August 2023

Study
report

Peace came from the herders

Supporting peace amidst drought, food insecurity and conflict. Lessons from Marsabit county, Kenya

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Introduction:

Food Security and Conflict Dynamics
in Northern Kenya

Since 2014, the number of people affected by hunger has been rising, with violent conflict playing a crucial role in current food crises. In 2021, out of 193 million people worldwide exposed to acute food insecurity, more than 139 million in 23 countries experienced conflict-related food crises, up from 77 million in 2019. Africa was the most affected continent in this regard.

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The Chalbi Desert is the hottest and driest region in Kenya. It is a harsh and sparsely populated area.

In Kenya, recent years have seen a spike in violence and a prolonged drought with an exceptional five-season drought sequence of well below-average rainfall since the short October to December rainy season in 2020. As a result, the number of food insecure people is now at its highest level in over a decade and violent conflicts involving pastoralists have become widespread and more severe in northern Kenya — a trend shared with the Horn of Africa more generally (see Figures 1 & 2). While conflicts among pastoralists have traditionally been associated with conflicts over the scarce resources of water and pasture, the politicisation and commercialisation of livestock raiding as well as land

contestations that are linked to ethno-politics are of increasing concern – especially under the conditions of political devolution since 2013.

Marsabit county was among the Kenyan regions most affected by drought and violent conflict in recent years. It has been identified as one of the high-risk areas for electoral violence in the run-up to the 2022 general elections *(National Commission for Integration and Cohesion – NCIC, 2022)*. BICC, therefore, partnered with Caritas Germany to conduct a study on the interrelations between food crises and violent conflict in Marsabit, in collaboration with Caritas Marsabit and PACIDA *(Pastoralist*

Community Initiative and Development Assistance), two NGOs and local partners of Caritas Germany in Kenya, involved in humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work.[3] This study report is the result of joint **research conducted in Marsabit county in November 2022**. Its purpose is to take a closer look at the interlinkage between food security and conflict in Marsabit and to stimulate discussion on how this could be addressed in the interest of enhancing the well-being and peace of people in Marsabit and other regions affected by food crises and violent conflict.

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[1] Adapted from Numbers of people by phase of acute food insecurity, 2016–23 by FSIN and Global Network Against Food Crises, 2023, https://www.fsinplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/GRFC2023-compressed.pdf

[2] Adapted from Summary of Conflict Incident Trends in the Region from 1997 to 2021 by IGAD, 2022, https://www.icpac.net/publications/report-on-state-of-climate-peace-and-security-in-the-horn-of-africa/

[3] We would like to acknowledge the crucial contribution of the following people to this study report. From Caritas Marsabit: Isacko Jirma, James Kunni Dido, John Abdub Wako, Arbe Galgalo Kiti and our driver Justus Muthoka. From PACIDA: Patrick Katelo, Godana Said, Adan Galmagar, Gumato Robale, Michael Loitemu Orguba and our driver Amos Adano. From BICC: Rolf Alberth, Marie Born and Jonas Specker.

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Figure 1: Food Insecurity in the Horn of Africa[1]
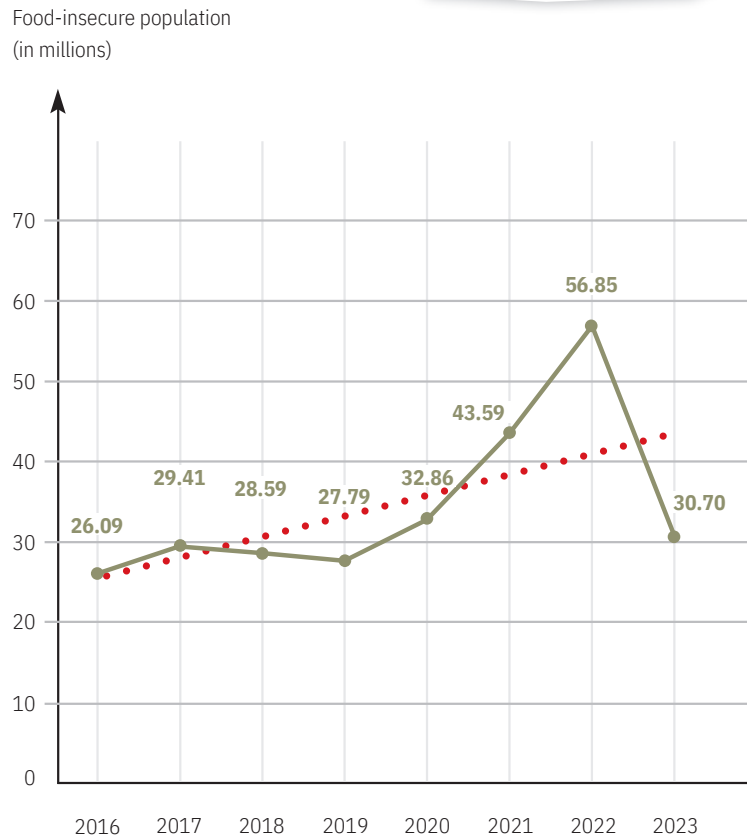
Food-insecure population (in millions)

Figure 2: Conflict Incidences in the Horn of Africa[2]

Number of conflicts

* up to July 2023
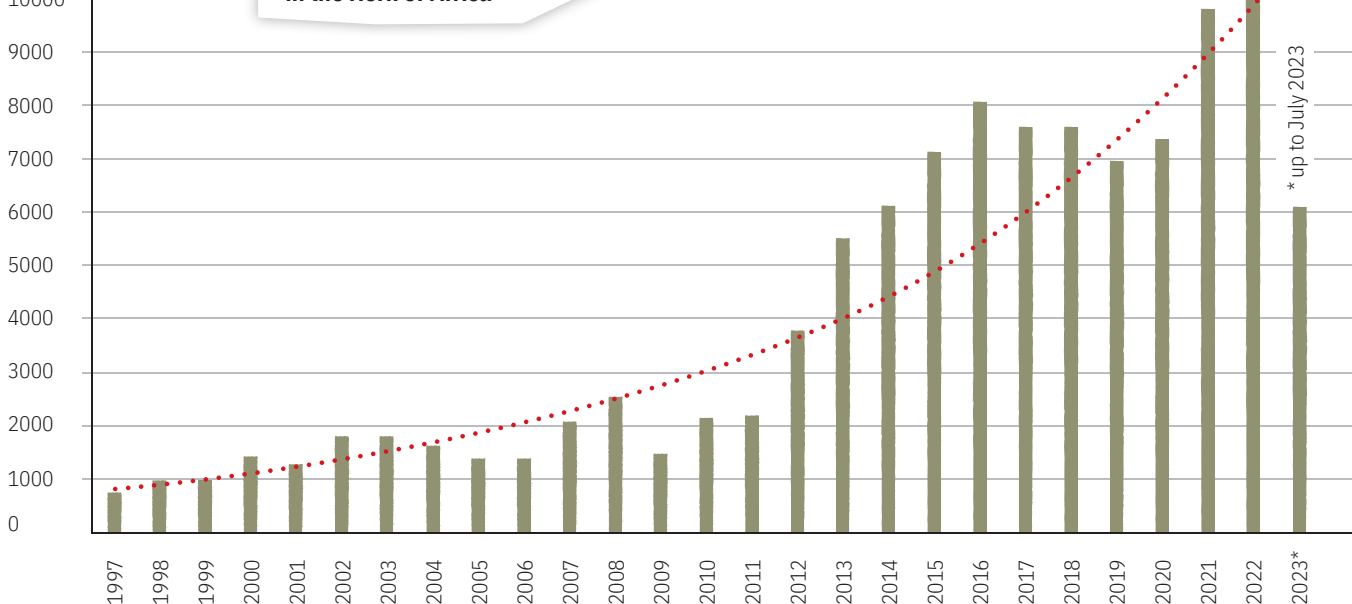
Methods and **Study Sites**

To answer the research question: "What are the interrelationships between food crises and violent conflict in northern Kenya?", we combined a desk-based review of literature and conflict event databases with qualitative empirical research using a mixed methods approach. We chose to focus on pastoral communities in Marsabit county, which are highly affected by food crises and conflict. The idea was to explore the triangular relationship between pastoral livelihoods, food security and violent conflict.


The research team conducted focus group discussions with members of local communities and internally displaced people (IDPs), as well as observations, including transect walks and participation in a regional peace meeting. We visited destroyed villages, boreholes, and other critical infrastructure, as well as a border post with Ethiopia to develop a better understanding of the drought situation, the (visible) impact of violence and the daily lives of pastoralists in Marsabit. We also conducted semi-structured interviews with community members and key informant interviews with experts (local community leaders, state representatives, religious leaders, humanitarian workers, members of peace initiatives). In total, we directly engaged with around 350 persons using a variety of methods.

The empirical study was conducted in 19 locations in Saku, North Horr, Laisamis and Moyale sub-counties. Besides Marsabit town and surrounding communities in Saku, we visited several rural towns and villages along sub-county boundaries as these can be considered ethno-political conflict hotspots, namely around Forole and Turbi or Horonderi and Jaldesa. The research team leaders purposefully chose the study sites to capture locally specific conflict histories, the perspectives of different ethnic groups and different livelihood systems. Security considerations, existing contacts and prior involvement by Caritas Marsabit or PACIDA, and therefore access and time constraints, also influenced the choice of study sites.

In early 2020, a huge plague of locusts in Kenya also hit the Marsabit region. © PACIDA (photo left) **| Peace is hard work – dissemination and reflection workshop organised by Caritas Marsabit, PACIDA and BICC on 2 March 2022** © Benjamin Etzold (photo middle) **| These houses in a settlement called 'Old Gabra Scheme' near Marsabit town were destroyed in an outbreak of violence in February 2021.** © Benjamin Etzold (photo right)

Map 1: Overview of Marsabit County and our Study Sites
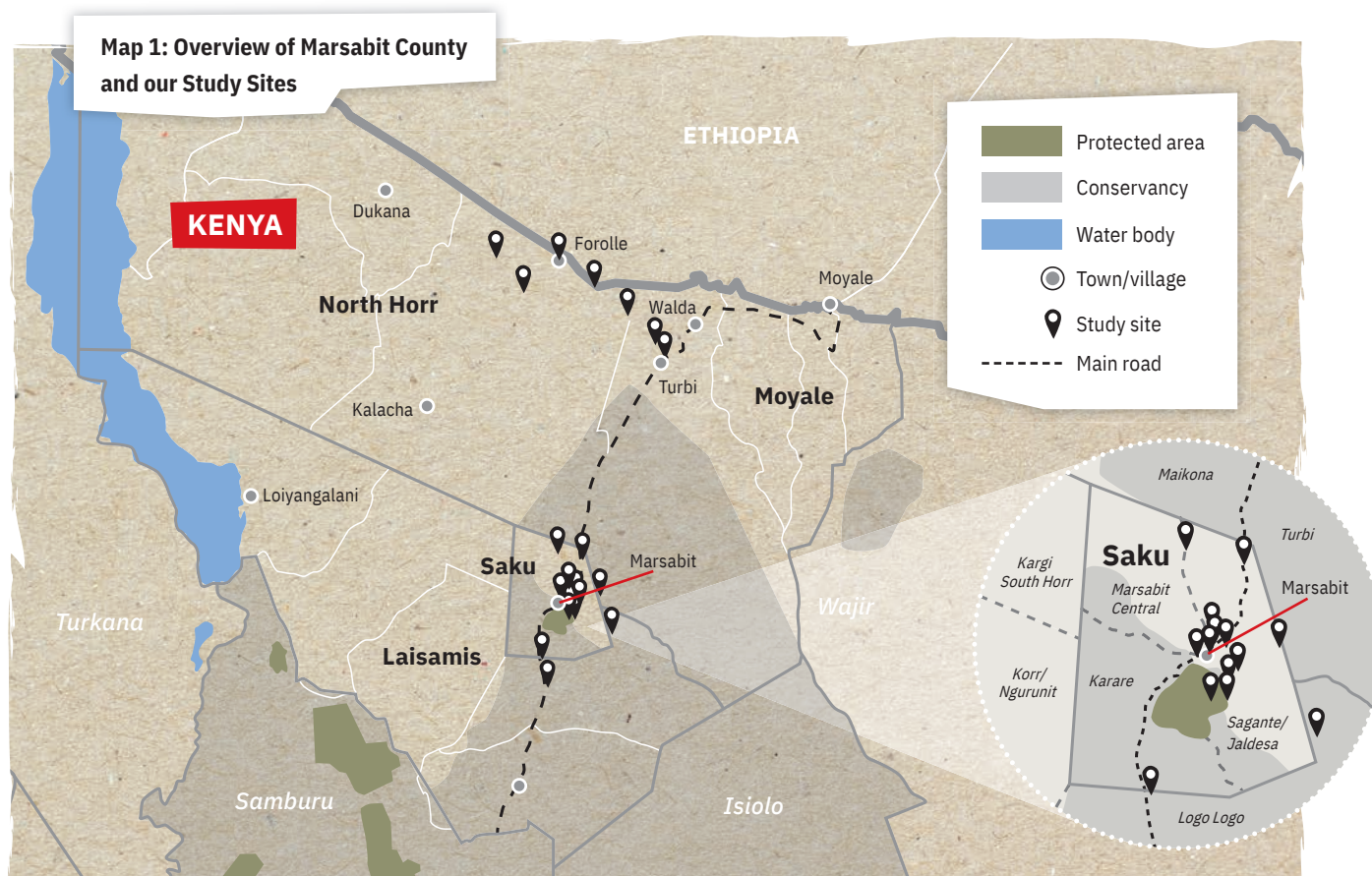
Overview: Conflicts, Drought and Food Insecurity in Marsabit

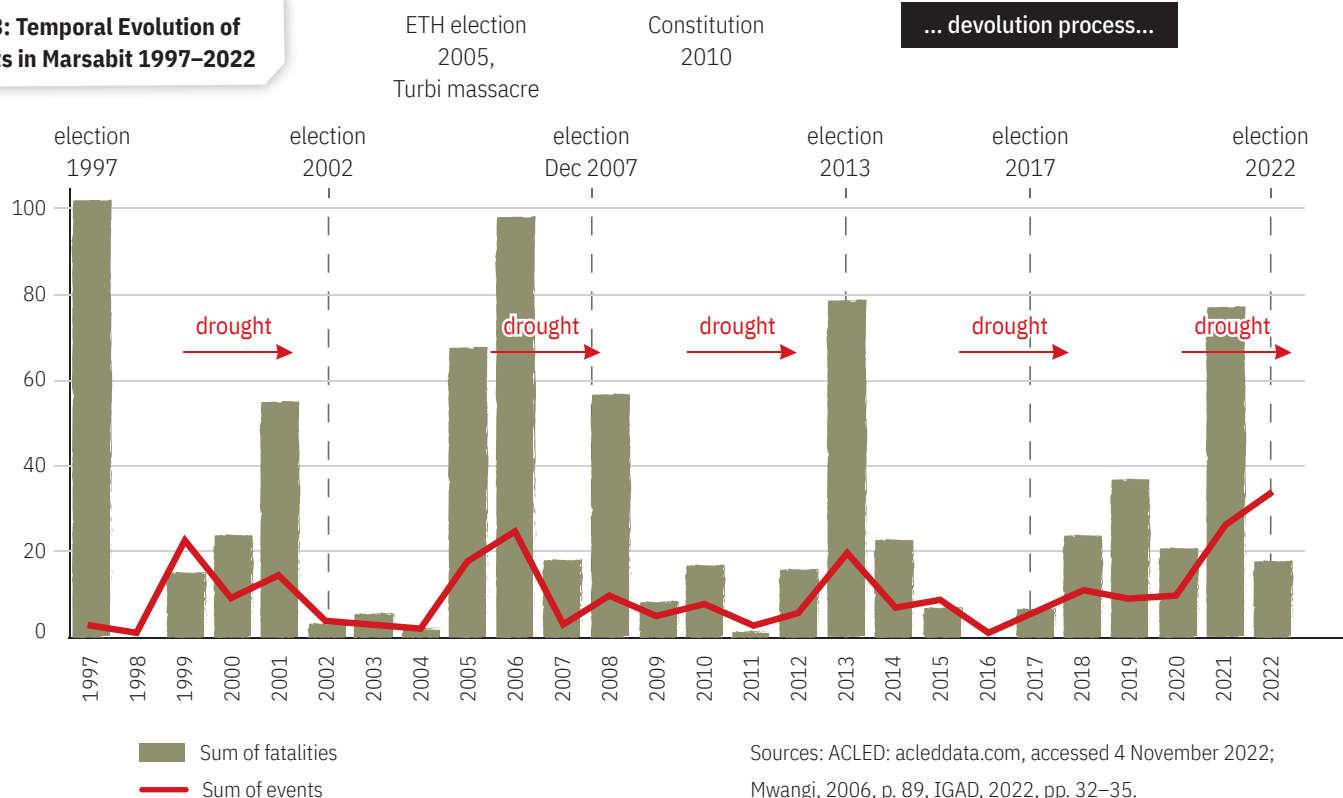## 1.1 Conflict Trends in Marsabit County

Conflicts: Actors, Dynamics of Violence and Regional Complexity of Drivers

Marsabit is inhabited by a variety of ethnic groups, with the Borana constituting a significant majority, along with the second and third largest groups, the Gabra and Rendille. They share the county with smaller communities: the Burji, Dassanech, El Molo, Garre, Samburu, Sakuye, Turkana and Waata.

Marsabit has experienced cyclical violent conflict since the advent of multi-party politics in Kenya in the 1990s. The upsurge in violent incidents in recent years in the run-up to the 2022 general elections has made violence, including killings, theft of property and livestock, a daily occurrence and brought regular armed confronta-

tions between warring communities and targeted killings to Marsabit town and surrounding areas. **The nature of the violence appears to have gradually changed.** There have traditionally been occasional armed clashes between pastoralist groups during cattle raids, but the commercialisation and politicisation of cattle rustling have contributed to increasing levels of atrocities committed. Any cattle raid is quickly interpreted through an ethno-political lens. However, the continuing tradition of cattle raiding for warrior age initiations and commercial incentives add to the conflicts' complexity, as they cannot be reduced to ethno-political competition alone.

The actors in Marsabit's conflicts include the Rendille, Gabra, Garre and Turkana, all of whom live in

Figure 3: Temporal Evolution of Conflicts in Marsabit 1997–2022

Figure 3: Temporal Evolution of Conflicts in Marsabit 1997–2022

- Sum of fatalities
- Sum of events

Sources: ACLED: acleddata.com, accessed 4 November 2022; Mwangi, 2006, p. 89, IGAD, 2022, pp. 32–35.

the county, and the Borana (from Kenya and Ethiopia) and Samburu, who are known to also graze their cattle in the southern part of the county. So-called ethnic militia from various groups are composed of warriors[4] from the respective communities. Kenya Police Reservists (KPR), who are armed by the national government (though disarmed in 2019 and 2022) to help with rural security, sometimes side with their own communities when attacked. The main political conflict is between the Borana and the Gabra (and their respective allies) for political supremacy in Marsabit county.

Spatio-temporal Evolution of Conflicts

The temporal development of the number of events and fatalities from 1997 to November 2022 shows a cyclical development of conflicts, with regular ups and downs (see Figure 3). **The peaks in the number of deaths and events are mostly around the Kenyan elections.** One major incident, the Turbi massacre in 2005, does not appear to be linked to a Kenyan election but rather to the general elections in Ethiopia in June 2005. **This suggests that factors other than drought and food insecurity are significant determinants of conflict in Marsabit.**

Overall, violence has shifted to urban centres and their environs (Moyale, Marsabit) in the last decade, suggesting heightened stakes due to political devolution following the new 2010 Constitution. Conflicts are increasingly occurring along the Isiolo-Moyale highway, which was completed in 2014, and along the – oftentimes unclear – boundaries between subcounties. Ethnopolitical competition for political office and land rushes in the wake of infrastructure plans are two main lines of explanation that will be pursued below.

1.2 Conflict Analysis

Ethnopolitical Competition for Resources in Marsabit
Ethnic boundary-making suggests that it is not the actual cultural differences between ethnic groups that cause conflict between them but the benefits that political leaders and their supporters derive from the process of boundary-making itself, of distinguishing between 'us' and 'them'. This means that ordinary people can live together peacefully and exchange in everyday lives but can still be mobilised to use violence against the other group in certain situations.

Boundary-making in Marsabit since colonial times has been a state-driven process, first by British administrators and then in the post-independence period (after 1963) by Kenyan administrators and politicians. Colonial rule brought about a **territorialisation of ethnicity** that linked collective identity to land.

A key issue of ethnic conflict in post-independence politics has been the attempt by smaller communities to overcome the continuing dominance of the Borana. As constituencies became ethnically more homogenous, intra-ethnic competition grew in parallel, especially among the Gabra clans. With the advent of multi-party politics in Kenya in the 1990s, inter-ethnic hostilities increased and inter-ethnic clashes occurred repeatedly in the 1990s and in 1999/2000. The creation of the Constituency Development Funds (CDF) in 2003, which Members of the Parliament (MPs) used to channel resources to their coethnics, further exacerbated tensions.

One of the most tragic events in this growing conflict was the **Turbi massacre** that occurred on **12 July 2005**, during which 95 people, including 23 children, were killed in an attack on Gabra settlements in the Didigalgalo–Turbi area. More than 6,200 people, mainly Gabra but also Borana, were displaced as a result of this attack and subsequent revenge attacks. The IDPs then had to seek refuge, permanent settlement and new pastures for their animals in other parts of Marsabit (see section 2.2). Due to its brutality, the memory of the Turbi massacre is very much alive and is being kept alive in public discourses. It has become an additional factor perpetuating conflict in Marsabit.

Political devolution, enshrined in the 2010 Constitution and implemented with the 2013 elections, has significantly increased the stakes of political contestation. Governors, county assemblies and municipal councils are now elected and allocated budgets for specific state functions. In addition to county budgets, large-scale infrastructure projects in the Kenya Vision 2030 have brought new government investment to Marsabit. Ethnopolitical competition over land and boundary disputes is hence also partly fuelled by **new infrastructure investments.**

Despite the predominance of Gabra–Borana competition in the county, the multi-level political institutions (national and devolved state institutions from county to village level) create a complex mosaic of spheres and zones of influence. Ethnopolitical alliances have also shifted over time.

[4] Male youth from pastoralist groups in northern Kenya are traditionally initiated into warrior groups, called *moran*, whose role it is to provide security for the community and to engage in raids for livestock and wealth accumulation.

Drought and Food Insecurity in Marsabit

Following the failure of five consecutive rainy seasons, the drought in Marsabit county had worsened to the point of emergency by the start of the year 2023. Even though the region received a significant amount of rain in March and April 2023, the effects of the drought remain. The vast majority of study participants perceive this food crisis as an emergency of catastrophic proportions. Massive livestock deaths have brought pastoral communities' food and income provision and rural economies to the brink of collapse and in many places beyond. Agropastoral communities and urban dwellers are also severely affected by the drought, but seem to be able to cope to some extent due to a more diversified livelihood structure. Hunger and malnutrition were found to be widespread. Despite a variety of coping strategies that (agro)pastoralists are trying to apply, the dependence of households on external assistance has steadily increased as the drought emergency has deepened. Cash transfers, food aid and water trucking by government and non-government organisations are currently the main humanitarian interventions, but their delivery also seems to be politicised. Longer-term adaptation practices and alternative livelihoods that can adequately complement pastoralism are underdeveloped. The local population of Marsabit county is, therefore, far from being drought resilient, particularly due to the additional negative impacts of violent conflict.

© PACIDA

In 2021, a prolonged drought began in Marsabit. It decimated the livestock and endangered the livelihoods of the pastoralists.

Living With Conflicts, Urging for Peace —
Local People's Perspectives

2.1 Experiences, Causes and Effects of Violence in Rural Areas

Over the years, the people in rural Marsabit have experienced diverse forms of direct violence, including loss of family and community members and serious injury in violent attacks, loss of livestock in raids, looting of property, destruction of homes, key infrastructure and development projects and forced displacement. The following cases exemplify the experience of the affected local population and the underlying drivers of violence in certain 'conflict hotspots' that are located on the borders between the spatial spheres of influence of Gabra and Borana politicians.

Competition Over Resources and Ethno-political Violence Along North Horr's Northern Boundaries
Funan Qumbi is a 'Borana village' in North Horr, west of Turbi, which has been severely affected by the ongoing drought. Elders told us that people of different origins used to live peacefully in this 40-year-old settlement, but then, territorial conflicts led to separation along ethnic lines. About 20 years ago, a tribal conflict between the Gabra and the Borana in the Bule Dera plains in Moyale sub-county triggered the regional conflict dynamics. Following the Turbi Massacre in July 2005, thou-

We pastoralists have a lot of problems, but the conflict has really been brought to us by this devolution policy. Both the Borana and the Gabra want the governorship and are campaigning along tribal lines. That is why everyone is competing for land and pasture. (Focus Group Discussion in Funan Qumbi, Nov. 2022.)

Politicians have branded land boundaries for different communities. For example, leaders will come and say Forole is 'Borana land', another will say it is 'Gabra land', and another will say it is 'Rendille land'. And so they bring these communities into conflict. (...) Sometimes a borehole (that used to be freely accessible) is marked as a 'community borehole', and then other communities are denied the right to drinking water. (Focus Group Discussion in Forole, Nov. 2022.)

The fear of being evicted from 'our land' is widespread among the Gabra and the Borana in these areas.

Violent Contestation Over (Re)settlement: Cases Along the North Horr-Saku Sub-county Boundary

Horonderi is a relatively new village of around 350 people, located close to the A2 highway on the border of Saku and North Horr sub-counties. According to interviews with residents, Gabra pastoralists from the Bubisa region, some 25km to the north, had settled there around the time of the drought in 2015. With the support of the government and local NGOs, permanent infrastructure such as a mosque, a primary school and an underground water tank were gradually built. These have helped to consolidate the settlement. In 2018, three years after the Gabra families formed this settlement, around 300 Borana also came to settle at Horonderi. Allegedly, they had been encouraged to move there by others – in 2017, when a Borana politician became governor of Marsabit county, having replaced a Gabra politician.

Rising ethnic tensions between these groups and ongoing competition for resources – pasture, water and local infrastructure – led to local violence, with dozens of people injured and several killed in shootings. Homes were looted and burned. Children were unable to attend school for many months due to the constant insecurity. Travel along the highway

sands, both Gabra and Borana from previously quite heterogenous areas were displaced, violence escalated, and ethnic segregation increased. Borana from Funan Qumbi returned around 2008. Since then, they have frequently lost livestock and some family members to raids in the grazing areas. Their village has also been attacked several times in the past three years. On one occasion, they lost 400 goats in an attack, allegedly by 'Gabra from Turbi village'. They had always reported these violent encounters to the police but to their knowledge, no one had ever been arrested and prosecuted. According to some locals, these conflicts are caused by competition for grazing land and water.

Elders from both sides of the conflict also highlighted the wider political changes that have fuelled violence in the region:

to nearby Marsabit town was disrupted, making it difficult for households to access food and services. Pastoralists could not move their herds to pastures for fear of being attacked along the way and at water points. They tried anyway and lost dozens of camels, cattle, sheep and goats. While it is clear that the boundaries between grazing areas that different groups use are fluid – 'livestock knows no boundaries' as one county government pastoral expert noted (Interview, Nov. 2022) – the unclear boundaries between different electoral and administrative areas and the location of settlements or infrastructure such as boreholes, are more problematic. A village elder previously involved in peace dialogue in Saku sub-county explained the politics of (unclear) boundaries:

A Gabra politician will tell his community that this location is administratively in his territory. The Borana leader will tell his Borana community the same thing. This is what really drives this never-ending conflict. (...). (Focus Group Discussion, site anonymised, Nov. 2022.)

Regular cattle raids and frequent violent clashes limit the herders' access to grazing land and water points and make movement over longer distances less safe. This also limits their ability to cope with the ongoing drought.

Another way in which agropastoral communities have been hard hit by the ongoing violence and high levels of insecurity is through **destruction of vital economic infrastructure** and **denial of access to land and markets.** In *Jaldesa*, for instance, a settlement located on the eastern side of Mount Marsabit, economic infrastructure was purposefully destroyed during conflict. The destroyed infrastructure – an irrigation system, a solar-powered water pump, and greenhouses – had been part of a 'Drought Resilience and Sustainable Livelihoods' Program of the national government and the African Development Bank. In addition, in times of conflict, the transport of goods such as agricultural products, firewood or charcoal to urban markets becomes more risky and costly; some direct routes are completely blocked as it is not safe for people of certain ethnic backgrounds to travel through areas controlled by others. There have been a number of attacks on *boda boda* riders, trucks, buses and pedestrians – many of them fatal – along the main roads in Saku county, particularly in Marsabit National Park. Poverty and food insecurity of agropastoral households are then further deepened, not primarily due to the drought but due to persistent ethno-political violence in highly contested rural areas.

In February 2021, the settlement 'Old Gabra Scheme' was looted and completely destroyed. Hundreds of people fled the violence to the nearby town of Marsabit. © Benjamin Etzold (photo left) **| Desperate residents near the village of Gas try to get a moribund camel back on its feet.** © Sebastian Haury (photo right)

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This pregnant woman and her family live as pastoral nomads near Loiyangalani. They belong to the large group of those who depend on food aid.

2.2 Experiences, Causes and Effects of Violence in Urban Areas

In the (peri-)urban areas, the forms of violence and their impact on the people are different from those in rural areas, even though they involve some of the same actors and have the same roots – ethno-political hatred and contestations over land. Cattle raids regularly take place on the outskirts of urban centres and occasionally lead to potentially fatal shootouts between herders from different communities and of different ethnic identities. But most of the violence has been linked to ethno-political party politics, violent protests and land disputes.

Land values in the (peri-)urban areas of Marsabit have risen significantly over the past decade due to population growth and demand for housing, infrastructure development, particularly along the fully paved A2 highway that passes through Marsabit town and expansion of agricultural land to meet the food needs of a growing urban population. As a result, land use and settlement dynamics in and around the town have become particularly contentious.

Protracted Internal Displacement in Marsabit County

In the pastoral areas of northern Kenya, more than 160,000 people have been displaced, at least temporarily, by violent conflict. The Turbi

massacre in 2005 alone resulted in the internal forced displacement of at least 6,200 people.

Interviews and group discussions revealed that IDPs from the Gabra community have not only endured a lack of physical security and repeated violence that has resulted in the loss of dozens of lives, hundreds of animals and their property and multiple enforced relocations to other places, but have also experienced a **lack of post-displacement support from the state.**

Many Gabra IDPs expressed that they would continue to face multiple **barriers to rebuilding their livelihoods** in Marsabit town (as well as elsewhere) and that they would be strategically excluded from food aid and other humanitarian assistance during this drought. They argued that their lack of political representation and participation as a minority group in Saku sub-county had exacerbated their social, political and economic exclusion. It should be noted that not only Gabra have been displaced in Marsabit county in recent years but also Borana and other ethnic groups. In and around Marsabit town, violence has severely affected members of the Borana and the Burji communities, and many have been forced to flee and to abandon their homes.
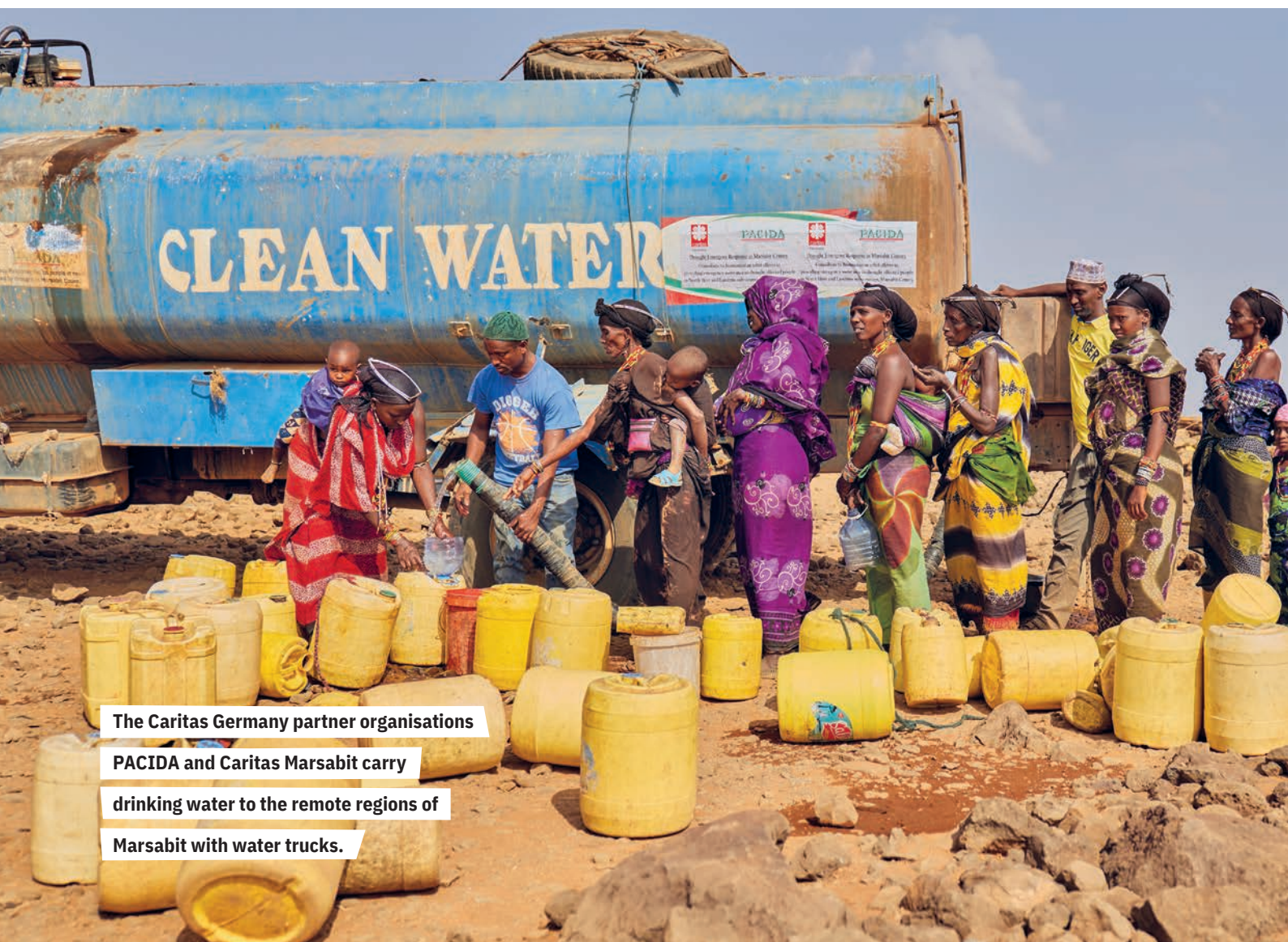
The Caritas Germany partner organisations PACIDA and Caritas Marsabit carry drinking water to the remote regions of Marsabit with water trucks.

2.3 Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding from Below

Existing Peacebuilding Initiatives and their Limitations

Due to the long history of armed conflict in northern Kenya, Marsabit has a diverse institutional landscape of peace institutions and initiatives. These range from non-state traditional elders, religious leaders and national and international NGOs to government-established district peace committees, the county administration with the county commissioner, the county security committee and the county cohesion office, which aims to establish a County Peace Forum to coordinate peace efforts. In June 2022, the National Commission for Integration and Cohesion (NCIC) opened an office in Marsabit together with the Swiss-NGO Interpeace. State and non-state actors have been involved in numerous peace and reconciliation meetings and initiatives. However, efforts at intercommunal recon-

ciliation and sustainable peacebuilding in Marsabit have for long not been fruitful.

The **national and county governments** have been criticised for appearing to side with one party to the conflict, a stance that has contributed to fuelling the conflict. Similarly, some **NGO** actors are linked to the conflict because of their ethnicity and the locations where they work and are therefore not seen as neutral actors, although they are increasingly recognised by the government as important actors for local social development and peace.

Religious actors play a crucial role in peacebuilding. In the aftermath of the 2005 Turbi massacre, Catholic and Protestant bishops and Muslim sheikhs formed the so-called **interfaith council**, which has since then been very active across the

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'The Peace Came From the Herders': Experience-driven Peacebuilding From Below

A common argument in public and academic debate is that scarce resources can lead to violent conflict between competing parties. In northern Kenya, this would seem to be partially true when pastoral communities are politically incited to maintain 'exclusive' access to certain land or water sources. At the time of our study, however, we observed the opposite: More than two years of drought had depleted all natural resources and herds to such an extent that communities were now forced to cooperate and had neither the means nor the interest to fight their competitors. In several study sites in rural areas, such as Horonderi and Kubi Qallo, we heard from our respondents that the drought had finally brought them peace:

Peace started when herders from both communities met and started grazing together. They talked to each other and later met with the community elders. That's how the peace started to grow. (Focus Group Discussion in Kubi Qallo, Nov. 2022.)

Building Peace From Below Through Community Dialogue

While the violent conflict led to enormous suffering and many deaths, the example of two communities also shows how vicious cycles of hatred and violence can be overcome, and **how a bottom-up peace initiative eventually evolved into a regional peace process**. In 2022, young armed men, allegedly Borana, attacked Gabra women from the village of *Adhi Huka* on the highway. The women ran away, and no one was injured. However, this incident triggered a 'spiral of peace', as many local people, including elders and a Borana chief from the neighbouring *Manyatta Jillo*, immediately rushed to the scene of the attack, all agreeing that the constant insecurity, hatred and fear between the Gabra and the Borana was unbearable and had to stop. Two days later, a first larger **inter-community peace meeting** was held, which has been followed up by almost weekly meetings. Between 150 and 300 people from different communities attended these inter-village peace forums, which were often the first occasions when members of opposing communities who had fought each other met and

whole county in (re)building trust and promoting peace, mutual respect and non-violent conflict resolution. However, all the efforts of civil society mediators and religious leaders will be in vain if they are not adequately supported or followed up by the state or key political actors.

We found a broad consensus across the study sites on two decisive aspects of peacebuilding. First, **there is good momentum for a sustainable peace process** after the 2022 general elections if all actors and key institutions work together. Second, **the current peace process is being driven by the local communities** themselves who are tired of the effects of protracted violence and years of drought. They are able and willing to work together and peacefully share scarce resources to survive with their livestock and as communities. Two examples from our empirical study, herders' camps and community dialogues, underline these points.

engaged with each other peacefully. The peace meetings created new trust between neighbours, separated families who have relatives in a Gabra or Borana village can visit one another again, road travel has become much safer, and grazing lands in the northern and eastern parts of Saku sub-county are being shared again.

Reflections on the Sustainability of Peace Processes from Below

Community-led peace processes cannot resolve conflicts on their own. First, while such community-driven peace initiatives can contribute to conflict resolution and peace advocacy, they certainly cannot compensate for the **lack of physical security**, a service the government must provide impartially to all citizens. The security infrastructure in many parts of Marsabit county is clearly inadequate, as evidenced by the limited number of police posts.

Second, there is **no sustainable peace without justice, reconciliation and restitution**. We have often been told that there are no criminal investigations into the theft of cattle, targeted killings, the destruction of people's homes or the looting of their belongings. As a result, perpetrators of violence continue to roam freely without fear of arrest, prosecution or conviction, with the law seemingly only selectively enforced.

Third, the **growing divide between rural people and urban 'elites'** makes the integration of top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding all the more difficult. There is widespread doubt among rural communities about the capacity and willingness of the state (both national and county government) to support them effectively. There is often a lack of trust in elected political leaders, who are seen to pursue their own agendas rather than act in the 'interest of local communities'. Overcoming these divisions will be crucial to restoring peace.

Fourth, it became clear throughout our study that the 'small wars' in Marsabit can be ended comparatively quickly if the **state takes a firm stance against violence** and uses its monopoly on violence, for instance through a large-scale security operation, curfew and disarmament campaign as it did before the 2022 elections.

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DROUGHT EMERGENCY RESPONSE
FOOD VOUCHER
KILIMA MBOGO
PERIOD: OCTOBER TO APRIL 20

CARITAS MARSABIT
For project feedback, contact Caritas Marsabit.
P.O. BOX 62-60500, Marsabit / Tel: 0113458289 / Email: info@caritas-dom.org

Fighting hunger in the village of Loiyangalani: In exchange for vouchers distributed by Caritas Marsabit, the people can get food at local shops.

Water kiosk of the Caritas Germany partner organisation PACIDA. It makes life a lot easier, especially for women and girls. *(photo p. 15)*

Conclusions: Building Peace while Responding to Drought (and Vice Versa)

3.1 Lessons Learned From Our Study

There is no direct link between drought and violent conflict. Yet, drought contributes indirectly to conflict by forcing pastoralists to move further into other people's territories, including to neighbouring Ethiopia, in search of pasture for their cattle. However, the need to cope with the drought by reaching greener pastures and watering points in other regions has also led herders to engage in bottom-up peace processes at multiple sites over the past year, including the Kenya–Ethiopian border region. Overall, **drought and food insecurity have hence rather contributed to instilling a bottom-up peace process in Marsabit.**

Violent conflict in Marsabit is largely driven by the intensification of ethno-political boundary-making. This can be explained by the territorialisation of ethnicity since colonial times and the increasing wealth of resources (state budgets, political offices, infrastructure projects, land) over the past decades. Our research clearly shows how ethno-political dynamics lead to inequitable distribution of resources between communities, how violence is politically instigated, how local people perceive and suffer from exclusionary ethnopolitics and associated violence, and how they seek to overcome violent conflict and the ethnopolitics that underpin it.

Displacement is another important factor in the complex relation between violent conflict and food security. Internal Displacement as a result of a direct attack, out of fear, or even as a deliberate political strategy of 'ethnic homogenisation' in certain constituencies, is a reality in Marsabit that Kenyan and international policymakers and practitioners of humanitarian and development aid can no longer ignore. Entire villages have been ethnically cleansed, leading to increasingly ethnically homogenous settlements and a spiral of mutual fear and mistrust that undermines prospects for peace.

There is currently momentum for a sustainable peace process in Marsabit county if all actors and key institutions work together. Following the Kenyan state's security interventions in May 2022 and the national elections in August 2022, ethno-politically motivated violence has decreased significantly. However, inter-ethnic tensions remain, particularly between the Rendille and the Borana or the Gabra (and vice versa), and violent cattle raiding continues. In contrast to previous peace initiatives, which were organised by state institutions, the current peace process is largely driven by local communities, who are tired of the effects of protracted violence and years-long drought. Community-led peace processes alone can, however, not resolve the underlying ethno-political conflicts in the county, nor can they guarantee overall physical security. Bottom-up and top-down approaches to peacebuilding need to be integrated and coordinated, and this will first and foremost require new alliances between the state, ordinary people and organised civil society. Reconciliation and trust-building will be the basis for a more durable peace and thus also for enhanced drought-resilience of (agro)pastoral communities and sustainable development in Marsabit.

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Qalaliwe School in Moyale:

These children fetch water from

the school's water tank.

3.2 Recommendations for Policy and Action

In a collaborative effort, we have formulated recommendations to address the challenges that both food insecurity and violent conflict pose for local people. On 2 March 2023, county officials, NGO representatives, religious leaders and researchers met at a dissemination and reflection workshop organised by Caritas Marsabit, PACIDA and BICC to discuss ways forward and decisive steps that need to be taken by concerned stakeholders.

A | FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS

1. Increase food aid, cash transfers and water trucking for all affected groups.

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Continue to raise awareness with the national government and international donors of the magnitude of food insecurity in Marsabit.

To county and national state institutions
> Scale up support in terms of quality, quantity and reach once food insecurity reaches crisis status (IPC Phase 3).

> Oversee and coordinate humanitarian activities to reduce the risk of bias and duplication of efforts.

To international donors
> Substantially increase assistance to affected communities.

2. 'Do no harm' and conflict sensitivity.

To civil society actors in Marsabit, state institutions and international donors
> Ensure impartiality, accountability and transparency in crises responses.

3. Livelihoods and development: Implement short-term income- and employment-generating rehabilitation activities and build long-term skills, capacity and market infrastructure, taking into account environmental sustainability and the empowerment of women and youth.

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Promote local livelihood opportunities, while avoiding deforestation and local charcoal production (e.g. charcoal made from organic waste or briquettes made from waste as an alternative).

> Scale up sustainable agricultural practices and help to (re-)build relevant rural value chains.

To county and national state institutions
> Implement rehabilitation works that generate income and employment in rural communities, including youth and women.

> Improve local and regional value chains to facilitate the marketing and valorisation of livestock and other products of (agro)pastoral communities.

To international organisations and donors
> Fund income- and employment-generating activities and projects to build rural livestock value chains and alternative livelihoods.

4. HDP Nexus: Integrate humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities within projects[5]

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Integrate local conflict analysis into the planning and implementation of all activities.

> Identify opportunities for conflict resolution and peacebuilding through humanitarian and livelihood support activities.

To international organisations and donors
> Fund and support the integration of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding activities in projects.

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[5] See the OECD. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, February 2019: OECD Legal Instruments, accessed 20 February 2023.

B | PEACEBUILDING

1. Multi-level peace processes: Integrate peace initiatives by national and international agencies with local, bottom-up peace processes.

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Support local, bottom-up peacebuilding initiatives in rural and urban settings and encourage broad participation of diverse actors including women, children and youth.

> Work closely with the media to promote conflict sensitivity, prevent hate speech, reduce social incentives for violence, and disseminate information about peace gatherings.

To county and national state institutions
> Establish a coordination forum for peace actors at county and sub-county levels with revolving budgets that are not dependent on international donors.

> Support (logistically, financially and politically) Kenyan communities involved in existing cross-border peace initiatives with neighbouring countries.

To international organisations and donors
> Encourage the design and funding of long-term peace and conflict resolution programmes that integrate local and national efforts and a wide range of stakeholders.

2. Restitution, justice, trauma: Focus on healing the wounds caused by violent conflict, reparations for victims and prosecution of perpetrators.

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Provide psychosocial support to families who have lost loved ones, suffered serious injuries as a result of violence, or have been displaced.

> Systematically document incidents of violence, including cattle raiding, with information on locations and groups involved to provide independent data.

To county and national state institutions
> Ensure that cattle rustlers, killers and instigators of violence are legally prosecuted and brought to justice. Tackle corruption in this area.

> Create and support cultural festivals that bring communities together.

To international organisations and donors
> Fund psycho-social support and healing activities.

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Due to a lack of adequate school buildings, classes are often held under a tree, as here at Qalaliwe School in Moyale.

> Fund local initiatives desired to address human rights activism at the county level.

> Increase pressure on the national government to prosecute violence against civilians.

3. Post-conflict reconstruction:

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Monitor government and INGO post-conflict reconstruction efforts and the transparent and appropriate use of resources so that not one community/conflict party benefits while others increasingly lose out.

To county and national state institutions
> Ensure equitable distribution of resources, including employment opportunities, to reduce risks of bias and opacity.

> Repair and reopen damaged schools, health centres, police posts, etc., and involve different groups and stakeholders

To international organisations and donors
> Take responsibility for previous projects, i.e. donor-funded infrastructure destroyed in the conflict, and work with local and national actors to repair or rebuild it quickly.

C | LAND AND TERRITORIAL BOUNDARIES

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Implement inclusive projects in areas where boundaries between groups are contested, rather than defining boundaries by a clear borderline.

To county and national state institutions
> Provide transparency on existing local administrative and electoral boundaries and on the location of planned investments (e.g. Lamu Port, South Sudan, Ethiopia Transport Corridor – LAPSSET).

> Support multi-ethnic administrative units to register community land.

To international organisations and donors
> Take into account boundary issues and related ethno-political conflicts when allocating funds and planning projects.

D | INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

To civil society actors in Marsabit
> Include IDPs in emergency response projects.

To county and national state institutions
> Include IDPs in emergency response activities.

> Improve security for IDPs to enable them to return to their previous places of residence and provide assistance to rebuild their homes and livelihoods.

To international organisations and donors
> Fund local livelihood, return and (re)integration assistance, including psychosocial counselling, also for IDPs.

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Caritas Marsabit provides daily school meals in Gas. For many children, it is the only meal of the day.

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Traditional tea is served to the pupils in the dining hall of the Tiigo boarding school near Turbi, which is supported by the Caritas Germany partner organisation PACIDA. The children mostly come from impoverished pastoralist families.

For more information and a bibliography, see the full study report:

Etzold, B. & Müller-Koné, M. (2023). Boundary-Making in a Contested Space. Food Security and Conflict Dynamics in Marsabit, Kenya (Study Report). BICC.

https://bicc.de/docs/BICC-FooCo-CLS-V1.pdf

PACIDA
Pastoralist Community Initiative and Development Assistance
Building on Indegineous Knowledge and Institutions

Catholic Diocese Of Marsabit
Caritas Marsabit

In Kenya, 1.5 million livestock have died since the end of 2021. The pastoral nomads often have to travel distances of 20 to 35km to the nearest water points.

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