

## **Conflict over Ltungai Conservancy: A Case of Fatal Competition over Grazing Land and Water among the Samburu and Pokot in north-western Kenya**

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### **Background Information**

Community Based Conservancies (CBCs) have sprung up in the arid and semi-arid lands of north-western Kenya inhabited by the Pokot, Samburu and Turkana communities over the last one and one-half decades as the government sought to engage pastoralist communities in natural resource management. Many of these CBCs are managed by the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT), a conservation group established by the owners of Lewa Conservancy with membership of several pastoralist groups and also strongly linked to government officials, and corporate bodies as well as local elites from the Samburu community. The establishment of Ltungai Conservancy on a 22,257 hectares inter-community grazing reserve in 2004 sparked five years of violent conflict between the Pokot and Samburu communities. In interviews with Pokot elders<sup>1</sup> at Amaya they claimed that the Samburu political elite's support for the establishment of the CBCs was a ploy to divest them of their land from Longewan Hills up to Amaya River. Interviews and discussions with community members and key respondents<sup>2</sup> revealed that civic leaders from the Samburu community issued Pokot herders living across the Amaya River with eviction letters in late 2004 thereby kicking off the establishment of the CBCs and prompting violent conflict. Conflict over Ltungai Conservancy stemmed from key issues of resource allocation, access and distribution between the Pokot and Samburu communities. Interviews with Pokot respondents at Murgie revealed that the five-year conflict was fought on the basis of their right to ownership, access and utilisation of pasture and water-points in Ltungai Conservancy whereas the Samburu<sup>3</sup> approached the conflict

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Mading Kipterer, a retired Senior Assistant Chief of Churo Location from 1975-2002, conducted at Amaya on September 08, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Evans Onyiego, the Secretary to the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission of Maralal on August 17, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Ropoki Lemeleny, a Samburu community member of the Amaya area on the Samburu West District side, conducted on March 06, 2012.

from an exclusivist perspective; viewing the Pokot households who had previously lived along the Longewan Hills in Samburu West Districts more as tenants than as rightful owners of the land, and therefore with limited rights of access to the pasture lands of Ltungai Conservancy.

The Pokot-Samburu conflict over the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy in Samburu County can therefore be seen broadly as a threat to the pastoral production system faced by pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities within Eastern Africa and the Horn of Africa regions. The establishment of Ltungai Conservancy in an inter-community grazing reserve not only precipitated inter-ethnic violence which claimed hundreds of lives, but also orchestrated a state of anarchy that contributed to livestock deaths and the displacement of many pastoralist households, further inhibiting inter-community interactions through trade. This was seen in the closure of cattle markets in Amaya, Longewan and Lonyek along the Pokot-Samburu border. It is notable that while members of the Samburu community could access the upper side of the grazing lands of Ltungai, the Pokot were denied access to pasture when the NRT posted armed Samburu game wardens within the boundaries of the conservancy, which, in turn, led to a concentration of Pokot livestock in limited grazing lands thereby contributing to the easy spread of cattle diseases and ecological degradation. The data presented here also includes information gained through scholarly work done by scientists on different facets of pastoralists' livelihoods, some of which are specific to land management while others have looked into factors contributing to increased violence among pastoral groups in north-western Kenya.

### **Study Area and Methods**

Ltungai Conservancy is located along the borders of East Pokot and Samburu West Districts in north-western Kenya, sits on 22,257 hectares of land, borders Turkana County to the north-west and Laikipia County to the south along the Rift Valley, and consists of dense grasslands. It is home to many wildlife species such as giraffes, zebras, cheetahs and antelopes. The Pokot and Samburu communities have traditionally shared this pastureland during periods of scarcity.

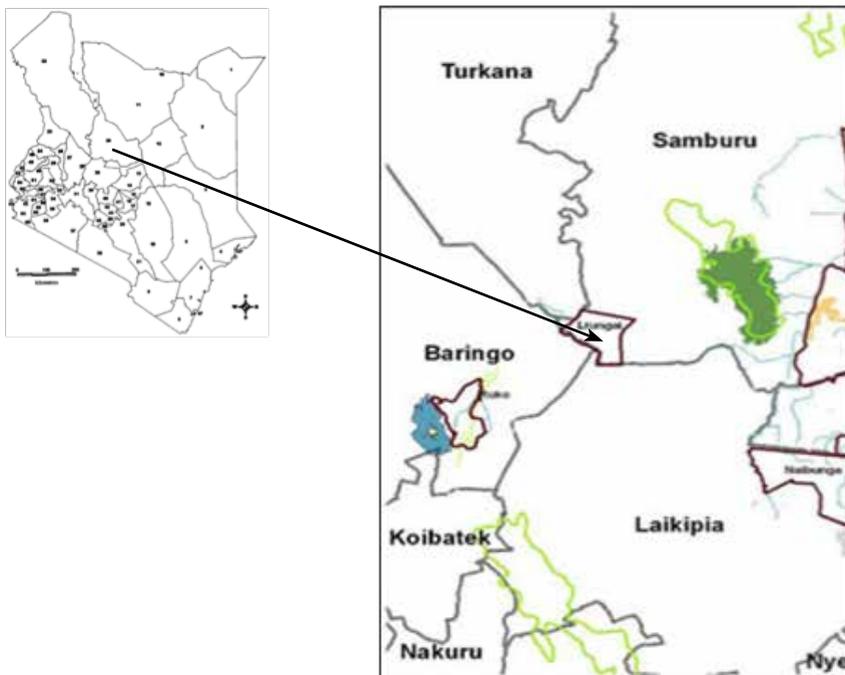


Figure 1: Study area indicating the location of Ltungai Conservancy  
Source: NRT (2013, p.12)

The data presented here was collected for 8 months between July 2011 and May 2013 in Samburu West and East Pokot Districts, and was obtained through key informant interviews and focused group discussions in Longewan, Amaya, Churo, Kasilangwa, Lonyek, Losuk and Loroki. Participant observation was also used to gain more insight into the livelihood challenges of pastoralists. The key informants interviewed during this study were identified through snowball sampling, where evictees from Samburu West District were specifically targeted. The study sampled 63 households from East Pokot District in Baringo County and 21 households from Samburu West District.

In conducting this study, key informant interviews and focused group discussions were adopted to obtain the most significant data. This study was further guided by the following key issues: ownership, utility and

access to grazing land and water, historical or ancestral memory and claims over geographical features such as rivers and hills, aspects and history of inter-communal sharing of natural resources and ways of dispute resolution, the legal framework of inter-community property rights among pastoralists in north-western Kenya, legal enforcement and the role of local politics of exclusion, ethnicity and history of pastoralist violence as a function of resource access and distribution within East Pokot and Samburu West Districts in north-western Kenya.

### **Ownership, Access and Utilisation Rights of Ltungai Pasture Lands and Waters as a Trigger to Pokot-Samburu Violence from 2004-2009**

The establishment of Ltungai Conservancy deprived Pokot herders of their right to graze livestock in the inter-community reserve pasture during droughts. Greiner (2013, p. 12) aptly captures this:

In 2006, however, war also erupted between the Pokot and the Samburu. The bone of contention in this case was the planned implementation of a wildlife conservancy in an area that had formerly been used by both groups without dispute, but which now attracted exclusive claims. The conflict eventually spread to Laikipia, where Pokot and Samburu herders had been moving into vacated areas since the mid-1990s to make use of available pasture. Provoked by tensions around the proposed wildlife conservancy, they fought each other over land claims. These fights reached a sad climax in the massacre of Kanampiu village in September 2009, when a Pokot attack led to 35 casualties. According to a Pokot elder, this massacre was meant as an example. The Samburu were explicitly warned not to move their settlements into a zone claimed by Pokot. Kanampiu[,] the settlement in question[,] was eradicated in the attack.

Claims of exclusive ownership rights by the Samburu in the establishment of Ltungai, in collaboration with the administrators of the NRT, stoked the embers of the pastoralists' violence by denying the Pokot their historical right of ownership of the grazing lands. The establishment of Ltungai therefore threatened the livelihood base of the Pokot and the Samburu

by earmarking 22,257 ha of pastoral reserve for wildlife conservation at the expense of livestock production. The reduction of pasture land by a hefty 22,257 ha of land is a significant loss as it contributes to ecological degradation, overgrazing and the easy spread of livestock diseases.

Questions over the ownership of Ltungai Conservancy were at the core of the Pokot-Samburu conflict. To many Pokot herders, who had lived for decades at Longewan Hills overlooking the Samburu ‘*manyattas*,’<sup>4</sup> the conservancy was a ploy used by the NRT and the Samburu elite to displace them, and ultimately deprive them of ownership, utilization and access to pasture resources within Ltungai as Greiner (2013, p. 19) was informed during his fieldwork there:

The Samburu say that their boundary with us is the River Amaya. And we, as Pokot, we know our boundary is in a place called Longewan, on the top of the hill. The Samburu, they have a problem with the boundary. But before, we had no trouble with the boundaries because everybody was grazing the way he felt like because there was no issue of boundaries.

Butler and Gates (2012, p. 24) pointed out that violent conflict between any two groups is bound to be more profound when it comes to ownership rights over natural resources: “If climate change, in the form of water availability, is going to affect any group’s proclivity to violence, then it will be a group most directly dependent on water and land, such as a herding group.” In the case of Pokot and Samburu pastoralists, conflict over Ltungai was conflict for the survival of pastoralist production since it was rich with ample pasture and water. Control of pasture and water resources is therefore at the core of pastoral violence. The Pokot-Samburu conflict over access, utilization and ownership of resources of Ltungai exemplified violent competition over scarce and diminishing pastoral resources.

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<sup>4</sup> Manyattas are homesteads built by many pastoralists’ communities across north-western Kenya to accommodate their nomadic lifestyle.

In an interview with Rev. Musa Maklab,<sup>5</sup> a Pokot who was born in Longewan but later evicted and relocated to the Samburu-Pokot border area at Pleisian near the Amaya Market, he stated that the conflict over Ltungai erupted when the Pokot realized that they were excluded from the Ltungai Conservancy's group title deed. The exclusion of the Pokot from the joint ownership of Ltungai may be interpreted as an attempt to "grab" land from a marginalized pastoralist community; this is further confirmed by the NRT's own website which had, until 2012, listed the Samburu as the sole owners of the Ltungai Conservancy. The conflict over the ownership rights of Ltungai Conservancy by pastoralist groups was therefore exacerbated by insensitive Samburu elite keen on amassing wealth by generating revenue through tourism at the expense of the pastoralist production of the Pokot herders who faced displacement and deprivation.

Considering the aridity of north-western Kenya and the great dependence of pastoralist communities on pastures and water resources, the annexing of 22,257 ha of land was seen as a threat to the very survival of the Pokot herders. This is further reaffirmed by the Conservation Development Centre (CDC), the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Saferworld (2009, p. 23) in their study, *Climate Change and Conflict; Lessons from Community Conservancies in Northern Kenya*, where they noted:

In arid areas where pasture and water resources are unevenly distributed and accessed by multiple groups from disparate areas, the formal establishment of a conservancy can be seen as a land grab which prevents access for non-conservancy members. Furthermore, each conservancy tends to be formed by members of one ethnic group, building on the existing group ranch structure, so this risks entrenching ethnic divisions. In short, the creation of a conservancy can

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<sup>5</sup> Rev. Musa Maklab, Interview with the author on August 12, 2011 at the Amaya Market. This conservancy continues to be the bone of contention between the Pokot and Samburu, along the Pokot-Samburu border. He intimated that the Pokot are not included in the group title deed of the conservancy and therefore they feel cheated by the Samburu over their land.

exacerbate one of the root causes of conflict by increasing exclusive use of land and escalating conflict through the polarisation of ethnic groups.

According to Kipturu, Kapoi and Nabuya (2010, p. 26), Pokot elders further laid historical claims to much of what is today's Ltungai Conservancy in a memorandum submitted to the Interim Independent Boundaries Review Commission (IIBRC),<sup>6</sup> basing their claims on the historical memory of elders, colonial maps, boundary beacons and names of places within Ltungai Conservancy which are linguistically rooted in the Pokot language. Indeed, they stated as follows: "Samburu division was administered at Barsaloi. They were far beyond the Eastern Rift Valley escarpment and occupied primarily at the plateaus of Samburu. It was only recently that the Pokot were flushed out of the land and lost access to Alkosom water spring" (Kipturu et al., 2010, p. 26). It is evident from this memorandum that the Pokot elders saw their eviction from Samburu West District to create space for the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy not only as an affront to their rights to ownership over the land but also as a threat to livestock production on which they exclusively depend.

It is against this background that Ltungai Conservancy was established. From the foregoing it can be stated that the establishment of this conservancy in pastoral rangelands and specifically in an inter-community grazing reserve has triggered inter-community conflict and the destruction of pastoral production.

### **Analysing the Pokot-Samburu Conflict over Grazing Lands and Waters of Ltungai using Contest Success Functions (CSF)**

The Samburu-Pokot conflict over ownership, access and utilization rights of pasture lands and waters of Ltungai Conservancy can be analysed through the CSF as applied by Butler and Gates (2012) in studying climate, conflict and property rights as key issues in African range wars.

<sup>6</sup> IIBRC was constitutionally set up through an Act of Parliament in May 2009 and charged with the responsibility of reviewing and demarcating Kenya's electoral boundaries in accordance with the geographical size and the population of the citizens of Kenya.

The CSF model puts into perspective the allocation or misallocation of resources in the absence of a property rights regime in a weak or fragile state characterised by endemic ethnic violence as exemplified by pastoralist groups in the Karamoja Cluster and more specifically in north-western Kenya among the Turkana, the Pokot and the Samburu. The CSF model assumes that the level of inter-ethnic violence between two herding groups in a pastoral rangeland is highly dependent upon the “levels of property rights protection (PRP) and the government bias on property rights enforcement (Bias)” (Butler & Gates, 2012, p. 26). As Butler and Gates explain:

Our CSF model incorporates the notion that increasing property rights protection reduces the effectiveness of fighting, which implies increasing the equilibrium allocation of productive effort. Our model also accounts for the potential bias towards one interpretation of property rights over another interpretation. Property rights bias can occur between pastoralist groups when territory is divided between groups granting exclusive rights to one particular group, excluding others from grazing rights. Bias and property rights protection interact to produce a non-monotonic result affecting the level of conflict in a society. More particularly, if a society has a moderate level of PRP, but some degree of bias away from equity, an increase in PRP can result in either a decrease or an increase in the amount of fighting between the two groups. Thus, simply increasing PRP without addressing equity and bias issues can actually increase the risk of armed conflict between pastoralists (2012, p. 26).

From the foregoing explanation we can deduce that the conflict between the Pokot and Samburu communities over the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy originated from very weak property rights infrastructure and the bias in the enforcement of these rights by the state. The Samburu elite exploited the weak property regime structure and close links to government officials to issue eviction letters to Pokot herders living along Longewan Hills in Samburu West District as they were seen to be a minority, less protected by the law, and defenceless in the face of the numerical might of the Samburu warriors. The collusion of government officials with the

Samburu elite and NRT officials imply a weak institutional framework for property rights enforcement and an opportunity for horizontal inequality against the Pokot based on ethnicity resulting in economic exclusion from the pastures of Ltungai. The loss of pasture lands and water-points by the Pokot can therefore be seen as a product of a weak state environment coupled with biased property rights enforcement and a clear motive of economic marginalisation of the Pokot by the Samburu elite and NRT officials.

Given that pastoralists production is dependent upon land, pasture and water, we further argue that the eviction of Pokot herders from an inter-community grazing reserve and its subsequent use by the Samburu for livestock production and revenue generation through the establishment of the wildlife conservancy denotes horizontal marginalisation of the Pokot. In other words, livestock production is contingent upon good grazing lands that contribute to healthier animals and higher chances of animal reproduction, better livestock prices and the possibility of reinvesting the money from animal sales back into pastoralism. In a situation where a pastoralist is evicted from good grazing land, his or her livestock are then inevitably concentrated in limited and inadequate pasture areas where the livestock degrade the environment through overgrazing and easily contract livestock diseases which not only reduces the quality of the animal in the eyes of livestock traders but also minimises the ability of the animal to reproduce for the benefit of the pastoralist. The Samburu-Pokot conflict can therefore be seen through the survival lenses of Pokot herders; the allocation of an inter-community grazing reserve for wildlife conservation inevitably incited inter-ethnic violence since it was seen by the Pokot as a land grab and an attack to their survival.

### **Consequences of the NRT's Annexing of Ltungai Pastoral Lands on Pokot and Samburu Livelihoods**

#### *a) Deaths*

In interviews<sup>7</sup> conducted in the Longewan, Plesian, Amaya and Lonyek

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<sup>7</sup> Interviews with Pokot elders, John Kaptiyos and Lopurusa Losote, and Samburu elders, Daniel Lepais and Enock Leshyampe, on August 5, 2011, at the Longewan and Amaya Markets along the Samburu West and East Pokot district borders.

areas, it was established by both Samburu and Pokot elders that over 500 Pokot and Samburu lost their lives between 2004 and 2009 until a peace agreement was reached in late 2009. It should be noted however that this is a very conservative estimate since it does not take into account other deaths, that although related to the contest over Ltungai, occurred on highways due to ethnic animosity that prevailed at that time. For instance, elders from the Pokot community confirmed that many young men from both sides were ambushed and killed around Murgie. Further, it should be noted that the Samburu attacked and killed ten Pokot herders and made away with hundreds of head of livestock in 2008 at Loroki which precipitated a revenge attack (see Greiner, 2013) and the massacre of Samburu herdsman at Kanampiu Village in Laikipia County. The massacres in Loroki and Kanampiu resulted in the killing of over 50 herders and the loss of over 1,000 herds of cattle in December 2009. The fact that the Kanampiu massacre occurred in Laikipia County, another inter-community grazing reserve during periods of drought, further points to grave threats to inter-community cohesion and increased difficulties in the sharing of rangeland resources among many pastoralist groups in Northern Kenya should the trend to establish wildlife conservancies in inter-community grazing land continue unabated. These massacres led to the abandonment of pastoral lands and contributed to the concentration of livestock in perceived ‘safe’<sup>8</sup> areas, thus increasing the possibility of the spread of livestock diseases and overgrazing.

### *b) Displacements*

According to Pokot elders,<sup>9</sup> Samburu civic leaders issued eviction letters to Pokot households living in Longewan, Lonyek, Amaya and Loroki in 2004; an estimated 2,000 households were evicted to create room for the conservancy. These families eventually settled among their kinsfolk in the Kasilangwa, Amaya and Churo areas of East Pokot District. The

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<sup>8</sup> Safe areas here denote exclusive Pokot or Samburu grazing areas which in most cases would only be useful during wet seasons when grass and water were easily available.

<sup>9</sup> Pokot elders’ (John Kaptiyos & Lopurusa Losote) interview with the author at Amaya Market along the Pokot-Samburu border on August 15, 2011, wherein the author was informed that the eviction letters were issued by Samburu civic leaders from Amaya Division, Samburu County.

displacement of pastoralists' households and the state of anarchy that followed led to the closure of schools, the malnutrition of children, the death of livestock due to scarcity of pasture, and increased highway banditry in the East Pokot District. Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) which had previously provided community health, water and sanitation services withdrew due to the insecurity, thus limiting access to essential services. The impact of inter-ethnic violence and the contest over the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy is further aptly captured by Greiner (2012, p. 10): "The conflict involved high levels of symbolic violence and led to large numbers of casualties. Victims were mutilated, women and children were killed, whole villages were displaced and large areas were turned into no-man's land until a ceasefire was agreed in late 2009." IRIN News (2006, p. 1) further illustrates the dire situation of those displaced by the inter-community warfare among the Samburu and Pokot over Ltungai Conservancy:

Heavily pregnant and with a bullet lodged in her leg, Mary Lenayasa hitched, ran and trekked for two days to reach a church at a remote centre hosting thousands of displaced families in Samburu District, northern Kenya. Lenayasa managed to escape death during an attack by bandits in which six people, including her husband, were killed a month ago, forcing her to flee. 'I lost everything - my husband, all our livestock and good neighbours,' she said, cradling a newborn boy, whom she delivered a day after arriving at the Sugutamarmar Church compound in Samburu. 'The situation in Samburu is bad[,] we can't go back to Losuk. Who will help me, my baby and the other five children?' she said, standing outside her flimsy hut made of sticks, pieces of cloth and plastic bags.

*c) Intra-ethnic Violence among the Pokot*

The inter-ethnic violence witnessed by the NRT after the establishment of the conservancy informed their decision in late 2011 to employ six Pokot game rangers and to deploy them along the Samburu West District boundary near Plesian at the border with the East Pokot District. This enraged Pokot elders who saw the recruitment of Pokot youth by the NRT

as an attempt to divide and exploit Pokot herders, further precipitating the mobilization of Pokot '*morans*,'<sup>10</sup> who attacked the game rangers and chased them away into the conservancy. The recruitment of Pokot game rangers brought tension and threats of intra-ethnic violence against the extended families of the Pokot game rangers from many *morans* who saw this as selfishness on the part of their kinsfolk and bribery by NRT officials. To the independent observer, the recruitment of these Pokot game rangers was an attempt at the legitimization of the Pokot as part of Ltungai Conservancy without addressing the underlying issues of ownership and access rights to land and pasture resources.

#### *d) Cattle Raids and Closure of Cattle Markets*

Even though pastoralists' violence over Ltungai revolved around the ownership of grazing land and water resources, it was mainly demonstrated through cattle raids. The main aim of *morans* who carried out these cattle raids was to forcefully deprive their rivals of cattle and thereby incapacitate them from utilizing the grazing land and waters of Ltungai. Socio-culturally, a pastoralist who loses his or her cattle through drought or cattle raids is deemed to be 'cattle-poor'<sup>11</sup> and is seen socially as a failure, forcing them to move out of the community, and to seek menial jobs in urban centres such as Maralal, Marigat, Nakuru or Eldoret. The insecurity that prevailed from 2004 until 2009 led to the closure of key inter-community cattle markets such as Amaya, Losuk, Longewan and Loroki; this made it impossible for both the Samburu and Pokot communities living at the border of Samburu West and East Pokot Districts to purchase grains and other household items, thus increasing their dependency on relief supplies. The closure of cattle markets further inhibited opportunities for inter-community interaction and contributed to the prolongation of the strife.

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<sup>10</sup> *Moran* is a Maa word meaning warrior (also called *Il murani* by the Samburu, and *muron* by the Pokot). They are community warriors in many pastoralist communities in north-western Kenya, and are responsible for protecting the community against external aggression.

<sup>11</sup> Being cattle-poor is a state of great shame and social stigma for pastoralist communities. Households who lose their herd/s through cattle raids or droughts are often forced to abandon the grazing zone and migrate to urban centres where they are mostly employed as security guards (men) or end up destitute (women).

Research has shown that closure of cattle markets has negative impacts on the survival of pastoralist communities; this is corroborated by Schilling, Opiyo and Scheffran (2012, pp. 12-13) in their recent study among the Pokot and Turkana in Kenya:

It was observed that livestock markets in Lokiriyama and Loya are not used because of insecurity. The lack of secure markets limits the ability of the pastoralists to sell livestock prior to or during dry periods and hence contributes to food insecurity. During the three years of this study, Turkana reported that options to sell livestock to traders were limited as they were afraid of attacks on their way to Kitale or Nairobi. Influx of grains and manufactured goods into Pokot and Turkana was also reported to be negatively affected by insecurity.

Table 1 below further illustrates the violent nature of the contest over the land, water and pasture resources of Ltungai between the Samburu and Pokot; selected data from 2008 until 2010 indicate that these pastoralist communities not only engaged in violent conflict within their traditional zones but also extended their battles to other inter-community grazing zones such as Laikipia, where many lives were lost, pastoralists displaced and thousands of cattle stolen or maimed.

Notenbaert et al. (2012) and Barrett (2001) have also argued that livestock trading in arid and semi-arid grazing lands in Northern Kenya has been gravely affected by mounting insecurity and poor infrastructure that have negatively impacted on the risks of trading thus depriving pastoralists of a means to generate income through their cattle. Inter-communal war, as witnessed between the Samburu and the Pokot over Ltungai Conservancy, therefore affects livestock marketing and production through closure of markets. This is further illustrated by the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism (CEWARN) of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), 2010, p. 10), when it notes: “Markets like Amaya in Churo division, Lengewyan and Suguta Marmar in Loroki division, Losuk in Maralal and Poro in Samburu west where the two communities traded peacefully years back have closed down because of the conflict over pasture.”

*e) Inter-Community Arms Race*

The Samburu-Pokot violence over the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy undoubtedly precipitated an inter-community arms race. North-western Kenya has, since independence, experienced “state retreat,” a situation where the state deliberately chooses to invest very minimally in its citizens in terms of economic development and security. Marginalization of the arid and semi-arid pastoralist rangelands was pursued as a state policy through *Sessional Paper No. 10 on African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya of 1965* which outlined the economic development policy of Kenya and directed that development funds should be committed to more developed areas with good soil and good infrastructure, with the assumption that these benefits would trickle down to pastoral rangelands in Northern Kenya over time (Government of Kenya, 1965).

As a result of decades of marginalization and neglect evident in limited presence of state security and rampant cattle raids, many pastoralist communities in Northern Kenya acquired guns for self-protection and aggression. While many households among the Samburu and Pokot were armed even before the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy, interviews<sup>12</sup> conducted among the Pokot along the Amaya River indicate that there was a deliberate effort by the political elite from both communities to obtain weapons and to avail these cheaply to kinsfolk as a means of enforcing claims to land and for self-protection. However, it should further be noted that while these weapons were acquired due to the conflict over Ltungai, many of these households used their weapons not only against each other but also to target other neighbourhood communities such as the Turkana and the Njemps, especially during cattle raids. The inter-community arms race occasioned by the battle over Ltungai has therefore contributed to loss of lives and livestock through commercialized cattle raids in north-western Kenya. This view is supported by Greiner (2012, p. 9), who, in his field work in East Pokot District, noted: “As the price of automatic guns and ammunition decreased, leading to what amounted to arms races by rural populations, the frequency of violent interactions increased”.

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<sup>12</sup> Interviews with John Gedii and Kibe Kolem at Kasilangwa in East Pokot District in March 19, 2012.

A Delicate Balance

Table 1: Incidences of Cattle Raids among the Samburu and Pokot during the Conflict over

Date	County	District	Stock Stolen	Recovered Stock	Deaths/ Injuries
01.01.2008	Laikipia	Laikipia West	4 cattle, 18 goats	-	-
16.01.2008	Laikipia	Laikipia West	27 cattle	-	-
21.01.2008	Laikipia	Laikipia East	45 cattle	45 goats	1 Pokot dead
22.01.2008	Laikipia	Laikipia West	6 cattle	6 cattle	1 Samburu dead
25.01.2008	Laikipia	Laikipia West	16 sheep	-	1 Injury
08.02.2008	Samburu	Samburu Central	80 cattle	62 cattle	-
09.02.2008	Turkana	Turkana Central	12,600 cattle, 834 camels, 164 donkeys and 50,000 goats and sheep	-	3 Pokot dead, 4 Turkana dead, 3 Turkana injured
17.03.2008	Baringo	East Pokot	107 goats	-	-
02.02.2009	Samburu	Samburu Central	507 goats and sheep	275 goats and sheep	-
04.09.2009	Samburu	Samburu East	Unknown number of cattle	20 cattle	-
18.04.2009	Samburu	Samburu Central	150 cattle, 5 donkeys	-	1 Samburu dead
25.06.2009	Samburu	Samburu Central	2,000 cattle	1,000 cattle	4 Samburu dead, 1 Pokot dead, 2 Samburu injured, 50 cattle dead
15.09.2009	Laikipia	Laikipia West	Over 400 cattle		32 Samburu killed, 8 Pokot killed

Source: Adapted from Occurrence Book of Various Police Stations in Kenya and private notes from Clemens Greiner in 2012

*f) Closure of Schools and the Repatriation of Civil Servants from the Area*

The conflict occasioned by the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy contributed to the closure of many primary and secondary schools in the area. Of particular importance here is the inter-community school, *Amani*<sup>13</sup> Primary School, in Amaya, which was closed during the entire period of the Samburu-Pokot violence as both pupils and teachers were targeted due to their ethnicity. The closure of this school led many schoolchildren to drop out of school, and contributed to the conflict since many teenage boys were easily recruited to fight against each other in the conflict while many teenage girls were circumcised and married off to warriors involved in the conflict in an effort by their parents to secure livestock to sustain their households. This conflict undoubtedly contributed to lowering the living standards of Pokot and Samburu children and increasing poverty in these pastoral societies as a whole given that it created an ill-equipped younger generation who may never have a real chance to contribute to societal development due to their functional illiteracy. The criminality that continues to persist among the Samburu and Pokot to date can be attributed to the large numbers of young men and women whose education was disrupted due to the conflict over Ltungai Conservancy. The impact of the violent conflict over Ltungai Conservancy on education is aptly captured by IRIN News (2006, p. 1): “the Laikipia Education Office report for September showed that seven schools had closed. It also reported that the fighting had reversed gains made in increasing school enrolment in the region, inhabited by pastoralists.”

*g) Closure of Inter-Community Cattle Dips and Inaccessibility of Extension Services*

The Samburu-Pokot conflict led to violent contests over inter-community cattle dips that were previously located in shared markets such as Longewan, Losuk and Lonyek. The closure of cattle dips and the absence of extension services due to insecurity further aggravated the plight of pastoralists' livestock, leading to the easy spread of cattle diseases. The

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<sup>13</sup> *Amani* is a Swahili word meaning peace. This school is an inter-community venture supported by the Government of Kenya and other development partners in an effort to enhance peace and development among the Pokot, Samburu and Turkana; the children studying in this school come from all of these communities.

inability of pastoralist households to access veterinary services contributed to poor livestock health. The droughts and famine that followed from 2006 not only decimated the livestock but also led to deaths of many pastoralists in Samburu West and East Pokot Districts. As Schilling et al. (2012, p. 11) reports: “A reduction in livestock population, even by small numbers, is critical especially for the pastoralists who depend on livestock for income and food security”.

*h) Dependency on Relief Supplies*

The protracted conflict over Ltungai Conservancy between the Pokot and the Samburu created a state of anarchy, and thus prevented many households from producing their own food. The droughts and famine experienced in much of Northern Kenya in 2006, 2009 and 2010 decimated livestock and left many households facing starvation. The establishment of Ltungai Conservancy therefore directly threatened pastoralists' livelihoods as it converted an inter-community grazing reserve into a wildlife conservancy and contributed to livestock deaths. The insecurity that prevailed in East Pokot and Samburu West Districts made the option of relief supplies hugely attractive to many desperate Pokot and Samburu households and as a result the Government of Kenya secured relief supplies such as maize flour, oil, maize and beans, thus altering the food choices of many pastoralist communities, as observed by Sortland (2009, p. 68):

People migrated close to Maralal in Kirisa Division and Suguta Marmar in Lorroki Division, primarily for two reasons. Firstly, these centralised areas were considered safe from raids, and secondly the areas provided some meagre non-pastoral economic opportunities, including a bigger chance of joining in on the monthly distribution from the food relief program.

Today many households in Samburu West and East Pokot largely depend on relief food and lack incentives for human innovation and productivity towards the cultivation of traditional vegetables and tubers that would sustain their lives.

*i) Ethnicised Pastoral Grazing Corridors*

The conflict between the Samburu and Pokot from 2005 to 2009 over the establishment of Ltungai Conservancy appreciably contributed to the ethnicization of pastoralists' grazing corridors. Inter-community grazing lands were managed through inter-community grazing committees comprising representatives from elders, *morans* and women. Grabbing of 'Pokotland'<sup>14</sup> in Ltungai led to dissolution of inter-community grazing committees and monopolization of inter-community grazing reserves by one community. A key example here is Kanampiu, Laikipia County, which was largely dominated by the Pokot immediately after the massacre that led to the deaths of over 35 Samburu herders. This conflict therefore contributed to exclusion of pastoralists from pasture and water resources thus aggravating the survival options of many households. From his interviews in East Pokot, Greiner (2012, p. 12) further confirms this view:

Most Pokot feel that they are the rightful owners of the designated conservancy area, and they are afraid that with the implementation of the conservancy the Samburu will cement their claim to the area. This was vividly expressed by a young Pokot man: 'We are fighting over boundaries and land. The Samburu want a conservancy but the area they want to use for it is our land. This is where our grandfathers were living. The Samburu want a conservancy, but they do not want to give out their land, they take our land.'

*j) Limitation to Livestock Mobility*

Research has shown that livestock mobility is essential for "biodiversity conservation and pasture growth" (Notenbaert et al., 2012, p. 1). Further, Notenbaert et al. assert that 'herd mobility is not only essential for effective risk management, it also enables pastoralists to harness the environmental variability and enhance livestock production" (2012, p. 1). The establishment of Ltungai Conservancy can be seen to have limited livestock mobility by the reduction in pasture lands and the subsequent outbreak of pastoralist conflict which limited pasture options for the

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<sup>14</sup> Meaning, the ancestral land of the Pokot.

Samburu and Pokot. Lack of access to pasture leads to low production of milk and meat which are essential supplies for pastoralists' households. Greiner (2012, p. 15) further highlights the dilemma faced by many pastoral Pokot after the establishment of Ltungai when he notes:

Although this notion of East Pokot as an open-access territory is rapidly and profoundly changing, people from areas outside the designated conservancies feel alienated from what they claim is also their land. They fear losing access to pastures which they formerly used and which are critical for the survival of their herds.

*k) Overpopulation and Sedentarisation of Pastoralists in East Pokot*

The displacement of over 2,000 Pokot households from Loroki, Lonyek and Longewan and their subsequent settlement among their kin in East Pokot District contributed to overpopulation. In seeking land to put up homesteads and supplement their diet, many households annexed pasture lands, thus contributing to limited space for livestock mobility and thereby threatening the sustainability of pastoral production within East Pokot.

## **Conclusion**

Pastoral production is based on mobility and access to pasture land and water resources. Large-scale commercial investments in pastoral rangelands of north-western Kenya are embedded in the modernist thought pursued by the state of Kenya since independence. The case of Ltungai Conservancy, demonstrate that pastoralist livelihoods are endangered when pastoral reserves are annexed for commercial purposes. Given the marginalisation experienced by pastoralist groups in Eastern Africa and the reduction of pastoral rangelands, pastoralist groups such as the Pokot and Samburu are continually threatened with loss of pasture lands to state-permitted commercial ventures which also triggers inter-ethnic violence as pastoralist groups compete over diminishing pasture lands and water resources. Allocating pastoral lands for commercial ventures may be seen as a source of revenue by the state but at what cost to pastoralist livelihoods?

Governments in the Karamoja Cluster need to appreciate the viability of pastoralist production and enact laws and regulations that secure pasture lands for pastoralists' production while at the same time enforcing equitable and fair allocation through legal rights to own, utilize and access pasture and water resources among pastoralist groups.

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