

**PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT:**

**A CASE STUDY OF MARSABIT DISTRICT, 1991 – 2005**

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this project is my original work and that it has not been presented at another university or institution for a degree or academic credit,

Signed:.......... 26.11.2012.....

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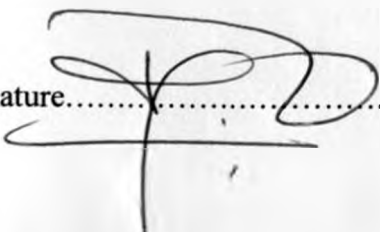
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the assistance and support of my family and friends during the completion of this year of work.

**DEDICATION**

To

The magnificent wife and mother of my children, both at Miraluz and Scahill.

*Sherry and Amos.*

My dear husband, the biggest blessing in my life, Dr. Amos C. Mwangi.

**Thank you for the love and prayers.**

My parents, James and Sherry

My Sister

My friends and family (and God's Blessings)

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**Profound appreciation to all whom I owe the fruitful completion of this piece of work;**

**The respondents who participated in the study, both in Marsabit and Nairobi,**

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**British Institute in East Africa,**

**My parents; Amos and Sherry**

**My Sisters.**

**Many thanks and I wish you God's blessings!**

## ABSTRACT

Armed conflict has changed since the end of the Cold War with present conflicts predominantly taking the lives of civilians, especially children. This study examines the role and impact of armed conflict in children in Marsabit district, 1991 – 2005. The study aimed to test the hypotheses that children have been involved in the Marsabit conflicts and that they had direct and indirect impacts on children. It utilized both primary and secondary data. It draws from the works of various authors whose content is on or relates to children and armed conflict in Marsabit District. Secondary data was collected through a thorough review of books, articles, journals as well and internet sources. Primary data was collected through interview, focus group discussion and observation and was used to fill in the gaps noted from the secondary sources. Data collected was analyzed and presented qualitatively through narrative and discussions.

The study begins with a detailed the history of the conflict in the district in three phases, pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. Conflict in Marsabit in the pre-colonial era was synonymous with those that occurred in the whole of northern Kenya where communal invasions and inter-group raiding was more of a cultural phenomenon. During the colonial periods, the conflict was linked to the violence that accompanied state formation in the colonial era. In post-colonial era, conflicts in Marsabit were characterized by commercialization of cattle raiding, increased access to arms and poverty. Other proximate causes were political instigation, insecurity, revenge and intense inter-clan rivalry.

The study found out that children involvement and participation in armed conflicts was through forceful recruitment and voluntary enlisting (whether by choice or as a result of excruciating circumstance that left them no choice). The roles they played in these conflicts were both as direct combatants as well as supporting conflict process e.g. being the porters and spies. In general conflict has negatively affected the lives of children socially, physically and psychologically. Many of them died, or suffered injuries. They faced disruption in their daily lives with many being separated from their families and ended up displaced, interruption in their education hence reduced school enrollment, gender based violence as well as trauma.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ASAL</b>	<b>Arid and Semi Arid Lands</b>
<b>CEMIRIDE</b>	<b>Centre for Minority Rights Development</b>
<b>CNSP</b>	<b>Children in Need of Special Protection</b>
<b>CRADLE</b>	<b>Child Rights Advisory Documentation and Legal Centre</b>
<b>CRC</b>	<b>Convention on the Rights of Children</b>
<b>DC</b>	<b>District Commissioner (s)</b>
<b>DO</b>	<b>District Officer (s)</b>
<b>DSC</b>	<b>District Security Committee</b>
<b>IDP</b>	<b>Internally Displaced Person (s)</b>
<b>ITDG</b>	<b>Intermediate Technology Development Group</b>
<b>KANU</b>	<b>Kenya African National Union</b>
<b>NCNN</b>	<b>National Children in Need Network</b>
<b>NPCTPB</b>	<b>National Policy on Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding</b>
<b>NPAC</b>	<b>National Programme of Action for Children</b>
<b>NSCPBCM</b>	<b>National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organization</b>
<b>NFD</b>	<b>Northern Frontier District</b>
<b>OUNHCR</b>	<b>Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</b>
<b>SRIC</b>	<b>Security Research and Information Centre</b>
<b>SALW</b>	<b>Small Arms and Light Weapons</b>
<b>UNHCR</b>	<b>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees</b>
<b>UNICEF</b>	<b>United Nations Children's Fund</b>



## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

**Children:** The local definition for children in Marsabit is characterized by the stages in life. Among the boys, circumcision determined the cross-over from childhood to adulthood and was carried out in age sets. Unmarried girls (and who were yet to go through initiation) were also referred to as children in this context.<sup>2</sup> From this definition, it was clear that age was not the determinant factor in the differentiation between childhood and adulthood. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the child (CRC), the term children mean all persons under the age of eighteen unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.<sup>3</sup> The Kenya government has standardized the concept of a child as being achieved using age bound criteria. The Children's Act 2001 provides that a child is a human being under the age of eighteen years. This standard corresponds with that of the CRC. This study is going to borrow from this definition in identifying who a child is in Marsabit.

**Conflict:** a state of opposition, disagreement or incompatibility between two or more people or groups.

**Armed conflict:** This is conflict that has degenerated to the use of violent physical force between combatants or upon civilians that results to damage of property, injury and loss of life. Armed conflict can refer to a situation whereby a war has broken out, either between states or between the armed forces of a particular state and a rebel group. It can also refer to national liberation wars conducted against a colonial or racist regime in the exercise of the right to self-determination.<sup>4</sup>

**Child soldier:** Refers to the inclusion and use of children in armed groups (government or rebel) who participate directly or indirectly.

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<sup>2</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Youth), 05.08.2007, Focus Group Discussions (Children), (09.08.2007), Abdi Zeila, Central Division (04.08.2007).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 1). It was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the General Assembly Resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 and entered into force in 2 September 1990, in accordance with Article 49. to date, the convention has been ratified by all states with the exception of Somalia and the United States.

<sup>4</sup> Child Rights Advisory Documentation and Legal Centre (CRADLE), *A Guide for Children in Armed Conflict*, Nairobi, CRADLE, 2004, p1.

**Coping Mechanisms:** Ways of adjusting to environmental stress without altering one's goals or purposes; it includes both conscious and unconscious mechanisms.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Parenting Psychology, *Definitions*, [www.indianpsychiatry.com/glossary.htm](http://www.indianpsychiatry.com/glossary.htm), accessed 10.03.06.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

In both the past and present, it is no secret that war has exacted a horrific toll on children. However, modern warfare kills, maims and exploits children more callously and more systematically than ever before. This could be blamed on the increase of the use of sophisticated weaponry, but also due to the fact that that present conflicts are characterized by attacks on civilians especially women and children.

Caught up in complex conflicts that have multiple causes and little prospects of early resolution, children are being sucked into seemingly endless endemic struggles for power and resources.<sup>6</sup> The situation of children affected by armed conflict has been increasingly gaining international attention in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, due to the growing number of children being involved directly or indirectly in conflict. The increasing numbers result from the systemic target of civilian populations by both government and non-state actors during conflict.<sup>7</sup> It was estimated that 300,000 children in more than 80 countries all over the world are participating in armed conflict carrying guns, fighting, serving as spies, porters and cooks, and being used as soldier 'wives'.<sup>8</sup> In today's conflicts, a big number of children were abducted, recruited or volunteered to serve in armies, rebel forces and paramilitaries.

In the past decade, there has been notable strides towards securing a reliable legal and policy environment for the children of Kenya. The country's ratification of the Convention on Rights of Children (CRC) in July 1990, the government's publication of the National Programme of Action for Children (NPAC) in 1992 and the publication of the Children's Bill 2001 are some of the remarkable milestones in the noble endeavor to protect and fulfill the rights for Kenyan children within the

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<sup>6</sup> Graca Machel, *The Impact of War on Children*, London: Hurst and Company Ltd., 2001, p 1.

<sup>7</sup> Rachel Harvey, *Children in Armed Conflict: A Guide to International Humanitarian and Human Rights Law*, International Bureau for Children's Rights, 2002, p 5.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics obtained from the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children and Armed Conflict website: [www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict](http://www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict), accessed 10-03-06.

convectional four pillars of Life and Survival, Protection, Development, and Participation.<sup>9</sup>

Over time, Kenya enjoyed a relatively state of peace and tranquility that largely insulated her children and the general population from the horrors of armed strife. In spite of this heritage of peace and noble intentions of the law, there have been developments in the recent past that seriously exposed children to insecurity and consequently endangered their lives. Marsabit district was characterized by prolonged armed conflicts as a result of struggle for power, resource scarcity, and religious differences among others. Lack of protection for security and basic rights of the child in conflict zones has had far reaching socio-economic consequences for them and their families. The study examined the participation of children in the Marsabit conflicts and assessed its impact on the children.

### 1.1 Background of Marsabit

Marsabit is among the fourteen districts that form the Eastern Province of Kenya and covers an area of 66,000sq.km, which includes 4,956sq.km covered by Lake Turkana.<sup>10</sup> The second largest district covering about 16% of the total area of the republic, it has six divisions namely, Central, Laisamis, North Horr, Gadamoji, Maikona, and Loiyangalani.<sup>11</sup> The table below shows the administrative units and population statistics of the district.

**Table 1 Marsabit Administrative Units and population figures**

		Area in KM	Locations	Sub-locations	Population <sup>12</sup>
1	Central	1,336	5	12	25,100
2	Gadamoji	614	4	6	12,345
3	Laisamis	11,547	5	15	24,011
4	Maikona	19,329	5	10	19,510

<sup>9</sup> National Children in Need Network (NCNN), *Bridging the Gap: Analysis of Law and Policy on Children in Need and Special Protection*, Nairobi: NCNN, 2002. P.4.

<sup>10</sup> Ministry Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Development plan 1997-2001*, Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Based on the last census of 1999.

5	North Horr	18,401	5	9	23,589
6	Loiyangalani	9,717	4	13	16,965
7	Lake Turkana	4,956	-	-	-
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65,900</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>121,520</b>

*Source: Marsabit Conflict Assessment Report.*

The district is an extensive plain towards the southeast, while the west and north plains are bordered by hills and mountain ranges.<sup>13</sup> It receives very minimal rainfall and hence seasonal rivers such as Milgis, Merille, Dida, Galgallu and Chalbi depression supply water for irrigation and for watering livestock during the dry seasons.<sup>14</sup>

Livestock keeping is the most practiced economic activity mostly organized in the form of nomadic pastoralism during the dry conditions, while crop farming is practiced in the highlands where the amount and duration of rainfall is reliable. Agro-pastoralism is also a form of livelihood practiced majorly in mount Marsabit which covers central and Gadamoji divisions.<sup>15</sup> Other sources of income are from the employment and business sectors, concentrated in the town.

The district is home to many ethnic groups although the Borana, Gabra, Burji and Rendille are the major occupants in the area. Other smaller groups include Samburu, Turkana and Dasnatch. The Gabra and Borana are the two largest ethnic groups related both linguistically and culturally. They are said to have originated from the same cradle land but later evolved into distinct political entities in the southern parts of Ethiopia and crossed into Marsabit district at the beginning of the last century (19 century).<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in the Northern Kenya: A Focus on the Internally Displaced Victims of Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2003, p 54-58.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG), *Kenya short Rains Assessment Report 2005*, Nairobi: KFSSG, 2006, p. 58.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development. *Marsabit District Socio-cultural Profile*, Nairobi: Government Printers, 1986, p. 27.

The Borana and Gabra, who are both Oromo speakers and speak the same dialect – Booran - have dominated the conflicts due to their constant violent interactions. Both communities are pastoralists with the Borana leaning towards cattle keeping while the Gabra are camel nomads.<sup>17</sup> This line of similarities makes one wonder what it is that makes the two belligerent towards each other. Wario who traces their relationship from pre-colonial Kenya articulates that they had pleasant associations before 1900<sup>18</sup> which showed signs of change in the years of 1919 – 1960 as a result of colonial policies that initiated the basis of ethnic identities.<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Kenya has never in the annals of world history gone to full-blown war with another country, ethno-political conflicts such as the Marsabit case have plagued the country since independence. Ethno-political conflict are “open conflicts in which groups that define themselves using the ethnic criteria make claims on behalf of their collective interests against the state or against other groups. The ‘ethnic criteria’ used by a group to define itself includes a combination of shared culture, religious beliefs, place of residence, race, and collective experiences past or present. The term ethnic group is loosely synonymous with peoples, communal group, minority and identity group.”<sup>20</sup>

The conflict can be traced to the pre-colonial era, although the 1963 – 1967 irredentist campaign by the Northern Frontier District (NFD), (which Marsabit was part of) marked a turning point in the conflict scope.<sup>21</sup> This was precipitated by the refusal by the British to enforce the outcome of the referendum that overwhelmingly supported secession by the Somali and Muslim Borana and Orma.<sup>22</sup> The bad blood in the Borana-Gabra relationship can also be attributed to the demarcation of land and separation of the two communities on each side of the border by the two colonial powers in Ethiopia (Italy) and Kenya (British) between 1919 and 1960.<sup>23</sup> By replacing traditional conflict management systems with political administrative office,

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<sup>17</sup> Hussein Wario, *Historical and Current Perspectives on Inter-ethnic Conflicts in Northern Kenya*, University of Life Sciences, 2006, pp. 17-19.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 42-46.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Gurr Ted and Barbara Harff, *Ethnic Conflict in World Politics*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, p 11.

<sup>21</sup> HusseinWario, “*Historical and Current Perspectives*, 2006, p 55.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.



the traditional mediation was thrown into disarray and resulting into the challenge of resolving conflict in the area.<sup>24</sup> The district also has a history of droughts recorded in 1969 – 1973, 1980, 1984 and 1998 – 2002, which left thousands of animals dead.<sup>25</sup> These inevitably catalyzed conflicts as communities tried to replenish their stocks by taking animals away from their ethnic rivals using any possible means.<sup>26</sup>

Unresolved conflicts were responsible for a cycle of violence since they have been grounds for revenge as was witnessed in July 2005, where an explosion of budding conflict in Turbi occurred. On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2005 as reported by the Daily Nation, there was a horrific raid on Turbi trading center in Marsabit district, which left 90 Gabra people dead. Heavily armed bandits from Kenya and Ethiopia Borana community left a trail of destruction at the trading centre and at the Turbi boarding school, where nine pupils were sprayed with bullets in cold blood as they huddled together in the dusty floor of the houses they had sought refuge.<sup>27</sup>

Others were hacked to death by panga-wielding raiders whose intentions appear to have been to massacre an entire village.<sup>28</sup> On the same day, the Gabra attacked and killed nine Borana men, women and children in Bubisa and Maikona.<sup>29</sup> This narrative only recounted the attack and subsequent numbers of people who lost their lives. To what extent were children part of the attackers? How were the children affected by these attacks? Simply put, the children's story in the Marsabit conflicts was not exhaustive. This study attempted to provide a detailed account of child involvement in armed conflicts within Marsabit district.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Children are said to be vulnerable where conflict is rampant because they are weak and defenseless. There have been enormous achievements realized on the global scene in enacting legal instruments and promulgating policy statements aimed at

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Adan, Mohamud and Ruto Pkalya, *Closed to Progress: An Assessment of the Socio-economic Impact of Conflict on Pastoral and Semi-pastoral Economies in Kenya and Uganda*, Nairobi, Practical Action, 2005, p 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> "Kenya Killings Fields", *Daily Nation*, 14 July 2005 p 6.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

ensuring protection of children in conflict. Important steps towards this realization include Article 22 of the African charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which advocates for the non-inclusion and protection of children in armed conflict. Despite the existence of these protocols and conventions governing children's protection, they have increasingly been engrossed in armed conflict situations in which they either participate in or are affected indirectly or directly.

There is little information about the extent to which children participate in various conflicts (socio-economic or political) in Marsabit, neither is there data showing how they are affected and the measures that have been undertaken to minimize the impacts on the children. Research carried out on the district casually mentioned or simply acknowledged children as participating in conflict but there is a dearth of detailed case studies of the involvement of children in conflict situations especially in small-scale conflicts.<sup>30</sup> Studies done have focused on the structural causes of conflict such as small arms proliferation, insecurity, poverty, poor governance, negative ethnicity etc. The participation and impact on children in the Marsabit conflict was ignored, yet their plight and suffering cannot be disregarded. This is because they are the future; they definitely are a section of society that determines the dynamics of conflict and shaped the overall character of conflict situations and possible solutions.

Apart from the silences about children's involvement in the Marsabit conflict, generally children are not given a place in conflict studies in Kenya. The needs of children in conflict are lumped together with those of adults especially women, and consequently the effects of armed conflict on children have been generalized under the category of civilians. This is half the story, about the involvement of children in armed conflict. This study is partly an attempt at filling that gap.<sup>31</sup>

### **1.3 Objective of the Study**

This study was guided by the following two objectives:

1. To examine the extent of children's involvement in the Marsabit conflict
2. To assess the impact of Marsabit conflict on children

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<sup>30</sup> Akililu, Yohanes, *"Ethnic Conflicts among Pastoralists in Marsabit District: A Case Study of the Boran-Rendille Conflict"*, MA Dissertation. Nairobi: University of Nairobi, 2004, p 37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

#### **1.4 Justification of the Study**

Marsabit has experienced a number of socio-economic and political conflicts; historically, raids and fights among the pastoral communities spared human lives, especially those of women and children. Recently, the changing nature of localized conflict has become more violent: raids are no longer conducted with traditional weapons or under traditional mores, but increasingly with the use of sophisticated weapons that have devastating effects. Studies done globally concerning the consequences of conflict on children indicate the rise of HIV/AIDS as the most powerful new factor compounding the dangers of children in armed conflict and that proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the factors that ignite and sustain the wars that victimize children.<sup>32</sup>

These studies however, have focused on the international scene i.e. conflict-affected children in inter or intrastate conflicts. This makes the study on the impact of small-scale (more specifically ethnic) conflicts on children a subject of interest to pursue. Marsabit has been closed overtime, and recent focus on it has been as a result of media attention on the violent conflicts that have been raging in the area. Telling the children's story will further the larger agenda of gaining a better understanding of conflicts there and the possible solutions thereof.

This study could inform various stakeholders involved in policy formulation like the proposed National Policy on Conflict Transformation and Peace-building (NPCTPB), aimed at addressing key peace and development challenges.<sup>33</sup> It is imperative to dispel the general and erroneous idea that Kenya is a haven of peace, particularly with the presence of simmering ongoing conflicts, which are potentially dilapidating for children who are 'the future' of the country. Understanding of children's involvement in conflict provides a starting point from which solutions can be found.

#### **1.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Children are not only the unfortunate victims of conflict; they have increasingly become the specific target of those fighting, in direct violation of international rules

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<sup>32</sup> Graca Machel, *The Impact of War on Children*, 2001.

<sup>33</sup> National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSC), *National Policy on Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding*, Nairobi: Government Press, 2006.

governing the conduct of hostilities. Furthermore, their participation in armed conflict has led them to become perpetrators as well as the victims of atrocities.<sup>34</sup> The study is therefore limited to the participation of children in inter-ethnic conflict, and the impact that conflict has had on children.

The period under examination will be confined to 1991 – 2005, one that has been marked by escalation in incidences of viciousness of violence. The 1990s was seen as the bloodiest decade in the history of colonial and independent Kenya. Characterized by ethnic clashes and horrendous acts of violence due to the re-introduction of political pluralism,<sup>35</sup> it is tempting to associate the escalation of armed conflict in Marsabit with the reform of multi-partism.<sup>36</sup> This is because pastoralists figured prominently in the new ‘electoral’ clashes in contrast to their normally passive role in national affairs.<sup>37</sup> For example, the campaign for political pluralism exacerbated communal tensions and drove the agitated Maasai pastoralists to attack the Kikuyu farmers at Enosupukia over the destruction of a critical water catchments area.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere in Kapenguria, Kikuyu traders were driven out of towns by the Pokot while their cohorts in East Baringo and Samburu attacked agricultural settlements in Laikipia.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps it is an erroneous assumption because Marsabit district with the exception of political hotspots such as Saku constituency and the town itself has largely been isolated and hence less exposed to political changes experienced elsewhere in the country. For that reason, it is interesting to look at the Marsabit conflict devoid of the generalization of multipartism and the rise of conflicts.

The 1990s ended with a protracted period of raiding and communal violence across Northern Kenya (Marsabit included), but a re-emergence of this was witnessed in

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<sup>34</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OUNHCR), United Nations General Assembly, Forty Ninth Session, Agenda Item 101: Promotion of the Rights of the Children, *Study of the Impact of Children of Armed Conflict*, Progress Report of the Secretary-General, [www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/50/plenary/a50-537](http://www.un.org/documents/ga/docs/50/plenary/a50-537), accessed on 20.07.06.

<sup>35</sup> Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE), *Conceptualizing the Cost of Pastoralist's Conflict on Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: CEMIRIDE, 2005, p 7.

<sup>36</sup> In 1982 the constitution was changed (amendment of section 2a) and officially Kenya was made a one-party state, with the Kenya African National Union (KANU) the sole legal party upon which all political candidates had to be members. After 1991 numerous political parties emerged, for example the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) and began to push for multiparty.

<sup>37</sup> CEMIRIDE, *Conceptualizing the Cost of Pastoralist's Conflict*, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

2004 after an interlude of relative calm dating back to 2001.<sup>40</sup> 2005 was the year that Marsabit witnessed one of the worst conflict incidences the Turbi massacre in July of that year. The tensions between the Gabra and Borana culminated into a situation where the two communities butchered each other resulting into the death, injuries and theft of thousands of animals.<sup>41</sup>

Language barrier, security issues and the vastness of the district made data collection difficult. Due to the sensitivity of the study topic our requests to conduct interviews were met with suspicion and sometimes outrightly denied. Given that 2007 was an election year, data collection was not as forthcoming as would have been desired since some of our interview schedules with leaders in Nairobi and Marsabit clashed with campaigns and meetings.

## 1.6 Literature Review

The study has reviewed available literature on children in armed conflict. Cohn and Goodwin-gill in *Child Soldiers; The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, outline the short and long-term consequences of child soldier participation in conflict-ridden countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, Israeli occupied territories, Liberia and Sri Lanka. They make an incisive analysis of the child soldier phenomena by looking at their reasons for picking up arms, which include forced and coerced recruitment as well as voluntary participation.<sup>42</sup> The authors note a lack of clarity between voluntary and coerced participation in conflict by children in the sampled areas. It is impossible to know the difference precisely because the vast majority of young soldiers are not only forced or coerced into participating in conflict. Other subtle manipulative motivations and pressures also play a role in pushing children into participating in conflict. Cohn and Goodwin-gill's work is a tremendous contribution to the study of children in armed conflict, however, their work only relates to child soldiers. What is the situation of civilian children in conflict scenarios?

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<sup>40</sup> CEMIRIDE, *Conceptualizing the Cost of Pastoralist's Conflict*, 2005, p 4.

<sup>41</sup> Daily Nation "Kenya Killings Fields", Daily Nation, 14 July 2005, p 6.

<sup>42</sup> Ilene Cohn and Goodwin-gill Guy, *Child Soldiers; The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Like Cohn and Goodwin-gill, Brett and McCallin do not talk about children in armed conflict per se, but armed conflict in the context of child soldiers. In their book, *Children the Invisible Soldiers*, they assert that irrespective of the method of recruitment, an overwhelming number of child soldiers are drawn from the poor or otherwise disadvantaged section of society. Better-off families may send their children abroad and hence directly or indirectly escape recruitment into armed groups.<sup>43</sup> While out of the country, they will not be liable for military service and they may take pains not to return until the danger is over. Consequently, recruiters naturally prefer to concentrate on those who can mount the least effective resistance or challenge i.e. the most disenfranchised groups.

The principal consequence of children who participate in armed conflict is separation from families and communities, which occurs in violent circumstances at period in their lives when children have the most need of the care and support that family life provides. Other results of involvement in conflict according to the authors are death, HIV/AIDS infection, physical injury and trauma among others. In recognizing the great contribution made by Brett and McCallin, questions arise over what becomes of children who are not in combat, but find themselves in conflict.

Machel in *Impact of War on Children* makes a global human rights assessment of the situation of children in different areas experiencing armed conflict. Here, field visits to war-ravaged countries are recorded, where experiences of children in circumstances of violent situations are documented – children’s flight from the conflict, their experience with HIV/AIDS, sexual violence and landmines.<sup>44</sup> The book also showcases attempts that have been made to make a difference on the lives of children in desperate circumstances. Machel brings to the fore, a rising phenomenon that continuously characterizes conflict settings today; she singles out the rise of HIV/AIDS as the most powerful new factor compounding the dangers of children in armed conflict. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the factors that ignite and sustain the wars that victimize children. Machel however, does not highlight how children have been affected by small-scale conflicts.

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<sup>43</sup> Rachael Brett, and Margaret McCallin, *Children the Invisible Soldiers*, Stockholm: Save the Children, 1998.

<sup>44</sup> Graca Machel. *The Impact of War on Children*, 2001.

*The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children* by Onyango highlights the plight of children in conflict areas in Africa, and the impacts that result thereof. Characteristics of contemporary armed conflict include advancement of technology hence availability of highly lethal weapons, increase in factional conflict such as religious, ethnic or cultural conflict, and the continuous involvement of women and children in conflict as both combatants and victims. Onyango is of the opinion that contrary to popular belief that children's involvement in conflict is only as victims, they also participate as aggressors or combatants in some situations. Generally, conflicts have affected negatively, the physical, mental, emotional and social lives of children.<sup>45</sup> Like Machel, the author discusses the phenomena on a global perspective thereby giving prominence to international and large-scale conflicts. This study will underpin the impacts of ethnic/small-scale conflicts on children.

*Conflict in Northern Kenya* by Ruto, Adan and Masinde is one of the few publications that analyze the conflict scenario in Marsabit. The report examines the factors that contribute to conflicts that rage in Marsabit and five other districts in the conflict ridden North Rift and North Eastern regions. Cattle raids are the principal manifestations and concerns of conflict in Marsabit district.<sup>46</sup> This is coupled with other causes of conflict such as competition over pasture, proliferation of small arms, ethnocentrism, politics and revenge missions.

The authors point out that some of the impacts of these conflicts include displacement of populations, theft of livestock, destruction of property, degradation of the environment and stalled development projects. While all this information is important and relevant to this study, there is a lack of an in-depth analysis of the conflict in the six districts that have been covered. Due to the enormity of the task of analyzing the conflicts in both North Rift and North Eastern provinces of Kenya, the authors do not delve deep into the Marsabit case. Additionally, the impact of the conflicts on the populations has been classified according to areas e.g. divisions and locations, hence the question of how children are explicitly affected is not tackled.

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<sup>45</sup> Onyango. Philista, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children", *Child Abuse Review*, Jul/Aug 98, Vol. 7, Issue 4, 2006.

<sup>46</sup> Ruto Pkalya. Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003.

Adan and Ruto in their book, *Closed to Progress* indicate that the types of conflict found in arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) are banditry, livestock rustling, land and resource conflict.<sup>47</sup> As in their earlier publication *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, Adan and Ruto allude the root causes of conflict in ASAL areas to resource scarcity, political instigation and policy failure, criminal profiteering and socio-cultural causes. Their assessment established that the conflicts have taken a toll on the pastoral communities. Closure of major livestock markets hence a decline in trade, poor schools attendance by pupils, drop in food production, loss of animals to raids, diseases and clashes, human deaths and casualties and displacements are some of the results of the conflicts. Similarly in this book as with their earlier publication, Adan and Ruto do not specifically state how children have been affected by these conflicts.

Akililu in *Ethnic Conflicts among Pastoralists in Marsabit: A Case Study of the Boran-Rendille Conflict* contextualizes the conflict in form of ethnic clashes, which have escalated since 1990s around Marsabit Mountains.<sup>48</sup> The root cause of the Boran-Rendille conflict is competition over scarce resources. Access and use of Shur and Baddasa dry season grazing areas was a major bone of contention between various groups within the district. Consequently, Akililu says this has resulted into loss of livestock displacement, closure of schools, loss of human lives, disruption of trade and stunted development.

Overall, the communities have had to grapple with reduced economic activity due to decreasing agricultural production and increasing unemployment, which have in turn deepened poverty and desperation.<sup>49</sup> The author also mentions that 70% of the displaced persons are women and children aged below 14 years. The mention of closure of schools as one of the consequences of conflicts in Marsabit gives a glimpse on what children have had to grapple with. While the mentions of children's impact by Akililu is an eye opener for this study, one can ask, are displacements and loss of educational opportunities the only way conflict has affected children?

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<sup>47</sup> Adan Mohamud and Ruto Pkalya, *Closed to Progress: An Assessment of the Socio-economic Impact of Conflict on Pastoral and Semi-pastoral Economies in Kenya and Uganda*, Nairobi: Practical Action, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Yohanes Akililu, *Ethnic Conflicts among Pastoralists in Marsabit District*, 2004.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.



The National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSC) in their publication *Marsabit District Conflict Assessment* peg the Marsabit conflict to ethnic rivalry, politics, inadequate development, cultural practices, proliferation of small arms and policy gaps.<sup>50</sup> The report, commissioned right after the Turbi massacre of July 2005, does not blame the conflict on a particular group, but depicts the local community, politicians, ethnic communities from Ethiopia and the Kenya Police Reserves as the main actors in the conflict. Various interventions to solve conflicts in the district have been undertaken by the provincial administration, elders, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), peace committees, governmental agencies and the national steering committee. The report points out that the massacre led to an increased vulnerability of women and children who were seen as “soft targets”. The conflict in the district displaced 6000 people directly and 38,000 indirectly.

Centre for Minority Rights Development (CEMIRIDE) in their publication *conceptualizing the Cost of Pastoralist's Conflict in Northern Kenya*; assess conflicts in northern pastoralist areas in terms of cost. Their main argument is that conflict is a development problem.<sup>51</sup> From this perspective, the assertion is that pastoral conflicts are as a result of poor policies, historical injustices, social exclusion and neglect, and the larger region's civil wars. However, the report does not explain how children have been affected by the conflicts in Marsabit.

### **1.7 Research Hypotheses**

The study tested two hypotheses. These were;

1. That children have been involved in Marsabit conflicts
2. That conflicts in Marsabit district impacted on children

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

The research was based on the Social Learning theory. The Social Learning theory is based on the hypothesis that aggression is not innate or instinctual but actually learned

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<sup>50</sup> National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management (NSC), *Marsabit District Conflict Assessment*, Nairobi: NSC, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> CEMIRIDE, *Conceptualizing the Cost of Pastoralist's Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2005.

through the process of socialization. This is the basis of the *Seville Statement*. It was adopted by an international meeting of scientists in Seville, Spain in May 1986, convened by the Spanish National Commission. The Seville Statement on Violence argues that peace is possible because war is not a biological necessity. William Cunningham uses the social learning theory to explain the conflict within Northern Ireland. He explains that one acquires aggressive attributes by learning them at home, in school and by interaction with their environment in general. According to Cunningham, interaction in society helps to focus and trigger stored aggression onto enemies, an important concept in cases where the conflict is ethno-national or sectarian in nature.<sup>52</sup> Social learning theorists have tried to understand the relationship of the individual in their environment and how this relates to group aggression.<sup>53</sup> Socialization into a violent environment has detrimental effects on childhood development and consequently a precursor to aggressive and anti-social behavior in the teen and early adult years.<sup>54</sup> The Social Learning Theory can be used to analyze the possible participation of children in the conflict in Marsabit. The study in Northern Ireland showed that the constant exposure of children to violent situations has led to an internalization of the idea of aggression. It is notable that children who have been born and raised in conflict situations like the Somalia scenario, have through time acquired and eventually exhibited aggressive traits leading to participation in conflict. This study is framed within this perspective i.e. that there is high probability of children in Marsabit participating in conflict due to long-term exposure to conflict situations.

## 1.9 Methodology

This field research was largely qualitative but also reviewed quantitative data. It involved both primary and secondary data, collected over a span of three months in Nairobi and Marsabit. However, much of it was confined to Marsabit Central Division because it is the fulcrum around which conflicts revolve. The area is heterogeneous in nature and hence the probability of finding all ethnic groups settled there was higher. Due to the strategic location of Marsabit town in the division, offices of many development agencies and the Marsabit district headquarters are located there. In

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<sup>52</sup> William Cunningham, *Conflict Theory and the Conflict in Northern Ireland*, Auckland: University of Auckland, 1998, p.57

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

addition many ethnic communities and the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the periphery have also settled in camps found in the area because of guaranteed security.

Primary data was obtained through the interview method using a guideline of open-ended questions. These were used to elicit subsequent questions to be asked on the subject. The interviews were conducted according to the availability of the participants and took between one and two hours each. To enhance the recording process, a tape recorder was used with the consent of the respondent. However, this was not the case where the people requested for anonymity. Observation method was also used where the physical appearance, behavior and actions of the children and youth were taken into consideration. This was to find out the impact that conflicts have had on them. Focus group discussions were a key component in collecting the primary data. In order to draw out greater children's participation in the discussions and to avoid singling them out for individual interviews they were put in groups. Other focus group discussions were also held with the youth and the women.

The study used three categories of informants; key informants, opinion leaders and the general population. The first category of respondents was sampled through the snowball method and included key informants involved in the conflict during the study period such as affected children, security personnel, local authority employees, district peace committees and health workers who treated casualties of the conflict. The second category comprised of opinion leaders in the society like spokespersons of different groups. These were sampled through snowballing. The third category was selected through stratified sampling from the general population. The population was divided into various strata according to relevant characteristics e.g. women groups, civil society, religious groups, politicians, youth groups, elders, schools, local authority, NGOs (both local and international) etc. Simple random sampling was used to select individuals from each of the groups.

The sample size was determined in order to reach theoretical saturation. This is defined as a point in data collection and analysis where any new information changes

in a category result in no new dimension.<sup>55</sup> In this study a total of 35 respondents were interviewed. Participants for such kind of research have been suggested to range from five to fifty.<sup>56</sup> Guest et al<sup>57</sup> experimenting on how many interviews are needed to reach theoretical saturation found out that the first six interviews can provide up to 80% of the possible codes and twelve interviews were enough to provide 100% of the codes. However there have been cases where more than fifty interviews have also been used for example Brett and Specht and interviewed 53 boys and girls.<sup>58</sup>

Secondary data was used to supplement the primary data. Materials such as books, journals, periodicals and theses were utilized. These were sourced from libraries and resource centers such as the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, the British Council library, the Daily Nation and the East African Standard archives. Reports, publications and documents from NGOs working in Marsabit were also reviewed.

This study adopted a qualitative data collection approach. It entailed collecting data from primary and secondary sources and analyzed it using the content analysis of data methodology.<sup>59</sup> Content analysis is defined as the technique of making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages and using the same to relate to trends.<sup>60</sup> Qualitative data is presented in the form of narration and which according to Mugenda and Mugenda<sup>61</sup> are the indices that describe a given sample. To curb the envisioned language barrier, the researcher employed the services of a research assistant from the area who was trained to help in data collection and translation during interviews with the local respondents.

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<sup>55</sup> Guest, G., Bunce A., and L. Johnson. 2006. How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field methods* 18(1) 59-82.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel Brett and Irma Specht. *Young soldiers; why they choose to fight*, London: Lynne Reiner Publishers, 2004, p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social research methods* (2nd ed), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004, pp 305-306.

<sup>60</sup> Chava Nachmias and David Nachmias. *Research Methods in the Social Sciences* (5th edition). New York: St. Martin's Press. 1996.

<sup>61</sup> Olive Mugenda and Abel Mugenda. *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*, Nairobi: Acts Press, 2003, p.51.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO CONFLICTS IN MARSABIT DISTRICT

#### 2.0 Introduction

Among other authors, Hussein Mahamoud posits that conflict in pastoral areas of East Africa, and the Great Lakes region in general, have been over key pastoral resources of water, pasture, and land.<sup>62</sup> Umar attributes pastoral conflict in Northern Kenya to a three pronged struggle for survival. According to him, the conflict has been shaped around disputes over resources between poor pastoralist groups, state authorities, a voracious local elite, and expanding populations of peasant cultivators.<sup>63</sup>

For decades clan conflicts have been widespread in Marsabit District. A general perception about the reasons for the intermittent conflicts among pastoralists is scarcity of the resource and old enmity that resulted in persistent conflicts. This comes about due to the need to ensure or enhance quality of life as argued by the pluralism theorists<sup>64</sup>. The theorists believed that the society was an interconnecting web of complex relationship influenced by the human needs. Marx Weber in Sandole et al argues that conflicts occurred whenever an individual or group action was oriented intentionally towards carrying out their own will against the resistance of the other party or parties. This argument is very real in pastoral societies like Marsabit where different communities conflicted over resources and supremacy. Consequently, given the diverseness of ethnic groups and their subsequent clans, different conflict dynamics dominated the life of communities in the district, hence the wide range of conflicts from time to time.

This chapter analyses in detail the history of the conflict in the Marsabit district. The description is aimed at directing understanding on the role of children in the conflicts that haunted the district from 1991 to 2005. A discussion is made about Marsabit

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<sup>62</sup> Hussein Mahamoud, *Conflict and constraints to peace among pastoralists in northern Kenya in Understanding Obstacles to Peace: Actors, Interests, and Strategies in Africa's Great Lakes Region*, International Development Research Center, Ottawa, 2011. p.151.

<sup>63</sup> Umar Abdi, *Resource Utilization, Conflict and Insecurity in Pastoral Areas of Kenya*, a paper for the USAID Organized Seminar on Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya Pastoral Forum March 1997, p. 21.

<sup>64</sup> D. Sandole and H. Merwe, *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application*, Manchester: Manchester University press, 1993.

conflicts in pre-colonial period as well as the conflict during the colonial and post-colonial period. In all these conflicts that occurred during different historical times children played significant roles as integral members of communities living in Marsabit.

## 2.1 Conflicts in Pre-Colonial Marsabit

African communities are not islands unto themselves. The communities in Marsabit are not an exception. Pastoral communities engaged in regular contact through basic elements of inter-group relations, e.g. as trade, warfare and raids. In the pre-colonial era, there were no fixed enemies in a typical pastoral society, there existed cultural frontiers that allowed for profitable contacts among Marsabit ethnic groups.<sup>65</sup> The pre-colonial relations between the communities living in the area were not always marked by conflict. Constant contact was made through trading, and during droughts, groups help in terms of pasture from their neighbours.<sup>66</sup> Traditionally members of the pastoral communities in Marsabit engaged in barter trade, while others engaged in small scale crop production in the hilly areas as noted by Awuondo;

All through their history pastoralists have engaged in a multiplicity of economic activities, making use of a wide diversity of resources within their reach and often modifying their animal production to the demands of other pursuits. Above all they farm a bit, they also trade, they handicraft and smuggle.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from trade, the communities also had violent interactions through conflicts, caused by cattle raiding and disputes over resources (pasture and water). Before the colonial period, all raids were first approved by the elders, although anthropologists stress that often young men decided in secret and took action quickly without informing the elders. However, large scale daylight attacks, typical of escalated conflict and all-out war, required a degree of organization and mobilization that was

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<sup>65</sup> John Lamphear and Falola Toyin, "Aspects of Early African History" in Martin Phyllis and Meara Patrick (eds) *Africa*, third edition, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 95.

<sup>66</sup> Civic Education for Marginalised Communities [CEDMAC], Constitution and Reform Education Consortium [CRECO], Ecumenical Civic Education Programme [ECEP] and the Gender Consortium, *Making Informed Choices: A Handbook for Civic Education*, Nairobi: CEDMAC, 2001. p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> Odegi Awuondo, *Life in the Balance: Ecological Sociology of Turkana Nomads*. Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1992. p.9.

only within the power of elders or war leaders. Control of pastoral economy used to be a monopoly of the elder age-set.<sup>68</sup>

The Marsabit pastoral relationship in pre-colonial period can be said to have been partly friendly and partly hostile. The groups lived together and interacted with each other. The children in these communities had some freedom of interaction and were mostly never allowed to take part in the conflict. During conflict children's lives were spared and if life was lost, it was by accident and the killer was to be cleansed before rejoining the society. During prolonged conflicts, pastoral communities could negotiate and plead for peace to prevail. Such meetings were high level and involved respected community elders from both sides.<sup>69</sup>

In the pre-colonial times, there were clear rituals used to guide the conduct of warfare.<sup>70</sup> Total war was avoided and even where raiding occurred, they were meant to ensure survival rather than a form of belligerent activities laced with massive killings and destruction as was witnessed in the later years after the introduction of guns and modern warfare. Wario strengthens this argument by saying;

During the pre-colonial times the pastoralists roamed freely without much restriction from any central authority. Conflicts even then did occur but were of ethnic nature and the focus was raiding of livestock using traditional weapons such as spears that caused limited fatalities.<sup>71</sup>

Conflicts in the pre-colonial era was synonymous with those that occurred in the whole of northern Kenya since not all were restricted to the district. The conflicts occurred mostly between different ethnic groups. For example in 1879 – 1880, there was the invasion of the Laikipiak Maasai (otherwise called Kibiyaa), which took the

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<sup>68</sup> Saverrio Krattli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya: A Literature Review*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1999. p.1. <http://www.Eldis.org/fultext/pastconf.pdf>, accessed on 10/4/2008.

<sup>69</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Indigenous Democracy, Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism, Pokot, Turkana, Samburu, and Marakwet*, Nairobi: Intermediate Technology Development Group, 2004.

<sup>70</sup> Umar Abdi, *Resource Utilisation, Conflict and Insecurity*, 1997, p.21.

<sup>71</sup> Hussein Wario, *Historical and Current Perspectives on Inter-ethnic Conflicts in Northern Kenya*, 2006, p. 14.

forces of Gabra and Borana to repulse.<sup>72</sup> On two different accounts in 1882 and 1895, the Gabra were attacked by the Turkana.<sup>73</sup> Yet again, in 1900, the Gabra found themselves surrounded by Turkana and Ethiopians and although they were able to beat the Turkana at Mata Korre near Kalacha the Ethiopians proved a bit too strong for them to conquer.<sup>74</sup> From this evidence it is therefore true that pre-colonial Marsabit communities' had positive and negative relations although the situation was to change during the colonial period.

## 2.2 Marsabit Conflict during Colonial Period, 1895- 1963

Pastoral conflict and violence in Marsabit district was historically linked to the violence that accompanied the state formation in the colonial era.<sup>75</sup> Although conflict in any society are as old as their history the situation was worsened by colonial state policy, which involved gazettement and appropriation of large pastoral communal lands, as was the case in Marsabit.

The Land Title Ordinance, promulgated on December 13, 1899 under the Britain's Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1890 gave imperial power for disposal of "waste and unoccupied land in protectorates where there was no settled form of government and where land had not been appropriated to the local sovereign or to individuals"<sup>76</sup>

The legislation allowed the Crown to lay rightful claim to pastoral land including Marsabit and what followed was appropriation of large tracks of land. The action by the colonial government triggered conflict between pastoralists and even the state. The violence meted out by the authorities pushed these communities to the fringes of the state and led to their being marginalized. This contributed to the strong impulse among pastoralists to acquire firearms to match or counter state violence.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Paul Tablino, *The Gabra Nomads of Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: St Paul Communications, 1999, p. 229.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Peter Nyaba and Peter Otim, *Conflicts in Pastoral Areas along Borders: The Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan*. CEWARN Report, London: FEWER, 2001.

<sup>76</sup> Centre for Governance and Development. *Pastoralism, Policy legislation and Governance*, Report by Centre for Governance and Development, Nairobi.

<http://www.cgd.or.ke/documents/Pastoralism%20Report.pdf>

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



The British authorities responded by administering emergency law to rule the Kenyan northern frontier districts, Marsabit included. The colonial authority's quest to pacify the pastoral people led them to neglect any meaningful investment in the fields of social and economic development in Marsabit and the larger frontier districts as they were commonly known. The colonial authority also imposed fixed internal divisions and international borders without regard for livelihood systems of pastoral communities. This had devastating results. This Northern Kenya was for example closed for inward movement during the colonial period. It was clear that colonial borders and the way they were administered since then were a crucial factor behind conflicts in border areas.<sup>78</sup>

Marsabit was often associated with their marginal location and weak state penetration. The British colonial administration saw pastoralists as not only physically distant and occupying peripheral areas, but also as politically and culturally marginal. Their presumed distance from modern institutions and from the controlling action of the colonial state was often accepted as a self-evident explanation for widespread violence. The situation was more complex and a closer analysis indicates that the colonial state had a direct role in increasing the insecurity of pastoral communities in Marsabit. For example, response to insecurity in the Marsabit arid areas was not as actively dealt with compared to non-arid areas.<sup>79</sup>

The colonial government lacked elaborate response measures to pastoral conflict in Marsabit. Frequently, there was no response to killings and raiding; a certain level of inter-clan or inter-ethnic killing among the Marsabit pastoral communities was often considered usual and acceptable. To the colonial government it was advantageous to leave the pastoral communities to engage in ethnic or clan conflict, hence giving the colonial administration humble time to exploit resources in other parts of the country.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Odegi Awuondo, *Life in the Balance: Ecological Sociology of Turkana Nomads*, Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1992, pp. 20-33.

<sup>79</sup> Oxfam Paper, *Conflict Reduction in arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya: Lessons learned*. Oxfam GB, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

The colonial government also applied indiscriminate force which promoted pastoral conflict in the larger Marsabit district. There were numerous cases where indiscriminate force was deployed by the notorious army or police 'operations'. These tended to effect collective punishment rather than apprehending culprits of raiding. Such responses rarely brought lasting results in terms of ending the ongoing cycle of conflict experienced in the area. In addition, where perpetrators of murder, banditry or raiding were processed through the formal state justice system, there were countless cases of the individual escaping justice through communal alliances with the colonial government.<sup>81</sup>

Where the colonial government deployed security personnel, they were not motivated enough to stem inter-clan or inter-ethnic fighting. Government apathy is also vividly illustrated in the government's failed attempts at forcible civilian disarmament without providing credible security guarantees more so when the perceived enemy was from another country. So long as the colonial state remained unable to provide credible alternative security mechanisms to pastoral communities, self-armament and enlisting in a militia group represents a 'rational' adaptation to violent conflict for many pastoral communities.<sup>82</sup> The trend was to continue even during the post-colonial period.

### **2.3 Marsabit Conflict in Post-Colonial Period, 1963-1990**

Ethnic clashes in Marsabit, northern Kenya, have been common occurrence for years since independence, with raids and counter raids between various communities resulting, in many cases, to death, injuries, displacement and theft of animals. Insecurity in Marsabit district is rooted in the region's long history and connection to the Horn of Africa.

The roots of the insecurity during post-colonial period can be traced back to 1962, when the NFD Commission was appointed by the British government to investigate the question of secession to the larger Somali and Cushitic groups. There were mixed opinions on the issue; while some groups wanted to remain part of Kenya, others favored the unification with Somalia. Moyale and Marsabit were against this

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

unification whereas communities in and around Isiolo (which was the centre of 'Alien' Somalia political agitation against the British) supported the cause for secession.<sup>83</sup> Additionally the bad relations between the Borana, Rendille and Somali worsened with "emerging jealousy" on the part of the elders over time wanted to control other ethnic groups.<sup>84</sup>

As the celebration of the end of colonialism was welcomed countrywide, in the NFD it was viewed with suspicion. It was perceived to represent 'leadership by the so-called *black men from Kenya*' i.e. domination by the government of their social, political and economic institutions.<sup>85</sup> The British did not put in practice the views expressed in the NFD Commission report where the majority favored unification with Somalia. This led them to declare the eastern part of the district as the Seventh Region of Kenya, early in 1963.<sup>86</sup>

Somalia, which had campaigned for unification with the territory did not brood well with this decision and therefore broke diplomatic relations with Britain. Civil disorder and clashes with the police and paramilitary ensued and lasted the next four years. This, coupled with 'indirect' backing by cattle rustlers turned guerilla warfare groups from a neighboring state, led to the *shifita* war.<sup>87</sup> The war was carried out by bands of fifteen to thirty men; the *shijfu* struck at night against police posts, convoys and supporters of Kenyan rule.<sup>88</sup>

During the war, the Kenya police and army reprisals were enormous including the institutionalization of a policy of enforced sedentarization into fixed camps by the

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Hogg, *The Social and Economic Organization of the Boran of Isiolo District*, Kenya (PhD. Thesis) Manchester: University of Manchester, 1981, p. 46.

<sup>84</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Socio-Cultural Profile*, Nairobi: Government Printer, 1986, p. 156.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Richard Hogg, *The Social and Economic Organization of the Boran of Isiolo District*, 1981, p. 46.

<sup>87</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Socio-Cultural Profile*, 1986, p. 156.

<sup>88</sup> David E. Kromm, *Irredentism in Africa: The Somali-Kenya Boundary Dispute*, Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science, Vol. 70, No. 3. 1967, pg 363

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-8443%28196723%2970%3A3%3C359%3AIIATSB%3E2.0.CO%3B2-1> accessed on 10/11/07.

administration between 1966 and 1967.<sup>89</sup> Conditions in the camps were very unfavorable, though the people had no choice but to live there for security. The camps were enclosed barbed wired and thorn-bush fenced and those who moved further than one mile from the camps were considered as members of the *shifita*. Many people especially the children suffered from malnourishment and diseases in the camps.<sup>90</sup> Livestock was also lost as a result of diseases and lack of pasture.

Despite this crisis, the war was stepped up even further in 1967 when the guerillas introduced landmines on a large scale. Fortunately, political changes in Somalia in the same year changed the turn of events. The establishment of a new government under the leadership of Prime Minister Muhammad Haji Ibrahim Egal led to the Arusha Talks. The success of these talks was realized with the publication of the Arusha Memorandum between Kenya and Somalia. Local resistance also declined during 1968 and the humanitarian disaster in the camps precipitated the distribution of food relief in the same year.<sup>91</sup>

Following the Arusha Memorandum, pastoral communities in Marsabit, therefore, moved freely although with sophisticated weapons, which were sometimes used to raid their neighbours. This factor decidedly influenced other communities within and the neighbouring districts to arm themselves with modern weapons for defense against the raiders. This complicated the security situation and intensified the conflict, which now involved use of modern weapons alongside traditional arrows and spears.

The acquisition of illegal arms reached its peak during the latter days of the Idi Amin regime in Uganda and immediately after his ouster in 1979.<sup>92</sup> From 1979, the conflict between different ethnic groups escalated dangerously, with devastating use of heavy arms during cattle raids. With the ensuing conflict and increased arms flow from war torn neighbouring countries, communities appealed to the Kenyan government for defense.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Richard Hogg, *The Social and Economic Organization of the Boran of Isiolo District, Kenya* (PhD. Thesis) Manchester: University of Manchester, 1981, p. 47.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Weekly Review Reporter, "The Storm Abates and Several find themselves in the Cold", in *The Weekly Review*, July 22, 1988, p. 11-16.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

In response to the calls to defend its territory, the government of Kenya formed the home guard units in 1980 in the entire Northern Kenya region. The process involved some members of pastoral communities being presented with guns in order to defend themselves.<sup>94</sup> The pastoralists used this chance to acquire more heavy weapons alongside those guns already given by the government. These weapons were used by the same pastoral communities to attack each other. The frequent attacks and raids worsened the security in the region yet it was still reeling from the effects of the *Shifita* war.

Inter-ethnic warfare occurred frequently between the Rendille and the Gabra starting from 1981 onwards.<sup>95</sup> The Degodia from Wajir also made frequent attacks on the Borana and stole large numbers of livestock. The government responded by increasing the security which resulted in relative calm for a decade until late 1990 when the Samburu were attacked by the Degodia and lost 5000 Cows.<sup>96</sup>

#### **2.4 Marsabit Conflict in Post-Colonial Period, 1991-2005**

The study is based on the conflicts that occurred during this period. What it unearthed was that there was no singular conflict and hence the discussion has been focused on the period 1991 - 2005. Akin to pastoral conflicts, there was a series of raids and subsequent violence outbreaks coupled with revenge and counter attacks, culminating to a ruinous cycle of conflicts.

Wario extensively traces the conflict that once again erupted in the district from 1993. In that year, a Gabra woman married to a Borana man ran away from their matrimonial home in southern Ethiopia back to her Gabra parents in Kenya's lowlands along with a son born to the Borana man.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p.15.

<sup>95</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Socio-Cultural Profile*, 1986, p. 152.

<sup>96</sup> Yohanes Akililu, *Ethnic Conflicts among Pastoralists in Marsabit District*, 2004, p.42.

<sup>97</sup> Hussein Wario, *Historical and Current Perspectives*, 2006, pp. 2-4.

The man followed to claim the son accompanied by a friend but was shot dead at by his Gabra in-laws while the friend escaped.<sup>98</sup> Following this incident the Ethiopian Borana seized the Gabra Gaara's *yaas* and demanded for the killers whom the Gabra declined to hand over.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, the Ethiopian Borana retaliated by beating the Gabra and confiscating and slaughtering their livestock. The Gabra claimed their girls and women were raped. This planted a seed of hate between the two communities. In 1998, the Gabra held a meeting, where one of the issues discussed were the community wide decisions to discourage Borana travelers passing through the Gabra dominated Chalbi area.<sup>100</sup>

In 1999 a Borana, Qalla Waqo Bero an influential businessman was murdered in Marsabit town. It was claimed that the Gabra were involved in the killing. Three months later the assassination of a Gabra-medical officer, Sora Qere occurred.<sup>101</sup> These actions were blamed on the Borana on suspicion of trying to avenge Qalla Waqo's murder. Following these incidences conflicts intensified leading to displacement of about 7,000 people whose homes were destroyed leaving them homeless and under the mercy of the local and international aid organizations which struggled to help the affected populations.<sup>102</sup>

During the 1990s the Turkana people also attacked the Rendille killing scores of them and taking away over 10,000 cows in 1994.<sup>103</sup> This caused the Rendille to buy guns and thereby armed themselves in the event of the need for retaliation arose. In 1997 the Boran attacked Rendille killing 63 of them and stole 500 cows.<sup>104</sup> The Rendille paired up with the Gabra in 2000 and attacked the Borana displacing many of them and leaving behind heavy casualties.<sup>105</sup> Counter attacks between the Boran and the Rendille were later witnessed in 2001 and subsequently repeated in 2002 and 2003.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Gabbra Gaara is one of the five Gabbra Malbe phratries and the *yaa* is a the ritual villages that always stay together.

<sup>100</sup> HusseinWario, *Historical and Current Perspectives*, 2006, pp. 2-4.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Yohanes Akililu, *Ethnic Conflicts among Pastoralists in Marsabit District*, 2004, p.42.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

In August 2002 a Gabra was killed at Turbi and the community revenged by raiding 728 goats from Borana. On 6th September 2002 a meeting between Gabra and Borana was conducted at Turbi to resolve the conflict where it was agreed that peace be maintained. A two day follow up meeting in September took place at Sololo, Moyale district attended by administrators, peace committees and opinion leaders from both districts attended.<sup>107</sup> The peace committees were asked to pass the verdict based on the Garissa Declaration. The decree was that the Borana pay 100 cattle for the person killed, while the Gabra pay three times the number of goats they took from the Borana. The communities were given a third alternative of resolving their conflict on their own mutually acceptable ways. Both parties opposed the verdict but did not have an alternative either.<sup>108</sup>

On 17th October 2002, another meeting between the two communities was held at Funnanqumbi (near Turbi) to seek new solutions but no agreement was reached. Neither of the communities was ready to pay. Borana from Funnanqumbi were denied access to Turbi town and the Gabra to Rawana and Walda water points - the nearest permanent water sources controlled by the Borana.

Disaster loomed over the fate of the two communities in November as they prepared for a show down. This was opportunely thwarted by the cross border committees from Kenya and Ethiopia. A cross border meeting held in Yabello, Ethiopia, in September of 2002 reinforced some calm throughout 2003 but the conflict remained unresolved as neither of the parties was eager to pay for the animals stolen. This strained relations and made resource sharing difficult. In an effort to try and restore peace, a group of six (6) prominent Gabra leaders from Moyale were tasked to organize a peace campaign amongst the Gabra in Turbi, Bubisa and Marsabit for a week on 22nd December 2003. They had discussion with their Marsabit counterparts and organized a joint Marsabit and Moyale meeting for 12th February 2004. The planned meeting in

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<sup>107</sup> The Mission team carried out an in depth analysis into the conflict a few days after the Turbi massacre and provided firsthand information on the current conflict. (NSC), *Marsabit District Conflict Assessment*, Nairobi: NSC, 2006. p.14.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

Turbi failed to take place because the Turbi people claimed that they were not well informed unlike leaders from Moyale who had turned up in large numbers.<sup>109</sup>

From the above accounts, it is evident that the conflict in Marsabit had by 2005 reached an alarming proportion. Cattle rustling became wide-spread, spilling over into the neighbouring districts, such as Wajir and Moyale. The situation threatened to run out of hand, forcing the Kenyan government to launch a crackdown, with detachments of the paramilitary General Service Unit (GSU) and the army being deployed to restore peace and order in the entire northern Kenya region.<sup>110</sup> The joint military operation took six months trying to locate rustlers and stolen cattle in the region but seemed to achieve very little.

When the operations were stopped after the six months the conflict escalated again with more causality on children. To worsen the situation, the price of guns had fallen down to fifteen cows, as compared to earlier years when a gun was going for sixty cows. The rifles on the market were the more deadly AK 47s, as compared to Lee- EN field Mark IV types. The price of the automatic Kalashnikovs had also fallen to five or four head of cattle making it easy to access by the local people.<sup>111</sup>

Apart from cheap weaponry, the influence from external forces, including powerful individuals from neighbouring unstable countries also encouraged intensification of the conflict.<sup>112</sup> Even with this external influence the government seemed reluctant to intervene and stop the escalation. Soon the people of Marsabit felt that the government was not interested in bringing to an end the pastoral conflict and some communities felt that the security forces were discriminatory in their duty. This fuelled purchase of arms for communal defense. Cattle raids persisted in Marsabit even after the NARC government, which under Mwai Kibaki, took office in 2002, promised to improve the security country wide. In 2003, the government embraced

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 16.

<sup>111</sup> Karl Vick , *Small Arms: Global Research Uproots Tribal Traditions* [http://washington post . com/ac2/wp-dyn/A30209- 2001 July 2](http://washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A30209-2001July2).

<sup>112</sup> Kennedy Mkutu *Pastoral Conflict and Small arms: The Kenya – Uganda Border Region* London: Safer World, 2003, p.15.



the idea of community-based policing as a way to enhance security in all parts of the country.<sup>113</sup>

Cattle raids were the principal manifestation of conflict in Marsabit district since independence. The district's proximity to Ethiopia increased contacts with the Oromo groups leading to conflicts over grazing resources.<sup>114</sup> Competition over the use, access and control of the little pasture resources was perhaps the main cause of conflict in Marsabit district. The Rendille, Borana and Gabbra communities were in constant confrontations especially during the dry spell when livestock tend to concentrate in the limited sections with pasture and water. Abuse of the traditional culture of cattle rustling to restock livestock after severe droughts or diseases was another cause of conflicts in Marsabit district. People were no longer raiding to replenish their stock but raid to kill, maim and enrich themselves. Commercialization of cattle raids has taken toll in the district.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is a major contributor to the conflict, some of whose origin is the insurgency group - the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). The OLF has its roots in the drawn out war between Ethiopia and its former province Eritrea, after the latter gained its independence in 1993 which precipitated an outbreak of a war in May 1998.<sup>115</sup> The OLF has been operating in southern Ethiopia and it is the guerrilla activities that encouraged growth in the smuggling and sale of small arms and ammunition into Marsabit. This was made possible with the extensive Kenyan border with Ethiopia largely being unmanned and the hard terrain. Moreover, some communities in Marsabit district have relations across the borders, which made it even harder to restrict any movement of people some of whom took part in arms smuggling. Other causes of conflicts include ethnocentrism, politics and revenge missions.<sup>116</sup>

Communal tension between the Borana and the Gabbra over revenge attacks and resource disputes remained through the period 2004-2005, Local stakeholders such as

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<sup>113</sup> H.E President Mwai Kibaki's message on the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of community policing. *The Standard* newspaper, Friday, May 26, 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003, p. 54-58.

<sup>115</sup> Global Security, *Ethiopia-Eritrea War* <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/eritrea.htm> (accessed on 15.11.08).

<sup>116</sup> Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, "Conflict in the 'Badlands', 2006.

the district peace committees (DPC) who had come up to try and resolve the issues began to get fatigued. It was just a matter of time before they too were drawn into the conflict and took sides. Ultimately this led to both DPCs being dissolved.<sup>117</sup> Meanwhile, the Gabra and the Borana communities at Turbi and Rawana held their own meetings between March and April 2005.<sup>118</sup> This negotiations resolved that the Gabra community returns the 728 goats (without any multiplication) and the Boranas will compensate the Gabra for the dead person according to the Borana law. The Gabra agreed to hand over the goats on 30th June 2005.

Regrettably the truce lasted only two weeks and around 5th of June 2005, three of five Ethiopian Borana traveling with the Gabra were killed near the Ethiopian border.<sup>119</sup> In retaliation, the neighboring Ethiopian Borana invaded the Gabra villages along the border stole animals.

Borana leaders and the government condemned the actions and were quick to recover the stolen animals. In the meantime, Ethiopian Borana made truce with the Kenyan Gabra that they should not revenge on the Kenyan Borana, while the recovery attempts were ongoing. However, three herds of Borana cattle were stolen from Marsabit and Hurri hills; a Borana Chief and his reservist were also shot dead. Borana retaliated by burning Gabra houses in Marsabit and a Gabra man was killed.<sup>120</sup> The final trigger for the bloodshed was pulled when the Gabra killed 6 Boranas around Forole settlements, near the Ethiopian border. This was followed by a violent revenge attack presumably from a combined force of Kenya and the neighboring Ethiopian Borana at Turbi.<sup>121</sup> This was known as the Turbi Massacre of 12 July 2005, where 90 people were killed, property destroyed and over 7,500 people displaced. The same day the Gabra killed 9 Borana at Bubisa, one at Maikona and burnt 10 Borana houses.

The conflict left a least 68 children orphaned.<sup>122</sup> Out of the people who were killed, 22 were pupils from Turbi Primary School. The attack on the helpless children took place at the school just as pupils were preparing for their morning classes. As a result,

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, "Conflict in the 'Badlands': The Turbi Massacre in Marsabit District" in the *Review of African Political Economy No. 107:81-91*, ROAPE Publications Ltd. 2006.

this school was closed down. Most of the animals were not recovered. Many farms belonging to the displaced families were also looted or intentionally destroyed resulting in food insecurity in the district. The Government of Kenya (GoK) sources placed the official death toll at 135, including previous attacks and counter attacks prior to the massacre. 7,500 people were driven from their homes due to tension and widespread arson targeting people in far flung villages where security outposts were yet to be set up.<sup>123</sup>

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Due to the scarcity of resources, such as water and pasture for animals which are central to a pastoral economy, the communities in Marsabit have a long history of conflict in which children were either affected or participated. Indeed this proves the pluralism theory which argued that society is an interconnecting web of complex relations. Since children were party to these societal complexes then it was proved that they too were active participants in the conflict through which livestock was central.

Apart from being central in their economy, livestock was also central in social life. One's status in society was judged by the size of herds he possessed seen in terms of cattle. Cattle also affected the marriage life of children and of an individual, in that one could only marry if he was capable of raising cattle for dowry. Traditionally, marriage was a very important and expensive institution in terms of dowry payment. To raise dowry, the young people who wished to marry engaged in cattle raids to build herds for bride price. Raids were organized by elders to avoid extensive destruction of property and life. Culturally, children being part of the larger community took part in these raids most of which resulted in armed violence and large-scale conflicts. This chapter was mainly a historical background leading to an understanding of the conflicts that persisted in Marsabit district. Its main aim was to shed light on the history of the conflicts that was witnessed between 1991 and 2005. The causes of the Marsabit conflict are the main subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER THREE

### CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN MARSABIT DISTRICT, 1991-2005

#### 3.0 Introduction

Many of the Africa's pastoral communities have a long history of conflict among themselves and although only a few number of them erupt to armed violence, those that do have proved devastating to the socio-economic and development trajectories of the entire region.<sup>124</sup> Bevan summarizes the major causes of pastoral conflict as augmenting, compensatory and commercialized raiding, contact with sedentary populations, disputes over land tenure and displacement as well as banditry and predation.<sup>125</sup>

Closer home, conflict between the Borana and Degodia communities (in neighboring Ethiopia which borders Marsabit) has been attributed to the deterioration in livelihood triggered by cyclical drought and escalated by ineffective social and political organization.<sup>126</sup> In northern Kenya, causes of conflict have been attributed to commercial raiding, new economy of weapons trade, political instigation and clan rivalry.<sup>127</sup>

Although different reasons can be fronted for conflict in Marsabit district, conflicts in the region are as old as the historical record and have played an important role in shaping the activities of children in Marsabit. This chapter will discuss various factors that caused conflict in the district, how they affected children life in line with the Social Learning theory which posits that, aggression is not innate or instinctual but actually learned through the process of socialization.

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<sup>124</sup> James Bevan, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*, Background paper for UNDP on follow-up to the Geneva Declaration on Armed Violence conference. Nairobi. 2007 p.3.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Dejene Aredo and Abdurahman Ame, *The Root Causes of Conflict among the Southern Pastoral Communities of Ethiopia: A Case Study of Borana and Degodia*. 2007

[http://www.ossrea.net/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=267](http://www.ossrea.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267).

<sup>127</sup> Saverio Krätli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya, 1999*.

### 3.1 Cattle Raiding

Cattle in all pastoral communities are central to their economy and status in society. Depletion of cattle was therefore seen as a threat to the pastoral societal survival hence all efforts were made to re-stock the depleted livestock. Depletion mainly occurred as a result of counter raiding by other clans, severe drought which led to death of livestock or after paying off huge bride prices. Raids were therefore organized as a means for replenishing their stock. Cattle raiding was therefore, culturally tolerated and even accepted as a way of life. Both oral and written historical records of the region confirmed that this practice was part of the history of the Marsabit communities. Traditionally cattle rustling took place on a seasonal basis and were mainly associated with rites of passage into adulthood for the young men. Such rites of passage included circumcision. Boys took part in raids to demonstrate that they were now mature men.<sup>128</sup>

Apart from circumcision rites, cattle were also used in marriage rites. In all African communities marriage was very important and individuals who did not adhere to it were shunned in society. Such individuals were not allowed to take part in any important communal activity. The youth were therefore encouraged to ensure continuity of the society by marrying after initiation. For the youth to marry they needed livestock for paying the bride wealth. Need for bride wealth forced the youth to organize frequent raids over their neighbours resulting into conflict in Marsabit.<sup>129</sup> Kratli and Swift further illustrate this point;

Young men (Gabbra and Borana) are waiting to start their own homestead; they want to increase their prestige and respect within the community, attract girls and be able to afford marriage. Security offers them few immediate advantages. They are highly mobile. It is in their interest to shake up existing power relationships within the community and they may prefer to trade security for cattle, money or prestige.<sup>130</sup>

Traditionally, raiding was not meant to disrupt the lives and livelihoods of communities because they were not frequent and were tied to cultural practices. It

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<sup>128</sup> Oral interview, Mariam Sharamo (01.02.2007).

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Saverio Kratli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya, 1999.*

provided means for rites of passage for young men as cattle are used as dowry in marriage.<sup>131</sup> The Borana and Gabra (the main aggressors in the Marsabit conflict) raided each other and the offended communities would in turn organize counter-raids to retrieve stolen cattle and carry out reprisals.<sup>132</sup> Although the raids were frequent, conflicts relating to cattle raids did not hinder the communities from living together until 1991 when the conflict escalated more so after infiltration of large amounts of modern weapons. From then onwards cattle rustling assumed a more violent and destructive character; one that greatly contributed to the insecurity situation in the district.<sup>133</sup>

### **3.2 Introduction and Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Apart from raiding, the introduction and use of guns caused and exacerbated conflict in the district as compared to traditional weapons. Traditionally the communities used spears, bows and arrows which were less destructive as compared to modern weapons. The gun, a more sophisticated and destructive weapon than the traditional spears, bows and arrows transformed traditional cattle rustling into a new form of warfare which was more of criminal activity. It was used in the killing of unarmed men, women and children, a deviation from the traditional rules of war, which strictly prohibited such killings.<sup>134</sup>

The large scale entry of the small arms and light weapons (SALW) into the region exacerbated the conflict as communities used all available means to acquire deadly weapons. SALW caused untold havoc leaving large numbers of casualties, most of them innocent children, women and the elderly. Communities seemed to have easy access to and a high stock of guns due to their closeness to the porous borders with war torn Somalia and conflict ridden Southern Ethiopia. With the large scale use of SALW, the security situation in Marsabit district deteriorated in the period 1990s and 2005.

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<sup>131</sup> Patrick Meier, Doug Bondand, and Joe Bon. *Environmental influences on pastoral conflict in the Horn of Africa*, paper presented at a Workshop on Human Security and Climate Change held in June 2005 in Oslo, Norway. Elsevier Ltd. 2007.

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/6521399/Environmental-inuences-on-pastoral-conict-in-the-Horn-of-Africa>

<sup>132</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in the Northern Kenya*, 2003, p 54-58.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

As the situation worsened, the government responded by establishing the Home Guards or the Kenya Police Reservist (KPR). The KPRs were established around 1966/67 as a volunteer service to assist the regular forces in anti-shifta operations.<sup>135</sup> Their role was to guard villages against shifta remnants that had then turned into cattle rustlers.<sup>136</sup>

Although the government might have had good intentions in the establishment of the KPR, It did not establish strict rules to govern the storage and usage of the guns. In some cases, the KPRs abused their authority and leased out guns to insurgent groups who used the guns to terrorize the neighbouring communities. They also used the loophole to purchase and re-stock their weapons from the war torn countries like Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Somalia. The Kenyan border from Kismayu, through Mandera to Lokichoggio is a porous region through which guns were slipping in without much trace. It was estimated that up to 11,000 guns are sold in the Kenyan black markets every year, a good number in Marsabit.<sup>137</sup> Participants of the oral interviews recall;

Marsabit being next to the boarder point of Ethiopia and Somalia, there is a lot of proliferation of small fire arms at the local levels. Small arms are available due to easy access from neighboring countries.<sup>138</sup>

Guns are readily available even from neighboring countries and it is prestigious if you own one. With such ease, young adolescent boys also own guns, mainly given by older community members in readiness for any conflict with other communities. This has accelerated the conflict problem.<sup>139</sup>

Guns were highly valued and most of the homesteads each owned a gun. Sometimes communities pooled resources and bought the weapons communally. With gun sales

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<sup>135</sup> Statement by Mr Munyi, Assistant Minister for State during parliamentary session on the Kenya police Reservists. Kenya National Assembly official record (Hansard) September 12 – 23 November 1972.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Adan, Mohamud and Ruto Pkalya, *Closed to Progress*, 2005, p 15.

<sup>138</sup> Oral Interviews, Anonymous Male Central location, Marsabit district (02.08.2007).

<sup>139</sup> Oral Interview, Patrick Guyo, North Horr location (03.08.2007).

done through barter trade with cattle where cash was not readily available, access increased considerably. Adan et al notes that;

...an AK-47, is equivalent to Ksh. 30,000 (3bulls), G3 is bought at an average of Kshs. 40,000 (four bulls) while M16, the most expensive gun, costs Kshs. 60.000 (five – six bulls). It is worth to note that the guns are paid for in terms of animals.<sup>140</sup>

The main merchants of guns, in the district were businessmen and political activists. Politicians with high political aspirations in the area easily mobilized support from their people by supplying them with guns and bullets. The price of such weapons fell to the levels where those intending to purchase could easily access them. The accessibility of the gun effectively gave conflicts a complex and destructive dimension.

### **3.3 Commercialization of Cattle Raids**

Traditionally cattle raided were used in cultural activities such as dowry payment, initiation and re-stocking of disseminated livestock by natural calamities. This and the fact that raids were controlled by elders reduced their frequency. But since 1980s, a rise of money economy changed these dynamics. It was brought about by increased urbanization, refugee inflows from Ethiopia and Somalia as well as exploration of new meat markets beyond the district. With the introduction of the money economy and ready mea markets, traditional raiding practices and introduced its commercialization.<sup>141</sup>

The commercialization of cattle raids changed cattle rustling from a cultural practice to a profitable business. Cattle were not only offered in exchange for guns but also sold to slaughterhouses outside the district. Although it was not clear who the arms and cattle merchants were, there was evidence that these may be influential people in the communities connected to a web of wealthy businessmen from other urban areas as far as Nairobi. This fuelled the raids for profitable gains. This fact is strengthened by stories of sighted lorries full of herds of cattle driven out of the district

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<sup>140</sup> Adan, Mohamud and Ruto Pkalya, *Closed to Progress*, 2005, p 15.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.



immediately after raids. This was a clear sign that the businesses were not being conducted by ordinary people.<sup>142</sup>

The commercialization of cattle raids caused a negative effect on the traditional peace initiatives which were meant to restore peace and end conflict. In the past Borana and Gabra elders would agree on a truce and sometimes raided cattle were returned to the raided community to restore peace. But since the advent of commercialization of cattle raiding, stolen were nowhere to be traced so as to facilitate a restoration of relations. As a result the reprisals become more savage and caused wanton destruction. The changing nature of cattle raiders meant there was a marked decrease in numbers of cattle in the district since many were ferried out of the district. As communities failed to recover their lost animals they redirected their anger to the perceived innocent women and children as a lesson to the raiders.<sup>143</sup>

### **3.4 Role of Traditional Religious Leaders**

The ethnic communities placed a very high premium on their traditional leaders and medicine men. The traditional medicine men assumed powerful roles in promoting the conflict in the region through raids. These leaders blessed the raiders who regularly consulted them. Such blessings were believed to increase the raiders' power and urge for war because the raiders believed that they were now protected from the enemies' weapons. With the perceived protection, peace advocating elders had no control over the youthful raiders.<sup>144</sup>

Apart from blessing the warriors the traditional religious leaders were believed to possess' medicine which would protect the warriors during raids. The communities as were the case for other African communities had a strong believe in the power of magic and religion. This made most Africans to gain hope and protection whenever traditional medicine was applied. During need for raids the warriors would therefore seek the help of such traditional or religious elders who were believed to render the

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<sup>142</sup> Kennedy Mkutu, *Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms*, 2003, P.15.

<sup>143</sup> Oral Interview, Patrick Guyo, North Horr location (03.08.2007).

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

enemy community harmless. Such believe and other cultural motivation gave the warriors hope hence encouraging cattle raiding.<sup>145</sup> In these raiding parties children under eighteen made up a good number.

### 3.5 Cultural Motivation

Communities had unswerving loyalty to their cultural practices some aspects of which exacerbate conflict in the region. Payment of dowry and use in burial ceremonies, worshipping ceremonies and birth ceremonies were important factors in fuelling and fanning the flames of conflict in Marsabit.<sup>146</sup> During such functions women played an important role in precipitating raids by praising raiders who brought in the largest number of cattle while deriding those who failed. This celebration placed a lot of pressure on young men especially who would go out and attack so that they could gain recognition as heroes among their communities. Participants of the focus group discussions recall;

Young adolescent boys were part of the clusters of warriors who would partake in raiding activities to earn the respect of the community.<sup>147</sup>

Women and girls would invent praise songs for brave warriors who came back from raiding with large herds of cattle. Mockery songs were also sang when raiders failed to live to their mandate.<sup>148</sup>

Cattle numbers were a measure of wealth and no parent would allow their daughter to get married to a man who did not have animals. For a youthful man to engage any girl for marriage therefore was expected to raid and prove to the in-laws that he was man enough to warrant marriage of their daughter. During raids such a young man was given status if he killed an enemy and women would sing praises of him. It is of no doubt that such cultural practices led to exacerbation of cattle raiding among the people living in Marsabit.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Monica Kaithina, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace, Peace Building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya*. New York: UNDP, 2000, p. 6.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Youth), Marsabit District, 05.08.2007.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

### **3.6 Marginalization**

Apart from cultural practices, social-economic marginalization of the pastoral communities in Marsabit district caused conflict in the region. Apart from the hilly areas, much of the district is semi-arid. Chalbi desert traverses the district making it one of the poorly endowed areas in Northern Kenya. The communities living there have felt that the government sidelined them in meeting their security concerns and development matters.

From the period of colonial administration to date, Kenyan legislation on land is still heavily biased towards sedentary groups and agriculture, a factor that has led to little development of pastoral areas such as Marsabit. This meant that the government budgetary allocations were minimal in Marsabit because it was not considered a high production area. With little financial resource allocation, crucial development projects such as water (digging of boreholes) to increase its access could not happen. The communities were left to do with the little that was there, hence increased competition over the available scarce resources (water and pasture) which resulted to conflict. Struggle over the use, access and control of the little pasture resources is the main cause of conflict in Marsabit district. Rendille, Borana and Gabbra communities are in constant confrontations especially during the dry spell when livestock tend to concentrate in the limited sections with pasture and water.<sup>150</sup>

### **3.7 Harsh Environment**

The environmental insecurity in the district brought about by the history of drought cycles, diminishing water sources, unreliable rainfall and shrinking pastureland have increased the competition for limited natural resources that form the mainstay of the pastoral communities. The harsh environment aggravated the insecurity situation in the region. These difficult conditions frustrated efforts at restocking and provided very few, if any, livelihood alternatives in the drought afflicted Marsabit areas.<sup>151</sup> Thus the resort to cattle raids as a way of restocking was lucrative. On the other hand, intense competition for limited pasture and watering points during persistent droughts

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<sup>150</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003, p. 54.

<sup>151</sup> NCCK, *Pacifying the Valley: an Analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict*, Nairobi; NCCK, 2001, p. 7-13.

culminated in violent confrontations as the Borana, Rendille and Gabra communities who struggled to control these scarce resources for their own use. Cattle raids were therefore a retaliation mechanism to the aggrieved.<sup>152</sup>

### 3.8 Political Instigation

The vacuum caused by lack of precise, legitimate and capable authorities resulted in the communities developing their own zones of leadership or is dominated by predatory politicians and warlords.<sup>153</sup> With limited government presence in Marsabit, the voice of the community was mainly heard through clan elders and politicians, who created their own cocoons or fiefdoms. It is such leaders who caused or exacerbated conflict with negative sentiments and political instigation. Although the Boran, Gabra, Garri, Sakuye, Ajuran, Degodia and numerous other smaller groups did not always coexisted peacefully, partly because of historical factors such as migration, most recently the emergence of a complicated network of actors with diverse political and economic interests is a great cause of conflict.<sup>154</sup> It is these political differences and rivalry between the late Bonaya Godana, a Gabra and MP for North Horr, and the late Guracha Galgalo, a Borana and MP for Moyale that led to the outbreak of the 2005 Borana/Gabra conflict.<sup>155</sup> Godana, a powerful minister was accused by critics of using his office to secure government positions for the Gabra community. Specifically he is alleged to have used the provincial administration to employ Gabra chiefs in Borana dominated areas and created administrative divisions, locations and sub-locations for the Gabra in Borana heartland in Oda, Kinisa and Qate in Moyale District.<sup>156</sup> This evidently increased the Gabra influence in the districts (which the Borana termed as arrogance) and when some Borana men were killed in Gabra territory near Forole, (on the border with Ethiopia), the Borana claim that they had retaliated, and attacked Turbi village, in which they killed close to 100 people.<sup>157</sup> This was the Turbi

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<sup>152</sup> Oral Interviews, anonymous male Central location, Marsabit district (02.08.2007).

<sup>153</sup> Ken Menkhaus. The rise of a mediated state in northern Kenya: the Wajir story and its implications for state-building. *Afrika Focus* — Volume 21, Nr. 2, 2008 — pp. 23-38.

<sup>154</sup> Hussein Mahamoud. Conflict and constraints to peace among pastoralists in northern Kenya in "Understanding Obstacles to Peace: Actors, Interests, and Strategies in Africa's Great Lakes Region." International Development Research Center. Ottawa, 2011. p.151.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 151.

Massacre of August 2005; an occurrence that some observers claim is the single worst incident of communal violence in the history of post-colonial Kenya.<sup>158</sup>

### 3.9 Resource Disputes

Due to the ubiquitous role of rangeland resources in the lifestyles of the people of the pastoral areas, most conflict have bearing on the resource utilization and tenure practices.<sup>159</sup> Pastoralist communities in Marsabit understand resources as land, pasture, watering points which were traditionally managed and used communally.<sup>160</sup> With the review of boundaries, establishment of settlement schemes, gazettement of forests and national parks, conventional resource management methods were introduced, thereby contradicting the existing traditional approaches.<sup>161</sup> With the conventional methods and an increasing population, conflicts over pasture, water, boundaries have been on the increase between the Boran, Gabra and Rendille. The resource conflicts are highest during the dry season where different groups would converge in specific areas which would be construed as encroachment by other groups hence causing conflict.<sup>162</sup> Being a vast area, most of which is under communal ownership, is a factor for disputes over mainly pasture and watering points.

### 3.10 Idleness and Poverty

Another cause of the conflict in Marsabit district was idleness, which was associated with poverty, unemployment, very low school enrolment and lack of social and economic occupational activities. Most of the youths who form the army of cattle rustlers and were effectively involved in the killings were a frustrated and poor lot who were driven out of school by poverty and cultural demands. Their ages ranged from thirteen to thirty years signaling a clear sign of children participation in conflict. Such youths had no source of livelihood at all hence resorted to raids for livestock in

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<sup>158</sup> Ken Menkhaus. *The rise of a mediated state in northern Kenya*, 2008 — pp. 23-38.

<sup>159</sup> Umar Abdi, *Resource Utilisation, Conflict and Insecurity in Pastoral Areas of Kenya* Kenya Pastoral Forum 1997, p. 21.

<sup>160</sup> NSC. *Marsabit Conflict Assessment Report*, 2011 p.19.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> Oral interview Miriam Abdi, Marsabit Town, 04.08.2007.

order to make a living. After such raids the raided communities organized counter-raids therefore, exacerbating the conflict in the district.<sup>163</sup>

### 3.11 Insecurity

The un-ending conflicts in the Horn of Africa and in particular Ethiopia and Somalia exposed the entire northern Kenya to an arms race region. Some weapons were brought in by the influx of asylum seekers from border countries of Ethiopia and Somalia afflicted by conflict. They overwhelmed the capacity of the Kenyan government to control the guns that came in with these populations. Combatants, including militia, and remnants of armies from countries at war, came together with these groups, bringing skills and knowledge of waging war to the local people. This coupled with limited presence of security agencies in the vast district, increased insecurity. This insecurity further fuelled acquisition of arms, increased raids and attacks. They also came along with sophisticated weapons that changed or impacted on the lives of residents.<sup>164</sup> Where the guns impacted negatively on the people they sought revenge.<sup>165</sup>

### 3.12 Revenge Factor

As stated before, the conflict resulted in loss of life. Most of the communities that lost their members and property were motivated to take on revenge or to pay back the damage caused to them. Thus, whenever the Rendille, Gabra or Borana was attacked, they mobilized their machinery to wage a counter-attack even after government intervention to stop any vengeful retaliation. The revenge attacks continued, causing a lot of harm to many in Marsabit district.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore where the children lost their parents through such attacks, they grew up with bitterness and urge for revenge when they became mature. Attack for revenge made the youths to live a war like life and in some cases could just wage war for glory in order to teach their enemies a lesson.<sup>167</sup> The communities in Marsabit district sometimes fought for mere show up for mighty.

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Monica Kathina, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*, 2000.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Oral interview, Miriam Abdi, Marsabit Town, 04.08.2007.

<sup>167</sup> Richard Chesos, "The Valley of Death" in *Daily Nation*, Friday, March 16, 2001, p.8.

Each community in the district wanted to show its military superiority over the other and most probably demonstrate to their women that they were heroes.<sup>168</sup>

### 3.13 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the causes of the conflict in Marsabit district and showed that its conflict issues have roots in historical marginalization, cultural aspects, political instigation, resource scarcity and disputes volatility. Other proximate causes discussed are proliferation of SALW, commercialization of cattle raids as well as insecurity. Discussion of the causes is critical to the understanding of the roles played by children in the conflict which will be discussed in the next chapter.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CHILDREN AND CONFLICT IN MARSABIT

#### 4.0 Introduction

Throughout human history war and conflict were a constant fact of life. During the decades of conflict in Marsabit district, the images of suffering children become commonplace. Although there is a general agreement that children, the most innocent of all, should be shielded from the effects of war, sadly, this "rule of innocents" has been increasingly ignored over the past several decades as civilians are more affected by war and targeted by various factions.

Although children are supposed to be protected during times of conflict they are among the most vulnerable during times of war. Children are supposed to be given special protection under international law but do the actors in remote areas such as Marsabit understand what the international laws say about children? The Geneva Conventions and its additional Protocols explicitly provide protection for children in times of war and armed conflict. The Geneva Convention IV of 1949 states that the child has the right to protection from all violence to life and to person (art. 3a).

“Art. 3. In the case of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each Party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the following provisions: (1) Persons taking no active part in the hostilities, including members of armed forces who have laid down their arms and those placed hors de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, or any other cause, shall in all circumstances be treated humanely, without any adverse distinction founded on race, colour, religion or faith, sex, birth or wealth, or any other similar criteria. To this end the following acts are and shall remain prohibited at any time and in any place whatsoever with respect to the above-mentioned persons: (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture; (b) taking of hostages; (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular humiliating and degrading treatment; (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court, affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Convention (IV) relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Geneva, 12 August 1949. <http://www.icrc.org/ihl.nsf/full/380>.



This was also the first international document to deal with children's participation in hostilities.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which entered into force in 1990, is applicable at all times and contains articles specifically designed to protect child victims of war. The CRC's Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict, which prohibits the use of children as combatants, entered into force in February 2002 and yet the children were still used in armed conflict in areas such as Marsabit. This chapter will therefore attempt to discuss how children have been used in the conflict in Marsabit by keenly examining their roles in the conflict.

#### **4.1 Definition of a Child**

An issue central to the argument on the involvement of children in conflicts in Marsabit is the characterization of a child in both the international and local contexts. Internationally (or in modern societies), determination of one's maturity is fixed at an age when it is presumed that an individual is capable of conducting him/herself as an adult. Currently, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African charter and the Kenya Children's Act 2001 apply this fixation, which has been set at eighteen (18) years. This is however not the case among the Borana, Gabra and Rendile and other communities in Marsabit. Culture and tradition still play a major role in the different spheres of life; maturity is associated with physical development such as puberty, and socio-cultural events, such as initiation.

Understanding of the local definition of child status was critical to this study to determine whether communities involve children in conflicts as a result of a misconception, deliberate intent or a combination of these situations. There were varied descriptions for who would be classified as a child. While some observations defined a child as anyone less than 15 years of age, others believed that anyone below the age of 18 years would be categorized as a child.<sup>170</sup> Respondents also tied the definition of a child to a number of social events. For example since initiation for girls

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<sup>170</sup> Abdi Zeila, Central Division (04.08.2007).

from most Marsabit communities occurs at around 12-13 years of age, culturally all girls are children before this initiation.<sup>171</sup> The implication of this socio-cultural distinction is that after initiation, girls are considered adults.

Children interviewed provided their interpretation of childhood as to include a person of school going age but specifically one below 13 years of age<sup>172</sup>; one who has not undergone circumcision (both male and female); one who is above or below primary school going age 10-14 years; a boy or girl under the age of 15.<sup>173</sup> The overall, cultural determinants of childhood were dominant i.e. that a child is anybody who is not circumcised (for boys) or not married (for girls). This is further illustrated by the sentiments of a cross-section of respondents during FDGs in Marsabit;

For boys, a child is one who is not yet circumcised and for a girl it is one who is yet to be married or one who has not yet given birth. Anybody carrying out a task of herding in their Manyatta life aged between 7-14 years is seen as a child.<sup>174</sup>

From the above, we see that unlike the international and national definitions which are broader and determined by age, the local definition is much narrower in its characterization of child status and is symbolized by the stages in life. As explained, this study made use of the internationally and nationally recognized figure of 18 years in its determination of a child.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Children), Marsabit District (09.08.2007)

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Youth), Marsabit District, 05.08.2007.

<sup>175</sup> This definition involves the youth who fall below this age fixation and for the purposes of this study they have also been referred to as children.



A child grazing cattle during the dry season (Source: *Practical Action*)

#### 4.2 Why Children Took Part in Marsabit Armed Conflict.

The number of children recruited into armed groups either voluntarily or by force is increasing despite the existence of international law. The reasons for engagement in armed conflict varies but a common factor is that vulnerable children (e.g. those from poor families or otherwise marginalized) face the highest possibility of recruitment into armed groups.<sup>176</sup> To such children, joining an armed group is a way of ensuring one's own survival.<sup>177</sup> This underlies the argument that, contrary to popular belief children's involvement in conflict is not as victims only, they also participate as aggressors or combatants in some situations.<sup>178</sup>

There are different reasons that have been fronted to explain why children joined armed conflict in Marsabit district. Some experienced brutal actions of conflict that harden them and prepare them for conflict. Children's life experience in conflict brings them face to face with the horrors of war. Too many children have personally experienced or witnessed extremes of physical violence, including summary executions, death squad killings, disappearances, torture, arrest or detention, sexual

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<sup>176</sup> ICRC, "Children and War", *International Review of the Red Cross*, No 844  
2011. <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/misc/57jrlb.htm#a10>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Philista Onyango, "The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children", 2006, p 219-229.

abuse, forced displacement, destruction of home or property and massacres. Such children were robbed of their childhood.

Some who felt that they had nothing to cling on chose the conflict as they were prepared to fight. Some confessed that they joined the armed groups to get food for their families. Though they had hope of food, most child soldiers suffer terrible hardship. Children in conflict were among the saddest victims of conflict, they rarely emerged from conflict with a sense of their own worth and identity. Worse, they often experience violence that leaves them physically or psychologically scarred.

After initiation among which took place between children were regarded as full members of the society. Initiation was very important because it was a rite that made one attain manhood and full membership of the community. Specifically, it permitted one to take part in the obligations of the community, including procreation and wealth creation. This explains why immediately after initiation the youth were given combat training needed not only for communal defense but also for raiding livestock. Initiation therefore, made young people enter into responsible ethnical life.<sup>179</sup>

Children, therefore, were wholly involved in the activities of their communities without exclusion. Apart from elder-reserved roles children took part in communal activities such as hunting, warrior-hood and iron smelting, which required highly specialized skills. Being a full member of society indeed required that one had to support the activities carried out by members of such a society. Children, therefore, identified with their communities, taking sides in support of their community in times of conflict.<sup>180</sup>

Livestock held a central position among the pastoral communities in Marsabit, hence losses inflicted by raiders impacted severely on children who were in dire need for livestock products. Children also had strong attachment to livestock that they took care of. Children who had lost their cattle to the raiders, particularly pressed for a counter-raid to re-stock what was lost. Herding is traditionally done by boys and as

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<sup>179</sup> Pietro Caggiano, *Pokot*, Turin: Stamperia Artistica Nazionale, 2004, p.18.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid

the custodian, many of them felt the responsibility for their loss. Paul Jalle explains that:

Boys volunteer themselves especially those who are herders to defend livestock being snatched<sup>181</sup>

Among the Gabra, Borana and Rendille communities, the elders were important decision makers. Decisions and resolutions made by council of elders were, therefore, expected to be adhered to by every member of that society children included. It was a serious offence for one to offend the desire of the society and such a move was punishable sometimes by a curse or beating. Thus, when conflicts ensued, even in cases where children were never required, they were coerced by the prevailing custom to support their communities.<sup>182</sup>

Contrary to the pre-colonial African culture and traditions, where children were never harmed, injured or attacked during conflicts, children became increasingly major targets of attack in Marsabit. This turn of events began with the infiltration of light weapons and small arms in the district. This made it possible for children to learn and use them. Marsabit district is one of the marginalized regions in terms of development, and security. This made the region to experience constant attacks and maltreatment of children.<sup>183</sup> The attacks shaped the common attitude of hatred among the Boran, Rendille and Gabra children towards their opponents.<sup>184</sup> Indeed due to their tribulations, the affected children perceived their enemies as a threat to their survival hence ready for supporting their warriors in times of conflict. The children who were subjected to increasing poverty also accentuated the receptivity towards their enemies and became quite amenable to the belief that their opponents were wholly responsible for their pain. The suffering therefore, played an important part in influencing children to take up active roles in the Marsabit armed conflict.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Oral Interview, Paul Jalla, Nagayo location, Marsabit (02.08.2007)

<sup>182</sup> Saverio Krätli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya, 1999*, p.1-5.

<sup>183</sup> Peter Kimani "Kenya; Why herders wont give up guns" *The Nation* 9/6/2005.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Oral interview, Mohammed Hussein, Marsabit Town, (05.08.2007).

The spirit of ethnic nationalism, glory and fear of domination by the enemy community was another factor that pushed children into giving support to their warriors during the conflicts. The children in any African society are a proud people, who like the rest of scoitey celebrated victory over the enemy group in times of conflict. Children cherished successful men and always wanted to associate with such heroes as a source of encouragement. Conversely, since men saw their children as precious and had the responsibility of mentoring them, they did all they could to inculcate them into responsible warrior hood.<sup>186</sup>

In some instances children were found to get involved in conflicts because they learnt the need to undertake such activities from their parents. Under such circumstances, children take an active part in inter community or inter-clan conflicts as a moral obligation. Additionally it was found that since circumcision occurs at an early age, children are expected to take up roles in the community such as herding. This exposes children to situations where they have to device ways of surviving in forest areas and this could lead to combatant behavior among such children. Observation from respondents also confirmed that there were cases of generational hatred that is being passed down to children between communities. This necessarily socialized children to be at war with the 'other' communities.<sup>187</sup>

The pastoralist child operates in a collective society with his/her roles oriented towards maintaining the herd in one unit within the family.<sup>188</sup> For example the Rendille children participated in the herding of small stock from an early age, a role that exposes them to the rigors of pastoral life. Among the Rendille, thirteen to fourteen year old boys join in the herding of camels until their marriage ten or so years later a task that is not of their own choosing but one that society expects them to adhere to.<sup>189</sup>

Here, boyhood was seen as a time for training and a time for movements between the bush and the settlement as one matures but does not yet bear any primary responsibility. This stage was closely followed by moranhood or warriorhood which

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003, p. 53.

<sup>188</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Socio-Cultural Profile*, Government Printer, 1986, pp. 108-114.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

is spent almost exclusively in the cattle camps located in the bush and these groups have no other major responsibility but the cattle and camels. During this period, they are exposed dangers such as raiding and therefore they also serve a military function that grows directly out of the herdsman's function or responsibility to guard against predators and enemy raiders.<sup>190</sup>

Transition from boyhood to moranhood is an occasion given much attention and admiration in the society and from an early age the boy-child looks forward to when they will reach this point in their lives.<sup>191</sup> It is a process that begins when young boys are tasked with the role of cattle herding which exposes them to the full dangers of attacks (from wild animals or other belligerent groups) and they assume the position of pseudo-warriors.<sup>192</sup> As they advance in age, they join cattle camps with their elder moran brothers and cousins after whom they are initiated into moranhood between ages 13 – 25 or above.<sup>193</sup> The climax of the initiation is circumcision: a four minute ordeal which has the necessary courage to build them for warriorhood,<sup>194</sup> and a stage that is synonymous with the participation in armed groups.

One respondent put it this way;

After initiation boys become warriors, sometimes at an early age and have to show it by their prowess in fighting. Initiation comes every 14 years hence 13 year old boys become warriors. Some are just victims of what is happening around them.<sup>195</sup>

The development of 'a warrior' grade of young men, grouped according to age and initiated with the rite of passage that makes them proud enough of their new status to be willing to undergo hardships, appears a natural reflex to the demands of economy in relation to the ecology.<sup>196</sup> Social pressure from parents and friends also drove children to get involved in armed groups or were used by the leaders and tribal chiefs

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Oral interview, Justus Omwanga, Civil Servant in Mountain location, Central Division, Marsabit District, 03.08.2007.

<sup>196</sup> Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Socio-Cultural Profile*, 1986, p. 108-114.

to perpetrate conflict, all in the name of protecting community interests. Children who were not given special care by their parents were greatly tempted to venture into armed groups.<sup>197</sup> An anonymous resident of Uwanja wa Ndege explained that;

Because they do not have an option children either fight to defend themselves or be killed.... Sometimes they get into armed groups to as a way of getting revenge e.g. when one of their family members is killed<sup>198</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Methods of Recruitment

Although nothing excuses the failure of communities and the government to stop the recruitment of children in armed conflict, it is recognized that it has been intricate web, hard to penetrate through. For starters, communities in Marsabit are still very traditional and in some areas, engaging conflict is still considered heroic, a task that many children aim to fulfill. Given the insecurity that has characterized the area, communities have built attack and defense forces that have included children under the age of eighteen. The strategies employed for recruitment into armed groups included:

- **Mass mobilization:** this involved community leaders, taking the initiative to solicit community support by asking families to get their children ready to join informal community defense groups.
- **Induction or cultural initiation:** Boys and young men undergo communal guidance and cultural indoctrination, some aspects of which advance conflict e.g. cattle raiding. The training grounds that served to induct them were the cattle camps and in the age sets that boys belonged to.
- **Coercion:** In instance of extreme urgency to raise significant numbers in local defense force, male youths irrespective of age were openly compelled to join such militant outfits to help defend their communities or at times launch preemptive attacks against communal threats.
- **'Volunteer' Enlisting:** The expectation of child combatants is that they were forcibly recruited. While this is true, it is not the whole story. Many children joined armed groups because of the pride associated with defending the

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Oral interviews, anonymous resident of Uwanja wa Ndege. (03.08.2007)



community. Poverty was also a push factor behind children's participation in violence and conflict. A controversial argument that this study puts across is that options for children in conflict zones are so few that volunteering as fighters is as a result of the lack of alternatives. This lack of choice was prompted by difficult prevailing situations such as death of parents and/or relatives leaving children in precarious circumstances that they have no control over. A number of such vulnerable children easily volunteered in armed groups because of the economic and physical security that they were afforded there-in.

#### **4.2 Role of Children in Conflict**

One of the most alarming trends in armed conflict is the participation of children as soldiers, where they serve in supporting roles, as cooks, porters, messengers and spies.<sup>199</sup> In eastern Myanmar and Ambon in Indonesia, children were used as combat troops and also served more of an intelligence function, collecting information or scouting for units.<sup>200</sup> In Marsabit, the role of children in conflict was both supportive and combative as follows;

##### **4.3.1 Children as Perpetrators**

Of great and growing concern in Marsabit is the use of children as perpetrators or accomplices in the conflict, including across borders to Ethiopia and Somalia. Children were used to perpetrate attacks against the enemy clans. Children aged 11 to 15 have been tricked promised money or otherwise forced to take part in conflict. This study found that children who were used as fighters were young, poor, uneducated hence easily influenced by their clan recruiters and drawn heavily from warring clans. Marsabit district borders war ton countries of Ethiopia and Somalia which have insurgent group militias such as the Oromo Peoples Liberation front in Ethiopia and Al-Shabaab in Somalia which recruited young people some from Marsabit.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Graca Machel. *Impact of war on children* 2001.

<sup>200</sup> Center for Population and Policy Studies . *Children Caught in Conflict – Assessing the Impact of Conflict on Children in East Asia and the Pacific*, Center for Population and Policy Studies. Research Report. 2005. p.16

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

The research found out that some of these young men and children recruited by the insurgent groups would then come back to Marsabit and join their fellow clan's men in the clan conflict that affected the district. Such children had a long history of violence. Existing traditional clan cultures in Marsabit perpetuates the use of children as soldiers, as it has for many years. Current traditional culture allows initiation at tender age of about ten years where warrior training is given after which voluntary joining of fighting group to defend the community. Culture demanded that every initiated person was supposed to defend their society during conflict even when still young.<sup>202</sup>

The clans therefore relied on traditional recruits or conscripts to fill its warrior ranks. For decades different clans in Marsabit continued with the tradition of warrior training programs to prepare youths for war and transfer combat skills. Through such programme children were trained to take part in hand-to-hand combat, and weapons use. The families that refused to enroll their children were despised as cowards who did not defend their communities and sometimes threatened with the loss of their friendship and clan positions.<sup>203</sup>

From the above observation, it was clear from the field study that children were actively involved in the Marsabit conflict and have played a part in wars between the communities that battled in the region throughout the history of the conflict. Although this had happened for long it came to the light since 1990s when their roles were highlighted that children were primarily in support of the fighters or raiders in the district. Since then, Marsabit children assumed a much greater role and join the armed groups more frequently, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles. In many raids and conflict between communities children played a vital role in these armed conflict.<sup>204</sup>

#### **4.3.2 Children as Secret Keepers**

Children both girls and boys in Marsabit played an important role in the conflict as secret keepers. The children were giving social and cultural teachings which required

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<sup>202</sup> Oral interview, anonymous resident of Uwanja wa Ndege, (03.08.2007).

<sup>203</sup> Oral interview, Nuria Abdulrahman, Marsabit Town (04.08.2007).

<sup>204</sup> Daily Nation Reporter, "Killing Fields" *Daily Nation*, 14 July 2005, p.6.

them to keep secrets of the society and in particular on issues related to the conflict with their perceived enemy. The children in Marsabit were fed with propaganda about physical abuse, terror, and execution of their relatives by the enemy clan and that the community was revenging on their behalf hence they should not reveal any information to the security agencies or members of other clans. This made the children to resist any move to extract information from them about their communities. The children were instructed in how to behave in case of an inspection of their home by security personnel, keeping quiet about illegal persons living in their communities or houses or illegal weapons in their communities.<sup>205</sup>

The clans at war in Marsabit ensured that children kept secret through censoring of foreigners speaking to their children. By ensuring that children kept secrets, this led to their involuntary participation in conflict. The children were trained that in time of war, controlling information that an enemy might exploit to undermine the conduct of their warriors operations and strategic positions becomes very important. The children in Marsabit therefore grew up knowing that information about their clan, families and warriors was to be kept as secret. Moreover the same children could become easy targets by the enemy since they were also active in the conflict sometimes as porters.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Oral interview, Nuria Abdulrahman, Marsabit Town (04.08.2007).

<sup>206</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Women), Marsabit District, (04.08.2007).



Youth are the principal actors of conflict in ASAL areas. (Source *Practical Action*)

### **4.3.3 Children as Porters**

For many years during conflicts in the district, children have been used as porters. Child porters were critical for transporting raided goods and delivering them sometimes to remote areas while the older people engaged in conflict. Portering is considered a worst form of child roles in conflict, because children often carry heavy loads, across difficult terrain, for long hours. Most of these children walked bare feet on long journeys in the scorching heat.<sup>207</sup> This research noted that, children as young as 10 years worked as porters amid intensifying conflict. This brought cases of child labor. Many of those who were engaged as porters missed out on school.

### **4.3.4 Children Offering Support Duties**

Children in Marsabit assumed a much greater role in society even when at a tender age and joined the armed groups in order to perform support roles. In outlining further issues related to the participation of children in situations of armed conflict this study found out that it should thus not be assumed that children were always part of the civilian population, playing caring and nurturing roles. Children who could not take part in combat duties were actively involved in supporting their warriors in conflict operations not always by taking up arms but by providing them with the moral and physical support needed to wage war. Children acted as couriers and took food and other supplies to warriors during conflict. Younger warriors especially those that had been newly initiated and recruited into Moran groups provided the much needed support to ensure seamless combat.

### **4.3.5 Children as Spies and Informants**

The children were used to observe the behavior of the enemy groups and sometimes government security forces. Acting as spies and informants exposed the children to a lot of suspicion and risk and was mainly a starting point for the younger children.<sup>208</sup> Their role as spies went hand in hand with acting as informants.

Children also acted as couriers and spies carrying enemy community information, because they supported the cause being fought for or because they are forced to

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

participate in this way. Spying and acting as informants was an important role in conflict as this provided the warriors with the key data to plan attacks and counter attacks. Children spoke of taking part in the conflict as a way of or desire to defend their land. They believed that by doing so they were safeguarding their survival and ensuring peace in their society.<sup>209</sup>

#### 4.3.6 Children as Peace Makers

Apart from exacerbating the conflict, children in Marsabit district also acted as peace initiators. Children taking part in school sports frequently initiated talks between their clans, by urging them to stop fighting over resources through songs in school competitions. Children, therefore, worked as peace initiators and as pillars of peace, by challenging their elders, the seers, the warriors, the administration, women groups, youth groups and church leaders through plays and songs to work for peace in Marsabit district.<sup>210</sup>

Non-governmental organizations such as Horn of Africa Development Initiative (HODI), Pastoralists Integrated Support Program (PISP) and pastoralist community development organization have come in with peace programs targeting children. They have started peace education programs among the schools in Marsabit town. Here the focus is on teaching intercultural understanding to stem negative ethnic perceptions that exacerbate conflict. In Zonga School, efforts have been made to hire teachers from other tribes to enhance inter-cultural understanding.

Through sports, children managed to bring communities and families back together. Organization of football tournaments with children from all ethnic communities participating has served to enhance inter-ethnic bonding. This works to lay the foundation for long-term relationships and reduce animosity.<sup>211</sup> Children therefore, played a very important role in peace building through school activities, which created solidarity between the conflicting communities in Marsabit district.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Ruto Pkalya, Adan Mohamud and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in the Northern Kenya*: 2003, p 54-58.

<sup>210</sup> Monica Kathina, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*, 2000., p. 59.

<sup>211</sup> Oral interview, Abdi Zeila, Central Division (04.08.2007).

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Though a lot has been said about children activities in armed conflict scenarios it was evident from this chapter that little has been done by the United Nations and local government of Kenya to address the problems that push children including those in Marsabit to take active roles in armed conflict. Although there has been a legal framework to protect children from armed conflicts, its actual implementation is painfully slow. This is partly because international human rights treaties typically bind States, not non-state actors such as armed rebel groups and traditional raiders living in Marsabit district. The enacted protocols have limited consequences to the children in conflict in rural set-ups like Marsabit.

This chapter also looked at different roles played by children in Marsabit armed conflict. The roles taken up by children in Marsabit armed conflict are a testimony that children important participants in the conflict. The abhorrent practice of putting children into conflicts as participants and utilizing them as resources for warfare was evident in Marsabit district. Although there were persistent calls to stop the practice, there is need at the local level for better, more effective legal prohibitions, implementation, and political will against use of children in conflict. The active role of children exposed them to many problems and challenges which will be discussed extensively in the next chapter on impacts of the conflict on children.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE IMPACT OF MARSABIT CONFLICT ON CHILDREN, 1991-2005.

#### 5.0 Introduction

In a bid to point out the effects of conflict on children, the Burma UN Service Unit echoes some of the sentiments of Machel and Onyango. In a report titled *The Impact of Armed Conflict on the Children of Burma*,<sup>213</sup> they argue that disruption of health systems during conflict, due to violence, meant that children from ethnic groups have extremely limited access to health care and immunization. Violence coupled with displacement, forced relocations, and resulting food insecurity were the main causes of malnutrition and other related illnesses. Accordingly, such children were in most cases at risk of human rights violations including sexual assault and trafficking.<sup>214</sup> Low educational attainment is also a result of conflict and tragically, female students are even more disadvantaged.<sup>215</sup> Children are also forced to serve as porters in combat areas, and frequently suffer beatings, rape and other mistreatments, yet this direct participation puts them at risk of being used as human minesweepers and human shields.<sup>216</sup> The report clearly portrays the tragic picture that children in conflict find themselves in and have to deal with.

This chapter examines the impact of the Marsabit conflict on all aspects of child development - physical, mental and emotional. Violence and conflict have interfered with the health of children exposing them to diseases. The chapter examines how educational opportunities were lost to many children due to insecurity and violence outbreaks. It outlines how long-term exposure to violence had significant effects on children during their development and as they form their own intimate relationships in childhood and adulthood.

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<sup>213</sup> Report submitted to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for the preparation of the Secretary-General's third report to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, on the implementation of resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001).

<sup>214</sup> Burma UN Service Office – New York and the Human Rights Documentation Unit, *The Impact of Armed Conflict on the Children of Burma*, New York, United Nations, 2002.

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*



## 5.1 HIV/AIDS and STIs Prevalence

Armed conflict fueled the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is so through the disintegration of communities, displacement from the home, separation of children from their families, and the destruction of schools and health services<sup>217</sup>, all of which have been witnessed in Marsabit. Rape and the trading of sex for survival owing to conflict induced impoverishment<sup>218</sup>, greatly increased the incidences of HIV/AIDS and STIs transmission. Machel also underscores the link between armed conflict and HIV/AIDS, arguing that it is compounded by poverty and gender dimensions.<sup>219</sup>

Given these facts, it was motivating to try and find out if the same has occurred in Marsabit. On the local context, matters relating to sexual abuse and exploitation are not discussed freely and hence it was not easy to exactly gauge the extent to which it has occurred as a result of the conflict. However, there were mixed opinions on the perceived relation between observed HIV/AIDS and other STI trends in the area and the occurrence of conflicts. On the one hand some believed that HIV/AIDS prevalence levels have been on the rise as a result of the conflicts. This they attribute to the rape of children, while some of those who escape the conflict into towns get involved in prostitution.

Another probable cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS within conflict areas in Marsabit district was the presence of what residents called 'strangers'; the security personnel who are deployed to the areas in times of conflicts. Residents believed that such 'strangers' ended up in sexual liaisons with local women who risk contracting 'imported' HIV infection. Wario Adhe illuminated that;

Children move to centers after being hosted in camps and exposed to risky town life. In order to earn their living, they engage in prostitution at an early age. Many idlers engage in unsafe sex with the girls<sup>220</sup>

Amina Sharamo added that;

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<sup>217</sup> UNICEF, Children, Armed Conflict and HIV/AIDS, UNICEF 2003. Pg 1

<sup>218</sup> *ibid*

<sup>219</sup> Machel impact of war on children 2001, pg 42

<sup>220</sup> Oral interview, Wario Adhe, (02.08.2007)

People are displaced with extreme poverty setting in, and with the presence of many strangers especially military guys who come in the name of security together with dangerous traditional practices, HIV prevalence is high within the area, although stigma is also high.<sup>221</sup>

In contrast to this, there were other beliefs that HIV/AIDS in the conflict prone district was very minimal. This is not a surprising belief given that it's awareness level among the pastoral communities is also low standing at 79.5% against the national average of 97% as of year 2003<sup>222</sup> and lack of an operational VCT to encourage voluntary testing.<sup>223</sup> It was felt that people in these areas were 'not sexually active' and therefore the prevalence levels of HIV/AIDS, could not be attributed to conflicts. This misconceived notion that engagement in sexual activity is the only way that HIV/AIDS is transmitted is misplaced and hence not only strengthens ITDG's arguments of low awareness levels but that, pastoral communities refuse to admit the presence and impact of HIV/AIDS within their families, with high stigma attached to the affected and infected.<sup>224</sup>

This notwithstanding there was however a general concurrence that vulnerable groups like refugees coming in from Ethiopia and children were particularly vulnerable to increased risk levels of HIV infection owing to displacement, and poverty arising from loss of parents respectively. ITDG's findings also indicate that many households have been left only with elderly people and young family members as a result of HIV/AIDS and conflict and a marked increase in the number of orphans in the community.<sup>225</sup>

## 5.2 Increased Child Vulnerability to Diseases

Over time, the conflict in the area affected the health of the children and general wellbeing. Marsabit children were the most vulnerable to collective assaults on health and well-being. At the height of the conflict in the district, more than half the deaths of children in some places were caused by measles. Diarrhea was another common

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<sup>221</sup> Oral interview, Amina Sharamo, (03.08.2007)

<sup>222</sup> ITDG, *Impact of HIV/AIDS among pastoralist communities in Kenya; study findings and recommendations*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

and often deadly disease while cholera was a constant threat. The infection rates of malaria, malnutrition and acute respiratory infections, including pneumonia, were also highest during conflict in Marsabit.<sup>226</sup>

The indirect assault of conflict on health was that it strained already scarce health resources (medicines and staff). During conflict local health facilities concentrated on treating violence casualties inevitable drawing the much needed resources from child health.

### 5.3 Death and Injuries

The sporadic nature of the conflicts in Marsabit and their limited description as inter-clan or inter-ethnic clashes meant that little attention was paid to the occurrence and worse still the casualties there-of. The remote and vast nature of the district did not help matters either. Their undocumented nature made it difficult for the study to trace exact figures of child deaths and injuries that resulted from the conflicts. Akililu in his analysis of the various bouts of conflict between the Borana and Rendille provides an outlay of casualties, specifically the numbers of children as outlined in Table 2 below;

**Table 2 Number of Casualties in Borana-Rendille Conflicts**

Area	Period	No. of people killed			No. of people injured			No. of people displaced
		C <sup>227</sup>	W	M	C	W	M	
Baddasa	1996-2000	11	6	8	14	11	9	120
Songa	1996-2000	12	23	4	8	4	12	210
Kituruni	1996-2000	3	6	13	2	11	7	230
Dirib Gombo	2000-2002	8	3	5	8	17	6	340
<b>Total</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	

<sup>226</sup> Oral interview. Galgallo Gurrar, Central Division (04.08.2007).

<sup>227</sup> C – Children; W – Women; M – Men.

The data in the above table shows that 30% of the deaths and injuries that occurred in the conflicts between 1996 and 2002 were children. One third of conflict casualties being children is a very high number whether targeted or not. It goes against the very essence of traditional and modern warfare (as backed by international law) that spare civilians especially women and children. Having discussed the direct role of children in conflict (as belligerents or supporters), this high casualty figure is a direct impact on the lives of children.

Perhaps the most visible and painful impact of armed conflict in Marsabit was the death of 22 children during the Turbi Massacre in 2005. Out of a total of 294 children who attended Turbi primary school, 22 were killed and 20 were injured after the Borana and Gabra clan animosities heightened and led to a direct attack on the school. This is the most visible example of direct target and attack of children in armed conflict ostensibly to strike at the very core of a community. As per the government report, armed conflict in Marsabit district was one of the causes underlying child deaths. The district is one of the poorest hence conflict took place, where children are already vulnerable.<sup>228</sup>

#### **5.4 Disrupted Health Services**

In most armed conflicts in pastoral communities, health facilities come under attack, in direct violation of international humanitarian law. Those facilities that remain open during a conflict were often looted or forced to close down, and the remainder were sometimes difficult to reach because of insecurity. Restrictions on travel also hampered the distribution of drugs and other medical supplies, causing health systems' referral services and logistic support to break down.

Health centers in Marsabit which were already scarce were forced to neglect the regular care of patients as staff moved away due to insecurity. Given that below 50% of the district's population have access to healthcare – there are only 25 health facilities including the district hospital which is a referral center<sup>229</sup> – the children's well-being was seriously compromised due to lack of access to these few facilities when families

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<sup>228</sup> National Steering Committee on Peace Building and Conflict Management *National Policy on Conflict*, 2006.

<sup>229</sup> impact of AIDS on pastoral communities pg 38.

and children are in flight from conflict or are displaced to further locations. The dangerous implication of the breakdown of health facilities was the disruption of vaccination programmes for children under five years.<sup>230</sup>

### **5.5 Food Insecurity and Poor Child Nutrition**

One of the most immediate effects of armed conflict in Marsabit was the disruption of food supplies. With the insecurity brought about by conflict and violence, there was movement restrictions which hampered herding by the pastoralists and farming by the small scale farmers. The restrictions, further limited access to markets yet households relied on market purchases to meet their food needs. In some conflict incidences, damage to food systems e.g. killing of cattle or burning of farms was deliberate to destabilize the enemy community.<sup>231</sup>

With limited means and access to food, children in the district suffered from malnourishment or sometimes died. Although neither a survey nor an assessment was carried out on how conflict affected nutrition in the district, the nutritional status of most children outside Central Division is very poor due to inadequate food and unbalanced diets.<sup>232</sup> The situation was further aggravated by conflict which destroyed the little livelihoods opportunities that were available to families, therefore affecting the lives of children.

Adequate nourishment depends on the way food is distributed, the way children are fed, hygiene and the time parents have available to care for children. Malnutrition can affect all children, but it causes the greatest mortality and morbidity among young children, especially those less than three years of age. Breastfeeding provides ideal nutrition for infants and reduces the incidence and severity of infectious diseases and contributes to women's health.<sup>233</sup>

During conflicts in Marsabit, mothers experienced hunger, exhaustion and distress that limited their capacity to care for their children. Breastfeeding was endangered by

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<sup>230</sup> Oral interview, Safiya Karayu, Marsabit District Hospital (05.08.2008).

<sup>231</sup> Oral interview, Barethu Boru, Central Division (05.08.2008).

<sup>232</sup> GOK, Ministry of Planning and National Development, *Marsabit District Development Plan 2002-2008*, Nairobi: Government Printer 2002, pg 47.

<sup>233</sup> *Ibid*, p.23.

the mother's inability to produce breast milk due to hunger and poor maternal nutrition. The conflict caused disruption by separating mothers from young children during flight from conflict. The result of this was poor nutrition among young separated children as they have no care-givers (mothers) to ensure this. As conflicts proceeded, social structures and networks were broken down.<sup>234</sup>

## 5.6 Trauma and Psychological Impact

During the conflict children were exposed to negative experiences that affected their psychology. They experienced destruction of their homes and property, death of parents and siblings, separation from their families, disruption of their education due to closure of schools etc. These effects of conflict broke down children's trust among people therefore undermining the very foundation of children's lives. The psychosocial concern intrinsic to child development was at risk. Seeing their parents or other important adults in their lives as vulnerable severely undermined children's confidence and added to their sense of fear. Many children in Marsabit witnessed their parents' torture, murder or rape, and were threatened with death themselves.<sup>235</sup> The loss, grief and fear associated with such experiences, traumatized children as expressed by a teacher at SKM primary school in Marsabit town;

What I have observed from the guest learners brought to the town schools from conflict ridden areas in the district reveals a withdrawn kind of character. While the rest pupils were participating in the group discussions, these learners were more passive and overly cautious; actions that could be translated to be fear of free expression of their ideas.<sup>236</sup>

The trauma manifested in increased anxiety about what they saw and sometimes because of separation from their families. Other experienced nightmares or trouble sleeping<sup>237</sup>, while some withdrew from contact and developed high levels of suspicion. Younger children had difficulty concentrating in school. Older children and adolescents become anxious, depressed, felt hopeless about the future or developed aggressive behaviour. Furthermore children who were continually exposed to violence

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<sup>234</sup> Ibid.

<sup>235</sup> Oral interview, Isaac Adan, Marsabit District 04.08.2007.

<sup>236</sup> Oral Interview, Anonymous Teacher, Marsabit Town. 04.08.2007.

<sup>237</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Children), Marsabit District, 09.08.2007.

experienced a significant change in their beliefs and attitudes, including a fundamental loss of trust in others. This was especially true of children who had been attacked or abused by people previously considered neighbours or friends, as happened in some parts of Marsabit district.<sup>238</sup>

### 5.7 Reduced School Enrollment

Education serves a much broader function in society. It is meant to give shape and structure to children's lives and instill community values, promote justice and respect for human rights and enhance peace, stability and interdependence.<sup>239</sup> The destruction of education networks represented one of the greatest developmental setbacks for Marsabit district.

Fear and disruption made it difficult to create an atmosphere conducive to learning, and the morale of both teachers and pupils was low in Marsabit. As the pastoral conflicts extended for longer periods, educational opportunities become more limited with the closure of schools and fleeing of teachers.<sup>240</sup> Between 2002 and 2005, the number of primary schools in the district reduced by 26%<sup>241</sup> from a total of 52 to 38 schools as illustrated by the Ministry of Education in the table below;

**Table 3: Number of Primary Schools 2002 - 2005**

YEAR	2002			2003		
	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total
Marsabit	50	2	52	50	4	54
	2004			2005		
	49	2	51	36	2	38

*Source: Ministry of Education*

<sup>238</sup> Focus Group Discussions, Nagayo location, Marsabit 06.08.2007.

<sup>239</sup> NCCK , *Pacifying the Valley; An Analysis on the Kerio Valley conflict*, Nairobi; NCCK, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>240</sup> Focus Group Discussions, Nagayo location, Marsabit 06.08.2007.

<sup>241</sup> Ministry of Education, *Annual School Data Returns Report*. Nairobi: Government Press, 2006.

The figures on Table 3 above are an indicator of reduced access to educational opportunities and although a myriad of factors are to blame for this, conflict was one of the core causes. Conflict led to closure of a number of schools in the districts and given the volatility of the district in 2005. In July 2005 the direct attack on Turbi primary school and its consequent closure, precipitated the closure of other schools in the district due to insecurity. Given that May – August is the second term of the school calendar in Kenya; this meant that a number of children missed out on learning as a result of the conflict. Ultimately, children in Marsabit had reduced access to educational opportunities and this will have far-reaching consequences in the future.

Displacement and insecurity as a result of conflict has locked children from taking advantage of educational opportunities even where schools remained open. The conflicts caused families to move to safe areas which in most cases did not mean they had access to schools to transfer their children. In some cases, this meant the end of the educational journey for some children who either dropped out during their primary education or did not pursue secondary education sitting for their class eight exams. The end result was decreased enrollment rate of children in schools where conflicts occurred and which later manifested in low education rates in the district. The ministry of education recorded decreased transition statistics of 50%<sup>242</sup> from primary to secondary school in the district between 2003 and 2005 as illustrated in the table below;

**Table 4 Transition rate from primary to secondary, 2003-2005**

<b>Transition rate from primary to secondary, 2003-2005</b>									
<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>2003</b>			<b>2004</b>			<b>2005</b>		
<b>DISTRICT</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
Marsabit	21.8	65.7	36.1	38.2	18.9	31.6	16.9	19.5	17.8

*Source: Ministry of Education*

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.



While one might justifiably argue that other overriding factors are responsible for the 50% decrease in enrollment rates, a greater girl-child than boy-child enrollment in 2003 and 2005 point to conflict as a major cause for this. This is because the study found that boys were more involved in conflict (directly) and hence suffered greater impacts of death, injuries, displacement which impeded their ability to regularly attend school. This argument further holds weight because pastoral communities are more inclined into educating the boy-child more than the girl child and one would expect the school transition rates to be in favor of the former. This is however not the case and the study argues that participation of children in armed conflict and their impacts thereof were a great factor in the reduced transition rates of children from primary to secondary schools.

Another impact of conflict in education was congestion in schools. Due to the security situation assured in the town, many families fleeing conflict from their villages headed to Marsabit Town or settled in the surrounding areas. Households that moved to Central Division from Turbi Location during the 2005 Turbi Massacre have not returned.<sup>243</sup> This inevitably meant that the children had to attend the town schools which are already congested. Additionally, schools in conflict areas closed by the government transferred their pupils to town school as 'guest learners', further increasing the child-teacher ratio in the town schools.<sup>244</sup>

The overall impact of conflicts in the district has been the contribution of armed conflict to further educational marginalization.<sup>245</sup> Ultimately these children find it hard to compete for opportunities in the job market creating a ruinous cycle of poverty in the long term.

## 5.8 Displacement and Separation of Children

Intense and prolonged situations of conflict tend to create large numbers of displaced children in urban centres, usually living in a state of abandonment, with no assets,

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<sup>243</sup> Kenya Food Security Steering Group (KFSSG), Kenya short Rains Assessment Report 2005, KFSSG, 2006, pg 59.

<sup>244</sup> This term is used to refer to pupils/students who are learning in a different schools for a while until the security situation in their school area is considered stable enough for them to go back.

<sup>245</sup> UNESCO. "Reaching the Marginalized; *EFA global monitoring Report.*" *UNESCO 2010*  
[http://books.google.co.ke/books?id=8TWTUU1HbDIC&dq=marginalization+in+marsabit&source=gbs\\_navlinks\\_s](http://books.google.co.ke/books?id=8TWTUU1HbDIC&dq=marginalization+in+marsabit&source=gbs_navlinks_s).

health facilities or education. These children are likely to become cheap fighting manpower to fuel existing and new conflicts.<sup>246</sup>

Armed conflict in the district caused great population movements. Children who were forced to flee to safer regions become internally displaced within their own countries and district. These children together with their kinsmen were brutally uprooted and forced to flee their homes, exposing them to danger and insecurity. During the Borana-Gabra violence flare-up in 1999 after the killing of Qalla Waqo Bero an influential businessman and the subsequent murder of a Gabra-medical officer in retaliation, conflict intensified leading to displacement of about 7,000 people (including children).

Wherever it occurred, displacement had a profound physical, emotional and developmental impact on children and increased their vulnerability. During flight from areas of conflict, children continued to be exposed to multiple physical dangers from sudden enemy attacks or wild animals.<sup>247</sup>

Ideally, as required by the international human right law, camps for the internally displaced should be places of safety, offering protection and assistance. However, the displaced in Marsabit were never protected and lacked security structures. Children in the focus groups discussions shared that;

After the conflict we had to leave Mt. Kulal and came to the town (Marsabit Town). We slept in the cold for a few days before my father traced some of our relatives here and we stayed with them for a few months.<sup>248</sup>

Children's social protection in such circumstances frequently comes under strain or breaks down completely. There are often high levels of violence, substance abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence. Children who were displaced faced perilous circumstances, including a higher risk of dying. The number of displaced and unaccompanied children was high during outbreaks of violence and where they were

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<sup>246</sup> Saverio Krätli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya, 1999*, pg 15.

<sup>247</sup> Oral interview, Halahke Dida, 05.08.2007.

<sup>248</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Children), Marsabit District, 09.08.2007.

never reunited, they ended up as street children in Marsabit town or other urban centers.<sup>249</sup>

## 5.9 Gender-Based Violence

In times of armed conflict, the disintegration of families and communities left women and girls especially vulnerable to violence. Rape was a continual threat, as were other forms of gender-based violence, including prostitution, sexual humiliation and mutilation, trafficking and domestic abuse. Women and girls were at risk of violence in all settings, whether in the home, during flight or in camps to which they had fled for safety.<sup>250</sup>

Most child victims of violence and sexual abuse were girls, but boys were also affected. It was not apparent whether rape was used as a form of weapon of conflict to torture and weaken the morale of the perceived enemy, it's occurrence was more random.<sup>251</sup> Due to the humiliating nature and strong cultural taboos on discussion of sexual issues, many victims were afraid to speak out.<sup>252</sup> The harm inflicted on a girl or woman was an attack on her family and culture. Rape victims who become pregnant were often ostracized by their families and communities and abandoned their babies.<sup>253</sup>

## 5.10 Economic Impact of Marsabit Conflict

The economic impact of the Marsabit conflict in the affected areas was not easy to quantify. There was enormous waste of human and economic resources. The conflict had lasting consequences that will continue to alter Marsabit district's economic development for many years. Much of the destruction worked to the economic advantage of the perpetrators of the conflict and their close aides.<sup>254</sup>

According to this study, one of the long term economic consequences of the clashes was the fact that land ownership patterns have been permanently altered. The conflict

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<sup>249</sup> Oral interview, Anonymous Female, Marsabit Town 04.08.2007.

<sup>250</sup> Oral interview, Focus Group Discussions (Women), Marsabit District, 04.08.2007.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Focus Group Discussions, Nagayo location, Marsabit (02.08.2007).

in Marsabit district caused a general decline in economic production as many of the people and by extension whole clans ran away due to insecurity created by the conflict. This movement means that it's is now harder to trace original land ownership as migrating populations mixed and settled in other areas over the years. With contested ownership, children have had their inheritance reduced or totally lost.

The armed conflict in also resulted in loss of property. The communities lost large herds or sometimes the entire herds of livestock in raiding attacks. Property, food crops and cash were looted during the attacks. Houses and schools were destroyed. This translated into loss of livelihoods and increasing impoverishment of families, rendering Marsabit children destitute who resorted to begging for survival. Food shortage was one of the far reaching economic consequences of the conflict that directly affected children.<sup>255</sup>

There were other subsequent economic problems related to the conflict in the district such as labour disruption on farms and civil service. As the conflict intensified most civil service workers left the district due to insecurity. Workers such as teachers, children's' officers who offered services in areas which directly benefited children hence their leaving exposed the children to denial of services that could improve their lives.

### **5.11 Political Impact of Marsabit Conflict on Children**

Frequent conflicts in Marsabit district revived clan politics that adversely affected children. Over the years, Marsabit district experienced the rise in clan tensions some of which eventually turned into open violence. This in turn affected the political life in the district as elections were decided upon not on issues but on ethnicity. For instance, if the Rendille are in KANU then automatically the Boran would join the party which would be in contradiction with KANU. Such alignments were barriers to development as people were not keen on development records but on ethnic alignments.<sup>256</sup>

The conflict in Marsabit not only increased clan animosity and prejudice but also made ethnic politics a reality. Indeed, the common ideology, especially among leaders

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid

<sup>256</sup> Oral Interview, anonymous male Central location, Marsabit district (02.08.2007)

of different political parties, was national democracy, but the practice or reality was ethnic democracy for their supporters. This intense rivalry is one of the root causes of underdevelopment, which is the root cause of limited educational and health opportunities and services for children.

### **5.13 Difference in Impact of Conflict on Boys and Girls**

Children exhibited remarkable differences in how they were affected by conflicts depending on their gender. Whereas children from both sides of the gender divide suffered similar consequences in the event of conflicts, some differences were exhibited. In terms of physical injury and death, boys accounted for the biggest number of casualties due to their direct participation as combatants during conflict. Furthermore, they were reported to be the target of armed groups given that they presented assurance of security for the communities.<sup>257</sup> On the negative side, however, boys were likely to resort to crime as a consequence of delinquency arising from conflict broken families.

Girls on the other hand suffered on a more psychological level because their role in conflict was indirect. Displaced girls often looked for work in the town as domestic workers and in some instances faced mistreatment from employers. Some destitute girls were sucked into prostitution while in other instances poverty induced conflict forced displaced families to marry off girls at an early age.<sup>258</sup>

### **5.14 Conclusion**

There are many indicators that illustrate the suffering of children in Marsabit district just like other members of the communities living in the district. This justifies the arguments by the pluralist theorists who believed that a community is a complex web where every member of society. According to the findings of the research, the conflict imposed heavy social and economic costs in the district where it occurs. Such effects accumulated and interacted with each other. The impact and trauma of death of family

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<sup>257</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Children), Marsabit District, 09.08.2007

<sup>258</sup> Focus Group Discussions (Children), Marsabit District, 09.08.2007

members extend far beyond the attack itself. Children survivors face emotional torment, psychological damage, physical injuries, disease, social ostracism and many other consequences that can devastate their lives forever.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

This study focused on children in armed conflict and narrowed on their participation and impact there-of. The field research was largely qualitative in nature and involved both primary and secondary data, collected over a span of three months in Nairobi and Marsabit. Secondary data was obtained from books, journals, scholarly articles, report and periodicals. Primary data was obtained through the interview method using a guideline of open-ended questions with key informants, opinion leaders and the general population. Observation method was also used where the physical appearance, behavior and actions of the children and youth were taken into consideration. Focus group discussions were a key component in collecting the primary data. Snowball, stratified and simple random sampling was used to select respondents. Qualitative data analysis was employed and entailed making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages and using the same to relate to trends.

The research revealed that in many of the armed conflict in Marsabit the children participated. From the findings of the study, the primary factors contributing to lack of respect for children and subsequent use in armed conflict was the influence of culture a lack of a clear understanding of the laws that were meant to protect children during conflict. Culture also played a big role. The study found out that children took part in active roles in armed conflict yet Kenya is a signatory to the convention on the protection of children. The most important challenge ahead for all actors is translating international standards into national action that can make a tangible difference in the lives of children affected by armed conflict.

An understanding and comparison of the definition of a child in the local and national context revealed two different classifications. While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Kenya National Children's Act of 2001 pegged child status to age, (a child is one who has attained the age of eighteen years), the conceptualization of a child in Marsabit was along the precincts of cultural stage. Among the Borana, Gabra and Rendile culture and tradition played a major role in the

different spheres of life; maturity was associated with physical development such as puberty, and socio-cultural events, such as initiation.

Understanding of these different rules was critical to the study. It led to the deduction that the involvement of children in the Marsabit conflicts was more in line with cultural norms than a deliberate attempt to subvert legislation on the rights of the child. This analysis is in line with the social learning theory that the constant exposure to conflict as part of culture led to the internalization of the idea of aggression.

The study began by building a background to the lives and experiences of the communities living in Marsabit, and the developments of the conflict from pre-colonial, colonial and to recent times.. The conflicts in Marsabit were closely linked to the districts historical and cultural record. Cattle raiding, an age-old tradition that served to replenish animal stock in pre-colonial Marsabit was and still is one of the major causes of conflict. In the pre-colonial times, there were clear rituals used to guide the conduct of warfare and even where it occurred, total war was avoided. Cattle raids and resource conflict were a common phenomenon even then, but were sanctioned by elders and there were clear rules of operation. This was especially so where civilians (women and children) were concerned. Conflicts during the colonial period in Marsabit were characterized by violence witnessed during the state formation. Colonial state policy such as the Land Title Ordinance of 1899, allowed the Crown to lay rightful claim to pastoral land including Marsabit and what followed was appropriation of large tracks of land. This action triggered conflict between pastoralists and even the state and contributed to the strong impulse among pastoralists to acquire firearms to match or counter state violence. Post-colonial conflict in Marsabit had major roots in the results of the 1962 referendum and its attendant report. There-in, communities' opinion was divided over the unification or secession of the Northern region with the greater Kenya or Somalia respectively. The declaration of the area as the Seventh Region of Kenya early in 1963 sparked civilian clashes (backed by guerilla groups) with police and paramilitary led to the famous *shifita* war. From 1991 to 2005, the study traced various outbreaks of conflict to sporadic attacks over resource disputes, cattle raids. More prominently, the conflicts during this period were between the major ethnic communities – the Borana, Gabra, Rendille and Burji. The dominant trend here was that the conflicts and violence outbreaks tied to each other in some cases were counter attacks to avenge previous



hostilities. From 2003 to 2005, raids, attacks and revenge missions between the Gabra and the Borana culminated in the Turbi Massacre in July of 2005.

The major cause of conflict unearthed by the study is cattle raiding. Its traditional link to initiation and payment of bride price has been eroded. The study revealed that introduction of small arms and light weapons changed its connotation to commercialized raiding. The latter is a far much worse cause of armed conflict its underlying purpose profit driven; to enriching corrupt business men. Easily gotten from the porous borders of war torn Somalia and Southern Ethiopia, introduction of the gun - a more sophisticated and destructive weapon - increased conflict outbreaks in the district. The study also found that resource disputes over pasture, water as well as leadership positions were a major cause of conflict. The fight for leadership is engrained in ethnic and clan animosities between and among mainly the Gabra and Borana which have been worsened by constant political instigation by their respective community leaders. This incitement has become a key factor in violent attacks and calls for intensive government intervention and scaling up of peace building initiatives.

Their direct involvement included carrying out of actual attacks and, raiding other communities to take away their livestock. It was also found that it was the children who were left to take care of the animals that had been rustled from elsewhere. It is this responsibility to handle stolen livestock that even elicited greater quest in the children, particularly the boys, to want to be part of future raids because of the perceived benefits associated with the activity. Moreover livestock herding involved use of both crude and light weapons such as guns, in which case this early exposure of children to weapons instilled in them an aggressive culture. Other roles that they played during conflict included fighting, pottering, and smuggling of weapons, spies and peace activities. The roles were a testimony that children were important actors in every societies activities including conflict.

The most visible and painful impact of armed conflict in Marsabit was the death of 22 children during the Turbi Massacre in 2005, which was a direct attack on a school. During the study period, many children died or were injured and faced disability due to hostilities between communities or with the state.

The conflict has also had a correlation to child education; educational opportunities were lost to many children due to insecurity and violence outbreaks. Low educational enrollment as a result of closure of schools due to conflict was witnessed during conflicts. Teachers also fled during outbreak of violence and the constant insecurity caused teachers posted to the district from other areas to shun their appointment. This contributed to the low educational standards in the district as the public schools had to make do with those who could accept the these terms, who were very few and may not have been the finest. Future educational policies hence have to take into account conflict backgrounds to measure that would attract good teachers to the district. Contingency measures should also be put in place to ensure minimal disruption of child education during conflict.

Violence and conflict have interfered with the health of children. It fueled the spread of HIV/AIDS and STIs among internally displaced children some of whom were raped or got into prostitution to secure their livelihoods after conflict induced displacement. By and large, child vulnerability to diseases increased during conflict with many suffering common ailments such as malaria, pneumonia, measles or cholera brought about or exacerbated by poor nutrition, poor health facilities and unhygienic living conditions in camps.

Long-term exposure to violence had significant psychological effects on children; the loss, grief and fear associated with such fighting traumatized children. The manifestation of this was increased anxiety, feelings of hopelessness and depression, experiencing nightmares, withdrawal from contact and development of aggressive behavior. The study found out that children associated with fighting face high levels of stigma upon returning to their communities, which results in their exclusion from social networks needed to access shelter, land, property, food, labor exchange, family and child support, and more sustainable livelihood opportunities. Generally the conflict had diverse impact on the children in Marsabit region.

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**10<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

Rachel Onyango  
University of Nairobi  
P.O. Box 30197  
**NAIROBI**

Dear Madam

## **RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION**

Following your application for authority to carry out research on, *'Children in Armed Conflict: A Case Study of Marsabit District' 1991-2005*

I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to carry out research in Marsabit District for a period ending 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008.

You are advised to report to the District Commissioner and District Education Officer Marsabit District before embarking on your research project.

On completion of your research, you are expected to submit two copies of your research report to this office.

Yours faithfully



**B. O. ADEWA**

**FOR: PERMANENT SECRETARY**

Copy to:

The District Commissioner  
**Marsabit District**

The District Education Officer  
**Marsabit District**