NOMADIC PASTORALISM AND EVERYDAY PEACE:
KEY EVIDENCE AND LESSONS FOR PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT MITIGATION FROM KENYA'S TURKANA NORTH

This fact sheet presents findings from the RESOLVE Network research report, "*Nomadic Pastoralism and Everyday Peace: Key Evidence and Lessons for Peacebuilding and Conflict Mitigation from Kenya's Turkana North*," by Caleb Maikuma Wafula. Over the past twenty years, tensions around the cultural and economic practices of pastoralism have become an increasingly discussed source of conflict across a wide stretch of the African continent. Pastoralist ways of life face unprecedented economic, ecological, social, and political pressure. As a result, pastoralists are often scapegoated by politicians and security actors as uniquely prone to violent conflict, a risk to peace and order in the spaces they share. This narrative is simplistic and ignores the important impact, contributions to sustainable development, and role in local, bottom-up initiatives to build and maintain peace that pastoralist communities play within broader state and regional structures. Informed by a multi-method research methodology, the findings from this study highlight both the existing local systems and resources for peacebuilding and conflict mitigation in pastoralist communities in Kenya's Turkana region, as well as the stressors and challenges that affect them. Lessons from this research contribute to our broader understanding of how policymakers and practitioners can better assess and coordinate violence prevention and reduction efforts in light of specific pastoralist needs and everyday practices of peace, particularly in areas impacted by violent conflict and/or violent extremism where pastoralist communities exist.

For more, see: Wafula, Caleb Maikuma. *Nomadic Pastoralism and Everyday Peace: Key Evidence and Lessons for Peacebuilding and Conflict Mitigation from Kenya's Turkana North*. RESOLVE Network, 2024.

KEY FINDINGS

Although pastoralists in Turkana are faced with many conflict drivers and challenges, they also participate in practices that enable peace and are capable of turning the tide of protracted conflicts that have long bedeviled the area.

Everyday practices—including local trade, sharing of resources including water and pastureland, intercommunal relationships and networks, and traditional cultural events and ceremonies—can each function as key activities fostering everyday peace within northern Turkana pastoralists and surrounding communities.

There are important challenges to maintaining these everyday practices of peace. While various governmental and nongovernmental resources are at times available within the region, issues including drought, changes in the natural environment, and continued acts of banditry and related violence impact many of these sources of everyday peace.

Instead of simply imagining pastoralist communities as inevitable sites of conflict, there is an opportunity for policymakers and implementers to examine, inventory, and analyze the resources that communities already rely on to prevent or mitigate conflict, and to consider how national, regional, and international initiatives might best build on and support these existing resources.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRACTIONERS & POLICYMAKERS

To understand pastoralist communities and the ecosystems of conflict and violence surrounding them, practitioners and policymakers should be particularly attentive to everyday sources of peace within and among pastoralists and avoid focusing or framing issues solely from a securitized or conflict lens.

- Documenting the importance of communal, kin, and social relationships between pastoralists and the communities with which they interact, understanding sources of everyday peace and elements that may support or undermine them could support more proactive and positive means of engagement with pastoralist communities for shared violence prevention goals.

Violence does not happen in a vacuum. Practitioners and policymakers addressing violent extremism and terrorism in areas in which pastoralist communities live must also consider the unique environmental, cultural, and political pressures facing pastoralist communities in particular, and the importance of social ties and connections (including transboundary ties and connections) that enable them to support their livelihoods and maintain access to the resources necessary for livestock herding.

- This is particularly important given shifts in local climate that impact available pasture and water resources for livestock, which may necessitate increased mobility and transboundary relationships to maintain pastoralist livelihoods.
- Strategies to address violence and conflict should be careful to consider and to avoid inflicting even further challenges to everyday livelihoods and peace within pastoralist communities.
- Considering the often-securitized nature of both P/CVE and counterterrorism efforts, additional care to understand these structures of everyday peace and potential impacts on them is crucial.

Assumptions suggesting that pastoralists are any more predisposed or susceptible to violence or engagement in violent activity are overly simplistic and fail to consider the peacebuilding practices that members of these communities undertake and engage in every day.

- For more ethical, informed, and proactive efforts to prevent and address terrorism occurring in areas with pastoralist populations, policymakers and practitioners should avoid making oversimplistic and often stigmatizing assumptions about the nature of pastoralism and pastoralists.
- Rather than approaching pastoralist communities as a potential vulnerability or security issue, practitioners and policymakers should consider potential areas of collaboration with pastoralists communities to enhance resilience and peacebuilding throughout the broader communities in which they operate.

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