more conducive for development work. Pressure on the government, NGOs, and community members has minimized.

## **Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF)**

ALDEF started in 1989 as a CBO, and has evolved into a larger NGO. It is similar in objectives and work to WASDA (above) and to NORDA, the Northern Development Agency, which operates out of Mandera. Working mostly with pastoralists, but also with internally displaced people they refer to as 'peri-urban poor', ALDEF has five major areas of work.

- The pastoral development programme is involved in local development projects and capacitating of peace on the ground
- Microcredit opportunities target women who have given up on pastoralism or who have been driven out of their homes by factors such as abuse, neglect, poverty, and rape
- Restocking of livestock after major droughts or conflicts
- Food security and conflict prevention, mitigation, and response (CPMR) is structured as a cross-border project. It is focused on improving Eastern Wajir pastoralist and Somali relations. Like WASDA, ALDEF often 'farms out' such projects to WPDC.

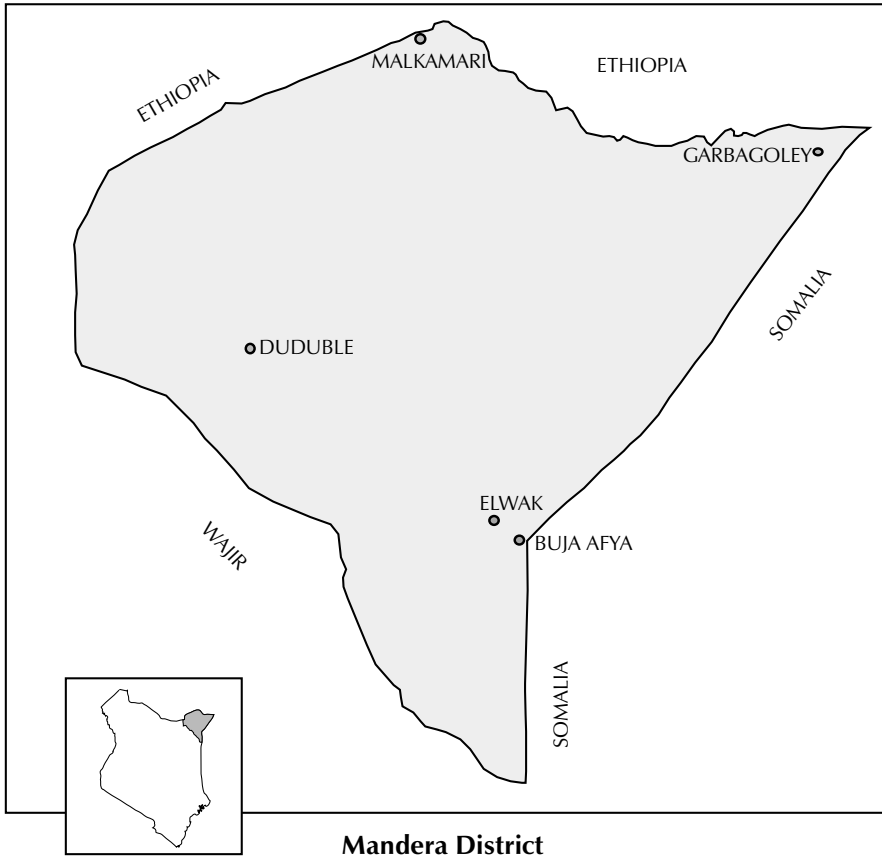
- Capacity building for Wajir peace structures. ALDEF manages funds for the WPDC, and the Committee implements projects. They are also supposed to build capacity through training within WPDC so that it can register as an NGO.

Before 1991, the framework for development in Wajir was centred on relief aid. International organizations would come in during a crisis, provide emergency assistance, and then leave with only a few post-relief measures in place. Now, locally based organizations have changed the situation by competing for donor money while remaining rooted in the communities where they work. “Aid work” has a different image. Local organizations have more transparency, greater innovation, and direct accountability to the people they serve. There is some frustration that while local groups co-ordinate well enough to make competition healthy, top-level donors such as DFID and USAID are not effective in this way.

ALDEF has influenced the demand for guns by addressing the root causes of violence. Pastoral poverty creates a need for guns, not just for livelihood, but also for cattle rustling and maintaining strength during clan warfare. The number of guns in use has gone down significantly in the last ten years, partly due to simple development tactics. One ALDEF staff member said, “If we support a youth group with a loan, and they start a business, we have targeted potential bandits: they will keep their guns silent and will support communities instead of being destructive.”<sup>6</sup>

## Mandera

The Mandera district in the Northeastern Province is bordered by Wajir to the south and west, Ethiopia to the north across the Dawa River, and Somalia to the east. It is one of the most remote, desolate, and underdeveloped parts of Kenya, and one of the few districts without at least one urban cluster boasting a cell phone tower (although KenCell is rumoured to be constructing one for use within the next year). Its main claim to fame is Kenya’s ‘Border Point One,’ the first border post demarcating the nation’s territory. Ironically, Mandera’s unpatrolled border remains mostly open to Somalis who walk easily into Kenya. The area hosts an unknown number of informal refugees, who have no official camp or international support. The streets of Mandera town are sandy in the dry season and become rivers in flash floods during the rainy season (such dry riverbeds are known as *luggas* and are common throughout the region but not commonly used as streets and pathways in district capitals).



### ***Mandra Women for Peace and Development (WFPD)***

In a place where both traditional pastoral and Islamic traditions are enforced with an iron rule, the primary peace building organization is staffed by and focused on women. WFPD began in May 2000 with an overall objective of improving the livelihoods of the pastoralist, agro-pastoralist, the peri-urban and rural poor through enhancing women's participation in peace and development activities. The organization is managed by a steering committee of 30 women selected from a cross-section of the local ethnic communities, NGOs and government of Kenya workers, and women leaders. It is registered with the District Social Development Office in Mandra a self-help CBO. The office activities are run by a work group of five people, headed by a coordinator.

During its three years of operation, WFPD has developed a strategic and operational plan for conflict management and peace building in the district, and signed partnerships with a number of NGOs and donors to implement the plan. The NGOs and donors supporting the organization include Oxfam GB, NORDA (Northern Region Development Agency, see below), MEDS, and Trocairre. In its project implementation WFPD also works closely with the Arid Lands office, the District Commissioner's office, and the traditional peace elders in the district.

In the conflict management and community peace building project, the main objective is to reduce vulnerability of pastoralist livelihoods to conflicts and insecurity and to enhance development. This is done through:

- Community awareness and mobilization on peace building, including establishment of local peace committees, exchange visits, facilitation of community dialogue meetings, peace activities, and monitoring of peace committees
- Training of divisional and locational peace committees on conflict management
- Rapid response: facilitating traditional peace elders and provincial politicians to quickly mitigate conflicts before they escalate to violence

Strengthening local capacity for conflict prevention and facilitating workshops, including working with elders and facilitating cross-border rapid response initiatives, is the focus of most work. Other projects include small income generating matching grants to women entrepreneurs and the establishment and operation of a micro-credit revolving fund in Mandera Central Division. Through the promotion of women's financial independence, WFPD hopes to eventually create more opportunities for gender-equal peace building.

People own and use guns in the Mandera district to make money from trafficking, for looting and survival, and for livelihood and self-defence. Availability is easy, especially due to the closeness of Somalia and an ungoverned part of Ethiopia. At the local level, demand for guns is easily satisfied through the porous borders. Peace workers on the ground can control what is already there, but have a more difficult time monitoring new 'shipments' that come in with camel caravans and traders.

By 2003, over 16 peace committees had been established, trained, and were under continuous monitoring. These peace committees bring together rural



communities for training, discussion, and negotiations with neighbouring groups to facilitate mutual understanding that might avoid violent conflict over issues that can be solved peacefully. Mandera Elders for Peace had been recognized as an established institution, working closely with the women to conduct training for peace committees and engage in rapid response negotiations. Cross-border ties with Somalia are strong. A training conducted for the Bellel Hawo women was intended to help them start a similar peace building initiative in the Gedo region.

In general, the impact of peace building has been marked, especially considering the lack of government presence in the district. According to a recent WFPD report:

- Conflict occurrences have generally reduced in the district. For example, highway banditry that occurred almost every month has almost ceased.
- Most of the conflict issues that used to be reported to the police or Provincial Administration are now solved by peace committees at their respective locations.
- There is improved sharing of conflict and security related information was earlier difficult to access by development actors and communities.
- Elders who were 'dormant' and not involved in peace and development activities two years ago have now been 'rekindled' and are in mainstream decision-making processes in the district.
- Chiefs and District officials who were not co-operative to the introduction of community-based peace building are now beginning to realise its importance and are requesting capacity building and enhancement for themselves and their communities.

**Structural Inequality: In their own words*****Interview with Mandera Women for Peace and Development***<sup>7</sup>

**Question:** What causes a demand for guns here at the local level?

**Answer:** Porous borders, especially Somalia east of El Wak, makes it difficult [to get rid of guns]. Especially in the late 1990s with the government's emphasis on security, demand was high then among *shiftas* [bandits] especially. With weapons collection, people turn in old ones and get the reward. Peace workers on the ground can control what is already there, but we must also look for local solutions before we talk at the international level. Supply and demand must be dealt with concurrently. If you are mopping your floor and someone is still running the tap, it can't work.

International conventions only deal with supply; this is necessary, but not impacting on the situation here, in Mandera. People at the policy level should use our work as a learning tool. Government should also be involved, because without a willingness for government change we can't move forward.

Guns come from big multinational companies abroad. It is a business for them. We only get these things because of the demand. We are using these things to kill each other, at our level. Africa even as a region and continent may not have the ability to stop the supply. But can we reduce demand? I think so. Trade fluctuates visibly with conflict levels. With local peace committees enacting cross-border by-laws and elders communicating, with alternative sources of income being offered, demand goes down. A change of attitude is also necessary. Mainstreaming small arms and light weapons issues into peace building and capacity building and training is very important. We can trade guns for development.

## **Women and Peace**

### ***Interview with Wajir Women for Peace and Development***

Attitudes are changing, but very slowly. For example, education for girls is key to changing women's status, and that is starting to be accepted. Religion is more difficult to challenge. Women are taking a greater role in peace building, but no women's organization existed before Dekha Ibrahim started the Wajir Peace and Development Committee. We took inspiration from that. Our main objective is to change women's support of conflict and fighting. We also want to educate women to pressure men. We have a saying that we tell women: 'lock your box' and tell the men they must put down their guns.

Women are becoming the breadwinners, especially in urban areas. Poverty is widespread, and women are entrepreneurial. When men justify violence by claiming they must earn their daily bread, you find that women start to find ways to put food on the table. Rape is still widespread, and is sometimes used as a tool in conflict, but this crime can be compensated with no more than five camels to the victim's family. With more women breaking the mould of the traditional wife, this can also cause violence in the home.

## **Mandera Elders for Peace**

Mandera Elders for Peace operates as a sub-section of Mandera Women for Peace and Development. MWPD is the recipient of funding, some of which is passed on to the elders for work in conflict resolution, negotiation, and emergency response. The women of MWPD, while very well organized and capable, understand that they are operating in a social system that respects the work and word of elders in a unique way. The elders characterize the conflict in Mandera as largely one of borders: Somali criminals and thieves have an easy escape into the lawless east of Kenya's 'Border Point One'. They are proud of their work in collaborating with elders on the Somali side, but they also see that the 'bad neighbour' problem is not just a regional or a Kenyan one, but a world issue that deserves international-level support, funding, and intervention. In such a scenario, they see themselves as part of the solution, negotiating at levels that 'non-locals' could not navigate.

## ***In their own words***

### ***Interview with six members in Mandera Town, September 4, 2003***

Elder 1: We are the people involved in peace and conflict in the district. We can tell you anything about conflict. There is a lot of conflict. There are a lot of arms. Our animals are taken, our women are raped, they do highway robberies, and our people are killed. In collaboration with the DSC, it has become very difficult for us to handle the situation. Because they come and raid, then run to the other side of the border. Now, we have to collaborate to bring peace.

In Ethiopia, there are guns, but they are not as bad as the Somali guns. They are not causing us as much destruction. But anywhere there are guns there are problems. We can easily resolve conflicts over animals or resources, but when there are guns it becomes more difficult. I don't know if you have been to the borders, but you can see they come, break into a shop, steal something, and then cross over again. I think the biggest problem in the world today is this border, for us. We have made some efforts, we have met other elders, we have sat down with them, we have asked them to help us resolve this issue.

Elder 2: So we have said to these people, now that your government has collapsed on that side, we want to use the traditional systems of dealing with things. If someone is killed, let us use blood money to compensate. When we use blood money, things are resolved and they don't pick up the issue again. The biggest problem to us is Somalia. Although we have a tripartite border, it is Somalia that bothers us the most. It doesn't mean that we don't have the youth, or others causing problems. We also do have this. They have guns for sale. We, as elders, our main issue is peace. We have seen the effect of guns. We go and tell people the effect of living on the border of Somalia with the guns. We try to educate. For sure, we have gone beyond our borders to Wajir, to help solve their conflict, and we have managed as peace mediators even outside our borders. Inter-clan battles are difficult. We use blood money and traditional methods. They work.

Elder 3: Somalia used to be a country. You know that Somalia used to have a government. The aftermath of that conflict caused many problems. There is nothing else new that we can really tell you. Somalia is closed. After the collapse, there was no international intervention to resolve the issue. All the guns that used to be there in the government are now in the hands of the people of Somalia. Now there is a Somali gun pointed at us. The victims are now Kenyan. Victims of the Somali gun. The Kenyan borders are all over the

country, but starting here in Mandera there is Border Point One. Right from where the border is marked, Border Point One, to Kisimayo, they cannot control their guns. Our problem became overwhelming. You have the guns. But where are these bullets coming from? That is the question we ask. Because you have asked us questions, you must listen to the answers. Some of the bullets are from alliances from outside. Those who get their arms from Ethiopia, those who get them from Somalia, all the guns come to Kenya. Kenyans have weapons. We have bullets. But here, we fear to break the law. More than the others. We need real help. Help us from these guns.

**Question:** The difference between here and Somalia is that Kenya has a government. Who should be helping with the gun problem, and what is the role of the government?

Elder 1: The government can fight these people, but they have kept quiet. The government kept quiet not because they have no ability. We want the world to see the problem Somalia is posing to Kenya. The government is trying to show the world how Somalia is posing a threat to Kenya. They do have an ability to intervene but they do not.

Elder 2: We know the government position. We know as peace elders. What we need is assistance, in terms of logistics, finance, and support. Government wants to help the peace process, but we need real support.

Elder 3: The government is there, but the government has shown its ability whether positive or negative in trying to resolve conflict. The people across the other side, they are not a militia. They are individuals, gun runners. It is elders now who can deal at their level. It is now at the level of individuals, of youth, of elders. It is only we elders who can deal with it, elder peacemakers, and not the government. There is no government there. Those people need counselling, capacity building, peace-building initiatives. They are people who are traumatized, they need to change their attitudes.

**Question:** Who needs capacity building?

Elder 3: I am getting there. People who have guns have grown with them for eight years, they are even twenty years old, young when the state collapsed. There are no institutions for education. They are only educated in the institution of the gun. Those are the people who should be targeted for transformation. Sometimes, also, it could be a problem to reach them directly. Even if they accept what the elders say, and give up their gun, what

alternative can we offer them? When you ask to disarm them, you must also have an alternative. This is a challenge to us. If that solution is not raised, they will not surrender their guns and we will not get our peace. Somalia today, it is the responsibility of the world to help.

We are part of the international community. We are close neighbours of Somalia. We are the ones who can change things, but we are also the ones who become victims. Where is the world? For the last ten years, we have done a lot of initiatives on our own. Whether we have achieved positive or negative results, we have tried. My opinion is that something should be done so the Somalia effect does not multiply on us, the victims. After Somalia, there could have been other countries that could have collapsed. Ethiopia also has that type of problems. Somalia has no stable government. It has now become part of the system in Somalia that they can actually survive without a government. They do not need one to survive. That is a threat. How can we even talk about neighbours when it is posing a threat to the whole world?

We need a whole set of programmes and initiatives to be set up so that the whole problem of gun running and instability can be solved in this region. The other problem is that all the guns in Somalia are now getting—there is a big influx into neighbouring countries. Again, an initiative is required to avoid that influx. Whatever is required, there must be a system so those guns remain in that country and not come into others.

Elder 1: I want to address the question about who we expect to help us and how. When there is a problem in some specific part of the world, what is generally done? The people who are supposed to help problem focal points are the world community. We expect the same world community to help us. Someone who has a gun, he is using that gun for his livelihood. If he does not get an alternative to pull his life away from that gun, then of course he will not give it up. There is no alternative to disarm these people. The best way is tokens. The best way is different sources of livelihood. If somebody has this gun, and he is using it for his livelihood, he will go with that gun until he finds something for his kids to eat. He will use that gun to kill, or he will be killed in the process. Because he has come out of his house either to kill or be killed. It is an extreme way of life. But if you give tokens, food rations, he will come out and maybe surrender. There are protocols, support to livelihood for problem places in the world. These things should be applied. The protocol to support of livelihood should be used here. This should be an issue of the whole world, and the countries involved, so that the issue can be resolved.

## Notes

1. P Onguji, *Wild Barrel, Incompatible Regimes: The case of violence in Isiolo Central Division*. PeaceNet: 2002 p 5–7.
2. Ibid p6–7.
3. Interview conducted in Wajir town, 1 September 2003.
4. *A Manual for Development Practitioners*, Pastoral Steering Committee, Wajir District, April 2000, p 10.
5. Interview in Wajir town, 1 September 2003.
6. Interview in Wajir town, 2 September 2003.
7. Interview with three staff members of MWPD, Mandera town, 3 September, 2003.

## CHAPTER SIX

# TANA RIVER

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The Tana River district occupies about 49 per cent of the Coast Province, occupying a total area of 38,782 km. sq with an estimated population of 181,000. It derives its name from the largest river in Kenya, which traverses the northern and eastern part of the district and drains into the Indian Ocean. Tana River district borders Kitui district to the west, Garissa and Ijara to the east, and Isiolo to the north. The main production system in this district is farming and pastoralism with a small portion of the population engaged in fishing. Tana River District is home to two major tribes: the Pokomo, who are farmers, and the Orma, who are pastoralists.

Tana River at one time had three major irrigation schemes: Bura, Hola, and Tana Delta, which influenced residents' lifestyles in terms of employment and sources of income. The collapse of these schemes forced the nomadic pastoralists to move during the wet season, while the farmers remained along the river. During the dry season the pastoralists move back to the river in search of water and pasture. The utilisation of the waters of the Tana River has been in the middle of a conflict pitting these two communities against each other. The Pokomo claim the land along the river and the Orma claim the waters of the river. This has been the major source and cause of a conflict that is usually predictable.

The conflict between these two communities and their different yet uncompromising lifestyles previously resulted in few casualties because the weapons of choice were traditional weapons such as clubs, spears, and bows. However, the increasing introduction of small arms and light weapons has caused the number of casualties to escalate and more property to be destroyed than in the past. The Orma communities belong to the larger Somali ethnic group and are believed to source their arms from their relatives in Garissa and Ijara districts, which border Tana River.

Tana River has the characteristics of any other conflict prone area in the country: underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, poor communication and social amenities, and social marginalization. Communities are arming themselves because of the need to defend against perceived attacks. They feel that the



government security machinery has not been able to effectively respond to violence. Isolation has led to increased demand for guns.

According to a stakeholders' meeting convened by the District Commissioner in July 2002, it was pointed out that no concrete data existed on the scope and extent of small arms and light weapons in the district. There are some undisputed facts, however. The ethnic clashes in Tana River District started in 2000 and slowly picked up intensity to unprecedented levels from late 2001 to early 2002. There were several reasons for the escalation and sustenance of the conflicts in the district.

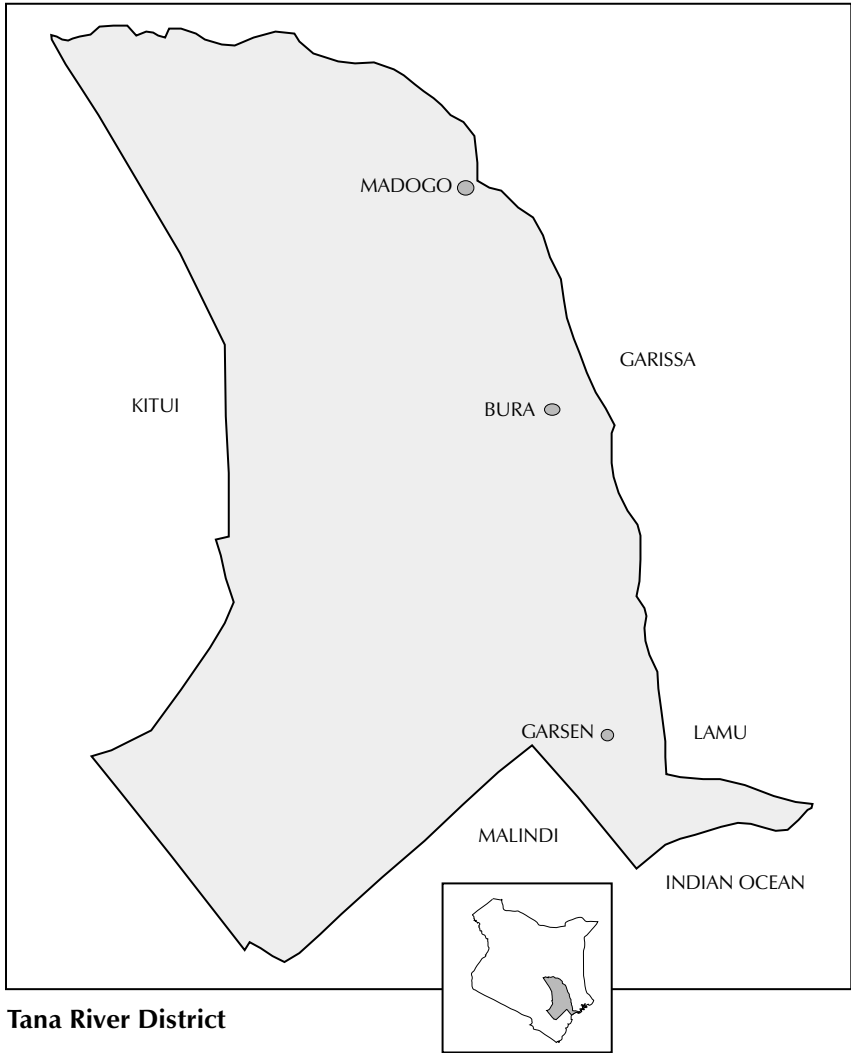
A land adjudication programme was started in the district without first adequately consulting with the communities. This programme was summarily rejected by the pastoralist Orma ethnic community because they saw the adjudication as a conspiracy between the Pokomo agricultural communities and the government to deny them access to traditional grazing areas and water access routes known as '*Malkas*'.

Environmentally, several factors are involved. The destruction of forests and bird breeding areas in the district have led to a lack of water, increased acidity, and serious soil erosion. The destruction of water sources has also led to human-wildlife conflicts with wildlife invading agricultural lands in search of water. The electricity generating company Kenya Generating Company (KenGen) has dammed the Tana River at various points upstream, resulting in water scarcity downstream as well as floods whenever the company opens the sluice gates of the dams. The flooding destroys irrigation canals and changes the course of the river, jeopardizing crops.

### ***Tana River Peace, Development, and Reconciliation Committee (TRPDC)***

The Tana River Peace, Development and Reconciliation Committee (TRPDC) is the umbrella peace and development committee in the district, although there are also various sub-committees at the divisional and locational levels. The objectives of the umbrella TRPDC include:

- To harmonize peaceful coexistence between the different communities in the district
- To initiate conflict resolution processes through the implementation of communal activities between the different ethnic groups



- To establish, enhance and empower community participation in peace building from the grassroots levels
- To strengthen cordial relations with the neighbouring districts
- To enhance community awareness on proper utilisation of the existing resources

- To undertake participatory research on the causes of conflict between the various communities within and outside the district
- To liaise with the district security committee on ways of building peace and conflict intervention strategies
- To initiate and implement development programmes that harmonize the communities living within the district.

The peace and development sub-committees draw their membership from local area chiefs, youth, elders and women representatives. The main activities of the sub-committees include holding peace meetings, organizing exchange visits to neighbouring districts to discuss peace, and the identification and advocacy for income generating activities as one way of sustaining peace. Financially, Oxfam, through the TRPDC, has supported most of the peace building work in the district. Oxfam has also been involved in development activities that relate to peace building work.

In a focus group conducted with members and leaders of the TRPDC on 28 August, 2003, three major sources of conflict were agreed upon by all present. First is the commercialization of conflict through the involvement of business interests, then issues of environment and water diversion, and finally the changing distribution of populations in the district. The group described how people are internally displaced in the fighting and migrate to other areas. Resettlement programs fail because chiefs “want the promotions and recognition that come with more population in their area, and they are pressured by businesses who also benefit from the influx of people,” according to one participant.

At the height of the ethnic clashes, the different communities were asked to identify leaders or representatives to attend a peace workshop in Malindi. At the meeting it was resolved that the religious leaders would go back home and visit the ‘no-go’ areas to initiate peace meetings among the conflicting communities. They did, and the religious leaders helped establish peace committees in the district, then withdrew to leave the committees to carry out the peace work.

The TRPDC is engaged in different specific projects to reduce the demand for guns and build harmony between clashing groups. In response to competition over river access, one project (waiting on funding) is to pave an access road to one part of the river where pastoralists will have unfettered use of the water

for their animals. In exchange for access, the pastoralists have agreed to the presence of a checkpoint for small arms so that farmers will be satisfied the route is not being used for gun trafficking.

Education drives aim to change the pastoralist tradition of children being used to tend cows rather than being sent to school. Children's lack of control over livestock has led to clashes, as cows trample crops near the river. Both children and the cows they tend have also died in deadly crocodile attacks in or near the water. Furthermore, educating Pokomo and Orma children together will build peace and future friendships. Adult illiteracy in this district is high, but there are government-funded schools that need to welcome both pastoralist and farmer children.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# NORTH RIFT

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The Rift Valley Province of Kenya extends from the border with Tanzania in the south to the borders of Ethiopia and Sudan in the north. More than half of the western border of the province is shared with Uganda, with the lower third of the border shared with Western and Nyanza provinces. On the east, it borders Central and Eastern provinces. The North Rift region is generally accepted to comprise the districts of Turkana, West Pokot, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Marakwet, Baringo, and Samburu. This area suffers from developmental and educational neglect, and violence from cattle rustling both within Kenya and across the border with Uganda, Ethiopia, and Sudan. Marginalized under the colonial government and isolated politically and developmentally after independence, the North Rift shares characteristics of pastoralist poverty with other Arid Lands districts such as Marsabit, Moyale, Mandera, and Wajir.

The North Rift shares more international borders than any other province in Kenya. Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia have all had or are currently having volatile civil wars, leading to easily accessible arms. While in Northeastern province it is not unusual to find AK-47s manufactured in the 1960s, in some parts of West Pokot and Turkana much newer models are on the market. The Heckler and Koch G3 assault rifle is also common. This is partly as a result of a larger selection from more conflicts, and partly because government raiding in an attempt to disarm communities in these districts has led to what residents call 'forced upgrades'. The loss of old guns spurs the demand for newer ones, creating a refresher market for dealers on routes as far away as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

As in other parts of the arid North, Kenya's national government has responded in part by arming Kenya Police Reservists (KPR). These are civilians who are given guns but are not supervised or paid for their work. In some ways, the KPR legitimises 'civilian' gun ownership and use in insecure areas. However, the KPR system does not establish a viable system of registration, leading to the perception by some communities that the government allows some civilians' use of guns and not others. Those with government-issued

guns often also have personal weapons (deemed illegal under Kenyan law), which are often better models and better maintained than the standard government-issue G3. It has been recognized even at the government level that reservists can be converted into private militias or criminal activity using their 'government' status as a cover.

## **Marakwet and West Pokot**

Marakwet and West Pokot are neighbouring districts, sharing a border and a history of violent conflict between the two ethnic groups. As one report stated:

"The gun culture has impacted very negatively on this region. Education standards, where they existed, have generally gone down as more and more schools are abandoned due to insecurity. More and more professionals are deserting this region, drawing back any progress previously achieved in agriculture, education and administration. The fertile Kerio Valley has been abandoned and no grazing or farming has taken place, especially between the Marakwet and Pokot... More community resources than ever before are channelled to security-related matters such as purchase of guns and ammunition at the expense of food and health."<sup>1</sup>

Since the national elections in December 2002 and the change of government from the long-reigning KANU (Kenya African National Union) to the new NARC (National Rainbow Coalition), there seems to be some hope for peace among NGOs and CBOs working with affected communities. This dramatic shift of attitude with the change of national government is an indicator of how important politics is to peace.

## **World Vision Marakwet**

World Vision Tot, Koloa, and Lokori works directly with communities, with activities happening at least once a month. They work in collaboration with the NCKK, traditional leaders, and at the district level participate in the district development committee meetings. In 1997, the area development programme (ADP) was founded in Tot. Before that, World Vision sponsored a family development programme. In July 2003, a cross-cutting peace initiative began to integrate peace and conflict issues throughout development projects.

The ADP focuses on water, sanitation, education (including child sponsorship), food security, and other specific community needs such as HIV/AIDS education and advocacy, environmental projects, child rights, and support for Christian impact groups. Because of increasingly violent cattle rustling and danger in the valley, most of the organization's activities were interrupted. The office was closed because of conflict, and there was a clear challenge to start a peace project to address these issues. The peace initiative will focus on awareness building, targeting the main actors in conflict and attempting to change attitudes using development as an incentive.

The conflict in the area is characterized by Marakwet and Pokot hostilities and Turkana and Pokot hostilities. In a World Vision evaluation of the area development programme, it became clear that the root cause of failure was insecurity. Communities involved in the ADP request urgent assistance with peace building activities, prioritizing this as the only way for development to succeed. The goal of the ADP is to transform communities' ability to tackle illiteracy, water-borne diseases, and food insecurity. Vaccine administration, animal health training, reading projects, and small-scale entrepreneurship are included in the staff's community-based activities. The peace project will strive to restore the relationship between communities, through sensitization meetings between leaders and peace rallies at which everyone, including and especially school-age children, will be encouraged to share poems, peace songs, and engage in friendly competitions.

For World Vision, the long-term goals are to end conflict by creating income-generating activities and creating sustainable livelihoods outside of the pastoralist focus on cattle. They acknowledge that the conflict is rampant because of guns, but prefer to tackle the problem through building peace rather than targeting guns specifically. Until the root causes of gun ownership can be mitigated through restoring community relationships and creating livelihoods, guns will continue to be a perceived necessity for people in Tot, Koloa, and Lokori.

"Conflict is rampant because of these guns,"<sup>2</sup> said one World Vision worker, referring to the commercialization and increased violence of cattle rustling. Every clan is forced to buy at least one gun for protection, at first. When raids start, driven by the desire for wealth, they start an arms race as well. New gun markets open up, with even ethnically opposed dealers selling arms to 'the enemy'. Businessmen are rumoured to bring free food to the *morans* (warriors) in order to promote their activities, thus creating insecurity and raising food prices.

Many elders are cooperative in peace building activities, encouraging youth to attend rallies. However, there are also some, along with other chiefs and leaders, who are getting dividends out of stealing. Some elders bless cattle raids because they know they will be paid from the results of an attack. The challenge World Vision has posed to itself as an organization is to get pastoralists to think as a group, challenging their chiefs for peace and cooperating with investigations when someone has been killed.

Things have been improving since the new government took power in 2003. People have started returning to the valley and their homes, and now community, governance, and accountability are what citizens in this area hope for in the future. The Kenya Police Reserves are seen to be a problem; the guns have been used for illegal purposes, and the feeling is that they must be returned. However, gun collection can only succeed if the government indicates a capacity and willingness to maintain security.

“Government just needs to maintain security. Pursue and prosecute those who incite violence,” said one field worker. Another added, “When a chief was sacked for not pursuing a killer, we had hope for peace.”<sup>3</sup>

### **Pokot: Kenya’s ‘forgotten children’**

A meeting with World Vision, Catholic Peace and Justice Commission, Red Cross staff and community members in the Pokot-inhabited town of Koloa rendered some different views on the causes underlying small arms proliferation. A man identifying himself as a ‘local youth’ identified the meaning of peace as “not just the absence of war.” He cited economic, social, and political reasons for the ongoing conflict.

Abject poverty is one of the foremost problems in every pastoralist community in Kenya. Among Pokots, the bride price is so high that young men feel forced into criminal activity to pay for a wife. One example of a bride price for a young woman was 15 cows, 30 goats, and 3 camels, ranging all the way up to 30 cows, 150 goats, and 10 camels. Stealing from within the Pokot community is a sin, and very taboo. But traditionally, stealing from enemies is sanctioned.

Socially, young men must prove their manliness by the number of bulls they own. Singing at traditional dances focuses on how dangerous a man can



prove himself; whether he has killed a lion, leopard, or other wild animal, and how wealthy he is. The entire community, especially potential brides and their families, are involved in rituals that reinforce motivations to raid.

Politically, there is a tendency to use ethnic divisions in order to maintain power. Some politicians offer protection for raiding as an incentive to vote. The alternative is often a government that takes indiscriminate action, confiscating all of the animals in a community that is seen to possess illegal weapons or to have committed illegal actions against a neighbouring tribe. In those instances, said one focus group member, "innocent people end up going to raid their neighbours' cattle after the government has ransacked their property, to 'recover' stock."

The Pokot, like most pastoralists, are marginalized in the Kenyan social and political context. Each community has its own 'myth', or fable, about how guns arrived. The Pokot myth in Koloa is that in the 1970s, the Turkana began mounting armed raids. The Pokot only had bows and arrows, but soon it became necessary for individuals with cows to own guns for protection. When individuals could not afford to buy a personal weapon, the community was there with communally owned firearms for protection. Still, the community describes itself as valuing wealth and achievement, but not guns *per se*. The value is placed on the results that a gun can produce (namely, wealth in the form of cows). Traditional dancing can praise bulls, but not the AK-47s used in the raid that brought the bulls into the tribe. Guns themselves are not celebrated.

The Christian perspective of the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission emphasizes the brotherhood of all people as saved by Jesus Christ, a message which is meant to underscore the lack of true meaning in tribal divisions. However, in an area where people still live by (albeit changing) traditional customs, Christianity is more likely to be adapted to existing norms than to transform them.

The CJPC area co-ordinator described the ritual cleansing of a moran after killing a human being: even that of another tribe. He then went on to explain that guns have made it so much easier to kill from afar, some morans are now rejecting the importance of cleansing, saying that they could not even see the face of their victim.

## **Kerio Valley Peace and Development Committee (KVPDC)**

From 1996 to 2000, the KVPDC was managed by the NCKC (National Council of Churches Kenya) as part of its peace building programme. In 2000, it elected members from the ground up to be volunteer co-ordinators. The Committee operates in West Pokot and Baringo, facilitating peace activities, meeting with chiefs, and approaching outside organizations to help with development projects.

“A man with a gun does not fear an *askari* [guard], chief, or God,” said one member. “Many people die in raids.”<sup>4</sup> The root causes of the gun ownership according to the KVPDC is poverty. People own a gun for security, but they use it to raid. This perpetuates a cycle of violence, revenge, and wealth that makes guns difficult to purge. Traditionally, elders have been responsible for the security of a community. Now, however, *morans* (warriors) are armed so well that their parents can no longer control them. Only a change in attitude can bring change, but there are few alternatives to the life of the gun. Meanwhile, elders bless raiding expeditions hoping to get a cut of the rewards if it is successful; and when *morans* are determined to attack, they can always find a willing blessing.

The Committee targets women, youth, and elders. The leaders are relatively educated, and so have earned the right to sit and speak with elders about the evils of cattle rustling. Their educational approach is to provide a broader view of the economy of guns, and instil the value that peace is what brings lasting prosperity. They feel that their work has been successful in this regard, but without concrete concessions from the government or outside development projects, it is difficult to sustain the gains in peace.

## **SETAT Kapenguria**

SETAT was founded in 1998 by seven Pokot women and is registered with the Department of Social Services as a CBO. It is a chapter of the National Council on Traditional Practices. The focus was initially on eliminating negative traditional and cultural practices and promoting culture as a positive force for both women and men. The estimated figure for the percentage of women and girls circumcised in West Pokot district is 96 per cent. The type of circumcision practiced is called infibulation, which involves the complete removal of the clitoris and inner labia and sometimes the sewing of the vaginal opening. What does an organization dealing in such issues have to say about peace building and the problem of small arms proliferation?

The problem of guns and cattle rustling is made more deadly by the commercialisation of dowries in the Pokot community. Bride prices are so high as to be impossible to pay without either waiting to become an old man (something SETAT also deals with, when child brides run away from husbands old enough to be grandfathers), or stealing cattle. It is possible to chart the rise in violence following the circumcision ceremony seasonally for girls. High dowries and the guns required to obtain them have also fostered a culture of violence that has led to more and more severe domestic violence. However, traditional punishments (even for elopement) all involve taking someone's animals away. In the current context, this leads to even more violence, raiding, and usually the acquisition of a firearm if there was not one in the household previously. This can often result in a woman being killed.

The SETAT group described the link between dowry prices and guns:

“There are gun problems here that make cattle rustling deadly. Because of population movements and livestock diseases, competition is fierce. Dowries for young men to get married are no longer cultural. The price is based on location: now there is no “acceptable limit” for a dowry. It is based purely on the parents’ perceived investment in their daughter. Old men are the only ones who can pay a high bride price without having a gun to raid, but it is young men who want to marry. Guns also help to intimidate competition when vying for a wife. Also, they can be sold to top up the dowry.”<sup>5</sup>

It is clear that empowering equality and dialogue between men and women may lead to negotiations on dowry adjustments that do not cannibalize the already scarce resources of a marginalized community.

## **Turkana**

The Turkana District is one of the largest in Kenya, and shares international borders with Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda. Lokichoggio, near the Sudanese border, is a remote but well-developed town where the United Nations bases its Operation Lifeline Sudan. The town is home to as many as 200 aid workers per night, has cell phone coverage, paved roads, and a busy airport. Many major relief agencies operate offices there. The Kakuma refugee camp, slightly farther from the border, houses refugees from Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Somalia. However, the rest of the district is largely undeveloped, and is

extremely arid. Lake Turkana provides some lakeside dwellers with a fishing livelihood, but most Turkana are pastoralists.

## **Development Case Study: Kakuma Refugee Camp**

In the Kakuma refugee camp in Turkana, there is fierce competition between refugees and local Turkana people. The war in Southern Sudan has been raging since the early 1980's. Refugees from that conflict have been living in camps in Kakuma on the Kenyan side of the border for years with no immediate alternatives for the future. At the UN camp, over 70,000 stateless people wait for something to change while food rations get smaller, children are born, and marriages arranged.

The Kenyan Turkana people living in the semi-desert area where the camp is located do not have 25 free primary schools, as those in the camp do. They do not have piped water, vocational schools, or relief food rations. The conflict over resources between the refugees and local people is the biggest challenge facing the UN-headed aid mission. The United Nations and international donors are looking after the refugees according to long-term plans for the camp's existence, while little attention is given to solving what the UN terms "long-term refugee" situations.<sup>6</sup> The long-term status of refugees ensures the continuing existence and funding of the support agencies. Meanwhile, the Kenyan government has failed to reverse the lack of development by the colonial authority in Turkana, and has little incentive to prioritize this area of the country. The UN and other large NGOs have provided jobs and development simply by paving the road to the refugee camp and hiring some locals in the management of operations there. However, this is not a long-term solution.

Most Turkana are illiterate and, as herders of cattle and camels, they are heavily armed to protect their animals against raids from other tribes (including groups from inside the refugee camp). Peace initiatives among Turkana people range from adult literacy drives to women's groups who teach about the evils of guns. "Literacy opens people up to a worldview that is knowledgeable," says the director of the Turkana Literacy Bureau. "People are able to see what is good in other cultures. If people get basic literacy, they will have freedom: they can apply a new understanding to farming and beekeeping so they are not only dependent on grazing animals. They can be involved in decision making about their own communities. This is what will eventually bring peace."

The way forward for Turkana must involve a harmonization of international, national, and local interests. It is not in the interests of the Kenyan government to leave a historically marginalized part of its population uneducated and isolated from food and human security. The peace education manager at the Lutheran World Federation, which runs the Kakuma refugee camp, said the LWF is targeting refugees and the immediate surrounding communities for peace building activities such as training leaders, facilitators, and planning development projects. He espoused the view that reactive measures such as disarmament do not work, and that the priority is to get communities both inside and outside the camp to understand the importance of peace. He believes this will enable them to disarm themselves.<sup>7</sup>

The Kenyan government police in the vast region of Turkana are, as in other marginalized areas, drastically under-capacitated. The Lutheran World Federation and the UNHCR are lobbying for international organizations to come and do large-scale development projects with the Turkana people outside the jurisdiction of the camp. Targeting and highlighting marginalized regions for outside investment and government commitment to basic infrastructure is the first step towards overcoming a culture of lawlessness and fear.

## **Turkana Development Organization Forum (TUDOF)**

The Turkana Development Organization Forum is an umbrella group founded to empower CBOs to communicate with foreign and international NGOs and connect with funding. It also aims to co-ordinate peace and development activities in the district. One of the members of the organization said, "The community is being put aside in conflict and peace negotiations. The local people who are suffering, are not contributing. They want to come up with a clear strategy." This was partly in reference to government intervention, but is also strongly tied to the ideal of communicating needs and demands from the grassroots level to national and international donors.

According to TUDOF, which has more than 20 smaller groups in its membership, conflict sources vary widely, from environmental damage from the Turkwell dam damaging grazing resources, to the need for education and reconciliation with those dwelling inside the Kakuma refugee camp. The goals around small arms demand reduction are focused purely on empowering the smaller community-based efforts under the umbrella to reach a level of dialogue and access with policy-makers and donors.

## **Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization (TUPADO)**

The Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization (TUPADO) was formed in 1995 with the main goal of offering a micro-credit programme. However, the organization quickly shifted to peace and conflict work, which the staff perceived to be more crucial to development. Now, this small group is under the TUDOF umbrella in the hopes of becoming better networked and funded.

TUPADO characterizes the demand for guns as being largely for self-defence purposes, as in other insecure border areas. One peace worker said:

“Because of pasture and water, livestock and the boundaries just bring about the conflicts. That is why people possess guns for self-defence. When the government became independent, there was not enough security around and by that time is when the conflicts started. So the only way for people to safeguard themselves was to buy arms from the neighbouring countries like Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia. For some people, comparing to different areas even in the west, they talk about how there is hardly any government presence and so they feel they must arm themselves in protection against the Marakwet and Pokot. The government tries to disarm them but they still continue possessing [guns]. Like in West Pokot and Turkana districts, when the neighbouring countries attack us, the government always takes long to react. So we do not wait for their defence.”<sup>8</sup>

To combat the demand for small arms, TUPADO visits border areas to form village-level peace and reconciliation committees, many of them across the international borders. This work is partially funded by Oxfam. Major obstacles include finding transportation to travel to remote areas: but according to the staff, villagers are receptive to peace-building education. The staff describes these activities in their own words.

### **Reducing Demand: In their own words**

We usually visit certain areas, and even last month we were in the northern part of Kimishi division and Kochero. We formed more village peace and reconciliation committees, from each division. Before, it had been difficult for the government to control these people and some organizations. Because when they come, they usually go talk to them and when they leave, the attacks happen the following day. So we sat down and came to a conclusion that we would take this issue to people on the ground, in the village. When we give them the responsibility, they can easily go and talk with their elders in the neighbouring tribes. It is easier for them to come to a conclusion than the government's involvement. When the government goes there, it just threatens them: "if you continue fighting we shall do this or that." So when the committee is formed the elders from both sides talk, they can do some other things which will end the conflicts.

### Notes

1. Kamenju et al, *Terrorized Citizens*, SRIC, Nairobi: 2003, p 10.
2. Interview at World Vision office in Tot, July 23, 2003.
3. Ibid.
4. Interview KVPDC, 23 July, 2003.
5. Interview with SETAT, Kapenguria, West Pokot. 24 July 2003.
6. See UNHCR Africa Bureau, Discussion Paper on Protracted Refugee Situation in the African Region, October 2001.
7. Interview with LWF peace education co-ordinator, August 17, 2003.
8. From interview, 13 August 2003.

## CONCLUSION

# FACTORS BEHIND DEMAND AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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The regional case studies examined in previous chapters reveal trends about the common factors underlying the demand for guns. These common factors are explored below, along with policy implications. Following this discussion, a bigger-picture conclusion about challenges facing the dialogue between local groups and policy makers leads to further questions for research.

### **Factors behind demand**

#### ***Identity-based conflict***

A majority of Africa's population can be classified as children or youth. The percentage of African countries' population under 14 years old ranges from 35 to 49 per cent.<sup>1</sup> The success or failure of child and youth development can destabilize nations and entire regions. States have a responsibility to provide their underage citizens with education, health care, and safe shelter, rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. They often fail to prioritize youth involvement in positive activities that promote peace building and conflict resolution, leaving a lack of safe space for the most vulnerable—and in many cases the largest—section of the population. Youth are then open to recruitment in activities that facilitate the worst kinds of marginal economies: buying and selling guns and conflict.

In peacetime, citizenship is defined according to a narrow set of criteria; historically, this has included only men, or men of a certain age who were property owners, or men of a certain race or economic background. Citizenship in most modern states, while often more inclusive, still defines youth and women as special 'sub-categories'. Youth and women's leagues of political parties keep these groups out of the mainstream with a focus on fringe rights. In times of conflict, however, both gender and age prerequisites are often re-formulated to fit conscription needs.



Easy-to-use weapons allow power brokers to assemble and train these troops from a seemingly never-ending pool of poor, disenfranchised, and uneducated young people, including refugees, orphans, and internally displaced people. As a group like any other element of society, children and youth develop strategies for survival and find resources wherever they can. When conflict decimates schools, health care systems, and other support networks for children, the only options left involve violence. One participant at a “Shrinking Small Arms” seminar said, “Our children look at guns as power. It is difficult to focus on guns, because in the minds of youth, the gun is the way to instant money, an opportunity for them where there is no other opportunity.”<sup>2</sup>

Social status and ethnicity are also used to promote involvement in conflict. ‘Ethnic clashing’ is a term associated with large-scale violence, but it is not innate divisions between groups that push them to take up arms. Ethnicity is just another dividing line used by those in power to perpetuate conflicts for political or economic gain. The rise of civil tension usually stems from economic, social, and political grievances with no other outlet. Extreme poverty, competition for resources, political power brokering, and other factors make disenfranchised groups (whether ethnicity-based, age-based, or other) easy prey for those seeking to build their own militias, crime syndicates, or simple gun-running empires.

In the urban slums around Nairobi and in the rural pastoralist areas around Lokichoggio in Turkana, youth are empowering themselves by forming associations that promote inter-ethnic and inter-group dialogue and provide opportunities not only for peace building, but also for joint activities that promote economic self-sustainability and growth. A member of the Lokichoggio Youth Association Society (LYAS) said, “Peace is development.”<sup>3</sup> Involving members of the community and building grassroots support has proven challenging but necessary for the success of these activities.

Whether this has occurred through group lobbying or religious persuasion and prayer, as with the relationship of the local priest to the group called ‘*Watu ya Amani*’ (People of Peace) in the Samburu district, local government needs to act as a link between local needs and higher-level policy. The implementation of policy plans such as the Nairobi Declaration cannot be successful without some level of community buy-in. Kenya’s Minister in charge of internal security and provincial administration was quoted in March 2003 as saying:

“The government of Kenya will soon disarm all communities owning illegal firearms in the country...the government is left with no other

alternative but to round up all the guns so that matters of maintaining security are completely left to the government.<sup>4</sup>”

In contrast, a member of LYAS promoted a bottom-up process rather than a top-down intervention, saying:

“First, you have to get communities on board from the grassroots. Have discussions with various groups to educate them: provide an understanding of conflict in schools. Listen to what people say. The issue of peace is not just something you wake up tomorrow and find there is no peace. There is a process. Peace is not a new idea, but to be successful we have to listen what the community says about the failure of past initiatives.<sup>5</sup>”

In many interviews in every region of Kenya, respondents noted that the government should emphasize peace rather than disarmament. There was a collectively expressed desire for the government at every level to partner with local groups. In the words of one peace worker:

“It’s not just a question of a state minister waking up one morning and deciding to disarm a community. They must bring the things lacking in the community first: roads, schools, development. First build peace. Get close to the people. Right now, our district is effectively a government of churches.<sup>6</sup>”

It would be impossible to postpone disarmament and security measures until development had fully taken root in any country. However, a concurrent approach to development, peace, and small arms reduction is a close second choice.

## ***Availability***

Availability drives demand for weapons. Because they are sturdy, durable, and reusable, small arms are extremely difficult to get rid of. Once they are present in a country they tend to stay there, either fuelling crime or flowing over boundaries to serve the needs of neighbouring conflicts. One of the purposes of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programmes is to confiscate and take small arms out of circulation following a conflict period, but arms caches are rarely effectively destroyed in the wake of fragile peace agreements. In unstable regions with bleak economic fore-

casts, former combatants have little hope of finding a job in civilian life. The option of keeping a gun and seeking mercenary work is more enticing than turning over their only chance at earning a livelihood. This has proven to be true in West Africa: youth from Sierra Leone, where there was an extensive DDR process, are rumoured to have gone on to fight in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.<sup>7</sup> The mere presence of weapons in situations where the balance of power is already delicate frequently plunges post-conflict states back into complex emergencies before significant development and reconstruction gains can be realized.

Poverty, unequal access to resources, large youth populations with limited access to education or jobs, and other socio-political factors contribute to instability, but it is the presence of guns that enables conflict to escalate into the type of violence that is beyond state control or mediation. Guns create another self-perpetuating cycle: an internal arms race. The more people accept that weapons are necessary for survival and economic advancement, the more insecurity spreads and drives further demand. Small arms proliferation hinders development and conflict resolution efforts, creates space for war economies to grow and become entrenched, and contributes to a growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

In analysing the informal economies on the Kenya-Somali border, it becomes clear that the circulation of guns from one small-scale conflict to another is easy and widespread. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee worked with one group in Somalia to create an informal armoury. With the support of elders, people were encouraged to place their guns in a communally guarded armoury during times of relative peace. The guns would therefore be present if needed, but unavailable for easy sale that might fuel other nearby conflicts.

Simply confiscating guns only leads to 'forced upgrades', as they were described in the Arid Lands districts. Those who have lost their weapons in government raids must find a way to replace them: this can often mean selling valuable resources like cattle, which depresses the local economy, and then acquiring whatever newer model of assault rifle is on offer. Governments, both local and national, must take a realistic approach to understanding the demand side of the gun market before designing an intervention. If the availability of weapons in a given area is high, forced confiscation of guns will only lead to upgrades and replacements. Demand-based alternatives could include trading development for guns and allowing NGOs or CBOs to establish locally based armouries that function as 'banks' in such trading.

### ***Economies on the margins***

Pastoralist groups in the Horn of Africa, specifically in Northwest Kenya and along the undemarcated border with Somalia, have long operated outside of state control. With scarce water resources and grazing land, cattle rustling and conflict between groups has been present for a long time. With the introduction of firearms into the region, however, the traditional cattle raiding activity in which young men were initiated into manhood but few people died has turned into a bloody and protracted conflict that has claimed many lives. The commercialization of cattle rustling, where cows are no longer kept in the raiding community but stolen and immediately sold at the market, has contributed to creating pastoral economies that rely on a cycle of violence with guns as the primary currency.

Decreased dependency on pastoralism as a sole source of livelihood would greatly improve the situation, but only if viable long-term alternatives are offered. This can be achieved by building and staffing schools in underserved areas and supporting vocational training that contributes to more varied skill sets among youth. Education would also empower pastoralists to be more effective in their chosen lifestyle, with a greater understanding of animal health and resource use. Efforts to mainstream activities in marginal economies, such as the selling of livestock in more urban markets, can create opportunities for both economic growth and cultural integration.

In urban borderlands, rent disputes fomented by land ownership conundrums are the primary dividing factor between ethnic populations living together in squalid and cramped conditions. The government has an obligation and an incentive to address land tenure in informal settlements such as Kibera. It is not ethnic tensions, but economic inequality that forms the basis of frustrations and internecine violence. In the larger sense, informal settlements are breeding grounds for informal economies involving guns, drugs, and human trafficking. Mainstreaming small arms demand reduction in departments of urban planning could stave off the disaster that comes with overpopulation and a lack of adequate low-income housing.

### ***Lack of education and development***

The role of donors and governments in managing peace building efforts in low-level, sustained conflicts is closely related to economic factors, but presents a different challenge. Both education and development in the broadest

sense of both terms form the foundations of frameworks laid out by local peace organizations for addressing conflict and building lasting peace. Education for both adults and children can change cultural perceptions, create opportunities for growth and changing economies, and produce more active, informed citizens. It is not a coincidence that areas in Kenya with the highest adult illiteracy rates are also the ones with the biggest demand for small arms. Organizations like the Turkana Literacy Bureau have recognized the benefits of a reading adult population, including the higher likelihood that they will send their children to school rather than keeping them in the fields. Likewise, educated children from marginalized communities grow up and often go back to their communities to work for peace and development.

Development can change the entire face of a community and its relationship to guns and conflict. Done poorly and without knowledge of local pressure points, it can wreak havoc and create fighting among competing groups, something often seen with the building of scarce boreholes for water in the Northeastern Province. However, small-scale projects like the paving of an access road to water points in Tana River have the potential to render conflict obsolete as resources become equally shared and tension over gun trafficking is resolved by the patrolling of potential gun running routes. Development on a large scale creates infrastructure with which communication and education can thrive. Guns thrive in the borderlands because they are cut off from the rest of the nation. People living in remote areas have little sense of their membership in the state. Without the benefits of government, the laws become meaningless. Many local groups want development as a precursor or a companion to disarmament. Mendera Women for Peace and Development went so far as to say that trading guns for development would be one of the only effective ways to decrease ownership and use of illegal weapons.

## **Conclusions and questions for further research**

When there is a vacuum of useful intervention for peace, communities fill it with their own solutions. These 'local' initiatives are not inherently positive: they offer a different set of problems, as in the case of the Al Fatah Declaration, which challenges the Kenyan Constitution and the rule of law. The overarching framework that emerged in talking with local peace groups, however, is the idea of mainstreaming development for peace. Can policy makers creatively draw links between the 'softer' issues of development and the 'traditionally despotic' mechanisms of security and disarmament?

The emphasis on development in the context of small arms reduction does not require a sequential framework. For example, alleviating poverty does not have to occur before tackling illegal guns. Initiatives like the Arid Lands project and other development-oriented funding are to some extent and need to continue mainstreaming agendas that will also address informal economies, small arms trafficking and use, and the role of conflict in the target population's well-being and outlook. This may, initially, require a multi-sectoral approach to funding. If an environmental agency finds it difficult to incorporate a small arms platform into its programmes, it may need to partner with or 'outsource' the conflict-based platforms to a more security-focused organization. At the local level in Kenya, this kind of partnership has worked, particularly in Wajir and Mandera. Still, policy mainstreaming of small arms reduction measures remains the ultimate goal.

Security sector reform and other more defence-oriented solutions were rarely raised in interviews. Likewise, peace workers referred to ethnicity and identity-based conflict mostly as tools of power brokers in the larger context of inequality. Rather, local groups want to change the status of the economy, education, environment, and resource management in pursuit of peace and the eradication of small arms. This suggests a growing awareness of structural inequality underlying conflict among educated peace building staff even on the most remote geographical and socio-economic borders. Perhaps this is unsurprising given the globalisation not just of guns, but also of information: CNN's popularity in remote areas of the Horn is unrivalled. Families in Mandera living in traditional structures often keep a separate shelter made out of sticks for their satellite dish. They may not live with clearly demarcated national borders, but they clearly understand the 'us' and 'them' of the so-called Western world, both politically and in the more concrete arena of donor funding.

With the United States building military bases in Africa and increasing a presence there to fight the 'war on terror,' will local peace building groups have the opportunity for meaningful dialogue with their own governments? African governments, not just those in Kenya, may find that the militarisation of relations with the world's only superpower may challenge and impact on the possibilities for honest dialogue with local concerns. With even local conflict increasingly being defined by global perspectives, it will be important not to forget that peace is always political. Achieving peace and eradicating small arms proliferation will require a shift in policy design and an openness to bottom-up feedback for democratic interventions.

Having shown that demand-based interventions focusing on small arms and light weapons exist and thrive at a local level in Kenya, some questions are particularly salient when assessing the next step: their relevance to policy.

Larger questions raised by the research include:

1. Can small, under-funded organizations actually instigate change or find their way into a larger dialogue with state, government, and policy? If they do, will it make a difference to the status of the conflict?
2. Should human rights ideology be bargained with and possibly traded for more oppressive local politics to keep the pragmatic peace and stifle the deadly gun trade? Are there ways of using tradition and customary law in peace building within a modern constitutional framework?
3. Can dialogues about peace exist outside of an economic and environmental framework? If not, how can we best integrate the security framework with traditionally 'softer' areas of policy concern?

Specific questions about the relevance of local concerns:

1. How can we link local practice with national and international policy?
2. What mechanisms could be used?
3. Who should use such mechanisms, and how?

Some mechanisms for linking local practice with national and international policy are:

- Formal local government involvement in local peace building. Local government support and knowledge of grassroots peace initiatives can be reported regularly to higher levels of government, resulting in a combination between a 'situation report' accurately reflecting the level of violence and illegal arms in the borderlands, and a 'policy report' recommending higher-level action. Rather than government choosing coercive disarmament to address illegal arms without knowledge or communication of local concerns, it can reference an information pipeline into the heart of local peace and conflict issues.

- Sharing responsibility at both the local and national level for small arms concerns between government departments, and where appropriate with non-governmental organizations. Rather than giving sole custody of the problem to the Ministry of Safety and Security (and the District Security Committees at the provincial level), the creation of multi-sectoral task forces to implement mainstreaming of small arms reduction throughout activities such as urban planning, youth development, education, health, and economic stimulus should be contemplated. An example of a mainstreaming project would be an education department using international funding for security issues to craft a peace building curriculum for government primary schools.
- Government and donor agency co-ordination and awareness of funding local peace building efforts as part of small arms reduction activities. The links between building peace, reducing the demand for small arms, and stifling local gun economies are clear. Structuring and monitoring funding so that it reaches active local peace building groups, especially those working across international borders, for the specific purpose of working on small arms issues, will raise the profile of gun proliferation and local successes in eradicating it. Building the capacity of local groups to negotiate peace and travel long distances to remote areas will ease the burden of low-level conflict resolution on governments.
- Environmental awareness in development and urban planning. The construction of dams, power plants, and other large projects can alter the natural resource landscape of an area drastically. Such projects should be vetted through a process that includes a conflict analysis and projections of future gun markets in areas where grazing and agricultural options will change. When planning and constructing urban settlements, land use and ownership should be clearly defined, infrastructure planned for garbage removal and waste disposal, and clear boundaries for building and occupancy set so that both landlords and renters have fair redress through a systematic grievance process. Planning in these areas should include input about small arms policy and disarmament goals.
- Offering development in exchange for guns. Rather than paying cash for surrendered weapons, governments in conjunction with donor agencies can offer development projects in exchange for voluntary weapons collection. Large-scale development projects should capacitate, train, and employ local people to invest in building their future, while ensuring that adequate state security will be provided during and after the projects.



- Supporting informal armouries. As a step towards building peace and disarming communities, government can support local groups' collection and storage of 'illegal' weapons in safehouses guarded by trusted elders. This kind of storage prevents guns from flooding alternative markets during times of peace, and can lead to the building of security in slow stages.
- Promoting women and youth development in both local and large-scale projects, especially those related to peace building and disarmament. Women's empowerment allows them to facilitate trade and dialogue with women in 'opposing' groups, and recognises that they are often the biggest victims of gun-related violence. Identity-based conflict can be avoided through youth co-operation and training in peace-oriented activities, youth participation in development and politics. The reconciling of so-called 'ethnic' differences becomes easier when both the non-combatants in a society and the members most likely to be recruited into combat are both encouraged to build social and economic bridges to traditional enemies.
- Making national civilian gun possession laws consistent and enforceable. Eliminate the procedure of arming some civilians for 'protection' duty and not others. In areas where insecurity is rampant, create effective and reasonable gun registration laws that allow citizens to petition for ownership on the basis of self-defence. If 'reasonable' gun ownership can be controlled by the government, individual ownership and accountability laws will be more easily and frequently policed.

## Notes

1. *CIA Factbook*, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook> (28 March 2003).
2. Conference report: *Shrinking small arms: A seminar on lessening the demand for weapons*. Sponsored by the Quaker United Nations Office. Durban, South Africa, November 19–24, 1999, p 8.
3. Lokichoggio Youth Association interview. Lokichoggio, Turkana. 15 August 2003.
4. NCKK update issue 121. March 31, 2003
5. LYAS interview, 15 August 2003.
6. Name and organization withheld by request.
7. K Aning of African Security, Dialogue and Research, presentation at the Institute for Security Studies seminar on "Youth and human security: Perspectives on African conflict", 28 February 2003.

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