NATURAL RESOURCE BASED CONFLICT AMONG PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES IN KENYA

BY
ANNE R. GAKURIA
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SUPERVISOR: PROF. MAKUMI MWAGIRU

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ABSTRACT
The study examines the natural resource based conflict among pastoralist communities in Kenya. The study aims at identifying causes of conflicts among pastoral communities and the effects of conflicts in Kenya. The study developed a theoretical framework which guided the study. The framework highlights conflicts as being caused by some key factors such as competition for resources (a structural cause) which arise when manipulated by various actors like herders and pastoralist, political leaders and among others. The framework also portrays the outcomes of conflicts presenting a direction link between causes of conflicts and the various players.
The data used in the study was based on secondary data sourced from Plan Action and was collected in 2005. The data collected was meant to access the socio-economic impacts of conflicts on pastoral communities. The data captured targeted population living in arid and semi arid areas of Northern Kenya. Adopting the Plan Action research design justifications, the data sampled comprised of 10 districts from the Northern Kenya districts and covered the period between 1994 – 2004. The data was analyzed using statistical software packages. Descriptive statistics are presented graphically using graphs and pie charts. The study found out that most conflicts in the country are mainly caused as a result of scarcity of natural resources. Persistent drought as a result of climate change increases the strain in the already existing natural scarce resources which leads to conflict as people fight for grazing and farm land rights. The study also established that factors such as economic and political marginalization, active resistance by pastoralist communities to assimilation, resource depletion and demographic changes, and the growing availability of small arms and light weapons are among the major factors causing conflicts in the country. As a result of conflicts, communities are left with reduced crop and livestock yields, increased casualties as many people are left injured and some killed, residents in the communities are also displaced with their property left destroyed. In addition social services are also affected leading to closure of schools, health centers and other outdoor activities as intensified insecurity looms in the community.
This study recommends a number of policies such as: promoting understanding and appreciation of conflicts, formulate policy on peace building, strengthening service delivery to ASAL areas, promote inter community peace building activities, promote conflict sensitivity and inter sector mainstreaming of conflict management, mopping up of illegal weapons and building policy advocacy and lobbying capacities of local organizations and communities.