



Centre for  
International Cooperation  
and Security

## **Armed violence and poverty in Northern Kenya**

A case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

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Conducted on behalf of the Centre for International Cooperation and Security

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## **The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative**

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University to carry out research to promote understanding of how and when poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by armed violence. This study programme, which forms one element in a broader “Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative”, aims to provide the full documentation of that correlation which DFID feels is widely accepted but not confirmed. It also aims to analyse the processes through which such impacts occur and the circumstances which exacerbate or moderate them. In addition it has a practical policy-oriented purpose and concludes with programming and policy recommendations to donor government agencies.

This report on Northern Kenya is one of 13 case studies (all of which can be found at [www.bradford.ac.uk/cics](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/cics)). This research draws upon secondary data sources including existing research studies, reports and evaluations commissioned by operational agencies, and early warning and survey data where this has been available. These secondary sources have been complemented by interviews with government officers, aid policymakers and practitioners, researchers and members of the local population. The authors would like to thank Patta Scott-Villiers for comments on an earlier draft. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of DFID or the UK government.

## Executive summary

This northern Kenya case study is an example of armed violence in the periphery, in the remote, semi-arid northern districts of the country. The economy is principally dependent upon pastoralism, and armed violence is mostly associated with livestock raiding. This case study focuses on two contrasting districts of northern Kenya: Turkana in the north-west, which has endured a particularly intense couple of decades of armed violence; and Wajir in the north-east which, after a bloody history, has enjoyed something of a 'peace dividend' in recent years, due to local peace-building efforts by the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC).

Although livestock raiding is an inherent feature of the pastoralist economy, it appears to have become increasingly violent since the early 1980s as small arms became more widely available. It is now associated with higher and less discriminate loss of human life and greater livestock losses. The conflict dynamics that fuel livestock raiding are complex and extend far beyond a simple 'competition for scarce resources' model. The weakness of government, specifically of state security institutions, means that criminal activity can flourish, particularly in the form of 'commercialised' livestock raiding. Instability has sometimes been encouraged for electoral purposes. The wider regional dynamics are also critical, as northern Kenya borders with Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia, all of which have had, or are currently experiencing violent civil wars. They are thus associated with lawlessness and the unchecked flow of small arms. The use of arms in northern Kenya has to be understood in this wider context.

There are three key reasons why pastoralists have been arming themselves:

- (1) to protect themselves against hostile groups;
- (2) to defend their animals against other armed pastoralist communities;
- (3) for offensive purposes, to steal livestock from other pastoralist communities.

There are deep-seated cultural values associated with cattle raiding, e.g., to prove that a young man is ready for manhood, and often to acquire the bride price which has been steadily increasing in recent years as poverty has deepened. Traditionally, elders oversaw raiding and there were established conflict resolution mechanisms, although raiding was still associated with loss of life. In many areas, these traditional means of governance have been weakened as young men have armed themselves and attained wealth through the barrel of the gun. Nevertheless, traditional leadership is still strong in Turkana. Wajir provides a very interesting example of local people taking the initiative to promote peace in the face of spiraling violence with the establishment of the WPDC in 1995. As livestock raiding has become commercialised, powerful and well-connected businessmen and politicians have become involved. Corruption and impunity are at the heart of this flourishing criminal activity. Unemployed young men, for whom there are limited economic opportunities, provide good recruits.

Quantifying the impact of armed violence on poverty is difficult, not only because of problems of attribution, but also because of a lack of relevant time-series data.

Nevertheless, we can safely conclude that armed violence has hastened the long-term decline of pastoralism in northern Kenya, which is directly associated with greater impoverishment. Most Turkana admit that they are poorer today than they were before the frequency of armed violence increased in the early 1980s. For example, in southern Turkana most households have lost animals to bandits at least once in the year. The size of many household herds has diminished to the point of material insignificance. In the absence of alternative economic opportunities, this creates irreversible conditions of poverty. Ironically, just as their asset basis is depleted, their need for cash to purchase food increases. Raided households have to engage in an increasing number of non-livestock work activities, the burden of which falls disproportionately on women. There has also been a rise in the number of women-headed households as men have been killed. In the worst-case scenario, when a household's entire herd is stolen, displacement and destitution quickly follow, especially if the raid affects the whole community.

Insecurity has a very negative impact on the mobility of livestock and access to some of the best grazing lands. This is most acute in drought years and can have a devastating impact on livestock productivity and mortality. Access to livestock markets is similarly disrupted by insecurity with the consequence that some pastoralists have to sell at much reduced prices often to itinerant traders. The effect of violent conflict on social infrastructure can be very damaging, as civil servants leave the respective district and health centres and schools close. Aid-funded development programmes are terminated prematurely. However, the experience of Wajir District shows how quickly social infrastructure can be recovered and aid investment can start to flow when relative peace is restored. At the macro level, the commercialisation of livestock raiding results in a tremendous drain of livestock out of the pastoralist economy. In Samburu, this was in the region of \$5 million over a three to four year period. Combined with the other negative effects of livestock raiding, this simply contributes to the widening poverty gap between pastoralist areas and the rest of the country, which is ultimately a threat to Kenya's stability and security.

The starting point for any aid programming is to understand that the widespread holding of arms is not the issue, rather it is understanding the *use* of arms in the wider context of local and regional conflict dynamics. Response to violent conflict, which is driven by security concerns alone is doomed to failure, including short-term and unilateral disarmament initiatives. Rather, it is the root causes that must be tackled through coherent policies that engage all agencies. Pastoralists must be given a greater voice in the development of any such policies. Helping pastoralists restock or finding alternatives to pastoralism are important to offer an alternative livelihood to living by the gun especially to disenfranchised young men. Positive examples of local level peace-building, as in Wajir, must be built on, but above all must be linked to national policy level and supported with real political will. In border areas, like Turkana, such initiatives can only be successful if they are regional. There must also be greater investment in collecting and analysing trend data that shows the impact of conflict and violence on livelihoods over time, not least to understand and monitor the impact of the various peace efforts. Finally, aid donors have an important role to play in ensuring that their assistance is also geared to tackling the root causes of conflict, but with a long-term commitment and in a coordinated and coherent way.

## 1. Introduction

The northern Kenya case study is an example of armed violence in the periphery, in a country, which is ruled by strong government. Yet government has a limited presence and has failed to maintain basic levels of security in the remote semi-arid northern districts of Kenya where the economy is principally dependent upon pastoralism. Investment in development in these districts has been limited; they have been marginalised both politically and economically for decades. This pattern is not untypical of other East African countries, including Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda, although the underlying causes of the conflict in remote regions may vary from one country to another, and also the particular dynamics of armed violence.

In northern Kenya, armed violence is mostly associated with livestock raiding. Although livestock raiding is an inherent feature of the pastoralist economy, it appears to have become increasingly violent since the early 1980s as small arms became more widely available. In recent years, livestock raiding has become 'commercialised' in parts of northern Kenya; years of impunity have resulted in the flourishing of this form of criminal activity.

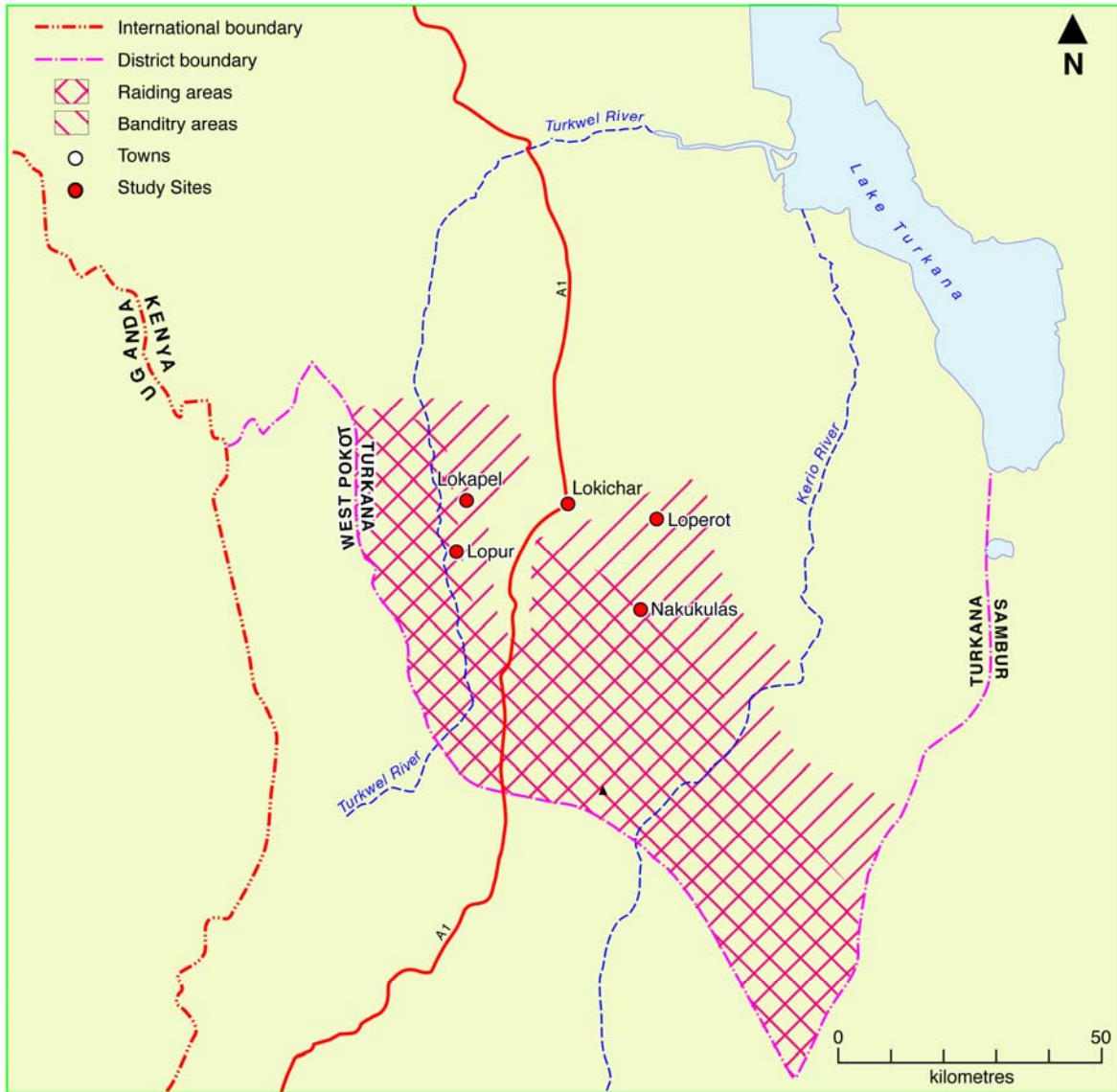
This case study focuses on two districts of northern Kenya: Turkana in the north-west and Wajir in the north-east. Both have experienced long periods of conflict associated with livestock raiding, in which armed violence has been a major feature. However, the patterns of conflict differ. Whilst armed violence appears to have increased in intensity and frequency in Turkana, in Wajir there has been some success in the last decade in finding peaceful means of dealing with, and resolving conflict. This has been almost entirely achieved through local efforts, particularly through the work of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC). Thus, Wajir has enjoyed something of a 'peace dividend', which provides some useful data to contrast with the negative impact of armed violence elsewhere. Table 2 summarises some of the characteristics of Turkana and Wajir districts. As data and information have been more readily available for Turkana district, this forms the core of this case study.

**Table 1: Similarities and differences between Turkana and Wajir Districts**

<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Turkana District</b>	<b>Wajir District</b>
Location	NW Kenya – bordering Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia	NE Kenya – bordering Somalia and Ethiopia
Ethnicity	More or less homogenous ethnic group (loose cultural federation of Turkana <sup>1</sup> ) – part of the Karimojong cluster	Homogenous ethnic group (Somali), divided into three main clans
Nature of armed violence	Armed livestock raiding: large numbers of cattle raided, often large loss of human life	Armed livestock raiding: large numbers of cattle raided, often large loss of human life
Conflict dynamics	Strong cross-border regional dimension	Mostly inter-clan, with cross-border dimension
Intensity of armed violence	Increased in last 2 decades – ‘no peaceful years’ reported since early ‘80s	Substantially decreased in last decade as a result of local peace efforts

<sup>1</sup> See Lamphear, 1992 on kinship sections and sub-units of the Turkana ethnic group.

**Map 1: Areas of insecurity in southern Turkana district, Kenya**



## **2.The context of armed violence**

### **2.1 The underlying conflict dynamics**

Livestock raiding has a long history in northern Kenya. Raids were an important strategy of accumulation that also served to cultivate relations with neighbours. For example, this enabled Turkana to expand by assimilating new groups (Lamphear, 1992). Pre-colonial raiding could also have been redistributive, transferring animals across social boundaries in situations of need, such as during drought or when young men sought animals to pay out as brideprice (Hendrickson et al, 1998; Spear and Waller, 1993). ‘Traditional’ means of raiding used ‘traditional’ weapons such as spears and bows and arrows, and was often directed by elders. There was loss of life, but on a smaller scale than now.

In the last two decades the nature of raiding and levels of violence associated with it have changed dramatically. As the availability and possession of small arms has increased, guns are now almost always used during raiding. As a result, the numbers of livestock stolen and the loss of human life associated with raiding have risen enormously. For example, a particularly vicious period of inter-clan conflict and banditry in Wajir claimed over 1,000 victims between 1992 and 1995, and close to US\$ 1million worth of livestock (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1996). Killing of humans is now much more indiscriminate. Whereas hand-to-hand fighting using traditional weapons targeted warriors, the use of guns means that many more women and children are killed in raids today.

#### **2.1.1 Turkana district**

The redistributive effects of raiding now appear insignificant to most households in Turkana district, who instead struggle to adjust their livelihoods to the high probability of loss of life and livestock. Predatory raiding has become prevalent, driven by interests outside the district (see Hendrickson et al, 1998). Politicians and wealthy entrepreneurs, whose intention is ‘to procure cattle in vast quantities either to feed warring armies or to sell on the market for profit’ (ibid:9), organise and equip the large gangs of young men who do the raiding. Evidence of this appears in the Kenya popular media, which has reported with alarm several deadly raids in Turkana District and neighbouring areas. Kenya’s leading daily paper, the *Nation*, reported in July 1999 that a criminal cartel, including well-connected traders, politicians and officials from the Rift Valley provincial administration (that covers Turkana District), was coordinating raids in Turkana and surrounding districts ostensibly to obtain livestock to sell to abattoirs in Nairobi and other urban centres.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the commercialisation of cattle raiding has introduced a significant new criminal element with negative consequences for the pastoralist economy – detailed in section 5 below.

According to local opinion armed violence associated with livestock raiding in south Turkana has increased since the early 1980s, and this pattern is borne out elsewhere. ‘Peaceful’ years in south Turkana, as recalled by respondents to a household survey

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<sup>2</sup> *Nation*. July 20, 1999. Nairobi.



carried out by Lind (2004), are concentrated between the 1950s and 1970s.<sup>3</sup> After 1981, no years are recalled as being 'peaceful'. Several large raids occurred in the 1990s, a period in which the level of insecurity is ranked as high by local elders. In these large, usually inter-tribal raids, for example across the Turkana-West Pokot District boundary, up to several hundred armed men from one side execute a coordinated attack on neighbouring villages lying across the border. Although the number of large raids varies from one year to another, typically there may be up to five large raids in southern Turkana in a given year. These raids require sophisticated planning to time the surprise of the attacks and the capture and escape of many thousand animals. They also require well planned ways of guarding the secrecy of the operation and the building of a wider network of support among villagers for the safe passage of raiders and contraband livestock. In turn, this requires clear leadership and command structures to coordinate multiple groups of attackers. While elders are sometimes complicit by sanctioning some livestock theft, renowned warriors, sharpshooters or seers undertake the actual organisation of raids.

In the north-west of the district, large-scale raiding is usually perpetrated by pastoralists from across the border – the Karimojong from Uganda, the Toposa and Nyang'atom from Sudan and the Merille from Ethiopia. Thus, the regional dimension to violence and livestock raiding in Turkana is critical. Turkana district shares borders with Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia, all of which have had, or are currently experiencing violent civil wars. Not only does this fuel the flow of arms, it also contributes to an environment of lawlessness and impunity in which opportunistic and criminal livestock raiding can flourish. For example, Kratli and Swift report on deserters and ex-combatants drifting into Kenya from neighbouring war zones living off banditry or working as mercenaries in commercial raids.

Understanding the balance of power between different ethnic groups, particularly cross-border, is critical to understanding the pattern of violent livestock raiding within Turkana district. The balance of power is directly related to the holdings of arms.

The other type of raiding identified by Turkana is smaller-scale theft of animals and household goods by organised bands of up to ten *ngoroko* or bandits. The availability of small arms means that raids are now feasible when carried out by small numbers of men. This was not the case when traditional weapons were used. *Ngoroko* typically steal for their own personal enrichment often exchanging contraband animals for other livestock with another herd owner. *Ngoroko* are often of the same ethnic origin as those they attack, although they are usually of a different sectional affiliation. Some *ngoroko* are well known<sup>4</sup> even by officials within the political-administrative apparatus. However, few are ever apprehended; most disregard traditional institutions and act with impunity. The strategy of these home-based robbers is opportunistically to attack vulnerable homesteads or small clusters of homes lying in remote bush areas as well as vehicles

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<sup>3</sup> Based on the explanations given by respondents, in peaceful years there were few if any raids, the intensity of violence was lower, banditry was socially sanctioned and less predatory, livestock products were in abundance and there were no purchases of food with cash.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, particularly notorious *ngoroko* are the subject of local folklore.

travelling along isolated stretches of road. *Ngoroko* typically take a small number of milking livestock kept at homesteads as well as grain reserves, fuelwood, kitchen utensils and other household goods. Although attacks by *ngoroko* are less severe in terms of loss of life and livestock and destruction of property, they are more frequent (occurring weekly in south Turkana) and their longer-term impacts are felt to be equally or more pernicious than the occasional raids on a larger scale. Indeed, an impact assessment conducted by the African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) in December 2003 revealed that big organized raids had reduced in Turkana but that small-scale and sporadic cattle theft had increased.

The role of the state in Turkana has been minimal, which is typical of most of the northern arid districts of Kenya. Pastoralist people have usually had limited contact with government which, in turn, has failed to provide security. A culture of impunity has prevailed and a distrust of government has built up over many years. Even when the security forces have attempted to control raiding, in very large raids the number of raiders easily outstrips the security forces (Mkutu, 2003). There is evidence of some corrupt government officials actually benefiting from raiding (see below).

### **2.1.2 Wajir district<sup>5</sup>**

Wajir's political history is very different to Turkana's, although both have a shared history of decades of livestock raiding. In Wajir, 'traditional' conflict was usually over water and grazing rights, which in turn were defined by clan territories. As in Turkana, national boundaries have made little difference to this type of conflict during most of the twentieth century; clan fighting may take place across boundaries as well as within Northeastern Province. The Colonial Administration attempted to maintain peace by defining and enforcing the boundaries of territorial grazing areas. However, when these restrictions were lifted after independence, clan conflict over pasture and water resources simply re-emerged.

In the early 1960s Somalis in the north-east fought to secede from Kenya and to join Somalia in the Shifta War. This rebellion was quashed in brutal form by both the armed forces and the police. Although the Shifta War ended in 1968, the legacy of deep hostility and distrust between the Somalis and the state continued for at least another 30 years. Indeed, Northeast Province, including Wajir District, remained under a state of emergency from independence until 1992. As a result, the administration had very wide powers, including the right to kill on sight anyone deemed 'suspicious' (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1996).

Wajir district has also suffered from the effects of insecurity and conflict in the neighbouring countries of Somalia and Ethiopia, for example in the mid 1980s when fighting between Somalia and Ethiopia spilled over into clan-based killing in Wajir. In 1991, the influx of Somali refugees after the state of Somalia collapsed made the situation even worse.

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<sup>5</sup> Most of this sub-section is based on Weiss, 2004

## **2.2 In conclusion**

The conflict dynamics that fuel livestock raiding are complex. Over-emphasis on a 'competition for scarce resources' model of conflict risks simplifying the causes. In both the north-west and the north-east of Kenya, the wider regional dynamics are critical and must be understood. The weakness of state security institutions means that criminal activity can flourish probably on a large-scale in Turkana District. On the other hand, the experience of Wajir District demonstrates the potential of the local community to enforce peace, despite the inability of government to provide security.

Building political power around particular ethnic groups has been another factor fuelling violence and livestock raiding between different groups and districts within Kenya, particularly during the regime of the previous government. For example, in Wajir electoral politics have become very much clan-based. Ibrahim and Jenner (1996) report that violent conflict has flared up in Wajir West constituency each time a Degodia MP has been elected (in 1979, 1984 and 1992).

Kratli and Swift propose a three-category typology of pastoral conflict in Kenya: traditional, commercial and political conflict. However, they also acknowledge the overlap between these three categories and especially the deliberate hiding of commercial and political conflict behind 'traditional' conflict.

## **3. The significance of small arms and light weapons**

Small arms have been present in Turkana district since the early twentieth century (Kratli and Swift). However, it appears that arms availability really increased from the late 1970s onwards matching the local people's assessment that there have been 'no peaceful years' since 1981. A defining moment was an event in Uganda: a raid in 1979 on the Moroto arms depot following the collapse of the regime of Idi Amin. It is widely reported that Turkana herders acquired the looted small arms from Karimojong tribesmen with whom they exchanged animals for weapons. This is indicative of a pattern in northern Kenya. The increased availability of arms is closely related to war and insecurity in neighbouring countries. The recommencing of civil war in South Sudan in 1983 provided renewed impetus to the flow of small arms in the north west of Kenya. For example, the SPLA has had a record of selling the livestock it captures through raiding in exchange for arms and thus fuelling the trade in small arms. In Wajir district, increased availability of arms is closely related to the outbreak of war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1984.

Interestingly, Weiss (2004) reports that newer guns (including the Heckler and Koch G3 assault rifle) are available in the north-west in close proximity to the more recent and intense wars in the region. This availability is also because government attempts to disarm have led to 'forced upgrades'. In Northeastern province, there are still many AK-47s from the 1960s. Somalis appear to dominate the arms trade to and within Kenya.

Although Kenyan law on legal firearm ownership is very strict, this means little in the remote and marginalised districts of northern Kenya. The reasons for this are best captured by two quotes, referring to the north-west and north-east respectively:

‘Where the State fails or is unable to provide security to its people, logic demands that the people seek alternative means to meet those challenges. In the North Rift, communities have resorted to self-arming owing to the widespread insecurity and the availability of small arms in the region.’

(Kamenju et al, 2003:6)

‘People’s reasons for owning guns are mostly insecurity. There has been little helpful government intervention, even historically. Maybe one security official for three or four thousand people. Also, government violence has been there: rapes and beatings against local people. So we own guns to protect both against our enemies and the government.’

(interview with a Wajir local peace-builder, reported in Weiss, 2004: 74)

Mkutu (2003) cites three reasons why pastoralists have been arming themselves:

- (i) to protect themselves against hostile groups;
- (ii) to defend their animals against other armed pastoralist communities; and
- (iii) for offensive purposes, to steal livestock from other pastoralist communities, often for revenge.

Of course the weighting of these motives will vary between different groups – for some protection is the most important motive, for others theft and accumulation. As Mkutu concludes, guns are an economic investment.

The holdings of small arms are notoriously difficult to estimate. Suffice to say that the distribution of guns is widespread. The extent to which women-headed households own and use guns is hard to fathom. There are anecdotal reports of women defending themselves with guns, but also reports that they seek the protection of gun-owners in the wider community (Lind, 2004). According to Mkutu (2003), women often request ownership of their man’s gun if he is killed on a raid. He cites the *Kenya Times* in saying that women are now learning how to use guns as so many have been widowed as a result of the high death rate amongst men taking part in or becoming victims of cattle raiding.

‘The problem of small arms arguably has the most impact [in Kenya] in the pastoral regions’ (Weiss, 2004: 27). A vicious circle has been created. The inability of government to provide or maintain security has resulted in local communities taking security measures into their own hands, not least by arming themselves. Yet this also fuels violence and insecurity as guns are used for raiding, whether as part of a criminal commercial enterprise or for small-scale accumulation of livestock. Thus, arms alone cannot be blamed for the intensity and widespread nature of violence. The use of arms has to be understood in the wider context.

Whilst violence associated with raiding is not new to the pastoralist north of Kenya, the availability of arms combined with the other factors fuelling conflict appear to have led to

a much greater intensity of violence creating a very insecure environment. This is supported by feedback from pastoralists themselves in surveys, workshops and interviews, although the literature is less clear-cut with some reports of high levels of violence in the first half of the twentieth century (see Kratli and Swift for a review of this). The adjustment in livelihood strategies due to the threat or probability of being attacked can be as destructive to a household's livelihood as actual incidents of armed violence themselves.

## **4. Social and cultural aspects of armed violence**

### **4.1 Cultural aspects**

In Turkana district raiding has traditionally been part of the ritual process by which young men proved they were ready for manhood (Mkutu, 2003). In addition,

‘the status of a warrior is determined once a man has killed his first enemy – an event he will mark by notching a scar on his right shoulder or chest’  
(Pkalya et al, 2004:15)

Cattle raiding is often essential for young men to be able to marry by paying the bride price, from the groom's family to the bride's family in order to legitimise the marriage. Increasing poverty of many pastoralists has caused steady inflation in the bride price only to put even greater pressure on young men. Amongst some groups it has increased to 200 cattle, although it is more commonly 30 to 60 cattle (AU/ IBAR, nd). Whilst there are ways of deferring the bride price, this cannot be done indefinitely particularly when children arrive (Mkutu, 2004).

Thus, there are deep-seated cultural values attached to raiding and to violence in which women play a critical part sometimes goading the men on. In recognition of this, recent efforts to reduce violent conflict in the Karamoja cluster<sup>6</sup> have particularly targeted women.

### **4.2 Social capital and armed violence**

Traditionally, elders oversaw cattle raiding. This was important to ensure that it did not spiral out of control and was also critical to traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. For example, it was common for human deaths to be compensated by the donation of cattle from the killers' family. Deaths were much fewer than they are now.

In some areas, these traditional means of governance have been weakened over decades, first by the colonial administration and then by governments post independence. As a result, community elders have less and less control over young men and this erosion of power has accelerated with the widespread use of small arms. As Mkutu puts it:

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<sup>6</sup> The Karamoja cluster spans north-west Kenya, north-east Uganda, south-east Sudan and south-west Ethiopia – a total of 14 tribes.

“ ‘eldership’ can now be attained by wealth, and youth are often well positioned to attain wealth if they can gain access to guns. Elders now have to ‘negotiate’ with such youth in a way that has not been the case in the past”.

(Mkutu, 2003:11)

In Turkana, the situation is more complex. The *emuron* – traditional seers – still command tremendous authority in villages and encampments. Yet, the extent to which they have control over the *ngoroko*, the source of much small-scale and devastating livestock theft, is unclear.

Wajir, however, offers a much more promising response to spiraling violence. There was intense conflict between the three main clans in 1992-93, which spread to include fighting between women in the market. In response, local women came together to form the Wajir Women for Peace Group in an attempt to address the causes of the problem. At the same time, a group of educated professionals established the Wajir Peace Group with members from all clans in the district. Meetings of elders were convened, culminating in the Al Fatah Declaration in September 1993 which set out guidelines for the return of peace (Oxfam GB, 2003). This establishes that:

‘the traditional law pertaining to blood feud will apply to those who commit murder... In the case of stock theft, the rule of collective punishment involving whole groups of people will be applied’

(as quoted in Weiss, 2004:16)

In other words, it is a return to customary law which has since remained in place. In 1995, all the respective peace groups in Wajir came together in the Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC). Today it is regarded as one of the most successful examples of a community-led peace initiative in Kenya.

Whilst Wajir demonstrates how social capital has been organised very effectively to build peace, Turkana offers an example of social reorganisation to provide protection. Turkana herding families traditionally reside and move in small units known as *adakars* in the wet season and in the dry season may move as individual households or *awi*. *Adakars* vary in size,<sup>7</sup> but typically comprise less than twenty households. As insecurity intensified in the early 1980s, the Turkana responded by creating *arumrums*, i.e., large residential units and grazing associations that comprise up to several hundred families. These have multiplied across southern Turkana in response to escalating armed violence in key grazing environments. Besides their larger size, there are other characteristics that distinguish an *arumrum* from other residential units. Leadership structures are more clearly defined in an *arumrum*. Typically a seer (*emuron*), sharpshooter or other respected elder leads an *arumrum*. This includes making important decisions related to security and grazing as well as assigning roles to *arumrum* members by instructing young men in grazing animals and scouting for raiders, for example. Defenses are usually stronger and more coordinated in an *arumrum*. Home guards also work under clearer command of the *arumrum* leader. Another distinguishing characteristic of an *arumrum* is that decisions

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<sup>7</sup> Dyson-Hudson, N. and Dyson-Hudson, R. 1999 ‘The social organization of resource exploitation in south Turkana.’ In *Turkana herders of the dry savanna: ecology and biobehavioral response of nomads to an uncertain environment*. Eds. Little, M. A. and Leslie, P. W. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

regarding human and livestock movements are made collectively by (male) herd owners, although the *arumrum* leader has the ultimate say. For instance, herd owners from an *arumrum* graze their livestock individually (separately), but always in the same agreed direction from the *arumrum* compound. In this way, herd owners are able to assist one another in the event of an attack. One condition for membership to an *arumrum* is ownership of a gun. Alternatively, households can seek protection from a close stock associate (friend, relative or neighbour) who owns a gun. This includes female-headed households and widows living alone. Interviewed Turkana emphasize the importance of social networks for protection and defense (Lind, 2004).

## 5. The political economy of violence

The commercialisation of cattle raiding is the most significant 'new' feature of the political economy of violence especially in the north-west of Kenya. In Mkutu's words:

'[it] has increased the intensity of ... raiding and is leading to major changes in economic, social and political structures in the border area. It is creating a black market for commercial cattle trading that straddles the localities, urban areas and the wider region. Access to arms has become essential to successful commercial cattle raiding'

(Mkutu, 2003: 15)

The businessmen and politicians behind this raiding are usually powerful and well-connected figures in positions of authority in Kenya, Uganda and in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). They operate through local agents who recruit young men for whom there are limited economic opportunities. Living by the gun becomes an attractive alternative.

The scale of this illegal activity is notoriously hard to establish. However, research done in Samburu district gives some indication of the magnitude. 'Between 1996 and 1999 over 25,770 cattle were stolen with very few recoveries. The approximate total cost of lost livestock to the community was calculated to be 384 million Kenyan shillings or US\$5million' (Mkutu, 2003:16).

Mkutu sounds a warning note that some of these businessmen may be taking on the characteristics of the 'warlord', i.e., building their own small bands of armed men and combining commercial trading with arms dealing. Although this is on nothing like the scale of warlordism in other parts of Africa, it is nevertheless a worrying development. As increasingly powerful actors have a vested interest in continued and even heightened levels of armed violence, the prospects for peace and development are grim especially in the current environment of *de facto* impunity. As more disenfranchised young men are drawn into this type of political economy, they too have a vested interest in continued violence and insecurity.

On a smaller scale, it is alleged that local government officials are also sometimes benefiting from this illegal activity. A Pokot woman living on the Ugandan side of the border claims that:

‘Government administration and chiefs are involved; it is well known that some get 10 per cent of the loot, and so will not expose the culprits no matter how much the community identifies them’  
(reported in Mkutu, 2003: 12)

Corruption within local government is common on both sides of the border and simply adds to the culture of impunity and failed security services.

In response to the failed security services, the Kenyan government tried arming citizens as Kenyan Police Reservists in more remote areas. However, it soon became clear that their loyalty lay with their tribe or with local politicians rather than with national government. In at least one area, they were known to lend their guns to raiders who used them for attacks instead of keeping security (Weiss, 2004).

## **6. The impact of armed violence on poverty**

### **6.1 Introduction**

So what is the impact of all of this armed violence and insecurity on poverty? This is a remarkably difficult question to answer not just because of the obvious difficulties of attribution, but also because of the lack of time-series data that sets out to measure and understand how violent conflict impacts on livelihoods. This is somewhat surprising, given the long-term investment in data collection and drought monitoring across the arid lands of northern Kenya, for example, through the Arid Lands Resource Management Project (ALRMP). However, the focus appears to have been on traditional early warning data collection. Although there has been a lot of talk about the need for conflict early warning, which to some extent might capture the impact of violent conflict, so far there has been little action. The new Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) project of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is expected to fill this gap, but is only just beginning to provide quarterly reports in 2004.

### **6.2 Micro level**

The long-term decline of pastoralism in Kenya has been commented upon above. The impact of armed violence must therefore be viewed against this backdrop. However, it is very clear that the shift away from a livestock-based existence is being hastened for many by insecurity and armed violence. It is also clear that there are currently few viable livelihood alternatives to pastoralism. Thus, a shift out of pastoralism represents, for most people, greater impoverishment.

Much of this section is based on data and survey work in Turkana, which has been most heavily affected by armed violence. Where possible, comparisons are made with Wajir.



### **6.2.1 Loss of livestock and limited alternatives**

As armed raiding has become so widespread, it appears that the number of families losing livestock has increased. In southern Turkana, Lind found that 93%, 96% and 100% of respondents in the villages of Nakukulas, Lopur and Lokapel, respectively, reported that they had lost animals to raiding in the past. More specific data on individual household losses is extremely difficult to obtain and any precise figures must be treated with caution. However, survey respondents in south Turkana indicated that loss of animals to bandits occurs at least once per year for most households. Although the loss of family herds is also attributed to drought and disease and there is no quantitative data to rank the relative importance of these different causes, questioned Turkana lay explanatory emphasis on raiding and banditry as the principal reason for their households' loss of herds. Indeed, raiding can also exacerbate the outbreak and impact of disease, by increasing transboundary epizootic disease transmission (AU/ IBAR, nd).

The impact of diminishing herd size is to increase the pressure to earn cash. Whereas in the past the family herd was a source of milk, blood and fat and was used as currency for provisioning other needs, the loss of animals has triggered a provisioning crisis for most households. A male respondent in Lopur in southern Turkana married to three wives summarised the crisis in the following way: '[t]he availability of livestock determines the expenditures you can make. When livestock are raided you have nothing to sell and therefore no income with which to make purchases.' A female nomadic herder and third wife adds to this explanation: 'I have more expenditures now than I did in the past. I must sell to buy food.' The dilemma facing those with smaller herds is that they have a greater need for supplementary sources of food and thus a greater need to earn cash. Yet, the loss of animals depletes a household's income-earning capacity. Livestock-poor households face the dilemma of disposing of their breeding stock and annual births to earn cash to provision for food or reduce consumption and survive with a small herd. In either case, it is extraordinarily difficult for herders with few livestock to recover.

Most Turkana questioned on the impacts of violence on their own household's livelihood report that they are poorer today than they were before the frequency of armed violence increased in the early 1980s. Turkana define (absolute) poverty as the condition of being without herds.<sup>8</sup> Being 'poorer' is the condition of possessing fewer livestock and thus a diminished capacity to provide for the needs of household members and to invest in social relations of importance.

### **6.2.2 Impact on labour: the gender dimension**

As a result, pastoralist households that have lost their animals are having to engage in an increasing number of work activities of a non-livestock nature. Of the sixteen locally identified activities in south Turkana, fourteen are not directly dependent on having

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<sup>8</sup> Broch-Due, V. 1999. 'Remembered cattle, forgotten people: the morality of exchange and the exclusion of the Turkana poor.' in *The poor are not us: poverty and pastoralism in Eastern Africa*. Edited by D. Anderson and V. Broch-Due. London: James Currey.

herds.<sup>9</sup> This, in turn, has increased the demand for labour. A poor widow in Lopur who lives off a small residual herd, farm food from her small rain-fed plot and remittances from her grown children, succinctly explained the situation of many Turkana households: '[b]ecause we have lost our animals we have more to do.'

A blurring in the gender and age division of work tasks is becoming apparent for households that are having to diversify their work portfolios with particular implications for women. A male respondent in Lokichar in south Turkana who has one wife and combines an assortment of activities with keeping livestock, explained: '[t]here is greater awareness today of life's situation. Today women are encouraged to acquire work roles that traditionally belong to men. In the past there was a blackout [possibly inferring lack of awareness of the benefits of less rigid gender work roles]'. Women from some households are encouraged to help with herding and, in rare cases, even selling animals. As well as these shifts in gender allocations, many of the cash-earning activities that are now becoming so important to household livelihoods, such as selling wild foods, fetching water for a fee and burning and selling charcoal are traditionally considered women's work. Thus, livelihood diversification is a transition that appears to burden women in particular. The positive aspect of this is that women enjoy greater control over deciding the use of returns from these activities compared with before when they were usually co-opted into their husband's effort to generate income and livelihood from the herd and did not control any returns except for animal products to be used for home consumption. As a peasant-widow farming in Lopur remarked: '[t]he woman is now in charge.

Meanwhile, the position of men has become more tenuous. Customarily men are the caretakers of the family herd. However, as the herds diminish in size, there are few other options for men. Opportunities to engage in work considered socially acceptable for men, like construction or transport, are few. A loosening of cultural restrictions on men's involvement in some work activities is one way out of the impasse. For instance, young men in a few but increasing number of cases now sell milk, traditionally a woman's activity. Men of all age groups also contribute to the household's labour effort on food for work projects. Subsistence agriculture, one of the more important 'new' activities, involves both women and men as well as members from different age groups.

These changes in livelihoods, induced by insecurity, can destabilise intra-household decision-making processes causing a rupture in the patriarchal social order. Trust within the household is waning as the patriarch's control of household labour falters and individual members claim greater autonomy in deciding the use of income and livelihood they help to generate. One male respondent in Lokichar having twelve children to three wives complains that his sons on past occasions sold animals without his awareness and approval and kept the returns for themselves. Customarily the authority of the household patriarch draws from his exclusive control of the family herd as the basis of the household's livelihood. Thus, the diminishing of the herd through a combination of

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<sup>9</sup> South Turkana livelihood activities include buying and selling animals, marketing animal products, gathering wild foods, subsistence agriculture, selling crops, workfare (food for work), handicrafts, collecting and selling fuelwood, collecting and selling honey, fetching water for a fee, brewing, remittances from relatives, dependency on family and friends, burning and selling charcoal, small business and wage labour.

violent theft, drought and disease erodes his decision-making powers. One female respondent in Nakukulas bluntly asserted that, '[w]ithout a herd a man is useless. Raids render men powerless.' With no existing substitutive asset for animals as the material basis of their customary control and claim to power in the household, men lose out. Their continued hegemony will depend upon how successfully they can continue to claim returns from non-livestock activities.

### **6.2.3 The worst case scenario: the loss of all livestock and destitution**

A household's ability to cope with loss of livestock through raiding depends on a suite of factors: the size of the herd preceding an attack; the family's purchase on social relations through which animals can be attained for restocking purposes; availability and access to other income-earning opportunities and circumstance. For some households, the depletion of physical assets – animals – is endured to the extent that they are able to compensate for the loss and continue to meet the needs of their members. Others recall the depletion of their own household's herd in terms of a 'sweep', suggesting the totality of loss in some instances. In such cases, the loss of livestock is so complete that the remnant herd ceases to have any material value as a livelihood base. A small herd is not able to produce sufficient quantities of milk in the short wet season, and for the long dry season lasting up to ten months the herd may stop producing milk altogether. In this situation, household members revert to survival activities and 'fall-back' sources of food. The widespread dependency on food relief programmes and on the gathering of wild foods is largely the result of the depletion of a household's physical asset-base.

Of course worst of all is when livestock thieves have rendered entire communities livestock poor. It is then difficult to draw on neighbourhood and familial relations to restock. Similarly, repeated attacks undermine attempts to rebuild depleted herds. Costly investments and cautious planning to expand herd numbers are easily undone by a chance event.

These are the processes whereby households, and entire communities, can become both displaced and destitute. Having lost most, if not all, of their livestock, households tend to move to more secure parts of the district, including urban areas, in search of relief aid and alternative sources of livelihood. According to the Kenya Central Bureau of Statistics, 81% of Turkana living in Kalokol location, on the more secure shores of Lake Turkana, are living below the poverty line<sup>10</sup>. This is undoubtedly explained by concentrations of destitute. Indeed, Turkana district has experienced the highest levels of displacement in northern Kenya, of around 40,000 people in 2003, 70% of whom are women and children (Pkalya, 2003). Whilst drought can also cause livestock losses and destitution, its negative impact is usually more gradual and a wider range of coping strategies can be employed. Not so with raiding. According to research done by McCabe (1990) in three famine camps in Turkana in the late 1980s, 47% of those interviewed saw raiding as the only cause of their destitution, while 25% saw it as a significant factor.

A higher incidence of raiding during drought years is common, as competition for scarce

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<sup>10</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, 2003

grazing and water resources intensifies. However, once again, the availability of guns means that the consequences have become much more devastating. For example, in the 1990 to 1992 drought in Turkana:

‘In parts of the district, the incidence and severity of raiding have occurred on an unprecedented scale. This has been partly due to the availability of sophisticated weaponry in countries neighbouring Turkana, namely Sudan and Ethiopia’  
(Buchanan-Smith, 1993:18)

In 1990-92 raiding occurred mostly along the border areas, including the southern border with Pokot district. In a single raid in the north, over 100 people were killed. For many pastoralists at that time, raiding was the prime cause of food insecurity and the principal reason for livestock losses rather than drought. Some of them rated it as the worst ‘drought’ in living memory (*ibid.*). During periods such as this, there is usually a high drop-out from the pastoralist economy. Without the support of relief aid, destitution quickly follows.

The experience of Wajir demonstrates the long-term legacy of violence. Although it is now experiencing relative peace and stability, approximately 33,000 people (out of a total population of 270,000) are still displaced as a result of raids dating back 10 years. This includes the infamous Bagalla massacre in 1998 when over 100 people were killed, thousands of livestock were raided and there was widespread destruction of property.

#### **6.2.4 The rise in women-headed households**

The number of women-headed households has certainly risen in both Wajir and Turkana as a result of raiding and of men being killed, although the figures are hard to obtain. For women, being widowed is associated with a certain loss of status. For example, Turkana women have limited land rights. Therefore, if they lose their husbands during violent raids, they may also lose the right to access any land their husband may have owned. Widows also report harassment by clan members or their husband’s relatives.<sup>11</sup> Some are now turning to commercial sex to earn a living.

As well as the labour implications for women, described above, violent raiding affects them in very particular ways. They may suffer from rape, which has been a particularly widespread form of abuse for Somali women in some of the refugee camps in north-eastern Kenya.

#### **6.2.5 The economic drain of small arms**

As armed violence has escalated, and having a gun is now regarded as key to protection as well as for offensive purposes, this is one more significant demand on a household’s resources. The cost of guns has dropped considerably since the late 1970s when one gun

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<sup>11</sup> ‘Kenyan Women Speak on the Proposed Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2003, Case of women in ethnic conflict situations in western part of Kenya. Presented by Selline Korir, Rural Women Peace Link.

cost up to 70 cows in the Kenya-Uganda border area. During the 1990s it cost between 20 to 30 cows (Mkutu, 2003). The Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG) estimated that in 2003 in Turkana one AK47 gun cost the equivalent of three bulls (KSh 30,000) (Pkalya et al, 2003: 37). If most households are armed, this represents a tremendous 'freezing' of assets, and diversion of assets out of livestock. In 1996, Ibrahim and Jenner estimated that around US\$500,000 – 600,000 (KSh 25 to 30 million) was tied up in guns in Wajir District.

Even if the price of guns has fallen, the price of ammunition has risen dramatically over the last decade. In Uganda, just over the border from Kenya, a bucket full of bullets could be traded for one cow in 2001. The price was reportedly higher still on the Kenyan side of the border.

### **6.3 Meso level**

The impact of insecurity on livelihoods and hence on poverty at the meso level is explored according to four different indicators. Both of the first two relate to the impact of reduced mobility.

#### **6.3.1 Mobility of livestock and access to grazing areas**

A key feature of the pastoralist livelihood system is mobility. Access to distant grazing areas is one of the most important coping mechanisms in the face of drought. Yet this coping mechanism is one of the first casualties of insecurity. Lind (2004) explains this in the case of south Turkana. One of the most ecologically rich areas is also one of the most chronically insecure.<sup>12</sup> This area should support larger and more mixed herds and therefore livestock thieves are drawn to the area in search of commercially valuable animals. Its proximity to West Pokot District also makes it possible for gangs to escape quickly with contraband livestock. As a result of insecurity, this expansive swathe is largely uninhabited, a further benefit to livestock thieves who can thus move relatively freely. As Kratli and Swift point out<sup>13</sup>:

'leaving land ungrazed not only causes an immediate loss of production but also its degradation in the long term, as decreased grazing pressures result in bushy, ungrazable vegetation gradually taking the place of grass... The shrinkage in grazing and water availability due to insecurity causes abnormal concentrations of animals in safe areas, thus also leading to ecological degradation and increasing the risk of new disputes'.

(ibid:13)

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<sup>12</sup> This area encompasses the *Naro* plain south of Kalemng'orok bordering West Pokot District, Kailongol and Laiteruk Mountains (forming the southern fringe of the Central Mountains), the Nadikam plain stretching from the eastern flank of the Central Mountains to the Kerio River and the area south of Lokori lying to the east of the Kerio.

<sup>13</sup> Citing Bollig, M., (1990) 'Ethnic conflicts in North West Kenya: Pokot-Turkana raiding 1969-1984', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* 115:73-90

The counter-example that demonstrates the potential loss from restricted access, especially in drought years, is provided by Aklilu and Wekesa (2002: 28). They estimated that negotiated cross-border access for the Turkana to Uganda during the height of the drought of 1999-2001 permitted the Turkana to use grazing areas within Uganda that saved around 20% of their cattle herds, an estimated KSHs 70 million. Meanwhile, in Wajir, the 1999 drought had a much less devastating impact compared with the 1991/92 drought, the worst in living memory. This is directly attributed to increased mobility of pastoralists with their livestock now compared with the early 1990s.

Where insecurity is episodic, for example around village(s) and particular geographic features such as salt licks and hand pumps where an isolated attack has occurred as well as larger areas where incidents are widely spaced in time, there may be temporary displacement lasting from several weeks to many months. Sudden and unanticipated movements precipitate shortages of food for households who must abandon their food stores. Some work activities to generate food may be suspended entirely; others may be carried out in cooperative work parties. Insecurity can also restrict access to areas where wild foods can be gathered in abundance.

Not only does restricted access have a negative impact on the body condition and productivity of animals, which in turn has an impoverishing effect at the household level, it also results in the very inefficient use of scarce grazing and water resources especially during times of drought stress.

### 6.3.2 Livestock markets

As Kratli and Swift point out, it is important to distinguish between the immediate and direct consequences of violence on livestock markets and the long-term indirect consequences. An example of the former are distress sales by herders in conflict prone areas to ensure they get some return rather than lose all their livestock. Yet this leaves them open to exploitation by traders who may make huge profits by taking the animals to distant markets where prices are high.<sup>14</sup>

Reluctance to travel because of insecurity and fears of being attacked *en route* have a long term impact as well. For example, in Turkana, livestock markets in towns such as Lodwar and Kalemng'orok are difficult to reach for many pastoralists who reside in distant settlements. Men in the remote settlements of Loperot and Nakukulas complain that they are unable to take animals for selling in Kalemng'orok where prices are comparatively higher because the few passes through the Central Mountains that they must use to reach Kalemng'orok are insecure. Their only alternative is to sell in Lokichar where prices are appreciably lower. Although official data on livestock prices at south Turkana market outlets is not available,<sup>15</sup> anecdotal testimony by several herders indicates that there are clear financial costs of not being able to access more distant and

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<sup>14</sup> Ocan, C.E. (1994) 'Pastoral Resources and Conflicts in North-Eastern Uganda: the Karimojong case', *Nomadic Peoples* 34-45: 123-145.

<sup>15</sup> One non-governmental organization with a field office in Lodwar is collecting daily and monthly figures for sale yards in Lodwar and Kakuma. The District Livestock Office does not collect district-wide market data.

lucrative markets. Chronic insecurity favours the continuation of informal daily sales to itinerant traders who travel to remote areas and trade commodities such as grain and sugar for goats and sheep at terms that are generally unfavourable to herd owners.

Although Turkana's peripheral status means that it has received little by way of government investment in its marketing infrastructure, that has not been helped by insecurity. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Livestock Production Department purchased small livestock from across the district. The animals were dipped, treated and exported from the Lotongot holding ground near the southern town of Kainuk on the border with West Pokot District. However, an attack by raiders in 1992 resulted in the loss of a large number of animals and forced the Livestock Production Department to close the holding ground. Despite a Departmental directive ordering the ground be re-opened with the construction of an Administrative Police post at Lotongot, this was never followed through. The supporting infrastructure for the grounds, including the western stock-route that enabled the movement of livestock from northern Turkana to the holding grounds at Lotongot, has now fallen into disrepair.<sup>16</sup>

It is not just livestock markets that are adversely affected by insecurity, business activity in general is usually very depressed. For example, at the height of the violence in Wajir between 1992 and 1995, approximately 500 businesses were looted and/ or destroyed. There was frequent highway robbery and hijacking of vehicles, severely affecting transport and trade, and hiking up the cost of transporting people and goods (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1996).

In contrast, since there has been relative peace and security in Wajir, there are now frequent buses and lorries. Businesses are recovering. The expensive trucking of cattle to market has been replaced by the less costly movement of cattle on the hoof.

### **6.3.2 Social infrastructure**

The effect of violent conflict on social infrastructure can be devastating. Ibrahim and Jenner (1996) record how approximately 165 civil servants, including teachers, who either left Wajir District or refused to accept their posting in response to the 1992-95 violence severely affected the provisioning of government services. Since relative peace has been established, however, education and health services have shown a remarkable recovery.

In Turkana, the picture is still bleak. Seventeen schools across the district have closed in recent years due to insecurity. Eight health centres/ dispensaries (out of a total of 45) and eight trading centres have closed/been deserted or have closed, respectively, while nine water points/ hand pumps are no longer functioning.

The activities of aid agencies, too, are negatively affected. In Turkana, almost all aid assistance is relief and humanitarian assistance, which is expensive to administer. Oxfam GB estimates that the security cost of operating in the insecure environment of Turkana

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<sup>16</sup> Key informant interview, Lodwar, April 2004.

district is in the region of £10,000 p.a. This includes paying for armed escorts. Meanwhile, a similar amount is used by Oxfam GB to support the WPDC each year.

At the height of the violence in Wajir in the early 1990s, there was an attack on the UNICEF compound. As a result, UNICEF and other NGOs pulled out of the district, bringing much of the drought relief work to a halt just when it was needed most. Ibrahim and Jenner (1996) document the subsequent benefits of greater security. Oxfam GB committed KSh 80 million to development work over a three year period from 1994 to 1997 and the World Bank Arid Lands Programme supported pastoral development and invested in infrastructure, including a new road. Perhaps even more remarkable has been the local fund-raising for development in the district. Between 1994 and 1996, this amounted to KSh 12,000,000 (US\$225,000), which was used for bursaries for higher education for the support of sports clubs and for the construction of mosques.

#### **6.4 Macro level**

One of the most striking impacts of the commercialisation of armed raiding is the overall drain on the pastoralist economy. Whereas before when raided livestock remained within the pastoralist economy, the effect of predatory raiding is to take the livestock out of the economy to be traded in more distant markets. Research from Samburu, quoted above, estimated the loss to the district to be in the region of US\$5 million over a 3 to 4 year period. The economic loss of raided livestock taken out of Wajir (mostly to Somalia and Ethiopia) in the early 1990s was estimated at around US\$ 900,000 (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1996).

This haemorrhaging of livestock out of the pastoralist economy is a worrying development. Associated with the other negative effects of armed raiding, it contributes to a widening of the gap between pastoralist areas and the rest of the country as economic investment and development are hampered. The long-term marginalisation of pastoralist areas is simply exacerbated as economic growth and prosperity benefits other geographical areas and other population groups. Some commentators have indicated that this may also contribute to public (media) images of pastoralists as backwards, irrational and violent.<sup>17</sup> Above all, such a widening gap can be a threat to the overall stability and security of the country.

#### **6.5 Regional & international levels**

Armed livestock raiding in northern Kenya is a regional phenomenon both in the Karimojong cluster in the north-west and in the north-east. Thus, all the negative impacts of armed raiding described above for northern Kenya are repeated and in many cases exacerbated in the neighbouring regions. Some of these have recently been gripped by civil war. Indeed, compared with its neighbouring countries, Kenya is the most stable and

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<sup>17</sup> Belshaw, D., and Malinga, M., (1999) 'The Kalashnikov Economies of the Eastern Sahel: Cumulative or Cyclical Differentiation between Nomadic Pastoralists?' Paper presented at the first Workshop of the Study Group on Conflict and Security of the Development Studies Association, South Bank University, March, quoted in Kratli and Swift.



the least threatened by internal armed conflict. However, until regional solutions to violence and conflict amongst these pastoral communities are found particularly in the north-west, there are limited prospects for peace, development and widespread prosperity.

## 7. Overall impact on poverty

Kenya's National Poverty Eradication Plan, 1999 to 2015, highlights that the highest incidence of poverty and destitution occurs in districts in northern Kenya where the poor account for 80% of the population (Khadiagala). All economic and social indices show that people in northern Kenya are worse off than the rest of the country. In Turkana district, for example, an estimated 62% of the population live below the monetary poverty line for rural Kenya of 1239 Ksh per month (or around 13 UK sterling).<sup>18</sup> The poverty gap, a measurement of the depth of poverty, is 26% for Turkana district, one of the highest percentages in Kenya. In other words, monthly income levels are 26% below the monetary poverty line.

To a large extent this disparity can be attributed to years of marginalisation of the arid pastoralist areas of Kenya and chronic under-investment. Pastoralism as a source of livelihood has been under threat from longer-term processes such as the privatisation of land. However, there is no doubt that armed violence, especially in the last two decades, have accelerated these trends of impoverishment and is now more devastating in impact than periods of drought. In the words of one village woman 'everything is fast now', alluding to how quickly a household's asset-base can be depleted by livestock raiding as well as to the pressure in the aftermath of an attack to work harder to earn a level of subsistence comparable to before the attack (Lind, 2004).

Most Turkana questioned on the impacts of violence on their own household's livelihood report that they are poorer today than they were before the frequency of armed violence increased in the early 1980s (ibid.). Being 'poorer' means possessing fewer livestock and thus having a diminished capacity to provide for the needs of household members and to invest in social relations of importance. While of course the severity of loss varies between households, losing animals in raids and other violent incidents is now a near universally shared experience in parts of Turkana.

Thus, we can confidently conclude that armed livestock raiding does cause a higher incidence and *deeper* levels of poverty even though it is hard to quantify the impact. Local people report greater impoverishment now compared with the 1970s before raiding increased in frequency and violence. The size of many household herds has diminished to the point of material insignificance. In this situation, it is extremely difficult to return to a livelihood based predominantly on pastoralism. It is important to have herds in order to maintain social contacts through which a herd can be rebuilt. Interviewed Turkana recount that presently it is more difficult to reconstitute herd losses through borrowing and receiving gifts of livestock from stock associates. Raiding and banditry have

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<sup>18</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics. 2003. Geographic dimensions of well-being in Kenya: where are the poor? Vol. 1. Nairobi: Ministry of Planning and National Development.

rendered entire social networks livestock-poor. Extraordinary circumstances may contribute to a household's recovery after the theft of animals such as waged labour or regular remittances from relatives or friends working in other parts of Kenya. However, this is unusual. Instead, armed violence further constricts the already narrow set of opportunities that poverty brings. The options are few for negotiating out of the condition of chronic poverty.

Thus, the impact of armed violence for many is to create irreversible conditions of poverty in the absence of viable alternative economic opportunities to livestock herding. This conclusion is borne out in the case of Wajir. Although there has been a remarkable recovery of economic activity due to the work of the WPDC and other groups, the large numbers who are still displaced and destitute are evidence of the long-term legacy of armed raiding.

## **8. Implications for aid programming**

### **8.1 Overall approach**

The starting point for any aid programming is to understand that the widespread holding of arms is not the issue, rather it is understanding the *use* of arms in the wider context of local and regional conflict dynamics that is essential. Response to violent conflict, which is driven by security concerns alone, is doomed to failure. Rather, it is the root causes that must be tackled. AU/ IBAR (nd) calls for coherent policies that cross boundaries and that draw in all agencies. To date this has rarely been the case, but perhaps the policy environment in Kenya is more conducive than ever before to alternative approaches. A pre-requisite to success is giving pastoralists a greater voice in the development of any policies (AU/ IBAR, nd). This may require a change of attitude amongst national policy-makers and a reversal of the long tradition of political marginalisation of pastoralists. However, it is essential if policies are to be based on fact rather than myth. This shift in approach may require the further development of pastoralist advocacy groups.

### **8.2 SALW programming**

This has mostly focused on disarmament by government, which is an example of attempts to contain the violence, but without addressing the root causes. The most recent initiative took place in 2001-2 under the former government of President Moi. An ultimatum was issued to hand over guns in exchange for amnesty. All of the disarmament initiatives have been notoriously unsuccessful. First, they have usually been uncoordinated and unilateral initiatives and are thus doomed to failure. As explained above, the balance of power between different pastoralist groups is highly dependent on how well-armed they are. So, as the Pokot elders argued:

‘it was difficult for the Pokot to live without guns, while their neighbours, including the Karimojong of Uganda, were allowed to use guns like walking sticks’

(quoted in Mkutu, 2003: 28, from the *Daily Nation*)

This lesson should have been learned from earlier unsuccessful unilateral attempts at disarmament on the Ugandan side of the border. Second, most disarmament initiatives are only tackling the symptom and do nothing to address root causes. Thus, whilst government fails to provide and maintain security, local people take it upon themselves to protect themselves. Even in Wajir, where there has been relative peace and security for some years, the holding of guns is still high, partly as an insurance mechanism. Rather than confiscating guns, the greatest success of the peace efforts has been in reducing the *use* of guns. Third, unless the disarmed are provided with employment alternatives, the benefits of disarmament will be very short-lived, as explained below.

Although the record to date has not been very impressive, there is the potential for greater future success as a result of the Nairobi Declaration. This Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa was signed by ten governments in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region in March 2000. Not only is this a positive example of much-needed regional cooperation, it acknowledges the link between security and development and the framework envisages a broad partnership between governments, multilateral agencies and civil society. Kenya has taken the first steps towards the Nairobi Declaration by establishing a National Focal Point and by developing a National Action Plan (NAP). The potential for this initiative is substantial as it enters the implementation phase in Kenya. However, there are also a number of challenges, for example overcoming the top-down approach that has characterised the NAP so far, linking to development and poverty reduction, combating corruption and making headway in the long process of building trust between the state and civil society (Peleman and Mutahi, 2004).

### **8.3 Development programming**

As long as there are limited alternatives to pastoralism, the attraction of the gun to young men who drop out of the pastoralist livelihood system is strong. They become willing recruits for businessmen and for warlords for commercialised livestock raiding. This is one of the fundamental issues to be addressed led by government and supported by donor agencies. Yet, there has been remarkably little progress, despite optimism after the change in government. Instead, a vicious cycle is created whereby years of chronic under-investment superimposed with violent livestock raiding renders the population highly vulnerable. This triggers humanitarian assistance, which is not always easy to deliver in such an insecure environment. Real development investment is constantly pushed aside. This was noted by the Turkana. Since the departure of NORAD from the region in the early 1990s, few external donors have provided broad-based assistance, for example in social and other infrastructure or in income generation (Khadiagala). Yet the provision/ encouragement of alternative or supplementary livelihood activities to pastoralism will be an essential part of successful development and small arms programming. Examples might include the harvesting of gum Arabic, supporting expanded farming activities and support for petty trade and small enterprises (Mkutu, 2003).

## **8.4 Peace-building**

This is one of the more hopeful areas of intervention in northern Kenya in recent years. The WPDC has set a powerful example of how peace-building can be done, a process initiated by local people to engage local government, while being supported by international aid. It balances traditional means of arbitration and justice with Kenyan constitutional law (Ibrahim and Jenner, 1996). Since the establishment of the WPDC there has been a burgeoning of community-based peace initiatives across northern Kenya many of them supported by local and international NGOs. It is too early to comment on the impact. However, one of the gaps is connecting these apparently successful local initiatives to national policy level. There is potential for this to change, not least with the establishment of the National Steering Committee on Conflict Resolution in 2000 backed by the Office of the President. Such a shift will require real political commitment, at the highest levels, and great sensitivity.

In border areas, like Turkana, such initiatives can only be successful if they are regional. There are some examples of cross-border peace efforts, for example across the Ugandan/Kenyan border in May 1997, involving the Turkana, Pokot and Karimojong (Mkutu, 2003: 33). Sometimes these bring temporary respite to violence, but often lack the long-term political commitment to make them work and to invest in continuous follow-up. The real challenge is cross-border peace initiatives with countries where there is limited or no government presence and civil war.

## **8.5 Poverty monitoring**

Although drought and livestock raiding are interlinked, the negative impact of armed violence in exacerbating poverty now appears to be greater than the negative impact of recurrent drought. Yet, a drought approach still seems to pervade much of the monitoring and planning of emergency relief operations. Although projects like CEWARN have recently started to collect and analyse early warning data on violent conflict, it is remarkable that it has taken this long to happen when violent raiding has been a serious threat to livelihoods in northern Kenya for at least two decades.

Related to this, there is extraordinarily little trend data and analysis that focuses on the impact of conflict and violence over time. Most work on the impact of conflict and violence in northern Kenya has been done in one-off studies. With the amount of investment now being made in community-based peace efforts – a very positive development – the imperative to collect this kind of information over time is even greater to understand and monitor the impact of these peace efforts.

## **8.6 Implications for aid donors**

International aid donors are significant actors in development and SALW programming in Kenya. They are powerful advocates for particular policies and approaches and are an important source of funds. Concerned that donor policy is driven by the needs of the

region rather than the donor government's domestic concerns and priorities, Mkutu (2003) has outlined some principles that should guide donor assistance for conflict prevention and small-arms control:

- (1) development assistance must tackle root causes of conflict.
- (2) national and local authorities should be encouraged to understand the underlying causes of conflict, recognising that some existing policies, laws and practices are contributing to the problem and need revision.
- (3) there must be long-term engagement on the part of the donor community.
- (4) there must be voluntary cooperation and community involvement in disarmament initiatives.
- (5) any disarmament initiatives must be linked to the provision of adequate alternative livelihood opportunities.
- (6) there must be coordination, communication and cooperation between donors to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort (and incoherence of approach).

Finally, as Mkutu eloquently puts it:

'success in reducing the level of armed violence amongst pastoralists in the Kenya/Uganda border area [and elsewhere] will ultimately depend on the development of positive partnerships between governments, their agencies, civil society organisations and communities at the local and national levels and between governments and their agencies at the regional level. Fundamentally, these partnerships will need to address the complex range of factors that drive pastoralists to acquire and use small arms – from the scarcity of resources and lack of development and economic opportunities, to the need to protect themselves and their livelihoods and the emergence of a culture of weaponisation and violence.'

(Mkutu, 2003: 38)

## List of acronyms

ALRMP	Arid Lands Resource Management Project
AU	Africa Union
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism
DFID	UK Department for International Development
IBAR	Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group
NAP	National Action Plan (Nairobi Declaration)
NGO	non governmental organisation
ODI	Overseas Development Institute, UK
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SRIC	Security Research & Information Centre, Nairobi
WPDC	Wajir Peace and Development Committee

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## Annex 1: List of people interviewed

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Mark Rotich	Senior Programme Officer, DFID
Lt Col Jan Kamenju	Director, SRIC
Peter Kisopia	Pastoralist Adviser, Oxfam Kenya
Mohamed Elmi	Regional Director, Oxfam
Izzy Birch	Regional Pastoralist Adviser, Oxfam
Abdi Billow Elmi	Member of Wajir Peace & Development Committee
Richard Grahn	Natural Resources & Conflict Adviser, AU/ IBAR
Dr Musumbayi	Lecturer, University of Nairobi
Rachel Lambert	Rural Livelihoods Adviser, DFID
Sam Kona	FEWS Net and CEWARN
Ambassador Ochieng Adala	Senior Program Officer, Africa Peace Forum
Frances Sang	Nairobi Secretariat on SALW