

## Mandera County Note



# Voices of the People: Challenges to Peace in Mandera County





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## Challenges to Peace in Mandera County

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Design and Layout:

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Printers:

**Frontier Bookmen**

Copyright:

**National Cohesion and  
Integration Commission (NCIC)**

Published:

**January 2017**

ISBN:

**978-9966-1665-8-6**

Cover photo: Community members participate in a Focus Group Discussion at Mandera town.

Back cover photo: A young girl sneaks a peek at an ongoing Focus Group Discussion.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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This is the first documentary report of the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme, a joint initiative of Kenya's National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace to build lasting peace in Mandera County, Kenya. Special thanks go to the NCIC under the leadership of its Chairperson, Hon. Francis Ole Kaparo, and its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamed; Hon. Yusuf Haji, Senator of Garissa County, and other local and national leaders who played a role in brokering the ceasefire that halted the 2012-2015 clan clashes, which had visited death, displacement, and massive destruction of property upon the people of Mandera County. We also thank the various communities, the Mandera County Government and other key stakeholders that helped steer the immediate post-conflict recovery process.

Secondly, we wish to acknowledge the support given by the respective County Commissioners of Mandera and Wajir Counties; the District Commissioner of El Wak, Somalia; the religious leaders, elders, youth, women, and other community members who warmly welcomed our team and participated openly in the various Focus Group Discussions and Key Informant Interviews.

We would also like to appreciate staff from Interpeace and the NCIC Secretariat for supporting the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme. Our special thanks go to Interpeace's Regional Director Jean-Paul Mugiraneza, Senior Regional Advisor Johan Svensson, and Kenya Programme Officer Hassan Ismail. It is through their mentorship and support that the programme team was able to deliver the first phase of the Mandera programme. This first phase of the programme would not have reached completion without the guidance of Dr. Sellah King'oro, Assistant Director for Policy and Research at the NCIC, who provided constant support, guidance, and mentorship throughout the process; and Mr. Liban Guyo, the NCIC's Assistant Director for Reconciliation and Integration.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would also like to thank the programme team, which turned every encounter with people into forums for building peace. They endured the rough terrain and the difficult field security conditions to gather vital information. They analysed every voice engaged by the programme and elucidated the core thematic issues for discussion by stakeholders and decision makers in surprisingly simple forms, combining the written and audio-visual formats.

Finally, the entire programme would not have been possible without the financial support of The Federal Foreign Office of Germany. On behalf of the people of Mandera County, we send our utmost gratitude.

I thank all who have contributed to this research, in one way or the other, since it is impossible to mention them all by name.

**Mahat Omar Ahmed,**  
Project Coordinator,  
Mandera Peacebuilding programme.

# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>AMISOM</b>	African Union Mission in Somalia
<b>AP</b>	Administration Police
<b>AS</b>	Al-Shabaab
<b>ATPU</b>	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit
<b>BBU</b>	Building Bridges of Understanding
<b>CDF</b>	Constituency Development Funds
<b>CEO</b>	Chief Executive Officer
<b>CID</b>	Criminal Investigation Department
<b>DC</b>	District Commissioner
<b>DDR</b>	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
<b>DMI</b>	Directorate of Military Intelligence
<b>DPC</b>	District Peace Committee
<b>EGH</b>	Elder of Golden Heart of Kenya
<b>FGDs</b>	Focus Group Discussions
<b>GOK</b>	Government of Kenya
<b>HON</b>	Honourable
<b>HRW</b>	Human Rights Watch
<b>IDPs</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>IEBC</b>	Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission
<b>IIRO</b>	International Islamic Relief Organization
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>KDF</b>	Kenya Defence Forces
<b>KNBS</b>	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
<b>KNHRC</b>	Kenya National Commission on Human Rights
<b>KPR</b>	Kenya Police Reservists
<b>KPS</b>	Kenya Police Service
<b>KRCS</b>	Kenya Red Cross Society
<b>MAVU</b>	Mobile Audio-Visual Unit

<b>MCA</b>	Member of County Assembly
<b>MCSB</b>	Mandera County Public Service Board
<b>MP</b>	Member of Parliament
<b>NCIC</b>	National Cohesion Integration Commission
<b>NFD</b>	Northern Frontier District
<b>NLC</b>	National Land Commission
<b>NSSF</b>	National Social Security Fund
<b>OCPD</b>	Officer Commanding Police Division
<b>OGW</b>	Order of the Grand Warrior of Kenya
<b>PAR</b>	Participatory Action Research
<b>PTA</b>	Parent Teacher Association
<b>PWDs</b>	Persons Living with Disabilities
<b>RBPU</b>	Rural Border Patrol Unit
<b>RDU</b>	Rapid Deployment Unit
<b>SALW</b>	Small Arms and Light Weapons
<b>SS</b>	Silver Star
<b>TFG</b>	Transitional Federal Government
<b>U.S.</b>	United States
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>WUA</b>	Water User Associations

**FIGURE 1: Location of Mander County in North Eastern Kenya**



# FOREWORD

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Firstly, I would like to thank the people of Mandera for abiding by the 2014 Ceasefire, which made it possible for the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace to begin working with the local communities and all stakeholders in search of the root causes and possible solutions for peace in the County. Our gratitude also goes to His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta, who laid the original seed for this quest for lasting peace in Mandera by setting up the Committee on the Wajir and Mandera Conflict, under the co-Chairmanship of Hon. Yusuf Haji, Senator of Garissa County and myself. On behalf of the people of Mandera and Wajir, the NCIC and Interpeace, I wish to thank President Kenyatta for his leadership in this regard, for it is this initial seed that yielded the ceasefire and sprouted the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme.

The NCIC was formed in the aftermath of the 2008 Post-Election Crisis to enhance social cohesion between communities living in Kenya. Its main mandate is to address any form of discrimination against persons based on race, religion, and ethnic background. The NCIC is committed towards helping the people of Mandera to find peace in diversity. We must however recognise that the main responsibility of building and protecting peace in the County lies in the hands of the people of Mandera and their leaders. The NCIC and Interpeace can only facilitate the process, but the ultimate guardians of the peace are the people themselves.

Of course, the NCIC acknowledges Mandera's state of disequilibrium, characterised by the scarcity of resources like water, pasture, and persistent drought, all of which are existential conflict triggers. This makes it imperative for the County to build sustainable peace infrastructures, tailored to this context of fragility. For this to happen, Mandera County must make maximum use of the resources made available by devolution. Sustainable development cannot be achieved in the absence of peace. The prudent use of devolved resources can turn around the economic fortunes of the people.

## FOREWORD

The same message needs to go out to the entire country. We, as a people, must place premium on peace. Kenya's overall conflict fragility would immensely reduce if borderline Counties like Mandera endeavour to prioritise peace and development, with the necessary support of the National Government.

Finally, I wish to appreciate the invaluable partnership with Interpeace during this consultative research phase. The next step of the programme will involve the joint implementation of the priorities for peace—as identified by the local population in Mandera and validated by a wide spectrum of stakeholders—by the NCIC and Interpeace to mitigate conflicts in Mandera. We also envision that the lessons learned will be replicated in the neighbouring counties and across the country.

**Hon. Francis Ole Kaparo, EGH, SS.,**

**Chairperson, National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC)**

# CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND





# CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

This publication presents the findings of the consultative phase of the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme, jointly implemented by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) and Interpeace in Kenya's Mandera County. The overarching objective of the programme is to achieve sustainable, long term peace in Mandera, through the collective identification of the challenges to peace and the participatory development of consensus-based solutions to the challenges.

Mandera County is situated in North Eastern Kenya, along the country's restive tri-border with Ethiopia and Somalia. Although the population of Mandera is almost homogenously ethnic Somali, conflict between the various Somali clans has often led to internecine violence. The conflicts, traditionally fuelled by competition over resources, have been exacerbated by new trigger factors such as competition between clans for political influence, disputes over land, and constant attacks by Al-Shabaab militants from Somalia. The devolution of governance has further intensified competition for political positions. Devolution was a key plank in the 2010 Constitution that ushered in Kenya's Second Republic. The local population in Mandera enthusiastically welcomed devolution as an opportunity to alleviate the County's historical marginalisation and underdevelopment. But while devolution has brought national resources and services closer to the people, it has also intensified competition for elective seats, perceived as a guarantee for access to economic resources by the "winning" clans to the disadvantage of the "losing" clans. This contestation over political posts has emerged as a critical point of concern for the residents of Mandera ahead of local and national elections scheduled for August 2017.

Using the Participatory Action Research (PAR)<sup>1</sup> methodology, the programme seeks to achieve sustainable, long term peace through the collective identification of the challenges to peace and the development of consensus-based conflict resolution strategies using a participatory approach that involves all stakeholders. It is in this pursuit that the programme aims to integrate grassroots aspirations for peace, building upon local capacities and providing a strategic link with decision and policy makers at the county and national levels. Its approach marks a departure from past peace initiatives, which were largely top-down interventions mobilised to contain specific situations that had already escalated into violence. The repeated failures of government-brokered ceasefires and securitised responses to clan clashes informed the NCIC and Interpeace of the need for a deeper analysis of the conflict dynamic, by collecting the voices of the local communities, since it is they who are the most directly affected by these conflicts.

Four thematic areas were identified by the local population as the most pressing challenges to peace in Mandera County. These are (1) Weak social cohesion structures; (2) Security and Rule of Law; (3) Governance and politics; and (4) Cross-border dynamics. These thematic areas were validated at a stakeholders' forum that marked the conclusion of the consultative phase. The stakeholders' forum, held on 14-16 December 2016 in Mandera town, had 150 participants from Mandera and Nairobi, as well as representatives from the bordering regions of Somalia and Ethiopia. After three days of discussion and deliberation, the stakeholders

zeroed in on the following four priority issues as the main impediments to peace in Mandera:

- a) Lack of effective social reconciliation processes.
- b) Lack of trust between the local population and the security agencies.
- c) Border disputes.
- d) Lack of coordination policies and mechanisms on cross-border Peace, security, movement, and trade.

In the next phase of the programme, Interpeace and the NCIC will focus on finding solutions for peace in Mandera, informed by the four key impediments to peace that were prioritised during the consultative phase in 2017. This second phase will remain participatory in its approach and will involve all stakeholders. The active role of the NCIC serves to upstream the priorities and recommendations of the people of Mandera to decision makers at the county and national levels, while the participatory approach enhances the prospects for lasting peace by compressing the accessibility gap between the decision makers and the people.

## 1.1 Conflict Context

Mandera County has a population of 1.1 million people<sup>2</sup>, mainly ethnic Somalis categorised into four clan groupings. These are the Garre, the Murulle and the Degodia clans, as well as the "Corner Tribes," a grouping of the smaller clans. After Somalia's collapse in 1991, a sizable population of the Marehan clan from Somalia also arrived in Mandera and has been seeking

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1 Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodology that enables a large number of stakeholders to take active part in processes of change and to develop consensus-based solutions.

2 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), *Kenya 2009 Population and Housing Census*, 2010.

recognition as the County's fifth clan. Although the Somali clan system has existed for centuries, rivalries between clans intensified during British colonial rule due to the balkanisation of the clans into grazing enclaves. To date, the clan-defined, colonial-era grazing areas remain a reference point for the local population in Mandera County and constitute one of the major issues of contestation and conflict.

As recently as the 1970s, Mandera was a thriving district<sup>3</sup>, envied for its stability, business opportunities and the peaceful coexistence among the local communities. Mandera's strategic location along Kenya's borders with Somalia and Ethiopia made it a major trade route and a key entry point into Kenya, attracting many traders with roots in Somalia and Ethiopia, some of them from as far as Puntland, Somaliland, and the hinterlands of Ethiopia, as well as from other parts of Kenya. Even Christian Missionaries easily settled into the predominantly Muslim area, establishing schools such as Mandera Secondary School and Mandera Boys Town Primary School.

Times have since changed and Mandera County has gained infamy for conflict. Places like Rhamu, the hometown of Sayid Abaas—the revered religious leader, elder and peacemaker who wielded influence across local communities in North Eastern Kenya—have since turned into some of the worst epicentres of violent conflict. Mandera has since 1963 experienced cyclical violent conflicts between various clans. Although most of these conflicts have been ended through negotiated ceasefires, the process of reconciling the communities

has typically been forgotten once the guns are silenced. The result is that any subsequent conflict escalates with greater momentum due to the pile up of unresolved grievances and disagreements from previous conflicts. The “*Xeer*” tradition—an age old social contract through which Somali clans mobilise resources to assist their kin in times of difficulty—has often been negatively invoked to mobilise clan militias and resources for violent conflict.

The most fundamental cause of these conflicts has long been the scarcity of water and pasture for Mandera's largely pastoralist communities. New conflict triggers have however emerged over the decades. These include competition for political and economic influence, and land disputes between the various clans living in Mandera. The devolved governance structure, introduced under the 2010 Constitution, has intensified competition over political positions, perceived by the clans as both a guarantee of access to resource allocation and a vanguard against exclusion and domination by other clans. The situation in the County is further complicated by the porosity of the Kenya-Somalia border, which facilitates the easy entry of Al-Shabaab to launch attacks both within Mandera and in other parts of Kenya.

The most recent conflict is a prolonged one between the Garre and Degodia clans. The two clans have engaged in on and off conflicts since independence, peaking in 2011-2015. As of November 2015, the Garre-Degodia conflict had led to the loss of at least 77 lives, the displacement of over 18,000 households and massive destruction of property<sup>4</sup>.

3 From independence to 2010, Kenya was administratively divided into provinces and districts. These administrative units were abolished by the 2010 Constitution, which introduced devolution and created counties as the primary subnational units.

4 Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°114, *Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and Security*, 17 November 2015.

## 1.2 Rationale for the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme

The joint NCIC and Interpeace peacebuilding programme was established in large part to address the cyclical conflict between the Garre and Degodia clans, which has sporadically erupted into violence for close to five years. The conflict is underlain by many unresolved issues that have impeded several peace efforts. Although the NCIC managed to broker a fragile ceasefire in 2015, there was a realisation that a deeper analysis of the conflict was necessary, through the voices of the people affected by the conflict.

It was based on this background that a joint mission of the NCIC and Interpeace made an exploratory visit to Mandera to understand the conflict dynamics with a view towards helping to facilitate the achievement of sustainable peace in Mandera. The two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2014 and jointly designed a pilot peacebuilding project to investigate the impediments to peace in Mandera County. The implementation of the programme began in 2016, with a consultative phase focusing on the collective identification of the challenges to peace and the development of consensus-based conflict resolution strategies through a participatory, bottom-up approach.

## 1.3 Research Problem

Mandera County has some of the lowest socio-economic indicators in Kenya. Literacy levels stand at 9.9% and only 2.5% of the population has access to potable water<sup>5</sup>. According to UNFPA, Mandera is one of the least safe places for a woman to have a baby in the world. Mandera has maternal mortality ratio of 3,795 deaths per 100,000 live births that surpasses that of wartime Sierra Leone (2000 deaths per 100,000 live births) as well as the Kenya's national average (448 deaths per 100,000 live births)<sup>6</sup>. Pastoralism is the primary economic activity, practiced by most of the county's population. Other economic activities include agro-pastoralism, irrigated cropping, as well as formal and informal commercial activities in the urban areas. Because of its tri-border location, the county's capital and largest town, Mandera, is a major trading route for the movement of goods by road between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Although the Somali clan system has existed for centuries, tensions between the Garre and Degodia predate colonial rule. Rivalries between the clans intensified during the colonial era, when Mandera was governed as part of the now defunct Northern Frontier District (NFD), carved out of Somalia's Jubaland region by the British colonial government in 1925. When Kenya gained independence in 1963, a secessionist war broke out in the NFD as ethnic Somalis attempted

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5 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), *Kenya 2009 Population and Housing Census*, 2010.

6 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Transforming Mandera County's Deadly Reputation for Maternal Health*, 18 October 2015.

to secede into Somalia. The war ended with the signing of a ceasefire between Kenya and Somalia in 1967. Some proponents of the war still assert that the grievances that led to the war remain unresolved.

The history of contemporary inter-clan conflict in Mandera is marked by periods of high and low peaks. The most vicious cycles of this clan-based conflict were in 1983, 1999-2000, 2004-2008 and in 2011-2015. Some of the longstanding conflict triggers in Mandera include the clan-defined, colonial-era grazing areas; a dispute over the ownership of the Malka Mari National Park; and access to natural resources such as the River Dawa, the only permanent fresh water source in Mandera. There has been substantial investment by the County government in agriculture, a factor that could inadvertently trigger further conflicts by way of increased competition for resources. An ongoing oil exploration exercise has also impacted the region by changing the land value system to a commercial one, raising the demand for and prices of land. The question of the sharing of the anticipated oil revenues could emerge as another source of conflict. Discussions on the progress of the oil exploration have been confined to the relevant national government agencies, politicians, and other elites, leaving out the local population. This is unlikely to bode well for the community, which has a long history of marginalisation since independence.

The most recent conflict between the Garre and Degodia is believed to have started in Ethiopia before spilling over the border into Kenya's Mandera, and later, Wajir Counties. The situation has been compounded by the poor management of the violent conflicts

between these clans by the Kenyan authorities, which typically respond by deploying security forces to halt violence without addressing the root causes of the conflicts. The NCIC and Interpeace seek to address the Mandera conflicts through a peacebuilding lens, by facilitating the collective identification of the challenges to peace and the participatory development of consensus-based solutions to the factors hindering peace.

## 1.4 Objectives

The overarching goal of the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme is to foster lasting peace in Mandera County. Specifically, the programme seeks to:

1. Identify the impediments to peace in Mandera County.
2. Document the resilience factors among the local communities in Mandera.
3. Provide a platform for the communities to resolve their own conflicts.
4. Amplify the voices of the people on issues of peace and security by increasing participation and local ownership.

## 1.5 Justification

Mandera County has for many decades been the theatre of internecine clan-based clashes. The cyclical nature of these conflicts has resulted in endemic tensions among the clans residing in the county. While various attempts have been made to resolve the clan conflicts, the resulting peace accords have never been enforced beyond the ceasefire phase. The remoteness of Mandera County

from Nairobi, the centre of security decision making in Kenya, as well as the cross-border nature of the clan conflicts and the long history of marginalisation have all compromised the capacity of local peace structures and the viability of resilience factors for peace in Mandera.

A 2013 report by the NCIC ranked Mandera among the counties with the lowest levels of social cohesion nationwide<sup>7</sup>. The Mandera Peacebuilding Programme seeks to reinforce the Kenyan government's broader efforts to bring peace to the Northern regions of the country, a goal that echoes the NCIC's national mandate to prevent discrimination on the basis of race or ethnicity, in addition to fostering cohesion among the diverse ethnic communities across Kenya.

## 1.6 Methodology

The study was carried out using the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, employing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Local communities were targeted in 12 of Mandera County's 30 civic wards. A total of 33 Focus Group Discussions were convened, reaching a total of 730 people. To complement and triangulate the information gathered through the FGDs, interviews were carried out with 43 key informants from the neighbouring Wajir County; Nairobi-based elites; communities living across the borders in Ethiopia and Somalia; as well as elected leaders and officials of both the County and National government.

The views of both grassroots communities and those of the elites were additionally documented in audio-visual format.

It was important to reach out to such a diverse target population because the preceding desk research indicated that issues of peace and security in Mandera have a cross-border element in addition to the tenuous clan relations, hence the need to interview key informants from the neighbouring regions in Somalia and Ethiopia, as well as in the adjacent Wajir County within Kenya. It was also important to have the perspective of actors and stakeholders beyond the local population, thus the outreach to Nairobi-based elites, and the leadership at both the county and national levels.

Throughout these consultations, the following two fundamental questions were explored:

a. *What are the impediments to peace in Mandera County?*

The purpose of this first question was to determine the main **challenges** to peace in the County, from the perspective of the local populations and other stakeholders.

b. *What is preventing things from getting worse?*

This second question served to explore the **resilience** factors that hold the communities together, and can therefore provide useful foundations for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, based on the challenges and proposed solutions identified by the stakeholders.

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<sup>7</sup> National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). *The Status of Social Cohesion in Kenya:2013*, Nairobi, 2014, p. 19.

## 1.7 Summary of Research Findings

During the consultative research phase of the programme, the research team listened to the voices of the people and collated them into the following five cluster issues, considered by the local communities as the main impediments to peace in Mandera:

- a. Issues around social and cultural systems.
- b. Security and the rule of law.
- c. Governance and politics.
- d. Cross border dynamics.
- e. Vulnerability of special interest groups.

These issues are discussed in greater detail in the subsequent chapters of this report. A three-day Stakeholders' Forum was held at the tail end of the consultative phase in December 2016, gathering 134 important community representatives from various sectors in Mandera town to discuss and validate the findings of the research phase, as well as to collectively

prioritise the challenges to peace in Mandera County.

The following four thematic areas were prioritised as the most pressing impediments to peace in Mandera:

- a. Social cohesion;
- b. Security and rule of law;
- c. Governance and politics; and
- d. Cross-border dynamics.

These priority issues will form the basis for the programme's subsequent task to seek solutions for peace, starting in 2017. Participants at the Mandera Stakeholders' Forum also nominated members to a Steering Committee and a Working Group that will accompany the peacebuilding team in seeking solutions to the prioritised impediments to peace in Mandera County.





# CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNITY SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STRUCTURES



# CHAPTER TWO: COMMUNITY SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STRUCTURES

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## 2.0 Introduction

Mandera is a near-homogeneous County, almost entirely inhabited by ethnic Somali clans. A closer study of the clans however shows that they are heterogeneous in many ways. The four major clan groupings (the Garre, Degodia, Murule and the Corner Tribes) nonetheless recognise their common lineage and history, perhaps best illustrated by their common respect for *Xeer* (Somali customary law). *Xeer* is a set of societal rules and obligations, developed over the ages by traditional elders to mediate peaceful relations between Somali clans and sub-clans. The core principles of *Xeer* are referred to as *xigsi ad kaadey* (longstanding cultural interactions). They include the traditional clan assemblies (*shiid*); the role of the clan elders (*ugas*) as key conflict resolution players; and the collective payment of *diya* (blood compensation). These three fundamental and most significant aspects of *Xeer* are widely upheld throughout Mandera because of its predominantly Somali composition, and they are as such important elements for peacebuilding efforts.

The negative manipulation of *Xeer* has stoked conflict many times among local communities within Mandera and has also allowed the involvement of elements from outside of the County. Some of the violent conflicts have been spill overs of conflicts among related Somali populations in the bordering regions of Somalia and Ethiopia. Although *Xeer* has provisions that could work in complementarity with the peace and security architecture of the contemporary state, the capacity of local structures to successfully mediate peace has been elusive. Peace accords and agreements reached have gathered dust over the years, and the enforcement of the agreed resolutions has sometimes been perceived as selective or biased in nature. This weakness in local capacities for peacebuilding create a big gap in the County's foundation for peace, as expounded in the next section.

## 2.1 Lack of Sustainable Social Reconciliation Processes

While many respondents felt that *Xeer* generally defines the way in which members of Somali communities relate to each other in the social and cultural realms, its universality as a viable platform for peacebuilding has also been questioned. This is in the sense that the implementation of *Xeer* can vary depending on the regions and clans involved in the conflicts,<sup>8</sup> for the most part because each clan tends to interpret *Xeer* based on its perspective of the latent conflict factors. Some of the respondents, feel that even though *Xeer* has been successfully used as a mediation tool, some of its components have been misused to escalate conflict. New conflict dynamics have transformed *Xeer* into a platform for mobilising war through kinship support, creating a nature of conflict that the Governor of Wajir County described as **“clan against clan, family against family, and cousin against cousin”**<sup>9</sup>.

In Mandera and Wajir Counties, the effect of the negative manipulation of the *Xeer* tradition, especially in the context of revenge, has had devastating effects. This one-sided perspective has for instance made it common for a member of a given clan to seek revenge on an innocent person from another clan by the mere fact

that one of his own has either been injured or killed by someone from the “other” clan. The Governor of Mandera County, Ali Roba, denounced the collective accusation of entire clans for the deeds of individual clan members, saying:

*“When a wrong is committed, let us focus on the individuals suspected of culpability, not their clans collectively.”*<sup>10</sup>

The complex sequence of attacks and counter-attacks in 2015 between the Garre and Degodia clans is a clear manifestation of this culture of retaliation. Despite the presence of the *Xeer* tradition, research participants cited the lack of a sustainable, overarching social reconciliation process as a major impediment to peace. The case has been that each spate of violent conflict leaves behind numerous unresolved issues, which resurge and exacerbate the next conflict into a more severe (and often prolonged) contest and render many peacebuilding initiatives unsuccessful.

Within this system, alliances among warring family lineages can be formed, while kins who are supportive in one situation can be predatory in another<sup>11</sup>. For instance, a Degodia elder in Malka Ruqa, stated that his sister is married to a Garre man, yet the two communities have in recent years engaged in devastating conflict. He claimed that during a previous conflict, he welcomed his Garre in-laws to the safety of his house on a morning that saw clashes heighten

8 Andre Le Sage, *Stateless Justice in Somali: Formal and Informal Rule of Law Initiatives*. Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, 2005.

9 Governor Ahmed Abdullahi of Wajir County, Key Informant Interview, Wajir, 22 August 2016.

10 Governor Ali Roba of Mandera, Speech at Mandera Stakeholders’ Forum, Mandera, 14 December 2016.

11 World Bank, *Conflict in Somalia: Drivers and Dynamics*, Washington, January 2005.

between the two communities; this situation is rarely experienced in contemporary inter-clan conflicts<sup>12</sup>.

The culture of retaliation and incidences of the negative manipulation of “*Xeer*” have increased. This culture of seeking revenge by targeting innocent people has been perfected and sanctioned over the years.

## 2.2 Weakened Capacities of Local Peace Actors

The lack of a strengthened peace system is a key challenge facing peace actors in Mandera County. It was observed that there is a wide range of duplication of activities by local peace actors. This has created competition between local peace actors, which negates the “do no harm” peacebuilding maxim, as peace actors end up contributing to the conflicts rather than helping resolve them. Prior to 2011, there existed an effective, collaborative cross-border mediation system, completed with a functional committee that acted as intermediaries between the Kenyan authorities and actors in southern Somalia<sup>13</sup>.

Kenya’s 2011 incursion into Somalia hampered the capacity of this cross border mediation structures. It also led to increased insecurity as Al Shabaab, which had a strong foothold in southern Somalia, began to actively launch attacks inside Kenyan territory. Moreover, these were particularly tough times for religious leaders and local peacebuilders, who found

themselves suspected by both sides: on one hand, Al Shabaab declared them traitors and collaborators of the Kenyan government; on the other hand, some elements within the Kenyan government perceived them of being Al-Shabaab sympathisers. The Mandera County government, installed in 2013, further weakened the pre-existing local and cross border peace structures when it began to initiate its own parallel peace programmes. Many religious leaders, despite their longstanding recognition as key agents for peace, have taken a back seat for fear of being perceived as terror suspects on suspicion of supporting Al-Shabaab<sup>14</sup>, in line with the Somali saying that goes:

*“The old lady fears for her last born to be bounded by that which killed her first born.”*

The overall consequence of these developments is a gradual weakening of traditional peacebuilding mechanisms. The monetisation of peacebuilding, to a large extent through the introduction of government and donor funds, has further deflated the viability of traditional peacebuilding mechanisms. Today, peace practitioners are viewed by many members of the local population as potential contributors to conflict. This study found a widespread perception among the public that the peacebuilding actors tend to “sustain” latent conflicts for purposes of securing their funding streams. The legitimacy of many local peacebuilders has also been questioned, particularly regarding their capacity to truly rise above their clan affiliations for the cause

12 Degodia Elder, Key Informant Interview, Malka Ruqa, 14 August 2016.

13 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 2 September 2016.

14 Ibid.

of peace<sup>15</sup>. Furthermore, some respondents perceive traditional elders as dishonest conflict arbitrators, citing cases where certain elders only agree to be involved on condition of that they will receive “facilitation” allowances. This points to a new phenomenon—the commercialisation of peace and security engagements. The concept of negotiated democracy, a mechanism led by the elders to determine the consensus-based sharing of political positions within and among the clans, has buttressed the political importance of the elders. The traditional elders’ role in negotiated democracy has positioned them as political power brokers, further compromising their neutrality. Religious leaders have also experienced the same perception. Although generally perceived as selfless and committed to peacebuilding initiatives, the religious leaders’ achievements are weakened by their association with politicians.

Another challenge for peace is the fact that the national government retains responsibility for security, which was not devolved. A religious leader in Mandera town opined that the national government has been inconsistent in its efforts to resolve inter-clan conflict, citing its silence on the displacement of people, atrocities committed against community members and the destruction of properties as some of the symptoms of a lack of a commitment to sustainable peace.

## 2.3 Manipulation of Clan Identities and Stereotypes

In Somali society, the clan is the key unit of social structure. In a parochial society and living in an environment of disequilibrium, the individual’s responsibility to learn his or her clan genealogy and relations with others is considered an important virtue. While the identification of others by clan is not in itself a conflict trigger, it has become another major impediment to peace. Loyalty to one’s clan is used to manipulate and mobilise individual clans against the others, and in some cases even among sub-clans of the same clan. Powerful individuals and groups have become adept in using the clan card as a means towards achieving their own interests.

The perception of ancestral land aggrandisement has seen some clans labelled “expansionist” by other clans; the converse of this perception has been the use of the “expulsionist” label by clans that feel victimised<sup>16</sup>. Respondents noted the curtailed access to grazing rights and peaceful co-existence between the communities, especially when new settlements are developed in the colonially-designated grazing areas of the traditionally nomadic clans.

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15 Youth Representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

16 The term “expulsionist” is commonly used among the people of Mandera County to roughly describe the perception from within clans that feel susceptible to expulsion from their lands.

## 2.3.1 Easy Mobilisation for Violent Conflict and the Challenge of Demobilisation

Somali clans are historically known to be highly cohesive when it comes to mobilisation in situations of conflict. This is largely attributed to the strong clan affiliation among the Somali people. These clan identities are easily manipulated by influential clan members (such as political leaders) in their pursuit of power and control of resources, often by invoking clan identities to mobilise clan members for violent conflict, and manipulating any existing cleavages to fuel the conflict. In this way, clan and sub-clan differences can be a potent force for division and fragmentation, particularly when manipulated for political purposes. In the words of an elder from Banissa:

*“Somalis possess the traits of the acacia species, whose trees blossom simultaneously when the season comes. This means that members of the Somali clans are so attached to each other that they respond to conflict simultaneously in whichever areas they happen to live.”*<sup>17</sup>

This description depicts the near-impulsive cohesion with which clan members respond to conflict, regardless of where they live. For instance, clan members easily cross the Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Somali borders to boost their kinsmen during times of violent conflict. The relatively easy access to arms and other items of modern weaponry have made such mobilisation

for conflict inevitably more aggressive. Clan elders mobilise resources from businessmen and political elites, while the manipulation of clan youth protracts many conflicts, some of which are fuelled by actors in distant locations who are not directly affected by the violence.

Demobilisation from violence is very challenging. In pre-colonial Somali culture, demobilisation from war involved an informal ceasefire with little focus on the disarmament, rehabilitation, and reintegration of ex-militias. The current situation in Mandera is not so different. After a conflict, youth who participate in violent clashes are virtually dumped afterwards—armed and left to their own devices. In Rhamu, one former youth militiaman forcefully took off with the wife of an elder, citing discontent with the failure to appreciate his “efforts to protect the clan”. In Banissa, government security officials state that ex-combatants loom at marketplaces and waterpoints, armed with guns and with no apparent fear of arrest, just to disparage local community leaders and government chiefs for failing to appreciate their role in the “protection of the clan.”

## 2.3.2 Weakened Influence of Community Elders

The system of leadership by the *Ugas* (community elders) was effective in pre-colonial Somali societies. The *Ugas* were powerful traditional chiefs with vast fiefdoms. The *Ugas* were highly respected, exemplary leaders, revered for their commitment to justice,

<sup>17</sup> Elder, Focus Group Discussion, Banissa, 15 August 2016.

integrity, and honesty. According to an elder from Rhamu, the hat or walking stick of one elder was symbolic enough to initiate a ceasefire between warring clans.

*“During war in the olden days, an Ugas who wanted to initiate a ceasefire only needed to deliver his hat or walking stick to the Ugas of the rival community, through an emissary. This would signal his willingness to find a negotiated resolution to the conflict. This no longer applies today.”<sup>18</sup>*

The *Ugas* system was gradually weakened and diminished in power and visibility in colonial and independent Kenya. It is only in recent years that a semblance of the *Ugas* leadership structure has re-emerged. But whereas pre-colonial *Ugas* were few and influential between the clans, the contemporary *Ugas* system has numerically increased to the extent of single clans having between 20 and 40 elders<sup>19</sup>. The perception of the elders among the communities has also changed. Although many people still respect them as symbols of unity within their specific clans, the elders are also seen as exclusionary leaders with vested interests that portend an impediment to peace.

### 2.3.3 Population Transfer and the “Expansionist” vs. “Expulsionist” Perceptions

Two controversial, antagonistic perceptions underlie the entrenched inclination of clans to maintain dominance within their ancestral

lands: these are the “expansionist” and “expulsionist” perceptions. In Mandera, the Degodia and the Murulle clans are labelled “expansionist,” while the Garre clan, with its numerical majority, is alleged to harbour “expulsionist” tendencies.

For a long period, the Degodia clan, traditionally herders along the Kenya-Ethiopia border area, had very little involvement in political and economic activities. The clan has over the decades established settlements along the borders of the two countries. These settlements have always been disputed by the Garre, who have gradually migrated away, deeper into the interior parts of today’s Mandera County in search of better pasturelands for their livestock.

Recent decades have seen increased involvement by the Degodia in commerce and politics. The spirited entry of the Degodia into politics has caused tensions with Mandera’s majority Garre. A case in point was the hot contest over the Mandera Central parliamentary seat (now renamed Mandera North) in 2007, when a Degodia candidate, Abdikadir Mohamed, defeated Billow Kerrow, the sitting Garre MP. The results of the election triggered violent clashes between the two communities, lasting all the way into early 2013, and spreading further into the neighbouring Wajir County, where the Degodia form the majority. In late 2013, members of the Garre clan were displaced from Wajir County and from a number of Degodia-dominated settlements in Mandera County such as Ashabito, Garse and Malka Ruqa. The Degodia were in return displaced from Garre-dominated areas of

18 Elder, Focus Group Discussion, Rhamu, 10 August 2016.

19 Elder, Key Informant Interview, Rhamu, 2 September 2016.



Mandera County (such as Banissa and Takaba). These “expansionist” and “expulsionist” perceptions are not limited to the Garre and Degodia clans. The Murulle have also been accused of exerting pressure on the Corner Tribes by creating new settlements like Dar-al-Salaam in Khalalio Ward to compel the Corner Tribes to support Murulle candidates for the Mandera East parliamentary seat. The Marehan Clan, which largely moved into Mandera after the 1991 state collapse of Somalia, are similarly accused of displacing the Murulle Clan along the Mandera-Lafey grazing corridor, sparking violent conflicts in recent years between the two clans.

### **2.3.4 Nepotism and favouritism along clan lines**

The strong affiliation of Somali groups to their clans was identified by respondents as a critical contributor to nepotism along clan lines. Although in most cases individuals benefit themselves at the expense of others, it is common for influential individuals to raise the clan card for purposes of evading accountability and transparency. Respondents however recounted the presence of outright nepotism and even favouritism at the sub clan level, pointing out that any time a prominent person is brought to account, the person rallies the support of his or her clan to divert attention from their wrongdoing.

Clan-based politics has led to the exclusion and marginalisation of some communities. Serious political contestation between the Garre and

the Degodia has seen them engage in several violent clashes. Many respondents posited that the numerical dominance of the Garre in Mandera County gives them an advantage in the realms of governance, resource allocation and economic wellbeing. On the contrary, many Garre claim to face deliberate exclusion from jobs in the majority-Degodia County of Wajir. This has brought accusations and counter accusations, with the Garre accusing the Degodia of systematically expanding their settlements within Mandera County, as well as along the Wajir/Mandera borders, with the intent of suppressing the dominance of the Garre majority in Mandera.

## **2.4 Violation of Traditional Somali War Conventions**

Traditional Somali culture has an elaborate set of dictates on the conduct of war, requiring just cause for war and forbidding the indiscriminate targeting of vulnerable members of the population. Contemporary conflicts in Mandera are to a large extent driven by vengeance and retaliation, which sustains the recurrence and severity of inter-clan conflicts. Warring clans and their militia have been reported to inflict extreme pain and loss of dignity upon their opponents by targeting children, women, the elderly and religious leaders. The destruction of homes and crops, attacks on humanitarian agencies, the mutilation of human bodies and taking of body parts as trophies have been described as tactics aimed at intensifying conflict and prolonging

any reconciliation attempts for maximum vengeance<sup>20</sup>.

The following are some of the practices and incidences that a local peacebuilder in Mandera cited as contrary to the traditional Somali conventions on war<sup>21</sup>:

1. *The killing of children and women during conflict:* This has become rather commonplace despite its prohibition in both Somali customary law and Islamic ethics of war. In one incident, nine young boys were killed by their maternal uncles during one of the peaks of the Garre-Degodia conflict. The fact of these uncles killing their blood nephews for being of the rival clan on the paternal side illustrates the daunting reality of the sometimes inhumanity of these conflicts.
2. *Imams and religious leaders being targeted inside mosques and areas of worship:* During another spate of the Garre and Degodia conflict in August 2013, an Imam was shot and killed by an assailant in Rhamu, while prostrating in prayer inside the town's main mosque. This case marked a new low as it had never been witnessed in any previous conflicts.
3. *Decreased voices of reason during conflict:* Traditional conflicts always had respected voices of reason who played the role of modulating conflict action, providing counsel on fairness, and at times even rebuking warriors who went out of line. These voices included elders, morally respected individuals, and noblemen within the clan. Such voices are very few in today's Mandera County.

4. *Attacks targeted at aid workers:* During episodes of clan conflict, it was the norm that aid workers and volunteers, such as members of the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) were not be targeted during conflict. Recent trends have featured these groups being attacked, and in some cases killed and maimed just like the clan fighters.

5. *Arson attacks on homes:* It is against Somali culture to burn homes during conflict. There have been reports of youth militia being transported for thousands of miles to participate in conflict, including razing the homes of the rival communities to the ground. This is another emerging trend in inter-clan conflict.

## 2.5 Use of Oral Folklore and Social Media to Fuel Conflict

Oral folklore is one of the richest and best-known features of Somali culture. The breadth of Somali folklore includes oral storytelling, fables, songs, poetry, and proverbs, many times infused into ordinary speech. These have sometimes been employed to drive conflict in Mandera particularly using derogatory songs and inflammatory statements. Various forms of oral folklore have been used to provoke emotional outbursts of clan militias and to prolong conflict in Mandera. Creatively delivered insults targeting leaders and clan

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20 County government official, Key Informant Interview, Mandera, 6 December 2016.

21 Local peacebuilder, Key Informant Interview, Mandera, 24 October 2016.

identities have been used to excite belligerents. Women, in particular, use a genre called *saar* to praise their clans and to demean rival clans. A woman trader from Rhamu pointed out the role that women play in inciting their menfolk into acts of violent conflict:

***“Even though conflict affects the women and children more adversely than the men, [the women’s] egos and strong clan affinities make them adulate their clan warriors in poems and traditional songs during clashes.”***<sup>22</sup>

Closely related to the negative use of folklore is the role of social media in the misinformation that fuels conflicts. Mandera professionals and a large number of local youth use social media to vibrantly engage in discussions on governance, accountability and general enlightenment on a broad range of issues.

Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram and Instagram are commonly used to pass negative, inappropriate or misleading information that triggers conflicts. For instance, the wide circulation of graphic pictures of victims of clan war and Prisoners of War (PoWs) on these social media platforms often triggers retaliatory violence from the “victim” clans in Mandera, sometimes with support from among their kinsmen from across the border in Ethiopia and Somalia.

Although the exact impact of social media was difficult to measure during the consultative phase, it was clear from the respondents that social media platforms, coupled with the negative of folklore, are both significant exacerbating factors for conflict.

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22 Woman trader, Focus Group Discussion, Rhamu, 10 August 2016.

**TABLE 1: Chronology of major clan conflicts and cessation mechanisms in Mandera (1963—2016)**

<b>Belligerent clans</b>	<b>Period</b>	<b>Issue of Contention</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Cessation Mechanism</b>	<b>Key Resolution actors</b>
<b>Garre vs. Degodia</b>	1963	Grazing land	Resolved	Traditional Ceasefire Agreement	Traditional leaders
<b>Garre vs. Murulle</b>	1983	Grazing land	Local agreement	Traditional ceasefire agreement	Pastoralist families
<b>Garre vs. Ajuran</b>	2000-2003	Territorial dispute over Bute division	Resolved; Government relocation of the Garre population to Danaba; Claims of lack of compensation by IDPs from Bute	Qudama Agreement	Politicians Local leaders
<b>Garre vs. Murulle</b>	2003-2008	Electoral boundary at Alango and Alungu administrative locations	Resolved but later re-emerged and crushed through military operation	Umul Accord	Politicians Local communities
<b>Garre vs. Degodia</b>	2012-2015	Dispute over the Mandera North parliamentary seat; Mutual suspicion of “Expansionist” and “Displacement” agendas	Latent conflict with negative peace; Could potentially reignite	Formal Ceasefire by NCIC	Politicians Clan elders

# CHAPTER THREE: SECURITY AND RULE OF LAW



# **CHAPTER THREE: SECURITY AND RULE OF LAW**

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## **3.0 Introduction**

In the absence of peace and security, development cannot take place anywhere. Mandera and other parts of Northern Kenya have long suffered underdevelopment and insecurity due to a number of challenges. In Mandera, these include the lack of trust between the people and the government, accruing from decades of economic marginalisation, oppressive security apparatus and the ramifications of the Shifta War in the 1960s. These factors, coupled with lack of local representation in the local security leadership and the general unaccountability of security agents, have been identified as key impediments to peace in respect to security and the rule of law. The resultant effect got complicated after recent emergence of insurgent groups in Somalia where the capacity of security agencies to fight them without the collaboration of local communities has proved impossible. The need to work around bridging the divide between the security and local population and transforming the security sector into a responsive and accountable institution cannot be ignored.

## **3.1 Lack of Trust Between the Population and Security Agencies**

The breakdown of trust between the local population and the security agencies began at independence, when the Somali population in the Northern Frontier District (NFD) overwhelmingly expressed their wish to secede into Somalia in a plebiscite organised by the outgoing British colonial administration. Kenya's independence government was unwilling to operationalise the secession agenda and developed various policies and laws to ensure that the NFD remains part

of Kenyan territory<sup>23</sup>. This led to the Shifta War (1963-1967), pitting the Kenyan army against secessionist insurgents backed by the Republic of Somalia. Peace talks mediated by Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda resulted in an official ceasefire, formalised in the Arusha Memorandum signed on October 1967 between Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta and Somali Prime Minister Mohamed Egal.

Although the Shifta War ended in 1967, decades of collective punishment by the security agencies followed and the former NFD region lagged relatively behind the overall national pace of development. Several massacres were committed by the security agencies that claimed thousands of lives. These included the 1980 Garissa massacre, the 1981 Malka Mari massacre in Mandera; and the 1984 Wagalla massacre in Wajir<sup>24</sup>. This history led to an erosion of trust between the local population and the security agencies of the post-colonial Kenyan state. The net effect is that people continue to be afraid of sharing information with the security agencies, and the security agencies on their part use blanket tagging, perceiving the local population as collectively culpable in many incidences of insecurity that occur in Mandera County.

## 3.2 Absence of Local Representation in the County Security Architecture

The presence of a strong relationship and mutual trust between the police and the communities they serve is a critical element in the maintenance of public safety. For effective policing, the police require the cooperation of community members to provide information about crime in their neighbourhoods—the communities are equally open to working with the police in devising solutions to crime and other issues that threaten public order.

Although many people in Mandera support the retention of security as a function of the national government, they are uncomfortable with the lack of local representation among the top decision-making brass at County level<sup>25</sup>. Intelligence officers posted to Mandera are mostly drawn from other parts of the country, and because of the cultural differences and linguistic limitations, often find themselves unable to mingle with the local community. This makes them unable to gather useful information.

This lack of trust between the population and security agencies is further compounded by the revelation that whenever residents provide intelligence to the police and arrests are made, the police are easily bribed to

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23 Hansard (UK Parliament), 03 April 1963, vol 248, cc600-36. Available at <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/lords/1963/apr/03/northern-frontier-district-of-kenya>.

24 Ahmed Issack Hassan, *Legal Impediments to Development in Northern Kenya*, 2008, pp. 10-11.

25 Religious Leader, Religious Leaders' Security Forum, Mandera, 4 December 2016.



release the suspects and reveal the identities of the witnesses. There are reported cases of whistle blowers and witnesses being killed by the suspects because of this failure of police confidentiality<sup>26</sup>. Residents interviewed noted that this has played a big part in worsening the level of trust between the residents and the security forces. Ironically, the security agencies constantly blame the locals for not supporting their efforts to keep the region secure, despite this widely known betrayal of informers, witnesses, and whistle blowers.

According to a police officer interviewed for this research, the North Eastern region is a highly undesirable posting for many non-local members of the security agencies<sup>27</sup>. Incidentally, the communities in Mandera see the heavy presence of government security officers to keep the peace in Mandera as a form of “punishment.” They feel that the reluctance of security officers to be deployed to Mandera could be a contributing factor to the impunity with which the security agencies act, citing unwarranted killings, physical assault, intimidation and cases of mass beatings reported in Elram, Harwale, Lafey, El Wak and Mandera town in the recent past.<sup>28</sup> It was evident from most respondents that in the wake of recent incidents involving police use of excessive force and other issues, the legitimacy of the police has been questioned by many community members living in Mandera County. The situation is further exacerbated by branding the people of Mandera as terrorists, undermining the trust

between the people and the security agencies, which fall under the control of the central government. Furthermore, respondents feel that the government does not trust most of the information volunteered by local communities, and once it is reported, the informants can easily be turned into suspected accomplices. In the opinion of the chair of a local peacebuilding team:

***“The approach of our security agencies is like [the people of Mandera] are used as a shield to both cushion [the security agencies] and to simultaneously stay on the guard against.”***<sup>29</sup>

There is a dislike of the ubiquitous security presence among the communities in Mandera, a fact which a Murulle elder from Mandera East Sub county described as “Kenya’s shield against Ethiopia and Somalia.” According to the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR):

***“It is unsettling for armed police to carry guns and bullet chains inside marketplaces. This simply depicts that Mandera is insecure thus creating fear into the people.”***<sup>30</sup>

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26 Human Rights Watch, *Deaths and Disappearances: Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations in Nairobi and in North Eastern Kenya*, July 2016.

27 Police Officer, Key Informant Interview, Mandera Town, 2 September 2016.

28 Community Member, Group Presentation, Mandera Stakeholders Forum, Mandera Town, 4 December 2016.

29 Local Peacebuilder, Focus Group Discussion, Rhamu, 10 August 2016.

30 KNCHR Official, Key Informant Interview, Mandera, 2 September 2016.

## 3.3 Lack of Accountability by the Security Sector

According to the views of several participants in this study, it appears that collective punishment, which has already been discussed previously in this document, is one of the symptoms of the lack of accountability of the security agencies in Mandera County. The blanket suspicion of the local communities inhibits their ability to effectively secure the community as prescribed by the Constitution. There are several unresolved cases of government security forces rounding up the inhabitants of a certain locality, whipping people indiscriminately without clearly stating the problem at hand, or trying suspects without entirely following the due legal process. These tend to breed enmity between the affected communities and the security agencies<sup>31</sup>.

Moreover, security officers in Mandera do not carry their service number tags and are alleged to routinely harass citizens. Respondents claimed that police use knowledge of English and Kiswahili as a verification tool of Kenyan citizenship even for community members with valid National Identity Cards. In addition, charges of police brutality while arresting suspects or in carrying out routine security checks are flatly denied by senior government officials<sup>32</sup>. The government denies any wrongdoing, the gross effect of which is the gradual loss of public confidence in the security agencies.

When the central government of Kenya imposed compulsory villagisation during the Shifita War to achieve controlled settlements, their scorched earth methods led to a massive loss of livestock<sup>33</sup>. Forty years since the end of the Shifita War, community members feel that collective punishment is still a feature of life in Mandera; respondents cited the beatings meted out in 2008 on communities in El Wak and Lafey to quell the conflict over Alango and Alungu administrative and electoral boundaries, which were delimited by the government without consideration of the pre-existing sensitivities that ultimately caused the conflicts.<sup>34</sup>

Many respondents lamented the saturation of the county security architecture with many different specialised units that are not accountable to any authority within the County, since they report to the National Government in Nairobi. It is estimated that the government has deployed a total of 1,500 trained security personnel in Mandera, drawn from the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF); the Kenya Police Service (KPS); the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU); the Criminal Investigation Department (CID); the KDF Directorate of Military Intelligence (KDF-DMI); the Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU) and the Rural Border Patrol Unit (RBPU), both of the Administration Police (AP).

Corruption is the other side of the coin. There were numerous allegations that the police, the courts, the CID and the ATPU often collude to hold suspects for longer than the constitutionally stipulated periods so that

31 Ibid.

32 Religious Leader, Religious Leaders Security Forum, Mandera, 4 December 2016.

33 Ibid.

34 Community Member, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

corrupt officials can hike the bribes demanded to free the suspects or to expedite their cases. This collusion was confirmed by a police officer from Mandera, who spoke on condition of anonymity<sup>35</sup>. One religious leader cautioned that the ensuing frustrations could easily make the victims amenable to the lure of extremist groups in search of vengeance, hence further endangering the already fragile peace and security of Mandera.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.3.1 Uncoordinated Security Sector

The apparent lack of proper coordination between the various security agencies present in Mandera is a matter of concern to the residents of Mandera. Although many respondents did not see it as a major impediment, there is a general feeling that each of the many agencies carries out its mandate without any effective coordination at the local level. A key informant, privy to the internal workings of the security sector, spoke of prevalent tensions between the KPS and the KPR on one hand, and between these police formations and the military on the other hand; the ATPU is also accused of being behind many of the human disappearances and of not accepting to be accountable to the local police structures<sup>37</sup>.

### 3.3.2 Ineffective Peace and Security Infrastructure

Due to the lack of trust for local communities, local stakeholders such as the County Security Committee and the Border Management Authorities—which represent the local population that is most impacted by the security situation—are kept at bay. The County Security Committee comprises the County Commissioner and the county-level heads of Police, CID and ATPU, all of whom happen to be non-locals. Yet the outcomes of policies adopted based on their deliberations and recommendations affect the locals most. A recent case is the banning of the veil in Mandera town, following allegations of male terrorists masquerading in veils. Such a policy clearly shows a clear disconnect between the security policy making and the societal realities in Mandera<sup>38</sup>.

Another issue concerns a gap in night security. Upon nightfall, it is said that police officers in Mandera generally remain indoors, leaving their duties in the hands of the Kenya Police Reservists (KPR), who are not formally trained in policing work; some reservists do not even possess basic schooling<sup>39</sup>. A prominent businessman in Mandera town remarked:

*“When we retire to bed at night, we expect security forces to take control and guard our lives and properties, but the contrary happens. The police*

35 Police Officer, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 2 September 2016.

36 Religious Leader, Religious Leaders Security Forum, Mandera, 4 December 2016.

37 Police Officer, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 2 September 2016.

38 Community Member, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

39 KNCHR Official, Key Informant Interview, 2 September 2016.

*officers also retire to bed to be similarly guarded by the few local Kenya Police Reservists employed by the Mandera County government.”<sup>40</sup>*

This situation is exacerbated by the late intervention of security officers when insecurity strikes. Despite closely monitoring security situations, their responses come late in many cases, often when the violent clashes have already escalated and lives have been lost<sup>41</sup>.

### 3.3.3 Extrajudicial Killings and Human Rights Abuses

Mandera and the rest of North Eastern region of Kenya have had a long history of human rights violations, carried out by both the colonial and post-independent governments. The enactment of a new, progressive, national Constitution in 2010 has not amounted to much change in this regard. Extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses remain a big issue in Mandera, especially affecting those suspected to be Al-Shabaab supporters. The conduct of police officers has been criticised by Human Rights Watch (HRW)<sup>42</sup>, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) and other observers, alleging the excessive use of force and extra judicial killings by the security agents. The KNCHR estimates that at least 48 people from Mandera

disappeared in 2015 alone, and another 40 are missing from their homes as of November 2016.<sup>43</sup> Various reports by HRW and the KNCHR have indicated excessive use of force by security establishments from colonial to post-colonial governments. Reported cases of mass murder in Malka Mari, among other areas, have not been well documented. Such human rights violations constitute direct recipes for conflict and suspicion. Sadly, the perpetrators of these atrocities are often well known, yet no action is taken against them, a fact that the KNCHR fears could unwittingly fuel radicalisation:

*The families of the victims of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances do not have access to justice, yet some even know their perpetrators by name. So, what will prevent them from joining Al-Shabaab?”<sup>44</sup>*

Respondents also spoke of the commercialisation of security equipment, claiming cases of security officers looking away when clan militias launch attacks; only acting when the killings have already occurred; and being venal enough to facilitate the safe passage of the militias<sup>45</sup>. This commercialisation of security in Mandera is further reinforced by corrupt security officers who openly free suspects from custody upon the payment of bribes, which can go upwards of KES 200,000 (US\$2,000)<sup>46</sup>.

40 Businessman, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

41 Local Politician, Speech at 2016 International Day of Peace Celebrations, Banissa, 21 September 2016.

42 Human Rights Watch, *Deaths and Disappearances: Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations in Nairobi and in North Eastern Kenya*, July 2016.

43 KNCHR, *The Error of Fighting Terror with Terror*, September 2015.

44 KNCHR Official, Key Informant Interview, 2 September 2016.

45 Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

46 Police Officer, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 2 September 2016.

# CHAPTER FOUR: GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS



# CHAPTER FOUR: GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL SYSTEMS

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## 4.0 Introduction

The consultative research revealed that governance and politics have emerged as a new frontier for conflict in Mandera County. Issues of political representation and service delivery have emerged as some of the key impediments to peace in the County. Devolution is seen as a resource in Mandera and in other parts of the arid rangelands of Northern Kenya. This is mainly because the decentralisation of governance in Kenya's 2010 Constitution provided hope that the historical resource marginalisation of the region would finally be arrested. Devolution has however amplified competition between the clans, each trying to outdo the other in the competition for the substantial resources that are devolved from the National Government to the County.

In this competition, the Governor's position is the most prized, because of the incumbent's stewardship of the County funds. The position of MP is the second most valued because the holder controls the Constituency Development Funds (CDF). The Member of the County Assembly (MCA) position is a two-fold resource: firstly, MCAs can marshal the numbers to secure resources from the County for their constituents by supporting or opposing the County Government's agenda in the County Assembly; secondly, the number of MCAs and MPs that a clan wins often determines the quantity of resources that they can leverage from both the County and National Governments.

These realities have particularly caused conflicts between various clans living in Mandera North Constituency and in the five Wards of Alungu, Malka Mari, Ashabito, Neboi and Khalalio. The Mandera North parliamentary seat and the five wards in the constituency are the most contested between the Garre and Degodia. That contestation has simmered since 2012 and could yet again boil over into open conflict during the August 2017 elections.

## 4.1 Historical Injustices and the Legacy of the Shifta War (1963-1967)

During the colonial period, Mandera was part of the Northern Frontier District (NFD), carved out of southern Somalia in 1925, partly as a buffer between the commercially farmed White Highlands of Kenya and the territory of the present-day Federal Republic of Somalia. Colonial attempts to control the native Somali communities through Christianisation failed; they held fast to their Islamic faith. Moreover, the semi-arid region was of no economic value to the British colonial government, and the NFD was abandoned economically.<sup>47</sup>

When Kenya became independent in 1963, the Shifta War broke out in the NFD. The war was mainly inspired by the concept of Pan-Somalism, an irredentist vision to unify all the five territories inhabited by ethnic Somali clans in the Horn of Africa into one Somali nation. These five territories are the present Republic of Somalia, the Republic of Djibouti, the self-declared State of Somaliland, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and the North Eastern region of Kenya (comprising Mandera, Wajir and Garissa Counties). The economic marginalisation and repression of the region continued after the end of the war in 1967, aimed at deterring any future secessionist aspirations. The result was over five decades of underdevelopment, underpinned by heavy

handed, securitised responses to clan clashes and other forms of insecurity. Today, Mandera County lacks adequate infrastructure, and is connected to Nairobi by a single murram road. Devolution was as such welcomed with wide open arms since it finally promised economic independence. Many respondents had an affirmative opinion of devolution, citing the closer accessibility to services and resources. In fact, Mandera County receives the third largest budget of devolved funds after Nairobi and Turkana Counties due to its underdevelopment and high poverty index<sup>48</sup>.

Despite this ray of hope provided by devolution, there are some persisting legacies of the Shifta War. One of them is the difficulty that Kenyan citizens of Somali descent face in accessing basic citizenship documentation. Respondents complained about the rigorous screening and police harassment to which Mandera residents are subjected before they can obtain birth certificates, identity cards and passports, in addition to having to provide the documentation of two parents and their grandparents as well. Respondents alleged that even the adoption of the 2010 Constitution has not changed things. The Kenyan Constitution clearly states that:

***"A person is a citizen by birth if on the day of the person's birth, whether or not the person is born in Kenya, either the mother or father of the person is a citizen."***<sup>49</sup>

Residents of Mandera decry this discrimination despite the clarity of the Constitution on

47 Mohamed Amin Osman, *Somalia: Proposals for the Future*, SPM, 1993, pp. 1–10.

48 World Bank, *Decision Time: Spend More or Spend Smart? Kenya Public Expenditure Review*, 2014.

49 Constitution of Kenya, 2010, art. 14 (1).



the matter of citizenship. They say it has caused many locals to lose out on jobs and education opportunities, as the documentation and verification process takes longer for ethnic Somali Kenyans than it does for their compatriots from other parts of the country.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, respondents say that illegal immigrants, from instance from Somalia, can easily access the same documents using bribery.<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, these frustrations are perceived as a sign of mistrust of Kenyan Somalis by the government. A religious leader in Mandera warned that this continued mistreatment is especially sensitive regarding the youth, saying it could push them towards extremism:

***“[The conditions] that pushed the Somali youth into piracy [could similarly push] the youth in Mandera towards extremist ideologies”.***<sup>52</sup>

After the 2015 Garissa University attack<sup>53</sup>, travelling to Nairobi by road has become very difficult. A bus driver plying the Mandera-Nairobi route said there are now 52 police checkpoints from Mandera to Nairobi, and travellers without proper documentation are not allowed to go beyond the last checkpoint at Thika town, 40 kilometres from Nairobi; this is unless they are willing to bribe their way through to Nairobi.<sup>54</sup>

## 4.2 Inequitable Resource Sharing

Although the Kenyan Constitution and Section 25 of the National Cohesion and Integration Act demand equity and equality in resource sharing at all levels of governance, the equitable sharing of resources remains a key challenge in Mandera. The sharing of resources favours the big clans to the disadvantage of the minorities. This is because the determination of land boundaries is effected by the national government because land management was not decentralised. The local population is seldom involved in decision on land boundaries, making them susceptible to political gerrymandering by the elite<sup>55</sup>. A pervasive winner-takes-all approach by the clans, especially those close to the elected leaders, allows some to have lopsided access to resources, while others are excluded<sup>56</sup>. Politics then becomes a matter of life and death, creating stiff political competition among major clans for clan supremacy.

The experience from previous elections has been that clans endeavour to politically marginalise rival clans. Voter transfer has become a common way of winning; it has motivated the mass transfer of voters from areas dominated by certain clans to the strongholds of rival clans. This is common among almost all the clans in Mandera. For instance, the Garre and Degodia

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50 Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

51 Ibid.

52 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

53 The Garissa University attack was a terrorist incident on 2 April 2015, when four Al-Shabaab gunmen stormed the university's campus in Garissa, North Eastern Kenya, and killed 148 people.

54 Bus Driver, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

55 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

56 Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

communities have been in a stiff political contestation in Mandera North Constituency. It is alleged that both communities were involved in mass voter transfer during the 2013 General Elections. Whereas the Garre transferred votes from the interior of Kenya, the Degodia drew their additional voters from as far as the interior of Ethiopia. On the other hand, the Murulle were in a competition with the Corner Tribes in Mandera East. Just before the elections, the Murulle developed a new settlement near Khalalio to create a new polling station named Dar-Al-Salaam. Voters were then transferred to this location to alienate the Shabelle vote from the larger Corner Tribe grouping<sup>57</sup>.

Recent changes in governance dynamics partially contribute to the competition for resources. Initially, the elders were not aligned with governance structures and had no influence on the political processes. Devolution has introduced a new role for traditional elders (the *ugas*), who have become deeply involved in the sharing of political positions under the concept of “negotiated democracy.” Among the big clans, negotiated democracy has been praised for ensuring the fair allocation of political representation to all the sub clans, hence peace within the clans. Negotiated democracy has however been criticised for excluding the minority clans, except for those that align with the big clans<sup>58</sup>.

A 2013 report by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) on social cohesion indicates that there is inequitable

access to resources in Mandera. It outlines that resource sharing favours the big clans which use their numerical advantage to maintain a status of privilege<sup>59</sup>. It is worth noting that these big clans have stiff internal competition within their respective sub clans. Negotiated democracy is thus a potential trigger for conflict due to its lack of inclusivity. Many respondents said that there are rampant cases of favouritism, especially by the majority Garre, in employment processes within the County. A youth activist from the Garre clan however sought to dispel this notion, emphasising that only those with the right connections have access to the favours that come with closeness to the elders:

***“It is true that the elders were so involved in the recruitment process that applications for jobs passed through their hands. But the popular thinking that the Garre took everything in the County is not true. It is the few with connections to the Garre elders, and those connected to allied elders from the other clans, that benefited from the County jobs.”***<sup>60</sup>

The youth activist added that professionals such as teachers and health officers cannot work outside their perceived clan homelands. For instance, a Murulle cannot comfortably work in the Garre-dominated locality of Kutulo, yet it is almost a decade since the Garre and the Murulle last had a conflict. The respondents indicated that although Mandera town is considered cosmopolitan, it is rare to

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57 The Shabelle are one of the small clans that comprise the Corner Tribes; they reside around Khalalio and represent a significant chunk of the minority Corner Tribe vote.

58 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

59 National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC). *The Status of Social Cohesion in Kenya*, 2013, p. 75.

60 Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

see a member of the Degodia clan operating in the town, which is majorly inhabited by the Garre. The Mandera County Assembly Speaker expressed fears that the new trend of labelling mosques with clan names at their entrances poses the danger of division and conflict if allowed to continue<sup>61</sup>.

## 4.2.1 Clan Contention over the Dividends of Devolution

While devolution is appreciated by the various communities in Mandera County as a sure exit from underdevelopment, the County Government has been accused of being selective in its development projects. For instance, residents have cited the fact that the road from Rhamu to Malka Mari has not been developed yet a parallel road from Mandera to Banissa has been completely rehabilitated. The Garre-led clan coalition that formed the 2013 – 2017 County Government has also been accused of enjoying the benefits of devolution to the exclusion of the Degodia and Corner Tribes. The County Government has pointedly been accused of isolating Mandera North Constituency, which is mainly populated by the Degodia<sup>62</sup>. Respondents in Shiirshiir echoed the challenges of lack access to health and water facilities. The situation of resource sharing in Mandera County is linked to the case in the adjacent Wajir County, which has also been accused of denying services and resources to the minority Garre population living in Wajir<sup>63</sup>.

These allegations and counter allegations strain relations between the two clans and affect service delivery in the two Counties, while perceptions of skewed resource allocation hold the potential for inter-clan conflict.

The Mandera County Government has also been accused of engaging in non-priority mega projects that have remained unfinished. Respondents feel that too much money has gone into capital structural development at the expense of basic services that they still lack; they have also complained of contractors from Nairobi receiving contracts and rechanneling the money back to the capital without much human or capital investment in Mandera. A professional from Mandera raised questions about the rationale of rehabilitating a County road between Mandera and Banisa, which he said only serves the elite and hence does little to improve the quality of life for the ordinary citizens for whom devolution was created.

Corruption in the County Government, lack of community participation in development projects, and proxy securing of contracts were reported as common occurrences in the County Government. One MCA alleged that some County government officials have been skimming off County resources to invest in Nairobi, particularly acquiring properties in the South C and Nyayo neighbourhoods of the capital<sup>64</sup>. On the contrary, there are residents who feel that the County Government has delivered on some of its key promises to the people of Mandera. As a local imam put it:

*“Even the rain does not fall everywhere*

61 Mandera County Assembly Speaker, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

62 Youth Representative, Focus Group Discussion, Rhamu, 10 August 2016.

63 Ibid.

64 Member of County Assembly, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

*[at the same time]. Our county government has given us [electricity] and several development projects like roads and hospitals.”<sup>65</sup>*

## 4.2.2 Political Representation as a Resource

Access to public resources in Mandera is decided by the people who hold political positions. Contestation over political power as a doorway to these resources has significantly worsened the conflict in Mandera. The worst episodes of political violence occurred in 1983 and in 2010-2015. Although political competition is a conflict risk factor in all parts of the County, Mandera North Constituency stands out as having the most potential for violent conflict in 2017. This is because the Garre and Degodia clans have not decided on an amicable way forward for peaceful coexistence due to the deep-seated competition from either clan. One FGD participant recited a common saying in the County that figuratively depicts the intractable political conflict in Mandera:

*“A child who witnesses his mother’s miscarriages believes that as long as his father is alive, the mother will keep on getting miscarriages. This means that as long as politics exists, conflicts will keep occurring.”<sup>66</sup>*

It also emerged from the respondents that political conflict is not entirely attributable

to clan rivalry over resources. Politicians and the elite play a significant role in fanning the conflict, as explained in the next section.

## 4.3 Politics and Elite Incitement to Violence

Politicians, businessmen and other elite groups are known to stoke conflict as a means towards attaining political and economic advantage in Mandera. One example that was highlighted by respondents was the mass transfer of voters from outside Mandera County, and sometimes within the County, to tilt the outcome of election contests. The Garre for instance accuse the Degodia of illegally registering their kinsmen from Ethiopian, and the Marehan from Somalia’s Gedo region, to ensure the victory of the Degodia candidate for the Mandera North parliamentary seat in 2013. Similar accusations were levelled when another Degodia won the seat in the 2007 elections<sup>67</sup>. The instrumentalisation of the youth also emerged as an important issue. Respondents spoke of the presence of youth militia intimidating voters around polling stations in Rhamu during the last elections in 2013, causing violence in some polling centres on election day.

A government chief from Warankara asserted that the root of many conflicts in Mandera is the influence of a small number of self-interested elites. A young respondent from Bella supported the claim of elite incitement, laying

<sup>65</sup> Religious Leader, Focus Group Discussion, Elwak, 18 August 2016.

<sup>66</sup> Women representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

<sup>67</sup> Member of County Assembly, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 4 December 2016.

the most blame on elites who are safe and well off in the big cities:

*“The youth are incited by people who live in Nairobi, enticed with small monies to fight each other. Why would a hungry person otherwise want to fight his neighbour?”<sup>68</sup>*

## 4.4 Intra-County Border Disputes

Boundary issues have been identified as one of the major causes of conflict in many parts of Mandera Country. Clan boundaries created by the colonial government remain an important reference point for local conflicts in Mandera County. Respondents see the boundaries as imaginary lines created by colonial rulers to propagate the divide and rule principle between communities that are essentially one people (all largely Somali). Nonetheless, each clan jealously guards its boundaries. Clans that respect the boundaries and operationalise cross border engagement tend to experience less conflicts, unlike those that bulldoze their way with the intent of expanding their territory. Natural landmarks are used to identify boundaries, and disputes over these boundaries easily escalate into full blown conflicts among the communities.

Over the decades prior to devolution, the national government created administrative boundaries from sub locations, to location and divisions. In the era of devolution, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) has created electoral boundaries based on the current devolved

governance structure, among them Sub Counties-cum-Constituencies and Wards. However, there are several disputed settlements, some resulting from the change of the land value system, and others from the creation of unplanned settlements, among other reasons. The lack of harmonisation of these new electoral units, in tandem with the pre-existing administrative units, has created confusion and subsequent friction between clans. The manifestation of such disputes includes:

1. **Malka Mari is a contentious land area along the River Dawa, claimed by both the Garre and the Degodia.** The Garre lay an ancestral claim on Malka Mari, explaining that they were relocated by the national government in the 1980s to pave way for the gazettement of the Malka Mari National Park. The Degodia claim that they have lived in Malka Mari for decades during which the area was upgraded through various administrative scales. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) confirms that the area was officially designated a national park in 1989, and that it remains a national park to date.
2. **Mandera South and Lafey Sub-Counties have had their fair share of Garre-Murulle conflicts that led to the loss of many lives.** The Garre clan perceives the Murulle as expansionist, based on their claim that all territory the East of the B9 road all the way to El Wak Police Station belongs to them. The Murulle on their part dispute the Garre ancestral claims, insisting that the border is the B9 road. Garre IDPs, originally from Alango location but now

<sup>68</sup> Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Mandera town, 4 August 2016.

living in El Wak, feel betrayed. They say they never received their ancestral lands back after committing themselves to the Umul Accord that ended the 2003-2008 Garre-Murulle conflict. The clash between the two clans spiralled off a disagreement over electoral boundaries between Alango and Alungu administrative locations. It is worth noting that the alleged imposition of the border between the two locations by two government chiefs is partly responsible for the conflict.

### 3. The delimitation of the IEBC

**Constituency and Wards is also being contested between Mandera North and Mandera South Constituencies, creating a conflict between the Garre and Degodia clans.**

The Degodia feel that Mandera North Constituency was created to serve their interest and that Garre candidates should not contest for it. Just before the 2013 elections, Dar-Al-Salaam village was established and a polling station created there. The Corner Tribes claim the village was created by the Murulle for the sole purpose of intimidating the Corner Tribes with their high voter numbers and subdue them into supporting the Murulle parliamentary candidate, or else risk losing the position of Member of County Assembly (MCA), which is “reserved” for a candidate from the Corner Tribes.

### 4. Some settlements are administratively placed under one area, while politically affiliated to a different area.

Eres Teno location is an example of one such area, torn between Wajir and Mandera Counties. Alango and Alungu administrative locations, which caused

a conflict between the Garre-Murulle in 2003-2008, are disputed between Lafey and El Wak Sub-Counties; the case is the same for Quramadow and Tinfo locations, disputed between El Wak South and Mandera North constituencies. These are just a few examples of how boundary delimitation constitutes an impediment to peace between the clans in Mandera.

5. **Defunct colonial-era clan boundaries as a conflict factor in Mandera.** These clan-defined borders enabled the colonial government to restrict the movement of the clans; to control grazing areas; and to enable easier tax collection. Although these boundaries have no legal standing in the current Constitution, they fuel conflicts when clans make reference to them in order to strengthen their territorial claims.

## 4.5 Population Transfers and Internal Displacement

The various conflicts that have occurred in Mandera County and its neighbourhood have resulted in widespread population transfers and displacement. Respondents have claimed while some people have been displaced by conflict based on legitimate fears, others have been moved out of some areas, or moved into new areas, for strategic reasons. Conflicts in Ethiopia and Somalia have also brought in many people who now claim their right to be recognised as Kenyan citizens. The Marehan clan, which fled Somalia in large numbers

after the fall of the Somali state in 1991, is the most notable example. The clan is said to be seeking recognition as Mandera's fifth clan<sup>69</sup>. Once a population is displaced, there is rarely an effective mechanism by either the County or National Governments, or local community elders, to return or resettle the population. This leaves them as IDPs, in many cases wounded and latently harbouring a desire for vengeance or redress.

According to the research findings, members of the Garre community consider themselves the indigenes of Mandera and feel that the Government of Kenya has not given them equal treatment as with the other clans. This claim was articulated by a Garre woman in Takaba:

*“We, the Garre people, have encountered a lot of challenges in Kenya. We were told everybody is equal in Kenya but this is not the case in our view. [Our people] have been chased from several places like Bute in Wajir County, Mulango in Tana River County, Wagbari in Wajir County among others.”*<sup>70</sup>

The “expansionist” and “expulsionist” perceptions are strong anchors of suspicion behind the factors of conflict. Many Garre respondents, perceiving themselves to be the original inhabitants of Mandera, claimed that the Degodia were entrenched by a collusion between corrupt government administrators and Degodia leaders. During FGDs in Banissa and Eymole, there were sentiments to the effect that the Degodia should simply “go back

home” to Southern Ethiopia and Wajir County and allow the Garre to “recover” their lands and livelihoods in Malka Mari. Many Garre respondents demanded that Malka Mari should either be purely reserved as a national park or “given back” to its original owners (the Garre). On the contrary, Degodia political leaders from Wajir County, some of whom have family members living in Malka Mari and Shirshir, deny that Malka Mari is Garre ancestral land<sup>71</sup>. Due to its location along the River Dawa, Malka Mari has rich farmlands and grazing fields. If the contention over it is not resolved, it will remain a lurking conflict trigger between the Garre and Degodia. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in Mandera has confirmed that the contested Malka Mari National Park is a gazetted government facility that will, in the near future, be developed to reach its potential, at that when this time comes everyone living in the gazetted area will be asked to vacate.<sup>72</sup>

Meanwhile the Degodia perceive the Garre as adept at deliberate massive population and voter transfers to take over political units, with the aim of displacing Degodia populations in parts of Mandera.

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69 Garre Woman, Women's Focus Group Discussion, Takaba, 10 September 2016.

70 Ibid.

71 Adan Keynan, MP for Eldas Constituency (Wajir County), Key Informant Interview, Nairobi, 12 September 2016.

72 Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Officer, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town.





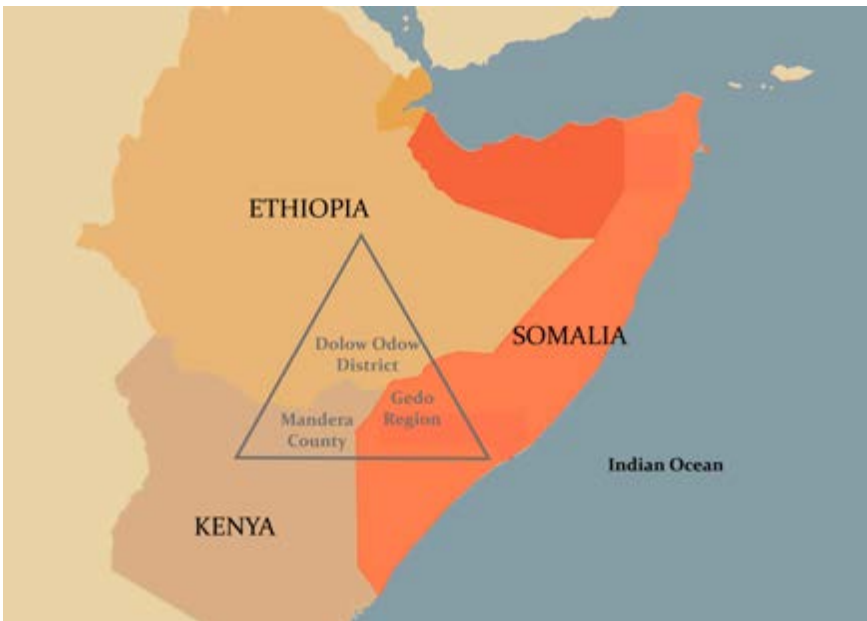
# CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS-BORDER DYNAMICS



# CHAPTER FIVE: CROSS-BORDER DYNAMICS

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## 5.0 Introduction



**FIGURE 2: Map of the Manderia Triangle in the Horn of Africa**

The Manderia Triangle is a geographical region in the Horn of Africa where Kenya, Ethiopia, and Somalia converge. The tri-border area is almost entirely inhabited by Somali communities with centuries of blood relations. The Garre and Degodia clans are known to live side by side in Ethiopia, as well as in Kenya's Manderia and Wajir Counties. The Marehan and Garre clans live together in Somalia. The conflict between any of these communities and actions of any of the three national governments across the border have social, economic, political and security

implications for the clans, which straddle the international borders. The types of government policies and strength that exist in the area also play an important role to determine how peace and security matters are addressed. The respondents sampled from across the borders of Mandera and its neighbours had mentioned the following as the key impediment to peace in the region, from their perspective.

## **5.1 Uncoordinated Policy on Cross Border Peace, Security, Trade, and Human Traffic**

There is lack of a coordinated approach between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia on issues of peace, security, trade, and the movement of people across the borders. Many key informants expressed a lack of awareness of any such inter-State agreements, adding that if these policies in effect do exist, they must be tucked away, unimplemented, in the respective capitals of the three countries.

The population living in Kenya's Mandera County and Ethiopia's Dolow Ado district mainly depends on food imports from Somalia's Gedo region. The long absence of a strong central state in Somalia has enabled the uncontrolled movement of cheap, mostly untaxed goods from across the Somalia border into Kenya and Ethiopia. The movement of across Kenya and Ethiopia is unhindered, while goods entering either country from

Somalia are considered contraband. The stringent restrictions imposed on these goods, confiscation of merchandise, and demands for bribes by security and customs officers in Kenya expose Somali traders to massive losses.

Respondents from Belet Hawa in Somalia's Gedo Region, complained of several unilateral decisions reached by the Kenya government, among them the closure of the Kenya-Somalia border and the construction of border wall to secure the Kenyan side. On several occasions shoppers from Belet Hawa are arrested in Mandera without warning and made to pay hefty fines for been in Kenya unlawfully. The fact is that the two towns are just stone throw away and people move between the borders while seeking basic services. The people of Somalia wonder how Kenyan government will expect meaningful collaboration when they are treated as suspects all the time.

## **5.2 Cross Border Conflict Spill Overs**

The most recent conflict between the Garre and Degodia communities originated in the Dolow Odo and Dire regions of Ethiopia, where the two clans live side by side. The conflict quickly spread across the border into Kenya, first into Mandera and onwards into Wajir County<sup>73</sup>.

The scars left behind have not yet healed, as can be seen in the tenuous relations in areas where these communities live together. These include Ashabito, Banissa, Rhamu, Garse, Malka Mari, Malka Ruqa, Choroqo, Guba, and Takaba, where people have been displaced. In Rhamu town, the main market has been split into two

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73 Elder, Focus Group Discussion, Rhamu, 10 August 2016.

parts, one for the Degodia and the other for the Garre<sup>74</sup>.

Two other challenging aspects of the easy cross border conflicts are the influence of the prolonged Somali civil war and the easy access of arms in the Mandera Triangle. The two factors are elaborated below.

### 5.2.1 Influence of the Prolonged Somali Civil War

Some of the residents interviewed noted that statelessness in Somalia has been cited as a contributing factor towards the increased culture of fighting among communities in Mandera, similar to the ebbs and flows of Somalia's prolonged civil war. Of special note was the influence of communities that came to Mandera as refugees, in addition to the active cross-border movements underlain by several commonalities between the near homogenously ethnic Somali communities living across the borders of the three countries. Some key informants claimed that the Marehan and Leysan clans were most responsible for this influence<sup>75</sup>.

### 5.2.2 Arms Dealers and other Profiteers of Violent Conflict

The Mandera Triangle, described by the U.S. Department of State as “one of the most conflict-prone areas in the world,”<sup>76</sup> is reported to be a significant conduit for weapon shipments from the Middle East into Somalia and onwards to other parts of the African continent. Respondents said that porous borders with a lawless Somalia and armed Ethiopian militias make it easy to get access to firearms. It is reported that the border towns are bases for arms traders, who facilitate the sale and movement of both small arms and sophisticated weapons to pastoralist communities all over Northern Kenya and in parts of the vast Rift Valley region, such as Pokot and Turkana Counties. It is allegedly possible to purchase anti-aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weapons in the Mandera Triangle, with the arms-dealers facilitating user training by ex-combatants from Somalia upon demand<sup>77</sup>. This easy availability of weapons has compelled local herders to seek ownership of some kind of firearm, preferably an AK47 rifle, to be able to protect their families and livestock<sup>78</sup>.

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74 Ibid.

75 Local Politician, Key Informant Interview, Malka Mari, 04 August 2016.

76 U.S. Department of State, Humanitarian Information Unit, *WebVISTA Prototype 1: Greater Mandera Triangle Conflict Incident Vista*, 2009.

77 Conflict Researcher, Key Informant Interview, Nairobi, 02 September 2016.

78 Ibid.

## 5.3 Impact of Kenya's 2011 Military Incursion into Somalia

Kenya's decision to cross into southern Somalia in 2011 was a key turning point for peace and security in Mandera. The incursion was aimed at defeating the Al-Shabaab militant group, which had kidnapped several aid workers and tourists from inside Kenyan territory and took them to Somalia, in this way posing a threat to Kenya's security and its thriving tourism industry.

Religious leaders, the business community, and local peace activists from Mandera strongly lobbied President Mwai Kibaki's government against sending troops to Somalia, citing the likelihood of Al-Shabaab attacks targeting civilians in Mandera and elsewhere in Kenya. Some of the religious leaders expressed their preference for the existence of a pre-existing cross border peace initiative, which had the capacity to mediate between the Kenyan government and communities, authorities, and other actors in Gedo.<sup>79</sup>

The Kenyan government however went ahead and, in October 2011, Kenyan forces went into Somalia, entering the fray for the first time in the two decades since the beginning of the Somali Civil War. In February 2012, the Kenya Defence Forces were absorbed into AMISOM through UNSCR 2036 to become part of the six troop-contributing countries (alongside

Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone).

True to the fears of the Mandera leaders, Al-Shabaab scaled up its insurgent attacks on Kenya, mainly targeting ordinary people in classic terrorist fashion. Some recent significant Al-Shabaab attacks have included the massacre of 147 people in the April 2015 Garissa University attack; the killing of 67 people in the September 2013 Westgate Mall Siege in Nairobi; the twin November / December 2014 Mandera massacres in which 64 non-Muslim Kenyans were ambushed and executed while travelling by bus to their home counties for Christmas; five assassination attempts on the Governor of Mandera County; attacks on Mandera County offices and the blowing up of infrastructural facilities such as electricity supply and telecommunications installations in various parts of Mandera. The sustained targeted killings of non-locals and non-Muslims has led to a flight of teachers, doctors and other civil servants from Mandera, depriving the local population of basic services such as education and healthcare in a County that has suffered historical marginalisation. Al-Shabaab's activities have also facilitated the movement of arms between the three countries, as well as the increasing use of sophisticated arms in conflicts within the Mandera Triangle. One religion and conflict scholar from Mandera still maintains that the incursion was ill-advised, saying:

***“The religious leaders advised against the Kenyan incursion to Somalia. Six years down the line, it is not only***

<sup>79</sup> Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 24 November 2016.

*Mandera paying the price, but also other parts of the country.”<sup>80</sup>*

Meanwhile, the religious leaders that were involved in the now defunct cross border framework of engagement have found themselves in a difficult situation—labelled traitors and targeted by Al-Shabaab on one hand, and suspected of being Al-Shabaab sympathisers by the government on the other hand<sup>81</sup>. This has impeded a lot of further voluntary engagement in peace work, especially in fighting radicalisation in Mandera, as expounded in section 6.3 below.

## 5.4 Uncoordinated Peace and Security Interventions

Although Kenya and Ethiopia are among the six countries providing forces to the AMISOM effort to stabilise Somalia, respondents from Somalia complain of the lack of synergy in the stabilisation effort. A number of Kenyan Somali youth from the North Eastern region, trained to buttress the TFG forces, have either died, or switched sides to join Al-Shabaab after the plan was abandoned without an express Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) process; local administrations in southern Somalia have noted a similar lack of support in the rehabilitation of youth who renounce Al-Shabaab. Some of these youths are reported to have re-joined Al-

Shabaab after finding no sense of incentive in joining the Somali National Army (SNA)<sup>82</sup>.

This clear lack of cross-border coordination in handling such militarised youth has left the local communities in fear of Al-Shabaab’s potential reassertion over southern Somalia. One local administrator from Gedo said:

*“The day AMISOM forces will withdraw, we shall follow them because we believe Al-Shabaab will retake the town despite having been locked out for 10 years”.*<sup>83</sup>

## 5.5 Significant Civilian Casualties of Military Campaigns

There have been numerous claims that aerial bombardment by Kenyan forces targeting Al-Shabaab militants in southern Somalia have resulted in civilian, non-combatant deaths in parts of El Wak, Damasa, and Khadija Haji in Somalia. Community members from El Wak, Somalia, claimed to be aware of up to 132 collateral casualties in recent years (period not specified)<sup>84</sup>. The lack of an engagement framework between the local population in Somalia and the AMISOM forces hinders trust building, which would have enhanced intelligence gathering for the military campaigns against Al-Shabaab.

80 Religion and Conflict Scholar, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 25 September 2016.

81 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 24 November 2016.

82 Religion and Conflict Scholar, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 25 September 2016.

83 Local Administration Official, Key Informant Interview, El Wak (Somalia), 18 August 2016.

84 Marehan Community Member, Focus Group Discussion, El Wak (Somalia), 18 August 2016.

In addition to this, members of the Marehan clan claim that they have been selectively targeted on suspicion of supporting Al-Shabaab, although it is common knowledge that Al-Shabaab recruits its fighters from across the Somali clans and even from among non-ethnic Somali communities. The members believe that this suspicion and arbitrary arrests provide fertile grounds for youth radicalisation. One Marehan elder from El Wak, Somalia, said:

***“I have been involved in the release of eight people detained by Kenyan authorities in El Wak, Kenya, most of them poor pastoralists but with bonds as high as US\$ 32,000 demanded for their release. Some have died in custody.”***<sup>85</sup>

Tales of such arrests have driven fear into the Somali population who wish to cross into Kenya to seek services. The respondents say Kenya does not appreciate good neighbourliness.

They claim that they are often treated like criminals when they cross into Kenya and have to pay bribes to enter Kenyan territory. A community member from El Wak, Somalia said:

***“Our identification documents from Somalia are hardly ever recognised unless accompanied by a bribe. It is a reality we are forced to live with].”***<sup>86</sup>

Another respondent noted that since Mandera depends on Somalia for the supply of food and essential services, difficulties with the border management have led to situations where cross-border business people lose millions of shillings to extortion by customs officials<sup>87</sup>.

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85 Marehan Elder, Focus Group Discussion, El Wak (Somalia), 18 August 2016.

86 Marehan Community Member, Focus Group Discussion, El Wak (Somalia), 18 August 2016.

87 Marehan trader, Focus Group Discussion, El Wak (Somalia), 18 August 2016.





The perspective of the sages: The *Ugas* (clan elders) are among the most important players on peace and related issues in Mandera. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



The silent majority speaks: The youth form the majority of the population in Mandera, but most decisions affecting them are made by older men. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



Seeking every voice: Participants at a women-only focus group discussion. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



Addressing the issues head on: A man stresses a point at a mixed focus group discussion. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



A programme researcher notes the views of respondents during the participatory research phase. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



Participants at a cross-clan focus group discussion listen keenly as a respected community member expresses his opinion. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



Seeking peace through consensus and dialogue: Participants at the stakeholders' forum vote on their priorities for peace in Mandera. ©NCIC and Interpeace.



Dry and hilly, Mandera is part of the arid and semi-arid rangelands of northern Kenya. ©NCIC and Interpeace.

# CHAPTER SIX: VULNERABILITY OF SPECIAL GROUPS IN MANDERA



# **CHAPTER SIX: VULNERABILITY OF SPECIAL GROUPS IN MANDERA**

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## **6.0 Introduction**

Beyond the core issues fuelling clan conflict in Mandera, the findings of the consultative phase of the Mandera Peacebuilding programme found the plight of minorities and special groups as a potential conflict trigger. In Focus Group Discussions carried out with minority clans, women, the youth and other special groups, the vulnerability of these groups became apparent. It was clear from listening to their voices that their current treatment, which is less than favourable, could constitute an impediment to peace either now or in the future depending on how they are treated. Their grievances range from losing their long-held livelihoods to not being given adequate space to participate in the public life of their societies. This section will look at each of the special groups and discuss the issues they raised during the FGDs and KIIs.

## **6.1 The Vulnerability of Minority Clans**

Relative to the big clans in Mandera, the minority clans stand at a political, economic and socio-cultural disadvantage. The marginalisation of the minorities was underscored by respondents, citing the fierce political competition and inequitable resource-sharing, mostly by way of low, inequitable representation in the County Assembly and low employment numbers in the Mandera County Public Service Board (MCSB). The study, for instance, revealed that no member of the Watta community—nationally recognised as one of the smallest and most marginalised ethnic groups in Kenya—has ever been employed by the County government. In the opinion of a local government official from Gingo, this qualifies devolution as a conflict driver:

***“Devolution is a source of conflict since county resources are not shared equitably. Political incitement is based on individual interest which perpetuates conflicts. Politicians manipulate poverty stricken populations with hand-outs to participate in conflict. Minority communities are unhappy with the dominance of the majority communities, and this creates disputes over political supremacy and subsequently leads to clashes.”***<sup>88</sup>

The Watta community in El Wak and those from the Corner Tribes expressed the feeling that their rights were much better protected under the Central Government than under the current County Government. They reported the loss of their plots, farms, and some elective seats like the position of the Member of County Assembly (MCA) for Neboi, which they had expected would be reserved for them.

Enticed using cash lump sums, many members of the Corner Tribes have been lured to sell their plots and farms in Koromey, Neboi, Bur Abor and even along the Dawa River to business and political elites in the County. Moreover, the main blacksmith yard in Mandera town, used mainly by blacksmiths from the Corner Tribes, was taken over by an influential businessman, displacing all the blacksmiths and constructing a fuel station in its place. It is feared that this gradual loss of lands belonging to the Corner Tribes could one day render them despondent and disposed of their ancestral lands, which may lead to land

conflict as they seek places to live, farm and rear their livestock. But for now, the money being flaunted is a quick bait for the poor minorities, as one respondent said:

***“It is difficult to resist the allure of such large amounts of cash when we are so poor. We will continue to suffer unless some policies are developed by the County Government or another saviour to protect us.”***<sup>89</sup>

The political prospects also seem to be shrinking for the Corner tribes. One minority rights activist recounted a visit he paid to one of Mandera’s elected leaders to inquire what development plans he had for the Corner Tribes. What he received was a sarcastic response, “I have certificates of good conduct for them.”<sup>90</sup> In 2013, when the Corner Tribes attempted to front a candidate for the Mandera East parliamentary seat, the Murulle outmanoeuvred them by compromising the voting bloc of Khalalio Ward, which is unofficially the reserve of the Corner Tribes. The Murulle set up a village named Dar-Al-Salaam next to Khalalio and transferred Murulle voters *en masse*. The move forced the Corner Tribes to vote for the Murulle parliamentary candidate in order not to lose the Khalalio Ward slot in the County Assembly. In the same election, the other County Assembly slot reserved for the Corner Tribes in Neboi was taken by a Degodia candidate through similar vote manoeuvring.

88 Government Chief, Focus Group Discussion, Khalalio, 13 August 2016.

89 Community Member, Focus Group Discussion, Khalalio, 13 August 2016.

90 Minority Rights Activist, Focus Group Discussion, Khalalio, 13 August 2016.



## 6.2 Manipulation of Youth and Women

The youth in Mandera have been affected in various forms and manipulated by several actors, which has made them an integral barrier to peace in the County. One respondent at the youth FGD said the County's youth have over time faced manipulation by many actors: some are radicalised to join Al-Shabaab; some were lured by the Kenyan security agencies and trained to fight alongside TFG forces in Somalia; others by their clan militias. Amid all this manipulation, there is a glaring lack of strategies to manage the aftermath of such manipulation. Most of the actors accused by the youth for having manipulated them, including government and clan elders, deny any involvement<sup>91</sup>. It is important to note that many radicalised youths who have participated in terror attacks in Kenya have some roots in Mandera County, either by birth or found citizenship documentation through proxies<sup>92</sup>. Some of the pull factors for the youths are inadequate educational opportunities and unemployment.

In 2010, the GOK, the TFG and AMISOM recruited almost 3,000 youth from across Mandera, Wajir, Garissa in Kenya, as well as from the Gedo and Lower Juba regions of Somalia, and gave them military training<sup>93</sup>. The aim was for them to secure the Kenya-Somalia border and create a buffer zone,

fighting alongside the Ras Kamboni Brigade. A significant number of them however, deserted for various reasons, some becoming victims of war, and others pulling out after finding out that they would be paid less than the initially promised US\$600. A great many of these youth are yet to be traced. It is suspected that some are active in local clan conflicts, while others have reportedly shifted allegiance to Al-Shabaab and have been involved in various cross-border attacks along the Kenya-Somalia border, all the way from Garissa to Mandera<sup>94</sup>.

On their part, women in Mandera have a mixed role in conflict. While recent conflict indicates that clan militias are increasingly seeking easier targets, especially women, children and elderly, women have been accused of encouraging conflict using folklore, despite the fact that their suffering is disproportionate to that of men. One woman said,

*“Women have become impediments to peace in Mandera, by fanning the violent conflict using inciteful songs and poems. Some threaten their husbands that if defeated, they will go for the winning men.”<sup>95</sup>*

A number of these inciteful poems, songs and hateful messages have gone viral on social media, intensifying clan hatred and exacerbating violent conflict in some cases. Women are therefore both villain and victim, and as one woman in Rhamu aptly put it:

91 Religion and Conflict Scholar, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 25 September 2016.

92 Youth representative, Focus Group Discussion, Khalalio, 13 August 2016.

93 Religion and Conflict Scholar, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 25 September 2016.

94 Ibid.

95 Woman Representative, Women's Focus Group Discussion, Takaba, 10 September 2016.

“[In the end] we suffer more, dealing with death, injuries and the burden of taking care of orphaned children.”<sup>96</sup>

## 6.3 Suspicion of Religious Leaders by Security Agencies

Religious leaders from Mandera were important actors in cross border dialogue before Kenya’s incursion into Somalia, facilitating many cross border incidents, ranging from the release of captured persons to helping address allegations of police brutality. After the incursion, the same leaders found themselves on the receiving end, suspected of supporting Al-Shabaab<sup>97</sup>. One religious leader used a fable to explain the conundrum facing the elders:

*“It is like the story of the lamb that saw two men fighting and cried out for their separation. Asked why it was so concerned by a fight between humans, the lamb replied that when two men fight and one is injured, it (the lamb) would be slaughtered to feed and nurse the injured man to recovery. Such is the plight of the religious leaders, being suspected by the same government that trusted them to facilitate cross-border dialogue in the past and has now treats them with suspicion simply because they were involved in those cross-border initiatives.”<sup>98</sup>*

Despite being treated with suspicion, the religious leaders have extensively spoken out against violent extremism, leading to their characterisation, and targeting, by Al-Shabaab as “enemies of the cause”. On the other hand, their own government suspects them of religious radicalisation despite playing important roles in building peace, cohesion and sustaining good cross border relations.

According to the respondents, such victimisation based on religious identity in the region is not a new phenomenon<sup>99</sup>. The following occurrences were cited as examples:

1. The closure of NGOs supported by majority Muslim states following the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombing in Nairobi. The NGOs, closed on suspicion of involvement in the U.S. bomb attack, included the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO), Help Africa People, Mercy International Relief Organization (Mercy), the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, Al-Muntada Al-Islami, and the Ibrahim al-Ibrahim Foundation. This disrupted the services rendered by these NGOs to vulnerable communities in Mandera and across the entire North Eastern region of Kenya.
2. In 2008, non-local teachers from Mandera who went to buy merchandise from Belet Hawa, Somalia, and were abducted. Local religious leaders successfully brokered their release, without any harm or any ransom terms. This successful mediation

96 Mother, Women’s Focus Group Discussion, Takaba, 10 September 2016.

97 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Rhamu, 24 November 2016.

98 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 2 September 2016.

99 Religion and Conflict Scholar, Key Informant Interview, Mandera town, 25 September 2016.

led to the creation of a permanent peace dialogue mechanism between Kenya and Somalia, involving multi-stakeholders. Eight years later during the 2016 Heroes Day celebrations in Mandera town, the County Commissioner declared that the government would hunt down all those who had ever had cross border contacts, even if those contacts occurred as far back as ten years prior<sup>100</sup>. This declaration caused fear among the religious fraternity.

3. In many cases, when a violent conflict erupts and the government fails to contain it, religious leaders are always approached as the last resort. Yet, they do not always receive the requisite facilitation and suitable conditions to mitigate conflicts<sup>101</sup>.

## 6.4 The Plight of People Living with Disabilities

Mandera's long history of conflicts and violence has left behind a large number of People Living with Disabilities (PWDs). These include community members living with both the physical marks of violent conflict, such as amputated limbs, and internal wounds such as unresolved grudges and the trauma of conflicts. There are cases of young ex-combatants living with disabilities being suspected of being sleeper agents and gathering intelligence for extremist groups; or of planning suicide bombings since they are no longer able to participate on the battlefield. The frustration and trauma experienced by PWDs, both ex-combatants and victims, poses a threat to stability and requires provision of counselling and alternative sources of livelihoods to enable their reintegration into the society.

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100 Religious Leader, Key Informant Interview, Mandera Town, 24 November 2016.

101 Ibid.



# CHAPTER SEVEN: RESILIENCE FACTORS



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## 7.0 Introduction

Alongside the focus on the challenges to peace in Mandera, there are resilience factors that bring the communities together, which can provide a concrete foundation for prolonged peace. These resilience factors anchor on the commonalities that exist between the near-homogenous ethnic Somali communities living in Mandera. These commonalities cover their largely nomadic lifestyle, a similar history of underdevelopment, and the rootedness in the *Xeer* tradition which compels Somali clans to mobilise resources to assist fellow kinsmen in times of difficulty. This section looks at some of the most salient resilience factors that respondents identified among the communities in Mandera.

## 7.1 Shared Cultural, Historical and Religious Ties

The common Somali identity of the local population that lives within Mandera, and also in the bordering regions of Ethiopia and Somalia, provides a strong bond that holds the people together. This aspect includes a common language, the strongly Cushitic physical appearance, clan-based identity, similar historical and cultural events, a widespread adherence to Islam, and largely pastoralist livelihoods. These similarities have enabled the development of common cultural treaties between clans to deal with disputes, including those over grazing rights, shared access to essential services like water, and judicial redress processes, including for livestock theft or even killings.

The clans have, at the local community level, been able to mitigate crime cases and other major cases, including the loss of life, through the “Maslaha” reconciliation

process. Depending on which clan is a neighbour, is closely linked or has had past disputes with a certain clan, there are often mutual agreements between them to deal with various levels and forms of crime. These range from rape, physical fights with bodily harm, or loss of teeth to death. Although a number of cases are resolved using a corrupted version of the Islamic penal code, some clans have their own commonly agreed reference terms to deal with judicial issues. The administration of these alternative dispute resolution mechanisms offers quick justice that has at times helped prevent retaliation or the escalation of conflict.

## **7.2 National Government as a Symbol of Unity**

Many respondents were quick to pick out the national Government of Kenya as a unifying factor across the clans in Mandera County. They cited the use of a single national flag, the office of the County Commissioner and the Security apparatus, which report to the National government in Nairobi, among the non-partisan symbols of unity. A majority of the interviewees believe that if some of these essential functions are placed under the County leadership they would fall under manipulation and possibly lack the neutrality that people would require from them. Although several challenges and the demeanour of the security institutions have led to the low level of public trust among the local population, they are also seen as a neutral conduit for non-partisan dialogue during internal clan conflict.

## **7.3 Common Sharing of Social Facilities**

In the villages, members of the local community share common utilities and public spaces like boreholes, markets, schools, and hospitals despite coming from different clans. This makes them feel that the effective functioning of these facilities is one of the most important issues that bond the people together. These facilities have local committees like the Parent Teacher Association (PTA), the Water User Association etc., which comprise members of the various clans that live in the area, and thus share a common vision of improving the services rendered to the public. This helps the communities avoid the destruction and mismanagement of such social services even during adverse conflict periods.

## **7.4 Interdependent Commercial Interests**

Many people also confirmed that they have common business interests or investments across clan lines. While some communities have the purchasing power, others provide the needed goods like firewood, milk, livestock etc. This interdependence has at times helped people seek solutions that will halt conflicts that are likely to affect their commercial interests. Some people jointly own or run properties, houses etc. with members of other clans and do not wish to see them destroyed in clan conflicts.



## 7.5 Shared Developmental and Security Challenges

The people of Mandera County share a similar history of underdevelopment, insecurity, political manipulation, weakened social fabrics, drought and environmental challenges, and terror attacks by Al-Shabaab. These common challenges have shaped the way people respond to situations. While the clans have conflicts among themselves, common problems often become a unifying factor. For example,

the harsh securitised response to the 2008-2009 Garre-Murulle conflict made the two communities reconcile quickly because they felt that they had a common aggressor in the atrocities that were visited upon them. Similarly, the scale of the Garre-Degodia conflict of 2010-2014 was lowered by the various attacks by Al-Shabaab on the local population. Common problems like drought, hunger and disease have at times provided opportunities for the community to work together to resolve the challenges thus helping to seal their various divisions.



# CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY OF KEY IMPEDIMENTS TO PEACE IN MANDERA



# CHAPTER EIGHT: SUMMARY OF KEY IMPEDIMENTS TO PEACE IN MANDERA

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## 8.0 Introduction

This section summarises the key findings of the consultative phase of the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme. It outlines the main impediments to peace as identified by the local population of Mandera and other stakeholders, as well as the priorities that they put forward in the process of seeking sustainable and long term peace in the County.

The findings of the research from the consultative phase and the prioritisation of the key impediments to peace were validated at a Stakeholders' forum held in Mandera town from 14-16 December 2016. A total of 134 stakeholders gathered to hear and validate them. They included members of the local communities, among them youth, women, clan elders, religious leaders, sub county administrators, representatives of the business community and the local population from the 30 wards of Mandera County. There were also key government officials from Nairobi, including officials of the national Ministry of Devolution and Planning, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), the Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC); County-level officials led by the County Governor, the County Commissioner, Senator of Mandera, 7 Members of Parliament, the County Women's Representative and aspiring candidates for various elective seats in the 2017 elections.

Also present were officials of the National Police Service (NPS), the National Intelligence Service (NIS) and Human Rights Watch (HRW). From across the Somali and Ethiopian borders there were District Commissioners from the Ethiopia and Somalia sides of the border, and representatives of the local populations from the two neighbouring countries.

The objective of the forum was to enable the stakeholders to collectively identify and prioritise the challenges to peace in Mandera, as well as to kick-start the participatory development of consensus-based solutions to the challenges. The forum marked the conclusion of the consultative phase of the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme, which ran from June to November 2016 across the entirety of Mandera County, the adjacent Wajir County, and the bordering regions of Somalia and Ethiopia.

The stakeholders at the forum reached consensus on the key impediments to peace in Mandera, under the five thematic areas explained in the following section.

## 8.1 Summary of Findings

### a) Manipulation of Community Social and Cultural Systems

The manipulation of clan identities and stereotypes, and the lack of sustainable social reconciliation processes has created an entrenched culture of retaliation, through the negative manipulation of the noble *Xeer* tradition. This has consequently resulted in concepts such as “our clan” vs. “their clan”; the double-sided role of the *Ugas* (elders) as both conflict resolution authorities and symbols of internal clan supremacy; the “expulsionist” and “expansionist” perceptions among clans; the ease of mobilisation of clan youth/militia to violence and resistance to demobilisation; the rejection of traditional Somali conventions of

war; and the negative use of folklore and social media to fuel conflict.

### b) Security and Rule of Law

There is a glaring lack of trust between the local population and security agencies in Mandera, partly due to the historical atrocities meted out on the people of the North-Eastern region and the lack of local representation in the leadership of County level security agencies. The other factor is the lack of accountability of the security sector for their actions.

### c) Governance and Political Systems

Historical injustices and repressive state policies under different governments over the decades have led to the resource marginalisation, underdevelopment, and conflicts over resources among the people of Mandera. The devolution of government has provided a laudable opportunity for the resources to finally reach the grassroots, but has equally exacerbated the inter-clan competition as political representation gives the illusion of access to resources. Border disputes and the quest for clan dominance have brought the role of elite incitement to the surface.

### d) Cross Border Conflict Dynamics

The lack of a coordinated policy for cross border peace, security, trade and movement of people has intensified cross border conflict spill overs mainly due to the complex dynamics of the broader Mandera Triangle. Cross border relations, initially sustained by local peace actors, have been paralysed since Kenya’s 2011 incursion into Somalia, engendering the subsequent terror attacks that have affected

the country for nearly seven years now. Uncoordinated security interventions have led to the collateral damage of civilian lives and properties, which has weakened capacities for cross border dialogue.

**e) Vulnerability of Special Groups**

The manipulation and victimisation of minority communities, women, youth, PWDs and religious leaders provides fertile ground for current and future conflict, as well as radicalisation and the weakening of the collaborative peace systems that were initially developed by previous peace programmes.

**8.2 The Validation Process**

For purposes of effective validation, the Mandera Peacebuilding Team presented the five selected thematic areas to the participants at the stakeholders’ forum and screened film recordings of the actual views that the people voiced for each thematic area. The participants were facilitated through plenary discussions

to give their views on the findings of the participatory research. Once the participants reached agreement on the issues, they were facilitated to work in breakout groups where they prioritised the most pressing issues identified during the research and plenary sessions.

**8.3 Prioritisation of Issues**

The 134 participants were divided into four heterogeneous groups, based on geographical locality of origin, clan dynamics, occupations, special groups (youth, women, persons with disabilities, and minorities) to discuss and prioritise key issues. The groups were then tasked to prioritise one issue under each of the themes, while simultaneously prioritising the actual themes themselves. Each of the four groups presented their findings and after deliberation, the following themes and issues were prioritised for the Mandera Peacebuilding Programme to begin working on in 2017.

**TABLE 2: Priority themes as identified by Mandera Stakeholders**

	<b>Prioritised themes</b>	<b>Prioritised activity for 2017 implementation</b>
<b>1</b>	Community social and cultural systems	Lack of social reconciliation processes
<b>2</b>	Security and rule of Law	Lack of trust between the population and security agencies
<b>3</b>	Governance and political systems	Border disputes
<b>4</b>	Cross border dynamics: cross border conflict spill overs	Lack of coordination mechanisms for peace, security, trade and movement across international borders
<b>5</b>	Vulnerability of special groups	To be mainstreamed across the activities

## 8.4 Recommendations for Future Peacebuilding work

The following are the key recommendations that emanated from the findings of this study:

### 8.4.1 Search for Local Solutions to Conflict

Similar to the process that was used to identify, validate and prioritise the impediments to peace in Mandera County, there is a need for possible solutions to be searched and validated by the local population. Local peacebuilding efforts should be pegged on a number of agreed upon interventions, which emphasise community-centred dialogue, reconciliation, trust building and the genuine efforts to build local peacebuilding capacities.

There is a need for Building Bridges of Understanding (BBU). BBU refers to a range of interventions aimed at promoting peace and integration among groups in conflict. BBU programmes were utilised in other parts of the country to reconcile ethnic groups that were in conflict during the 2008 post-election violence. In Kenya, exchange programmes were organised for community elders from the Kalenjin, Kikuyu and Luo communities to facilitate peace dialogue. The outcomes of the process were sustainable and manifested in the relative peace of the 2013 elections.

The government needs to invest in bolstering public confidence of the local population in Mandera. Those mechanisms that did not

work during the colonial period or in the early part of Kenya's independence should be shunned because they impede the course of peace. These include systemic marginalisation, collective punishment, torture, brutality, enforced disappearances and alleged extra-judicial killings. At best, such measures may inflict fear, intimidation and a conflict lull in the short-term, but such negative peace is counterproductive in the long run. Better options include permanent dialogue spaces, open and honest engagements to broker peace, reconciliation and integration among the clans, all of which could be integrated into the national and county level peace and security architecture, with activities geared towards developing trust between the rival clans in the lead.

Going forward in 2017, the Peacebuilding Team envisions the search for peace through several ways. Using the local Working Group members and Steering Committees, the team will engage the local community and facilitate their search for local solutions to peace in Mandera County. In the further research phase of the 2017 programme, the team will explore the following questions in their pursuit for concretising the solutions to the impediments to peace in Mandera County.

- In what ways does the identified challenge (prioritised above) manifest itself in the county?
- What are the immediate actions that will be undertaken to resolve the challenges (Short-term actions- conflict prevention around election related violence in 2017)?
- What are the long-term actions that need to be undertaken to solve the challenges (Long-term intervention)?



- What are the issues that require external collaborative support (Advocacy issues)?

## 8.4.2 Capacity Building for Local, Community-level Peace Initiatives

For peacebuilding to be sustainable, it is imperative to have local communities driving the process of identifying the root cause of conflict (the impediments to peace) as well as the possible solutions. This is because they are the ones who suffer the most when conflicts take a violent turn. At the same time, it is important to involve all the stakeholders and to emphasise the resilience factors that exist among the feuding communities (e.g. a common history, culture, religion, language, common utilities etc.). It is on these resilience factors that a foundation for lasting peace can be established.

The exclusion of the local community and their limited participation in most government peace programmes only compounds the mistrust of the local population and undermines the cohesion within the community. There is a need to build the local capacity for peace through community-based conflict resolution processes based on trust-building, addressing the impediments to peace, focusing on resilience factors and adopting a conflict transformation approach with a win-win attitude. These are suitable stepping stones for peace in heterogeneous contexts like Mander.

## 8.4.3 Support for Sustainable Coordination and Advocacy for Peace in Mander

The many years of conflict in the wider Mander Triangle has had a devastating and far-reaching impact on the socio-economic status of the people of Mander County. One of the elders interviewed used the analogy of a slithering snake to describe the nature of the Mander conflicts in the context their trans-boundary nature:

*“The conflicts in Mander are like a snake with its tail in Ethiopia, its body coiling through Mander into Somalia and Wajir County, and the head turning back into Mander County.”<sup>102</sup>*

This analogy vividly describes the clan and transboundary attributes that characterise the Mander conflicts. As such, the very nature of the conflicts calls for a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral, and cross border engagement to bolster the chances of sustainable peace and local conflict resolution capacities. There is an imperative need for information sharing and coordination of peace efforts between Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia for the sake of peace in Mander County.

102 Elder, Key Informant Interview, Rhamu, 2 September 2016.



# CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION



# CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

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## 9.0 Summary

As elaborated in the earlier chapters of this report, the focus of the consultative research phase of the programme was to listen to the voices of the people and all the stakeholders of Mandera in order to hear what they identified as the impediments to peace in the County. This consultative phase, carried out in 2016, is the first part of a Participatory Action Research (PAR) process involving communities across Mandera County, as well as community representatives in Nairobi, key informants in the neighbouring Wajir County, and communities living along the international borders with Somalia and Ethiopia.

Marking the end of the consultative phase of the programme, a three-day stakeholders' forum was held in Mandera town in December 2016, gathering a large number of representatives from the local communities and other stakeholders. The forum validated the findings of the consultative phase of the PAR process and collectively prioritised the identified challenges to peace in Mandera. The following four challenges were identified as the most pressing impediments to peace in the County:

### **a. Lack of sustainable social reconciliation processes**

Social reconciliation processes have been weakened by changing community dynamics. This has been exemplified by the deliberate manipulation of clan identities and stereotypes for political and economic gain, the weakening of the *Xeer* tradition and the resultant culture of retaliation. The ambivalent role of the *Ugas* (elders), traditionally a reliable institution for social moderation and conflict resolution, has contributed to the lack of sustainable social reconciliation structures.

Contemporary clan elders are now considered both as symbols of internal clan supremacy and conflict resolution authorities, rendering their role in community peacemaking rather ambiguous. The rejection of traditional Somali conventions of war, and the negative use of folklore and social media to fuel conflict have both further contributed to the weakening of the social reconciliation structures.

## **b. Lack of trust between the population and security agencies**

The relationship between local communities and the security agencies in Mandera County is one marked by a lack of trust. One of the reasons for the mistrust is the atrocities that the people of Mandera and other parts of the North Eastern region have historically suffered at the hands of the security forces. Another reason is the lack of local representation of the local population within the County-level security structures, which report to the national government since security is not a devolved function in Kenya. This makes it difficult to hold the security agencies to account for their actions at the county level.

## **c. Border disputes**

Disputes over land boundaries have been the drivers behind many conflicts in Mandera Country, as clans seek to guard their areas of territorial influence from domination by other clans. These disputes include contestation over tillable areas like Malka Mari along the River Dawa; irredentist attempts to revert to the now defunct colonial clan boundaries; administrative boundaries created by the national government across clan settlements; the increased commercialisation of land; and gerrymandering by influential political actors.

## **d. Lack of coordination mechanisms for trade and movement across international borders**

The lack of coordinated policies governing cross border trade and movement across the international borders between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia has allowed the complex dynamics of the Mandera Triangle to present a challenge to peace. The uncoordinated policies affect the cross-border interactions among the Somali clans that straddle the international borders of these three countries. Trade and movement between the borders has been made difficult by corrupt customs

officials, and cross border relations that were initially sustained by local peace actors have been paralysed since Kenya's 2011 incursion into Somalia, engendering the subsequent terror attacks that have affected the country for nearly seven years now. All of these factors impede positive cross border interactions that would otherwise foster peace.

## 9.1 Way Forward

In the beginning of 2017, the programme entered the second phase of its PAR process, which seeks to find and implement solutions to the impediments to peace identified in the consultative phase. As the programme is limited in capacity, it will initially focus on the first two highest rated impediments to peace. Participants at the County Stakeholders Forum nominated members to a Working Group and a Steering Committee that will lead the research on solutions to these impediments to peace (Working Group) and spearhead the advocacy for these solutions to be implemented (Steering Committee), accompanied and supported by the programme's peacebuilding team at all times.

The joint NCIC and Interpeace peacebuilding programme in Mandera, whose ultimate goal is to achieve an effective, locally owned peacebuilding architecture for sustainable peace among the communities of Mandera, will continue to facilitate the search for solutions to peace, in line with the identified priorities and through the active participation of community members and other relevant stakeholders throughout the process.





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This publication was made possible through the generous contribution and support from:

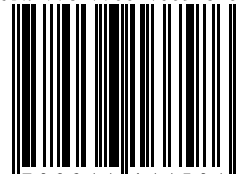


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ISBN 978-9966-1665-8-6



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