Conflict and human security in the North Rift and North Eastern Kenya

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Abstract
Purpose – Within the theoretical context of human security, this United Nations (UN) three-year research project examines the causes and effects of conflicts in the arid and semi-arid lands of Northern Kenya. The purpose of this paper is to address the human security concerns arising out of conflict, displacement, migration and poverty. The people who live in the area are mainly nomadic pastoralists.

Design/methodology/approach – A review of previous empirical research and ongoing field studies are used to examine four problem areas: cattle rustling, proliferation of small arms, competition over scarce resources and conflict between refugees and local communities.

Findings – Seeking access to water and green pastures, the nomads generally follow their cattle across the region, and their movement is not confined to Kenya alone. They cross and re-cross international boundaries to and from Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda resulting in conflicts over water and pasture. Resource competition in a fragile economy has had grave consequences for the economic security of families and internally displaced people.

Originality/value – The North Rift and North Eastern regions of Kenya are the most underdeveloped area of the country and suffer from a high level of human insecurity, with more than three-quarters of the population living below the poverty line. This UN project seeks an empirical understanding of the causes of conflict and ways to build the capacity of a vulnerable population to gain both freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Keywords Conflict, Poverty, Natural resources, Kenya, Africa

Paper type General review

Introduction
The carefully planned attacks of November 2008, in Mumbai, India, sent shockwaves around the world. The destruction of the Taj Hotel in Mumbai like that of the Twin Towers in New York immediately assumed international proportions. Power politics and a global “war on terror” set it apart from equally chilling past and present events in developing regions. Other major violations of human rights have passed without the same all-consuming attention, even as civil and inter-state wars continue to threaten people’s survival and human dignity. Consider the situation in Africa. Between 1990 and 2001 alone, there were 57 major conflicts in 45 countries, a high proportion of them in Africa. When the Commission on Human Security (2003)
issued its report, *Human Security Now*, it put human security in a global context with its emphasis on international peace and stability, alongside the human elements of security – civil rights and development.

The irony of underdevelopment, poverty and civil strife is that the present century is a time of global wealth unrivalled in history. In contrast to most countries that over the past decades witnessed great improvement in their economic and social conditions, there are vast areas in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and South America where lack of natural resources or access to the market make them unable to compete in the world economy (Jones, 2009). Severe deprivation is still a way of life for entire populations. More than 2.5 billion people cling to survival on less than $1-2 a day. While the chief beneficiaries of globalizations enjoy tremendous advancements in health, education and living standards, over 40 per cent of the world’s population face the threat of severe poverty. The experience of genocide and civil disorder in today’s world has the potential of a wider conflagration. Felt worldwide, the need for safety has crystallized in the phrase “human security.” The words which acquired new nuances and currency in the last two or three decades owes much of its dominance in development circles to the United Nations’ Millennium Declaration that raised the alarm and called upon the international community to come to the rescue of all those who constitute the global underclass.

Politics has undoubtedly played a role in the emergence of human security as a policy issue. The fear of political instability, border conflict, and social chaos, following the disappearance of paradoxically stable Cold War boundaries and (often forced) alliances has focused politicians’ minds on national safety. But other underlying concerns besides national safety are at play. There are at least three developments that have reshaped notions of security, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. These are:

1. The shift in analysis from a narrow focus on military security in the defense of national sovereignty to consideration of internal sources of instability. These internal factors include communal strife, ethnic unrest, poverty, unemployment, crime and terrorism.

2. Recognition of the inevitable link between the welfare of citizens and state security. Non-military barriers to stability can be economic, social, environmental or civil. Drug smuggling or corruption can threaten a government no less than armed invasion from outside.

3. Increasing awareness that national and sub-national problems are amenable to, and sometimes require, international assistance or intervention. Suddenly, regional humanitarian issues become geopolitical as in Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Niger and Liberia (UNHCR, 2000).

Human security can be defined as a process of intervention to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment through protection of civil rights and provision of basic human needs. The definition is based on that of the Commission on Human Security, but with added and explicit inclusion of civil rights and basic human needs (Jones, 2009). Owen (2004) has proposed adding to the commission’s notion of enhancing human freedoms and human fulfillment the words “in critical and widespread threats and situations”. His rationale is the need to narrow the focus to imminent and severe crises, on extensive menaces
such as extreme poverty, massive displacement of people, the scourge of civil war, or looming famine rather than an excessively wide orientation.

Regions of insecurity and conflict

The North Rift and North Eastern regions of Kenya[1] fall within the arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), respectively. ASALs constitute about 80 per cent of the country’s land mass; and about 10 million people live in this region. It is estimated that approximately 70 per cent of the national livestock herd is found in ASALs (Government of Kenya – GoK, 2006). Most of the people who live in this area are mainly nomadic pastoralists. The community’s main livelihood is based on livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and camels). For the pastoralist community, access to water and pasture for their cattle is crucial to sustain their livelihood. The pastoralist community occupies about 70 per cent of Kenya’s total land area, and they constitute about 20 per cent of the total population of the country (Mwaniki et al., 2007).

The pastoralists generally follow their cattle across the region in search of green pastures and water. Their movement is not confined to Kenya alone, but transcends international boundaries into Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia and Uganda (Mwaniki et al., 2007). These inter-regional and cross-border movements oftentimes lead to conflicts over water and pasture. Consequently, a large number of households are frequently displaced from their original settlements due to conflicts arising from cattle rustling and inter-clan disputes.

The North Rift and North Eastern Kenya are some of the most underdeveloped, poverty ridden and most marginalized areas of Kenya. As pointed out by Mwaura (2005, p. 4):

Pastoralists are seen as not only physically distant and occupying peripheral areas, but also as politically and culturally marginal. Their presumed distance from modern institutions and from controlling action of the state is often accepted as a self-evident explanation for widespread violence.

Owing to the high level of poverty in the region, the majority of the people in the area depend on relief aid provided by international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government (Mwaniki et al., 2007). At the same time, the high-poverty level and easy access to illicit arms have engulfed the region in a spiral of conflict, which has inflicted heavy damage to the region’s economy, infrastructure and natural resources. As a result, most socioeconomic indices of the region are quite low compared to the national average and to other regions (Table I).

The region suffers high levels of human insecurity and poor infrastructure, which have affected the well-being of the people. There is acute food and physical insecurity, low levels of education; and low levels of gender development. School enrollment rates, access to health facilities and clean water are below the national levels. Child mortality rates are very high, and so are the poverty levels. Moreover, proper sanitation and education facilities are either inadequate or nonexistent.

Table I indicates that the human poverty index (HPI) of the target districts is higher than the national, which is 36.2 per cent. Marsabit district has the highest poverty index of 64.7 per cent, followed by Wajir at 54.6 per cent.

Table I also indicates that there are far more people without access to qualified doctors in these districts compared to the national average. For instance, 89 per cent of the people in Garissa, Mandera and Wajir do not have access to qualified doctors.
Similarly, 96 per cent of the population in Wajir does not have access to safe drinking water. The figure is almost twice the national average, which stands at 42.3 per cent. Adult illiteracy rate is also very high in almost all the districts compared to the national average. At 82.6 per cent, Marsabit has the highest adult illiteracy rate, followed by Marakwet which has 57.7 per cent. Samburu has the highest number of underweight children aged below five years, followed by Mandera.

These low-economic indicators are mainly as a result of several socioeconomic and political problems in the area such as:

(….) armed conflicts, civil strife and cattle rustling, major socio-economic challenges including recurring droughts, floods and hunger, massive unemployment, environmental degradation, the spread of infectious diseases, and more pointedly, HIV/AIDS pandemic (United Nations Development Programme – UNDP, 2006, p. xi).

### Causes of conflict

Historically, conflict and displacement in Kenya are closely linked to land tenure issues, starting initially with forced displacement of an indigenous African population to give room to White settlements enforced by the colonial authorities (UNHCR, 2003). The current causes and patterns of conflict in the North Rift and North Eastern regions are complex and intertwined with ethnicity, environmental degradation, competition over scarce resources, influx of illicit arms from neighbouring countries; and cultural practices such as cattle rustling. Others include “inadequate policing and state security arrangements, diminishing role of traditional governance systems […] land issues, political incitement, ethnocentrism, increasing levels of poverty and idleness amongst the youth” (Mwaniki et al., 2007, p. 10). Others argue that conflicts in this part of Kenya could be attributed to the social, economic, and political exclusion of the region from the centre; and especially the state’s inability to provide security and the necessary livelihoods to the pastoral community (Mwaura, 2005).

Determining which causes are incidental and which are at the heart of armed conflict is not an easy task (Menkhaus, 2005). Nonetheless, conflicts in North East and North Rift of Kenya, as mentioned earlier, can be attributed to the following main factors.

### Kenya HPI, 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Percentage of people not expected to live beyond 40</th>
<th>Adult illiteracy (%)</th>
<th>Safe drinking water</th>
<th>Qualified doctor</th>
<th>Underweight children below five years (%)</th>
<th>HPI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garissa</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandera</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>32.8</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wajir</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>96.0</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>54.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsabit</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>82.6</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>64.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samburu</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkana</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>42.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Pokot</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>43.2</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>86.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marakwet</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>45.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNDP (2006)
Cattle rustling

Cattle rustling, which is embedded in traditional and cultural practices of pastoralists communities, is one of the main causes of conflict in this part of Kenya. There are deep-rooted values associated with cattle rustling. Among the pastoralist communities, raids and cattle rustling are undertaken to prove that young men are ready for manhood, as well as to acquire bride price (Buchanan-Smith and Lind, 2005). At this stage, the young warriors have to become independent and self-sufficient; and are expected to fend for “themselves not through work, but by raiding other clans’ herds” (Saidi, 1992, p. 135). Similarly, in the Borana traditional custom:

To kill an enemy, a lion, or an elephant is the aim of every young man, and was formerly an essential, and still is, a frequent preliminary to a respectable marriage, which is the first step towards formal recognition as a social adult (Baxter quoted in Aguilar, 1998, p. 50).

A study done by Mwaniki et al. (2007) found that 39 per cent of the people who were interviewed in the North Rift of Kenya felt that cattle rustling and dispute over animals were the main causes of conflict, while 31 per cent thought dispute over grazing land was the main cause of conflict. Although cattle rustling had been a common socio-cultural practice in the past among the pastoralist community, it was controlled by the elders and by traditional values. However, with the diminishing role of the traditional governance system cattle rustling has spiraled out of control and has become extremely destructive. Moreover, proliferation of arms from conflict-ridden neighboring countries of the region has made cattle rustling a deadly and destructive practice. Most importantly, cattle rustling has taken criminal and political dimensions and has emerged as a new system of predatory exploitation of the pastoral economic resources, manifesting itself in the form of banditry and political incitement (Pkalya et al., 2003). It is believed that “economically powerful people are funding livestock thefts; and politicians are encouraging conflicts to flush out would-be supporters of political opponents from their political turf” (Pkalya et al., 2003, p. 14).

Proliferation of small arms

With the introduction of small arms to the region, cattle rustling has become a deadly practice accounting for much loss of human lives. Some communities have even gone to the extent of renting out guns for the purpose of cattle rustling and making money; and thereby commercializing cattle rustling (Mwaniki et al., 2007). These illicit arms pour into the region from conflict-prone neighboring countries such as Southern Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and Northern Uganda. It is interesting to note that a study done by Pkalya et al. (2003) in Northern Kenya found out that 88 per cent of the respondents in Samburu district use guns for raiding purposes. In this regard, with increasing insecurity and inter-ethnic conflicts, small arms have become essential household assets. Mostly, the youth are the ones who carry and use these deadly weapons to demonstrate their heroism by raiding and killing members of other communities (Mwaura, 2005). Moreover, the high unemployment and inadequate economic opportunities in the region have created a fertile ground for the youth to arm themselves with illegal arms, and to resort to cattle rustling as a source livelihood.

Competition over scarce resources

Shrinking economic opportunities for the people also cause violence in the region. Given the fact that animal rearing is the main source of income, competition over, and access to,
natural resources such as pasture and water have contributed to violence among pastoralist communities. These scarce resources are increasingly under pressure. The growing human population and livestock herds, and inappropriate placement of boreholes, have resulted in severe overgrazing in some areas and exacerbated environmental degradation (Menkhaus, 2005, p. 4). The demand for charcoal and firewood has also increased the environmental degradation of the area. Since the majority of the people are pastoralists, environmental degradation and the reduction of pasture and water for their cattle creates fierce competition over scarce resources and leads to deadly conflicts.

It is important to note that conflict over scarce resources such as water and pasture has been a common phenomenon among pastoralist communities since time immemorial. However, they have their own traditional systems of conflict resolution and management mechanisms. For instance, among the Borana, the Gadaa system, a complex traditional governance system, has the capacity to resolve and manage conflicts among the Borana as well as with other groups (Tache and Irwin, 2003). Conflict resolution and management must imply strengthening traditional systems of conflict resolution mechanisms and linking and harmonizing them with the formal institutions as a means of reinforcing the role of traditional social systems in governance and resource utilization and management of communities in North Eastern and North Rift regions of Kenya.

Conflict between refugees and local communities

Accessing scarce natural resources is also a major source of conflict around camps that host refugees in North Kenya (Dadaab and Kakuma Camps). As a consequence, of conflicts in Somalia, the Sudan, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Uganda, a large number of refugees are crossing to Kenya in search of a safe haven. In 2008, about 319,400 refugees and asylum seekers, mainly from Somalia (about 196,200) and from Sudan (about 46,700), were hosted in Kenya (US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2008). Apart from the resulting economic and environmental burden on Kenya, the refugees are stressed and also have to contend with a hostile environment. Since the two camps are located in harsh climatic areas, most refugees find it very difficult to adjust to the inhospitable and difficult living conditions. Most of them are deeply traumatized and appear to have lost the zeal to live. To compound matters, they live in highly congested and overcrowded refugee camps. For instance, the Dadaab refugee camp is currently hosting over 215,000 refugees, twice its recommended population (UNHCR, 2008).

Further, refugees in both camps have difficulty finding enough firewood for cooking and for other needs. When they venture out of their camps in search of firewood, they are confronted with hostile local community who resent them for cutting trees and hence damaging the environment. Oftentimes, when women and young refugee girls travel long distances in search of firewood, they are exposed to vices such as rape and sexual violence. To ameliorate the problem of firewood in both refugee camps, UNHCR and WFP put in place innovative programs to supply the refugees with firewood, but the program did not achieve its goal (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Also, conflicts have been known to occur between host communities and refugees due to differences in the humanitarian aid each group receives. Despite the difficult conditions in refugee camps, the refugees are often perceived to enjoy relatively good
With UNHCR's support, they receive good health services and free schooling (Obura, 2002). Although both groups face the same security issues, conflicts often erupt between refugees and the local communities due to the inherent, and in some cases, slight differences in the economic status of the two groups (UNHCR, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, 2001). Conflicts are further exacerbated by gang activities and the decline in cultural and traditional values in the camps.

Spillover effects of conflicts from neighboring countries
It is also important to note that conflicts and instability in neighboring countries of Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda have spilled over to Northern Kenya, resulting in an increase in cross-border conflicts, proliferation of small arms and general instability in the region. Therefore, when addressing conflicts in the North Rift and North Eastern Kenya, it is important to look at the regional dimension of the problem, the dynamics of the ethnic composition of the community in the region, and the effect of the flow of refugees, small and light arms, to this region from neighboring communities.

According to a study on conflict in Northern Kenya, respondents in Samburu district indicated that 90 per cent of small arms come from Sudan while 76 per cent come from Uganda. The same study found that in Marsabit district, 83 per cent of the respondents indicated that small arms come from Ethiopia while 78 per cent[2] of them said they come from Somalia (Pakalya et al., 2003). The proximity of the two districts to different countries explains the variation in the number of small arms coming either from the Sudan and Uganda, or from Ethiopia and Somalia. The respondents were however unanimous that the proliferation of small arms is one of the main causes of conflicts in their respective districts.

Inadequate security measures to deter cross-border incursions and the dynamics of ethnic composition in the border areas have complicated conflict management strategies and endeavors. This can be partly blamed on the colonial heritage of these countries. Colonial powers, especially the British, arbitrarily divided the territorial boundaries of these nations and separated the same ethnic groups between different states. As noted by Schlee (1991, p. 131), “this separation indicates a misunderstanding of the complex interethnic relationships in the area and establishes categories which are neither historically separate nor politically and economically viable”. In the past, this separation has led to conflicts, encouraging secessionist demands in Northern Kenya as witnessed Somali ethnic groups demanded independence for the North Eastern District (Oyugi, 2002). Recently, since the Somali state collapsed, the North Eastern Region has experienced “lawlessness, banditry, and inter-clan fighting [...] assailants commit crimes and then cross over to neighboring states where some have built up special relations with the warlords” (Oyugi, 2002, p. 5).

Also, conflicts in Ethiopia have spill-over effects on Northern Kenya as the Ethiopian army enters the northern region of Kenya under the pretext of pursing Oromo rebel group, who according to the Ethiopian government retreat into Kenya and are given sanctuary by the Borana. The border between Ethiopia and Kenya that stretches over 600 kilometres is home to, among others, the nomadic pastoralist communities of Borana and Gabra who live on both sides of the border (Kagunyu et al., 2007). These pastoralist communities’ livelihood is based mainly on livestock production. During dry seasons, these communities move their livestock within the region as well as across the Ethiopia-Kenya border, as pastoralists often do not recognize official boundaries.
This cross-border movement is not only attributed to the search for pasture and water, but also to:

[...] the necessity to go on a pilgrimage, to hold age-set promotions on a traditional holy site, to gather for communal circumcision in large clan settlements on given lunar dates for blessing ceremonies or other ritual requirements (Schlee, 1991, p. 130).

However, in the recent past, this movement has been limited or blocked by conflicts or government interventions (Kagunyu et al., 2007). Unfortunately, these cross-border migrations often lead to conflicts due to competition over scarce resources and political problems.

The inaccessible terrain and isolation of the northern region creates a fertile and a safe haven for armed criminals and robbers. For example, Somalis often commit crime on the Kenyan side and cross over to the Somalia side where there is no functioning state, and where law and order have collapsed. Somalia, which is often referred to as a “failed state”, has become a breeding ground for radical Islamist groups such as Al-Ittidad al-Islamiyya, Al-Shabaab and other terrorist organizations. This has led to the proliferation of small arms and increased cross-border conflicts and criminal activities in North Eastern Kenya.

A study done on conflict in Northern Kenya found that in Turkana district one of the main or leading aggressors involved in raiding and killing of people are the Toposa community from Sudan. In the same study, majority of the respondents (90 per cent) indicated that illicit arms come from Sudan (Pkalya et al., 2003). Another study found out that in the north-west of Turkana district, large-scale raiding is often undertaken by communities from across the border, mainly the Karimojong of Uganda, the Toposa and Nyangatom of Sudan, and the Merille of Ethiopia (Buchanan-Smith and Lind, 2005).

Conflicts from northern Uganda also often spill over to Northern Kenya, and destabilize socioeconomic stability of the community living along the borders. More specifically there is a spill over effect from the conflict prone-region of Karamu to Northern Kenya. The region which borders southern Sudan and Northern Kenya is a semi-arid land with little rain through out the year. It is economically, socially and culturally marginalized and isolated from the rest of Uganda (Nannyonjo, 2004). It is plagued by insecurity, cattle rustling and other conflicts. During the dry season when pasture is scarce, the Karamojong cross to the Kenyan border to terrorize people. According to Nannyonjo (2004), the high-unemployment rate and inadequate economic opportunities are what trigger and sustain conflict and insecurity in Karamojong region, which has direct implications for the border regions of Kenya.

Impact of conflict
Conflicts in this part of Kenya have brought colossal human tragedies, e.g. loss of human lives and property, as well as destroying and restricting access to the available infrastructure in the community. As noted by Pkalya et al. (2003, pp. 10-11) conflict in the North Rift and North Eastern Kenya has led to:

[...] loss of human life, property, displacement of large segments of the communities, disruption of socioeconomic activities and livelihoods, increased hatred between communities, environmental degradation and threat to water catchments areas, increased economic hardships as a result of loss of livelihoods, high levels of starvation and malnutrition among the displaced groups and unprecedented dependency syndrome on relief food.
The adverse impact of conflict on social and economic infrastructure is enormous as civil servants, teachers, medical officers, as well as development partners and NGOs opt to leave for better opportunities elsewhere; and schools and health centers are closed down; and development projects are suspended prematurely. According to Buchanan-Smith and Lind (2005), cattle rustling alone resulted in a loss of US$5 million over a three- to four-year period in Samburu District.

Conflict also adversely affects the migratory routes and patterns of pastoralists and leads to “unsustainable utilization of natural resources as livestock tends to be concentrated in secure areas, resulting in environmental degradation. Well-watered areas with good pasture are avoided due to insecurity” (Pkalya et al., 2003, p. 15). It is estimated that as a result of conflicts, about 164,457 people have been displaced in the northern frontiers of Kenya. Out of this, 70 per cent or 105,500 are women and children aged below 14 years old (Pkalya et al., 2003). The same study indicates that Turkana district has the highest number of displaced people, followed by Wajir District at 41,097 and 32,914 people, respectively. As internally displaced peoples (IDPs) do not cross international borders, they do not receive international protection and related aid that is often available to refugees who cross-borders. After displacement, many become exposed to violence and other human rights violations. Among IDPs, women and children are particularly vulnerable, suffering higher rates of rape, physical assault and exposure to child labour and trauma.

A study by Mwaniki et al. (2007, p. 37) confirms that: “there is a strong correlation between displacements and increased rape cases, physical assaults, prostitution, child labor and growing number of children living in the streets”. As inter-ethnic conflicts rage between the various communities, men and young adults are killed, thereby leading to a rise in the number of women-headed households. This has a direct adverse impact on the poverty levels among women because in some communities (for example the Turkana), widows have no right or access to land their husbands owned (Buchanan-Smith and Lind, 2005). Under these difficult circumstances, widowed women become outcasts in their own community, forcing some to turn to prostitution for their livelihood.

**Economics of insecurity and state planning**

The study area falls within ASALs of Kenya. Pastoralism is the dominant economic activity of the region and it is dependent on a fragile ecology. Livestock accounts for 95 per cent of the family income and provides employment for 90 per cent of the population (GoK, 2003). Oftentimes, there are draughts and floods that adversely affect the region. Various local communities also face competition and conflict over access and control of natural resources such as water and pasture. In recent years, these conflicts have led to loss of life and property and aggravated poverty in the region. Incidence of poverty in the area is estimated to be about 65 per cent (GoK, 2003). In this regard, high-poverty levels and food insecurity have become serious development challenges in Northern Kenya. Lack of critical social services including health and education services, as well as physical infrastructure such as roads have worsened the development problems in general and poverty of the region in particular.

To address these and other socioeconomic challenges, the GoK prepared and launched the *Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation* in 2003. This strategy aims at poverty reduction, employment creation and enhanced
decentralized development. The government identified several policies to achieve its economic recovery strategy, including effective utilization of natural resources and sustainable environmental management as well as consultation and participation of stakeholders in the formulation and implementation of development policies. In the study area, the government aims to strengthen peoples’ livelihoods through support to livestock production and marketing for livestock products; promotion of eco-tourism; initiating irrigation projects; and provision of the necessary infrastructure including roads as well as improving security (GoK, 2003).

The land tenure systems in Northern Kenya have also complicated the socioeconomic development of the region. The land tenure system in the region comprises trust land, government and private land (GoK, 2003). The trust land is the dominant land holding system in the area but is poorly recognized in the current land tenure arrangement of Kenya (GoK, 2003). Consequently, oftentimes, the local communities have lost their communal land to wildlife conservation as well as to government institutions and individuals (GoK, 2003).

To tackle the problem of poverty and economic growth, the GoK has also prepared and adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in 2000 through the support of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund – IMF. This paper was preceded by the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy. The interim paper assessed in summary form the country’s current poverty situation and described the existing poverty reduction strategy (GoK, 2000). The interim paper also identified gaps in poverty data and monitoring capacity with a planned process for addressing these gaps. Like other countries seeking funding and support from the Bretton Woods institutions, Kenya in first drawing up its interim plan followed IMF’s comprehensive development framework, with a heavy economic emphasis. Its basic components and policy objectives were intended to:

- facilitate sustained and rapid economic growth;
- improve governance and security;
- increase the ability of the poor to raise their incomes;
- advance the quality of life of the poor; and
- promote equity and participation.

The strategy was presented as a national planning framework in which detailed sector priorities, programs and allocations were developed within budget constraints determined by projections and economic performance. The Paper was the first phase of implementing Kenya’s National Poverty Eradication Plan.

The planning process was participatory through broad consultation with the various stakeholders within and outside the government. In its final drafting stage, the government organized a National Stakeholders Consultative Forum, bringing together 300 Kenyans from the private sector, government, civil society, media, NGOs, women leaders, research institutions and think tanks. Since participation by the poor was missing in the forum, the government sought to include their voice by decentralizing the consultation process to districts and communities. Once the interim paper was approved, the next step was the preparation of a more complete planning document, the official Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Jones, 2009). Updated every three years with annual progress reports, the document laid out Kenya’s economic and
social policies and programs in detail, along with its major sources of funding and its external financing needs (IMF, 2005).

Such orderly state planning, with or without outside partners, presupposes a stable government with the interests of all citizens at heart. The underlying assumption and guiding principle is the common good. Where violence threatens, the facts and suppositions change in a radical way. State planning is distorted where, for instance, ethnic strife is prevalent as in Northern Kenya. It is also worth noting, however, that in Northern Kenya, the perennial intra- and inter-clan clashes among the Somali community in the north, the internally displaced, and the clans of the region are, according to Nying’uro, “resource wars” to the extent that they are about pasture and water which are very scarce in the arid- and semi-arid northern districts. Accordingly, to Nying’uro (2005, pp. 41-2):

While some resource-related conflicts may be induced by abundance, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), some conflicts are occasioned by the scramble for scarce resources. In Kenya, the perennial intra- and inter-clan clashes among the Somali community in the north are actually “resource wars” to the extent that they are about pasture and water – which are very scarce in the arid and semi-arid northern districts. Different clans of the predominantly pastoral Somali community have often fought over pasture and water for their cattle and camels, especially during the dry season. Apart from the few water dams that have been dug in the region, the Government of Kenya has also sunk a few boreholes that are not enough. The Somali pastoralists in the region have organized themselves into clans as they struggle for access to pasture and water, thereby making the clash over these resources assume tribal and clan dimensions.

Conclusion

Scholars, policy makers and practitioners in the field have two contrasting approaches to defining human security. The first puts main emphasis on threats to individuals of physical harm, with the remedy sought in the protection of communities and individuals from internal and external violence. Dispute management between combatants is front and center in this orientation. A broader, more global perception of human security includes, besides outright physical violence, threats to the natural environment, natural or manmade disasters, famine, poverty, hunger and disease. While direct intervention in violent situations is also recognized as crucial in this second broad approach, equally important is the prevention of conflict through civil rights legislation, health services, and poverty reduction. Although neither concept contradicts the other, the strategies adopted by the proponents of each approach vary, as do the criteria chosen to mark progress towards the achievement of the human security goal (Human Security Centre, 2006). The Human Security in Northern Kenya project favors a broad interpretation of human security by being very conscious of global poverty, inequality and disease, and all that feeds and inflames human crises. It seeks solutions in both the protection of civil rights and the provision of basic needs.

The potential of violence recognized in practically all definitions of human security highlights competition for property or material as a major factor in fomenting resource wars and civic strife in sub-Saharan Africa. Not all would pin ethnic conflict on resource wars. Abukari (2005), writing on conflict in Northern Ghana, attributes much of the blame for violence in sub-Saharan countries to traditional tribal rivalry. Journalists and other observers have also testified to the mob violence resulting from political and ethnic conflict between the Kikuyu and Lou communities in
Northern Kenya (Gettleman, 2008). Agriculture is relatively underdeveloped in the area as the majority of the inhabitants are predominantly pastoralists. Although the region has potential for rain-fed agricultural development in some areas, soil erosion and low fertility of the soil as well as frequent droughts are some of the major production constraints. The scarcity of pasture inevitably leads to a contest for land. While ethnic rivalry cannot be denied and other complex sociopolitical factors cause ethnic conflict, the hypothesis of resource competition as a source of conflict is a strong one long asserted by development scholars (Hansen, 1987; McGillivray, 2008).

Notes
1. The North Rift Region is composed of Turakana, West Pokot, Markakwet and Samburu Districts while the North Eastern Region comprises Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, Moyale and Wajir Districts.
2. Each figure is independent of the other.

References


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