

# Climate Change and Pastoralism: Traditional Coping Mechanisms and Conflict in the Horn of Africa

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# Climate Change and Pastoralism: Traditional Coping Mechanisms and Conflict in the Horn of Africa

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# Inter-Ateker Discord: The Case of the Nyangatom and the Turkana

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explains the longstanding inter-ethnic discord between the Nyangatom and the Turkana, and examines the effectiveness of the dispute resolution approaches tried so far. Both groups belong to the Karamojong Cluster (also Ateker), an ethno-geographic designation of numerous ethnic groups living in Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. The relationship between the Nyangatom and the Turkana began to deteriorate after the former lost control over their grazing land in the Kibish area during the colonial period. Over the years, the steady increase in herd size, exceeding carrying capacity; the changes in climatic patterns that led to frequent drought; the cultural values that incite violence; and the participation of non-pastoral groups in raids, made the conflict complex and complicated. In recent years, the Nyangatom-Turkana discord increased in frequency and intensity largely due to competition over scarce resources. The major consequences of this rather protracted inter-ethnic conflict include loss of precious life, permanent injuries, loss of access to pasture and water, and failing livelihoods. Thus far, the governments of Ethiopia and Kenya failed to stop the cross-border inter-ethnic conflicts in the Ilemi Triangle - a disputed territory. It is high time to devise a comprehensive program intervention in the border area to attain lasting peace.*

## **1. Introduction**

This paper explores the relationship between two ethnic groups: the Nyangatom of Ethiopia and the Turkana of Kenya. Both groups are members of the Ateker or the Karamojong (also Karimojong) Cluster, an ethno-geographic designation of numerous ethnic groups living in northeastern Uganda, northwestern Kenya, southeastern South Sudan, and southwestern Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup> It seems that there is no

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<sup>2</sup>Terrence McCabe (1996), in *Encyclopedia of World Cultures*, wrote, "Oral history and archaeological evidence suggest that, prior to A.D. 1500, the ancestors of the Ateker Language Group lived somewhere in southern Sudan and most likely subsisted as hunter and gatherer peoples. After beginning their southern migration, these ancestral peoples incorporated both agricultural and pastoral

clear consensus on which ethnic groups belong or do not belong to the Karamojong Cluster. Based on the works of previous researchers, Michael Quam (1999, p. 2) identified the Dodoth, Jie, Karimojong (which is further divided into Bokora, Matheniko, and Pian sub-groups), Teso, Turkana (Kenya), and one or two groups in Sudan, as the core groups of the Karamojong Cluster. The Jiye and the Toposa of South Sudan and the Nyangatom in Ethiopia are widely recognized as members of the Ateker group. In different online sources, the Chekwi, Kumam, Labwor, and Tepes are also reported to belong to the Karamojong Cluster.

Most members of the Karamojong Cluster speak mutually intelligible languages, share certain cultural values and practices and common religious traditions, and pursue similar livelihood strategies (agro-pastoralism—although the level of dependence on livestock or crop production varies from one group to another). The relationship between the various members of the Ateker is characterized by both hostility and solidarity. For example, the Nyangatom maintain friendly relations with the Toposa and frequently fight with the Turkana. If they all belong to the same geographic, socio-economic, and ethnic cluster, what is the reason that they maintain solidarity with some and are hostile with others?

Based on information obtained from the Nyangatom people in the South Omo Zone (Ethiopia) and a review of documents, this paper attempts to identify the factors that contributed to inter-ethnic discord. There will also be discussions about the social organisations of the Nyangatom and the effectiveness of customary and official dispute resolution mechanisms. It is important to understand the factors which divide the two groups, their historical and cultural relationship, and their existing conflict resolution methods, in order to identify the connectors (peace potentials) that could be used to revitalise solidarity between the Nyangatom and the Turkana.

The study, which started in 2010 in Nyangatom and continued in Jinka (the capital of the South Omo Zone) and Addis Ababa until September 2011, employed qualitative research methods (interviews, focus group discussions, and observations) and document reviews. The local residents of the Nyangatom (men, women, young, and old), government officials at different administrative levels, and relevant experts were interviewed at different times. The limitation of this paper is the absence of the Turkana perspective on the pertinent issues discussed.

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pursuits, and eventually split into groups that emphasised one subsistence strategy or another." According to another online source (<http://www.littlestar.com/karamojong/karmjong/migrate.htm>), "The Karamojong originated ... in what is now southern Ethiopia and Sudan. Traditions of the Karamojong group hold that the land they came from was mountainous and blessed with abundant rainfall.... Others have pointed to the Omo river valley, a tributary of Lake Turkana, as their point of origin. Several hundred years ago, somewhere between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries, a large migration of the original people (usually called the Plains Nilotes) began.... These Plains Nilotic peoples fanned out heading to west, south, .... The Toposa, the Jiye, and the Nyangatom seemed to retrace their steps to the northeast, almost returning to the point from which they began."

However, attempts have been made to review relevant studies, which focus on insight and experience in Turkana.

Conceptually, this paper follows certain lines of argument to provide a context for broader understanding of the complexity of conflict in the area. Given the fragile nature of the physical environment, the variability and unpredictability of rainfall, the scarcity of vital resources (water and pasture), the increased human and livestock population pressure, and the absence of alternative livelihood strategies, conflict is expected. Moreover, given the diversity of the actors (for example, the pastoral communities, state players, livestock traders, commercial raiders, arms dealers, armed gangsters), it would be naïve to assume that everyone values peace or strives to attain it. There might be individuals and/or groups whose interests are better served only when conflict prevails. Therefore, both conceptually and practically, it is important to recognise the complexity of conflict and the need for comprehensive intervention.

In the context of this paper, inter-ethnic pastoral conflict is conceptualised as a confrontation that prevails between groups of people who have or perceive to have competing interests to resources (in this case, pasture and water points), power, and opportunities. In the context of pastoral conflict, due to certain trigger factors, the prevailing confrontational situations often manifest themselves in violence that involves the killing and maiming people, livestock raids, property destruction, and the creation of widespread insecurity. Not all confrontations culminate in violence, as the opponents often have the opportunity to resolve differences peacefully. Violence could be averted by addressing the root causes of conflict and by preventing the trigger factors. Both strategies require the creation of the conditions necessary for the opponents to feel safe and united, and able to benefit from the mutual connection. In this regard, at the intervention level, attempts need to be made to identify the commonalities that could serve as connectors. Moreover, it is necessary to devise new strategies (such as border area joint projects) that promote cultural and socio-economic integration.

The paper is divided into five parts. This introduction is followed by the second part, which provides a brief ethnographic account of the Nyangatom people—background information, for example, on location, environment, history, economy, internal division, external relations, and development. In part three, the major factors that contributed to and escalated the inter-ethnic conflict between the Nyangatom and the Turkana are analytically discussed. The social organisations of the Nyangatom, and the various conflict resolution approaches attempted thus far, are discussed in part four. Knowledge of social organisations helps to enhance our understanding of the identity, role, power, and legitimacy of decision-makers. The concluding remarks and the recommendations represent the last part of the paper.

## 2. The study area

### 2.1 Overview of the Nyangatom world

The Nyangatom (also known as Gnangatom) people, who belong to the Nilo-Saharan language family, live in Southwestern Ethiopia, in the border region between Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan. Kangaten, the capital of Nyangatom *Woreda*, is located some 848 km southwest of Addis Ababa. According to the latest national census, the population of the Nyangatom ethnic group is 25,252 (Central Statistics Authority (CSA), 2007, p. 85), and the land area inhabited by the group is estimated to be 2,183.6 sq km.<sup>3</sup> The official territory of the Nyangatom stretches from the Omo river in the east to the Kibish river in the west.<sup>4</sup> While those who live in the west and central parts of the territory rely heavily on livestock production, those in the east largely depend on flood retreat cultivation of sorghum, some maize, cowpeas, and tobacco along the Omo River. The Nyangatom send their livestock (especially cattle) to cattle camps, located far away from permanent residential areas, where only milking cows and small stocks are kept. Those taking care of the animals in the cattle camp rely heavily on blood and milk for their subsistence.

The Nyangatom people have different social organisations: territorial sections (*ngiteala*, sing. *ekitala*), generation-sets (*ngikasa*, sing. *ekas*), age-sets (*ngigerea*, sing. *ajere*), and clans (*ngitekerea*, sing. *ateker*). These institutions play different roles in the secular and sacred lives of the people. The Nyangatom *Woreda*, which was established only in 2006, consists of three ethnic groups (Nyangatom, Kwegu or Muguji, and Murle) and 20 *Kebele* (local administrative tier). In the last five years, the new *Woreda* has taken encouraging steps in the area of office organisation, health provision, school enrolment, agricultural extension, gender participation, transportation and communication, and investment attraction. Regarding inter-ethnic conflict, the officials worked hard to convince local people to refrain from engaging in raids and revenge actions. Moreover, in collaboration with NGOs, they organised a series of peace initiatives and motivated people to focus on development activities. These efforts are reported to have significantly contributed to the reduction in the number of counter attacks from the Nyangatom side (CEWARN, 2010a). In the Nyangatom area, modernity is still far from a reality. The people continue to lead a traditional life, heavily reliant on their rich knowledge to exploit their natural environment.

Protestant Christianity was introduced in the Nyangatom territory in the early 1970s by the Swedish Philadelphia Church Mission (SPCM). The Mission made a modest contribution, in terms of providing modern education, healthcare, and irrigated agriculture. Most of the educated Nyangatom, currently serving or representing their people in different capacities, attended the mission school.

<sup>3</sup> The figure for land area was obtained from the South Omo Zone Administration.

<sup>4</sup> The local people claim that the Kibish area (both sides of the Kibish River) was their traditional homeland with its western border further west from the river.

Although the Church existed for a long time, it was only from the second half of the 1980s that teachings of the Bible spread in the society.

The Nyangatom people are surrounded by eight ethnic groups, namely, the Surma (Suri), Mursi, Kwegu (Muguji), Kara, Murle, Dassanech, Toposa, and Turkana. While the first seven reside in Ethiopia, the last two live outside of Ethiopia. Historically, the Nyangatom maintained peaceful relationships with the Toposa and the two small groups, the Muguji and Murle.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, they had a history of conflict with the Surma to the northwest, the Mursi to the north, the Kara and the Hamar to the east, and the Dassanech and the Turkana to the south. The Nyangatom, who were feared because of their reputation as ferocious warriors in the 1970s and 1980s, have now become a calm people—in the face of repetitive attacks from their neighbours. The decline in the motivation for aggression and the number of revenge killings was partly explained, by Christian informants in Nyangatom, in terms of religious teachings about sin and forgiveness. Many others attributed the reduction in the incidents of fighting to a lack of weapons, especially bullets, which ran out when the Sudanese civil war ended. There are still others (notably *woreda* government officials and development experts) who strongly believe that the recent development initiatives launched by the government significantly diverted the attention of people away from war. For a combination of reasons, the Nyangatom people were prepared and committed to lasting peace with their neighbours, especially the Turkana. This is an important peace opportunity on which to build.

## ***2.2 Nyangatom migration and inter-Ateker relations***

According to oral history, the Nyangatom migrated perhaps some 200 years ago from the Karamoja area, northeast Uganda, together with the Toposa—because of drought that caused the deaths of humans and livestock. Gulliver, (1968) (in Tornay, 1979, p. 98), considered the Nyangatom as a splinter group of the Toposa, who, in turn, originated from the Jie of Uganda. However, Serge Tornay (1979, p. 98) noted that the separation of the Nyangatom from the related Parakilotes might have occurred around 1800, at least concomitant with that of the Toposa. Upon arrival, while some of the Nyangatom settled west of the Kibish River, others moved further east and settled at Lere, near the Omo River. Informants noted that the Arbore<sup>6</sup> and the Dassanech were the original inhabitants of the Kibish and Omo areas respectively. The Nyangatom were already in the lower Omo valley by the time Count Samuel Teleki and Ludwig von Höhnel (travellers) visited the area in 1888. Tornay (1979, p. 98) wrote:

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<sup>5</sup> The Murle were called Narich and treated as one of the seven territorial sections of the Nyangatom until recently. At the moment, the Murle are officially registered as constituting an independent ethnic group.

<sup>6</sup> It appears that there was some kind of Nyangatom-Arbore integration or assimilation. One of the territorial sections of the Nyangatom called *Ngilingaqol* is believed to be related to the Arbore, who later migrated east.

At the time of the first explorations of the Lake Turkana area (by Höhnel and Teleki in 1888) two groups of Nyangatom, one at Kibish who were mainly cattle herders (the Dongiro), and the other at the Omo itself who lived mainly by cultivation and fishing (the Puma), were already settled in the Lower Omo Valley.

The Nyangatom people recognise the Karamojong as the earliest tribe, from which all Ateker members originated. According to one resourceful informant, the word Karamojong is made up of two terms: *ngikaru* (year) and *mojomong* (old). Thus, the Nyangatom define Karamojong as their ancestors who had lived for many years before their migration to their current location. All ethnic groups that originated from the earliest tribe (Karamojong) are collectively called Ateker. The Ateker members commonly known to the Nyangatom include the Matheniko, Pian, Bokora, Dodoth, Jie, Kumam, Tepeth, Toposa, Jiye, Turkana, and Teso. When asked what they have in common, many informants listed the following communalities: origin, geographic location (Karamoja), language, religion,<sup>7</sup> age-system, dances, and songs.

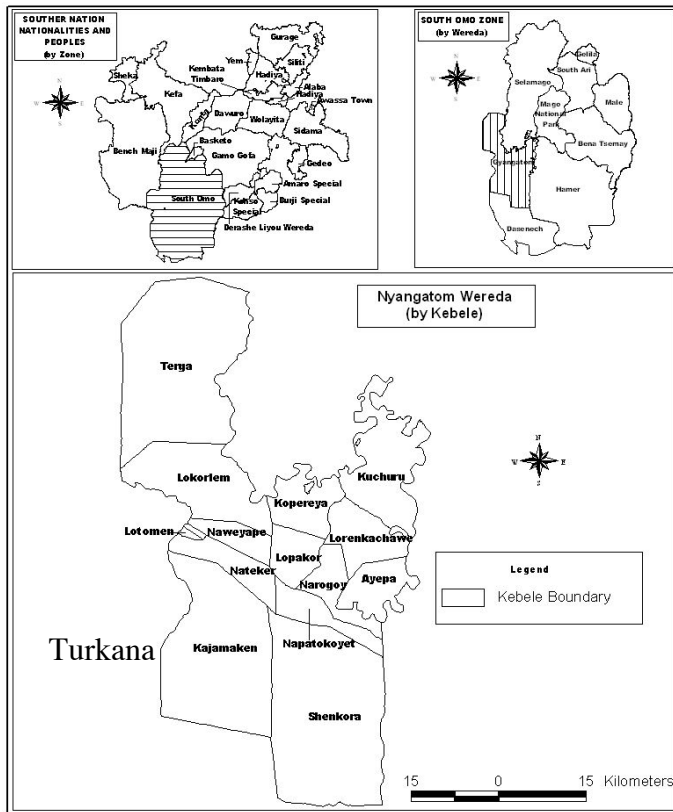


Figure 1: Map of Nyangatom Woreda  
Source: Adapted from CSA map

<sup>7</sup> The common religious beliefs include: Akuj (Sky God), ngikaram (ancestors), and ngipyen (spirits).



The Nyangatom and the Toposa are close associates and they consider one another *amuro-katta* (grand-mother's thigh), an expression that symbolises common ancestry. It is believed that they have descended from the same ancestor, lived in the same neighbourhood in the Karamoja area, migrated together, and split away only later. Cultural expectations exist between the two groups that stress sharing and mutual assistance. For instance, when a Nyangatom slaughters an animal, any Toposa (old or young) present is entitled to the hindquarter, as a matter of cultural right. Any Nyangatom would expect the same when his Toposa neighbour kills an animal. Failure to live up to this expectation is considered mystically dangerous and culturally unacceptable. The depth of the relationship between the two goes beyond sharing food, pasture, water, and residential areas. They often form alliances in fights against common enemies (e.g., Surma and Turkana) or each other's enemies (e.g., Dassanech are considered as Nyangatom's enemy, while Jiye are Toposa's).

The Nyangatom fully recognise that the Turkana are also their Ateker-mates. Apart from the recognition of common origin, the Nyangatom and the Turkana do not seem to have accounts of historical cooperation and cultural responsibilities for one another. Some writers noted that the Nyangatom people might have migrated from Uganda due to Turkana pressure (Mburu, 2001, p. 150; Tornay, 1979, p. 98), and this suggests that the two groups may have been early rivals. However, there exists no historical memory, or even folktale, that points to Nyangatom-Turkana conflict in olden days. What informants stressed was that the two groups lived together in peace when the Turkana moved to Kibish from the Lodwar area, located further south. The local people's remarks about the northward expansion of the Turkana is consistent with the reports of Alexander De Waal (1991) and Nene Mburu (2003) that the boundary of Turkana grazing, and the limits of Kenyan administration, moved north over the years. Terrence J. MacCabe (1996) presented the early migration and later expansion of the Turkana people as follows:

The period from 1500 to 1800 appears to have been characterized by frequent splitting and fusing of ethnic groups, and shifting alliances among the groups.... The Turkana people emerged as a distinct ethnic group sometime during the early to middle decades of the nineteenth century.... Oral histories suggest that the Jie seceded from the Karamojong, and that a group split off from the Jie established themselves in the region near the headwaters of the Tarach River, in what is now Turkana District, sometime during the early part of the eighteenth century. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Turkana cattle camps began to push down the Tarach in search of new pastures.... They first pushed to the north and east to Lake Turkana, and then to the south, crossing the Turkwell River.

During the early contact period, the Turkana and the Nyangatom were good friends, cherished their common identity as Ateker, and experienced intermarriage (although mutual raids occurred sporadically). Traditionally, pastoral territorial boundaries are flexible, to allow free movement and grant access to pasture and water resources. Prior to the colonial period, the Nyangatom and the Turkana exploited the rich pasture and water in the Kibish River valley. During the dry seasons, they migrated further north and west to share resources with the Surma and the Toposa people. Some 60-70 years ago, however, the relationship between the Nyangatom and the Turkana began to deteriorate fast. The Nyangatom informants firmly believed that external agents (the British colonial administration, the Kenyan government, and later commercial raiders) created and perpetuated animosity between them and the Turkana. There is a strong feeling among the Nyangatom that lasting peace with the Turkana could be attained if the external agents could stop interfering.

### **3. Factors responsible for Nyangatom-Turkana discord**

The 2002 USAID report identified three major causes of conflict in the Karamojong Cluster. These include structural or root causes, proximate causes, and triggering factors.

Structural causes of conflict in the Cluster include competition for scarce resources, traditional pastoral cultural values, increasing frequency of drought since about 1980, and the general poverty of the cluster. Proximate causes of conflict in the KC include systematic neglect by government of pastoral areas, politicization of conflict, the enormous increase in modern weapons, inappropriate government responses to conflict, provision of food aid without developing suitable livelihood opportunities for the recipients, interference by political leaders, weakened traditional authority systems, increased levels and non-traditional nature of violence, inflammatory media, and the introduction of commercial raiding.... Several factors can trigger immediate violent conflict between groups in the Cluster and surrounding areas, including a specific violent incident, a series of livestock theft, a raid, a government operation, traditional taunting by girls and women, a seer's prophecy, an inflammatory media article or a politician's speech (USAID, 2002, p. 8).

These characterizations of the causes of conflict in the Karamojong Cluster adequately capture the nature of the Nyangatom-Turkana conflict. With the intention of providing a deeper context and appreciation of the details of individual cases, the major factors that contributed to and exacerbated the Nyangatom-Turkana conflict are discussed below.

### ***3.1 Colonial land alienation and movement restriction***

The northward expansion of the Turkana became evident during the colonial period. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, certain Turkana sections are reported to have migrated to Ethiopia to avoid surrender to the British colonial army. According to Mburu (2001, p. 154), "Resistance to British military conquest was weak as some Turkana sections collaborated with the colonizers whereas those defiant evaded confrontation by simply relocating north to sanctuaries in Ethiopia."

At this stage, the Turkana did not pose a real threat to Nyangatom interests. Probably the most serious blow to pastoral economy in the Nyangatom area was the movement restriction that followed the colonial demarcation of boundaries. The British colonial administration in Kenya imposed several measures that restricted free movement and denied access to traditional pastures and water points. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Ilemi Triangle was created and patrolled by the King's African Rifles (KAR), in the name of protecting the Turkana against the Nyangatom and the Dassanech.<sup>8</sup> In July 1939, according to Mburu (2003), "Britain conducted a punitive raid with the King's African Rifles (KAR), supported by the Royal Air Force who dropped 250-pound bombs north of Ilemi."

The British troops of the KAR occupied Ilemi in 1941 and consolidated control over the area when the British entered Ethiopia to fight the Italians during World War II. In the 1940s, the British colonial administration in Kenya established "a series of police posts along the Ethiopian border at Kokuru, Liwan, Lokomarinyang, Kaiemothia and Kibish" (Almagor, 1986, p. 98), thereby effectively curtailing the movement of the Nyangatom and the Dassanech to their traditional grazing lands. This was a time when Ethiopia was deeply indebted to Britain for the help in expelling the Italians, after five years of occupation. Although the Turkana, who were perceived as enemies of the British, had to be brutally pacified,<sup>9</sup> the colonial boundary demarcation obviously expanded their grazing territory further north. The Nyangatom-Turkana relationship worsened after the enclosure of the Ilemi Triangle.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Paradoxically, during the same period the Turkana needed protection. The British military was responsible for the protection of the Karamoja of Uganda from Turkana aggressors (USAID, 2002, p. 23).

<sup>9</sup> However, the establishment of the colonial rule involved brutal military expeditions against the Turkana and the consequent disarmament, which made them vulnerable to attacks and raids by their northern neighbours (Mburu, 2001).

<sup>10</sup> Nyangatom and Turkana were not the only to experience hostility partly due to the colonial legacy. More than half of what became Turkana District was transferred from Uganda to Kenya in 1926 (USAID, 2002, p. 24), thereby exacerbating conflict between the Turkana and those who had lost their land. The report further noted that during the punitive military expeditions in Turkana, the British seized a large number of livestock, which were passed on to members of the Pokot ethnic group as reward for taking part in the campaign on the side of the colonial power, and this increased the animosity of the Turkana towards the Pokot.

### ***3.2 The Ilemi Triangle***

The Ilemi Triangle is a disputed territory claimed by Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan for more than a century now. From the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to the 1970s, numerous meetings were held to determine the status of this area. Since the meetings were held without involving all disputants, the agreements failed to prove binding. Temporary maps drawn during the colonial period, place the triangle under Sudan's control. Sudan and Kenya made arrangements for the latter to administer the area. Hence, Kenya has *de facto* control over the triangle today. Charles Haskins reported that the inter-ethnic conflicts in the Ilemi Triangle is considered as proxy wars to maintain claims to the disputed territory, and he warned that the problem was a time-bomb.

The problems facing people who live in the Ilemi Triangle...have up to now remain largely ignored by the outside world.... Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan have each been accused by international observers of using the ethnic groups to fight low-level proxy wars as a means of maintaining their claims to the disputed territory.... Inter-ethnic conflict, competition over dwindling natural resources, state neglect, a lack of adequate health care and, more recently, the discovery of oil, all make the Ilemi Triangle a time-bomb which is ticking inexorably towards disaster (Haskins<sup>11</sup>).

For the Nyangatom, the disaster is not in the future—it is an ongoing and lived experience. The lack of demarcation meant underdevelopment of the area due to state neglect, prolonged hopes that land could be reclaimed, and protracted conflict to realize this hope. After 100 years, unfortunately, there seems to be no solution in sight. In the past the three countries seemed to have chosen to avoid conflict over this remote and inaccessible location, which is perceived to be of marginal economic importance. With the Ilemi Triangle now described as potentially rich in unexplored oil reserves the prospect for peace in the area remains bleak. Therefore, it is high time for the three countries (Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan) to peacefully resolve the age-old and silent dispute over the triangle in a manner that respects the inalienable rights of the original inhabitants of the disputed area.

### ***3.3 Later and recent Turkana expansion***

The ordeals of the Nyangatom did not end with the end of British colonial rule in Africa. Reports and informants revealed that afterwards they continued to lose more land and more lives. In July 1988, the Kenyan government, which was planning to annex the Ilemi Triangle earlier in that year, massacred an estimated 700 Nyangatom and displaced the rest from the Kibish river valley (De Waal, 1991; Matsuda, 1994). De Waal (1991, Pp. 345-6) wrote:

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<sup>11</sup> Charles Haskins, in a report titled, "The Ilemi Triangle: A forgotten conflict" noted that the size of the area is between 10,000 to 14,000 sq km.  
[http://shalomconflictcenter.org/images/THE\\_ILEMI\\_TRIANGLE.pdf](http://shalomconflictcenter.org/images/THE_ILEMI_TRIANGLE.pdf)

[In] July 1988, the Kenyan police clashed with a group of Toposa or Nyangatom raiders who had previously attacked the Dassanech, and came of worst. Fifteen [Kenyan] policemen were killed, and some taken hostage. The Kenyan government responded the following day with an attack using helicopter gunships and paramilitary forces on the Nyangatom area of Kibish, which straddles Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. About 200 Nyangatom raiders and a minimum of 500 civilians were killed by the Kenyan forces over the following 18 days. In the attack, at least five villages in Ethiopia were partly destroyed, the Swedish Philadelphia Mission at Kibish was burned.

The 1988 Kibish massacre is locally known as the *dio* incident, after the District Office of Kenya at Kibish from which the attack was launched. The *dio* incident led to the forced relocation of some Nyangatom eastward as far as the Omo River, while others fled further north to Mount Naita. On the very day the Kenyans bombed the Nyangatom positions, the survivors fled the area in disarray, abandoning their chief, called Loguti Lobotol, who died shortly after the *dio* incident. The Nyangatom, believe that the disappointed and humiliated chief cursed the people and the land, and the curse is now manifested through natural disasters and man-made adversities.

Soon after the Kibish massacre, the Kenyan government is reported to have strengthened its presence by increasing the Police Force, establishing a military camp, and reinforcing the district administrative post. Since the 1988 incident, the grazing area that stretches from the Kibish River to the Tepeth Mountain has been under Turkana control. The Turkana continued to attack and raid the Nyangatom by crossing the Kibish River, deep into Ethiopian territory. A large-scale attack in December 2008 on the Lebere, Kajamakin and Natikar villages caused property destruction and a massive displacement eastwards of the Nyangatom people. In June 2011, the Turkana occupied Lobere for weeks and then withdrew; reportedly after high-level government officials of the two countries were alerted.

### ***3.4 Livestock raids: traditional and transformed***

Among most pastoral groups, raiding is widely practiced to replenish lost stock or build new herds. A USAID (2002, p. 5) report stated, "In some respects, this raiding can be seen as a quasi-legitimate sharing of resources, permitting groups on the verge of economic ruin and even starvation to re-establish their systems of food production and natural resource management." Legitimate or otherwise, raiding and livestock theft remain the hallmark of Nyangatom-Turkana relations. Raiding led to the cycle of retribution and violent conflict in the Ilemi Triangle. From the Nyangatom perspective, Turkana raiding has increased in frequency and intensity. A high-profile raid took place in August 2009, when the Turkana allegedly raided more than 13,316 livestock from the Nyangatom (Gebre, 2011).

The practice of raiding is reported to have transformed because of the alleged involvement of some elements of the Kenyan security forces, livestock traders, arms dealers, and jobless armed gangsters. The alleged non-pastoral actors behind cattle rustling are reported to be employing sophisticated strategies to ensure success in raiding. These include meticulous planning and execution of raids, the use of advance automatic weapons (e.g., G3), the use of trucks to load and drive the animals away, and the immediate selling of animals. Teshome Mekonnen (2010, Pp. 206-7) wrote, "When the commercial raiders sold cattle in distant markets, the ability to locate and restore these cattle to rightful owners becomes impossible." Regarding commercial raiding, Nancy Omolo (2011, p. 88) wrote, "The challenging problem is the way in which livestock raiding has been transformed over the years, from a cultural practice/redistributive raiding into a more predatory activity/commercial activity.... In Turkana, the increase in 'commercial' raiding includes cases of 'sponsored' raiding where guns are provided to young men by wealthy people who wish to acquire livestock for sale." Cathy Watson (2003, p. 9) states, "Commercial raids are defined as an aspect of the wider integration of pastoralists within a market economy, and as such includes both raids in which the promoters are not pastoralists themselves, but also those involving pastoralists or ex-pastoralists who raid then sell the stolen livestock immediately afterwards."

The USAID (2002, p. 6) report also highlighted a new conflict trend, as follows:

One newer phenomenon in the KC [Karamojong Cluster] is roadside banditry, which is often blamed on young men living in the towns and centers. They are part of a growing reservoir of impoverished and uneducated young men, many of whose families have been forced out of pastoralism by circumstances beyond their control or who have dropped out of pastoralist way of life while their families struggle on. All these young men have limited opportunities to earn income so they end up preying on their fellow citizens.

### ***3.5 Other indirect factors***

While some factors directly contributed to the Nyangatom-Turkana conflict, others failed to play preventive roles or even exacerbated cross-border pastoral conflict. For example, there is lax security on the Ethiopian side of the Ethio-Kenyan border. In Nyangatom, there are only two police posts (Kibish and Kakuta) located around the border area. They represent a symbolic presence rather than an actual force capable of monitoring the long, porous border and protecting the people from Turkana attacks. According to the study, Kakuta, Lebere, Lokorlam, and Natikar are Nyangatom villages repeatedly attacked by the Turkana. When the fighters/raiders from Kenya perpetrate attacks on Ethiopian soil, the border police, or special security force, rarely come to the rescue of the Nyangatom. The Kenyan side of the border seems to be better protected by the General Service Unit (GSU),

the regular police, and the Kenyan Police Reservist (KPR). According to Nyangatom informants, the Kenyan forces have the capacity to monitor movement on the Ethiopian side of the border, alert the Turkana through by radio, and provide cover when the Turkana attackers/raiders are pursued by the Nyangatom. Some Nyangatom informants reported to have witnessed the involvement of elements of the Kenyan security force in the raids and sharing out of raided animals. It is equally important to acknowledge the brave acts of the responsible Kenyan security forces, in helping the Nyangatom recover raided/stolen livestock. Sammy Ekal (2008), Secretary of Riam Riam (an NGO operating in Turkana), reported,

On 7<sup>th</sup> February 2008, the Ngisiger clan of the Turkana from Lapur division... raided the Nyangatom...386 herds of cattle and during this incident six Nyangatom were gunned down.... On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2008...a violent armed clash occurred between the Turkana of Ngisiger clan and the General Service Unit based at Kibish when the security force was pursuing the Turkana raiders to recover the stolen Nyangatom cattle...the armed raiders opened fire at the security force injuring three...

The Nyangatom-Turkana conflict may have been complicated and exacerbated by human, cultural and natural factors. Within 23 years, the population of the Nyangatom increased fourfold: from 6,087 in 1984 (CSA, 1984, p. 45) to 25,252 in 2007 (CSA, 2007, p. 85). Given the population growth trend in developing countries, it would be safe to assume that the Turkana, the population of which is estimated at 497,770 (Omolo, 2011), have also been expanding demographically. The rapid population growth, and the high social values attached to cattle, may have contributed to the steady increase in the number of livestock being kept. On the other hand, climate change, which is evidenced by frequent drought, has caused scarcity of water and pasture. In recent periods, the Nyangatom experienced severe drought incidences in 2000, 2003, 2005 and 2008. Therefore, environmental change, population growth, and increased herd size, combined with a host of other factors, have exacerbated competition over vital resources—leading to the escalation of inter-ethnic conflict in the hotspot Ilemi Triangle.

A number of cultural values and practices seem to have had a triggering effect on pastoral conflict. In Nyangatom, traditionally participation in offensive/defensive action is important, in order to demonstrate masculinity and fitness. Killing members of ethnic groups considered your enemy does not necessarily subject the killer(s) to negative sanction. The culture allows killers to perform rituals that earn them greater reputation, bestows them with killer names, and changes their social status. Women, in particular, are reported to be playing a significant role in driving men into violence by challenging docility and encouraging/praising aggressiveness. When an individual from a group kills a member of another group, the blame is laid on his group and any member of that group will be targeted for revenge. According to Nyangatom informants, the traditions related to warrior ethos, hero

cults, and the cycle of retribution are not different in the Turkana. It is also important to underline that guns entered the highly valued cultural repertoire and the use of automatic guns since the 1980s has increased pastoral fatality.

### ***3.6 Environmental and climatic factors***

Some reports, based on insight from the Turkana area, explain the escalation of conflict between the Turkana and their neighbours, such as the Nyangatom, primarily in terms of how climate change contributed to resource scarcity. Sammy Ekal (2008) attributes the increase in conflict incidences between the Turkana and all their neighbours as the scramble for available natural resources, following the failure of rain. Integrated Regional Information Network (Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), 2011) reported, "Cross-border armed conflict over resources among Turkana pastoralists in northeastern Kenya has increased following the severe drought ravaging parts of the Horn of Africa." Thijs Berman (2011), a Dutch politician and Member of the European Parliament, wrote,

Last May I visited Kenya's Turkana province, on the border with Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia.... I had read about the killings of twenty people the week before; it seemed a revenge for a cattle raid by an Ethiopian tribe. The government downplayed the news somewhat, but during my visit it appeared this was not an isolated incident. The struggle for water, for viable land and cattle makes the situation very tense.

Information from the local people also reveal that, over the last few decades, temperatures have increased, rainfall decreased, and droughts occurred with a frequency and intensity never seen before. Informants stressed that they experienced prolonged dry spells and significant seasonal and annual variability of rainfall. Although there are indications that climate change does contribute to or worsen conflict, it is not easy to link specific meteorological factors to a specific conflict. This is partly because conflict occurs due to a number of factors other than climate related ones. When the dry spells intensify, people and livestock concentrate in resource-rich areas, and it is at this time that resource-related conflict surfaces. Yet, a single-year dry season may not lead to conflict, as water and grass do not disappear completely within a short period of time. Moreover, violent conflict is not considered as the only option to address scarcity. People tend to exhibit tolerance in the face of threats and provocations from enemies, in order to save human and animal lives.



## 4. Social organizations and conflict resolution approaches

### 4.1 Social organisations<sup>12</sup>

*Territorial organisation:* There are seven named territorial sections (sing. *ekitala*, pl. *ngiteala*) in Nyangatom. These include Ngilingaqol, Ngkapung, Ngsaqol, Ngutokoraman, Ngukumama, Nubune, Ngarich.<sup>13</sup> An individual (male or female) is born into a given territorial section through his/her father. Section names are not place names, rather the collective names of people occupying a given place. Hence, sections can best be described as political units where important decisions are made. In other words, a territorial section serves as a social identity and fundamental organising principle. Individuals and communities participate in public life through their territorial sections. As Tornay (1981, p. 160) noted, “Members of the sections have rights to settlement, grazing and watering, cultivation, and transhumance within their territory.”

*Generation-set:* The generation-set (*ekas*) is another very important social organisation in Nyangatom. It operates side-by-side and in total harmony with the territorial section. The men of one generation-set father the men of the next generation-set. Hence, each individual belongs to the generation junior to his father. At any given time, two generation-sets with living members are recognised as major and dominant, and they are called the 'Fathers of the Country' and the 'Sons of the Country.' During the research period, the *Gnytome* (Elephants) and the *Gnyorukopi* (Ostriches) represented the Fathers of the Country and the Sons of the Country respectively. Junior to the Ostriches, are three generation-sets: *Gnugoleteng* (Antelopes), *Gnykosowa* (Buffalos), and the youngest generation (not yet formally named, but temporarily called the *Gnykinyaga* (Crocodiles), ranked in order of seniority.

Traditionally, secular (administrative, judicial, etc.) and ritual powers are vested in the hands of the Fathers of the Country. Serious matters of public concern are brought to their attention for deliberation. Since the entire Nyangatom society is organised according to the principle of generation-sets, every territorial section has the same generation-sets. Hence, in all territorial sections of Nyangatom it is the Elephants who are responsible for the management of public affairs. Theoretically, the Elephants are the sole decision-makers. Practically, however, they invite a certain number of members of the sets called Ostriches, Antelopes, and sometimes Buffalos, to attend crucial meetings. The Elephants could delegate power to the Ostriches to handle certain issues on their behalf. The Sons of the Country are responsible for ensuring the implementation of the decisions made by the

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<sup>12</sup> In order to adequately grasp the customary dispute resolution mechanisms, it is necessary to understand social organisations. Deeper knowledge of the social organisations of conflicting groups would enable us to understand the decision-making processes and the power and legitimacy of local actors in pastoral conflict. This, in turn, may serve as an entry point for planned intervention or further and detailed research.

<sup>13</sup> The Ngarich section consists of the Murle, an independent ethnic group assimilated into the Nyangatom. In recent years, the independence of the Murle has been recognised.

Elephants and giving orders to the junior sets, who are responsible for the actual implementation of decisions. Despite the introduction of modern administrative and justice systems, the Nyangatom prefer to resolve intra-and inter-ethnic conflict through traditional mechanisms. In recent years, however, people have realized that only bilateral government meetings would resolve the cross-border conflict with the Turkana.

*Age-sets:* Generation-sets are further divided into a number of age-sets. Age-sets consist of age-mates, i.e., males of a similar biological age through an initiation ritual called *apeyo*. Except for the most senior generation-set (which loses most members due to aging) and the most junior generation-set (which recruits new members), generation-sets in the middle hierarchy have several age-sets. Neville Dyson-Hudson (1963, p. 358-9) explained the age system among the Karimojong cluster as follows:

Adult male Karimojong are recruited into named corporate groups of coevals, termed *ngasapaneta* or *ngasapanisia*, and here are spoken of as age-sets. Each age-set comprises all those men who have performed the initiation ceremonies within (ideally) a single five-to-six years period throughout the entire tribe. Five age-sets amalgamate into a named corporate group of wider time span and larger membership, termed *anyamet*, to which I give the name generation-set. Each generation-set thus comprises all men of the tribe who have performed initiation within the period of 25 to 30 years ideally covered by its constituent age-sets.

Likewise, the generation-sets of the Nyangatom are divided into age-sets, which are formed in different localities and with different names. Age-mates, willing to be initiated into a new age-set, have to demonstrate their readiness by participating in some offensive/defensive action. Moreover, they are expected to offer animals (e.g. goats) to members of the senior age-sets within the same generation. As Tornay (1981, p. 162) noted, the senior age-sets ‘...in return allow the initiands to wear the adult mauve plastered head-dress and to adopt the new age-set name,...

The name could be chosen by the new initiates or imposed on them by the elder age-mates. The youths continue to join the newly initiated age-set until the group becomes numerous and strong enough to declare its autonomy. Although the dates of age-set formation and the names given to individual sets vary from place to place, the ranks of the sets and the structural equivalence is widely understood.

*Clan:* The Nyangatom are divided into 14 (there may be more) named patrilineal exogamous clans (*ngitekerea*, sing. *ateker*). These include Ngimuyoko, Ngitoroy, Ngukuko, Ngikuakurecha, Ngidhocha, Ngikor, Nginyanga, Ngipucho, Ngiribo,

Ngithiger, Ngiraputa, Ngilopol, Ngimeturuaba, and Ngikuren.<sup>14</sup> The clans of Murle (Yirmach) and Muguji (Numuchu) are not treated as Nyangatom clans.<sup>15</sup> An individual becomes a member of his/her father's clan at birth. Unlike in other cultures, such as Somalia, clans do not serve as organising foundations for the formation of a political entity. According to Tornay (1981, p. 153), 'clans should be viewed as emblematic entities rather than descent units.' Most clans are not territorial and thus do not claim resources in their names. Clans do not have publicly recognized roles in major decision-making processes. However, certain clans are believed to have the power to make/stop rain, deceive/trick enemies, cure snake/scorpion bites, and control disease. For instance, the Ngikuren are reported to be responsible for fire and war.

#### **4.2 Conflict resolution approaches**

*Resolving intra-ethnic conflicts:* In Nyangatom, there exists an elaborate customary law for resolving intra-ethnic conflicts. The common types of internal conflict that are often resolved using customary mechanisms include homicide, adultery, impregnating girls, disputes over resources (water and pasture), theft, failure to pay debt, and betrayal. When disputes arise, attempts are made to resolve them at the family, friends, or neighbourhood level, with or without involving elders. Sometimes individuals may agree to resolve their problems within the presence of few witnesses. If the matter turns out to be difficult to handle then more elders may be invited to participate, while the matter is still kept low key. The arbitrators/elders would normally ask the disputants to explain the causes of their conflict, before advising them to reconcile rather than hurt each other and their loved ones. When such initial efforts fail, the matter is taken to members of the senior generation-set (Gnytome) and/or a senior member of the Ngukumama territorial section. The Ngukumama are considered as ritual experts, peace symbols, and masters of blessing/cursing. The presentation of a case to the Gnytome or the Ngukumama is followed by various procedures of hearing, evidence verification, deliberation, ritual performance, and provision of compensation.

*Resolving inter-ethnic conflicts:* After a major conflict, or a series of repeated small clashes, inter-ethnic disputes were resolved by traditional mechanisms. In most cases, elders from one or more groups expressed the need to initiate a peace process through peace messengers, who carried peace symbols—white ostrich feathers tied to a tree branch. Following approval of both parties meetings will be held in each group to discuss possible reconciliation. Then delegates will be identified to attend the peace ceremony. On a date fixed in advance, the guests from one group travel to the village of the other group, often to their common border area. The Nyangatom are represented by senior members of the Elephants,

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<sup>14</sup> Serge Tornay (1981, Pp. 153-4) counted 20 clans in Nyangatom and noted that some of the clans have wives acquired from the Dodoth, Lotuko, and Turkana peoples. The reduction in the list of Nyangatom clans today may partly be explained in terms of the death of these women.

<sup>15</sup> Further research may reveal that the Murle and the Muguji have more clans than only one each.

senior members of the Ostriches, at least one Ngukumama, and other wise elders and young men as deemed necessary.

Upon their arrival, the guests will be given warm hospitality, including the slaughtering of small animals in their honour. The same day, or often the next day, the peace negotiations would resume and continue for at least a day. In order to develop trust and confidence, the deliberations would be held in a manner that is open/free and based on telling the truth. Terms of compensation and retrieval of animals would be agreed, to the satisfaction of both parties, and implemented without any delay. Rituals will be performed to validate and enforce the agreements. Since the Nyangatom and the Turkana share the same religious traditions and cultural values and practices, the reconciliation rituals are taken seriously. Common ritual practices include splashing milk and water on participants, placing the belly fat of a sacrificial goat on their necks, rubbing hands/body with stomach discharges, holding fresh green grass/leaves, breaking and burying spears or guns, cursing evil deeds, and blessing peaceful activities. The participants would then return to their respective groups to spread the peacemaking news and urge their people to refrain from engaging in any conflict. In the past, conflict was intermittent and peace deals lasted for several years. Today, peace efforts fail immediately, or last only a very short.

*Community level peace initiatives:* The community-based conflict resolution mechanisms discussed above worked well prior to the 1970s but not in recent years. After the 1988 Kibish massacre, the relationship between the Nyangatom and the Turkana further deteriorated. Ten years later, the Nyangatom and the Turkana elders met and performed reconciliation rituals at Lokiriyama (Kenya). To the embarrassment of the Nyangatom elders involved and the people they represented, the Turkana launched an organized attack on the very day the Lokiriyama meeting was held. In 2004, elders from the two ethnic groups met at Kibish (Kenya) and swore through acts of rituals, not to attack and raid each other. Once again, according to Nyangatom informants, the Turkana violated the deal by launching an attack shortly after the meeting. However, the Nyangatom explain the failure of peace deals in terms certain agents in Kenya who benefit from destabilization. One elder noted:

We know the ordinary Turkana, we know their elders. They are our neighbours, our cousins. They want to live in peace with us. When we meet, we say: what went wrong? Aren't we Ateker? Why are we killing each other? The ordinary Turkana could not understand why the peace agreements are violated.... Of course, there are some Turkana who come from distant locations to raid. That happens rarely. They come for animals, not for land.... The real enemy is the father of Turkana [the Kenyan government] who spoiled some of his children. He sends them to kill us, to evict us from home... Our father [the Ethiopian government] does not protect us.

It appears that the traditional methods of resolving conflict are not taken seriously by the Turkana, as evidenced by their failure to honour agreements. Some Nyangatom informants unequivocally expressed their conviction that elements of the Kenyan security forces, local officials, and NGOs operating on the Kenyan side of the border, are not interested in ending the raiding. Others felt that the younger generation and the educated Turkana do not respect their elders or honour their decisions. This may have to do with the dismantling of the traditional dispute resolution institutions by the colonial administration.

Colonial boundaries were introduced that put restriction on transhumant migrations and imposed an alien system of resolving community disputes, which usurped the gerontocratic authority previously vested with community elders.... It is notable that before colonialism, chiefly authority constrained unnecessary conflicts and when they occurred, it regulated bloodletting and devastation. For example, there existed a poly-tribal council of elders known as Lukiko, which settled inter-community disputes over water, grazing or livestock thefts between the Nyangatom, Turkana, Dassanetch and Toposa without recourse to war.... However, this traditional institution was destroyed by the British system of colonial administration that was backed by the force of modern weapon (Mburu, 2001, p. 155).

*District level peace initiatives:* The second conflict resolution approach relates to peace initiatives taken by authorities of adjacent border districts. The Nyangatom *Woreda* administration, on its own and sometimes in collaboration with other agencies, worked to organise or facilitate a series of peace meetings/events. In 2006, the administration sent a delegate to Loktank (Kenya) to initiate peace talks, and this initiative led to the January 2007 initial meeting at Kangaten (Ethiopia) and the March 2007 peace conference at Kibish (Kenya). During this conference, elders of the Nyangatom and the Turkana signed a comprehensive peace agreement, in the presence of district officials from both countries. In October 2007, a peace festival was organized by a local NGO called Atowokis Ekisil Pastoralist Development Association (AEPDA) at Kangaten, with the objective of promoting and strengthening the peace effort. People from 18 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya participated. In January 2008, the Turkana violated the 2007 Kibish peace deal and since then have intensified their assaults with impunity. The 2008 Turmi Accord was also reportedly broken by the Turkana. On the other hand, Riam Riam (2008, online), the Kenyan NGO operating in Turkana, claimed that the Nyangatom were in breach of the Turmi agreement, as follows:

From Turmi - Ethiopian meeting communities agreed as a resolution that a 10 km buffer zone be created within the communities for purposes of managing the conflict in the area but

... we found Nyangatom livestock [grazing] within the fence of the Kenya GSU camp, an issue that had contravened the Turmi resolutions. Therefore, we attribute that as a problem caused by lack of following the laid down agreement by either communities, governments and the civil societies.

The 2010 CEWARN Country Updates from Ethiopia (for the period of September-December 2009) recognises the efforts made by the Ethiopian local authorities to minimise cross-border counter raids and revenge killings in the face of repetitive attacks from the Kenyan side, as follows:

The active engagement of local authorities in positive peace activities was one of the key reasons for keeping the peace initiatives.... The Dassanech and Nyangatom administrations had worked relentlessly in convincing the communities to refrain from launching counter raids in the face of repetitive attacks from Turkana. They were tirelessly moving from settlements to settlements in an attempt to convince the communities to show restraints. This has hugely contributed to the lessening of cross-border attacks from the Ethiopian side (CEWARN, 2010a, p. 9).

*Regional level peace initiatives:* Bilateral border commission meetings represent the third peace-making approach. When local peace initiatives failed and the conflict escalated unabated, the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya once in a while organise high-level meetings through their border commissions. The latest such meeting was held in October 2009 at Nakuru (Kenya) and November 2009 at Hawassa (Ethiopia). The Nakuru and Hawassa meetings were led by the Provincial Commissioner of the Rift Valley Province and the President of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNPR) (Ethiopia). Both meetings focused on improving relations between the Nyangatom, Turkana, and Dassanech, and an agreement was reached on the retrieval of livestock (CEWARN, 2010a). However, this decision was not implemented because the "Turkana insisted that they cannot return the livestock because they had died since then due to disease or had been raided by other communities" (CEWARN, 2010b, p. 9). Local authorities in Ethiopia noted that the Turkana not only refused to honour the Joint Border Commission's decision but also derailed the peace process by launching new attacks on the Nyangatom shortly after the Hawassa meeting.

During the research period, the local people and *Woreda* officials were frustrated by the behaviour of the Turkana, who became unpredictable, untrustworthy, and increasingly violent. There was a sense of bitterness, on the part of local people, who felt that the Ethiopian government did not come to their rescue when they were massacred, displaced, and robbed of their lifeline (livestock) repeatedly by the Turkana—who, allegedly, enjoy protection and support from the Kenyan police and army stationed at Kibish.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

Based on a study conducted in 2010 in Nyangatom (South Omo Zone, SNNPR, Ethiopia), attempts are made in this paper to explain the longstanding inter-ethnic conflict between the Nyangatom and the Turkana. The relationship between the two groups began to deteriorate after the Nyangatom lost control over their grazing land in the Kibish area—the heart of the contested Ilemi Triangle. The British colonial administration planted the seeds of animosity by creating the Triangle to restrict free movement of pastoralists. The worst conflict happened in 1988 when the Kenyan government controlled the land west of the Kibish River, after expelling the Nyangatom at gunpoint. The steady increase in herd size, exceeding carrying capacity; the changes in climatic patterns that led to frequent drought; the cultural values that incite violence; and the participation of non-pastoral groups in raids, made the conflict complex and complicated.

The consequences of this rather protracted inter-ethnic conflict include loss of precious life, permanent injuries, loss of access of pasture and water, and failing livelihoods. Large tracts of land in Kibish area have been abandoned and wasted because of security concerns. Many households displaced by the conflict are on emergency aid. The conflict zones in the border areas lack meaningful development projects, infrastructure, social services, trade activities, and security. The increased attacks perpetrated by both parties over the years with impunity, using newly acquired deadly automatic weapons, have exacerbated animosity and the cycle of violence. Unfortunately, the governments of Ethiopia and Kenya did not pay sufficient attention to the cross-border inter-ethnic conflict in the Ilemi Triangle. The Nyangatom-Turkana conflict is far from over and it is high time for a lasting solution to be found.

There exist a number of peace capacities (connectors) to build on. The Nyangatom and the Turkana have a lot in common: identity as members of the Ateker, similar religious traditions, common language, common cultural values and practices, intermarriage, and the culture of sharing. Apart from these historical and cultural bases of connectors, it is important to develop the current perception, among the Nyangatom, that the Turkana are a friendly people. The existing sense of friendship/companionship could be further enhanced through social and cultural events (e.g., music and dance festivals, sports events, and religious/ritual activities). In the last five years, the Nyangatom have expressed, and demonstrated time and again, their readiness for lasting peace with the Turkana. Since it takes two to cut a peace deal, genuine commitment on the part of the Turkana side is also necessary. The steady decline in resources due to environmental factors contributed to the escalation of conflict. This warrants the need to devise joint or separate program intervention in the border area.

Traditionally, the Nyangatom migrated from the Kibish area to the Omo River bank to avoid more loss of human life and livestock through Turkana attack and drought. The Ethiopian Government plans to develop 150,000 hectares of land to grow sugarcane, which will be processed in six factories to be established in the lower Omo valley. Although the Ethiopian authorities claim to have consulted local people about this, the ordinary pastoralists in Nyangatom do not seem to have adequate and clear information about the project and the way it will affect their future. Some people had heard about the construction of a dam (Gibe III) upstream and the planned diversion of water to irrigate the sugarcane plantation. It is feared that these projects would reduce the flow of the river, thereby threatening livelihoods and exacerbating inter-ethnic conflict—as a large number of people may be forced to return to Kibish. The Ethiopian government plans to resettle the pastoralists and provide access to irrigated agriculture, infrastructure development, social services, and agricultural extension services. It is difficult to speculate what will exactly happen down the road. After taking their land away, if the Nyangatom are left to fend for themselves with minimum support from the government, the concerns that the projects may threaten livelihoods and exacerbate inter-ethnic conflict will become a reality. On the other hand, if the planned interventions are based on proper understanding of the cultures and life choices of the people in the area, the projects would mark the end of all social evils—that is, conflict, poverty, disease, and underdevelopment.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

*Conflict prevention:* Strengthen police posts, local militia, peace communities, community vigilance, and early warning systems, to prevent conflict

*Inter-community contact:* Launch regular dialogue, review of peace progress, cultural events/festivals, to foster mutual understanding and solidarity

*Joint projects:* In the border areas, launch common social services (schools, clinics), veterinary services, water/grazing schemes, local market/trade, infrastructure, to create and promote socio-economic and cultural integration

*Improving livelihoods:* Diversify livelihoods, improve livestock quality, promote milk/butter production, promote agriculture (where possible), create outside market opportunities for pastoral products, to reduce reliance on raising animals.

*Enforce peace accords:* Involve major actors in peacemaking, reduce commitment to acts of violence through awareness raising schemes, devise mechanisms to enforce peace accords.



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