

# Combating the problem of Small Arms in Northern Kenya: Case Studies and Testimonies of the Pastoralist Communities



*Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction in Pastoralist Communities in Kenya; A Joint UNDP Kenya and GoK (Arid Lands Resource Management Project II) Initiative*



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***List of Acronyms***

ALRMP II	<i>Arid Lands Resource Management Project phase II</i>
ASALs	<i>Arid and Semi Arid Lands</i>
AVR	<i>Armed Violence Reduction</i>
BCPR	<i>Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery</i>
BP1	<i>Border Point One</i>
CEWARN	<i>Conflict Early Warning and Response Network/ Mechanism</i>
DC	<i>District Commissioner</i>
DMO	<i>Drought Management Officer</i>
DPC	<i>District Peace Committee</i>
GB	<i>Great Britain</i>
GoK	<i>Government of Kenya</i>
IGAD	<i>Inter Governmental Authority on Development</i>
Ksh	<i>Kenya Shillings</i>
NAP	<i>National Action Plan on small arms</i>
NEP	<i>North Eastern Province</i>
NFP	<i>National Focal Point</i>
NGO	<i>Non Governmental Organization</i>
NSC	<i>National Steering Committee on peacebuilding and conflict management</i>
OLF	<i>Oromo Liberation Front</i>
PD	<i>Project Document</i>
SALW	<i>Small Arms and Light Weapons</i>
SUPKEM	<i>Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims</i>
TFG	<i>Transitional Federal Government of Somalia</i>
UNDP	<i>United Nations Development Programme</i>
UNPOA	<i>United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects</i>
UNV	<i>United Nations Volunteer</i>

*Disclaimer*

*The views and opinions expressed in this publication do not represent the official views or position of the Government of Kenya or UNDP Kenya but solely those of the interviewees and authors.*

## **1.0 Introduction**

*By Ruto Pkalya*

In much of lawless Africa and elsewhere, modern small arms and light weapons (SALW) have become the ubiquitous tools of violence. Despite of the fact that armed violence is generally considered a feature of conventional conflict and war, most victims and perpetrators of armed violence are civilians, and armed violence is increasingly a problem in ostensibly non-conflict and low-conflict societies, characterized by crime, banditry and sexual and gender-based violence.

This phenomenon is not very much different in Kenya, particularly in pastoralist communities where Low-level conflicts, combined with high rates of banditry, account for the increasing levels of armed violence and attendant proliferation of SALW. Ready availability of illicit arms trafficked across the porous borders, unresolved grievances between groups and communities and competition for scarce resources and control of livelihoods cumulatively result to an embedded gun culture that only serves to consign then millions in these borderlands into abject poverty characterized with none or limited prospects for socio-economic development .

### **1.1 Armed violence and SALW in the pastoralist context**

The situation of armed violence and insecurity is overt in the pastoralist communities of northeastern and northwestern Kenya, including the districts of Garissa, Mandera, Wajir in North Eastern Kenya, and Turkana, West Pokot, Marakwet Baringo and Samburu in Rift Valley as well as, Marsabit, Isiolo and Moyale in Upper Eastern region. Completing the tie of equally armed violence prone districts include Tana River, Ijara, Laikipia and Lamu. These regions are characterized by a drought-prone environment in which basic resources are scarce. The problem is aggravated by environmental degradation, which in turn has increased competition for access to resources and control of livelihoods. Access to water is a particular concern, which also impacts on the capacity to keep livestock and generate income.

This sorry state of affairs has been compounded by the proximity of most of these districts to a number of the Eastern Africa region's conflict zones and the absence of effective border controls, which has rendered these areas easy trading and passage points for illicit weapons. The pastoralist communities generally fall beyond the reach of official governance institutions, and have a history of tension among themselves as well as with non-pastoralist settlements. The history of tensions coupled with fierce competition for scarce resources, widespread availability and ownership of firearms, low capacity of rule of law institutions and general socio-economic misery has produced a fragile environment that is highly conducive for arms proliferation.

At the same time, these conditions are self-reinforcing, and the high level of insecurity makes the possession of firearms a necessity for survival and economic activity. The ensuing violence is as such in itself a direct cause for the poor state of development in these regions.

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The result is a negative spiral of armed violence and underdevelopment which needs to be addressed and reversed for any peaceful development to be viable, especially as the country moves towards devolved governance system.

## *1.2 National initiatives to alleviate the SALW Problem*

In the last decade, the Government of Kenya has recognized the problems associated with increasing levels of armed violence and escalating use of small arms, and is working with like minded organizations/agencies to respond to the problem. To demonstrate this commitment, the Government signed the Nairobi Declaration on Small Arms and Light Weapons in March 2000 and agreed to host its Secretariat in Nairobi to coordinate all small arms issues in the ten countries. The Government, in line with the recommendation of the UN Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects (UNPOA) adopted at the July 2001 UN Small Arms Conference, established the National Focal Point to be responsible for all issues pertaining to small arms and light weapons. In addition, in 2006 the Government (through the National Focal Point and working with civil society) adopted a National Plan of Action (NAP) to respond programmatically to small arms issues in Kenya. The five year period to implement the first phase of the NAP elapsed in 2010 and the same has been reviewed and will be implemented for additional five years. In 2010, the National Focal Point was elevated into a fully fledged Directorate within Office of the President, Ministry of State for Provincial Administration and Internal Security. A policy on SALW has since been drafted and is awaiting Cabinet approval.



*Each year, the Kenya National Focal Point on Small Arms coordinates the public destruction of thousands of surrendered and recovered illicit SALW*

In addition to this, the government is working in partnership with civil society, Peace Committees and regional bodies in the pastoralist regions to respond to the conflicts and address the proliferation and use of illicit weapons. The main focus has been to facilitate confidence-building measures through community peace and development processes and micro disarmament.

The Kenyan government is a signatory of the 2006 Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence and Development, and is thereby committed to integrating armed violence prevention into its development strategies. In October 2007, the government co-hosted with UNDP and BCPR Geneva an All Africa Meeting on this topic, which led to the adoption of the African Regional Declaration on Armed Violence and Development.

### **1.3 The Project**

Faced with this problem of armed conflict and proliferation of small arms, Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) of the Ministry of State for the Development of Northern Kenya and other Arid lands, with financial support from UNDP, started a journey of addressing this problem in 2004. This journey, Armed Violence and Small Arms reduction in pastoralists communities project, commenced as a pilot project in Garissa and was expanded in 2008 to include other five additional greater districts in North Eastern and Upper Eastern region namely Wajir, Mandera, Moyale, Marsabit and Isiolo.

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of national and local government and civil society to effectively prevent and reduce levels of armed violence in order to nurture peace and enhance development opportunities in pastoral communities, and to enhance prospects for cross-border cooperation and dialogue.

Since its inception, the project has been involved in the formation and strengthening of district, divisional and local peace committees, provincial and district task forces on small arms management, the establishment and capacity development of Women Peace Forums, skills development in peace-building and conflict management, improved weapons stockpile management and the collection and destruction of illicit small arms, development of water resources, livelihood improvement and cross-border peace dialogues.

In implementing the project, ALRMP II is partnering with National Focal point on Small Arms and Light Weapons (NFP), National Steering Committee on peace building and conflict management (NSC) and Oxfam GB.

### **1.4 Hypothesis of the Project**

The design and execution of the Armed Violence and Small Arms reduction in pastoralists communities project is based on the hypothesis and or philosophy that conflict; whether armed or not is part and parcel of human life and as such the most we could do is to manage and reduce its impacts, at least to a socially tolerable levels. The same thinking informs the problem of small arms; including the very reason as to why civilians arm themselves; especially in such a fragile and volatile place like pastoralists' northern Kenya.

It is in public domain that pastoralists in Kenya do not acquire SALW expressly for criminality purposes or just for the sake of it. Living in a peripheral, largely underdeveloped and conflict prone areas with limited livelihood opportunities occasioned by the aridity of their lands that has been worsened by weather vagaries, pastoralists have been forced by a combination of these mutually self reinforcing circumstances to arm themselves.

This is why this project hypothesizes that by addressing some of the key issues driving pastoralists in northern Kenya to acquire illicit SALW, the problem of the proliferation of SALW will be greatly reduced. This could be achieved in a number of ways.

**One;** lack of strong local and national institutions including policy frameworks could provide a fertile ground for conflicts to occur and or escalate.

This is why this project seeks to team up with other like-minded actors to strengthen the capacity of national and local government and civil society to effectively prevent and reduce levels of armed violence. Presence of strong institutions would nip the bud at the onset of any misunderstanding and would also provide a framework where communities, government agencies and civil society could dialogue, collaborate and address the problem of conflicts and small arms in a more coherent and sustainable manner.

The civil society could do a greater job in lobbying the government to increase security personnel in the ASALs and most importantly provide that much needed security. With improved security, people will not have an excuse of arming themselves and this is what has been demonstrated in North Eastern Province over the years. Yes, we don't rule out the possibility that perhaps there could be hundreds, even not thousands of illicit arms amongst the population in NEP but the fact that the region is largely peaceful has rendered those arms obsolete and that's why disarmament exercises in NEP have been largely successful compared to conflict hotspots like the Isiolo Triangle and North Rift region.

**Two;** conflicts, especially in pastoralists areas, have been sparked by competition over access and control of the scarce water and pasture resources. The situation becomes worse during the dry spell when water becomes increasingly scarce and herders are tempted to use force to access such previous resources. Coupled with limited livelihood opportunities in pastoralists' areas, armed violence becomes an easy, but cruel option to survive.

This is why the project, acting as a catalyst, seeks to demonstrate that by providing water in pastoralists' areas, tensions are likely to decrease. So if a dam in Forrole, Marsabit County is dug or rehabilitated, it will ensure that the Borana and Gabbra co-exist peacefully, well aware that there is enough water for everybody. So imagine if the government or a coalition of development partners could commission drilling of 20 boreholes and a number of dams in Marsabit County; the water conflicts will likely be something of the past.

Improving access to water should also be complemented by improving the socio-economic livelihood bases of the pastoralists. This is expected to reduce the over-reliance on livestock and where possible ensure that the livestock industry in pastoralists regions is improved and modernized so as to be part of the national economy. The days of keeping thousands of livestock just for prestige or other cultural reasons needs to be reviewed in preference of market economy, keeping in mind the weather vagaries and the livestock carrying capacity of the rangelands that are increasingly becoming under pressure from farmers, national parks and private wildlife conservancies.

Limited livelihood forces people to engage in crimes such as cattle rustling and banditry. Restocking, alternative livelihood support like engaging in livestock trade, small scale farming and value addition will go a long way in improving the income and diversifying the livelihood base of the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the ASALs

**Three;** there have been misconceptions to the effect that weapons voluntarily surrendered by the communities or seized during disarmament exercises have found out there way back to civilian hands, thanks to corruption in the security sector or so it is agonized.

So whenever you visit a place like Wamba in Samburu East district, you are likely to be confronted by elders claiming that the guns they surrendered have since been given to their rivals, the Borana in Isiolo district.

There are also claims that licit arms have found their way to civilian hands, again, thanks to dearth of accountability frameworks and corruption in the security sector. In 2005, members of the then Marsabit District Peace Committee were able to corroborate this line of thinking when they recovered spent cartridges that had been used by bandits and upon analysis those spent cartridges resembled the ones issued to security personnel in Marsabit district.

Based on such revelations, the project hypothesizes that when weapons (both licit and illicit) are securely stored and destroyed (the illicit ones), people will have confidence on the ability of the government to protect them and be convinced that in actual sense the arms they own are illicit and that's why they are periodically destroyed.

**Four**, and in some very isolated cases, some pastoralists are not in the first place aware that owning an AK 47 Rifle is a crime. "I sold my own cows to buy this rifle that has done a great job in protecting me, my family, clan, tribe and our livestock" are some of the tirade you could be bombarded with when you confront armed herders in some of the remote locations in pastoralists areas. So a great deal of awareness on the illegality of illicit arms as well as its socio-economic impacts on the communities need to be undertaken.



**Fifth** and possibly finally, improving cross-border inter-community and inter-governmental relations is vital in the war against the proliferation of small arms. Communities in peripheral border areas have been arguing that since they border hostile and armed neighbours, they don't have any alternative other than to equally arm themselves. This is why sustained cross-border peace dialogues, including peace dividends, are critical in improving cross-border relations with cumulative results being less and less incidences of armed violence and proliferation of illicit SALW.

*There is a critical need to raise awareness on the problem of illicit SALW in pastoralist areas using different ways.*

## **1.5 This publication**

This publication is a product of our interactions, experiences and lessons learned collectively as we have been implementing this project. It is based on primary sources i.e. informal interviews we have had with our constituents, documentation of what we have observed, told or heard as we interact with community members across Northern Kenya.

Whatever is contained in this publication has also been informed by our own thinking and reflections as we grapple with this twin problem of armed violence and small arms proliferation. We hope that our readers will find this publication useful.

*For more information, read the Project Document: Armed Violence and Small Arms reduction in pastoralists' communities' project, UNDP/GoK PD, 2008.*

## 2.0 From an Armed Bandit to a Peace Caravan member: The story of Dansa Adan Dururu

By Guyo Golicha Huka  
and Ruto Pkalya

When poverty stares at a young household head in pastoralists Marsabit County, resorting to armed banditry and cattle rustling seems to be the inevitable alternative. This is the story being peddled everywhere in the resource poor pastoralist Kenya as the main factor behind the countless cattle raids and banditry vices that have continued to malign the media image of this part of Kenya. Nevertheless, the story of Dansa, a Borana warrior from Marsabit, shows that illicit livelihoods will not end poverty in the county. “The proceeds from crime are cursed in the very beginning. For all these years I have been involved in rustling and hijacking vehicles, there is nothing to show of it yet I have escaped death by a whisker almost on all those missions”, said Sora during a recent peace meeting in Laisamis, Marsabit County.

Mr. Dansa Adan Dururu was born in Marsabit district in Eastern Province of Kenya. A sound minded man, he is aged 35 years old. He is married and blessed with three children; two girls and a boy. Mr. Dansa went to Marsabit primary school and satisfactorily completed his primary education but did not continue with his secondary education due to financial difficulties. His parents live in the poor informal suburban of Marsabit Township. They do not have sufficient resources to enable their son to continue with education, which could have solved some of the problems they found themselves in. More so they were aged and could not find any viable employment to earn them a decent living.

With his education dream and hope of getting a white collar job shattered, Dansa decided to settle down and bring up a family. As the family grew, more demands came knocking. So to put food on the table leave alone providing for the other social needs of the family was increasingly becoming a challenge to the unemployed, semi-educated young family head.

“Faced with this predicament that was further compounded by the fact that our cattle had been raided by suspected Rendille warriors, I thought the best way to handle this was to resort to robbery just to feed my family”, said Dansa during the celebrations to mark the 2010 global week of action on small arms in Marsabit town.

For the young man to engage in this new found illicit livelihood venture, he had to be equipped with the tool of the trade, the dreaded AK 47 rifle. At first, he had to rent the same from his “peers in the trade” and after two successful robbery episodes, he had looted enough to buy his own brand new AK 47, thanks to the easy availability of the same from war-torn Somalia.

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Mr. Golicha is a UNV based at ALRMP II office at Marsabit and is the Field Coordinator for the larger Marsabit District; Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction in pastoralists' communities' project.

“Within no time, I had become a dreaded gangster. I was able to provide for my family and luckily my wife never realized what sort of business I engage in. I guess she was satisfied that I must be doing very well in the livestock trade I used to intermittently engage in mainly to cover my exploits”, narrated Dansa. He continued, “In all those exploits, I never ever attempted to kill someone, unless my life was in danger.”

He continued to say, “In fact my aim is not to kill but to rob to find food for my children. I started this business of stealing since 1997. For all these years I did not do these because it is good, only because of my children and wife.”

Dansa says that his entire life is surrounded by fear and uncertainty. He feared to be killed by security personnel. He came to be known for his notoriety even by small children of his children’s ages. He says, “Since I am doing bad things always I fear I might be killed or my families, children or wife may be punished when they could not tell of my whereabouts.”

Courtesy of the armed violence reduction project in Marsabit County, the young man sought help from the area youth leader Mr. Halkano Galgalo who introduced him to the UNDP AVR project field coordinator, Mr. Guyo Golicha. After a few counseling sessions he was advised to surrender himself to the government of Kenya.

This was the very time the Dumisha Amani I, the voluntary disarmament exercise, was going on. On his part and despite of the assurances from the project team that he will not be victimized for surrendering his illicit AK 47, Dansa thought he might be tricked to arrest and subsequent jailing since he was already on the list of wanted criminals in the area. The project team persisted convincing him to surrender the gun and reminded him that there are so many other ways of earning licit livelihood.

Finally the hitherto deadly gangster called it a day and arranged for his gun to be surrendered to authorities. A rehabilitation and counseling programme was soon designed for Dansa as a way of preparing him to integrate back into society for nobody seemed to trust him in the region. Church pastors were soon praying for him. Later, the Chiefs were introducing him to the local communities as a reformed warrior. To ensure that the new peace convert does not slide back to robbery, he was placed under close observatory and surveillance by the security apparatus.

“Everyone thanked and congratulated me while others prayed for me. At the same time others remained in a state of limbo, uncertain of my reformed life! When I was taken to the chief and councilor, who took me to the District Commissioner they all advised me and thanked me for surrendering myself to them and God. They all said that there are other alternative ways of earning livelihoods other than armed violence and that every effort will be made to build his capacity to earn a decent living”, he narrated to the project team in Marsabit

With the assistance of livelihood component of the Armed Violence reduction project, youths were mobilized to deliberate on the best way possible for helping this new convert to earn decent licit livelihood. Soon, the youth organized a fundraising to buy him a motor cycle for the ex bandit. Since he was skilled in riding motor bikes, it was thought that this was the best business enterprise Dansa could engage in; ferrying passengers from and to different parts of Marsabit town.

The DC agreed to grant him permission to fundraise/solicit from the public to help him buy a motorcycle. A first round of collection from well-wishers realized about Ksh. 30,000/ which is well below the estimated cost of the bike (put at Ksh 70,000). However there are many individuals who have pledged to contribute more money.

“When they were giving me their contributions, some people could not believe that I’m a changed man, thinking that I was only cheating on them and will get back to banditry after getting the money”, he noted.

About his accomplices- he said that he was in a gang of three men, one was killed by police but two disappeared into the neighboring Ethiopia for fear of their lives. ‘‘If I see them today I will impress upon them to discard this dangerous undertaking and join other members of society in nation-building. Being a gangster is a terrible life that I wouldn’t like anybody to be involved in’’, he added.

To help others and more specifically the youth abandon armed violence, Dansa said he was going to join peace caravan movements preaching peace in the entire Marsabit County. In particular he would like to talk to the Rendille morans who fight from the bush, engaging themselves in cattle rustling, raids and killing other people. He finds these practices as outdated and dangerous to both the individual and society.

“I am now going to preach peace and armed violence reduction activities first for fear of God and secondly, that it is retrogressive and goes against the grains of development’’. Finally, he called upon all young men engaging in such heinous business to stop and look around for other livelihood earning activities.

### 3.0 AK 47 Rifle:

#### *A Snake under the Bed?*

“Today, peace means the ascent from simple coexistence to cooperation and common creativity among Countries and Nations”. Mikhail Gorbachev-Nobel lecture 1991 By Abdi Mohamed Maalim

For a long time, the easy availability of SALWs in Garissa County has been cited as a major impediment to peace building and socio-economic development. It is in record that communities arm themselves mainly to protect their animals from rustlers. This is the story being repeated again and again in most of pastoralists regions in Kenya and it is a high time that such blanket justification of illicit arms ownership is critiqued.

In Garissa as well as in the entire Somali speaking North Eastern Province (NEP) of Kenya, many people claim that the government cannot simply rise to the occasion and guarantee their security. And although NEP and Garissa in particular is relatively peaceful, large numbers of the residents have hidden their arsenals but the possibility of such arsenals being mobilized for use in the event of any real or perceived conflict is lurking everywhere. But is this the safest and right thing to do?

According to Rashid Kune, a respected elder in Garissa, hiding guns because there is peace is not necessarily the right thing to do, “it’s like hiding a snake under the bed”, he said. Kune went ahead and noted that such a snake under the bed can strike at any moment so the same gun under the bed can as well cause unprecedented collateral damage in the homes.



This is the reason why Kune surrendered his AK 47 Rifle with 18 rounds of ammunition to the security team in Garissa in April 2010 at Alango Arba location of Lagdera district in the presence of government officials.

*AK 47 Rifles and other ammunitions: This is what Mzee Rashid calls “a snake under the bed”*

Speaking at a separate function and echoing the sentiments of Rashid Kune, Ali Mohamed of Shimbirey location in Garissa County cautioned that “if gun use is of any benefit, it would have helped the Republic of Somalia which had no central government for almost two decades. Every day we hear over the mass media that dozens have been killed, maimed or injured. It’s not an epidemic that is killing them. No! It’s the use of the gun. If we don’t watch, we may end up the same”.

The availability of illicit arms in a society is a time bomb waiting to explode at the opportune moment. Absence of conflict is not and will not be a reason for slowing down disarmament efforts. Aware of the risks of illegal arms among the population, the Ministry of Northern Kenya and other Arid Lands, through the Armed Violence Reduction Project, implemented by Arid Lands Resource Management Project, has been engaged in voluntary illicit arms mop-up exercises since 2004.

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*Maalim is a UNV based at ALRMP II Garissa office. He is the larger Garissa district Field Coordinator for the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction in pastoralist communities project*

These voluntary mop-up exercises have greatly contributed to peace in Northern Kenya and particularly Garissa County, where as of 2008, over 700 rifles had been voluntarily surrendered by the community.

“For many years, North Eastern Province (NEP) was regarded as a ‘no going zone’ even for civil servants but it is great that the province that was once was dubbed Nothing Except Problems (NEP), is currently being perceived a peaceful swathe of land akin to Nothing Except Pleasure (NEP)”, noted the Mayor of Garissa Municipality during the commemoration of World Peace Day on 21 September 2010 at Garissa Primary School grounds.

Those who are familiar with the history of North Eastern Province particularly the Shifta secession war of late 1960s including its effects that pulverized the province till 2001 will echo the observations of the Mayor, observations that were corroborated by the International Police (Interpol) who voted Garissa as the safest town in East and Central Africa region in June 2010 (Daily Nation, 14 June 2010 Issue).

The transformation of NEP to a region of peace and pleasure could to a large extent explain why this vast and poorly developed part of Kenya was not affected by the Post Election Violence that gripped the country in late 2007 to early 2008. Whereas the rest of the country was immersed in the poll violence, the residents of NEP were busy with their daily chores and sarcastically bragging that they were ready to host the internally displaced persons and those fleeing the post poll chaos.

Nevertheless, it is important to appreciate that the road to peace in NEP and particularly Garissa County has been long, bumpy, rutted, treacherous and double-crossing. It was never a smooth, soft and silky affair as some may think. During this pacification process, many residents, including government officials and civil society personnel, lost their lives with many more maimed, orphaned or widowed. In other words, the process in search for peace and reduction of the proliferation of SALW has not been a cup of tea.

The current peace being enjoyed in Garissa also came at a cost to socio-economic development. For instance, funds destined for development were diverted to security operations like provision of armed escorts to all vehicles plying the County. “During the 1980s and 1990s, you could not walk for a kilometer without being escorted by the security personnel. In addition to this, security operations was the norm notwithstanding its attendant vices like rape and unnecessary confiscation of livestock”, narrated Said Mzee Hassan, a resident of Garissa town.

So how this peace was achieved, especially the reduction of illicit weapons, what Rashid Kune refers to as the snake under the bed? According to Abdi Mohammed Abdi, the project’s regional coordinator, “the conflict in Garissa as well as the entire NEP was and continues to be mainly resource-based and can be amicably resolved by addressing issues surrounding sharing of water and pasture”. This is why in its voluntary illicit SALW campaigns; the project has particularly targeted women to help persuade their men and sons to give up the guns for the sake of peace. “What we tell women is that they don’t participate in clan feuds because they don’t have guns, but their men do,” added Mr Abdi.

It is also important to note that despite sharing a porous border with lawless Somalia and hosting close to 300,000 Somali refugees in Dadaab, Garissa County has remained relatively peaceful. Cases of highway robberies or cross-border cattle raids are currently seldom reported.



*The DPC Chair (second from right), listens to the acting DC in a baraza where one man voluntarily surrendered an AK 47 with 18 rounds of ammunition.*

#### 4.0 *The Role of Women in Arms Reduction: The Case of Women Peace Forum members in Isiolo County*

By Mary Alobei

Women from pastoralists' communities in Northern Kenya account for a large proportion of the victims of armed violence. Albeit women are not the real combatants in the cattle rustling and inter-tribal skirmishes that characterize Northern Kenya, study after study, including the one commissioned by UNDP in 2008, concludes that women and girls have been borne the brunt of the armed conflict.

Yes, they are not in the battlefield but accounts for the largest proportion of internally displaced persons, sexually molested lot and head of single families as a result of death of their husbands in the battlefronts. The socio-economical burden left to women at the wake of any armed conflict is huge.

In Isiolo County, located in the upper Eastern part of Kenya, cattle rustle and banditry vices have conspired to dampen the prospects of women realizing their full potentials and hopefully contribute to the county economy. "Women are either hiding in the thickets, nursing the wounded or tramping to relief food distribution centers", said Abdia Mohamed, the Secretary of Isiolo Women Peace Forum.

So, when women in Isiolo are confined to the effects of armed violence, their counterparts in various parts of the country are busy contributing to the national economy and this is perhaps why Isiolo County compares poorly with the national poverty and literacy indices. This sorry state of affairs could be attributed to rampant armed violence in the county and especially the toll it has taken on women potentials.

With increasing incidences of armed violence in Isiolo and beyond, the government in 2009, through a Presidential Amnesty, urged the residents to voluntarily surrender their illicit arms. This voluntary arms surrender window was faced with its share of challenges. Their main point of concern was the fear that their neighbours might not be disarmed further exposing them to more armed violence.

In early 2010, the government decided to order an operation, dubbed Dumisha Amani II, to disarm all those still in possession of illicit arms. At first, this was a welcome call but later, many people were taken aback by the "problems associated with forceful disarmament" such as rape, brutality and harassment of the public.

Faced with this problem, many people decided to move away with others opting to transfer their families, especially wives and daughters, to other towns fearing harassment. With this kind of misconception, there was tension between the public and the security forces, with some members of the public declaring that they will never surrender their guns even though it means losing their lives.

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With no place to go, a group of women from the Isiolo women peace forum, whom had been formed and trained by the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction project, decided to dare the situation by visiting the illicit arms mop up operation centre where they sought audience with one Mr. Gituko, the Operation Commandant. During their meeting with the top cop, they candidly expressed their fears about the disarmament exercise, highlighting the need for the exercise to assume a "human face" and ensure that women and girls are not raped

Out of this initiative, Mr. Gituko reassured the women that all efforts will be put in place to ensure that the exercise will be carried out in a humane way. The Commandants went ahead set up a gender desk specifically for the exercise and ensured that female officers were also deployed to monitor any unbecoming behavior of the operation team members. He also gave his personal telephone number to the public so that they may report directly to him any form of mishandling by the forces during the operation. This was a major milestone in building confidence between the public and the security forces in the operation. No cases of harassment were reported and the exercise was termed to as humane.

As a recognition and appreciation of the role of women peace forum in illicit arms mop-up exercises, the Isiolo Women Peace Forum was awarded a prize during the 2010 Global Week of Action on armed violence for ensuring that the Duminsha Amani II operation in Isiolo was humane. While receiving the award on behalf of the forum, Mrs. Abdia Mohamud, the Chair noted that, “this award goes to all the women in Isiolo who ensured that we do away with the gun that had been a nightmare in our society”. She also congratulated the security personnel for conducting the exercise in a socially and culturally acceptable manner.

As a result of this initiative by Women Peace Forum members, Isiolo surrendered the highest number of illicit small arms and light weapons when compared to her neighbors in Samburu, Laisamis and Laikipia districts. This could not have been achieved without the crucial role played by women not only for advocating for a humane disarmament exercise but also for calling upon the community members to support the process.

During the mop up exercise, over 500 illicit assorted weapons and 4,000 rounds of ammunitions were voluntarily surrendered and or recovered during both the government amnesty window on all illicit weapons to be surrendered as well as during the forceful disarmament (Dumisha Amanai II).

Though women have been blamed for instigating violence through inciting their male counterparts, they have also been very instrumental in brokering peace. The strength that lies within women to bring change in the community cannot be underrated. That is why in Isiolo their story concerning the disarmament exercise has been very evident. Some of the women went against all odds to ensure that the guns under their husbands and sons custody are returned to the security forces.

“My husband was very furious with me after learning that I personally tricked our camel herder to get the gun from him and surrendered it to the chief.” Ms. Sarura, a member of Women Peace Forum from Kambi Garba, said. She had to defy her husband’s orders to surrender the weapon. They had acquired the firearm to protect their camel and it was under the custody of their hired herder. Though she pleaded with her husband to surrender the weapon who could not hear any of her pleas but also instructed the herder not heed to what she is saying.



*A woman receiving a certificate of surrender from Garbatulla DC after she voluntarily surrendered her husband’s gun*

Ms. Sarura played a trick on the herder to leave the gun after visiting their home claiming that it was not safe for him to carry the weapon openly as he was going back to the grazing field.

The herder was convinced and left it behind in which she immediately ran to the chief's office to surrender it.

Just as Ms. Sarura's husband was adamant to hand back the weapon, many residents felt the same due to the many attacks they have been through. The fear of being left vulnerable to cattle rustlers was enough to bemoan.

On the other hand, Mrs. Rebecca Namoi of Lotiki village sighed with relief saying, "I could now eat and sleep in peace since the gun left my house". Many are sleepless nights she went through wondering where to hide the gun so that the security personnel could not find it. Her husband was the custodian of the community gun. The gun was owned communally as many people could not afford buying a gun alone. For the safety of their livestock, the Lotiki community had to raise money through members' contribution for them to own a gun that could protect their livestock. The day her husband travelled to check on the livestock, leaving the gun behind because of the Dumisha Amani II operation, she picked the weapon and surrendered it at the chief's office. "These guns had made our lives a nightmare, we are grateful the government came for them", she mused.

For Ms. Kulai Ibrahim of Bulapesa village, her story was different; it was her son who totally refused to surrender the firearm. "I had to hire some of his friends to steal the gun from him since he even ran away from home due to my nagging", she said. Luckily for her, the friend's of her son managed to steal the AK 47 rifle, brought it to her and she quickly surrendered it back. "I had no option but to pay these guys to bring the gun back to the rightful hands". She said

During the exercise, one challenge that was highlighted was the fact that the communities had spent quite a fortune in purchasing the weapons. On the other hand, the guns were primarily acquired for self defense and protection of livestock. Surrendering the weapon for many was like leaving themselves vulnerable due to the mistrust that existed among the many ethnic groups in the region.

"We are tired of our young girls getting widowed at a very young age because their husbands go out to fight and get killed. We have also lost so many of our sons who leave behind their children for us to take care and yet we don't have that strength. If today you are not going to surrender that weapon that has caused us misery please forget that you once had a mother or wife. You young men please don't even think of marrying our daughters. Please return those guns that you have if really we are your mothers." These were the statements of Ms. Ngokor Lobun during a Baraza by local leaders in Ngaremara while calling on voluntary surrender of arms.

Despite all these challenges, it is remarkable that women took it upon themselves to ensure that illicit arms are surrendered to the security personnel. This is despite the fact that women are the very ones suffering the brunt of the gun.

## **5.0 Defying Stereotypes: Somali Women soldiers on with Peace Building in Wajir**

*By Gaal Ahmedkheir Dahir*

Despite playing a crucial role in the management, prevention and resolution of clan conflicts in Wajir in early 1990s, women have continued to be looked down in key decision making processes in the highly patriarchal Somali community of North Eastern Kenya. The Wajir Story, the much celebrated origin of peace committee model in Kenya, was a “women project” as it were the local women civil servants from the district under the able leadership of Dekha Ibrahim who decided enough was enough with clan conflicts and it was time to embark on a women led peace building processes that finally gave birth to Wajir Peace and Development Committee in 1995.

What started as a women initiative to arbitrate women clan based conflicts in market places in Wajir was later joined by Elders, Youth, Religious Leaders and the business fraternity to form the Wajir Peace and Development Committee, a concept that has been replicated all over the country with varying levels of success. For once, the potential of womenfolk in traditionally male-dominated processes like conflict resolution was coming to face, challenging and defying this old-age stereotype that women are “big-footed baby” as succinctly captured by one of Somali sayings.

In Wajir, the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction Project has emboldened and given a fresh impetus to the women inspired peace building and conflict management processes. This has been realized through the formation, reconstitution and strengthening of Women Peace Forums in a bid to revive and consolidate the gains of the Women for Peace movement of the 1990s. In the early years of 1990, women in Wajir took ‘the bull by the horns’ by openly advocating for peaceful resolution of clan conflicts.

To ensure that their peace crusade sees the light of the day, the women movement enlisted the participation and support of elders, youth and the religious leaders with end result being the pacification of Wajir County as we know it today. This is the agenda that the Women Peace Forums seeks to carry forward and consolidate in Wajir.

As alluded to above, Somali community is highly patriarchal in nature and women are usually locked out in key decision making. In such societies, women are often erroneously equated with children and in the process entrenching male dominance. The formation of Women Peace Forums is therefore an eye-opener for the women folk in Wajir County to challenge such stereotypes and reclaim their rightful place in society.

“It has been said a war started by a woman will not easily come to an end. Women by nature contribute to conflict. They praise brave warriors and rebuke cowards in songs. These songs motivate our men who without a second thought indulge in armed violence. At the time of war, women and children suffer the most. The peace forums will not only liberate us from the shackles of male dominance but also enable us to cultivate a culture of love, tolerance and peaceful co-existence,” said Halima Gedow during the training for Bute Women Peace Forum held on 9th -15th March 2010 at Bute.

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*Gaal is a UNV based at ALRMP II Wajir office. He is the greater Wajir Field Coordinator for the Armed Violence and Small Arms reduction in pastoralist communities’ project.*

While acknowledging the important role played by women in peace building, Abdi Musa, DMO ALRMP, Wajir that is implementing the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction Project, noted that “Wajir Women Peace Forum is our partner in peace building and conflict management and its officials have a conviction, just like mine, that the onus of transforming our society is the responsibility of all the stakeholders. Women Peace Forum has spearheaded the voluntary surrender of illicit arms in the past and continues to set the pace in conflict resolution work”.



*Women singing a peace song in Wajir during the celebrations to mark 2010 World Peace Day*

The contribution of women in peace building continues to be seen in Wajir with the recent resolution of Ajuran-Sakuye conflict being a case in point. During this conflict, members of Women Peace Forums advocated for reconciliation with Ajuran women discouraged their men from waging retaliatory attacks. This was viewed by many as a step in the right direction and a true way for women to assert their authority.

The women, in their quest for peace and prosperity, work closely with all the District Peace Committees in the County. “They are actually part and parcel of the peace committees, the sort of women desk within this architecture”, noted Abdi Musa, DMO Wajir. Since peace building is a concerted effort, the Women Peace Forums also collaborates with Provincial Administration, local, national and international organizations and their cross-border counterparts.

“We have teamed with members of women peace forums to address resource-based and boundary disputes. We are engaged in community sensitization and awareness on conflict prevention, management and resolution. We educate the public on the proliferation and dangers of SALWs and advocate for voluntary surrender of illicit arms. Two herders have voluntarily surrendered two rifles and I have no doubt more will surrender their illicit arms. We also promote community policing and harmonious co-existence among communities of diverse background,” explained Abdow Adullahi, Chair, Wajir West DPC during a field monitoring visit in March 2010.

On the political front, women have also had their way. During the countdown to the recent by-election in Wajir South constituency, women were out in numbers to ensure that the campaigns and voting was peaceful, free and fair. “We appealed to all and sundry to be peaceful during the electioneering process and we are happy that there were no conflicts before or after the parliamentary by-election held on 13th October 2010”, said Mrs. Habiba of Wajir Women Peace Forum.

From the foregoing, it’s very obvious that women have continued to defy tradition and culture by not only foraging into male dominated spheres but also succeeding in the same. This is perhaps why peace building fraternity should seriously consider investing in women inspired peace building process not only in pastoralists’ areas but in the country as a whole.

## **6.0 Modogashe Declaration:**

### *Ten years down the line and what needs to be reviewed*

The communities of upper Eastern and North Eastern provinces have embarked on a series of consultative meetings to build consensus on issues that needs to be reviewed in the much celebrated Modogashe declaration.

*By Waqo Guyo Gufu*

Modogashe declaration was brokered by community leaders and government representatives from the Eastern and North Eastern Provinces in 2001 at Modogashe, Isiolo district, following increased cases of banditry and cattle rustling. The declaration put government officers, especially chiefs, on notice for not preventing and or arresting criminals in their localities. The declaration also outlawed gun culture; specified compensation for lives lost as a result of inter-communal conflict as well as measures to make cattle rustling expensive. The declaration identified key conflict issues which were spelt out as cattle rustling, highway banditry, unauthorized grazing and proliferation of small arms.

The Modogashe peace model was born out of necessity to address vicious cycle of conflict in the arid parts of Northern Kenya. It has been hailed as one of the exemplary community peace initiative by the peace actors from across the eastern Africa region. The declaration was conceived at a time when the region was engulfed in a protracted period of raiding and communal violence of 1990s which also witnessed the fall of Republic of Somalia that opened flood gates of illicit weapons which propelled the conflict dynamics to new heights.

Modogashe declaration is credited with pacifying North Eastern Province as well as some parts of Upper Eastern region. Currently North Eastern Province is relatively peaceful with Interpol declaring Garissa in 2009 as the safest town in East and Central Africa region .

With changing conflict dynamics and emerging of new issues, stakeholders converged in Garissa in April 2005 to review the declaration and explore possibilities of making it a binding peace pact in most of conflict prone pastoralists regions in Kenya. The Garissa meeting effected some amendments to the initial declaration chief among them the reduction of compensation of stolen and not recovered livestock to twice the said number. The 2001 declaration put such compensation at five times the stolen and not recovered livestock. This meeting also agreed that the declaration should be reviewed and validated after every two years to keep abreast with emerging issues and conflict dynamics.

The 2005 review reinforced the provision of the declaration through additional clauses to make the rules more explicit and further incorporate civil rules to tackle arms trafficking and murder cases. It is worth to note that in Isiolo and neighboring districts of North Eastern Province where the majority of the populations profess Islamic religion the declaration registered notable success in reducing the levels of conflict.

However and mainly due to lack of funds, the Modogashe declaration has not been reviewed since 2005. Nevertheless, stakeholders under the auspices of the National Steering Committee on peacebuilding and conflict management agreed to review the declaration in 2010, this time starting with cluster based consultations so that each cluster of communities with common conflict issues could build consensus on issues they would like to be reviewed to improve effectiveness of the declaration.

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*Waqo is the Regional Coordinator, Upper Eastern Region for the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction in pastoralists' communities project. He is based at ALRMP II Isiolo office*

Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP II) with funding from UNDP kicked off the process in Isiolo on 24th March 2010. Communities from Isiolo, Garbatulla and Marsabit South districts participated in this review meeting with Samburu especially from Samburu east conspicuously missing in the deliberations yet they had been invited. All these communities inhabit the Isiolo triangle that has continued to be a haven of cattle rustlers.

Another similar meeting was held in Marsabit on 27th – 28th of March 2010 where the Borana, Gabbra, Burji and Rendille community representatives participated.

### ***6.1 Modogashe Declaration in Upper Eastern: Successes and Challenges faced***

The Isiolo review meeting began by highlighting some of the successes associated with the declaration as well as the bottlenecks faced as a way of building consensus on issues that needs to be reviewed and agreed upon.

On his part, the Garbatulla District Peace Committee Chairman, Mr. Harun Roba, noted that “the declaration’s most notable achievement is the creation of a forum through which the conflicting parties can talk to each other”.

“In the past when the raiders cross into their territory with stolen animals, we abandoned further pursuit and leave the rest to police or retreat to organize counter attack to compensate the loss. With the declaration in force we negotiate and recover the animals but still the accompanying penalties for breach of the accord stands,” the chairman observed. “This has discouraged killing and rustling because the culprits can no longer go unpunished,” he continued.

On the other hand, provisions like unauthorized grazing have not been honoured by the parties concerned since there were no penalties prescribed in the accord. In most cases, herders never sought prior consent of elders of the host community they have moved with their herds into in the process sparking clashes.

The timely payment of compensation also remains another problematic area according to many people consulted by the project personnel. Delays, partial payments and non compliance have become the order of the day. In Sericho of Garba-Tulla District blood compensation to be paid by Borana community for the killing of a Degodia tribesman in 2005 is yet to be fully honoured while a similar payment expected of Ajuran community by the Boranas is yet to be settled years down the line. These unfulfilled commitments often blow minor issues out of proportion whenever dispute occurs.

“It’s against our faith to fail to pay blood compensation to the surviving family members. But collecting contributions from mobile clan groups is not easy and when we fail to meet the agreed deadline, we end up being blamed,” laments Mr. Bule Yelehow, member of Alfatah council of elders during one of the proceedings.

In Isiolo triangle, covering parts of Samburu East, Laisamis and Isiolo North districts, the enforcement of the declaration has been wanting. From the onset the Samburu community expressed their reservation to abide by the clause to compensate women which affected the overall implementation of the accord. During the 2005 review meeting in Garissa, the then Samburu District Peace

Committee Chairman, Moses Lenairoshi, stunned the participants by saying that in Samburu culture, they don't compensate women since they are not killed in the first place. This line of thinking could have been made obsolete since modern day rustlers and bandits kill both sexes.

In the larger Marsabit District unresolved issues, political incitement, ethnicity and dissolution of the district peace committee by the District Commissioner in 2005 among others undermined the full implementation of the declaration. This was blamed for the unprecedented level of violence among Gabra, Borana and Rendille culminating with the infamous Turbi massacre of July 12 2005.

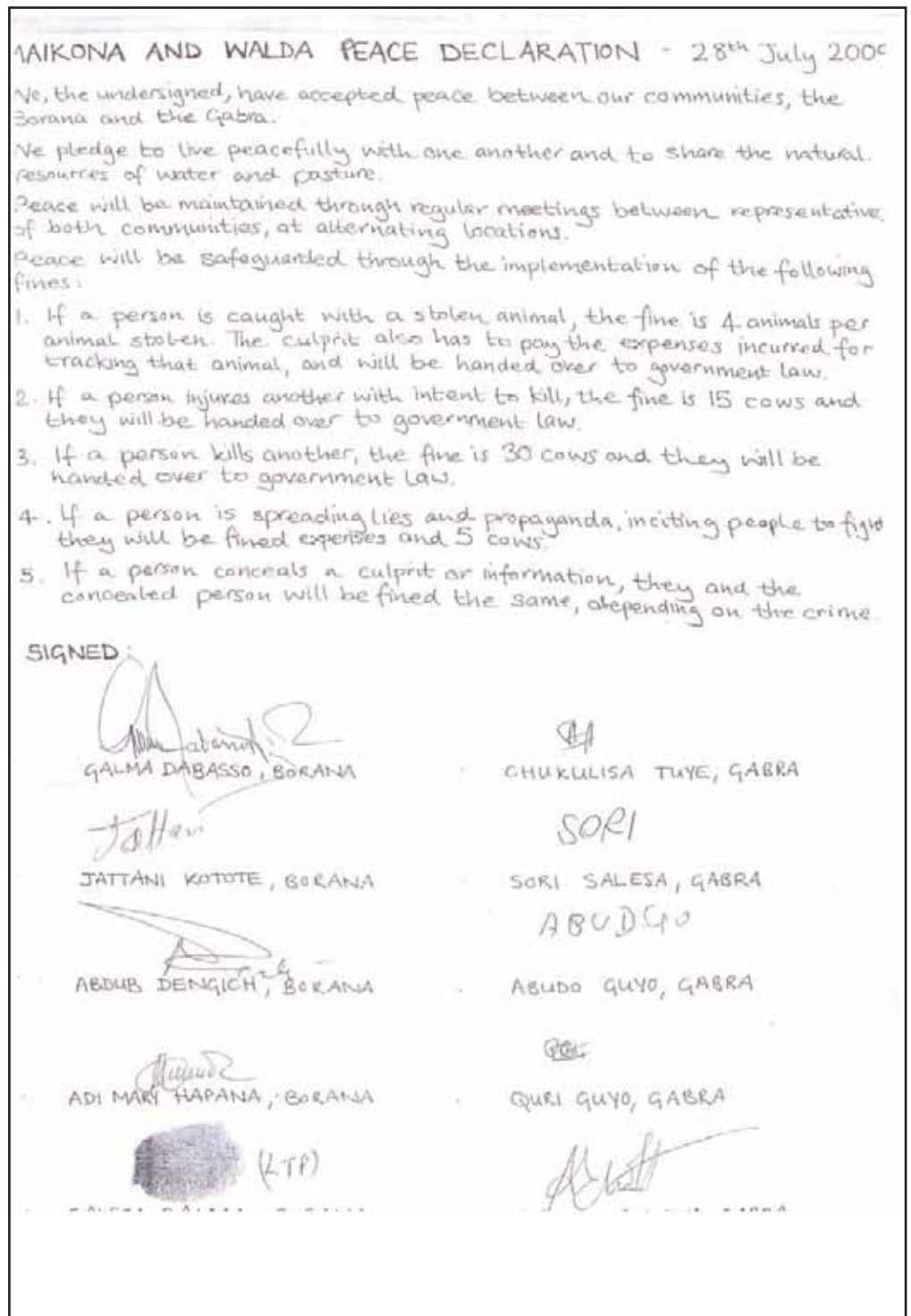
## 6.2 Isiolo and Marsabit Review Meetings:

### Pertinent Issues Raised and Recommendations made

The review was intended to analyze and reach consensus on outstanding issues and to reaffirm the community's commitment to the declaration. In Isiolo the participants were unanimous that the penalty under the declaration was too high and should be reduced to conform to other existing community accords. The parties thus agreed to reduce blood compensation to 50 cows' or its equivalent down from 100 and to be applied across the board without discrimination on the basis of gender. They further introduced penalties for fatal injuries at 15 cattle, concealing or giving false information at 5 cows and stolen and unrecovered animals at 3 times the number stolen.

The participants also set a 14 days' timeframe within which penalties, judicial prosecution, grazing rules and surrender of firearms should take effect among other suggestion to strengthen the rules.

In Marsabit, the meeting passed a resolution to adhere to Maikona/Dukana declaration, which has been adopted by more than 18 pastoral communities in Kenya and Ethiopia.



A signed copy of the Maikona Declaration

“We made a commitment under Maikona/ Dukana declarations which bides communities living on both sides of the border. It has helped us to maintain peace internally and across common border so we should adapt it as district wide declaration,” proposed Mr. Adan Sora from Marsabit.

His view was supported by many delegates who were of the opinion that Maikona / Dukana declaration, which is based on Borana Gadha system of conflict resolution, has an inbuilt elaborate structure for enforcement, incorporates large number of communities and thus best suited for the region.

The Rendille delegates from Marsabit South noted that the declaration borrows heavily from the Borana culture, which is very similar to their own culture and informed the meeting that in principal they approve of the declaration but would need time to widely consult their people back home in order to build consensus and get community’s buy-in.



*Mr. Tumul Orto facilitating a cluster meeting in Isiolo on 24th March 2010*

“We appreciate the process that has given birth to peace between you and we want to be part of the process. Please take us on board since exclusion will make us a common enemy of Borana and Gabra and we may not realize the peace we yearn for,” pleaded Mr. Haibor, a key Rendille delegate and former senior chief of Kargi location. The Rendille participants noted that the declaration could unify all the communities in Marsabit County

The Maikona /Dukana declaration which is similar to Modogashe declaration set compensation for loss of life at 30 cows across the board

(both men and women) and stolen animals at four times the number stolen. Other penalties include 15 cows for fatal injuries and 5 for concealing information among other rules set to control access to pasture and water resources.

The delegates from Marsabit County further proposed the adoption of Maikona declaration for handling internal conflict, while the Modogashe one could be applied to inter County conflict resolution.

It was also recommended that the government should enact a legal framework to legitimize such traditional conflict resolution mechanism like the Maikona and Modogashe/Garissa Declarations.

## **7.0 Transforming pastoralists Youths through alternative livelihood support: The Case of Youth Groups in Mandera**

Limited and fragile livelihood opportunities have been blamed for the rise of conflicts in pastoralists' areas of the Greater Horn of Africa region. In this region, and mainly due to weather vagaries, nomadic pastoralism seems to be the only livelihood occupation known to the pastoralists and more specifically the youth. This problem has been compounded by high illiteracy, low school enrollment and completion rates that renders most of the youths from the region unemployable in the competitive formal white collar jobs.

*By Hussein Mohamed Alio*

The situation in Mandera County of North Eastern Kenya is no better than the rest of pastoralists' areas in Kenya. Mandera County borders the politically fragile Somalia and Ethiopia, sharing a long porous border, a haven of small arms and light weapons traffickers. As such, the easy availability of arms in this part of the country makes criminal activities attractive to the largely unemployed youths including hundreds who have dropped from pastoralism either due to droughts or livestock raids.

To illustrate this, on 30th of October 2010 along Mandera-Elwak highway, a land cruiser transporting miraa (khat) from Maua to Mandera was attacked by group of youths and robbed money and properties worth's hundred thousand shillings. This is a clear testimony that economically frustrated youths are resorting to uncouth behaviors' to earn illicit livelihood and this is a time bomb waiting to explode. Peace actors should not wait until such a catastrophe happens and that's why ALRMP, through the UNDP funded Armed Violence Reduction Project, sought to invest in alternative livelihood opportunities targeting youth in the County.

As ALRMP was engaging youth and discussing possible alternative livelihood opportunities, more and more youth came calling, desperate for a livelihood after escaping from military training camps in Somalia or when some realized that what they had been promised to earn in Somalia was not forthcoming.

It is in public domain that youths from the North Eastern Province of Kenya were recruited by unknown people to go and join the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) currently under the leadership of Sheikh Sheriff Ahmed in Somalia so as to fight Al-Shabaab "rebels". During the recruitment, youths who approached project personnel in Mandera testified that they were promised good salary once they join TFG military ranks. To the many unemployed youths, this was a god-send opportunity or so they thought.

But after a while, the good salaries that they had been promised was not forthcoming, the training conditions were deplorable and the threat posed by the ever expanding Al Shabaab are some of the things that made them escape and come back home to face the challenges they had lived with for a while.

With this group of trained and skilled youths back home, the possibility of crimes rate souring was lurking in Mandera County and something had to be done. This forced the project to seek dialogue with these military trainees and advised them to be organized in form of groups or join existing youth groups so that they could be supported to undertake alternative livelihood projects,

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One of the groups, Youths of Good Organization, was given a grant of kshs 66,000 so as to enable the group equip and operate a barber shop on the busy Meta Meta Street of Mandera town. The effort has paid off and the shop has become one of the famous shops where customers' line up for hair cut at cost of only 50 shillings.



*Youth of Good Organization Group members receiving a cheque of Ksh 66,000 for income generating activities (IGA) from the project field coordinator, Mandera (third right)*

‘The group gets an average daily income of between 650 ksh to 1250ksh’, said Mr. Feisal Mohamed, the chairman of the group. ‘Our lives have changed drastically and the group’s account has over Ksh. 32,000, which we are intending to open another barber shop in town and also plan to put up a photocopier shop near the DC ‘s office’, added Mr. Feisal.

‘We recently suffered a big loss when stock worth 25,700ksh was lost after Desert Cruiser bus destined for Mandera was involved in accident where we lost 4 wall mirrors, face wash creams, shaving items, 4 dozens of towels and 2 boxes of shampoo. But we hope to recover from this loss’, noted the group Chairman.

Another group, Border Point One (B.P.1) Water Melon farmers group, was assisted by the project to expand their farming enterprise. The group was supported with irrigation pump-to irrigate their farms. The group planted water melon, tomatoes and onions on a 30 ha. piece of land which was rented to them at an annual cost of ksh 70,000. The farm is located strategically along the River Dawa basin.

‘The irrigation pump set we were given by Arid lands and UNDP have changed our income statuses because the crops we have grown here like onions , sukuma wiki (kales) and watermelons helped us generate cash’, said Mr Issack, the group leader.



*Green lush vegetation in Mandera: one of the farms of BPI group in Mandera, along river Dawa*

‘This season we harvested about 600 pieces of water melons, about 4500kgs of onions 1tone of sukuma wiki and 11tones of tomatoes with estimated total sales of Ksh. 280,000’, added Mr. Issack, speaking on behalf of the group on a regular field visit by ALRMP team, Mr. Isaack, the group leader noted that, “this initiative has really improved our living conditions and we have also employed over 30 youths in the farm including ladies to earn a living.”

Down south Mandera County, Kobe Kona Youth Group was supported with Ksh. 66,000 to strengthen their livestock trading and reach out to more youths within their locality. The group is doing well and is currently supplying goats to Wajir.

The visiting ALRMP team was impressed with this project, noting that more youths and women should be encouraged and supported to engage in crop farming. Since the future of pastoralism is increasingly becoming bleak due to weather vagaries compounded by effects of climate change, it is a high time that pastoralists embrace marginal dryland farming as one way of earning their livelihoods.

### Combating the problem of Small Arms in Northern Kenya

“The problems we are facing include the condition of the Dawa River which is a seasonal river that can dry up sometimes at the middle of the planting season affecting the farms. Heavy rains may also force the river banks to break hence flooding the farms destroying the crops”, said Mr. Issack, a group member.

This project has demonstrated that youths who have dropped from pastoralism or for whatever reasons were unable to complete formal education and secure formal employment could as well venture into the unexploited treasures of Mandera County. Marginal farming along River Dawa, the only major river in the entire province apart from the Tana River, is one such treasure that could be exploited to transform the socio-economic status of the thousand youths in Mandera County.



*Mandera Project field coordinator displaying onions harvested from the BPI farm.*

## 8.0 Traumas of being in possession of illicit arms: The Case of Marsabit County

By Guyo Golicha Huka

Contrary to the public opinion, being in possession of an illegal firearm is not good news to all. Perhaps it's a constant source of fidgeting, an admission of lurking insecurity and harbours the unimagined situation of being arrested, tortured and hauled into jail. This is not my imagination, nor that of UNDP or ALRMP, but a synopsis of testimonies of residents of Marsabit County.

Notwithstanding the bare minimum that the main livelihood endeavor in such hostile environmental condition is nomadic pastoralism in a context of tribal animosity, cattle rustling and banditry, arming themselves for defensive purposes is still a psychological burden for the impoverished pastoralists in the North of the country as a whole.

Yes, these complex and self reinforcing factors have forced herder to arms themselves for self protection, but it also comes with its own set of social, cultural, economic and psychological fists.



Kule Halake, a teacher from the County narrated a sad incident where a young boy in possession of an illegal firearm killed his brother accidentally. "A school boy accidentally shot and killed his elder brother who was herding the family's livestock far from home. The deceased had acquired the weapon illegally to protect the animals from rustlers. The young boy who was on vacation in the satellite grazing camp while toying with his brothers rifle accidentally pulled the trigger killing him instantly," the teacher said, tears flowing all over his face.

She continued; "At the moment the boy is mentally disturbed and out of school while his mother, shocked by incident also succumbed to mental breakdown." This is just a glimpse of the undesired costs of being in a possession of a firearm. And many more people might have accidentally lost their dear ones this way, leave alone the thousands who have lost their lives and property to raiders from neighbouring communities and or clans.

*Madam Hakule Halake demonstrating how the boy fired the gun and accidentally killed his brother*

Mr. Galgalo Tuye (a director with Ewaso Ngiro North Development Authority) recalled his ordeal when his brothers and other herdsmen were attacked by armed rustlers allegedly from Ethiopia in North Horr.

"I lost two relatives to the armed conflict between Gabbra and Dasnaach. All their livestock were stolen and the family is now languishing in poverty," lamented Tuye.

Livestock keeping, the main source of livelihood in this far-flung and largely undeveloped county has also been greatly affected by the conflict in the region that is increasingly becoming synonymous with cattle rustling.

The previously vibrant livestock trade in the county that saw traders moving freely across the expansive and rugged terrain to buy livestock from herders came to a standstill in 2005 following the Turbi massacre. Market places were polluted with the aftermath of the massacre leading to selective trading where communities basically traded with their own kinsmen. This resulted into deteriorating livestock prices thus impacting negatively on the County's economy.



From interviews conducted among residents including women, children and the elderly who often bear the brunt of the armed conflicts in pastoralists' areas, the government intervention through disarmament operation launched in April 2010 was a welcome idea. Women have lost husbands who among the herding communities are the soul breadwinners while school children have dropped out of school eventually adding to the high number of illiteracy in the region.

*Security personnel drive the livestock recovered through efforts of stakeholders in the County after a recent raid.*

The intervention undertaken by the UNDP under a project on reduction of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in collaboration with ALRMP II and other government agencies has resulted in peaceful coexistence among erstwhile unsavoury enemies in Marsabit County.

The project has initiated several community based peace campaigns which is bearing fruits and strengthened community peace structures in the expansive region. Various women peace forums and district peace committees have received trainings to build their capacity in peace process. The onus of all these interventions is to raise awareness on the perils of small arms and light weapons especially how such illicit acquisitions could impoverish communities (meager resources used to buy weapons instead of being invested in other livelihood opportunities), resulted to loss of lives and left many more maimed.



As a result of these interventions, coordination and cooperation from the public has resulted in voluntary surrender of over 450 illegal firearms in the County.

*With awareness on dangers of SALW enhanced pastoralist surrender illegal arms*

‘Our children can comfortably herd and come home safely. We worry less now. Our district commissioner, his security team and UNDP/ALRMP representatives have done a good job in sensitizing our people on the dangers of SALW. This has led to the much surrender of illegal weapons.’ Says Mrs. Kule Bute of Sagante location.

## **9.0 From Retaliation to Reconciliation: Pastoralists communities along Kenya-Ethiopia border finally embrace peace**

*By Emmanuel Mio Bule*

Inter-clan rivalries, deadly cattle raids and road banditry had for a long time characterized the pastoralists' communities' lives along the Kenya-Ethiopia border. The presence of the remnants and sympathizers of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rebels in the largely least policed terrain traversing a long porous border has not helped matters either. With this state of affairs, the cumulative results have been a largely insecure and volatile country side cutting across the two states.

On the Kenya side of the troubled border region are Sololo, Waye Goda and Uran (all in present day Moyale district), Forolle, Dukana and Turbi (all in North Horr District). In Ethiopia, conflict hotspot areas include Dilo, Magado and Moyale, all in Region Four (Oromia State) among a host of other conflict hotspots dotting the entire Kenya-Ethiopia border.

Over the years, communities living along the border had suffered loss of lives, property, infringement of their human rights from both the Kenyan and Ethiopian forces (ostensibly on military operations to flush out OLF) and the OLF militiamen, whom coerce the respective communities to support their call with those seemingly harbouring contrary opinions on the firing line. All these uncertainties have led to massive displacement of the residents in each side of the border as people scamper to areas perceived out of reach of OLF and its sympathizers.

Faced with these life threatening challenges, communities, peace building actors, respective local government officials and local leadership were convinced that a solution to the current state of affairs was within their reach, provided that all and sundry were to commit themselves to a peace and reconciliation agenda. This realization was backed by the realization that continued attacks and retaliation, either in the name of cattle rustling or banditry, has only served to impoverish the Borana and Gabbra communities living on both sides of the national borders.

The new found good neighbourliness cordial relationship between the Kenyan and Ethiopian governments gave impetus to this thinking as for once and following the end of Moi regime in 2002, the successive Kibaki government seemed to be tough on OLF rebels with Addis Ababa reciprocating the same, at least in the eyes of the locals, by intensifying patrols on the Ethiopia side of the border. With all these happenings, finally a window of reconciliation was beckoning and many actors, including the UNDP funded Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction Project, implemented by Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP) seizing the opportunity.

As it is opined, peace building in fragile environments calls for concerted efforts by like-minded organizations and individuals. Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN)- under Inter-Governmental Authority and Development (IGAD), respective arms of the two governments, Non Governmental Organizations such as Pact-Kenya, Oxfam (GB)s and District and Cross Border Peace Committees among other stakeholders were on hand to pacify the border region.

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To build on the peace window, the Armed Violence and Small Arms Reduction Project organized several cross-border meetings with representatives of the Borana and Gabrra communities who straddle the two countries to deliberate on the way forward and deepen the culture of reconciliation.

It is also worth noting that different stakeholders in the recent past have made significant gains in addressing the root causes of the conflict by bringing together the warring sides to talk peace face to face. After the 2005 Turbi massacre where over 100 lives were lost during a dawn raid by suspected Borana raiders aided by OLF rebels, the relations between Borana and Gabrra was so tense that they could not even agree to come under a tree and talk face to face. The situation was this bad, affecting relationship between the kins of the two communities deep inside Ethiopia.



So a lot of efforts were expended towards building and laying the peace blocks in the region. Such efforts finally exuded hope when the two communities agreed to dialogue culminating to a peace declaration at Dilo and Dukana in Ethiopia and Kenya respectively popularly known as Maikona Declaration. The Maikona declaration was validated in July 2009 at Waldaa and has since been embraced by communities across their borders. The peace pact, brokered with assistance of traditional authorities, bound the two communities to the provisions of the Gadha system, the Oroma (Borana and Gabbra are part of the Oromo community) traditional governance and conflict resolution mechanism.

*Peace committees with the Borana King (Abagadha) Guyo Goba (in red kikoi) at Yabelo, peace conference.*

According to the peace accord, it was agreed that herders move freely with their livestock in search of pasture and water especially during the dry spell provided they abide by the rules governing such movement.

“One who desires to migrate during hard times with his livestock must seek consent of the host community. One must declare whether he is armed legally or not and if permitted move in,” read part of the similar declaration signed by the parties on both sides.

Through this effort, herders from both countries can now graze freely and have access to water points and grazing areas in both countries. Through grazing zone management council of elders (Dedha in Borana language), the parties resolved to strengthened and assign a wider mandate to the elders to ensure that all deserving herders access grazing resources.

“We have developed the community grazing rules which ensures that herdsmen from both sides do not suffer, notably during the drought period due to lack of water and pasture. We want to set aside our petty differences and share the little we have,” said Galma Dabaso who is the chairman of Dedha council from the Kenyan side.

Before this declaration, pastoralists from both countries and within Kenya could not share pasture and water due to the existing hostility that resulted in deaths of thousands of livestock.

In Kenya, at the height of animosity between the Borana and Gabra, residents of Turbi in North Horr were forced to trek 70 km to Bubisa borehole in the same area while there was plenty of water at Rawana in Moyale, 5km away.

During the handing over ceremony of the stolen Kenyan livestock at Dukhale, Ethiopia on 10th March 2010, Mr Dabaso, a former Kenyan administrator and a resident of Sololo, Moyale District said on behalf of the Kenyan delegates, “our animals can now move freely to Ethiopia and their livestock can come to Kenya without any problem”.

The handing over of the stolen livestock was made possible after a cross border peace meeting that was held at Miyo District, Ethiopia on 4th March 2010, which agreed that communities from each side of the border should work closely with respective government representatives to ensure that stolen livestock are recovered and returned to its owners as spelt out in Maikona Waldaa Declaration. In spirit of the agreement, four cattle which were stolen and driven to Ethiopia were handed over to the owners in Sololo, Kenya thus easing tension that could have led to escalation of conflict.

Appreciating the positive step, Sololo District Peace Committee chairman Denge Okotu thanked the Ethiopian authorities for their cooperation saying; “It was a good gesture and it was an indication that there was no room to hide thieves”.



The Ethiopian Government also thanked the Kenyan side for their assistance during the drought that hit their country in 2009 when large number of herders were forced to cross into Kenya and promised to reciprocate the good gesture accorded to their fellow countrymen.

“You helped us a lot during the last dry spell. It is unforgettable and it is our turn to reciprocate the good gesture,” said Guyo Abgudho, an Ethiopian elder from Mio District during the peace meeting at Miyo.

*Sololo-Mio, cross-border handing over ceremony of stolen animals.*

During the closing ceremony of the cross-border peace tournament in Moyale from 5th – 11th April 2010, and while emphasising the importance for peaceful coexistence and the need to curb petty crimes along the common border, Mr. Boru Godana, the Borana Regional Administrator said, “I had instructed all my administration team that they will be fully responsible for the return of any animal stolen and driven into Ethiopia.”

He further added, “ My Government has began upgrading the road linking Mio District to Sololo to a motorable standard to boost trade and commerce between the two countries and the communities can now make use of the improved network to engage in cross border trade to better their livelihood.”

Appreciating the initiative being undertaken by Ethiopian authority councilor Abdi Bando Moyale Kenya cross- border peace chairman said,” The road network will ease communication for us; hasten information sharing and exchange of goods and services which will have the advantage of bringing us closer to strengthen the peace initiative that we have toiled to achieve.”

The peace initiative has earned serious commitment from both sides of the divide and with the strong backing it has continued to received from both governments and NGO peace actors, the realization of the elusive peace is a foregone conclusion. But the need to maintain constant dialogue through frequent cross-border meeting remain critical to consolidate the gains made so as to avoid relapse to undesirable conflict situation that everyone wants to consign to forgettable historical past. The current peace is now the treasure to be selflessly guarded at all cost.

## **10.0 Religious leaders in conflict resolution:**

### ***The case of North Eastern Kenya***

*By Abdi Mohammed Abdi*

Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms have traditionally been a preserve of elders, normally sitting under a big tree in the dry-riverbeds and occasionally facing the numerous mountains dotting arid and semi arid lands (ASALs) in Kenya cursing trouble makers including those who fail to heed the advice of the elders. In some communities in ASALs, elders are a respected lot and preside over all manner of cases ranging from adultery, divorce, assaults to such complex issues involving more than one community such as negotiating grazing regimes, access to water and return of raided livestock.

However, in Northern Eastern Kenya and other areas inhabited by people who profess Islamic faith, religious leaders, the Sheikhs and Imams, are the one calling the shots in terms of dispute resolutions. And they have not disappointed; just like the Modogashe Declaration of 2001, modeled on Islamic teachings and beliefs, has pacified North Eastern Province.

The Sheikhs and Imams are a respected lot in this hinterland, at least in defusing tensions temporarily when they arise. Whenever there is a crisis or a likelihood of one occurring (early warning), the immediate response by the religious leaders is usually to initiate a dialogue process. This is normally done analyzing the conflict, identifying the issues and the warring clans or groups and dispatching a team of “neutral” religious leaders to the warring communities in order to prevail upon them to agree to dialogue.

For instance, the conflict is between the Garre and Murulle as normally happens in Mandera, religious leaders drawn from the “Corner Tribes”, the small tribes perceived to be neutral, are called upon to initiate a mediation process. If need be and depending on the intensity of the conflict, shuttle diplomacy paves the way for a joint dialogue mediated by the “neutral” religious leaders.

Religious leaders use a number of strategies when mediating between the warring communities all of which are based on the Islamic teachings and borrowed from the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet.

Sheikh Ali Gure, who is one of the most respected religious leaders in the Province, suggests that their peacebuilding roles also include promoting better understanding among family members, which is such an indispensable step for building trust among members to avoid problems spilling over fast. This practice will help make peace at home and family members will surely come to understand each other better. This is the basic peace effort. They also inspire the people to learn and practice religion, to speak against injustice, to act nonviolently, and to see peace inevitable necessity for life.

“Religious leaders work at the grassroots. They know the problems of the poor, help them to build their basic life, encourage them, and make them realize what power is hidden within them. They also teach them to be self-reliant, not dependent on external aid. The Prophet started with illiterate desert people, one by one, and the result has been a big success”, avers Sheikh Ali Gure of Garissa.

During their sermons and teachings including at the lowest level, the Madrasas, Islamic values and conflict resolution mechanisms are emphasized in order to entrench the understanding of Islamic concept of peace.

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In particular, such sermons and teachings focus on the inherent capacities of Islam for nonviolence, the concept of justice and the duty of each Muslim to work for peace. Excerpts from the sacred texts in Islam as well as examples of practical experiences are used to illustrate and support this concept. Prophet Ibrahim (A.S) for instance prayed for Mecca to be a peaceful and prosperous centre long before it was established as a town. This indicates further that most of the prophets of Allah had considered peace as a necessity in the world as a whole.

Several excerpts from the Quran support resolution of disagreements and a number of the excerpts ask the Muslim faithful to practice patience e.g. Surah Asr (Q 103). Another excerpt explains, for Muslims to qualify for paradise they are required to hide their anger, forgive others and do good. This teaches Muslims to forgive their attackers and forge peace instead. It is also a religious requirement for Muslims to use everything at their disposal to ensure they give (assist) others, inform their neighbours to do the good (rewarding acts) and participate in peace.

“One of the major exercises the religious leaders undertake during mediation include the facilitation of justice especially in cases which include payment of damages and blood price with emphasis on honouring the deals” suggested Sheikh Hassan, SUPKEM’s assistant secretary

Just like soldiers who might be asked to quell violence and fall victim to the same the religious leaders have faced a number of challenges in ensuring the community members leave in harmony and that peace prevails in the area.



“Peace work calls for a lot of commitment and sacrifice which we are willing to accord so long as the end result might be to the benefit of our people, the region and the country at large,” suggested Sheikh Hassan, the Assistant Secretary of SUPKEM, Garissa Branch. “This region is characterized by drought with basic resources like water and pasture being minimal and the pastoralists compete for them and subsequently lead to a clash between them. The competition for these resources makes the settlement even more complicated” Cried Sheikh Hassan

*From Left Sheikh Hassan Abdirahman, Asst. Secretary and Abdullahi Salat Chairman of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims Garissa Branch*

“We also have the assumption that most of our confrontations have some politics involved. People tend to please a politician, try to dominate others or even aim to secure some authority. The boundaries of the newly created administrative centres, which have not been fully drawn also proved to be a source of clash between the communities in the region. Our roles also include the complimenting of ongoing efforts but where there are no efforts or delayed intervention we don’t hesitate to take the central role since we enjoy the trust of all the parties,” adds Sheikh Amey, an official of the North Eastern Muslim Welfare Society.

“We successfully mediated the conflict between the Murulle and Garreh communities of Mandera during the 2008 clash that left a number of people killed. We have also been invited to mediate the long-standing conflict between the Orma and the Wardei of Tana North District. But when we volunteer to engage in such missions, facilitation becomes another headaches since no institution supports us,” added Sheikh Hassan.

Religious leaders in North Eastern Province are unanimous that politics has been their main impediment to peaceful resolution of conflicts. This is the case whenever a conflict takes a political turn normally after politicians play an active role in the conflict or when sub clans of rival politicians are involved. In most cases, religious leaders find it difficult to solve a conflict where politicians are fuelling the conflicts behind the scenes. But all in all, religious leaders have taken a lead role in resolving conflicts in North Eastern Province and have performed much better than most traditional institutions involved in conflict resolution activities in various parts of the country.





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