

CHAPTER FIVE

NORTHEASTERN PROVINCE

The Northeastern Province is one of the most historically marginalized areas of Kenya. From colonial times through the reign of the Moi regime, the arid area encompassing nearly 700km of largely unmarked border with Somalia has been excluded from nation building and development because of the pastoral lifestyle and Somali culture of its inhabitants, and the remote reaches of its geography. Most of the province is normally hot and dry throughout the year except for some erratic, scarce, and unpredictable bimodal rains, which fall in March and April and October through December. Scarce rains coupled with frequent droughts and harsh temperatures have dictated pastoral nomadism as the economic mainstay over generations. The inhabitants of the district are predominantly Somalis, an ethnic group that is distinct in language, culture and lifestyle from other Kenyans.

The Shifta War¹

From *Wild Barrel, Incompatible Regimes*, a PeaceNet publication

The Outlying Districts Ordinance of 1902, under the colonial government, restricted the movement of Africans in and out of the marginalized NFD (Northern Frontier District). The NFD was declared a closed area, and a pass in the form of a red card was required for residents as proof of legitimate residency. The Outlying Districts Act was only repealed in 1997.

Because of the restrictive legislation and the complete lack of development in the NFD, the inhabitants of Somali origin gravitated towards their counterparts across the colonial border in the Republic of Somalia. Similar culture and clan structures formed the basis of political alliances. A commission set up in 1962 found that 87 per cent of Kenyans of Somali descent were in favour of seceding from Kenya. They completely boycotted the independence elections.

Soon after, the Shifta War rebellion broke out, with Somalis fighting to secede from Kenya and join Somalia, and the Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta of KANU (Kenya African National Union) taking extra measures to quell the uprising. The government invoked Section 85 of the Constitution to declare a State of Emergency. Under the Public Security Act, the Northeastern Province and “Contagious districts regulations” of 1966 came into force, allowing the president to make regulations amending the operations of any written law.

The armed forces were allowed to use unlimited force against anyone attempting to cross international borders. Police brutality was not only allowed, it was also sanctioned and ignored by official policy that refused to require investigation into prisoners’ cause of death while in custody. The authorities were no longer required to keep or make public records of detention, causing many detainees to simply ‘disappear’. It became a death-penalty offence to be in possession of a firearm or to be seen with someone who had a firearm. Harboring ‘criminal elements’ was punishable by life in prison.

The Shifta War ended in 1968, but the State of Emergency and the treatment of the NFD ‘citizens’ as hostile enemies continued until as recently as the last elections, in which a new government defeated the long-standing reign of Daniel arap Moi, Kenyatta’s KANU heir. More than one generation of NFD residents was militarized and grew to perceive state security institutions as the ‘enemy’. This distrust is evident in the success of traditional laws and the use of elder councils for resolving conflict outside of any government system of justice or policing.²

Customary laws, or ‘*Heer*,’ regulate daily affairs in the nomadic population, which lives according to the traditional Somali way of life. However, Somalis are Muslims and so the ‘*Heer*’ is only valid as long as it does not contravene Islamic teachings. Islamic ‘*Sharia*’ law always takes precedence. Each clan acts as the enforcer of its own ‘*Heer*’, and force or the threat of force backs up the morals and ethics of the law. Though legally most land in the province is ‘Trust Land’, each of the clans attach a traditional claim to their respective grazing areas.

In pre-independence Kenya, the Colonial Administration drew boundaries along territorial grazing areas as a way of enhancing their administrative laws, a move

they saw as restoring peace among different pastoral groups. The colonial government invoked the Special District Ordinance Act of 1934, which empowered the Provincial Commissioner of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) to define grazing and water boundaries. The Native Ordinance Act was used for the implementation of this concept. Each clan was restricted to its traditional grazing territory and strict surveillance was put in place to enforce the order. Trespassers were punished through arbitrary stock-fines. The colonial grazing boundaries established areas for clans, which over time and by virtue of use, became part of the informal legal system and the attendant threat of force.

The system of customary exclusiveness is no longer in use since Kenya gained independence. However, clan members still identify closely with their traditional grazing territories and use their legal systems to enforce what had earlier been common practice. The colonial policy of tribal separation attempted to resolve a situation in which water and grazing rights were acquired largely through force, according to the relative strength of different groups, but has left a legacy of conflict.

Immediately after independence, grazing restrictions were withdrawn and adherence to clan territories broke down. This triggered pastoral migration across the district and international boundaries resulting in increased human and livestock numbers in the province. Pasture and water resources were utilized in a free-for-all manner, a scenario that led to the current state of insecurity and tribal clashes over resources.

Garissa

Garissa district borders Wajir district to the north, Lamu to the south, Tana River and Isiolo districts to the west, and Somalia to the east. The district has a population of approximately 254,000 and hosts about 126,000 refugees from Somalia, Uganda, Ethiopia and Zanzibar. The Somalis of Garissa are of the Ogaden clan within the larger Darood sub-tribe.

Garissa has a long and, in Kenya, infamous history of insecurity brought about by banditry and raids in which various clans attack each other for supremacy, competition, and control of limited natural resources. In the recent past, the situation worsened due to the collapse of the Republic of Somalia and the instability in Ethiopia. Beginning in 1991, insecurity increased, manifested by increased highway banditry and hijacking, raiding and stock thefts, robbery and looting, intimidation, physical injury and mutilation, rape, and murder.

The insecurity in the district reduced the resource base of the pastoral communities by pushing them into a more sedentary lifestyle. The conflicts further affected the socio-economic well being of the communities mainly through:

- Reduced viability of livestock and increased incidence of animal malnutrition, morbidity and mortality
- Reduced commerce and trading activities leading to further depression of livestock values and markets
- Unavailability, scarcity and high cost of basic commodities
- Increased isolation of the district from the rest of the country
- Reduced investments and few and poor employment opportunities
- Reduced educational opportunities
- Family separations
- Increased numbers of families living in destitution in the peri-urban settlements
- Loss of hope and confidence
- Diversion of scarce resources, for example more funds directed to purchase of firearms for self-defence reducing capital expenditure on welfare
- Increased malnutrition, morbidity and mortality particularly among vulnerable groups, especially children and women.

After the 1997 general elections, an inter-clan war erupted between the two local clans, the Auliyahan, and the Abduwak, over watering points. Hundreds of people and livestock were killed, maimed, and property stolen or destroyed, rendering thousands of people destitute and displaced from their traditional homesteads. According to the District Security Committee (DSC), the problem of insecurity could be attributed to:

- Traditional, structural, and socio-economic tensions over resources and political representation

- Increased premium on services and opportunities due to the endemic droughts and the influx of refugees
- Increased tensions and proliferation of illegal small arms leading to increased banditry, opportunistic crimes and inter-clan feuds
- Limited resources from the central government for both civil and security services rendering the civil administration and the police incapable of effectively managing the new scale and complexity of insecurity
- Civilians taking the law into their hands with clans and families arming themselves for self-defence
- Weak traditional authority structures over defensive militias, resulting in escalated inter-clan hostilities and banditry.

Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI)

The Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI) is a local NGO that has facilitated the peace and reconciliation activities in Garissa district since 2000. The Peace and Development Committee is implemented as a core activity of the PPDI. The objective in 2000 was primarily to secure peace in the district, and by 2003 the objective had largely been achieved. The next important step in securing and maintaining the peace in the district is the identification, initiation and implementation of development activities in the district.

The main source of conflict according to PPDI is the competition over natural resources – access, user rights, and ownership – including water and pasture. The problem of water and pasture are brought about by the endemic droughts that plague the district. The location-based peace and development committees (subsets of the district-level group) have formed grazing committees that negotiate for grazing rights in the different livestock migratory areas.

The main stakeholders in the development activities in the district include the PPDI, elders from across the district who participate in the Peace and Development Committee, the Provincial Administration (represented by the District Commission, District Officers, and Chiefs) and development partners based in the district. The Divisional Representatives are trained by the PPDI and they in turn are asked to train their sub-committees at the division

and locational levels. It has been noted that more support is needed at the divisional level in order to facilitate their work at the grassroots level.

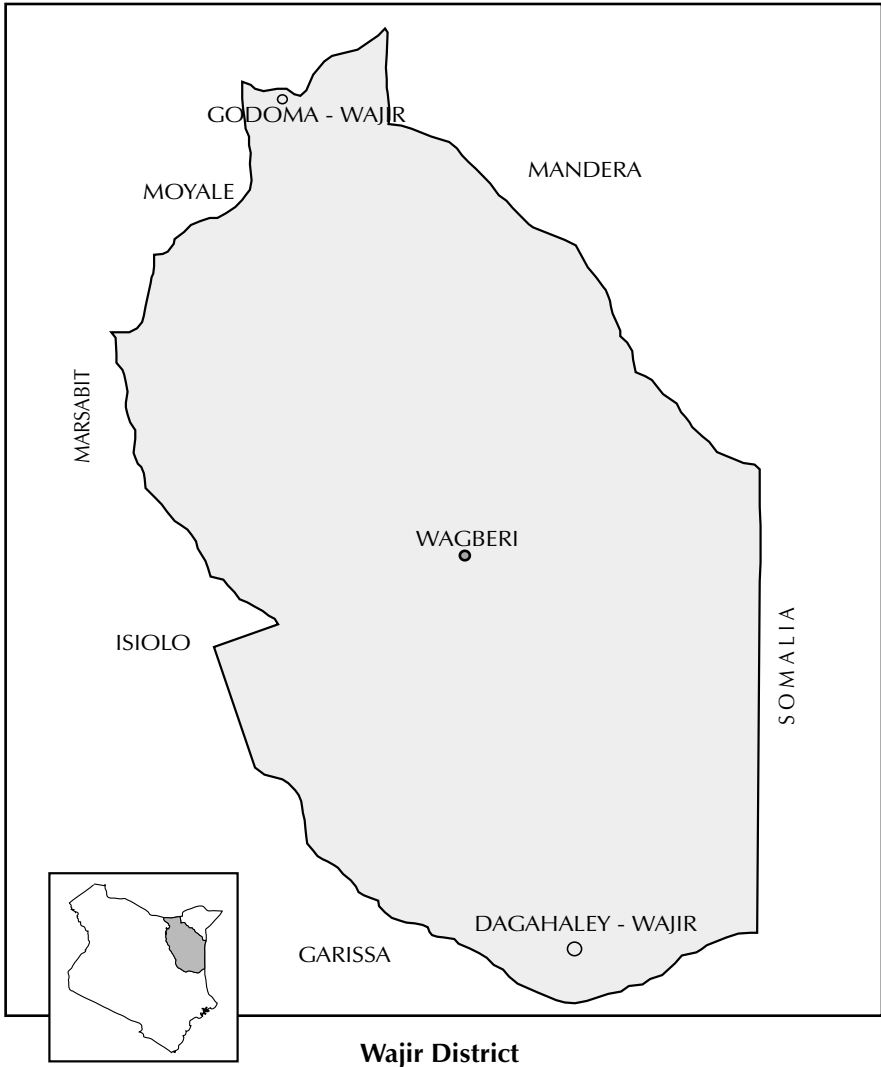
The membership of the Peace and Development Committee is drawn from the different locations and divisions in the district. Unfortunately, given the sheer size of the district; it is usually difficult to bring together all the members of the committee together for meetings on a short notice. To overcome this setback, the Peace and Development Committee sees a need to form a small management committee at the district level with members who can quickly be brought together for meetings and for the day-to-day running of the committee.

To date the peace and development activities have been facilitated as one of the activities of the PPDI. It is, however, necessary that the PPDI acquires a separate identity. As a distinct entity the PPDI can enhance its bargaining power at the district level. Members can sit in the District Development Committee (DDC), the leadership of the organization can operate an independent bank account, write proposals, negotiate for funding, and provide other services to the district as an NGO separate from the government-based Peace Committee.

Besides awareness creation to the community on the problem of illegal small arms, the Peace and Development Committee has been involved in facilitating the surrender of firearms. In 2003 alone, the Dadaab sub-committee has facilitated the surrender of 40 illegal firearms (25 from Dadaab and 15 from Fafi and Lagdera areas). One of the issues that came out during the surrender of the illegal firearms is the need to offer incentives in form of development activities in order to reduce the demand for firearms. The communities also indicated the need for such development initiatives to specifically target women as a special category, given their important role in the peace processes in the district.

Following the relative peace that has been achieved in the district, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) intends to undertake a development project to ensure that the conflicts do not erupt or recur. The project, which has pledged funding in the six-figure range, will address water, livestock and small arms issues. This one-year pilot project, if successful, will be replicated in 20 other districts in the country. The lessons will then be used to design similar interventions in other UNDP programmes worldwide. The specific project activities will be implemented and prioritized by the Peace and Development Committee, as separate from the PPDI.

Wajir



Wajir is bordered by the Manderla district and Ethiopia to the north, Somalia to the east, Eastern Province to the west, and Garissa district to the south. There are three major clans of Kenyan Somali: Ajuuran, Degodia, and Ogaden. Similar to the other districts in the Northeastern Province, Wajir's politics and economy are characterized by ties to southern Somalia and by the nomadic

pastoral lifestyle accompanying the arid climate. Many organizations working on peace and conflict issues do so on both sides of the Somali border. Wajir is also well known for being the site of the 1993 Al Fatah Declaration, discussed at greater length in the Introduction.

Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPRDC)

The Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) evolved as part of the larger movement for peace and reconciliation in the district beginning in 1993 with the Al Fatah council of elders. In 1984, fighting between Somalia and Ethiopia resulted in arms proliferation in the region, and clan-based killing that evolved as an extension of that conflict. In 1991, the influx of Somali refugees after the state collapse made the situation even worse. Finally in September 1993, elders from all clans came together as part of what is now known as the Wajir Peace Process. Representatives from all clans including minor ones not directly involved in the conflict came together in Wajir town to negotiate a settlement that would stop the bloodshed. While they had a measure of success with the Al Fatah Declaration, still used as the basis for most conflict resolution in the district today, there was a gap in participation. Women and youth were not involved, and there were no government stakeholders on board.

In 1994, women and youth formed their own structures (Wajir Women for Peace and Development and Wajir Youth for Peace and Development). The common objective was to restore peace. As part of the growth of these other peace groups, the Wajir Peace and Development Committee formed and was inclusive of business, politicians, and all stakeholders, including women and youth. It is registered as a CBO, but is working to attain NGO status so that it can apply directly for grants from larger donors. Presently, much of its funding is filtered through sub-contracts with larger NGOs such as WASDA (see below).

The major activity of the Committee is community education, facilitated through workshops and *barazas*. Other activities include rapid response for conflict intervention and intervention teams based on early warning signs, peace education in schools, lobbying and advocacy for survivors of violence, cross-border activities across local and international borders. On policy issues, the WPDC lobbies through the District Steering Group (DSG) and has communicated with the Pastoral Parliamentary Group. Four Members of Parliament from Wajir are members of the Committee.

Local peace, larger policy: In their own words

Interview with a Wajir local peace builder³

Question: Do you wish you could influence national and international policy? Do you feel capacitated to make your experiences known at a higher level?

Answer: Here in Wajir, guns are not used as much anymore. The border is calm and quiet. But these ideas are not reaching the national and international level of policy making. We have written a play on small arms, but have not found any channels through which to perform and share our success. People's reasons for owning guns are mostly insecurity. There are 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. Now, the [local] government does not act without WPDC support. But when the government fails, it must work with community-level institutions.

The government even supports the Al Fatah Declaration because it saved lives and healed wounds. We say, one may not place a value on human life, but we can restore the relationship between communities. Parting with cattle and camels is costly, so "an eye for an eye", where a killer's family has to compensate for the death of the victim, leads to forgiveness.

Question: What about human rights?

Answer: Is it the life of one person, or the lives of the whole community that matters more? The community health and well being is more important than one person's wrongdoing or even one person's death. The government supports this because it is expedient for peace. Losing camels is a painful and powerful, effective deterrent to further crime. It works. But we do not offer cash for arms surrender. People even use traditional weapons in conflict now despite the presence of guns because they are aware and afraid of the consequences. Gunshots are hear up to 80km away, and reports are made. When the government is being supportive, people who use guns are actively punished. Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, Marakwet, even Karamojong are learning and training with us, and replicating the Wajir efforts at traditional problem solving elsewhere. But still, we have no resources to influence policy. We are spreading our beliefs through grassroots work.

Wajir South Development Association (WASDA)

Professional and business people from Wajir South registered WASDA as an NGO in 1993 on the behalf of the Wajir community. Its purpose is to supplement government efforts in development. WASDA aims to support the improvement of the livelihoods of pastoral communities in Wajir district and in lower Juba in southern Somalia. The organization operates in areas inhabited by pastoral communities who are highly dependent on livestock for their social and economic well being. Animal health, education, water and social services are poorly developed due to logistical difficulties, insecurity, resource constraints, cultural biases and, according to WASDA, “inappropriate policies on pastoral development.”

Marginalization of Pastoralism in East Africa

From the Pastoral Steering Committee’s “Wajir Manual for Development Practitioners”

A number of factors have been suggested as responsible for the long term decline of pastoralism in the region:

State structures: Loss of autonomy of pastoral groups and incorporation into state structures. Restrictions on mobility for administrative, security, and political reasons.

Drought and conflict: Droughts have become more frequent and protracted in recent decades. Insecurity and conflict has also been a significant factor in pastoral in most East African states. In particular, change in nature and severity of raiding, forcing households out of the pastoral sector.

Sedenterisation [sic]: Discouragement of nomadic lifestyle, development approaches which encourage cultivation, expansion of settlements, move from nomadic to more sedenterised [sic] herding.

Land tenure: Land tenure regimes which do not recognize customary institutions governing control and access. Expansion of agriculture into pastoral grazing land, especially into dry season grazing areas bordering rivers. Privatization of pastoral land and growth of game reserves.

Internal differentiation: Increased social differentiation, classes of rich pastoralists emerging who combine livestock holding with political and administrative office.⁴

For pastoralists to take advantage of their resources, there is a need for programmes that can enable their basic human rights to education, water, and health. WASDA seeks to realise this goal through training, monitoring, development of physical facilities, awareness creation, and initiating or strengthening existing community structures. Board members and staff, all of whom are trained in various disciplines, run the organization. The board is responsible for long-term policy and planning, and management focuses on implementation of activities and services.

WASDA's vision is of a "prosperous pastoral society at peace with itself and its neighbours from all generations." Core values are listed as those key points that will guide 'service delivery' and include:

- Sincerity and honesty
- Equity and fairness
- Accountability and transparency
- Commitment and cooperation
- Professionalism and voluntary service
- Conservation of environment
- Upholding the sanctity of human life
- Gender sensitivity
- Acting as a non-profit organization

While other NGOs certainly can be assumed to espouse these qualities, WASDA is one of the few that has put them on paper as an informal contract with its staff. The level of organization and funding support is much higher than the WPDC. The flow of funding in Wajir goes through the larger NGOs, who in turn contract out peace work to the WPDC, which is capacitated to do community education in areas outside of simple development work.

WASDA believes in the close interlinking of conflict and development work. Conflict and peace issues are both critical to the path forward for development. In the words of one WASDA staff member, "We need very, very local

people on the ground who know the clan histories and even people's lineages. Access and control of resources are often along clan lines. For eight months, we were prevented from training community health workers in Somalia because of guns: only males with guns were loud about being trained. Specific knowledge of the laws, rules, and so on are needed on that side to make things work. Otherwise, you can be fired on just for blowing dust on people while driving to a training site."⁵ WASDA staff said they would like to find ways to illustrate how donors should budget peace building as more than just an afterthought to development work.

WASDA case study: The Burder pan

From WASDA records

Resource based conflicts and relationship with development: How WASDA is influencing local peace and the demand for guns.

Burder is a relatively new settlement with a high livestock population in Wajir South. It has no developed infrastructure, (e.g. public utilities including human and livestock health services, permanent water sources and education services). Two attempts were made to drill a borehole in the area but in vain, no underground water was found.

As a result of the increasing demand for water, the heavily silted Burder pan came under intense pressure from area pastoralists. The heavy silting was due to the poor management and lack of proper conservation measures. This led to acute shortages of water, forcing settled and pastoral communities to migrate with their livestock, leading to the closure of the primary school. It also created misunderstanding and conflicts on the use of the already scarce water resource. The water shortage at times resulted in livestock deaths, the nearest permanent water source being Kulaley which is 70 kms away. During dry seasons, the town depended on water transported by vehicle from Wajir, which is 86 km away. The community members were constantly seeking assistance from government departments, NGOs and other well-wishers in the form of fuel, vehicle, and other overhead costs.

As a result of the recurrent problem, the disadvantaged Burder community approached WASDA and requested intervention. WASDA responded by sourcing funds from ECHO through CORDAID to desilt, expand, and fence

the pan, and put pan management structures in place. The community was sensitized: a pan management committee was trained and the pan was desilted manually in September and October of 2002. A total volume of 6,000 cubic metres of sand was removed, making the pan one of the largest water harvesting facilities in the district.

The project brought an alternative source of income through payments for manual labour, which enabled members of the community to buy food and clothing and to spare the animals that otherwise would have been sold. A few people started small-scale businesses from the cash generated, while some bought small numbers of livestock. The pan is currently well managed, properly used and has sustained the community. There are no more reports of livestock death, and disruption to learning because of school closures is unheard of. The long-standing problem of water trekking is now history in the lives of the Burder community. Clan infighting has reduced, making the area more conducive for development work. Pressure on the government, NGOs, and community members has minimized.

Arid Lands Development Focus (ALDEF)

ALDEF started in 1989 as a CBO, and has evolved into a larger NGO. It is similar in objectives and work to WASDA (above) and to NORDA, the Northern Development Agency, which operates out of Mandera. Working mostly with pastoralists, but also with internally displaced people they refer to as 'peri-urban poor', ALDEF has five major areas of work.

- The pastoral development programme is involved in local development projects and capacitating of peace on the ground
- Microcredit opportunities target women who have given up on pastoralism or who have been driven out of their homes by factors such as abuse, neglect, poverty, and rape
- Restocking of livestock after major droughts or conflicts
- Food security and conflict prevention, mitigation, and response (CPMR) is structured as a cross-border project. It is focused on improving Eastern Wajir pastoralist and Somali relations. Like WASDA, ALDEF often 'farms out' such projects to WPDC.

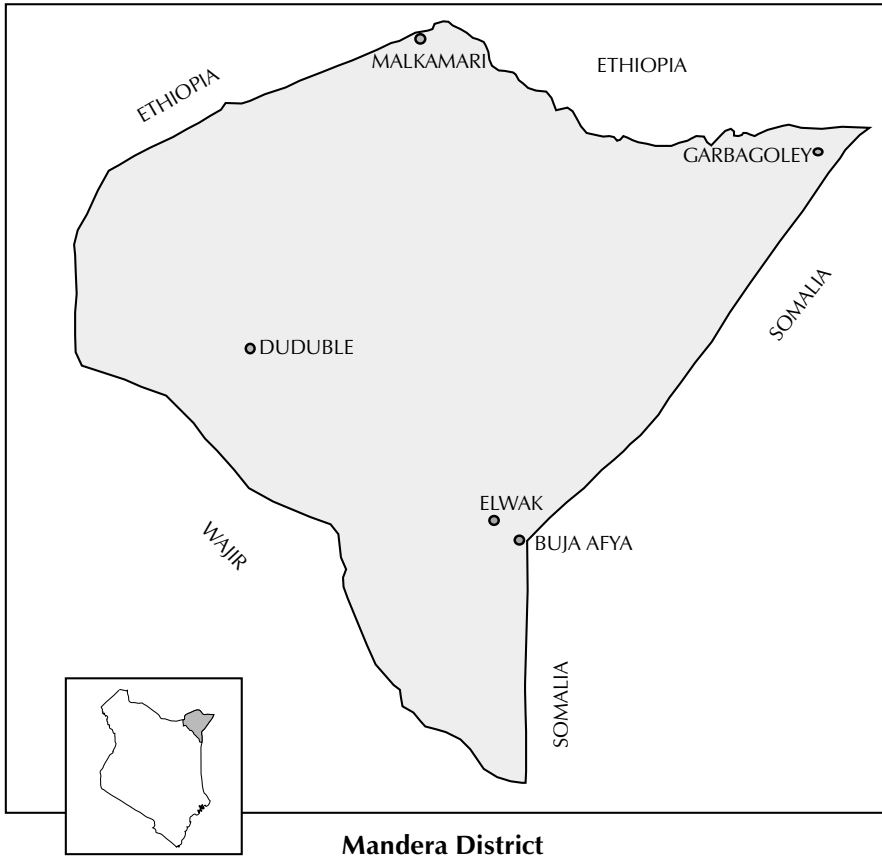
- Capacity building for Wajir peace structures. ALDEF manages funds for the WPDC, and the Committee implements projects. They are also supposed to build capacity through training within WPDC so that it can register as an NGO.

Before 1991, the framework for development in Wajir was centred on relief aid. International organizations would come in during a crisis, provide emergency assistance, and then leave with only a few post-relief measures in place. Now, locally based organizations have changed the situation by competing for donor money while remaining rooted in the communities where they work. "Aid work" has a different image. Local organizations have more transparency, greater innovation, and direct accountability to the people they serve. There is some frustration that while local groups co-ordinate well enough to make competition healthy, top-level donors such as DFID and USAID are not effective in this way.

ALDEF has influenced the demand for guns by addressing the root causes of violence. Pastoral poverty creates a need for guns, not just for livelihood, but also for cattle rustling and maintaining strength during clan warfare. The number of guns in use has gone down significantly in the last ten years, partly due to simple development tactics. One ALDEF staff member said, "If we support a youth group with a loan, and they start a business, we have targeted potential bandits: they will keep their guns silent and will support communities instead of being destructive."⁶

Mandera

The Mandera district in the Northeastern Province is bordered by Wajir to the south and west, Ethiopia to the north across the Dawa River, and Somalia to the east. It is one of the most remote, desolate, and underdeveloped parts of Kenya, and one of the few districts without at least one urban cluster boasting a cell phone tower (although KenCell is rumoured to be constructing one for use within the next year). Its main claim to fame is Kenya's 'Border Point One,' the first border post demarcating the nation's territory. Ironically, Mandera's unpatrolled border remains mostly open to Somalis who walk easily into Kenya. The area hosts an unknown number of informal refugees, who have no official camp or international support. The streets of Mandera town are sandy in the dry season and become rivers in flash floods during the rainy season (such dry riverbeds are known as *luggas* and are common throughout the region but not commonly used as streets and pathways in district capitals).



Mandra Women for Peace and Development (WFPD)

In a place where both traditional pastoral and Islamic traditions are enforced with an iron rule, the primary peace building organization is staffed by and focused on women. WFPD began in May 2000 with an overall objective of improving the livelihoods of the pastoralist, agro-pastoralist, the peri-urban and rural poor through enhancing women's participation in peace and development activities. The organization is managed by a steering committee of 30 women selected from a cross-section of the local ethnic communities, NGOs and government of Kenya workers, and women leaders. It is registered with the District Social Development Office in Mandra a self-help CBO. The office activities are run by a work group of five people, headed by a coordinator.

During its three years of operation, WFPD has developed a strategic and operational plan for conflict management and peace building in the district, and signed partnerships with a number of NGOs and donors to implement the plan. The NGOs and donors supporting the organization include Oxfam GB, NORDA (Northern Region Development Agency, see below), MEDS, and Trocairre. In its project implementation WFPD also works closely with the Arid Lands office, the District Commissioner's office, and the traditional peace elders in the district.

In the conflict management and community peace building project, the main objective is to reduce vulnerability of pastoralist livelihoods to conflicts and insecurity and to enhance development. This is done through:

- Community awareness and mobilization on peace building, including establishment of local peace committees, exchange visits, facilitation of community dialogue meetings, peace activities, and monitoring of peace committees
- Training of divisional and locational peace committees on conflict management
- Rapid response: facilitating traditional peace elders and provincial politicians to quickly mitigate conflicts before they escalate to violence

Strengthening local capacity for conflict prevention and facilitating workshops, including working with elders and facilitating cross-border rapid response initiatives, is the focus of most work. Other projects include small income generating matching grants to women entrepreneurs and the establishment and operation of a micro-credit revolving fund in Mandera Central Division. Through the promotion of women's financial independence, WFPD hopes to eventually create more opportunities for gender-equal peace building.

People own and use guns in the Mandera district to make money from trafficking, for looting and survival, and for livelihood and self-defence. Availability is easy, especially due to the closeness of Somalia and an ungoverned part of Ethiopia. At the local level, demand for guns is easily satisfied through the porous borders. Peace workers on the ground can control what is already there, but have a more difficult time monitoring new 'shipments' that come in with camel caravans and traders.

By 2003, over 16 peace committees had been established, trained, and were under continuous monitoring. These peace committees bring together rural

communities for training, discussion, and negotiations with neighbouring groups to facilitate mutual understanding that might avoid violent conflict over issues that can be solved peacefully. Mandera Elders for Peace had been recognized as an established institution, working closely with the women to conduct training for peace committees and engage in rapid response negotiations. Cross-border ties with Somalia are strong. A training conducted for the Bellel Hawo women was intended to help them start a similar peace building initiative in the Gedo region.

In general, the impact of peace building has been marked, especially considering the lack of government presence in the district. According to a recent WFPD report:

- Conflict occurrences have generally reduced in the district. For example, highway banditry that occurred almost every month has almost ceased.
- Most of the conflict issues that used to be reported to the police or Provincial Administration are now solved by peace committees at their respective locations.
- There is improved sharing of conflict and security related information was earlier difficult to access by development actors and communities.
- Elders who were 'dormant' and not involved in peace and development activities two years ago have now been 'rekindled' and are in mainstream decision-making processes in the district.
- Chiefs and District officials who were not co-operative to the introduction of community-based peace building are now beginning to realise its importance and are requesting capacity building and enhancement for themselves and their communities.

Structural Inequality: In their own words***Interview with Mandera Women for Peace and Development***⁷

Question: What causes a demand for guns here at the local level?

Answer: Porous borders, especially Somalia east of El Wak, makes it difficult [to get rid of guns]. Especially in the late 1990s with the government's emphasis on security, demand was high then among *shiftas* [bandits] especially. With weapons collection, people turn in old ones and get the reward. Peace workers on the ground can control what is already there, but we must also look for local solutions before we talk at the international level. Supply and demand must be dealt with concurrently. If you are mopping your floor and someone is still running the tap, it can't work.

International conventions only deal with supply; this is necessary, but not impacting on the situation here, in Mandera. People at the policy level should use our work as a learning tool. Government should also be involved, because without a willingness for government change we can't move forward.

Guns come from big multinational companies abroad. It is a business for them. We only get these things because of the demand. We are using these things to kill each other, at our level. Africa even as a region and continent may not have the ability to stop the supply. But can we reduce demand? I think so. Trade fluctuates visibly with conflict levels. With local peace committees enacting cross-border by-laws and elders communicating, with alternative sources of income being offered, demand goes down. A change of attitude is also necessary. Mainstreaming small arms and light weapons issues into peace building and capacity building and training is very important. We can trade guns for development.

Women and Peace

Interview with Wajir Women for Peace and Development

Attitudes are changing, but very slowly. For example, education for girls is key to changing women's status, and that is starting to be accepted. Religion is more difficult to challenge. Women are taking a greater role in peace building, but no women's organization existed before Dekha Ibrahim started the Wajir Peace and Development Committee. We took inspiration from that. Our main objective is to change women's support of conflict and fighting. We also want to educate women to pressure men. We have a saying that we tell women: 'lock your box' and tell the men they must put down their guns.

Women are becoming the breadwinners, especially in urban areas. Poverty is widespread, and women are entrepreneurial. When men justify violence by claiming they must earn their daily bread, you find that women start to find ways to put food on the table. Rape is still widespread, and is sometimes used as a tool in conflict, but this crime can be compensated with no more than five camels to the victim's family. With more women breaking the mould of the traditional wife, this can also cause violence in the home.

Mandera Elders for Peace

Mandera Elders for Peace operates as a sub-section of Mandera Women for Peace and Development. MWPD is the recipient of funding, some of which is passed on to the elders for work in conflict resolution, negotiation, and emergency response. The women of MWPD, while very well organized and capable, understand that they are operating in a social system that respects the work and word of elders in a unique way. The elders characterize the conflict in Mandera as largely one of borders: Somali criminals and thieves have an easy escape into the lawless east of Kenya's 'Border Point One'. They are proud of their work in collaborating with elders on the Somali side, but they also see that the 'bad neighbour' problem is not just a regional or a Kenyan one, but a world issue that deserves international-level support, funding, and intervention. In such a scenario, they see themselves as part of the solution, negotiating at levels that 'non-locals' could not navigate.

In their own words

Interview with six members in Mandera Town, September 4, 2003

Elder 1: We are the people involved in peace and conflict in the district. We can tell you anything about conflict. There is a lot of conflict. There are a lot of arms. Our animals are taken, our women are raped, they do highway robberies, and our people are killed. In collaboration with the DSC, it has become very difficult for us to handle the situation. Because they come and raid, then run to the other side of the border. Now, we have to collaborate to bring peace.

In Ethiopia, there are guns, but they are not as bad as the Somali guns. They are not causing us as much destruction. But anywhere there are guns there are problems. We can easily resolve conflicts over animals or resources, but when there are guns it becomes more difficult. I don't know if you have been to the borders, but you can see they come, break into a shop, steal something, and then cross over again. I think the biggest problem in the world today is this border, for us. We have made some efforts, we have met other elders, we have sat down with them, we have asked them to help us resolve this issue.

Elder 2: So we have said to these people, now that your government has collapsed on that side, we want to use the traditional systems of dealing with things. If someone is killed, let us use blood money to compensate. When we use blood money, things are resolved and they don't pick up the issue again. The biggest problem to us is Somalia. Although we have a tripartite border, it is Somalia that bothers us the most. It doesn't mean that we don't have the youth, or others causing problems. We also do have this. They have guns for sale. We, as elders, our main issue is peace. We have seen the effect of guns. We go and tell people the effect of living on the border of Somalia with the guns. We try to educate. For sure, we have gone beyond our borders to Wajir, to help solve their conflict, and we have managed as peace mediators even outside our borders. Inter-clan battles are difficult. We use blood money and traditional methods. They work.

Elder 3: Somalia used to be a country. You know that Somalia used to have a government. The aftermath of that conflict caused many problems. There is nothing else new that we can really tell you. Somalia is closed. After the collapse, there was no international intervention to resolve the issue. All the guns that used to be there in the government are now in the hands of the people of Somalia. Now there is a Somali gun pointed at us. The victims are now Kenyan. Victims of the Somali gun. The Kenyan borders are all over the

country, but starting here in Mandera there is Border Point One. Right from where the border is marked, Border Point One, to Kisimayo, they cannot control their guns. Our problem became overwhelming. You have the guns. But where are these bullets coming from? That is the question we ask. Because you have asked us questions, you must listen to the answers. Some of the bullets are from alliances from outside. Those who get their arms from Ethiopia, those who get them from Somalia, all the guns come to Kenya. Kenyans have weapons. We have bullets. But here, we fear to break the law. More than the others. We need real help. Help us from these guns.

Question: The difference between here and Somalia is that Kenya has a government. Who should be helping with the gun problem, and what is the role of the government?

Elder 1: The government can fight these people, but they have kept quiet. The government kept quiet not because they have no ability. We want the world to see the problem Somalia is posing to Kenya. The government is trying to show the world how Somalia is posing a threat to Kenya. They do have an ability to intervene but they do not.

Elder 2: We know the government position. We know as peace elders. What we need is assistance, in terms of logistics, finance, and support. Government wants to help the peace process, but we need real support.

Elder 3: The government is there, but the government has shown its ability whether positive or negative in trying to resolve conflict. The people across the other side, they are not a militia. They are individuals, gun runners. It is elders now who can deal at their level. It is now at the level of individuals, of youth, of elders. It is only we elders who can deal with it, elder peacemakers, and not the government. There is no government there. Those people need counselling, capacity building, peace-building initiatives. They are people who are traumatized, they need to change their attitudes.

Question: Who needs capacity building?

Elder 3: I am getting there. People who have guns have grown with them for eight years, they are even twenty years old, young when the state collapsed. There are no institutions for education. They are only educated in the institution of the gun. Those are the people who should be targeted for transformation. Sometimes, also, it could be a problem to reach them directly. Even if they accept what the elders say, and give up their gun, what

alternative can we offer them? When you ask to disarm them, you must also have an alternative. This is a challenge to us. If that solution is not raised, they will not surrender their guns and we will not get our peace. Somalia today, it is the responsibility of the world to help.

We are part of the international community. We are close neighbours of Somalia. We are the ones who can change things, but we are also the ones who become victims. Where is the world? For the last ten years, we have done a lot of initiatives on our own. Whether we have achieved positive or negative results, we have tried. My opinion is that something should be done so the Somalia effect does not multiply on us, the victims. After Somalia, there could have been other countries that could have collapsed. Ethiopia also has that type of problems. Somalia has no stable government. It has now become part of the system in Somalia that they can actually survive without a government. They do not need one to survive. That is a threat. How can we even talk about neighbours when it is posing a threat to the whole world?

We need a whole set of programmes and initiatives to be set up so that the whole problem of gun running and instability can be solved in this region. The other problem is that all the guns in Somalia are now getting—there is a big influx into neighbouring countries. Again, an initiative is required to avoid that influx. Whatever is required, there must be a system so those guns remain in that country and not come into others.

Elder 1: I want to address the question about who we expect to help us and how. When there is a problem in some specific part of the world, what is generally done? The people who are supposed to help problem focal points are the world community. We expect the same world community to help us. Someone who has a gun, he is using that gun for his livelihood. If he does not get an alternative to pull his life away from that gun, then of course he will not give it up. There is no alternative to disarm these people. The best way is tokens. The best way is different sources of livelihood. If somebody has this gun, and he is using it for his livelihood, he will go with that gun until he finds something for his kids to eat. He will use that gun to kill, or he will be killed in the process. Because he has come out of his house either to kill or be killed. It is an extreme way of life. But if you give tokens, food rations, he will come out and maybe surrender. There are protocols, support to livelihood for problem places in the world. These things should be applied. The protocol to support of livelihood should be used here. This should be an issue of the whole world, and the countries involved, so that the issue can be resolved.

Notes

1. P Onguji, *Wild Barrel, Incompatible Regimes: The case of violence in Isiolo Central Division*. PeaceNet: 2002 p 5–7.
2. Ibid p6–7.
3. Interview conducted in Wajir town, 1 September 2003.
4. *A Manual for Development Practitioners*, Pastoral Steering Committee, Wajir District, April 2000, p 10.
5. Interview in Wajir town, 1 September 2003.
6. Interview in Wajir town, 2 September 2003.
7. Interview with three staff members of MWPD, Mandera town, 3 September, 2003.