

CONFLICT AND PEACE BUILDING

EXPERIENCES FROM NORTHERN KENYA



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Background:

Pastoralist Journalist Network is a community media organisation that uses community media, community outreach and awareness in educating, imparting and disseminating information to marginalised pastoralist communities in northern Kenya, southern Ethiopia and southern Somalia.

ACTIVITIES

Peace education, women peace building, Cross border peace building, eradication of small arms, Non-violent action, human rights education , advocacy, clinics, reporting, radio listening group, refugee rights, health education among others

The Pastoralist communities and conflict in Northern Kenya:

In Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, the pastoralist communities occupy the largest percentage (over 70%) of the countries total land area. Most of these people occupy the vast *Arid* and *Semi-Arid* region in the three countries. They keep cattle, camel, goat, sheep and donkeys.

The pastoralists are nomadic ethnic groups that are highly mobile. These are mainly Turkana, Samburu, Pokot, Borana, Rendille, Orma and Somali clans in Kenya. Borana, Burji, Gambella Gabra, Shangila, Nyangatum, Oromo, Degodia, Garreh and afar in Ethiopia and Somali clans in Somalia. They move from one area to another in search of pasture and water for their livestock. Their movements are not restricted to one area or even country as they move into and out of neighbouring countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda.

These movements are one of the major sources of misunderstanding and conflict between them and their neighbours.

The region is highly marginalised and underdeveloped as essential infrastructure such as water, livestock market, health, roads and education facilities are either too scarce or totally absent to be relied on. **The vastness and remoteness of the area, inadequate road networks and scarcity of resources goes hand-in-hand with *lapse in security***

occasioning frequent misunderstanding and conflicts among these pastoralist communities. This is normally over resources especially water and grazing land.

The conflict situation in this area is further complicated by two major issues

1 flow of arms from eastern Europe e.g Ukraine

2 Attacks sponsored by Al-shabaab [proxy conflict]



CONFLICT IN NORTHERN KENYA

North eastern province is one of eight provinces in Kenya that is plagued by violent conflict pitting different clans. The province has witnessed series of incursion, cross border raids, inter-clan clashes, state sponsored massacres. The province has never witnessed peace since independence

A few years after Kenya attained independence, the province was put under curfew due to the infamous shifta war and clamour for secession that ended in 1977.

Afterward the province experienced state sponsored inter-clan clashes that were also fuelled by external factors like lawless Somalia and Ethiopia. The province lacks infrastructure hence their feelings of not being part of Kenya

Violent conflict involving pastoralist had become widespread and increasingly severe in North Eastern province of Kenya.

Among the consequences and impacts of the conflict are; loss of human life, property, displacement of large segment of the communities,, disruption of socio-economic activities in the region, increased hatred between the communities, environmental degradation, increased economic hardships as a result of loss of livelihoods, high level starvation and malnutrition among the displaced communities and unprecedented dependency syndrome on relief food.



CAUSES OF CONFLICT

Among the pastoral communities in the three countries, there are many sources of conflicts among them are;

- Scarce resources e.g. water, pasture, salt licks etc.
- Frequent droughts that occasion migrations.
- Historical rivalries between the ethnic communities.
- Disputes over territorial boundary claims.
- Traditional / customary practices.
- Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (show of power of the gun).
- Weak state security and governance structures (especially the neighbouring countries).
- State politics.
- Lack of clear land ownership policies.



TYPES OF CONFLICT

- Fights over natural resources such as pasture and water points.
- Livestock rustling.
- Raids.
- Banditry.
- Highway robbery.
- Politically instigated violence.

TYPES OF ARMS FOUND IN NORTHERN KENYA

There are varieties of lethal weapons found in this area. These range from small arms to light weapons such as AK-47, G3, M-16, Uzi, American Carbine, patchets, Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG), hand grenades, land mines and many brands of pistols. These arms are illegal and in wrong hands.



EFFECT OF CONFLICT ON COMMUNITIES:

1. Ethnic conflicts.
2. Destruction of life (deaths).
3. Frequent livestock rustling.
4. Destruction of property.
5. Rising poverty levels among the communities of Northern Kenya.
6. Increased insecurity levels.
7. Consistent banditry.
8. Increased crime levels.
9. Sophistication of conflicts and crime incidences.
10. Attracted many businessmen in to commercial trading and deals in arms.
11. Kept off investors from the region – affected tourism and livestock

- marketing businesses.
12. Disruption of social harmony and co-existence among the ethnic groups.
 13. Rapes and maiming of people victims.
 14. Constant fear and feeling of vulnerability is instilled in the communities.
 15. Destruction of infrastructure / facilities such as schools, health centres, roads, water holes and markets.



IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON PEACEBUILDING

1. Destabilised the peace situation in the district / region.
2. Peacemakers have been victims of attacks.
3. Supporters are kept off/scared by presence of arms.

KPJN/WACC INTERVENTION

Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network took the initiative of using its media members to approach their communities so that they can down their arms and embrace peace.

After the approach, the journalists decided to form a group so that we can approach the larger communities combined and government officials as a bonafide group. Resources to do all these were not available.

The journalists formed Kenya Pastoralist Journalist Network, and we approach World Association of Christian Communication WACC Global and they offered our peace work some support that mobilised various stakeholders for community peace building workshop.

The workshop brought together enemy clans, youths, women, elders, journalists and government officials. The workshop acted as a bridge to all the communities who were fighting in the region.

They discussed their problems and suggested solution for the conflict that was ravaging the region. The group agreed to denounce violence and work toward peace building in the areas affected.

The workshop formed a network dubbed Northern Kenya Peace Network that brought all stakeholders for peace building together so that we can educate the communities in grazing areas and watering points on peace making and social cohesion.

The network made a big stride as each member from the stakeholder group approached their clans to stop fighting and it culminated in demobilisation of 150 armed combatants who were given amnesty by government.

The network approached WACC GLOBAL for second round of support to take peace education to grazing areas, conflict zones and watering points.

The peace education campaign and education aimed at addressing various factors that fuels conflict including cattle rustlings, direct marginalization, resource competition e.g. water, pasture and salt licks, eradication of small arms and light weapons, highlight and popularize traditional governance systems and traditional methods of conflict resolutions , promoting inter-cultural exchange between the rival communities, empower the ex-combatants on alternative livelihoods and positive integration into the society.



PROJECT REACH

1 GRAZING AREAS

2 WATERING POINTS

3 CONFLICT ZONES

4 REMOTE VILLAGES

PROJECT TARGET:

1 WOMEN

2 ELDERS

3 CONFLICT CONCUBINES

4 REHABILITATED EX-COMBATANTS

5 ARMED YOUTHS



METHODS OF USED FOR PEACE EDUCATION

1 SONGS

2 ORAL NARRATIVES

3 FOLKLORE

4 TRADITIONAL DANCE

5 INTER COMMUNAL EXCHANGE

6 PEACE EDUCATION AT GRAZING AREAS AND WATERING POINTS

PROJECT IMPACT

1 COMMUNITIES FORMED VILLAGE MEDIATION COMMITTEE

2 COMMUNITIES STARTED LIVING SIDE BY SIDE

3 SCHOOLS WERE REOPENED

4 SPIRIT OF ONE SOCIETY WAS ACHIEVED

5 250 ARMED YOUTH SURRENDERED AND DOWN THEIR ARMS

6 TRADE ROUTES RE-OPENED



PROJECT IMPACT ON WOMEN

1 IT'S THE FIRST ACTIVITIES THAT INVOLVED WOMEN IN PEACE ACTIVITIES AND PEACE RESTORATION

2 IT'S THE FIRST TIME PASTORALIST WOMEN WERE GIVEN RESPONSIBILITY TO MEDIATE DIFFERENCES AND PREACH PEACE THROUGH THEIR INCLUSION IN VILLAGE MEDIATION COMMITTEES

3 IT'S THE FIRST PROGRAM THAT EMPOWERED CONFLICT CONCUBINES AND INCLUDED THEM IN THE VILAGE MEDIATION COMMITTEE

4 VILLAGE MEDIATION COMMITTEE THROUGH EX-COMBATANTS WILL DEMOBILISE ACTIVE COMBATANTS THUS STOPPING WOMEN ABDUCTION AND KIDNAPPING.

IMPACT ON MEN

1 MEN FROM WARRING COMMUNITIES JOINED FORCES IN SEARCHING AND RESTORING PEACE

2 MEN AGREED TO RESPECT WOMEN RIGHT AND ESPECIALLY THOSE CONFLCIT CONCUBINES

3 MEN AGREED TO WORK CLOSELY WITH WOMEN IN IRONING OUT SUSPCION AMONGST THE COMMUNITOES

4 MEN AGREED TO PREACH PEACE TO THEIR BOYS SO THAT THEY SHOULD NOT JOIN ACTIVE COMBATANTS

5 MEN AGREED TO START PEACE EDUCATION AT THEIR HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

6 MEN WILL ACT AS PEACE AMBASSADORS SO THAT OTHERS CAN EMULATE THEM.



OUTCOMES:

- 1 Conducive atmosphere for peace was set
- 2 Communities will own peace process at village level
- 3 Communities embracing importance of peace and co-existence
- 4 Reduction of factors that will fuel or ignite fresh conflicts like cattle rustlings and resource competitions
- 5 Joint cooperation between the government and communities at grassroots level in promoting peace and cohesion
- 6 Increased enrolment in schools situated in conflict areas.
- 7 Increased socio-economic activities due to relative peace.
- 8 Demobilization of active combatants will be undertaken
- 9 Empower communities at grassroots to keep peace
- 10 eliminate hatreds and stereotypes amongst various clans in the area.
- 11 Formation village mediation committee
- 12 Women were involved for first time into the mediation committees
- 13 Conflict concubines were empowered and their voice has been heard. They were also included into mediation committee.
- 14 its first time since independence where peace process and campaign has been taken to grass root level.



PROJECT BENEFICIARIES:

Peace education, community outreaches and awareness campaign reached estimated 10,000 pastoralists in the village, watering points and grazing areas. The project has no number of men and women as it was an open forum and campaign. However with engendering of the program and community mobilization, these activities saw large number of pastoralist women attending and taking stake in peace making, peace structures and peace education

CONFLICT CONCUBINES

Conflict concubines were given opportunity to attend and take part in the process. A conflict concubine refers to pastoralist women who were abducted by armed combatants to act as their conflict concubines in the conflict zones. They were chased from conflict zones after the combatants brought in young girls to replace them.

The communities have ostracized and stigmatized them. Most of the conflict concubines are on wheelchairs due to attack and maiming from armed combatants.

The program brought them on board and offered them trauma / healing session and psycho social support so that they can live side by side with other community member. However the program was able to persuade the community to include conflict concubine into the village peace mediation committee.



INDIRECT BENEFICIARIES;

The project reached the active combatants who are still active in the 16 hotspots and they are privy of peace messages, peace activities, inter-communities linkages and village mediation committee that were formed. The active combatants were given olive branch to surrender and infact some of their former colleague [rehabilitated ex-combatants] were included in the village mediation committee with task to persuade the active combatants to demobilize and integrate into the society

THANKS
