

Historical and Socio-Cultural Factors Contributing to Land Conflict: A Case of Laikipia County

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to establish the underlying issues leading to land conflict in Laikipia County. It sought to establish the historic and socio-cultural factors that led to the conflict in Laikipia County by adopting a cross-sectional survey design. The study objectives were to establish the role of land redistribution in land conflict in Laikipia County, assess the effect of breakdown of traditional governance systems on land conflict in Laikipia County and to assess the effect of subdivision and sale of communal land on land conflict in Laikipia County. The target population for the study was 300, wherefrom a sample size of 90 was selected randomly. Data was collected using interview schedules, focus group discussion guides and observation checklists, and subsequently analysed by Coding to establish recurring themes. Ethical considerations were taken into account and applied. The findings of the study were that injustices emanating from how land was re-distributed after independence led to the conflict, breakdown of the traditional governance systems led to conflict, the conflict had been triggered by the subdivision and sale of communal land. The most cited socio-cultural factor that led to conflict in Laikipia County was cattle rustling. Other factors cited by the informants were communal ownership of land and attachment to cattle. The study recommends that the Government of Kenya and Laikipia County address the historical land grievances. Tried and tested traditional approaches should be effectively integrated by both state and non-state actors in peace building and conflict resolution initiatives.

Keywords: Kenya, Laikipia, Conflict, Historical, Socio-Cultural

Introduction

Asia and Africa have continuously seen a trend in violent crises and wars, which often take place in an intrastate environment (Schrader, 2016). Prominent causes are challenges to individual or communal identity and legitimacy, the deprivation of fundamental needs and lack of perspective (Conflict Research Consortium Report of the University of Colorado, 1998). These issues can be linked to local power relations regarding social, political, and economic structures, and conflicts about the distribution of the resources, which in Africa often result from colonial past and resulting historical grievances. Conflicts in the Horn of Africa often include historical, political, and ethnic dimensions, creating a high complexity, further complicated by pastoral movements (Shibru, 2009). In Kenya, peace and security challenges are impeded by slow economic development and growth, and the continued disproportionate marginalization of poor and remote areas (CHRIPS, 2017). Other factors that contribute to peace and security challenges in the country include cattle rustling¹, proliferation of illicit arms, inadequate policing, and security arrangements, diminishing role of traditional governance systems, competition over and access to natural resources, as well as political incitement (Pkeyla et al., 2013).

The Government of Kenya and Kenya's civil society have recognized these issues and have placed safety and security high on Kenya's development agenda. This is reflected in the *Economic Recovery Strategy* (2003-2007) and the promulgation of the *Constitution of Kenya*, 2010, which implemented the shift to devolved

governance to accelerate growth and economic development to county levels addressing existing grievances. *Kenya Vision 2030*, a long-term development policy to transform Kenya, aims at promoting peace and security i.e. through the promotion of community involvement, national and intercommunity dialogue, to build peace and reconciliation and to involve information and communication technology in crime detection. Moreover, laws such as the National Cohesion and Integration Act (2008) aim at encouraging national cohesion and integration by outlawing discrimination on ethnic grounds. Further national peace building and conflict resolution measures are carried out in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program Kenya and other stakeholders.

This shift holds important opportunities to minimize marginalization, improve access to services, and increase civilian participation in governance. However, it also entails the risk of new conflict triggers with political actors stirring up ethnic tensions, new marginalization and exclusion, unemployed youth and the presence of armed and organized criminal groups, and the corresponding insufficient presence of policing structures and actors (CHRIPS, 2017).

Conflicts have changed from traditional, resource-based rivalry to a more complex phenomenon that are fueled by economic and political gains (Gibbons, 2014). Gibbons further underscores the institutional factors driving conflicts, which include political, economic and social factors related to historical marginalization. In addition, Hanson (2008) notes that Kenya's ethnic conflicts are attributed to

¹ Cattle theft or cattle rustling is a common characteristic of pastoral conflicts, and it is defined as the criminal act of stealing cattle. It is the act of forcefully raiding livestock from one community by another using weapons including guns and leaving behind destruction of property, displacement of people and fatalities. In Kenya it is often viewed in the legitimising context of tradition, and resource

conflict but increasingly it bears the hallmarks of organised crime to meet the rising demand for meat in urban areas and bride price for young pastoral men (IRIN, 2014). The remaining family members who are witnesses to these atrocities suffer psychological stress and are traumatised and unable to lead normal lives (KNCHR, 2016).

economic inequalities between ethnic groups and great disputes over land. Earlier works in the field often reduced the conflict in Laikipia to a territorial dispute of lawful property right (Letai 2011), hence excluding sociocultural factors and the historic aspect of it. However, Bond (2014) provides a holistic in-depth analysis of the conflict in Laikipia county by highlighting its social, ecological and institutional elements. Yet, this work does not include cultural aspects, which may be key to resolving the conflict in a sustainable manner (UNICEF 2016).

Based on multidimensional conflict resolution approaches (Anhut 2003) and especially referring to Disintegration Theory (Bonecker 2003) this study has been implemented through a cross-sectional survey design. This study was carried out with a sample population of 300, wherefrom 90 participants well selected randomly, and published in May 2020. This facilitated access to a broad range of issues and factors associated locally with the source of the ongoing conflict in Laikipia County. By focusing on historic and socio-cultural components during the Coding process, dominant assumptions of sociobiological and socioeconomic standing can be supplemented to foster a holistic peace building approach by all stakeholders in future.

1 Study Question

1. Does land redistribution influence land conflict in Laikipia County
2. Does breakdown of traditional governance systems influence land conflict in Laikipia County
3. Does subdivision and sale of communal land influence land conflict in Laikipia County.

The study objectives were

1. To establish the role of land redistribution in land conflict in Laikipia County,
2. To assess the effect of breakdown of traditional governance systems on land conflict in Laikipia County and
3. To assess the effect of subdivision and sale of communal land on land conflict in Laikipia County.

2 Literature Review on The Conflict in Laikipia County

2.1 Conflict in Laikipia County

Violent conflicts sporadically occur in various parts of Kenya with the most common being ethnic conflict and resource-based conflicts. For years Laikipia County has been experiencing sporadic resource conflicts between private landowners and pastoralists.

Laikipia County is situated in the Rift Valley Province of Kenya, with an area size of 9,532 km² and has a population of 518,560 (KNBS, 2019). The eastern and northern parts of the county are suitable for grazing while the plateau lying in the central and the northern parts of the county are suitable for ranching (Council of Governors, 2013). The largest percentage of the land in the County is owned by a small population of Kenyan settler families, and increasingly non-Kenyan wealthy landowners and international organizations. Laikipia is home to several community ranches, which are owned and managed by local communities to protect wildlife, communal lands, and grazing and herding lands (NCIC, 2013).

In response to increasing scarcity of pasture and water resources, pastoral communities have been known to raid private farms for access to these resources and for cattle theft. Recently, these

raids have also been driven by political and economic gain but are mainly caused by historical land injustices, improper land use practices and the sale of communal land. In addition to cattle rustling, the conflict is characterized by the burning of farms and the use of illegal firearms.

Various interventions by state and non-state actors have not solved the conflicts. Despite a robust legal and policy framework and the existence of various initiatives the high levels of inter-communal violence especially in the pastoralist dry lands persist. The government has continued to respond by establishing disarmament campaigns, increased security presence, and establishment of peace committees across the country. Moreover, efforts such as the Kenya Livestock Insurance Program support peace and security initiatives in pastoral areas by cushioning pastoralists from the effects of severe drought. These programmes failed in all areas of the conflict due to the lack of response to the historical and political dimension of the conflicts and ignoring state responsibility (KNCHR, 2016).

2.2 Historical factors

Laikipia belonged to the Maasai community who entered into agreements with the British between 1904 and 1913 resulting in the designation of Laikipia as a European settlement region (Hughes, 2006). At independence the land that was sold to the government by the white settlers was not reverted to the Maasai community and instead over time it was subdivided amongst government elite officials and Maasai elites resulting in the current status where 40% of 9,532 km² land in Laikipia is owned by less than 50 individuals (KNBS, 2019). Consequently, due to the use of the vast lands for ranching and wildlife conservation there has been increased water abstraction from rivers and the fencing of private

ranches has adversely affected the pastoralists' ability to search for pasture and water.

As noted above, before colonization the land in Laikipia belonged to the Maasai community. When the colonial period started, two agreements with the British between 1904 and 1913 and relocated the Maasai at gunpoint to the area which is today known as the Maasai Mara. Laikipia was then reserved as a settlement region for Europeans (Hughes, 2006). Europeans who settled in these *White Highlands* were advantaged with regards to rights to land while native African rights were put secondary or disregarded entirely. This resulted in the exclusion and marginalization of communities living in the white highlands. Access to resources was also greatly curtailed to African communities (Oucho, 2002).

When Kenya became independent, the land was sold to the government and subsequently either subdivided (Kiteme et al. 2008), given to Kikuyus from central province through land buying companies by the Kenyatta administration (Letai, 2011), divided into group ranches for Maasai pastoralists during the World Bank rangeland development programme, or registered as government land.

Further, clan-based raiding of livestock constitutes another factor that contributes to conflicts in the region. Competition over scarce grazing fields, water resources and pasture and political incitement, have escalated the formerly balanced cultural practice into inter-ethnic animosity, often resulting in armed conflicts, which are predatory in nature and much more destructive than in the past (Letai, 2011). The Uppsala Conflict Data Program states the causes of the conflict is the imbalance of power between the neighbouring Pokot and Samburu communities supposedly brought by the lack of impartiality of government and police in their disarmament activities whereby the Samburu were disarmed but the Pokot were not (Bond,

2014). Gibbons (2014) also underlines that the institutional factors driving conflicts include contested borders, weak land tenure rights, and failures of policing and justice. He notes that political economic factors such as extractive commercial enterprises without adequate benefit sharing, land alienation, divisive politics, and corrupt local administrations; and social factors relating to historical marginalization and exclusion, as well as issues of identity, gender and ethnicity are all at play.

2.3 Socio-cultural factors contributing to the Laikipia conflict

In other words, conflicts, and violence in the pastoralist drylands of Kenya are characterised by a highly complex and multi-layered nature comprising all of the foregoing leading causes. (Gibbons, 2014). They are expressed in various forms including but not limited to cattle rustling, ethnic violence, displacements, massacres, and revenge attacks (Sharamo, 2014). The long-held tradition of cattle raiding for prestige and bride prices, as well as the competition over scarce and diminishing water and pasture resources are also evident in Laikipia County (Okumu, 2013). Notably, the conflicts as experienced in Laikipia have become less manageable due to the weakening of traditional governance systems, breakdown of intercommunal social contracts, elders' loss of control over the youths, the persistence of Moran (warrior) culture, and politicization of peace-making processes and manipulation by the political elites (Rohwerder, 2015).

Culture and its practice are an identity of a group of people. There are numerous cultures and cultural practices in Kenya, and most are linked to the different ethnic groups in the country. Cultural heritage is a unifying factor and should be well preserved. The differences in cultures range from perceptions, beliefs to practices

(NCIC, 2021). In the context of the study the socio-cultural practice of cattle raiding for bride price and prestige was widely accepted in most pastoralist communities. As noted earlier, in Laikipia clan-based raiding of livestock has been traditionally practised among the pastoral communities, and culturally accepted. However, in the last few decades, the nature of the conflict has transformed and is mostly characterised by competition over scarce grazing fields, water resources and pasture has escalated inter-ethnic animosity, often resulting in armed conflicts, which are predatory in nature and much more destructive. For example, herders from Isiolo, Baringo and Samburu counties migrate in large numbers into agricultural areas of Laikipia in search of water and pasture (Letai, 2011).

3 Methodology

This study investigated the underlying issues leading to conflicts in Laikipia County, Kenya. Participation was voluntary and it was approved by NACOSTI where every participant duly filled in and signed a consent form prior to recorded action. The study involved the collection of information from the targeted population to establish a relationship between various historic and socio-cultural variables and the happening of conflicts there.

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). As a survey study the data collection focused on people, the vital facts of the people, their beliefs, opinions, attitudes, motivations, and behaviour. Care was taken to mitigate the researcher possibilities of impacting on the sampled targeted study variables. This approach provided a wide range of stakeholders' ample opportunities to share their views, ideas and suggestions on the underlying issues leading to conflicts in Laikipia County.

The target population for the study was 300, comprising residents, victims of conflict, farmers, rangers, village elders and chiefs, complemented by county security officers, county officials, and government officials from various ministries, as well as members of the District Peace Committee, religious organizations, the Red Cross Committee and medical officers. A sample size of 90 was selected randomly to participate in the study, where various demographic groups including women, men and youth data were taken into consideration. Before commencing the study, the instruments – i.e. focus group discussion guides and an observation checklist – were pilot tested in Nairobi County among pastoralist communities. The information gathered during piloting was used to improve the study instruments by removing ambiguity and redundant items to improve validity and reliability. In addition, the information gathered through these instruments was subjected to content analysis by a team of experts with wide experience in educational and social research. Qualitative data was collected and subjected to content analysis by Coding to establish recurring themes regarding the objective of the study.

Social unrest in Laikipia County has been caused by diverse grievances, so that these factors shall be broken down and analyzed based on the findings of the qualitative research. With regards to the socio-cultural components the analysis shall be based on the concept of socio-cultural system by Marvin Harris; This divides socio-cultural systems into the components of infrastructure, structure and superstructure. In the case of conflicts in Laikipia County, the infrastructure is determined by the access to education, infrastructure, property rights, population and animal growth, as well as the cattle industry. The structure is given by marginalization, discrimination, misgovernance and the decline of traditional governance. And the superstructure, that is circumscribed by norms,

beliefs and values, here depends on the divergent understandings of property, the social and individual value of cattle, as well as on tribal traditions such as moranism (Kangas, 2007).

4 Findings of The Study

4.1 Historical Causes

i. Non-Inclusivity

The pastoralist respondents cited injustices emanating from how the land was re-distributed after independence. Yet, since education and community empowerment acted as an eye opener, they soon realized that “The first and second Maasai agreement which was made in the past involved colonial administration and the Maasai were pushed in dry areas. Now the Maasai are aware that Laikipia was initially their area” (Caritas).

“The pastoralist communities have realized that they do not have land of their own. Other communities have been allocated land shares in Laikipia and are forcing the pastoralist communities out of their own land.... you find someone comes and claims that some of the communal land is theirs, it was sold or given to them. So, we are asking ourselves, why is it that we were not informed when the land was being sold or allocated? The question is why were the local communities not involved? My identification card shows that I was born in Oljogi. I have eight siblings each with several children. None of us has land here. Are we going to remain squatters all our lives? People are fighting because of these injustices, having no place to call their own and now being pushed out of the communal land because it now belongs to an individual. When people have a place, they can call their own, they have no need to fight.”

– Moran Community Opinion Leaders

ii. [The 2010 Constitution](#)

It was argued, mostly by opinion leaders in government that further change has been brought about by the Constitution of 2010, as sampled below.

“[People] claim that the lease of some landowners is [sic] expired and that they have to move from their ranches. In Laikipia however, this is not true since no land expired with the change of constitution.”

– Office of the County Commissioner

Hence, this often-praised achievement also entails legal disputes.

iii. [Post-Colonial Governance](#)

On a political level, the informants reaffirmed that the conflict had been triggered by the subdivision and sale of communal land by politicians. In addition, post-colonial repercussions continue as “the economically stronger people were buying the land from the European settlers and the Maasai were pushed back, the pastoralists find it very unjust” (Caritas). These perceptions of injustice done are reflected in the socio-cultural situation in Laikipia County.

The study’s findings show that historical land grievances and current injustices must be addressed as well as the questions of absentee landowners. Further there should be an integration of traditional land conservation practices to current land use management practices as a way of preserving the cultural heritage of the local communities.

4.2 Socio-Cultural Causes

a) [Infrastructure](#)

The sociocultural infrastructure of the conflict in Laikipia is determined by property rights, population growth, infrastructure as well as the cattle industry.

i. [Property Rights](#)

The most frequently cited cause of conflict are property rights. Ever since colonial times especially the Maasai community has felt short-changed by the agreements signed, which relinquished their land. But also after independence, when the land was re-distributed, pastoralist respondents cite injustices, selectivity and a lack of transparency in this process. Further, the resettlements of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from other communities increased the locals’ grievances:

“We have seen the way IDPs were brought here from Eldoret and resettled in Laikipia. They were given plots of land with title deeds by the government and even helped to build their own homes. But we were given nothing; [...] We feel that the government has neglected us.”

– Moran Community Opinion Leaders,
Focused Group Discussion

“When you look at this area, there are no good roads. The good roads pass through the ranches and these have been fenced. If you are found passing there, you are fined for trespass. So, we just pass in the bush. Most of us walk; if you don’t have money for a motorcycle, you just walk.”

– Pastoralist Elders (Focused Group Discussion)

This is underscored by Moran Community Opinion Leaders’ contribution stating that “[people] are fighting because of these injustices, having no place to call their own and now being pushed out of the communal land because it now belongs to an individual.” Clear and secured property rights to the whole population may hence limit the need for violence.

ii. Population Growth

“Land has thereby become a limited resource since the land is shrinking while the population is growing. This makes the pastoralists to start shifting their focus on ranches”

– Samburu Women Trust

The trend of competition for land and resources has been aggravated further by strong population growth, limiting space for pastoralists. “Due to lack of enough land to graze on and scarce resources, it has led to them invading peoples’ land forcefully”, explained an ICT Officer (Key Informant Interview).

iii. Infrastructure

An additional factor contributing to the conflict in the form of vigilante justice is the lack of well-developed infrastructure. Since the access to good roads has been fined, most people cannot rely on means of transport.

These two aspects lead to the conclusion that “getting to the chief or the police if there is a problem is a big challenge” (Pastoralist Elders, Focused Group Discussion). This in turn promotes the use of illicit weapons for incidents of self-defense, when public institutions are too far off to be accessed freely.

iv. Cattle Industry

The majority of the respondents also mentioned that, traditionally cattle rustling was triggered by moranism, for the acquisition of bride price and “to acquire more animals for prestige” (Religious Leader). In the past, “the raids were seasonal, [relatively] predictable, and only few animals were involved, with [little or] no violence” (Religious Leader). However, since the 1990s cattle rustling has been commercialized with large stocks of animals being taken for sale. This entailed an increase in total livestock held, leading to overgrazing, soil erosion and overall environmental degradation, further limiting already scarce resources and fueling the struggle for cattle, land and pasture.

“There are too many animals on limited land, pasture and water. This leads to overstocking leading to soil erosion and therefore environmental degradation affecting the pasture”

– Police Department

b) Structure

The structural socio-cultural situation in Laikipia County is perceived to be characterised not only by marginalization and discrimination, but also by misgovernance, use of armed violence, and a decline of traditional governance.

v. Misgovernance

Informants mentioned that current injustices such as political manipulation and abuse of power regarding how land is allocated are other causes of the conflict because politicians are said to have subdivided and sold formerly communal land. In addition, representatives of the local police department indicated that the frequent rescheduling of boundaries has been utilized to extend regional boundaries according to political preferences:

“The main aim for these invasions is not only to find pasture and water for their cattle, but as a result of incitements from politicians who want to extent their regional boundaries for political reasons”

– Police department (Key Informant Interview)

vi. Marginalisation and Discrimination

Longstanding marginalization of the county has led to a widely spread perception of discrimination both on a macro and a micro level. On the one hand “[when] it comes to employment of people by the ranchers and other private landowners, the Turkanas are favoured. [...] They don’t want to employ the Samburus and Pokots, so that they don’t get empowered” (Moran Community Leaders, Focused Group Discussion). And on the other hand, decision-makers are perceived:

“[to be sitting] in Nairobi and in Nakuru and Naivasha and Mai Mahiu and these places. That’s where the people make the money and where these people are”

– Ranchers & Conservancy Owners, Focused Group Discussion

These factors increase grievances and thereby heighten the readiness of the parties concerned to use violence to enforce their needs and demands.

vii. Armed Violence

Above-mentioned cattle commercialization did not only increase the total amount of cattle stolen but also introduced “an element of violence [...] in varying levels especially with increased availability of illicit firearms” (Religious Leader). Many landowners are said to “purchase illegal firearms and arm the morans so they can herd their animals for them” (Police Department, Key Informant Interview). Consequently, increased fatalities and destruction of livestock and wildlife have been witnessed during the raids, either intentionally or collaterally through the security response.

viii. Decline of Traditional Governance

The sociocultural structure is further characterized by the decline of traditional governance so that traditional authorities no longer hold authority over contemporary youth. According to Moran Opinion Leaders (Focused Group Discussion):

“These days the youth have been led astray. They no longer listen to the older men as it was the case in the past. They are no longer afraid of the curses of the older men if they disobey them.”

This suggests that new governance has destabilised local power relations and contributed to spreading insecurity.

c) Superstructure

A divergent understanding of property, limited access to education, the social and individual value of cattle, as well as tribal traditions determine the situation's socio-cultural superstructure.

ix. Understanding of Property

Other socio-cultural factors cited by the informants were communal ownership of land and attachment to cattle. All the informants mentioned that the common belief held by Maasai and Samburu pastoralists was that land was communally owned, and therefore they should be allowed to graze anywhere within Laikipia County.

"[They] think that the land belongs to the one who uses it, which is everyone in the end. So, there are different understandings about ownership between them and us, but also between different tribes like Kikuyu and Samburu"

– Conservancy owner (Key Informant Interview)

This assumption is underscored by tradition and local leaders who encourage them to "not even think about it, just go" (Ranchers and Conservancy Owners, Focused Group Discussion). In addition, "[pastoralists] say that since the 99-year lease period for the ranches has expired, the land should be reverted to the community" (Women in Nanyuki, Focused Group Discussion). These legal and illegal land transfer and ownership processes as well as absentee landlords are viewed as historical injustices which are a common cause for conflicts in Laikipia. The locals' idea of common goods clashes with the contemporary concept of continued property and ownership that had been introduced by white settlers who in turn have

incentive to protect their property against unwanted intruders to exert full control over it.

x. Access to Education

Therein, factual access to education is considered key to mutual understanding since "[with] education and community empowerment, the locals have come to realize the unequal distribution of resources" (Caritas). Education may yield the potential of equal opportunities "[but] for the pastoralists, having many livestock is their security" (Ranchers & Conservancy Owners, Focused Group Discussion) so that many children have to support the cattle's safekeeping instead of going to school:

"We all see these little children herding cows, goats and sheep. Why are they not in school? It's because we are looking at it from our own perspective. For us education is security: With education we can get jobs and do to her things. [...] Without basic education, [pastoralists] have fewer chances and are easily influenced."

– Ranchers and Conservancy Owners (Focused Group Discussion)

Therefore, this trade-off between education and herding can hem current and future mediation attempts.

xi. Value of Cattle

Another key factor contributing to violence is the locals' reliance on livestock, which is not only an important source of wealth but also the most active social relationship (Markakis, 1993). As a result, former owners of cattle are not only exposed to poverty but also undermines self-respect and selfhood. Certain interviewees referred to a recent case where the loss of large numbers of cattle was too much to bear and resulted in the victims taking their lives. The loss of livestock is ever more convulsing when there

has been no theft but mere destruction of livestock through illicit weapons:

“Our livestock is being killed using guns, grenades and starvation. This is our livelihood. It’s just like someone with a farm; they rely on the crops as a source of income and to feed his family. But if someone comes to rip you off your livelihood, it becomes tragic.”

– Rumuruti Youth Representative

xii. Tribal Traditions

The different tribes living in Laikipia County follow various ways of life and other traditions. For example, it has been shown that cattle rustling was traditionally triggered by moranism. Yet, it has been stated that “the perpetrators are unknown but clearly beyond local morans” (Religious Leader). Hence, tribal traditions may be associated with cattle rustling as the main outlet of conflicts in Laikipia County, but the sources of violence suggest other or further actors and causes of conflict.

Conclusion

The findings of the study as discussed above highlight that there are both historical and socio-cultural factors which cause conflicts in Laikipia County according to the questioned various representatives. Its roots can be traced back to post-/colonial times when the foundation for contemporary property quarrels were laid. Further grievances are linked to the region’s perceived marginalisation and discrimination i.e., with regards to infrastructure and the resulting access to education and public institutions, as well as competing spheres of authority. In addition, the changed value of cattle due to an alteration in consumption and production behaviour has led to increasingly rare resources of land and cattle alike. In combination with tribal traditions and some incidents of interethnic

rivalry, above-mentioned factors - especially improper land use practices and mismanagement of resources as well as political manipulation and the presence of illegal firearms in the county - contributed to and exacerbated the ongoing conflict in Laikipia County.

Recommendations

These factors need to be countered on multiple levels to ensure peace and security in the county. Hence, the findings of the study lead to the recommendations that:

1. The national and county governments take the lead in engaging the local communities to address the historical land grievances among the locals, to avoid them being used as a rallying call for conflicts, especially during electoral cycles.
2. Viable options are actively explored and piloted under the coordination of the county government, to address the abandoned land / absentee landowner’s question. Some land use options include agriculture, livestock, wildlife tourism and developing natural products, based on existing land-use practices;
3. The link between land use practices and sustainability of peace is recognised. There will be a need for involving both state and non-state actors to be involved in an open and participatory conversation. Both community and conservancy owners shall agree on how best to address the issue, adequately considering mutual interests. NGOs as well as the county government shall broker and facilitate this conversation;
4. All governments should ensure that disarmament programmes are carried out in a humane and fair manner targeting all communities equally to

- avoid any appearance of discrimination on ethnic grounds; and
5. The national government needs to streamline the function of police reservists and monitor the activities of the reservists to ensure they do not become a factor that escalates conflicts with local communities. It also needs to

recognize the important contribution of traditional structures to sustainable peace. Tried and tested traditional approaches should be effectively integrated by both state and non-state actors in the peace building and conflict resolution initiatives in Laikipia County.

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