



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



NORTHERN KENYA VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT ASSESSMENT



Final Report: February 2024

This document is made possible by the United States Agency for International Development and the generous support of the American People and by USAID through USAID / CPS / CVP Task Order No. 7200AA22F00014. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Integrity Global LLC and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT
AND CONFLICT IN ISIOLO, LAIKIPIA,
SAMBURU, TURKANA, AND WEST
POKOT

PAGE LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

NORTHERN KENYA VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT ASSESSMENT: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CONFLICT IN ISIOLO, LAIKIPIA, SAMBURU, TURKANA, AND WEST POKOT

USAID/Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization Peacebuilding Evaluation, Analysis, Research and Learning

Activity Title:	Peacebuilding Evaluation, Analysis, Research, and Learning (PEARL)
Sponsoring USAID Office:	USAID/Kenya and East Africa
Delivered through:	USAID/Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization
Award Number:	7200AA22F00014
Contractor:	Integrity
Date of Publication:	February 2024
Author:	Integrity
Contact Information:	Julia.Rizvi@Integrityglobal.com

This document is made possible by the United States Agency for International Development and the generous support of the American People and by USAID through USAID / CPS / CVP Task Order No. 7200AA22F00014. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of Integrity Global LLC and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS	ii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	i
INTRODUCTION	6
BACKGROUND ON THE CONFLICT CONTEXT	7
FINDINGS: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & CONFLICT	13
RECOMMENDATIONS	33
ANNEX 1: CORRUPTION, DEVOLUTION AND PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT	39
ANNEX 2: LAND TENURE IN NORTHERN KENYA	43
ANNEX 3: THE YOUTH DILEMMA IN NORTHERN KENYA: DEMOGRAPHICS, EMPLOYMENT, AND SECURITY RISKS	47
ANNEX 4: WORKS CITED	50
ANNEX 5: DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS	52

ACRONYMS

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Affairs
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CHIRPS	Climate Hazards Group InfraRed Precipitation with Station data
CVP	Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention
DGPS	Democracy, Governance, and Peace and Security Office
DPGL	Development Partners Group on Land
EACC	Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GESDeK	Program for Results to Strengthen Governance for Enabling Service Delivery and Public Investment in Kenya
GIS	Geospatial Information Systems
IEBC	Interim Electoral and Boundaries Commission
IFMIS	Integrated financial management system
KEA	Kenya and East Africa
Kenya-IGAPP	Kenya Inclusive Governance, Accountability, Performance, and Participation
KII	Key Informant Interview
KSG	Kenya School of Government
KWCA	Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association
LAPSSET	Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport
LDO	Local Development Organization
LTWP	Lake Turkana Wind Power Station
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission

NSC	National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLC	National Land Commission
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRT	Northern Rangelands Trust
PASEDE	Public Accountability and Service Delivery Program
PFM	Public Financial Management
PREG	Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth
USG	United States Government
VCA	Violence and Conflict Assessment

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2023, USAID/Kenya and East Africa (KEA)'s Democracy, Governance, and Peace and Security Office commissioned a Violence and Conflict Assessment (VCA) through the Peacebuilding Evaluation, Analysis, Research and Learning (PEARL) Task Order. The VCA examines the role that Natural Resource Management (NRM) plays in violence and conflict dynamics, including the extent to which NRM drives conflict, in five counties of northern Kenya: Isiolo, Laikipia, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot. It seeks to inform future conflict and peacebuilding approaches at the Mission and strengthen the integration of conflict and resilience considerations across its portfolio.

This assessment is grounded in USAID/Center for Conflict and Violence Prevention (CVP)'s VCA tool. The VCA took a mixed-methods approach, which included a desk review, geospatial and quantitative analysis of four open-source datasets and program data, 70 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) across the five counties. The 180 respondents who provided their perspectives to the assessment team represented youth, women, men, elders, government officials, USAID implementing partners, journalists, human rights activists, civil society actors, and private sector representatives. Findings reflect the prevailing trends in the data gathered for this assessment, which at times reflect respondents' perceptions. As a result, findings should not be interpreted as representative of all conflict dynamics or experiences in northern Kenya.

KEY FINDINGS

Conflict dynamics in Northern Kenya are shaped by the region's socio-political, environmental, and historical context. The region, which is predominantly home to pastoralist communities whose culture and livelihood center on livestock, has faced systemic political and economic marginalization and high levels of poverty and socio-economic vulnerability. Data collected by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics in 2021 showed that seven out of eight of Kenya's poorest counties are in Northern Kenya.¹ Corruption and elite capture lead to the mismanagement and misallocation of resources, limit service provision, and impact opportunities for many people to benefit from growing economic investment in the region. In this context, access to and control over land and other resources have long been sources of competition and conflict between different communities and have been used to provide patronage along ethnic lines. Access to resources such as water and pasture that sustain livelihoods and ways of life are inextricably linked to access to and control over land, which is governed by competing institutions that often fail to provide secure land tenure.

In recent years, Northern Kenya has faced growing shocks and stresses across the region's political, social, environmental, economic, and security systems. Since 2019, data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project indicates that conflict incidents, including inter and intra-communal clashes, resource-driven disputes, banditry, livestock raids and clashes with security forces, in Northern Kenya have increased by 292%. Recent developments such as changing weather patterns, governance initiatives on corruption and local resource allocation, the discovery of mineral and energy resources, and large-scale infrastructure and energy investment, have exacerbated existing tensions and created new sources of conflict over access to, control over, and ownership of land and land-based resources. High levels of socio-economic vulnerability and marginalization cut across all these dynamics, leading to increased grievances and zero-sum confrontations.

¹ Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, "The Kenya Poverty Report: Based on the 2021 Kenya Continuous Household Survey," 2021.

The assessment team’s analysis of the key drivers, actors, mitigating factors and trajectories related to NRM and violence and conflict in Isiolo, Laikipia, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot are provided below.

KEY DRIVERS

- **Access to and control of land and land-based resources are key drivers of conflict in communities visited in Northern Kenya.** Across the five target counties, respondents agree that land ownership and access are the main causes of conflict in their communities. The various types of conflict over land described by respondents reflect increasing resource competition for water and pasture, elite capture of resources, and widespread socio-economic and political marginalization in Northern Kenya. These conflicts disproportionately impact groups such as women and children, indigenous populations, pastoralists, and small-scale farmers, who often find themselves on the frontlines of escalating tensions. These drivers are being exacerbated by a range of contemporary social, political, and economic developments in the region, such as urbanization, new forms of land governance, decentralized government, and large-scale investments, which have exposed significant gaps in existing land governance institutions’ capacity to provide secure land tenure.
- **Environmental shocks and stresses amplify resource scarcity and competition.** Pastoralism, which is the main economic activity in Northern Kenya, relies on livestock and access to water and pasture. Prolonged drought conditions and increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns are fueling resource scarcity, intensifying competition for essential resources and heightening longstanding tensions within and between communities. Climatic changes have disrupted traditional resource-sharing agreements that helped mitigate conflict over resources. Climate change projections suggest rainfall will continue to decrease and become more erratic in the region,² presenting a significant long-term challenge for these communities, with implications for conflict.
- **Corruption fuels social divisions and local grievances around resource allocation and inequality.** In Northern Kenya, widespread corruption undermines equitable resource distribution. In the case of land and natural resources, corruption results in biased land allocation favoring elites, as well as the manipulation of resource management systems. By allowing local politics and corruption to interfere with land rights and ownership issues, devolution—which has seen the transfer of administrative and financial authority from the central government to 47 counties—has also created new conflict over resources and land at local levels. Corruption intensifies divisions between groups that receive different access to resources. Moreover, the grievances it creates undermine trust in governance structures and their capacity to manage conflict among their constituents.

KEY ACTORS

- **Politicians are widely believed to manipulate information to incite conflict over land and resources for personal gain.** Both disinformation and misinformation are reportedly prevalent across communities in northern Kenya, eroding inter-communal trust

² Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, “The Kenya Poverty Report,” 2021.

and stoking violence by spreading false information about conflict events. While respondents linked misinformation to dynamics such as illiteracy, they said that political actors use disinformation to exploit existing grievances over land and intentionally incite violence for political and economic gain. Disinformation is reportedly spread through social media, including by young people and bloggers hired by elites. While past research has corroborated respondents' reports, they also reflect to how communities see the legitimacy of political actors in their area.

- **Perceptions that state and security forces are corrupt, biased, and ineffective limit recourse to formal security and justice institutions.** Widespread perceptions about the corruption and partiality of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary limit communities' willingness to involve these institutions in resolving disputes. These perceptions lead communities to resort to parallel justice systems such as community elders, which are often male-dominated and exclude women, or vigilante groups. While Kenya's Judiciary system promotes alternative dispute resolution processes to reduce case backlog in the formal, data collected suggests they are not adequately equipped to address many of the NRM-related conflicts respondents described. .
- **Youth play a pivotal role in violence and conflict dynamics.** Youth, who constitute an estimated 80% of the population,³ are often at the frontlines of violence and conflict. In particular, young men known as *Morans* are often involved in livestock raids, which have become increasingly violent and disruptive due to market forces and the proliferation of small arms. Faced with limited education options, scarce employment opportunities, widespread poverty, and political exclusion, youth face compound pressures that push them towards conflict.
- **Women's roles in conflict are complex, as they contribute to both the escalation and resolution of hostilities.** Women were often described as influencing combatants, particularly *Morans*, by preparing traditional foods, conducting ceremonies to fortify raiders, supplying necessities during raids, and lauding and encouraging raiders. Despite facing barriers to participating in community-level conflict mitigation structures rooted in prevailing gender norms, including councils of elders, women also appear to be increasingly involved in efforts to promote peace through women-led initiatives and groups that mobilize against violence.

MITIGATING FACTORS

- **A range of traditional and emerging actors are actively engaged in mitigating conflict within communities.** Community elders, religious actors and institutions, peace committees, and peace caravans are complementing traditional resolution mechanisms, such as community dialogue, with new initiatives and events to resolve conflicts and support peace. However, their effectiveness is not uniform and varies greatly depending on the specific context and community dynamics. For instance, in some areas, the authority of community elders is paramount and their involvement in dialogue has led to successful conflict resolution. In others, the introduction of peace committees has provided a structured platform for addressing grievances that were previously unresolved.

³ National Council for Population and Development, "Youth Bulge in Kenya: A Blessing or a Curse," June 2017.

- **Communities use resource-sharing mechanisms, change adaptations, and livelihood diversification strategies to mitigate conflict and strengthen community resilience.** Resource-sharing agreements ranged from traditional models like the Borana Dedha system to modern grazing agreements between ranchers and pastoralists, while adaptation strategies focused on smart agriculture. Respondents perceived youth employment and livelihood diversification efforts to be particularly successful in reducing conflict.

TRAJECTORIES

- **The frequency and severity of environmental and climatic shocks and stresses will increase resource scarcity and further fuel competition.** According to the World Bank’s climate projection data, areas of northern Kenya visited for this assessment are likely to face prolonged periods of drought, flooding, and depletion of natural resources and socio-economic resources such as livestock. The assessment team’s analysis of data on rainfall and conflict using inferential statistics shows a clear correlation between the two, strongly suggesting that shifting weather patterns will lead to increased conflict.
- **Continued investment into Northern Kenya, including efforts to “open up” the area or exploit natural resources, will fuel increasing conflict and community grievances if efforts to engage communities and distribute benefits more equitably are not strengthened.** While investment in Northern Kenya has the potential to stimulate economic growth, it often leads to community displacement and disruption of livelihoods, often without adequate compensation. In addition, these investments primarily benefit a select few individuals or groups within the community due to elite capture, resulting in limited benefits for most people. Without transparent and accountable management, coupled with a robust legal framework that ensures equitable benefit-sharing and prioritizes harm prevention, these investments risk creating new grievances and conflict by displacing communities, disrupting pastoralist ways of life, and eroding community livelihoods.
- **Conflict in Northern Kenya will continue to become more frequent and violent.** The region is experiencing significant shocks such as drastic environmental changes, including severe drought and flooding, and stresses from economic volatility, political instability, inter-ethnic tensions, and the proliferation of arms. The trajectory of these compound pressures suggests that if violence and conflict mitigation strategies are not strengthened, conflict will continue to escalate.

IMPLICATIONS FOR USAID

In response to findings, the assessment team is proposing a series of recommendations to guide the Mission’s efforts to mitigate NRM drivers of conflict. Assessment findings show that USAID and its interventions are well-perceived, and the Mission is well positioned to work across sectors to address the various factors that shape continued violence and conflict in Northern Kenya. In consultation with the Mission, the assessment team identified five priority recommendations to enable the Mission to adopt an integrated, conflict sensitive approach to supporting conflict integration, resilience, and its wider development objectives. The full list of recommendations is available in the report.

Recommendation	Rationale
<p>1. Review and strengthen donor coordination mechanisms to avoid duplication in conflict-mitigation programming.</p>	<p>Respondents consistently highlighted the relative absence of donor coordination and resulting duplication. Leveraging USAID leadership in this area can enable more streamlined, coherent efforts to create more resilient conflict mitigation systems in Northern Kenya.</p>
<p>2. Advocate for multi-agency conflict-sensitive development and security strategies.</p>	<p>NRM conflict is exacerbated by a range of governance and security approaches and dynamics. Given interagency engagement and well-established collaboration with the Government of Kenya, USAID, in collaboration with the Embassy, is strategically positioned to advocate for conflict-sensitive development and security approaches.</p>
<p>3. Engage Local Development Organizations (LDOs) in NRM and conflict mitigation programming to support localized approaches to peacebuilding.</p>	<p>Local problems require local solutions. LDOs, given their intimate knowledge of community dynamics, can support USAID’s localization agenda by increasing USAID’s access to local organizations working to support peace and identifying local solutions to challenges in NRM and conflict.</p>
<p>4. Build on successful alternative livelihoods programs for youth to reduce factors pushing them towards violence and risky behaviors.</p>	<p>Addressing youth unemployment and disenfranchisement is a clear opportunity to mitigate conflict and harness the potential of young people to drive economic growth and positive social change.</p>
<p>5. Strengthen public financial management (PFM) to support more equitable resource allocation and strengthen service delivery.</p>	<p>Strengthening PFM at the county level will directly support equitable resource distribution, thereby helping to mitigate one of the fundamental drivers of conflict over natural resources in Northern Kenya.</p>

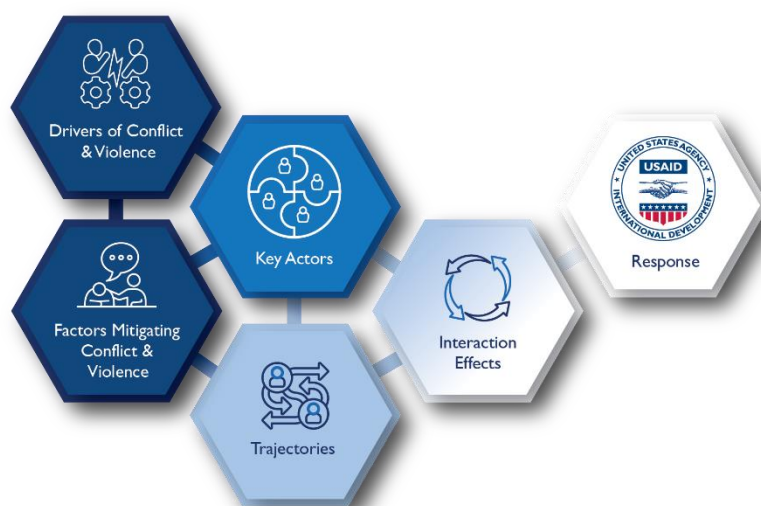
INTRODUCTION

In March 2023, USAID/KEA's Democracy, Governance, and Peace and Security (DGPS) Office commissioned a VCA through the PEARL Task Order. The VCA examines the relationship between NRM⁴ and conflict dynamics in five counties of Northern Kenya: Isiolo, Laikipia, Samburu, Turkana, and West Pokot. It seeks to understand the extent to which NRM drives conflict and how NRM-related grievances interact with other drivers of conflict in these counties. The objectives of the VCA are to:

1. Inform the co-creation of a future conflict and peacebuilding activity under the Kenya Inclusive Governance, Accountability, Performance, and Participation (Kenya-IGAPP) Annual Program Statement.
2. Identify opportunities to integrate conflict and resilience considerations more meaningfully into USAID/KEA's sectoral efforts in line with its Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).
3. Help build a common understanding of conflict and resilience dynamics as they relate to NRM and climate change across the Mission and its partners to inform conflict-sensitive programming and adaptation.

Implemented in close collaboration with a multidisciplinary team from PEARL, USAID/KEA and USAID/CVP, including international and local conflict researchers and specialists, this assessment is grounded in USAID's VCA. The VCA is a structured analytical approach and tool for examining violence, and peace in a given context and how these dynamics interact with the development landscape to identify opportunities for USAID and its partners to respond and adapt to these dynamics and interactions (see Annex 10). The VCA serves as the analytical framework for the

Figure 1: USAID's VCA Analytical Framework



study, enabling an in-depth analysis of violence and conflict dynamics that account for social, political, economic, and environmental considerations. The assessment team also drew on USAID's Land and Conflict Toolkit⁵ and Water and Conflict Toolkit⁶ to inform the VCA's design and methods. Between April-September 2023, PEARL used a mixed-methods approach to examine the role of NRM in violence and conflict dynamics and answer the assessment's lines

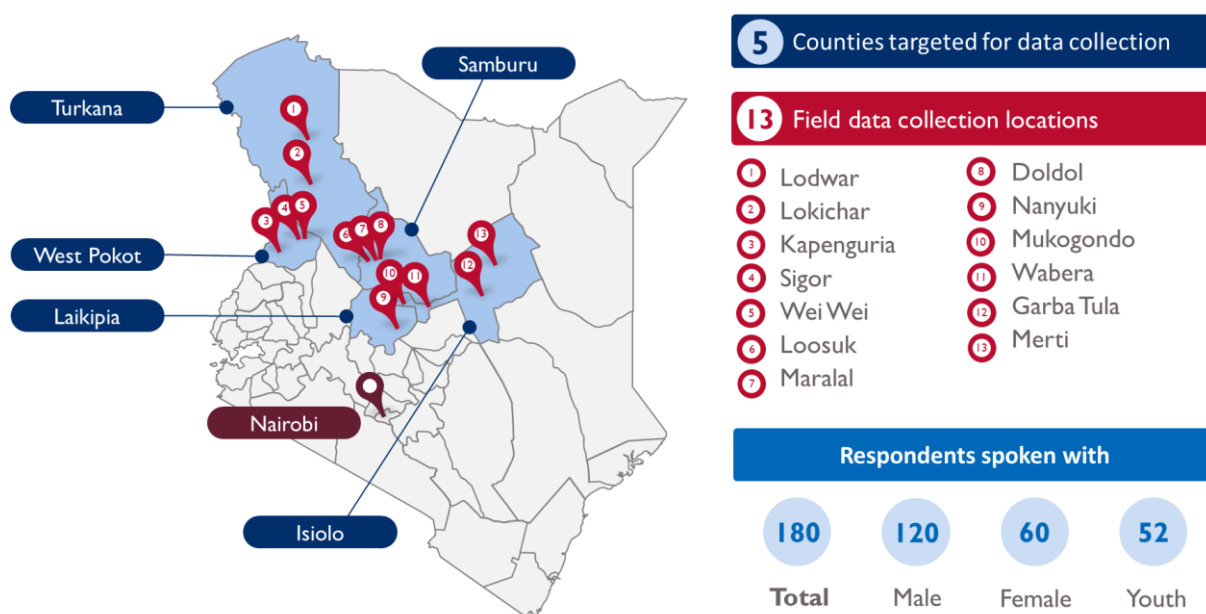
⁴ NRM is defined as the sustainable utilization, conservation, and governance of natural resources to meet social, economic, and environmental needs. Natural resources were defined by respondents in Northern Kenya as land, water, pasture, livestock and land-based resources such as minerals, oil and gas.

⁵ Karol Boudreaux and Daniel Abrahams, "Land and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention 2", USAID, 2022, [USAID-Land-and-Conflict-Toolkit-Final.pdf \(land-links.org\)](#)

⁶ Ekta Patel, Erika Weinthal, Geoff Dabelko, Carl Bruch, Jack Daly, and Nikki Behnke, "Water and Conflict: A Toolkit for Programming," USAID, November 2022, [globalwaters.org/sites/default/files/usaid_water_and_conflict_toolkit_2023_1.pdf](#)

of inquiry. This included a desk review of 123 secondary sources,⁷ Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and analysis of four open-source datasets and program data from USAID/KEA using inferential statistics, and 70 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and 15 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) across the five counties. Interviews were held in English Swahili and local languages including Pokot, Samburu, Turkana and Borana. Respondents included youth, women, elders, government representatives at both county and national levels, USAID implementing partners, journalists, human rights activists, civil society actors, and private sector representatives. The assessment team triangulated findings using primary and secondary data wherever possible. However, sampling methods and limitations in available secondary sources means that findings at times rely heavily on respondents' perceptions of the main NRM and conflict dynamics in their communities and should not be interpreted as representative. Findings are also based on data from specific counties in Northern Kenya and may not reflect prevailing dynamics in the rest of the region. Annex 6 contains the Assessment's Lines of Inquiry, and Annex 7 provides further details on methodology, sources, and key report limitations.

Figure 2: Data Collection Map and Respondent Profile



The Assessment team also conducted 16 consultations and two workshops with stakeholders from across the Mission to shape the VCA design and discuss the implications of findings for strategic planning and implementation. These workshops enabled the assessment team to translate evidence on NRM and conflict into recommendations on policy formulation, program design, and on-the-ground implementation that support USAID/KEA's development objectives in Kenya.

BACKGROUND ON THE CONFLICT CONTEXT

Northern Kenya's socio-economic and demographic characteristics play an important role in shaping its conflict landscape and system. The region is predominantly populated by pastoralist communities, whose livelihood system is based on livestock production. For these communities, which include Somali, Borana, Turkana, Pokot, Samburu, Maasai, and smaller minority groups, livestock serves as more than just an economic asset; it plays a pivotal role in the cultural fabric of society. Historically,

⁷ The desk review used Artificial Intelligence-powered platforms to identify the most relevant sources of published secondary evidence.

practices such as inter-communal cattle raids and rustling were rites of passage and measures of bravery and played important social functions.

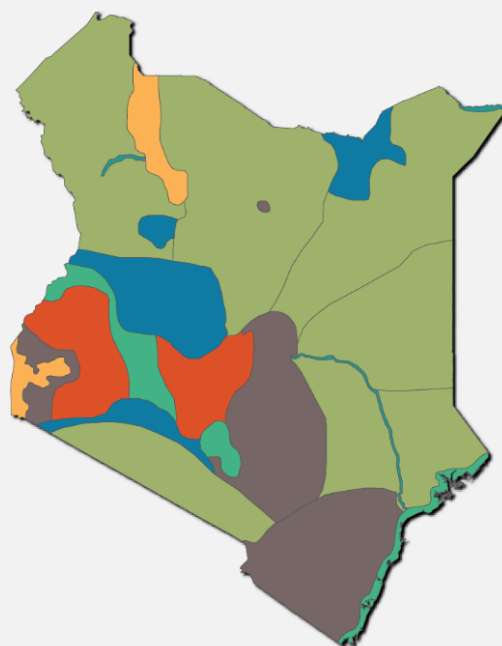
Recent studies have documented numerous challenges facing pastoralist that contribute to conflict and socio-economic vulnerability.⁸ Pastoralism in Northern Kenya is characterized by mobility and a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle in which communities move livestock across vast arid and semi-arid landscapes in search of water and pasture. Land use change, changing weather patterns that include more frequent and severe incidents of drought, population growth, and commercial extraction, have accelerated the increasing scarcity of these resources, which are essential for maintaining livestock. This scarcity, in turn, contributes to intensifying resource competition within pastoral communities and between pastoralist and agricultural and contributes to conflict and poverty. Respondents also spoke about the erosion of traditional practices in managing grazing and water resources that have sustained these communities, furthering cycles of conflict and poverty.

BOX I: KEY FACTS ON NORTHERN KENYA'S GEOGRAPHY AND DEMOGRAPHICS

- Vast arid and semi-arid region that is sparsely populated.
- Pastoralism is the region's main livelihood strategy.
- Borders multiple conflict contexts, including Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan.
- Home to diverse ethnic groups (Samburu, Somali, Pokot, Turkana, and Borana), with longstanding inter-ethnic group tensions.
- Has a significant youth population, with an estimated seventy-five percent of the population under age 35.⁹
- Population faces high levels of food insecurity and poverty.¹⁰

Kenya Livelihood Zones

SOURCE: FEWS Net



⁸ For example, see: USAID, "Current Trends in Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa: Literature Search on Trends and Drivers of Change," June 2023.

⁹ National Council for Population and Development, June 2017.

¹⁰ As of October 2023, Turkana had an Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) of Phase 3 (Crisis), while the other counties researched for this study had an IPC of Phase 2 (Stressed). FEWS NET, *Kenya Acute Food Insecurity*, October 2023, <https://fewsn.net/east-africa/kenya>. In 2018, World Bank estimates put the average poverty rate in Northern Kenya at 70%. The World Bank Group, "The North & North Eastern Development Initiatives: Boosting Shared Prosperity for the North and North Eastern Counties of Kenya," 2018.

NEGLECT, MARGINALIZATION, AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Northern Kenya has been marked by systemic neglect, marginalization, and high levels of poverty and underdevelopment, a legacy that stems from the British colonial era. During colonial rule, the region was considered a peripheral zone of limited value, except as a buffer against neighboring countries. This policy laid the foundation for persistent underinvestment in terms of infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other basic services.¹¹

Northern Kenya's marginalization continued in the period after British rule and was institutionalized after independence through key policy documents. Notably, the Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 prioritized investment in "high potential" agricultural areas to the detriment of arid and semi-arid lands like Northern Kenya.¹² This policy framework effectively perpetuated disinvestment in the region, contributing to a lack of functioning services, infrastructure, and economic opportunities. Post-independent historical events, including a secessionist conflict known as the Shifta War¹³ and the subsequent state of emergency imposed by the Kenyan government, further isolated Northern Kenya and have had longstanding security and economic impacts on the region.¹⁴

In recent decades, the Government of Kenya has announced new policies and governance initiatives that seek to address regional disparities and foster investment in Northern Kenya, such as devolution and Vision 2030. Devolution, which is enshrined in Kenya's 2010 Constitution and saw the transfer of administrative and financial authority from the central government to 47 counties, was hailed as a new era of localized governance that would reduce historical marginalization. Under Vision 2030—a long-term development plan aimed at transforming Kenya into an industrialized, middle-income country—Northern Kenya has become a focal point for large-scale development projects.¹⁵ Specific projects like the \$29 billion Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, and the \$700 million Lake Turkana Wind Power Station (LTWP), represent monumental investments aimed at tapping into the economic potential of the region.

However, devolution and investments under Vision 2030 does not appear to have resulted in significantly improved services or provided new economic opportunities in many areas of Northern Kenya. The region continues to be characterized by significant levels of socio-economic vulnerability. Data from the World Bank shows that Northern Kenya continues to lag behind the rest of the country on many education, health, and infrastructure indicators, with seven out of eight of Kenya's poorest counties in the region.¹⁶ Respondents told the assessment team that while devolution has had a positive impact on service provision in some areas, devolution and mega-projects associated with Vision 2030 have been subject to elite capture, limiting the extent to which communities experience the benefits of these projects. They also explained that they exacerbate conflict due to speculative land acquisition, land grabbing, and disputes arising from county border demarcation, which reduce community access to resources required to secure their livelihoods. A number of key

¹¹ Abdiquadir M. Khalif, "Colonial policies and the failure of Somali secessionism in the Northern frontier district of Kenya colony, c.1890-1968," CORE, accessed December 4, 2023, <https://core.ac.uk/reader/145055100>.

¹² Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965.

¹³ The Shifta War (1963–1967) was a secessionist conflict in which ethnic Somalis in Northern Kenya attempted to join Somalia. Non-Somalis such as Turkana also participated in the conflict, motivated by the fear of restrictions on their movement and lifestyle imposed by the Kenyan government. Hannah Alice Whittaker, "The Socioeconomic Dynamics of the Shifta Conflict in Kenya, c. 1963–8," *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (2012): 391–408, doi:10.1017/S0021853712000448.

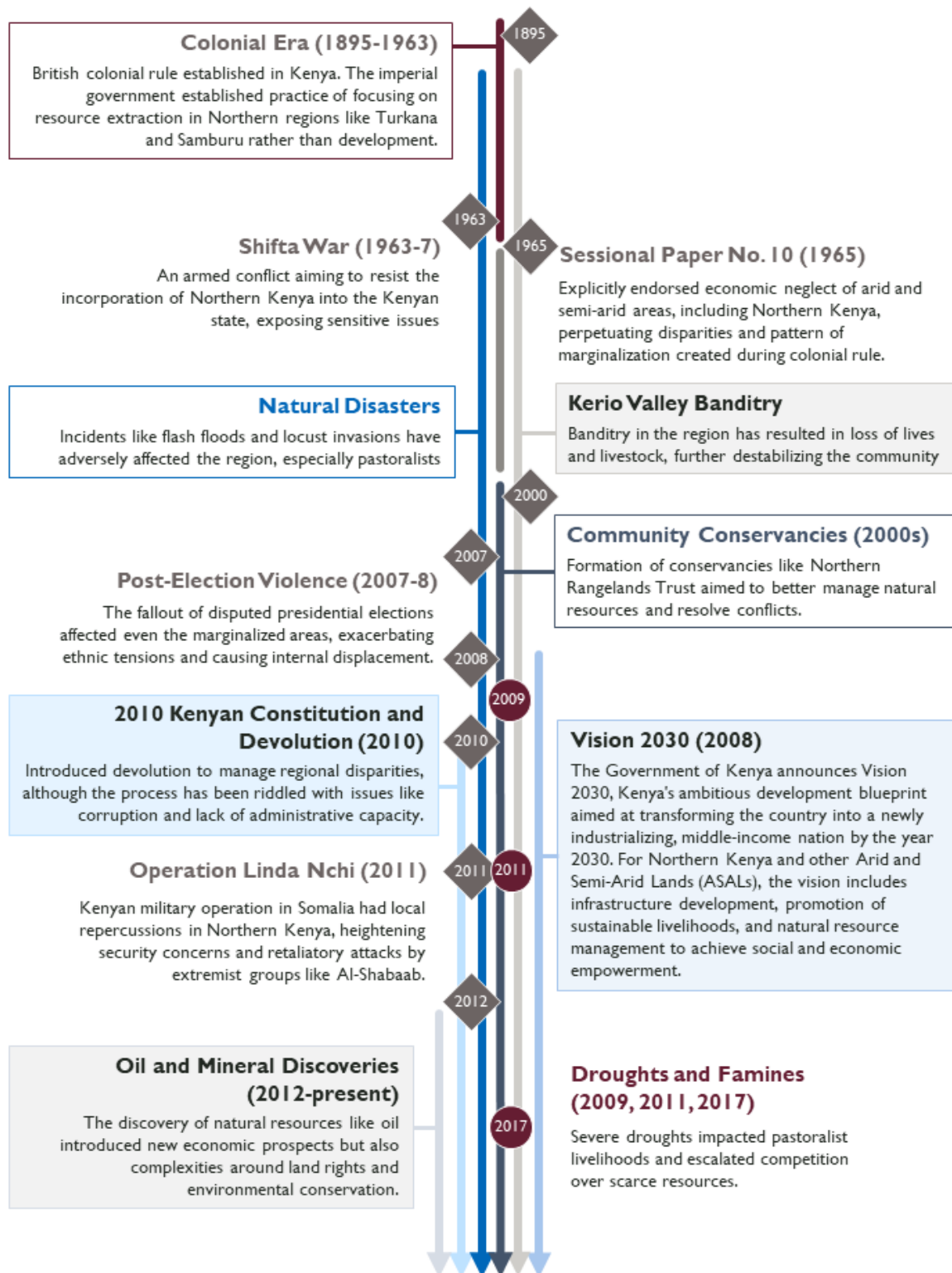
¹⁴ Zeinabu Kabale Khalif & Gufu Oba, "'Gaafa dhaabaa - the period of stop': Narrating impacts of shifta insurgency on pastoral economy in northern Kenya, c. 1963 to 2007," *Pastoralism* 3 (2013): 14, <https://doi.org/10.1186/2041-7136-3-14>.

¹⁵ Government of Kenya, "Kenya Vision 2030: Popular Version," May 2018, <https://vision2030.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Vision-2030-Popular-Version.pdf>.

¹⁶ The World Bank Group, "The North & North Eastern Development Initiatives: Boosting Shared Prosperity for the North and North Eastern Counties of Kenya," 2018; Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021.

informants highlighted that the Government of Kenya lacks the political will to address these dynamics, suggesting that the extent to which the potential benefits of investment and devolved governance will continue to be limited.

Figure 3: Timeline of Key Historical Developments and Events in Northern Kenya



LAND GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS

Land governance and tenure in Northern Kenya encompasses a complex array of informal and formal institutions and systems that are critical to understanding the NRM and conflict context. These institutions often coexist, leading to overlapping jurisdictions and ambiguous rights, and contributing to insecure land tenure. Some of the main institutions and legal frameworks that govern land tenure include:

- **Community Land Act:** The Community Land Act of 2016 is a pivotal legislative framework in Kenya's land management landscape. The act aims to give legal recognition to community land rights and has provisions for the registration and management of community land. It offers a bridge between customary land tenure systems and formal legal frameworks by enabling communities to acquire titles to their ancestral lands. However, its implementation faces a range of challenges, including longstanding territorial disputes, and past research has documented negative consequences for pastoralist communities.¹⁷ Annex 2 provides more detail on the Community Land Act and the status of its implementation.
- **Customary land tenure systems:** For pastoralist communities, customary land tenure systems are deeply rooted in their social and cultural fabric. These systems operate according to a set of traditions and norms that govern land use and access, often relying on agreements set by community elders and leaders.
- **Conservancies:** Through efforts to integrate community-based resource management into formal structures, conservancies have become significant institutions in land governance in Northern Kenya. Conservancies are often partnerships between local communities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or private actors, aimed at balancing livelihoods with environmental conservation.
- **Community-level structures:** These structures range from water user associations that manage water points to grazing committees that negotiate access and timing for shared grazing lands. While these structures can be effective in mitigating resource-based conflict, they are often not integrated into larger governance frameworks, limiting their reach and potential impact.¹⁸

ELITE CAPTURE AND CORRUPTION

Corruption is deeply ingrained in Kenya's governance system, with evidence documenting its widespread impact on the distribution of resources, wealth, and economic opportunities. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2022, Kenya ranks 123 out of 180 countries in terms of its perceived level of public sector corruption.¹⁹ In 2016, the Head of the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC) Philip Kinisu estimated that approximately \$6 billion of Kenya's public sector resources are lost annually due to corruption, representing roughly 7.8% of its gross domestic product (GDP).²⁰ In 2023, a report by Pricewaterhouse Coopers found

¹⁷ For example, see Rahma Hassan, Iben Nathan, and Karuti Kanyinga, "Will community rights secure pastoralists' access to land? The Community Land Act in Kenya and its implications for Samburu pastoralists," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 50, no. 5 (2023): 1735-1756, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2022.2119847>.

¹⁸ Stephen M. Mureithi, Ann Verdoodt, Jesse T. Njoka, Joseph S. Olesarioyo, and Eric Van Ranst, "Community-Based Conservation: An Emerging Land Use at the Livestock-Wildlife Interface in Northern Kenya," 2019, DOI: 10.5772/intechopen.73854.

¹⁹ Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index (2022)," <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2022>.

²⁰ Quoted in Miriri, Duncan, "Third of Kenyan budget lost to corruption: anti-graft chief," *Reuters*, March 10, 2016.

that “Kenya’s public sector is still rife with corruption despite the investments in oversight institutions.”²¹ In Northern Kenya, it has significant implications for in the region given its socio-economic deprivation and chronic gaps in service delivery. These include limiting equitable economic growth and the availability of services as well as the mismanagement and capture of resources, which further widespread grievances.

TRANSNATIONAL CONFLICT AND THE PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS

Conflict and instability in neighboring Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan have an impact on the security landscape in Northern Kenya. Porous borders have facilitated the cross-border movement of arms, extremist ideologies, and combatants, creating a range of local and transnational security issues. The proliferation of arms from neighboring contexts has contributed to making conflict in Northern Kenya more deadly, with clashes or cultural forms of violence such as raids routinely resulting in fatalities.²² It also creates challenges for local and national security agencies, complicating disarmament efforts and efforts to maintain public safety.

YOUTH

Youth constitute most of the population in Northern Kenya and play an important role in the overall conflict dynamics of the area. According to the National Council for Population and Development, an estimated 80% of Kenya’s population is under the age of 35.²³ Nearly half of youth aged 18-34 years old (48%) face multidimensional poverty.²⁴ According to a 2020 Challenge Fund for Youth Employment report, youth unemployment stands at 20% in urban areas and up to 60% in rural areas.²⁵ This figure is believed to be much higher in the northern counties, where economic opportunities are limited primarily to pastoralism and small-scale trade as traditional livelihoods become increasingly unsustainable.²⁶ The lack of industrial development and tertiary education centers adds to widespread poverty, particularly affecting young people. Respondents spoke of significant youth disaffection and marginalization amid limited livelihood and education opportunities, driving their participation in illicit activities such as banditry and raiding or politically motivated violence. Annex 3 provides more details on the youth demographic in Northern Kenya.

RECENT TRENDS IN VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT

In recent years, conflict has increased in Northern Kenya. Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Project Data (ACLED) shows that the number of conflict events has been rising each year since 2019. Some types of conflict have intensified in recent years. This includes conflict events linked to banditry and cattle rustling, particularly in the Kerio Valley that borders Elgeyo-Marakwet, West Pokot, Baringo, and Samburu, as well as a large-scale disarmament and security operation in February 2023 in six counties in the North Rift launched by the government to curtail increasing

²¹ <https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/business/2023/10/corruption-in-public-sector-still-widespread-in-kenya-pwc-new-report/>

²² Omondi Gumba, Duncan, and Guyo Chepe Turi. “Cross-Border Arms Trafficking Inflames Northern Kenya’s Conflict.” ISS Africa, November 18, 2019. <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/cross-border-arms-trafficking-inflames-northern-kenyas-conflict>.

²³ National Council for Population and Development, 2017.

²⁴ Evis Elezaj, Naveen Ramful, Julia Karpati, and Chris De Neubourg, “Kenya Comprehensive Poverty Report: Children, Youth, Women & Men, Elderly. From national to county level,” ResearchGate, 2020,

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343601594_Kenya_Comprehensive_Poverty_Report_Children_youth_womenmenelderly_From_national_to_county_level.

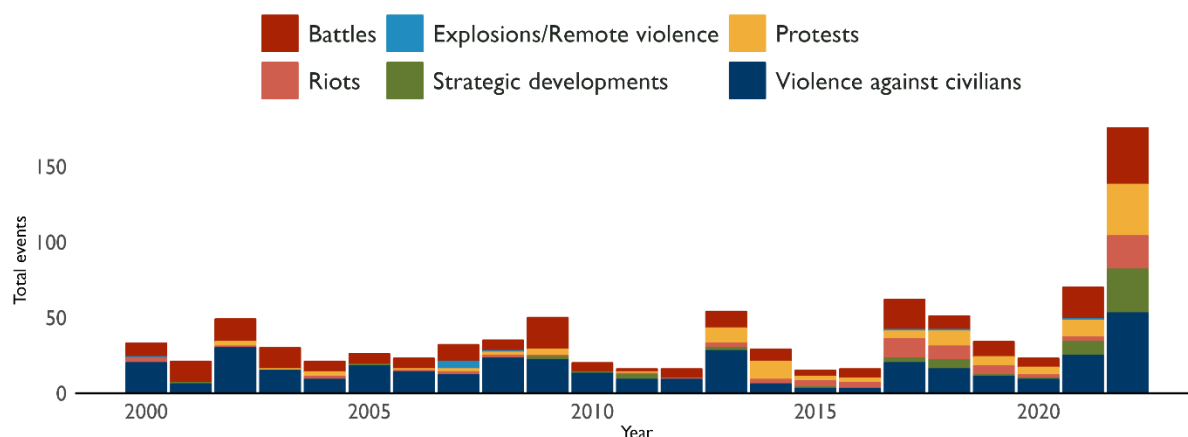
²⁵ Rep. Kenya Scoping Highlights Report. Challenge Fund for Youth Employment (CFYE), December 2020.

<https://fundforyouthemployment.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Scoping-Highlights-Report-Kenya-2020-Challenge-Fund-for-Youth-Employment-1.pdf>.

²⁶ According to 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census data, unemployment in Northern Kenya was as high as 62%.

incidents.²⁷ In addition, increased conflict reflects increased competition for resources, exacerbated by drought conditions between 2021-2023 and resource scarcity. In 2023, ACLED also recorded rising tensions linked to county border disputes, including between Turkana-West Pokot, Turkana-Samburu, Isiolo-Garissa, and Isiolo-Meru.²⁸

Figure 4: Total Conflict Events by Type in Northern Kenya, 2000-2022



¹Northern counties include Isiolo, Laikipia, Turkana, and West Pokot.

FINDINGS: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT & CONFLICT

Using the VCA analytical framework, the assessment team examined the drivers, mitigating factors, actors, and trajectories to understand the patterns and dynamics between NRM and violence and conflict in Northern Kenya. High levels of socio-economic vulnerability and marginalization cut across these dynamics, leading to increasing grievances and zero-sum confrontations around the control of, access to, and ownership of natural resources.

FINDINGS ON CONFLICT DRIVERS



Key Drivers of Conflict



Access to and control of land and land-based resources are key drivers of conflict. These conflict drivers are exacerbated by a range of contemporary social, political, and economic developments.



Climate-change induced environmental shocks and stresses amplify resource scarcity and competition.



Corruption fuels social divisions and local grievances around resource allocation and inequality.

²⁷ ACLED, “Kenya: Government Operation against Pastoralist Militias in North Rift Region.” March 31, 2023.

²⁸ ACLED, “Kenya: Competition Over Politics and Resources Affect Recent County Border Disputes,” November 2023, [Kenya Situation Update: November 2023 | Competition Over Politics and Resources Affect Recent County Border Disputes \(acleddata.com\)](https://acleddata.com)

KEY FINDING: ACCESS TO AND CONTROL OF LAND AND LAND-BASED RESOURCES ARE KEY DRIVERS OF CONFLICT, WHICH ARE EXACERBATED BY A RANGE OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS.

Across the five target counties, respondents—regardless of age, position, or gender—consistently agreed that land ownership, use, and access is the main cause of conflict in their communities. Respondents highlighted various types of conflict over land, including disputes over boundaries, competing land tenure claims, land encroachment, access to land in conservancies or ranches, displacement due to large-scale investment projects, and access to land-based resources. Conflict over land routinely results in violence at different scales, ranging from localized community tensions, intra-group disputes, and larger inter-communal clashes. These conflicts reflect the critical social, economic, and political role land plays amid widespread land tenure insecurity and competing customary, communal, and legal institutions governing land rights and ownership in Northern Kenya.

Table 1: Types of Land Conflicts Described by Respondents

Type of Land Conflict	Descriptions
Boundary disputes	Conflicts stemming from unclear or overlapping land demarcations. These are exacerbated by overlapping traditional/ethnic group claims and conflicting administrative county boundaries. For example, respondents mentioned conflicts between Pokot and Turkana communities, or Pokot and Samburu communities due to unclear and contested county border demarcations in West Pokot, Turkana and Baringo counties.
Communal versus individual tenure conflicts	Tensions between traditional communal landholding practices and individual or private ownership rights, often due to changes in land laws or economic incentives. In response to emerging economic opportunities and government efforts to formalize land ownership, members of pastoral communities, and in particular the political and professional class, have sought individual ownership/tenure which has created tension within communities that have long relied on communal land governance.
Land encroachment	As defined by respondents and the examples provided during the assessment, disputes over land encroachment include incidents during which pastoralists enter traditionally wildlife zones due to drought, or when changing land uses (e.g., urbanization, agriculture) interfere with pastoralists’ traditional land use.
Conflict over access to land in conservancies and ranches	Clashes arising from differences in land use rights, especially when conservation areas and commercial ranches are perceived to limit local communities' access to traditionally used lands, including by blocking migratory routes.

Conflict over oil, gas, and mineral-rich land	Disputes over access to and control over territories with newly discovered resources like gold, oil, gas, and established renewable energy potential, including geothermal and wind energy projects.
Mega-project land Displacement	Conflicts emerging from large-scale projects that necessitate community eviction or relocation, often without adequate compensation, for example the construction of Isiolo Airport, Lake Turkana Wind Power project and the expected displacement for Vision 2030 and LAPSSSET.

Table 2: Reported Types of Land Conflict Across the Five Counties

County	Type of Land Conflict
Laikipia	Boundary disputes; communal vs individual tenure conflicts; land encroachment; conflict over access to land in conservancies and ranches.
Isiolo	Boundary disputes; conflict over oil, gas, and mineral-rich land; land encroachment; conflict over access to land in conservancies and ranches; mega-project land displacement.
Samburu	Boundary disputes; conflict over oil, gas, and mineral-rich land; conflict over access to land in conservancies and ranches.
Turkana	Boundary disputes; conflict over oil, gas, and mineral-rich land; land encroachment; mega-project land displacement.
West Pokot	Boundary disputes; conflict over oil, gas, and mineral-rich land; land encroachment.

Respondents noted that the conflicts over land and resources had existed for a long time, often reflecting deep-seated inter-group rivalries or tensions. However, they also explained that conflicts over land and land-based resources had intensified and escalated in recent years, citing a range of converging political, economic, and social developments that exacerbate land tenure insecurity. These developments, including urbanization, the establishment of conservancies and ranches, devolution, Vision 2030 investments, and the discovery of oil, gas, and mineral resources, highlight the inadequacy of existing formal and informal land governance institutions to ensure land rights are secure amid contemporary pressures, resulting in more frequent and intense conflicts.

Urbanization. Urbanization in Northern Kenya is reshaping traditional land use patterns, as pastoral communities, facing environmental and economic pressures, move towards towns and cities seeking alternative livelihoods. This shift has led to increased demand for land in urban areas, often resulting in the conversion of communal lands into private property for development without recognizing traditional claims or customary systems. Respondents explained that these dynamics result in disputes over land ownership between urban settlers and those maintaining pastoral ways

of life. Urban sprawl also encroaches on grazing territories in some areas, further exacerbating tensions between pastoralists and agricultural or developmental interests.

Conservancies and Ranches. From the 2000s, conservancies and ranches have been introduced in Northern Kenya to conserve biodiversity and manage natural resources. However, conservation initiatives in Northern Kenya, which often create protected areas, are at times perceived to undermine the land rights and livelihoods of local communities. The “fencing off” of large tracts of land for conservation purposes is seen to displace communities and restrict their access to grazing lands, water, and other resources.²⁹

Respondents told the assessment team about recurring conflict between pastoralist communities and conservancies or ranches, particularly in Laikipia North, where private ranches occupy a significant portion of the land and are perceived by communities to benefit from unequal access to resources such as water. When resources become scarce in periods of drought, individuals breach conservancies to gain access to water and grazing areas, resulting in conflict. Several descriptions of these types of conflict are captured in Box 2 below.

BOX 2: CONFLICTS BETWEEN CONSERVANCIES AND COMMUNITIES

“If you go to Laikipia north right now it is dry, but inside the conservancies, it is green everywhere. White people have so much water, they keep green lawns and grass. Water is a natural resource, but it is not distributed equally to the people. This led to the conflict that has been talked about [in the FGD]. The conservancy owners fight back when their lands are invaded by the pastoralists, and they have access to the best guns. And the pastoralists also have guns, so when they come to you to fight, they fire bullets indiscriminately, so people are forced to move away.” - FGD with youth, Laikipia

“In Laikipia North, during droughts, people invade the private ranges. The private landowners are resented by the community due to a lack of engagement mechanisms, exacerbating conflicts during dry periods.” - youth activist, Laikipia

Devolution. Devolution has had mixed outcomes across areas of data collection. On the one hand, some respondents described how devolution had brought improvements in service delivery, noting that it had enabled access to essential services such as piped water and healthcare for the first time since independence in some areas. On the other, many highlighted its negative impact on corruption and conflict over land and resources in the target counties. One immediate consequence of the policy’s implementation was that county borders were redrawn and strictly enforced, overlapping with existing tensions and creating new boundary disputes. Unclear and contested county borders in West Pokot, Turkana, and Baringo counties, for example, have fueled conflict between Pokot and Turkana communities, as well as Pokot and Samburu.

Devolution has also inflamed land-based disputes by devolving corruption and elite capture to the local level. This has created new competition for resources and land at increasingly localized levels, often along ethno-political lines, by allowing local politics and corruption to interfere with land rights and ownership issues. Past research has documented the impact of devolution on power dynamics within counties of Northern Kenya, with previously marginalized groups at the national level often

²⁹ Nnemek Pas, Elizabeth E. Watson, and Bilal Butt, “Land Tenure Transformation: The Case of Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya,” *Political Geography* 106 (2023): <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2023.102950>.

dominating at the county level and in turn marginalizing minority clans, resulting in new conflict.³⁰ During interviews, community members often explained that local elites, often political or business leaders with significant social capital, have found ways to personally profit from devolved funds and projects and reward their followers or families. Respondents also spoke of instances where the local government appropriated land for public use without adequately compensating the original owners. Box 3 captures some of the common ways that respondents described the impact of devolution on conflict over land.

BOX 3: DEVOTION AND CONFLICT OVER LAND

“Corruption and favoritism have become rampant since the inception of the devolved system of government. The politics here is clan based and the clans which lost in the election are excluded from resources sharing and decision making.” - government official, Isiolo

“Before devolution, there was no value in land. But when devolution came, [the elites] realized that it has a lot of value and that is [now a] cause of conflict. For the market in Lokichar, the people had [that] land and the government decided to take from them and build a market and the owners have not been compensated since, so that has caused conflict among the community and the local leaders.” - FGD with elders, Turkana

Vision 2030 investments. As Northern Kenya has become a focal point for large-scale development projects under Vision 2030, projects such as LAPSET and LTWP have compounded issues around land rights and ownership due to land grabbing and speculative land acquisition. State acquisition of the large tracts of land required for these projects clashes with informal and communal land tenure systems, leading to the involuntary displacement of communities, disrupted livelihoods, and cultural erosion.³¹ Community grievances are further compounded by limited compensation. Respondents frequently voiced the perception that local leaders and private entities manipulate development projects for personal gain, while communities receive limited benefits. The newly introduced resources and infrastructure projects not only instigate localized disputes and fuel grievances among affected communities but also risk triggering broader conflicts.

The discovery of oil, gas, and mineral resources. The discovery of oil and mineral resources starting in 2012 in Northern Kenya has also fueled land grabbing and speculative land acquisition by elites or private investors. Similar to Vision 2030 projects, the acquisition of large tracts of land for exploration and extraction leads to the displacement of communities, disruption of livelihoods, and grievances around compensation and lack of adequate benefit sharing.

Conflict over land also erupts over who controls, uses, or benefits from other resources extracted from certain territories—such as pasture, water, oil, gas, sand, gold, and other minerals—often seen as belonging to a particular group. For instance, respondents spoke about intensified conflict over the county border demarcation between West Pokot and Turkana, exacerbated by the discovery of

³⁰ Huma Haider, “Conflict Analysis of North Eastern Kenya,” Institute of Development Studies, July 2020. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/20.500.12413/15570/EIR%2036_Conflict_analysis_of_Northern_Kenya.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

³¹ Cultural erosion as explained by concerned respondents was seen to manifest itself through the loss of ancestral lands, diminishing traditional foods and medicines, the commodification of indigenous culture for tourism, and potential language loss as younger generations assimilate into mainstream society. These factors not only disrupt daily life but also undercut the foundations of community identity and heritage.

natural resources. Several respondents described conflict as a tactic to displace others and gain access to these resources, with a private sector actor from West Pokot recounting, “There are oil and gas minerals all over. For example, in the area near Kasei there are minerals [such as] gold and others that result in the conflicts for land, as people try to displace others to gain ownership of the minerals.”

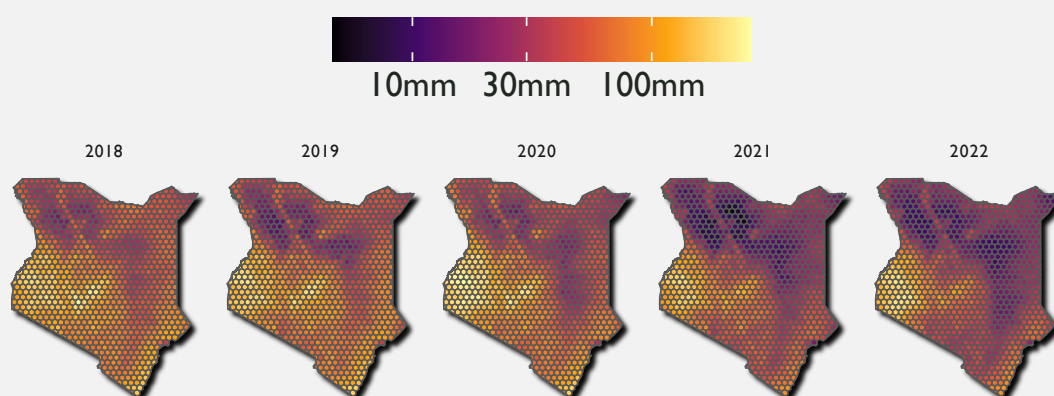
KEY FINDING: CLIMATE-CHANGE INDUCED ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCKS AND STRESSES AMPLIFY RESOURCE SCARCITY AND COMPETITION.

The effects of climate change emerged as one of the main factors exacerbating conflict in communities visited for this assessment. Environmental shocks and stresses, including unpredictable and decreasing rainfall as well as long and frequent drought conditions, limit the availability of water and pasture, creating increasing competition over water and pasture resources required to sustain livestock. As resources become scarce, pastoralists expand their search for water and pasture, driving conflict by increasing competition for resources and escalating existing community rivalries into overt conflict or creating new intra-communal conflict.

While many respondents noted that conflict over resources typically emerges during dry seasons and subsides when rains return, recent shocks and stresses have caused these conflicts to escalate, become more frequent, and emerge between new parties. Between 2018–2022, Northern Kenya experienced five failed rainy seasons (see Box 4 below), resulting in drought between 2021-2023. Respondents across communities described how once-abundant grazing lands had turned into barren landscapes in recent years. They explained that repeated drought conditions and below average rainfall in their areas had led to more frequent and violent clashes that increasingly have a zero-sum quality due to high levels of poverty and vulnerability and increased inability to sustain livestock. They also noted that increased violence resulting from resource competition and climate-induced migration had a range of additional negative impacts on their communities, including school closures, displacement, and disruptions local agriculture.

BOX 4: AVERAGE RAINFALL IN KENYA FROM 2018-2022

SOURCE: Climate Hazards center InfraRed Precipitation with Station data (CHIRPS) (2018-2022)



Total rainfall in Kenya fell by 39% between 2018 and 2022

The relationship assessment respondents described between changing weather patterns and increased conflict is corroborated both by past research³² and the assessment team's analysis of ACLED and Climate Hazards Group InfraRed Precipitation with Station data (CHIRPS) data, which show a clear correlation between decreased rainfall and increased conflict events. While respondents explained that the arrival of rains, including an above-average rainy season in 2023, had reduced conflict, climate data projects increasingly frequent and prolonged periods of drought and reduced rainfall in Northern Kenya, with implications for the trajectory of conflict in the region.³³

Climate change has also strained historical mitigation strategies, such as community agreements on water use and grazing. Respondents explained that in many communities, societal frameworks designed to share resources or minimize conflicts have become ineffective due to increasingly unpredictable weather patterns and corresponding resource availability. This has undermined community resilience in the face of climate shocks and stresses that are reshaping local socio-economic dynamics and influencing patterns of conflict.

KEY FINDING: CORRUPTION FUELS SOCIAL DIVISIONS AND LOCAL GRIEVANCES AROUND RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND INEQUALITY.

Corruption in Northern Kenya extends across various levels of public administration, including national and county government units, as well as the security sector, affecting the distribution of resources and the quality of services. Devolution has localized corruption, altering power structures and benefitting specific groups. This has entrenched and exacerbated social disparities, as entities from local governance bodies to service delivery institutions have been associated with corrupt practices. Respondents underscored the resulting widespread mistrust and dissatisfaction with the government, which deepens ethno-political divisions and intensifies resource-related grievances. Security sector institutions and politicians were the most frequently mentioned actors when respondents spoke about corruption and its impact on their communities.

Inequitable natural resource management and allocation was one of the most prevalent grievances among assessment respondents. In the case of land, corruption interferes with the appropriate allocation and use of communal lands. Powerful individuals, often working with corrupt local authorities, unlawfully allocate communal lands for personal profit. Past research has captured how the appropriation of communal tenure reform processes by elites is a consistent problem in the devolution of natural resource administration.³⁴ The Kenya Land Alliance reported that fraudulent land allocations have cost communities in Northern Kenya thousands of hectares of arable land.³⁵ It also affects the management of water through the manipulation of water permit allocation, depriving communities of access to water, as well as deforestation, illegal logging and overfishing.³⁶ Many respondents described unequal access to resources such as water and land due to corrupt practices

³² Past researcher from NRT and Pact, for instance, found that ownership and competition over scarce resources and climate change were the top two drivers of conflict respondents named in Baringo, Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu and West Pokot. NRT and Pact, "Aridity and Violence in Kenyan Rangelands: A Political Economy Analysis of Conflicts in Baringo, Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu, and West Pokot Counties," January 2021.

³³ The World Bank Group, "Climate Risk Profile: Kenya," 2021.

³⁴ Gargule A Achiba, Monica N Lengoiboni, Devolution and the politics of communal tenure reform in Kenya, *African Affairs*, Volume 119, Issue 476, July 2020, Pages 338–369, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adaa010>

³⁵ Kenya Land Alliance, "Land Allocations Report," 2018. <https://www.kenyalandalliance.or.ke/>.

³⁶ World Bank, Comprehensive Public Expenditure Review: From Evidence to Policy, 2017, [https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/153321585885809761/comprehensive-public-expenditure-review-from-evidence-to-policy-2017](https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/153321585885809761/comprehensive-public-expenditure-review-from-evidence-to-policy-2017;); Officer of the Auditor General, 2020.

and the allocation of resources and services based on ethnicity and tribe rather than needs as a key driver of social divisions and tension.

Misused devolved funds also impact conflict by furthering discontent and marginalization. Local governance structures, though newly empowered, often lack the necessary systems for robust financial oversight. This leads to the misallocation and embezzlement of funds intended for community development. Respondents told the assessment team about various instances in which the funds meant for essential resources like water facilities or pasturelands were squandered, leading to disillusionment. A civil society representative in Turkana voiced this concern, noting, *“Our county comes second in terms of allocation of resources from the national government after Nairobi, but a lot of that money is lost to corruption...There are so many irrigation schemes along River Turkwell that have never been successful due to corruption.”*

BOX 5: RESPONDENT PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

“Corruption has become a normalized crime, to an extent[that] people do not see it as a crime any longer. The issue of corruption has caused internal conflict...[by causing] a gap within the community between the rich and the poor.” - youth leader, Samburu

Some community members also perceived that the responsibility for corruption does not only lie with leaders, but also stems from a general apathy and the failure among communities to hold officials accountable. A youth leader in Samburu echoed this sentiment, noting: *“The way resources are distributed is a source of conflict; those not in power fight with those in power, but that is a problem of the community, not the leaders, because we have failed to play our role as a citizen.”*

FINDINGS ON KEY ACTORS



Key Actors in Conflict Dynamics



Faced with compound social and economic pressures, youth are pushed towards risky and violent activities.



Politicians are widely believed to use information manipulation to incite conflict over land and resources for personal gain.



Perceptions that security actors are corrupt, biased, and ineffective limit recourse to formal security and justice institutions.



Women play varied roles, influencing both conflict and peace. They are also disproportionately affected by violence.

KEY FINDING: POLITICIANS ARE WIDELY BELIEVED TO USE INFORMATION MANIPULATION TO INCITE CONFLICT OVER LAND AND RESOURCES FOR PERSONAL GAIN.

Both misinformation, where inaccurate information is spread without intent to deceive, and disinformation, where false information is deliberately disseminated, perpetuate and exacerbate conflicts over natural resources across the target counties. Respondents said that rumors and lies containing inaccurate information about violence and conflict, distributed through various channels such as word-of-mouth, social media, and radio, are prevalent in their communities. These lies and rumors often misrepresent or distort conflict events, either by inflating the scale or impact of a conflict occurrence and reporting fictitious conflict events or planned attacks or land grabs from one community to another. In addition to exacerbating existing conflict drivers over land, the spread of both misinformation and disinformation further erodes any common ground for trust and mutual understanding among communities.

Reflecting deep-seated mistrust of political actors, many respondents said that politicians deliberately manipulate information and exploit existing grievances around land and resources for political and economic gain (see Box 6 below). Some alleged that politicians use disinformation spread through paid bloggers and planted media reports to deliberately incite conflict and violence and forcibly displace populations to gain access to resources in contested land, which they further encourage by providing locals with weapons and ammunition. Others explained that politicians mobilize genuine land-based grievances to cement their political standing in communities ahead of elections and contribute to violence around elections. When discussing instances of misinformation, respondents often cited low literacy levels and access to reliable information as important factors contributing to its prevalence.

While community perceptions and reports about the role some political actors play in mobilizing conflict and violence in their communities are corroborated by existing literature and events,³⁷ they also reflect how respondents see the legitimacy of political actors and the role they play in violence in their communities. These perceptions capture clear grievances around the credibility of these actors and their motivations, contributing to tensions and conflict drivers over resource allocation.

BOX 6: REPORTS ABOUT INFORMATION MANIPULATION

“Our political leaders and influential people are using these bloggers and other people to actually mislead or misinform people on such matters.” - female civil society representative, Isiolo

“I’d say 95% of the conflicts are a result of disinformation. The lies are mostly peddled by politicians. For instance, Pokots claim that the Turkana leaders have asked their people to kill Pokots in exchange for 100,000 [KES, ~\$678] per Pokot man killed.” - youth representative, West Pokot

“Misinformation plays a role in violence and conflict. For instance, the conflicts worsen because of people spreading false information that a certain number of people from a particular community has been killed.” - religious leader, Samburu

³⁷For instance, Laikipia MP Matthew Lempurkel was arrested in 2021 and Samburu North MP Lois Lentoimaga was investigated for their roles in inciting in violent clashes and activities in their respective counties. For secondary sources on the politicization of land conflicts, see Philip Onguny and Taylor Gillies, “Land Conflict in Kenya: A Comprehensive Overview of Literature,” *Les Cahiers d’Afrique de l’Est / The East African Review* 53 (2019), <http://journals.openedition.org/estafrica/879>. doi: <https://doi.org/10.4000/estafrica.879>.

KEY FINDING: FACED WITH COMPOUND SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PRESSURES, YOUTH ARE PUSHED TOWARDS RISKY AND VIOLENT ACTIVITIES.

The research consistently reinforced the central role youth play in NRM-related conflicts in target counties. Across the target counties, youth are often at the frontlines of violence and conflict in their communities, including both as perpetrators of violence such as raids as well as some of its main victims. While respondents particularly highlighted the role of youth in raids, they were also described as key actors in the other forms of NRM conflicts highlighted above.

In particular, young men known as *Morans* have become key figures in increasing incidents of conflict due to their role in raids. Historically, livestock raids have been integral to the cultural fabric of these regions, serving dual purposes: a rite of passage into manhood and as a legitimate means to secure assets, either for bride price or for replenishing herds. However, several developments have transformed livestock raiding into more violent activities that involve high numbers of civilian casualties and significant economic losses due to the increased scale of livestock theft and disruption of transport and trade. The introduction and proliferation of small arms have escalated the level of violence associated with raids and made them more lethal, creating greater risks and costs for communities. Whereas livestock raids were previously governed by traditional codes of conduct and norms, key informants explained organized raids are driven by significant financial incentives and facilitated by organized crime networks alleged to be affiliated with local businesspeople and politicians.

Like other youth in these areas, *Morans* face compound pressures that push them to engage in violence. Respondents attributed their role in perpetrating or participating in raids to a lack of education, scarce employment opportunities amid widespread poverty, and societal norms that valorize raiding, leading to pressure from family members and elders to partake in raids. In addition, interviews suggest that youth are often absent from community decision-making, dialogues, and socio-cultural forums, indicating that they also face a degree of political and social exclusion. Critically, some respondents noted that the political and social exclusion of *Morans* or youth limits the extent to which existing community conflict mitigation and dispute resolution structures can be effective.

Given their implication in violence and conflict dynamics, youth, particularly *Morans*, are key actors in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding efforts. As emphasized by a civil society representative from Kapenguria, West Pokot, *“The youth are the drivers of the conflict. They’re the ones who go for the raids. They will be strategic peacemakers if they’re engaged in these processes... you can’t talk of young people without involving them.”* Recognizing the critical role that youth play in conflict as well as peacebuilding efforts, many of the recommendations key informants provided for supporting resilience focused on youth, including supporting livelihoods and skill building programming, civic education, and organized sporting events, or engaging reformed *Morans* to work with youth as peace advocates.

BOX 7: COMMON PERSPECTIVES ON THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN CONFLICT

“The perpetrators [of raids] are mainly young men from 15 to 25 or 30 years [old]. The main problem is these perpetrators are stealing these cattle to sell. It is likely that the buyers are the key drivers to these raids.” - FGD with youth, Laikipia

“The Morans who have not gone to school are the ones involved in raids. Poverty is forcing these Morans to go for raids. Unemployment is also forcing youths to engage in conflicts.” - youth leader, Samburu

“Youth, specifically Morans, who are often the victims, are sidelined in crucial security meetings, only engaging the elders. This exclusion invariably leads to conflicts.” - human rights activist, Samburu

KEY FINDING: PERCEPTIONS THAT STATE AND SECURITY FORCES ARE CORRUPT, BIASED, AND INEFFECTIVE LIMIT RECOURSE TO FORMAL SECURITY AND JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS.

Historically, the state's engagement with Northern Kenya has largely focused on “pacification” rather than equitable development or effective governance. For decades, the region lacked well-established civil administration structures, including a comprehensive legal and judicial system. This vacuum has led to an over-reliance on security forces as the primary interface between the state and the community. These forces have often been criticized for their heavy-handed methods, arbitrary enforcement, and instances of corruption, further eroding trust between communities and state institutions.³⁸

Widespread perceptions about the corruption and partiality of law enforcement agencies and the judiciary limit communities' willingness to involve these institutions in resolving disputes. Many respondents shared deep reservations about the security forces in their communities, including the Anti Stock Theft Unit, a specialized wing of the Kenyan police force tasked primarily with preventing livestock theft, and the Kenya Police Reservists, who are community-based law enforcement officers. While some community members said they rely on local security forces to enforce the law and had seen the impact of a large-scale security campaign in early 2023 focused on reducing banditry and cattle rustling in the Kerio Valley, many saw them as corruption, partial, or ineffective. These perceptions prompt communities to seek justice via parallel systems such as elder councils or vigilante groups that may be biased or ill-equipped to handle disputes and further violence.

BOX 8: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES OF SECURITY FORCES

“To us, police officers are not friendly and you can't depend on them because you can be wronged and you report the wrongdoer, but instead of getting justice, the wrongdoer is just released because he or she has money. The level of corruption [in] the police is high.” - elder, Turkana

“Despite [the Anti Stock Theft Unit's] presence, the conflicts have worsened since livestock are still taken by bandits without being returned and people are still being killed. How come the bandits come past them and drive livestock this way just around here.” - FGD with women, Samburu

KEY FINDING: WOMEN PLAY VARIED ROLES IN INFLUENCING BOTH CONFLICT AND PEACE. THEY ARE ALSO DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE DUE TO THEIR SOCIAL ROLES.

In Northern Kenya, women's roles in conflict are complex, as they contribute to both the escalation and resolution of hostilities. Women were often noted for spurring on combatants, particularly *Morans*, by preparing traditional foods, conducting ceremonies to fortify raiders, supplying necessities

³⁸ These dynamics are widely reported in the media and scholarly articles. For example, see Hannah Whittaker, “Legacies of empire: State violence and collective punishment in Kenya's North Eastern Province, c. 163–Present,” September 1, 2015. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03086534.2015.1083232>.

during raids, and lauding and encouraging raiders. Despite facing barriers to participating in community-level conflict mitigation structures rooted in prevailing gender norms, including from community-level councils of elders, women also appear to be increasingly involved in efforts to promote peace through self-organized peace groups as well as by engaging with security officials at the county level. In some areas, respondents highlighted the existence of women-led initiatives and groups that mobilize against violence or spread messages of peace. Additionally, some noted that women, possess valuable insights into the actions and intentions of *Morans*, enabling them to offer early warnings and responses to planned violence.

Women, along with children, often bear the brunt of conflict and are disproportionately affected by violence. As the primary caregivers in these communities, women lose primary breadwinners to violence, affecting their ability to provide for their families and themselves. Respondents shared that this not only disrupted their familial structures but also put them under significant financial strain, requiring them to seek alternative livelihoods such as selling off possessions to support their families or seeking employment in the informal sector. Respondents also noted that women and children were frequently displaced, affected by school closures, or experienced trauma because of violence.

BOX 9: EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN’S ROLE IN CONFLICT

“Women are very crucial in conflict solving and at the same time escalating... Women are very good in solving conflict since they are good mechanisms of providing early warning and early response. They are also good in solving [conflicts] because these youth engage with their mothers, and therefore their mothers know what the young Morans are doing, what they are planning, and even when they come back” - implementing partner staff member, Samburu

“The role of women in conflicts, they are really fueling [the] conflicts. When young warriors are going to steal cows, they praise them before they go. When coming back with cows, they are also praised by the women.” - community leader, West Pokot

FINDINGS ON FACTORS MITIGATING CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Mitigators of Conflict

Religious institutions

Traditional elders

Resource sharing agreements

Climate change adaptation

Livelihood diversification strategies

KEY FINDING: VARIOUS LOCAL ACTORS, INCLUDING ELDERS, RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS, AND PEACE COMMITTEES, WORK TO MITIGATE CONFLICT AND SUPPORT PEACE.

Within communities visited in Northern Kenya, a range of traditional and emerging actors are actively engaged in mitigating conflict and supporting peace. These actors include community elders, religious actors and institutions, peace committees,³⁹ and peace caravans.⁴⁰ Often working in tandem, these actors complement traditional resolution mechanisms, such as the Somali 'Xeer' system, the Maasai 'Enkiguena' system and the Borana 'Gadaa' system⁴¹ with new initiatives and events. Respondents spoke of inter-communal sports and cultural events, such as the Maralal International Camel Derby, as important venues for community mingling, informal resolution of grievances, spreading religious messages of peace, or initiating community dialogues. Similarly, since 2013, local NGO IMPACT has held the Ewaso Nyiro Camel Caravan, a five-day trek along the Ewaso Nyiro Basin Ecosystem with participants interacting with local communities and promoting coexistence and equitable sharing of scarce resources. While women's participation in more traditional systems and elders councils reflects cultural barriers and is often limited, the assessment team found that women play a more active role in peace committees.

Community elders remain important actors involved in efforts to mitigate conflict. Drawing on their traditional roles in community governance, elders continue to mediate disputes and support social cohesion by leading community engagement and dialogue, including around conflicts and disputes. While elders remain actively involved in conflict resolution mechanisms across the different data collection areas and are often able to resolve intra-communal conflict, their influence also appears to be waning. Relatively recent challenges, such as organized crime and the proliferation of small arms, strain traditional conflict resolution methods. Respondents also indicated that councils involving community elders are often not inclusive and do not include women and youth, limiting their ability to effectively mitigate conflict.

Religious actors have also adopted increasing roles in peacebuilding and conflict mitigation amid the diminishing influence of community elders. Using religious networks and communities of worship, religious institutions spread messages of peace and co-existence, offering platforms for inter-communal dialogue and interaction. In some instances, like in Turkana, respondents highlighted the direct involvement of actors in supporting resource management, mediating between communities in conflict, and supporting with climate change adaptation strategies such as by planting trees.

Peace committees and peace caravans have also emerged in recent decades across communities in Northern Kenya in response to evolving conflict dynamics. Some respondents felt these structures had facilitated significant changes in conflict dynamics. For instance, respondents in Loosuk, Samburu

³⁹ Peace committees are grassroots, community-level structures focused on promoting peace. The first formal example can be traced to Wajir Peace and Development Committee in the early 1990s, after which similar structures emerged across the Northern districts. After the post-election violence in Kenya in 2007, the Kofi Annan-led National Accord and Reconciliation Agreement recommended their institutionalization into the peace architecture.

⁴⁰ Peace Caravans are journeys through diverse communities championed by community leaders and professionals promoting dialogue and reconciliation.

⁴¹ The Somali 'Xeer', Maasai 'Enkiguena', and Borana 'Gadaa' are traditional African legal and governance systems. 'Xeer' emphasizes clan-based restorative justice, 'Enkiguena' focuses on social harmony and elder mediation, while 'Gadaa' combines democratic governance with socio-religious practices. For more information on the Enkiguena system, please see: Mara J. Goldman and Saningo Millary, "From Critique to Engagement: Re-evaluating the Participatory Model with Maasai in Northern Tanzania," *Journal of Political Ecology* 21 (2014): 408-423. For more information on the Gadaa system: Ketema Tafa Biratu and Obsa Mamo Kosa, "The Roles, Challenges and Opportunities of Gadaa System in Resolving Water Conflict: The Case of Borana Oromo," *Open Journal of Social Sciences* 8, no. 2 (January 2020): 19-31, doi:10.4236/jss.2020.82002. For more information on the Xeer system: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/africanpeaceprevi.2.1.87>. For more information on the Xeer system, see Mahdi Abdile, "Customary Dispute Resolution in Somalia," *African Conflict and Peacebuilding Review* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 87-110, doi:10.2979/africanpeaceprevi.2.1.87.

attributed more than a decade of peaceful co-existence between Samburu and Pokot communities, who were previously fighting over land, to the mediation efforts of peace caravans. Others mentioned the impact of peace committees on improving relationships between communities and security forces. However, respondents also report that peace committees often struggle to achieve lasting results due to insufficient resources or capacity to support their work.

While politicians and local administrative leaders often mobilize and enable violence and conflict, testimonies from communities illustrate that they can also be significant agents for peace when conflict resolution aligns with their interests.

BOX 10: COMMON DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTORS SUPPORTING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

“The diocese of Lodwar is mitigating through the water department. We drill and maintain water pumps. The diocese is now engaging in growing of trees; schools and Christians are also encouraged to grow trees. They are also supported or funded to growing vegetables as part of mitigation [of] climate change.” - private sector actor, Turkana

“The main initiatives are peace meetings organized by local leaders and community elders... We have managed to reduce the conflict by around 40 percent.” - government official, Isiolo

“Village elders from different communities... have helped through dialogues. Sports, music in schools, and events have brought communities together.” - youth leader, Samburu

KEY FINDING: RESOURCE-SHARING MECHANISMS, CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION EFFORTS, AND LIVELIHOODS DIVERSIFICATION ARE KEY SOURCES OF COMMUNITY ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE.

Resource-Sharing Mechanisms. Community members, government officials, and civil society actors see traditional and emerging resource-sharing mechanisms as critical tools for mitigating conflicts. These mechanisms, ranging from traditional models like the Borana Dedha system to modern grazing agreements between ranchers and pastoralists, reduce tensions by enabling more equitable access to resources.

BOX 11: EXAMPLE OF A RESOURCE-SHARING AGREEMENT

“Some of the communities have introduced grazing patterns; they secure some places for a certain time and land is left unused, [then] during drought seasons they move to the secured place. Some other people have introduced rotational grazing to avoid depletion of available resources, and this has been seen in places that have conservancies: they have rangeland management committees. I’ve seen people coming up with community committees that will monitor people who go into or out of their land.” – human rights activist, Samburu

The Borana Dedha system exemplifies the region's indigenous knowledge and practices in resource management. Under the Dedha system, which is rooted in communities' ways of life and traditions, community elders negotiate resource allocation, ensuring fair distribution based in long-standing customs. As highlighted previously, these methods are under increasing strain due to climate change and increased resource scarcity.

Communities have adopted structured mechanisms like grazing agreements between ranchers and pastoralists. These agreements, which are overseen by rangeland management committees and may involve community oversight, demarcate clear terms of resource sharing, and provide pastoralists access to conservancy resources to reduce conflict. These mechanisms may offer models that can be replicated in other areas where research indicates there exist significant levels of tension between communities and conservancies.

Rainy seasons also bring reprieve from conflict. By replenishing resources, rain reduces intense competition for resources offers communities a window of opportunity to renew communal relations and adapt resource-sharing mechanisms to changing conditions.

Climate Change Adaptation and Livelihood Diversification: Communities are using climate change adaptation and livelihood diversification strategies to adapt and reduce conflicts. Commonly cited adaptation strategies include the creation of water catchment areas, the introduction of smart agriculture practices, and the cultivation of climate-resistant crops to directly alleviate competition over dwindling resources.

Youth employment and livelihood diversification efforts also positively impact conflict. Respondents explained these efforts, such as small-scale farming, craftsmanship, and community-based tourism, are important mitigators of conflict as they open up alternative ways of generating income and decrease incentives to partake in violence. These new income streams also reduce dependence on resource-intensive practices, further lowering the risk of conflict.

BOX 12: PERCEPTIONS OF US GOVERNMENT AND USAID INTERVENTIONS

To understand how violence and conflict dynamics interact with USAID programming and inform recommendations, the assessment team sought to understand perceptions of USAID and US Government (USG) programming in the counties where the assessment team conducted field research.

For the most part, perceptions of USAID's humanitarian efforts were positive, especially in relation to drought relief. Nawiri was frequently cited as an example of an effective program, as well as USAID's efforts to alleviate the severe impacts of recent droughts.

Respondents provided more mixed feedback of USAID-supported conservancies. Some respondents spoke highly of conservancies, including those operated by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), for their contributions to conservation and community-based natural resource management.

“A good example [of well-received programming] is the transformed warriors who have been brought on board in Samburu East and West and are trained by [NRT and Community Safety Initiative] to look for alternative livelihoods.” - human rights activist, Samburu

The assessment team also came across concerns about the extent of community involvement in these projects, as well as potential instances of elite capture. These concerns have been described by media and reports and were echoed by some respondents.

“Also, there are conservancies coming up and this can also bring conflicts. If you see areas where conservancies are already established, they went into those areas without any regulatory mechanisms and

[without] considering the traditional ways of communities governing their resources, they went there and planted themselves. The inclination is to protect land for wildlife rather than for livestock, therefore that one itself is a conflict.” - clan elder, Samburu

TRAJECTORIES: EMERGING TRENDS IN CONFLICT AND MITIGATION

Based on the patterns of conflict, violence, and peace presented in the data collected, the assessment team identified several key trajectories on how NRM-related conflict is likely to develop. Trajectories include both trends and potential triggers, which are events that may ignite grievances and spark violent conflict, as well as windows of opportunities to reduce violence and conflict.



Trajectories

Environmental shocks and stresses will increase and further fuel resource competition and scarcity.



Continued investment will fuel conflicts and community grievances if not accompanied by stronger mechanisms to redistribute benefits.





Conflict over land and other natural resources in Northern Kenya will increase.



To support an analysis of future trajectories, the assessment team leveraged USAID’s Framework for Analyzing Resilience in Fragile and Conflict Affected Settings to better examine the balance between the region’s prevailing shocks and stresses against its current resilience capacities. This analysis suggests that while Northern Kenya has various factors of resilience as captured in this assessment, these appear to be outpaced by the various shocks and stresses across its subsystems. These dynamics are captured in Figure 5 on the next page.

Figure 5: Shocks and Stresses and Factors of Resilience

	 Shocks and Stresses	 Factors of Resilience or Opportunities
POLITICAL	Corruption and elite capture, political contestation, electoral violence, inefficient and ineffective county-level structures, political manipulation of conflict dynamics for personal gain	Positive impacts of devolution on service provision and resource management in some areas
SECURITY	Exposure to regional conflict dynamics and displacement, proliferation of small arms, vacuum/negative perceptions of security actors, growing intra-communal conflicts	Peace Committees, Multi-Agency Security operations
ECONOMY	Over-dependence on pastoralism, limited employment opportunities, high levels of poverty, recent livestock failure, unequal distribution of investment gains and economic growth, resource extraction and unequal wealth distribution, widespread poverty	Resource sharing, employment opportunities from investment, tourism revenue and youth employment opportunities in conservation, tourism, livestock value chain, smart agriculture
SOCIAL	Displacement, poor access to education and health, erosion of traditional networks and culture, malnutrition and food insecurity, youth bulge/population growth, low literacy and education levels	Social capital from community/family/tribe networks, informal conflict resolution structures and council of elders, increasing role of religious networks and institutions
ENVIRONMENT	Increasingly severe and frequent drought, deforestation, decreased rainfall, overgrazing of pasture leading to soil erosion	Rainy seasons, preservation of biodiversity through the conservancy model, community resource sharing mechanisms



Trajectory: The frequency and severity of environmental shocks and stresses will increase and further fuel resource competition and scarcity.

TRENDS

Climate-change shocks and stressors in Northern Kenya will increase. Data on climate patterns and climate modelling strongly suggest that Northern Kenya is likely to face prolonged and more frequent periods of drought and depletion of natural resources and socio-economic resources such as livestock. At the same time, the region is likely to experience more erratic and intense rainfall and flooding, particularly in West Pokot and Laikipia.⁴² Climate shocks and stressors will exacerbate resource scarcity and competition and thereby increase conflict if not accompanied by adaption strategies. They will also negatively impact socio-economic vulnerability in the region. Data on decreased rainfall and conflict (see Box 4) corroborates the correlation between climate shocks and stresses such as decreased rainfall and conflict events.

⁴² The World Bank Group, “Climate Risk Profile: Kenya”, 2021.

TRIGGERS	Reduced and unpredictable rainfall, prolonged and more frequent episodes of major drought, and increased flooding incidents. Without proper water management, unpredictable rainfall and droughts strain resources, triggering competition and potential conflicts over scarce water and land. While drought and below average rainfall exacerbates resource scarcity, the risk of intense rainfall and flooding can also exacerbate conflicts by causing flash floods and further degradation of arable land.
WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY	Rainy seasons. Data from the 2023 rainy season shows that the return of rains can offer moments of relief and a window of opportunity to rebuild and re-strategize. Aid partners can capitalize on this period where tensions are reduced to work on factors that support resilience to conflict, including facilitating peacebuilding dialogues, community agreements on resource sharing, and supporting efforts to fortify communities against the impact of resource-driven conflict.



Trajectory: Continued investment into Northern Kenya, including efforts to “open up” the area or exploit natural resources, will fuel conflicts and community grievances if not accompanied by stronger mechanisms to redistribute benefits to communities.

TRENDS	Investments in infrastructure, oil, and land will continue as part of Vision 2030, LAPSET and other initiatives. Associated land acquisitions dispossess communities of land or disrupt traditional mobility patterns for pastoralists, eroding livelihoods. Most people in Northern Kenya will not benefit from investment in Northern Kenya due to elite capture and corruption unless communities begin to have greater access to shared benefits.
TRIGGERS	Launch or completion of new large-scale investment projects or new oil and gas exploration. Exploration and large-scale investment projects often result in the displacement of communities from their land without adequate compensation, including due to speculative land acquisition. They can also disrupt migratory routes or lead to conflict by shutting off access to resources once they are completed, such as the Crocodile Jaw Dam in Isiolo.
WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Commitments from private sector actors to hire local youth and ensure investment benefits reach local communities. This can boost local economic opportunities and reduce unemployment, a key driver of unrest. ● Compensation schemes and empowerment of the National Land Commission. While compensation may not address the social



and cultural value that land can have for a community, implementing fair compensation for land use enhances trust in land governance and mitigates land-related conflicts.

- **Devolution.** Devolution has the potential to enable tailored, community-specific resource management and could provide an opportunity to address local grievances directly if equitably and appropriately implemented.
- **Better enforcement of Multilateral Development Banks (e.g., African Development Bank) Performance Standards on land acquisition and more generally, around investments.** As Multilateral Development Banks fund some of the major infrastructure projects, they may have the required leverage to ensure conflict sensitive approaches to land acquisition.



Trajectory: Conflict over land and other natural resources in Northern Kenya will increase.

TRENDS

In the absence of adequate land governance systems in Northern Kenya that provides secure land tenure, the resolution of land-based disputes and grievances is being outpaced by additional pressures that exacerbate and create new grievances around access to and control over land. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are becoming increasingly ineffective, while many peace actors face challenges around sustainability. Political rivalry and administrative inefficiencies mean that county-level actors do not provide adequate conflict resolution or management capabilities.

While small gains in service provision and infrastructure were noted by respondents in some communities due to devolution, these gains are not sufficient to offset significant socio-economic vulnerability and pressure on most people and especially youth is likely to increase as pastoralism becomes increasingly unviable as an economic activity. In the absence of education or alternative livelihood strategies, incentives for joining organized crime or violent extremist organizations will increase.

TRIGGERS

- **Elections.** Violence and conflict regularly increase around elections, where existing grievances or conflicts are instrumentalized for political gain. Widespread post-electoral violence in previous election cycles indicates that these triggers can devolve into widespread and sustained conflicts.
- **Dry seasons or other significant climate shocks and stresses.** As highlighted above, there are regular upticks in conflict in some areas of Northern Kenya due to reduced access to water and pasture.



- **Uncoordinated infrastructure development projects.** Local projects conducted by county government or development actors that affect resource distribution, such as borehole drilling, can upset existing resource distribution, sparking intercommunity conflicts.
- **Continued urban expansion.** As pastoralism becomes increasingly unviable, rural-to-urban migration will continue to increase as will urban development and sprawl. Implications for land use and competing customary and formal tenure rights are likely to lead to clashes.
- **Formation of new conservancies without adequate community consultation.** Data accessed illustrates that while community conservancies can contribute to peace, they can also contribute to conflict.
- **The discovery of new mineral resources:** New mineral discoveries can ignite disputes over land rights and resource control, leading to community conflicts. Increased exploration of



- **Planned boundary demarcation and consultation exercise** by Interim Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). The IEBC is an independent regulatory agency that conducts periodic county boundary reviews. The commission will look into county boundaries and through its recommendations can create opportunities to address grievances around borders.
- **Multi-agency security operations by Kenya Police, Kenya Defense Forces and other security agencies.** These operations are effective at temporarily reducing the frequency and prevalence of banditry and looting. These moments of increased security create opportunities for community dialogue, peacebuilding and delivery of humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations.
- **National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) work in conflict hotspot mapping, civic education and political key leadership engagement.** This provides an opportunity to leverage political will to address long-standing grievances and also embark on civic education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to these findings, the assessment team developed 10 priority recommendations to support the Mission with its conflict integration, resilience, and wider development objectives. Informed by a workshop and consultations with staff across USAID/KEA, the recommendations considered the following key criteria:

- **Operational feasibility**, including alignment with Mission priorities, resources, relationships, and position within the wider development landscape in Kenya. Considering funding constraints, recommendations focus on opportunities to strengthen existing processes, programming, and partnerships.
- **Technical feasibility**, building on assessment findings and evidenced-based practices for reducing conflict and promoting peace.
- **An integrated, multi-stakeholder approach** spanning multiple sectors, offices, and actors.

Recommendations include suggestions for both short-term (less than one year time horizon) and long-term (greater than one year) options for implementation. Key assessment stakeholders and partners highlighted the first five recommendations below as particularly important for USAID/KEA. Annex 5 also provides additional recommendations and details.

PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

I. REVIEW AND STRENGTHEN DONOR COORDINATION MECHANISMS TO AVOID DUPLICATION IN CONFLICT-MITIGATION PROGRAMMING.

Respondents, including implementing partners, local stakeholders, and government officials, consistently highlighted the relative absence of donor coordination and resulting duplication in conflict mitigation and peacebuilding programming. Leveraging existing platforms, best practices, and USAID leadership in this area can enable more streamlined, coherent efforts to create more resilient conflict mitigation systems in Northern Kenya.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Convene actors with strong coordination mechanisms, such as the European Union and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to discuss lessons learned and agree on next steps.
- Conduct a mapping exercise of current and planned programming with other donors and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA).
- Strengthen donor coordination groups under the Office of the Deputy President with direct support from Mission leadership.
- Leverage the Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) as a channel for addressing coordination gaps.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Integrate LDOs in donor coordination mechanisms, capitalizing on their local expertise, and role in community structures to improve donor interventions.

- Coordinate state and non-state early warning and early response systems.
- Replicate best practices from the North East Advisory Group model, including involving other donors in design, co-creation, budgeting, and joint work-planning processes.

2. ADVOCATE FOR MULTI-AGENCY CONFLICT-SENSITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY STRATEGIES.

The assessment found that NRM conflict is exacerbated by a range of governance and security approaches and dynamics. Given interagency engagement and well-established collaboration with the Government of Kenya, USAID, in collaboration with the Embassy, are strategically positioned to advocate for conflict-sensitive development and security approaches.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Share top-level assessment findings with Government of Kenya partners.
- Coordinate with interagency partners involved in development and security on how to jointly address findings.
- Monitor Government of Kenya readiness and willingness to address vulnerabilities, e.g., through relevant policies and legislative frameworks.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Provide targeted technical assistance and capacity building to Government of Kenya to promote integration of conflict sensitivity approaches into key national projects like LAPSET and Vision 2030.

3. ENGAGE LDOs IN NRM AND CONFLICT MITIGATION PROGRAMMING TO SUPPORT LOCALIZED APPROACHES TO PEACE.

Findings highlighted that many NRM conflicts are highly localized and require local solutions. The Mission is already working through LDOs, which—given their reach and intimate knowledge of community dynamics—are well-placed to help USAID overcome barriers to identifying and working with local organizations that can support peace and address NRM-related conflict. This also aligns with USAID’s localization agenda.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Engage LDOs in capacity building programs focused on NRM, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding to empower them with the necessary skills.
- Use LDOs to map local organizations and partnerships working on peace and overcome administrative barriers to working with hyperlocal partners. This includes identifying existing women-led and youth-led peace and mediation efforts within the community.
- Work with LDOs to integrate conflict sensitivity into their work. This should include identifying the main risks, opportunities, and mitigations associated with their work, as well as plans to regularly monitor these risks and opportunities to adapt programming.
- Leverage existing partnerships with actors such as the Kenyan School of Government (KSG), National Drought Management Authority, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission to ensure a comprehensive approach to conflict sensitive NRM.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Utilize LDOs to conduct thorough and periodic local conflict assessments, identifying potential triggers and offering localized solutions. LDOs could also lead research on other priorities, such as gender.
- Support horizontal engagement between LDOs and county governments by including LDOs in planning and decision-making processes related to NRM and conflict mitigation in their respective counties.

4. BUILD ON SUCCESSFUL ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH TO ADDRESS ROOT CAUSES OF RESOURCE-DRIVEN CONFLICT.

Youth are a critical stakeholder in any peacebuilding effort due to their role in conflict. Addressing youth unemployment and disenfranchisement is a clear opportunity to mitigate conflict and harness the potential of young people to drive economic growth and positive social change.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Work with LDOs to conduct a youth situation assessment to better understand context, including youth opportunities and disenfranchisement that makes them vulnerable to violent activities.
- Work with the Government of Kenya to strengthen resource reach to young people (e.g., a specific window within the Hustler Fund for youth in Northern Kenya).
- Leverage the LDO platform as an opportunity to enfranchise youth into NRM and security discourse.
- Conduct joint work planning across the Mission around youth issues.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Coordinate with other donors on youth programming.
- To ensure the Mission has an integrated approach to addressing the compound risks youth face in Northern Kenya, USAID can focus its upcoming CDCS on a youth-centric whole-of-mission approach.

5. STRENGTHEN PFM AT THE COUNTY LEVEL TO ENSURE INCLUSIVE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.

Strengthening PFM at the county level will directly support equitable resource distribution, one of the fundamental drivers of conflict over natural resources in Northern Kenya. USAID/KEA has internal expertise in PFM that can be leveraged to explore programmatic entry points in this area.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Leverage a strategic partnership with the KSG to develop a curriculum of training and technical support with a focus on conflict-sensitive planning, resource management, and inclusive budget processes.
- Conduct an internal review of past and current PFM capacity building and technical assistance to counties.
- Bring LDOs into budget and resource allocation processes to strengthen oversight. Support community participation in budgetary process.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Build a cross-cutting PFM capacity building and oversight approach into the next CDCS to strengthen devolved governments.

6. LEVERAGE EXISTING STRUCTURES TO ESTABLISH A FORMAL CONFLICT COORDINATION MECHANISM FOR THE MISSION.

USAID/KEA currently lacks a formal coordination mechanism to support conflict integration and sensitivity approaches across the Mission. This mechanism could map and identify conflict sensitivity practices, capacity, and gaps across the Mission, support the development of conflict sensitivity integration guidance, and coordinate conflict initiatives, fostering a more coherent and effective approach to conflict mitigation. In addition, a conflict coordination mechanism could be mandated to address existing gaps in the coordination and sharing of conflict research at different levels, including within the Mission, with implementing partners, and among donors. Using an existing forum to support conflict sensitivity integration can avoid duplication and address capacity constraints.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Use the Integration Working Group to map different sources of information available on conflict dynamics within and outside of the Mission, coordinate information sharing on conflict, and review conflict sensitivity integration practices and gaps across the Mission.
- Work with CVP to identify best practices and models for similar mechanisms at other USAID missions.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Ensure conflict is addressed as a cross-cutting, integrated issue in the next CDCS.
- Spearhead conflict-sensitive programming across the HDP nexus. This involves the integration of conflict analysis, localization, and community participation throughout activity lifecycles.

7. BUILD ON CROSS-BORDER INITIATIVES TO FACILITATE MULTI-COUNTY PROGRAMMING ACROSS COUNTIES IN NORTHERN KENYA.

Conflicts related to NRM in Northern Kenya transcend county borders and include disputes between groups on county border demarcations. Furthermore, unclear border demarcations between counties create fertile ground for conflicts exacerbated by resource scarcity, political manipulation, and land tenure systems. While USAID plans to increasingly focus its investments on focus counties, the cross-border nature of NRM conflicts will require a multi-county approach. This is applicable to all five counties targeted in this assessment. Cross-border initiatives can capitalize on existing structures and local stakeholder engagement for greater reach and impact.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Leverage existing platforms for cross-border coordination like LDOs to facilitate multi-county programming and approaches to conflict resolution.
- Align the Mission's focus on specific counties with multi-county programming on conflict mitigation.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Replicate and scale up existing cross-border initiatives (e.g., Amaya Triangle Initiative, Frontier Counties Development Council), as models to scale, layer, and sequence conflict mitigation efforts.
- Engage with the Government of Kenya to advocate for clearly defined border settlements through the upcoming IEBC boundaries review.

8. STRENGTHEN CONFLICT SENSITIVITY APPROACHES IN CONSERVATION PROGRAMMING.

The assessment highlights how conservation efforts in Northern Kenya often interact with conflict dynamics, and competition for resources can escalate into violence and undermine both conservation efforts and human security. However, there is also evidence that some conservancies support effective resource management and mitigate conflict when they engage with communities effectively. Given the number of conservancies across Northern Kenya, the Mission should prioritize and continue to strengthen existing efforts to ensure programming that safeguards biodiversity also capitalizes on opportunities to support peace.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Build on the existing conflict sensitivity assessment to review conflict sensitivity risks and put in place rapid mitigation measures with implementing partners, if required.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Draw from best practices in USAID's global experience working on land and conflict to support the development of a conflict sensitivity approach for Environment Office (ENV) programming. ENV can leverage CVP technical assistance or the Land and Conflict toolkit as starting points.
- Leverage existing conservation initiatives to counteract specific conflict drivers, engage local actors, and improve resource governance mechanisms.
- Build on ENV's successful investments in NRT to mainstream its approaches in conflict analysis across the conservation landscape in Kenya.

9. CHAMPION THE USE OF GRAZING AND WATER USAGE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN CONSERVANCIES AND PASTORAL COMMUNITIES.

Findings indicate that conservancies and communities have formed agreements on resource sharing that help balance community and biodiversity needs. These agreements can be replicated to reduce conflict and foster local ownership of natural resources.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Map successful examples of grazing and water usage agreements that can be replicated and scaled up. One possible example is the Tianamut group ranch located in Mkogodo West in Laikipia.
- Advocate for existing conservancy partners to adopt similar systems.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Extend technical assistance and resources to group ranches transitioning to Community Land Act models, ensuring the process is informed by careful assessments of local conflict dynamics and community engagement. This can be done in partnership with the State Department for Lands and Physical Planning.
- Build resource-sharing agreements into future conservancy programming.

10. EMBED CONFLICT SENSITIVITY INTO PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT FOR CONFLICT RESILIENCE.

Private-sector investments can have large-scale effects on conflicts in Northern Kenya and have implications for both conflict risk and mitigation. By aligning private sector activities with conflict prevention efforts and fostering positive relations with local communities, USAID can help ensure that investments are more resilient to potential conflict-related disruptions.

SHORT-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Conduct a rapid assessment of conflict risks in OEGI-supported investments in Northern Kenya, and work with private sector partners to develop risk mitigation strategies where required.
- Leverage partnerships with the US Development Finance Corporation and the Government of Kenya to review how investments play a role in economic resilience and conflict mitigation.
- Integrate pastoralists into the livestock value chain through the Kenya Meat Commission, including by helping local communities to sell livestock to county government just before extreme drought.

LONG-TERM OPTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

- Incorporate conflict sensitivity into investment promotion and economic growth strategies, enabling the private sector to play a more considered role in conflict mitigation.

ANNEX I: CORRUPTION, DEVOLUTION AND PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The assessment found that overlapping corruption, devolution, and PFM deficits perpetuate underdevelopment, inequitable governance, and inadequate service provision in Northern Kenya. These dynamics increase citizen apathy and disillusionment, grievances, and conflict and violence. This annex aims to complement the findings presented in the assessment by providing further context and detail on issues around corruption, the effect of devolution on corruption and governance, and challenges around PFM within devolved units. It also looks at the policy implications of these findings, including possible entry points for programming, and provides information on stakeholders already working to address these issues.

CORRUPTION IN KENYA

Corruption in Kenya is a systemic issue that permeates society and governance. Despite the presence of a system of checks and balances in Kenya, like the integrated financial management system (IFMIS) and independent judiciary, and constitutionally mandated offices like the Office of the Auditor General and EACC, corruption remains widespread and deeply embedded in the country's political culture and economy. The extent of corruption is widely acknowledged by Kenyan leadership. In February 2021, former President Uhuru Kenyatta stated that more than KSh2 billion (\$13.4 million) was being stolen from the public purse every day. More recently, the Government of Kenya's Head of Public Service Felix Koskei made several public statements about the extent of corruption in various Kenyan institutions, describing them as *"corrupt to the core."* The former Head of the EACC Philip Kinisu estimated in 2016 that Kenya loses approximately \$6 billion annually to corruption, representing roughly 7.8% of Kenya's GDP.⁴³

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVOLUTION AND CORRUPTION

Devolution, operationalized under the Constitution of 2010, was heralded as an opportunity to correct historical injustices by transferring power and resources away from centralized authority.⁴⁴ However, the assessment's findings indicate that this policy has had mixed outcomes in Northern Kenya. On one hand, devolution appears to have had some success in bringing governance closer to the people. It has empowered local communities to have a voice in local governance structures. It has also addressed, to some extent, imbalances in resource allocation, as an earmarked percentage of national revenue now flows to historically marginalized regions.⁴⁵

At the same time, decentralization has created grievances by devolving corruption and capture of public sector resources to the county level. Transparency International reports capture a noticeable uptick in corruption at the county level since the devolution policy came into effect, citing reports from the

⁴³ Quoted in Miriri, 2016.

⁴⁴ Kenya Law Reports, *Constitution of Kenya, 2010*, <http://kenyalaw.org/kl/index.php?id=398>

⁴⁵ Kenya Commission on Revenue Allocation, *Revenue Allocation Report, 2018*, <https://www.crakenya.org/>

EACC and Office of the Auditor General describing bribery, nepotism, patronage, and even embezzlement and mismanagement of public resources.⁴⁶ The Office of the Auditor General has found that most counties do not comply with the Government of Kenya’s financial regulations and procedures, and has released multiple reports capturing inconsistencies in budget allocation and questionable financial management practices at the county level.⁴⁷

Devolution has also introduced a shift in power dynamics in local governance structures. Although theoretically devolution decentralizes power, in practice, it has centralized authority in the hands of county leadership, empowering some elites while marginalizing others and local communities from decision-making processes. One resident observed, *“Devolution, if I see from a management perspective, has given more authority to county leadership than to the elites and ordinary people. It has created some forms of social differentiation; actually, the elites have been excluded from decision-making involving conflicts.”*

GAPS IN PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Another significant factor shaping the effect of devolution service delivery is the gap in PFM capacity and systems at the county level, which also enables corrupt practices. Apparent deficiencies in PFM in part stem from the infancy of administrative and financial systems within these devolved units. Local governments grapple with limited institutional capacity and often lack the systems for effective budgeting, transparent procurement, and accountable fiscal management. According to the Controller of Budget’s Annual Report, over 30% of county governments failed to fully absorb their development budgets, primarily due to inefficiencies in the planning and procurement processes. For example, Laikipia County’s absorption rate of its development budget stood at 39.3%.⁴⁸ A 2019 International Budget Partnership (IBP) report also highlighted that 22 out of 47 counties in Kenya were found to have inadequately transparent budget processes.⁴⁹ In a context where corrupt practices are common, this lack of experience and resources further exacerbates the ability of county governments to manage public finances transparently and effectively.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE PROVISION

Many respondents stated that they have not felt the benefits of devolution despite Northern Kenya counties receiving significant allocations from the national government. As one key informant remarked, *“Our county comes second in terms of allocation of resources from the national government after Nairobi, but a lot of that money is lost to corruption, especially those in county government.”*⁵⁰ Devolution has also reshaped the way natural resources like water are managed by intensifying local competition and interference in resource management, paving the way for corruption. New forms of elite capture have also contributed to the transformation of traditional systems, particularly among communities like the Borana. One resident stated, *“What actually has created conflicts in Merti is the change in the traditional management of water resources because management is easily corrupted even by the outsiders to access the water.”*

⁴⁶ Transparency International, *Corruption Perceptions Index*, 2019, <https://www.transparency.org/cpi/>

⁴⁷ Office of the Auditor-General, *Annual Report on County Governments*, 2020, https://oagkenya.go.ke/index.php/reports/cat_view/2-reports/1-audited-reports

⁴⁸ Controller of Budget, *Annual Report on County Governments Budget Implementation (2019-2020)*, 2020, <https://www.cob.go.ke/>

⁴⁹ International Budget Partnership, *Open Budget Survey*, 2019, <https://www.internationalbudget.org/open-budget-survey/>

⁵⁰ This comment refers to Turkana county, which in 2019 received 11.2 Billion KES, only second to Nairobi’s allocation of 16. B

RELEVANT PROGRAMMES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Research and consultations conducted for this assessment indicated that the following stakeholders have been working on addressing corruption and challenges created by devolution. Some of these initiatives include:

1. Kenya Devolution Support Program. Through this program, the World Bank worked with the government to improve the capacity of county governments to deliver services effectively. Similarly, the World Bank partnered with the government on the Kenya Accountable Devolution Program, another initiative that worked to enhance public financial management at the county level.
2. Program for Results to Strengthen Governance for Enabling Service Delivery and Public Investment in Kenya. This program is funded jointly by the Government of Kenya, the World Bank, and the French Development Agency. It aims to improve governance and service delivery at the county level.
3. Consolidated Gains and Deepening Devolution in Kenya. Funded by the governments of Finland and Italy, Swedish International Development Cooperation and UNDP, the program focused on improving county governance capacity, including in public financial management, resilience to environmental risks, citizen engagement, and inclusiveness.
4. Public Accountability and Service Delivery Program. Signed on April 20, 2020, between the Government of Kenya and the European Commission, this program aims to promote macro-fiscal stability, service delivery, and poverty alleviation.
5. Kenya Anti-Corruption Programme. Funded by the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth Development Office, this program seeks to prevent corruption in the public and private sector by strengthening bottom-up oversight in public service delivery.
6. Kenya Country Program. In collaboration with the GoK, the Danish Embassy supports various departments such as the Office of the Auditor General, Office of the Controller of Budget, Kenya Revenue Authority, and the National Treasury and Planning.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC IMPLICATIONS

The interlinked challenges presented by corruption, devolution, and ineffective PFM have several implications for policy and programming. USAID is already planning to support county-level PFM budgeting processes in health spending. Additional entry points that are aligned with the Mission's programming and priorities include:

1. Assessments by the World Bank have called for the thorough examination of devolution structures. This would entail evaluating if the objectives stipulated in the constitution, Public Finance Management Act, and other legal instruments are being achieved, and pinpointing the systemic and structural barriers that impede efficient and transparent PFM⁵¹
2. Strengthening PFM capacity and oversight mechanisms. Organizations like the International Budget Partnership have called for increased scrutiny of county-level financial transactions to improve accountability.⁵² Using performance-based conditional grants, where international financial support is tied to the implementation of transparent and inclusive processes, can also help to mitigate the

⁵¹ World Bank, *Kenya Public Expenditure Review*, 2017, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/publication/kenya-public-expenditure-review>

⁵² International Budget Survey, 2019.

misuse of funds. Performance-based conditional grants are being used on the Kenya Devolution Support Program and the Kenya Urban Support Program.

- 3.** Strengthening Kenya's anti-corruption legislation and institutions that provide entry points for donors to support enhanced transparency and accountability in devolved governments. Possible entry points for strengthening oversight mechanisms include increasing the capacity of the Office of the Auditor General and working on legislative reform that enable its findings to be actioned.
- 4.** Improving citizen engagement and accountability by supporting public participation in budgeting and accountability mechanisms.

ANNEX 2: LAND TENURE IN NORTHERN KENYA

One of the main findings of this assessment is that the access to, ownership of, and right to use land is a key driver of conflict in Northern Kenya. Existing and historical disputes and grievances have also been further complicated by corruption, the politicization of land conflicts, elite capture of land rights, and a range of recent political, social, economic, and environmental factors intensifying conflict over land. Shaped by the legacy of colonial land management practices and the use of land rights and ownership for personal gain and patronage, land tenure has become a central grievance in Northern Kenya that is further complicated by tension between different informal and formal institutions for governing land. This annex builds on the findings of the assessment to provide further background on land tenure in Northern Kenya and highlight possible entry points for USAID or other development actors working on improving land tenure security and resolving conflict over land.

BACKGROUND

The land tenure system in Northern Kenya is shaped by the legacy of colonialism. Under British colonial rule, large swaths of land were classified as “Trust Lands.” By disregarding customary land rights and existing management systems, the Trust Lands systems effectively disenfranchised indigenous communities, concentrated land ownership in the hands of the colonial powers, and exacerbated pre-existing conflicts over land by ranging land access rights. The Trust Lands system has left an enduring mark on the land tenure landscape,⁵³ as their legacy continues to influence land negotiations, development projects, and conflict resolution efforts in the region. Its impact manifested itself in persisting land claims rooted in historical overlaps with indigenous territories, which resurface during modern land negotiations as well as historical mishandling of land conflicts which influences current conflict resolution approaches, with communities often skeptical of formal legal processes.

As Northern Kenya shifted from colonial to independent governance, land ownership has remained a key patronage tool and has been subject to elite capture. Literature consulted for this assessment shows that political elites in the post-colonial era continued to manipulate land allocation for personal or political gain. For instance, the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land (known as the Ndung’u Report) shed light on the systemic irregularities and corruption associated with land transactions in Kenya, including the widespread practice of land grabbing. The Ndung’u Report, among others, illustrated the extent to which political and economic interests have subverted equitable land allocation and ownership processes.

CURRENT LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORKS

The 2016 Community Land Act was hailed as a transformative moment in the land tenure system in Northern Kenya as part of a broader reform agenda. Coming after decades of a more centralized, often

⁵³ M. Mwangi and S. Kariuki, "Factors Determining the Adoption of New Agricultural Technology by Small Scale Farmers in Developing Countries," *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* 6 (2015): 208-216.

disjointed approach to land management, this legislation promised to bring a level of order and legal backing to communal land rights.⁵⁴

As outlined in the Kenyan Constitution, land is categorized into three types: public, private, and community land. The 2016 Community Land Act oversees these categories, based on the principles of equality and sustainable, productive land resource management. In 2009, Kenya introduced the National Land Policy, replacing a myriad of colonial-era regulations. This policy's core tenets were later integrated into the 2010 constitution. Efforts to realize the principles of this policy and the constitution have given rise to several legislative measures, including the Land Act, the Land Registration Act, and the National Land Commission Act, all enacted in 2012. The Land Act emphasizes fair land access, the security of land rights, and encourages community-led endeavors, also proposing the establishment of a Land Settlement Fund. The 2016 Land Laws (Amendment) Act was introduced to address initial disagreements between the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Physical Planning, and the National Land Commission.

THE COMMUNITY LAND ACT IN PRACTICE

The introduction of the Community Land Act was considered a significant step forward in addressing inequalities over land. However, the transition from de facto to de jure land rights has been marred by challenges. On the one hand, it has provided communities with a legal framework to register, manage, and make decisions about their communal lands. This legal recognition has the potential to be particularly impactful for the pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya, many of whom have relied on these lands for generations but often had their claims ignored.⁵⁵ The Community Land Act helps affirm their ancestral claims and enhances tenure security. Additionally, it empowers them to govern and sustainably manage their lands. On the other hand, the law's provisions are yet to be fully implemented. The bureaucratic procedures required for communities to legally register their land have been slow, complex, and prone to corruption. The act's implementation must also address a range of legacy issues, including unresolved land disputes, lack of documentation, and most importantly, a historical bias against the communal land systems employed by the pastoralist communities. Moreover, the act requires communities to establish governance structures that are often unfamiliar, leading to internal disagreements and power struggles.⁵⁶

In addition, under the Omnibus Land Laws Amendment Act No. 28 of 2016, aggrieved parties had a five-year window from 2016 to submit claims for historical land injustices. This short window of time created challenges in verifying and addressing longstanding grievances given some communities' limited access to legal resources, a lack of awareness among communities about their rights to submit claims, and the logistical difficulties of documenting historical injustices in regions with sparse infrastructure and historical records.

⁵⁴ Kenya Law Reports: The Community Land Act, 2016, http://www.kenyalaw.org/kl/fileadmin/pdfdownloads/Acts/CommunityLandAct_27of2016.pdf.

⁵⁵ John G. Galaty, "Land Grabbing in the Eastern African Rangelands," in *Pastoralism and Development in Africa*, 1st Edition (London: Routledge, 2013), 143–53.

⁵⁶ Lenice Ojwang, Sergio Rosendo, Louis Celliers, et al., "Assessment of Coastal Governance for Climate Change Adaptation in Kenya," *Earth's Future* 5, no. 10 (2017). [Assessment of Coastal Governance for Climate Change Adaptation in Kenya - Ojwang - 2017 - Earth's Future - Wiley Online Library](#).

“In central Pokot, we predominantly follow a group range land tenure. However, recent subdivision initiatives have been a significant source of conflict, even resulting in wars.” - elder from Sigor, West Pokot -

Ultimately, while the Community Land Act was envisioned as a safeguard, its implementation has not prevented the mismanagement of communal lands or addressed longstanding grievances over land. For some, individual land ownership promises economic growth and prosperity. However, it clashes with communal land systems that have been deeply intertwined with the cultural and survival strategies of communities in Northern Kenya.⁵⁷ The friction between these systems becomes more pronounced when third-party actors become involved, such as mining companies interested in resource extraction or agribusinesses looking to use tracts of land for large-scale farming. While the Community Land Act provides some protections against such external intrusions, loopholes in the law and its incomplete implementation allow for potential abuse.

BALANCING LAND TENURE NEEDS AND RIGHTS

The complexities of land tenure in Northern Kenya stems in part from the challenge of reconciling the needs of various stakeholders. Pastoralists often view land primarily as a communal resource, essential for their livelihoods and deeply rooted in their cultural identity. Farmers, on the other hand, emphasize the need for individualized land ownership that would allow for longer-term planning and investment in agricultural development. Commercial ranchers and conservation agencies represent external but powerful stakeholders, often backed by capital and legal frameworks, whose interests may directly contradict those of local communities.⁵⁸

Government agencies play a critical role in land ownership but must balance differing priorities and claims. The need to encourage economic development often comes in conflict with the need to secure communal land rights, as recognized by the Community Land Act. While policies aim to create a framework for equitable land use, they may inadvertently fuel conflicts or facilitate land grabs when not carefully implemented in line with localized realities and existing grievances. Thus, any solutions to land tenure issues in Northern Kenya must be locally rooted to consider these various interests.⁵⁹

RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS AND POLICY INITIATIVES

Research and consultations conducted for this Assessment highlighted that the following key institutions and policies are focused on land tenure and management:

- I.** National Land Policy (GoK). Adopted in 2009, this policy aims to address historical land injustices, create an effective land administration system, and ensure equitable access to land. The policy recognizes the importance of community land and seeks to provide a framework for its administration and management.

⁵⁷ Simon F. R. Coldham, "Land-Tenure Reform in Kenya: The Limits of Law," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 17, no. 4 (1979): 615–27, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022278x00007473>.

⁵⁸ Galaty, 2013.

⁵⁹ HWO. Okoth-Ogendo, "Land Policy Development in East Africa: A Survey of Recent Trends," *Land Use Policy* 25, no. 1 (2008): 85-94.

2. Development Partners Group on Land (DPGL). The DPGL was created in 2004 by donors to support the Government of Kenya in addressing historical injustices, informal settlement upgrading and urban land management.
3. National Land Commission (NLC). The NLC was established as an independent office under the Kenyan constitution to manage public land on behalf of the national and county governments, initiate investigations into present or historical land injustices and recommend appropriate redress, and monitor and have oversight responsibilities over land use planning throughout the country.
4. Kenya Wildlife Conservancy Association (KWCA). Established in 2013, KWCA champions the interests of conservancies and has a stated ambition of “ensuring local communities derive multiple benefits from the management of land and natural resources under sustainable wildlife conservancies.”

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC ENTRY POINTS

As land tenure insecurity is a core driver of conflict, any initiative aimed at conflict mitigation will need to tackle the overlapping challenges creating conflict over land. Possible entry points, including initiatives with pastoralist communities, could include:

1. Strengthening engagement with the NLC to map possible opportunities for USAID support.
2. Advocating for settlements to disputes over county borders. The upcoming IEBC boundaries review provides a window of opportunity for USAID to help address this source of conflict and land tenure insecurity.
3. Conducting a land assessment in Northern Kenya using the Rapid Appraisal Guide,⁶⁰ which can be used to identify relevant land issues and interventions.
4. Supporting negotiated agreements for pastoralists to access conservancy/larger ranch pastures/water during droughts at scale.
5. Supporting the development and operationalization of robust local land and resource governance frameworks. Approaches could include supporting land use planning, the registration of community land, supporting local land and resource governance through technical assistance, and helping communities obtain documentation to prove land rights.

⁶⁰ The Rapid Appraisal Guide has been designed to help staff understand, in a particular context, which land issues are relevant to violent conflict and, in turn, which programmatic interventions may be useful to secure tenure, improve land and resource governance, build trust, and promote peacebuilding

ANNEX 3: THE YOUTH DILEMMA IN NORTHERN KENYA: DEMOGRAPHICS, EMPLOYMENT, AND SECURITY RISKS

INTRODUCTION

Youth in Northern Kenya are faced with compound risks and challenges. They face an increasingly uncertain future due to limited economic prospects, education opportunities, and poverty. As part of a broader national issue often referred to as the “youth bomb,” the number of young people entering the workforce is lagging behind corresponding increases in employment and development opportunities. These dynamics make youth vulnerable to violence, including through recruitment in organized crime or violent extremist organizations. This annex provides further detail on the set of challenges facing youth in Northern Kenya as well as the policy and programmatic entry points for addressing youth involvement in conflict.

DEMOGRAPHICS: THE ‘YOUTH BOMB’

According to the United Nations Population Fund and the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, approximately 75% of Kenya's population is under the age of 35. An estimated one million young people enter the job market each year, creating an urgent need for employment generation.⁶¹ Northern Kenya epitomizes this national trend, with limited employment opportunities and exploding youth population amid high levels of poverty and socio-economic vulnerability.

The demographic realities of Northern Kenya place a spotlight on the urgent need for targeted intervention supporting economic resilience. Job creation in line with demographic pressures is not just an economic requirement, but also an imperative for maintaining stability.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC CONSTRAINTS

Based on the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics, the official unemployment rate for Kenyan youth between the ages of 20 and 24 is 16.8%.⁶² However, this figure is likely higher in Northern Kenya due to the region's historically marginalized status, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to educational institutions. The unemployment challenge is compounded by a mismatch between available skills and market demand. Most employment opportunities in Northern Kenya are in the informal sector, often offering precarious work conditions and insufficient income levels. The limited industrial and commercial activities in the region offer few opportunities for structured, full-time employment.

POLITICAL EXCLUSION

Despite forming a majority of the population, young people in Northern Kenya often find themselves on the periphery of governance and community decision-making. Traditional hierarchies, combined with a political structure that often favors older, established elites, result in youth voices being relegated to the

⁶¹ United Nations Population Fund (UNFP), "State of World Population 2019," 2019, <https://www.unfpa.org/state-world-population-2019>.

⁶² National Bureau of Statistics, 2021.

background. This systemic exclusion extends beyond political representation; it manifests in limited youth participation in community dialogues, resource management decisions, and socio-cultural forums.

“The youths are the drivers of the conflict. They're on the frontline during confrontations. Their strategic involvement as peacemakers is crucial, and nowadays, it's acknowledged that there's 'nothing for us, without us.' It's imperative to involve young people in peace solution processes and initiatives, ensuring they can effectively communicate with their peers to address and mitigate conflict.” - civil society representative, West Pokot -

MORANISM

Moranism, deeply embedded within pastoral communities like the Maasai, Pokot, Samburu, and Turkana in Northern Kenya, is both a cultural rite of passage and an essential livelihood strategy. Young men, or morans, traditionally undertake the responsibility of herding livestock, symbolizing their transition to adulthood. In addition, Moranism played an important role in community security, as *Morans* functioned as informal security agents for communities in the harsh terrains of Northern Kenya, providing protection against external threats.

The role of *Morans*, while traditionally based on cultural and social values such as unity, camaraderie, and a strong communal identity, has shifted in the current socio-economic climate and threats to pastoralist ways of life. In particular, *Morans* appear to be increasingly engaged in organized livestock raids, which have transformed traditional livestock raids into larger, more organized theft of cattle for sale. Such activities, often driven by economic motivations, pitch them against neighboring communities, leading to violent confrontations and deep-seated animosities. This emergent pattern not only disrupts local peace but also triggers retaliatory violence cycles that destabilize vast regions beyond the immediate site of these raids.⁶³

The shifts in Moranism have multiple implications. First, *Morans* involved in these activities restrict their opportunities to integrate into the formal education sector and the wider job market, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and conflict. Furthermore, their participation in raiding activities pits *Morans* against formal legal structures, exposing them to potential punitive measures and further estranging them from broader societal norms.⁶⁴ At the community level, these shifts have increased the frequency of violent attacks that lead to high casualties and loss of communal assets, compounding their socio-economic challenges.

Youth, especially *Morans*, are central to both conflict and potential peace-building processes. Their active engagement, alongside targeted interventions addressing root causes like sustainable livelihoods, are critical components of efforts in conflict resolution.

⁶³ D. Eaton. “The business of peace: Raiding and peace work along the Kenya-Uganda border (part I).” *African Affairs*, 107(426), 89-110.

⁶⁴ J. Schilling, F.E. Opiyo, and J. Scheffran, “Raiding pastoral livelihoods: Motives and effects of violent conflict in north-western Kenya,” *Pastoralism*, 2(1), 1-16.

STRENGTHS AND POTENTIAL: LITERACY AND DIGITAL SKILLS

Despite the challenges, there are also opportunities to productively engage the youth of Northern Kenya. National data suggests a steady rise in literacy rates, attributed in part to the implementation of universal primary education. Moreover, there is increasing engagement with digital technology among the youth, even in remote areas. This digital affinity could be leveraged for skill development and remote employment opportunities, given the right investment in infrastructure and training.⁶⁵

RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS AND PROGRAMMING

Research and consultations conducted for this assessment indicated that the following stakeholders have been working on youth programming:

1. USAID's Empowered Youth provides small grants to start-up or expand youth-led businesses, scale youth-run enterprises to employ more youth, or expand employer-led training.
2. Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project is a World Bank-GoK initiative to equip young people between the age of 18 to 29 with training, work experience and grant funding for small businesses.
3. *Ujuzi Manyattani* is a vocational training initiative by NRT that provides access to learning, adult literacy, and entrepreneurship skills to people from disadvantaged backgrounds and those without formal education.
4. Youth Empowerment Centers (YEC) program is a flagship intervention under Vision 2030. Modelled to be 'One Stop' Centers, YECs serve as platforms for integrating services such as entrepreneurship training, information provision, ICT, counselling, games, community mobilization and networking and act hubs for all Government activities involving the youth countrywide.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC ENTRY POINTS

As highlighted above, USAID/KEA already has different programs focused on youth, and youth are a cross-cutting priority for the Mission. Some additional policy and programming entry points the Mission could consider include:

1. Building on the success of the Empowered Youth program to provide small grants to youth-led businesses. This can be scaled up through Public Private Partnerships and also connected to the work of the Hustler Fund.
2. Leveraging the YALI Regional Leadership Center for East Africa to design and offer leadership programs for youth from pastoral backgrounds on facilitating peace, community dialogue and climate change adaptation.
3. Utilize the next CDCS development process to mainstream youth engagement and inclusion in all programs. A 'Youth-Centered CDCS' can also be leveraged to rally a coordinated donor response to address the 'youth bomb.'

⁶⁵ . ITU Hub, "Facts and Figures 2020," ITU/UN tech agency, December 10, 2020, https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-ind-ict_mdd-2020/.

ANNEX 4: WORKS CITED

1. ACLED, “Kenya: Competition Over Politics and Resources Affect Recent County Border Disputes,” November 2023, [Link](#)
2. ACLED, “Kenya: Government Operation against Pastoralist Militias in North Rift Region,” March 31, 2023.
3. Baringo, Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu and West Pokot. NRT and Pact, “Aridity and Violence in Kenyan Rangelands: A Political Economy Analysis of Conflicts in Baringo, Isiolo, Marsabit, Samburu, and West Pokot Counties,” January 2021.
4. Karol Boudreaux and Daniel Abrahams, “Land and Conflict: A Toolkit for Intervention 2,” USAID, 2022, [Link](#)
5. Corruption Perceptions Index (2022), Transparency International, [Link](#)
6. Government of Kenya, “Kenya Vision 2030: Popular Version,” May 2018, [Link](#)
7. Huma Haider, “Conflict Analysis of North Eastern Kenya,” Institute of Development Studies, July 2020, [Link](#)
8. Rahma Hassan, Iben Nathan, and Karuti Kanyinga, “Will community rights secure pastoralists’ access to land? The Community Land Act in Kenya and its implications for Samburu pastoralists,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 50, no. 5 (2023): 1735-1756, [DOI](#)
9. Gargule A Achiba, Monica N Lengoiboni, “Devolution and the politics of communal tenure reform in Kenya,” *African Affairs*, Volume 119, Issue 476, July 2020, Pages 338–369, [DOI](#)
10. Evis Elezaj, Naveen Ramful, Julia Karpati, and Chris De Neubourg, “Kenya Comprehensive Poverty Report: Children, Youth, Women & Men, Elderly. From national to county level,” ResearchGate, 2020, [Link](#)
11. Kenya Land Alliance, “Land Allocations Report,” 2018, [Link](#)
12. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, “The Kenya Poverty Report,” 2021.
13. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, “The Kenya Poverty Report: Based on the 2021 Kenya Continuous Household Survey,” 2021.
14. The World Bank Group, “Climate Risk Profile: Kenya,” 2021.
15. The World Bank Group, “The North & North Eastern Development Initiatives: Boosting Shared Prosperity for the North and North Eastern Counties of Kenya,” 2018.
16. Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2021.
17. Hannah Alice Whittaker, “The Socioeconomic Dynamics of the Shifita Conflict in Kenya, c. 1963—8,” *The Journal of African History* 53, no. 3 (2012): 391-408, [DOI](#)
18. Zeinabu Kabale Khalif & Gufu Oba, “‘Gaafa dhaabaa - the period of stop’: Narrating impacts of shifita insurgency on pastoral economy in northern Kenya, c. 1963 to 2007,” *Pastoralism* 3 (2013): 14, [DOI](#)
19. Nnemie Pas, Elizabeth E. Watson, and Bilal Butt, “Land Tenure Transformation: The Case of Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya,” *Political Geography* 106 (2023): [DOI](#)
20. Philip Onguny and Taylor Gillies, “Land Conflict in Kenya: A Comprehensive Overview of Literature,” *Les Cahiers d’Afrique de l’Est / The East African Review* 53 (2019), [Link](#), [DOI](#)
21. FEWS NET, Kenya Acute Food Insecurity, October 2023, [Link](#)
22. Miriri, Duncan, “Third of Kenyan budget lost to corruption: anti-graft chief,” Reuters, March 10, 2016.
23. National Council for Population and Development, “Youth Bulge in Kenya: A Blessing or a Curse,” June 2017.
24. National Council for Population and Development, June 2017.
25. National Council for Population and Development, 2017.

- 26.** NRM is defined as the sustainable utilization, conservation, and governance of natural resources to meet social, economic, and environmental needs. Natural resources were defined by respondents in Northern Kenya as land, water, pasture, livestock and land-based resources such as minerals, oil and gas.
- 27.** Omondi Gumba, Duncan, and Guyo Chepe Turi. "Cross-Border Arms Trafficking Inflames Northern Kenya's Conflict." ISS Africa, November 18, 2019, [Link](#)
- 28.** Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965.
- 29.** Stephen M. Mureithi, Ann Verdoodt, Jesse T. Njoka, Joseph S. Olesarioyo, and Eric Van Ranst, "Community-Based Conservation: An Emerging Land Use at the Livestock-Wildlife Interface in Northern Kenya," 2019, [DOI](#).
- 30.** The World Bank Group, "Climate Risk Profile: Kenya," 2021.
- 31.** The World Bank Group, "Climate Risk Profile: Kenya", 2021.
- 32.** Transparency International, "Corruption Perceptions Index (2022)," [Link](#)
- 33.** USAID, "Current Trends in Pastoralism in the Horn of Africa: Literature Search on Trends and Drivers of Change," June 2023.
- 34.** World Bank, Comprehensive Public Expenditure Review: From Evidence to Policy, 2017, [\[Link\]\(https://documents.worldbank](https://documents.worldbank)

ANNEX 5: DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

This annex provides additional recommendations and details developed by the assessment team. The recommendations focus on the following entry points:

- 1. Priority Recommendations.** Participants in workshops and briefings on assessment findings and recommendations highlighted five recommendations as being particularly important for USAID/KEA.
- 2. Policy and External Coordination.** Aligned with the ambitions from the Mission's mid-course stock-taking exercise, recommendations under this category are non-programmatic. They can be actioned through partnerships, influence with key counterparts in the Kenyan government, or collaboration with interagency, donor, and local partners.
- 3. Environment, Climate Change, and Resource Competition.** Resource competition is a key driver of conflict that is being exacerbated by climate change. In some areas, it is also leading to conflict between communities and conservancies. Recommendations in this section speak to how the Mission can respond to these dynamics and leverage assessment findings to support community resilience.
- 4. Governance.** In light of assessment findings on the interlinked dynamics of corruption and lack of capacity in core governance functions, these recommendations focus on enabling USAID to address key governance grievances and work with local peacebuilding actors to mitigate conflict.
- 5. Youth.** Youth are a critical stakeholder in any peacebuilding effort. Recommendations in this section provide priority recommendations focused on key conflict drivers for this demographic across technical offices.
- 6. Economic Resilience and Improved Service Delivery.** Limited access to services and diversified economic opportunities amid increasing threats to pastoralism gives resource competition a zero-sum quality. Recommendations in this section focus on how USAID can adapt economic programming and service delivery to alleviate pressure and dependence on natural resources.
- 7. Mission Management and Learning.** These mission-wide strategic and operational recommendations speak to how the Mission can adapt its work to be more conflict sensitive and respond to emerging changes in the conflict context

I. POLICY AND EXTERNAL COORDINATION

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
<p>I. Review and strengthen donor coordination mechanisms.</p>	<p>Respondents consistently highlighted the relative absence of donor coordination and resulting duplication of efforts in Northern Kenya. Leveraging USAID leadership in this area can enable more streamlined, coherent efforts to peacebuilding and efforts to address the drivers of conflict. This would optimize accountability and resource allocation.</p>	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Convene with actors with strong coordination mechanisms, such as the European Union and the United Kingdom’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) to discuss lessons learned and agree on next steps. ● Conduct a mapping exercise of existing development and peacebuilding programming and actors with other donors and the Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA). ● With direct support from Mission leadership, lend political capital to donor coordination groups under the Office of the Deputy President. ● Leverage Partnership for Resilience and Economic Growth (PREG) as a channel for addressing coordination gaps. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrate LDOs in donor coordination mechanisms, capitalizing on their local expertise, and role in community structures to improve donor interventions. Coordinate state and non-state early warning and early response systems. ● Replicate good practices from the North East Advisory Group model, including involving other donors in design, co-creation, budgeting, and joint work-planning processes. 	<p>Front Office leadership for leadership with other donors</p> <p>Requires whole of Mission buy-in on coordination approach</p> <p>Government of Kenya (GoK) Office of the Deputy President as convener</p>

<p>2. Build on cross-border initiatives to facilitate multi-county programming across counties in Northern Kenya.</p>	<p>Conflicts around NRM in Northern Kenya transcend county borders and include disputes between groups on county border demarcations. While USAID plans to increasingly focus its investments on focus counties, the cross-border nature of NRM conflicts will require a multi-county approach. This is applicable to all five counties targeted in this assessment. Cross-border initiatives should capitalize on existing structures and local stakeholder engagement for greater reach and impact.</p>	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Leverage existing platforms for cross-border coordination like LDOs to facilitate multi-county programming and approaches to conflict resolution. ● Align the Mission’s focus on specific counties with multi-county programming on conflict mitigation. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Replicate and scale up existing cross-border initiatives (e.g., Amaya Triangle Initiative, Frontier Counties Development Council, Economic Blocs), as models to scale, layer, and sequence conflict mitigation efforts. 	<p>DGPS LDOs</p>
<p>3. Advocate for multi-agency conflict-sensitive development and security strategies.</p>	<p>USAID and other USG agencies can leverage their relationship with the Government of Kenya to advocate for security strategies that directly address the root causes of resource-based conflicts.</p>	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share top level assessment findings with GoK partners. ● Coordinate with interagency partners involved in development and security. ● Monitor GoK readiness and willingness to address vulnerabilities, e.g. through relevant policies and legislative frameworks. <p>Long Term:</p>	<p>DGPS Interagency working groups National Police Service, Kenya Defense Forces, Ministry of Interior, and National Administration</p>

- Targeted technical assistance and capacity building to GoK to promote integration of conflict sensitivity approaches into key national projects like LAPSSSET and Vision 2030.
- Targeted technical assistance to Government of Kenya to promote integration of conflict sensitivity approaches into security sector agencies.

4. Embed LDOs in NRM and conflict mitigation programming to support localized approaches to peace.

Stakeholders universally agreed that local problems require local solutions. LDOs, given their intimate knowledge of community dynamics, can support USAID’s localization agenda by increasing USAID’s access to local organizations working to support peace and identifying local solutions to challenges in NRM and conflict and enhance.

Short Term:

- Engage LDOs in capacity building programs focused on NRM, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding to empower them with the necessary skills.
- Use LDOs to map local organizations and partnerships working on peace and overcome administrative barriers to working with hyperlocal partners.
- Work with LDOs to integrate conflict sensitivity in their work. This should include identifying the main risks, opportunities, and mitigations associated with their work, and plans to regularly monitor these risks and opportunities to adapt programming.
- Leverage existing partnerships such as the Kenyan School of Government (KSG), National Drought Management Authority, the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development, and the National Cohesion and Integration Commission to ensure a comprehensive approach to conflict-sensitive NRM.

LDOs in Isiolo, Turkana, and Samburu

LDOs in Laikipia and West Pokot (when established)

BHA Shirika Plan

National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management (NSC)

Long Term:

- Utilize LDOs to conduct thorough and periodic local conflict assessments, identifying potential triggers and offering localized solutions.

- Support horizontal engagement between LDOs and county government by including LDOs in planning and decision-making processes related to NRM and conflict mitigation in their respective counties.

2. ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND RESOURCE COMPETITION

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
4. Strengthen and refine conflict sensitivity approaches within conservation programming	The assessment shows that conservation efforts in Northern Kenya often intersect with conflict dynamics, and competition for resources can escalate into violence and undermine both conservation efforts and human security. Developing conflict sensitivity offers a dual benefit: safeguarding biodiversity while promoting social cohesion	<p>Short term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build on the existing conflict sensitivity assessment to review conflict sensitivity risks and put in place rapid mitigation measures with Implementing Partners if required. <p>Long term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draw from best practices in USAID’s global experience working on land and conflict to support the development of a conflict sensitivity approach for ENV programming. ENV can leverage CVP technical assistance or the Land and Conflict toolkit as starting points. ● Leverage existing conservation initiatives to counteract specific conflict drivers, engage local actors, and improve resource governance mechanisms. ● Build on successful investments by ENV in NRT to mainstream its approaches in conflict analysis across the conservation landscape in Kenya. 	ENV

5. Champion the use of grazing and water usage agreements between conservancies and pastoral communities.	Findings indicate that conservancies and communities have formed agreements on resource sharing that help balance community and biodiversity needs. These agreements can be replicated to reduce conflict and foster local ownership of natural resources.	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map successful examples of grazing and water usage agreements that can be replicated and scaled up. One possible example is the Tianamut group ranch located in Mkogodo West in Laikipia. Advocate for existing conservancy partners to adopt similar systems. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extend technical assistance and resources to group ranches transitioning to Community Land Act models, ensuring the process is informed by careful assessments of local conflict dynamics and community engagement. Build resource sharing agreements into future conservancy programming. 	ENV State Department for Lands and Physical Planning
---	--	--	---

3. GOVERNANCE

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
6. Strengthen PFM at the county level to mitigate conflict through more effective and equitable resource allocation.	Amid grievances around public service provision and resource allocation, working on PFM capacity and oversight can bolster local governance and community involvement in NRM. Given that counties receive a notable share of the national budget, USAID can	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leverage a strategic partnership with the KSG to develop a curriculum of training and technical support with a focus on conflict-sensitive planning, resource management, and inclusive budget processes. Review past and current PFM capacity building and technical assistance to counties. 	DGPS KSG LDOs

	prioritize ensuring its efficient and transparent use to address grievances around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring LDOs into budget and resource allocation processes to strengthen oversight. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build a cross-cutting PFM capacity building and oversight approach into the next CDCS to strengthen devolved governments. 	<p>Public Financial Management Reforms Secretariat</p> <p>Regional Economic Blocs.</p>
7. Advocate for settlements on county border demarcations.	Unclear border demarcations between counties create fertile ground for conflicts, exacerbated by resource scarcity, political manipulation and land tenure systems.	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with GoK to advocate for clearly defined borders through the upcoming IEBC boundaries review. Prioritize West Pokot/Turkana borders as a pilot. 	<p>DGPS</p> <p>IEBC</p> <p>Local Community Structures</p> <p>Council of Governors</p>
8. Enhance citizen oversight and accountability on budgeting processes.	The assessment indicated widespread citizen apathy regarding the vast scale and profound impact of corruption. Introducing citizen oversight and accountability measures to the Mission's ongoing work with county governments can support anti-corruption, increase citizen engagement, and help to ensure	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with the EACC to map opportunities for engaging directly with citizens at the county level. <p>Long Term:</p>	<p>DGPS</p> <p>EACC</p>

	budgets are utilized efficiently and with transparency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen government accountability by designing programs to empower citizens with digital tools to identify, report, and prevent corruption before it happens. 	
9. Revitalize Peace Committees and strengthen their role in conflict mitigation.	Peace committees have a proven track record of conflict mitigation and early warning, and have potential for resolving NRM issues and bolstering community engagement. They also provide grassroots coordination platforms for multiple peacebuilding actors to work together, including elders, religious actors, youth, and women's groups. However, they face challenges around inconsistent budgeting and prioritization and sustainability.	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with other donors to map past achievements and lessons learned from past engagements with Peace Committees. Enhance the sustainability of Peace Committees by integrating them into formal governance frameworks for institutional support and establishing clear, adaptable operational guidelines to navigate evolving conflict dynamics. Strengthen the peace ambassadors' network through NRT. Consider opportunities to work with Peace Committees on NRM conflict mitigation through IGAPP or upcoming procurements. <p>Long-Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor the inclusivity of Peace Committees receiving USAID support, particularly with regards to youth, women, and minority groups. Advocate for GoK/county-government funding of Peace Committees. Use programming to strengthen horizontal relationships between Peace Committees to improve their ability to support inter-group conflict mitigation. 	<p>DGPS</p> <p>ENV</p> <p>LDOs</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop conflict sensitive financing and sustainability plans for supported Peace Committees. 	
10. Develop conflict-informed civic education campaigns.	Stakeholders cited civic education as an entry point to address significant levels of misinformation and disinformation within communities that are contributing to conflict. Given high levels of illiteracy, campaigns should use mixed platforms (radio, traditional media, social media, etc.) to maximize reach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replicate best practices from PREG’s media outreach model at scale and in strategic forums. Embed conflict sensitivity, sustainable NRM, and climate change perspectives into civic education endeavors. Collaborate with the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation to maximize reach. Partner with civil society and media to develop context-specific content disseminated through a well-coordinated campaign. 	<p>DGPS</p> <p>LDOs</p> <p>National Cohesion and Integration Commission</p> <p>Kenya Broadcasting Corporation</p>

4. YOUTH

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
11. Build on successful alternative livelihoods programs for youth to mitigate socio-economic pressures that push young people towards conflict.	Addressing youth unemployment and disenfranchisement is a clear opportunity to mitigate conflict but also to harness the potential of young people to participate in NRM, drive economic growth and positive social change.	<p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with LDOs to conduct a youth situation assessment to better understand context, including youth opportunities and radicalization. Work with the Government of Kenya to strengthen resource reach to young people (e.g., a specific window within the Hustler Fund for youth in Northern Kenya). Leverage the LDO platform as an opportunity to enfranchise youth into county development and security discourse. Joint work planning around youth issues. 	<p>DGPS, HPN, EDY, OEGI</p> <p>PREG</p> <p>Design Team</p>

Long Term:

- Coordinate with other donors on youth programming.
- To ensure the Mission has an integrated approach to addressing the compound risks youth face in Northern Kenya, USAID can focus its upcoming CDCS on a youth-centric whole-of-mission approach.

12. Leverage ongoing curricula review processes to embed peace education into primary and secondary schools.

Systematizing and fostering a culture of peace and conflict resolution among future generations is crucial in laying the groundwork for long-term stability and societal harmony.

Long Term:

- Partner with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development to introduce conflict sensitivity into multimedia educational content. Include land literacy materials into the curriculum.
- Incorporate peacebuilding and conflict resolution modules into YALI programs.
- Design youth leadership programs that draw on the values of courage, responsibility, and community service intrinsic to “Moranism,” integrating conflict-resolution skills and advocating for nonviolent engagement.

EDY

13. Promote youth entrepreneurship for conflict mitigation.

Fostering youth entrepreneurs whose business ideas support conflict mitigation can diversity economic opportunities and redirect youth from factors and incentives that draw them to conflict and organized crime.

- Prioritize youth businesses that contribute to conflict mitigation through Empowered Youth's small grant programs.
- Offer mentorship and support to youth entrepreneurs who innovate solutions that address local conflict.

EDY

5. ECONOMIC RESILIENCE AND IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
14. Embed conflict sensitivity into private sector engagement for conflict resilience.	Private-sector investments can have large-scale effects on conflicts in Northern Kenya and have implications for both conflict risk and mitigation. By aligning private sector activities with conflict prevention efforts and fostering positive relations with local communities, USAID can help ensure that investments are more resilient to potential conflict-related disruptions.	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a rapid assessment of conflict risks in OEI-supported investments in Northern Kenya, and work with private sector partners to develop risk mitigation strategies where required. • Leverage partnerships with the US Development Finance Corporation and the Government of Kenya to review how investments play a role in economic resilience and conflict mitigation. • Integrate pastoralists into the livestock value chain through the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC), including by helping local communities to sell livestock to county government just before extreme drought. <p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate conflict sensitivity into investment promotion and economic growth strategies, enabling the private sector to play a more considered role in conflict mitigation. 	OEI
15. Integrate health outreach for humans and livestock to reinforce wider	Livestock are a critical resource for pastoralist communities. Pairing medical services for communities and veterinary care for ailing livestock can enhance community resilience,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch health outreach initiatives that simultaneously address human and livestock health. 	HPN

conflict mitigation efforts.	reduce resource competition, and foster cooperation among diverse stakeholders.		
16. Optimize health resources allocation at the county level to mitigate conflict.	<p>Devolution has presented challenges and opportunities for county-level health services. The distribution of health resources and infrastructure can be a source of tension. Disparities in resource allocation can lead to feelings of marginalization among communities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strengthen capacity of county health departments to effectively manage devolved health roles. Strive to provide equitable access to health facilities, outreach services, and resources. ● Work with DGPS to leverage PFM health budgeting support. 	<p>HPN DGPS</p>

MISSION MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING

RECOMMENDATION	RATIONALE	WAYS FORWARD	RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS
17. Establish a formal conflict coordination mechanism for USAID/KEA.	USAID/KEA currently lacks a formal coordination mechanism to support conflict integration and sensitivity approaches across the Mission. This mechanism would serve to both deepen analytical rigor and synchronize conflict initiatives, fostering a more coherent and effective approach to conflict mitigation. To avoid creating new structures, an existing	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the Integration Working Group to ensure that conflict-related issues and data are consistently addressed across various offices. • Ensure conflict integration addressed in design and co-creation processes. • Identify an existing appropriate forum at the Mission that could lead its conflict integration efforts. • Work with CVP to identify best practices and terms of reference for similar mechanisms at other USAID missions. <p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure conflict is addressed as a cross-cutting, integrated issue in the next CDCS. 	<p>DGPS Center of Excellence</p> <p>Integration Working Group</p> <p>Design Team</p>
18. Incorporate conflict sensitivity requirements into procurement processes	Conflict sensitivity requirements in procurement documents and Technical Evaluation Committees (TECs) can help ensure that IPs are working to mitigate violence and conflict, and that conflict-sensitive thinking is integrated across Mission programming.	<p>Short Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate an explicit agenda item focused on conflict sensitivity approaches in upcoming co-creation activities and TEC reviews across areas of programming. • Work with CPS/CVP to incorporate conflict sensitive procurement support resources into Mission designs. 	<p>Integration Working Group</p> <p>Office of Assistance and Acquisition</p>

		Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formalize conflict sensitivity requirements for all partners by incorporating them into contract language. 	Strategic Planning and Analysis (SPA) Design Team TECs CVP
19. Strengthen conflict sensitivity approaches across USAID/KEA's portfolio.	Respondents indicated uneven understanding of conflict sensitivity approaches across IPs. A systematic assessment allows USAID to establish a baseline and monitor IP compliance. The Conflict Sensitivity Assessment ENV is conducting could serve as a model.	Short Term:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a rapid conflict sensitivity review of existing awards to establish a baseline. Conduct Conflict Sensitivity Assessments where rapid reviews identify significant risks or opportunities to affect conflict. Partner with CVP to hold Mission-wide CSAID Training. 	Integration Working Group CVP
		Long Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide training for frontline staff, including health workers and IPs to better recognize and address conflict-induced stressors. 	
20. Enhance conflict monitoring and dissemination of analysis with other donors, within the Mission, and with IPs.	Regular conflict monitoring and analysis are crucial for adapting to the evolving landscape, but discussion with USAID stakeholders speak to gaps in coordination and sharing of conflict research at different levels, including among donors, within the Mission, and with IPs.	Short Term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map the different sources of information available on conflict dynamics across Mission offices, and IPs and make the Integration Working Group the central collection point. Tighten conflict monitoring by embedding conflict and resilience metrics into IGAPP activities. 	Integration Working Group DGPS SPA

	<p>This process should feature a strong feedback loop with key stakeholders, including local communities, the Kenyan government, and IPs. Transparently sharing findings ensures trust, realigns interventions with current conditions, and cultivates a shared understanding of conflict dynamics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Partner with SPA to create cross-sector data-sharing mechanisms for timely, coordinated conflict response. <p>Long Term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Distribute conflict analysis to TOs through the Integration Working Group, IPs through PREG, and to local communities through LDOs. ● Create and regularly update conflict-and-NRM profiles for priority counties. ● Coordinate conflict analysis with other donors through the above coordination groups. 	
<p>21. Build on “Do No Harm” approaches to strengthen conflict sensitivity across the Human-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus.</p>	<p>USAID can capitalize on BHA’s expertise in “Do No Harm” approaches and the Integration Working Group’s function as a lead on Mission conflict sensitivity to advocate for a stronger approach to the HDP nexus.</p>	<p>Spearhead conflict-sensitive programming across the HDP nexus. This involves the integration of conflict analysis, localization, and community participation throughout activity lifecycles.</p>	<p>BHA Integration Working Group</p>