Implication of Public Policy Interventions on Inter-Ethnic Conflict in Isiolo County

Colonel Kariithi Charles Aritho[1]; Colonel (Dr) John Kisilu Reuben (Ph.D.)[2]

National Defence University-Kenya[1, 2]

ABSTRACT

Public policies are among some solutions states use to address inter-ethnic conflicts. The state is responsible for protecting the welfare of its citizenry, which is why the government strives to identify solutions to resolve conflicts within its borders. The study was anchored on Stakeholder Approach in Conflict Analysis. This study adopted the descriptive survey research method employing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods in the research process. The study was conducted in Isiolo County. The research employed probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.0, while qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic analysis method. The findings indicated that policy interventions to improve the road infrastructure would open viable markets and limit banditry attacks along the highways. Alternate sources of economic livelihoods, enabling security to allow uninterrupted access to education, availability of social amenities, and developing an early warning system to deter inter-ethnic conflicts before they escalate would be a proactive policy framework. The study recommended that equitable representation of the communities in the county government, involvement of all stakeholders in the efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change and ensure food security, Youth fund to provide alternative sources of employment, and provision of quality education to the children can be adequate public intervention measures by the government which could help resolve the inter-ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County.

Keywords: Public Policy, conflict management, Development, Interventions, Ethnic conflicts, socio-economic

INTRODUCTION

Policy interventions encompass a wide range of actions, programs, and initiatives undertaken or mandated by national and international authorities and non-state actors. These interventions cover various aspects such as regulations, market-based incentives, information schemes, and infrastructure development (Lund University, 2023).

The state and non-state actors have a huge role to play when it comes to conflict management. Policy interventions by these actors can help in conflict management. Various global policy intervention programs have been attempted to address community conflicts and reach aggrieved communities. O'Brien (2007) suggests that community development has been utilized for control, reform, or to support political objectives. For instance, in South Africa, community development was employed by the Apartheid government to empower and encourage genuine participation of people in their development. In Northern Ireland, Catholic communities used community development strategies to secure essential services and housing from the Protestant-controlled local government structures.

A study by Watitu (2014) reveals that civil society plays a crucial role in peace-building and conflict management, influencing these processes significantly. Government funding to civil society organizations

(CSOs) helps in conflict management, and training programs run by CSOs at the community level contribute to a substantial reduction in community conflict and recurring disputes. Mac Ginty (2014) also introduces the "Everyday Peace" concept, which involves grassroots-to-top conflict management and peace-building, creating local ownership of the peace process. This approach utilizes policy interventions focusing on norms and practices within highly divided societies to prevent or diffuse conflict and promote harmony among community members.

Apart from working with Civil society to shape and implement policies that aid conflict management, the state is responsible for protecting the welfare of its citizenry, which is why the government strives to identify solutions to resolve conflicts within its borders. Inter-ethnic conflicts cause a wide range of socio-economic effects. Public policies are among some solutions states use to address inter-ethnic conflicts. According to Wansai, Myanmar is a country in Southeast Asia with about 135 ethnic groups. The diverse ethnicity of the people in this country has contributed to recurrent ethnic conflicts (Wansai, n.d).To bring peace to this nation, Wansai says that since this country became an independent state in 1948, successive governments have been using the policy of ethnic nationalism to reconcile the country. Peter Rasmussen supports this solution for this country because it can promote nationhood and help build a shared cultural heritage and a sense of identity for the people (Rasmussen, 2001).

According to Lee, a blend of ethnicities in Malaysia triggered conflicts in 1969 (Lee, 2017). The country suffered a tragic eruption of violence. However, it managed to stop these conflicts by using public policy to shape ethnic relations for the better. The policies implemented focused on promoting equality in access to education and equality in the workplace for all ethnic communities.

In the context of Kenya, Kioko (2017) explains that decentralization and delegation of conflict-mitigation tasks have been carried out by the National Security Council (NSC) through the establishment of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) at the community/village level. These LPCs merge informal (traditional) and formal conflict-resolution processes to foster peace and security. At the ward level, chiefs and state administrators serve as the sub-location (or location) peace and security committee's "eyes," while LPC heads constitute the location peace and security committee.

Nzioka conducted a study on ethnic conflict management in Moyale. He established that development policy is one of the strategies employed in this region (Nzioka, 2012). He reported that the government has been drilling boreholes in various parts of Moyale; since the water was a significant source of contention. Developing a water point was a suitable solution in the area. Other countries have also used infrastructure development to restore security and stability. According to Ali et al., the justification here is that infrastructure can spur economic growth, revive the fragile economy, and stave off conflict (Ali et al., 2015).Infrastructure development of a region includes the availability of roads, airways, and railways. It also has many services, such as health, education, banking, energy, water, sanitation, and other public utility concerns. The availability of these infrastructures and services can impact the productivity of a region and its economic growth in the long run.

In this regard, an array of policy interventions by state and non-state actors incentivize inter-ethnic conflict management. Isiolo County is one of the areas that has constantly faced ethnic conflicts in Kenya. The current study explores the extent to which policy interventions in the study area have created an enabling environment for conflict management in the County.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was anchored on Stakeholder Approach in Conflict Analysis. The Stakeholder approach in conflict analysis was advanced by Jonathan Good hand in 2004. Stakeholder analysis is a system analysis technique that involves identifying the conflict's major players or stakeholders and assessing their respective interests.

A stakeholder analysis of the political economy of conflict gives a more detailed understanding of conflict's functions, which might lead to more focused conflict prevention and resolution policies and initiatives (Goodhand, 2004).

Every conflict has its origin, dynamics, and stakeholders involved. Those who are concerned with conflict management must address the issue of stakeholders. To prevent the recurrence of conflict, the conflict managers must ask themselves pertinent questions: Who are the primary stakeholders in the war economy? What are their motivations for participating in war economies? What are their reasons for seeking peace? Who has authority over the weapons of war? This is important in adequately evaluating the many roles of war economies (Freeman, 1984).

In this regard, the successful management of ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County requires that all players are involved in efforts to manage the conflicts. State and non-state actors all have a huge role to play as stakeholders. However, the role of the protagonists in the conflicts must never be overlooked as they determine the direction that the conflict will take. Stakeholders have the key to either escalation or de-escalation of hostilities. Hence, any policy intervention must recognize the stakeholders' critical role in successfully managing conflicts.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey research method employing a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods in the research process. The study population was residents of Isiolo County. In the 2019 census, Isiolo County was determined to have a population of 268,002. The study targeted National Government administration officers (County Commissioner, Sub-County Commissioners); Security personnel (Anti-Stock Theft Unit); County Government Officials, CSO (International and local NGOs), Council of Elders leaders (Meru, Borana, Samburu, Turkana, Sekuye and Somali); Business community leadership, pastoralist/ group ranches leaders, and private ranches owners, small-holder farmers leaders, religious leaders (Catholic, Protestants, Pentecostal, and Muslim).The study utilized probability and non-probability sampling techniques. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative data was collected through the use of questionnaires. Qualitative data was collected through Key Informant Interviews. Quantitative data was analyzed through Statistical Packages for Social Scientists Version 25.0 and presented through Tables and charts as percentages.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Policy factors affecting inter-ethnic Conflicts

The study sought to establish policy issues that affected inter-ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County, and the following were the responses.

Table 4.1 Policy factors affecting inter-ethnic Conflicts

Statement	Agree%	Neutral%	Disagreed%
The government's mega projects in the County, such as the construction of the Isiolo Airport, have helped to create a sustainable livelihood for the people.	70.5	21.3	8.2
Alternative economic empowerment, such as enterprise development, will reduce inter-community conflicts	80.3	13.1	6.6
The government has adequately resolved the land rights problem in Isiolo County.	13.1	11.5	75.4

Proper measures are being implemented to help cushion the people from the problems caused by climate change and variability in Isiolo County.	62.2	14.8	23.0
The operations of community policing in Isiolo County are adequate for promoting peace.	59.0	36.1	4.9
The political representation will reduce inter-community conflicts	91.8	8.2	0.0
The community people are adequately involved in peace strategies.	88.5	4.9	6.6

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The study sought to establish whether the government's mega projects in the County, such as the construction of the Isiolo Airport, have helped to create a sustainable livelihood for the people in Isiolo County. The study's findings indicated that 70.5% of the respondents felt that the government's mega projects in the County, such as the construction of the Isiolo Airport, have helped create a sustainable livelihood for the people, and 8.2% were neutral. In comparison, 21.3% felt that the government's mega projects in the County, such as the construction of the Isiolo Airport, have not helped to create a sustainable livelihood for the people.

The study endeavored to establish whether alternative economic empowerment, such as enterprise development, will reduce inter-community conflicts. The findings indicated that 80.3% of the respondents felt that alternative economic empowerment, such as enterprise development, would reduce inter-community conflicts, and 13.1% were neutral. In comparison, 6.6% felt that alternative economic empowerment, such as enterprise development, would not mitigate inter-community disputes.

The study's findings also indicated that 13.1% of the respondents felt that the government had adequately resolved the land rights problem in Isiolo County, 11.5% were neutral, and 75.4% thought that the government had not adequately resolved the land rights problem in Isiolo County. Additionally, 62.2% of the respondents felt that proper measures were being implemented to help cushion the people from the problems caused by climate change and variability in Isiolo County, and 14.8% were neutral. In comparison, 23.0% felt that no proper measures were being implemented to help cushion the people from the problems caused by climate change and variability in Isiolo County.

The study in this part sought to establish whether the operations of community policing in Isiolo County are adequate for promoting peace. The study's findings indicated that 59.0% of the respondents felt that the functions of community policing in Isiolo County are sufficient for promoting peace, and 36.1% were neutral. In comparison, 4.9% did not think that the operations of community policing in Isiolo County are adequate for promoting peace.

The study's findings also indicated that 91.8% of the respondents felt that Political representation would reduce inter-community conflicts, and 8.2% were neutral. In contrast, none of the respondents did think that Political representation would reduce inter-community disputes.

Finally, results indicated that 88.5% of the respondents felt that the community people were adequately involved in peace strategies, and 4.9% were neutral. In comparison, 6.6% thought the community people were not sufficiently engaged in peace strategies.

The findings agreed with Homer-Dixon (2010), who opined that mega projects by the government are the allocation of resources such as land, water, and natural resources. If there is inequality in the distribution of these resources, ethnic groups can exacerbate existing tensions and lead to conflicts. According to Casey et

al. (2015), policy interventions can be vital in fostering inclusive projects that boost cohesion and the feeling of inclusion. Government projects can also serve as a way of building confidence between different ethnic groups because initiatives that involve joint efforts and collaboration among diverse communities create opportunities for interaction and dialogue, fostering mutual understanding and trust (Chen, 2021).
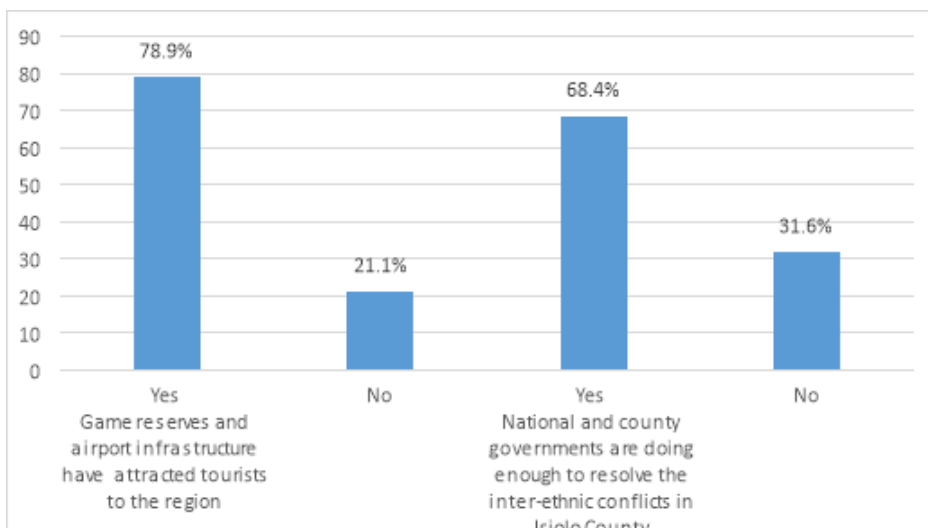
Alternative economic empowerment as a policy intervention is crucial to conflict management. Humphreys & Weinstein (2008) averred that Economic empowerment would help reduce economic Disparities and foster inter-community collaboration**.** According to the World Bank (2021), Enterprise development initiatives can create jobs and income-generating opportunities for members of various communities, especially those economically marginalized. Having access to stable livelihoods and economic prospects can reduce feelings of deprivation and resentment, potentially triggering inter-community conflicts. Additionally, enterprise development programs encourage collaboration and cooperation among individuals from different communities, creating mutual understanding, trust, and social cohesion.

Therefore, the findings show that government projects and economic empowerment activities are important policy decisions that can help manage ethnic conflicts. A paradigm shift in community empowerment and development in volatile areas like Isiolo County is critical for ensuring ethnic cohesion and conflict management in the study area.

Effects of game reserves and airport infrastructure on economic activities

The study's findings indicated that 78.9% of the respondents felt that game reserves and airport infrastructure had attracted tourists to the region and that 68.4% believed that National and county governments are doing enough to resolve the inter-ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County. The findings were as shown in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1Effects of game reserves and airport infrastructure on economic activities

The findings were in agreement with Spierenburg & Brooks (2014),who opined that when well-managed, game reserves can boost tourism and create employment opportunities in the hospitality industry, leading to increased economic growth and revenue for Local communities who may, in turn, benefit from tourism-related businesses and services. On the flip side, however, Chiutsi & Saarinen (2017) stated that if all stakeholders are not adequately involved in traditional economic activities, such as agriculture or livestock farming, they may be affected due to competition for resources which may exacerbate the conflict situation. Additionally, Button et al. (2010) argued that airport development considers the needs and aspirations of different ethnic groups, providing opportunities for economic participation and benefiting local communities; it can foster social cohesion and reduce ethnic tensions.

From the preceding, it is evident that constructing game reserves and airports creates many opportunities for local communities. Hence, proper stakeholder engagement with local communities and civil society organizations makes it possible to create a cohesive society. In this regard, having such critical amenities in Isiolo County would create an environment in which the conflictual relationships between the local ethnic groups could be transformed into more peaceful and mutually enriching ones.

Public Policy Interventions

The study sought to establish Public Policy Interventions required to solve inter-ethnic conflicts in Isiolo, and the following were the responses.

Table 4.2: Public Policy Interventions

Public policy Interventions	Percentage (%)
Provision of administration services	59.22
Provision of security	75.07
Provision of water services	78.45
Provision of social amenities	60.00
Development of infrastructure	82.15
Community outreach and reconciliations	84.14
Stakeholder engagement	65.23
Local economic empowerment	89.33
Political representation	72.55

Source: Field Survey (2023)

The study's findings indicated that local economic empowerment would be the intervention with the highest socio-economic effect at 89.33%, followed by community outreach and reconciliations at 84.14% and then infrastructure development at 82.15%. At the same time, the provision of administration services as an intervention would have the most negligible effect on socio-economic development at 59.225, followed by the provision of social amenities at 60.00% and Stakeholder engagement at 65.23%.

While Community outreach and reconciliations remain one of the interventions for peace in the conflict-afflicted areas, the findings indicated that the National and County Governments have not been doing enough to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts. Attacks and casualties were on the rise, indicating that the national and County governments play their role in promoting peace and encouraging inclusivism in the composition of their governments.

Political representation also remains one of the interventions to inter-ethnic conflicts, as 72.55% of respondents pointed out that feelings of political exclusion can contribute to inter-ethnic conflict in the area. In the politics of the winner takes it, the elected leaders choose to award their cronies other than equally working for the people (Abdille, 2017). The losers do not benefit from the government of the day. The findings support earlier studies that divisive politics have played a significant role in side-tracking the efforts being put in place to enhance peace talks in the region. The National and County governments must prioritize regional security to implement their strategies. Additionally, as advised by many studies, the County government needs to ensure that all the communities present have a representative within the county government to address their grievances.

The findings agreed with Kamau (2020), who argued that the National Government needs to be more ruthless when dealing with leaders who incite citizens rather than shielding them from the law due to their

affiliations. Because of this, the National Government also needs to fund the police officers in the County more to improve their working conditions which continues to be a significant challenge. The study did not highlight the provision of administration services as one of the highest-ranked interventions in solving inter-ethnic conflicts in the area.

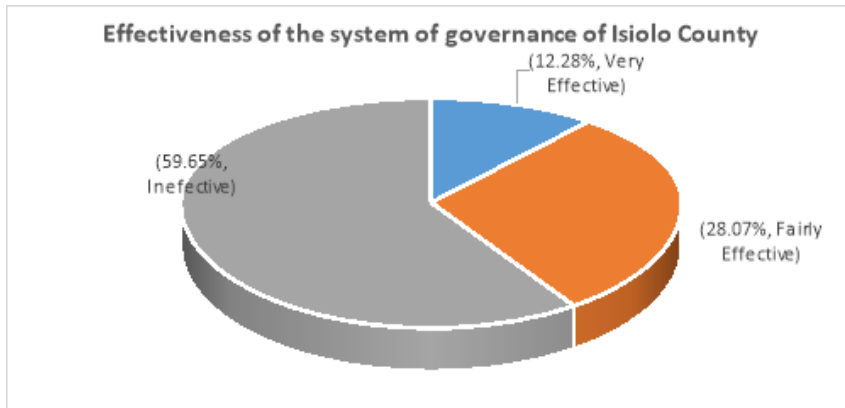**Effectiveness of the System of Governance of Isiolo County.**

Figure 4.3 Effectiveness of the System of Governance of Isiolo County

The study's findings established that 59.65% of the respondents felt the government was ineffective,28.07 % thought it was reasonably practical, and only 12.28% felt it was effective. The study's findings support earlier studies highlighting that the elected political leaders also catalyze poor governance in the County as they were seemingly seen to serve their interests or enhance the influence of their communities rather than doing all the people in the County.

Findings from interviews also emphasize that government should prioritize security in the region by providing more resources to the police officers. These findings supported Safer world's (2015) report, which indicated that the County needs to have a stable security status to support the growth of businesses, resolve the pertinent land rights ownership issues, and issue pending title deeds to reduce land ownership conflict. Subsequently, there is a need to ensure access to basic social amenities such as healthcare and clean water for domestic consumption.

In addition, respondents mentioned that most residents content with the water scarcity problem and compete for the available resources. Further, respondents reported the need to improve the state of infrastructure in the region, for example, feeder roads, to make remote areas more accessible to residents and security officers. Healthcare facilities must also be increased and equipped with the proper personnel and medicine to effectively serve the communities in the area. Subsequently, respondents indicated that the government should implement disarmament initiatives and curb the County's easy access to small arms and light weapons. The easy accessibility of SAWLs in the County has increased illegal ownership of firearms used in inter-ethnic attacks and banditry (Jebet, 2016).

Respondents indicated that all stakeholders, led by the national and County Governments, should develop strategies to cushion people from the effects of climate change, which has become prevalent. The county government must prioritize food security by encouraging irrigation and funding agricultural initiatives. There is also a need to build on community policing to help in enhancing security in the region. Residents' involvement in security matters plays a significant role in making the interventions more successful.

Whether politicians or other community leaders are involved, the perpetrators of inter-ethnic conflicts should be held accountable and charged within the law. In addition, the perpetrators' prosecution should be executed to serve as an example to others.

The respondent needs to fund poverty alleviation projects to reduce poverty levels in the County and improve livelihoods. Most youths in the County are unemployed and need funding to develop start-up projects. As the study findings emerge, it's to improve the conditions of the region's education facilities and build more schools to improve access to education. In some areas, school-going children walk long distances to attend poorly equipped schools. There is also a need to sensitize pastoralists on keeping manageable herds of cattle, goats and goats, and camels. Lastly, the government should involve all the stakeholders in peace and reconciliation-building efforts by holding frequent dialogues and discussions to seek opinions from people on improving peace and identify early signs of possible triggers of inter-ethnic conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The National and County government had attempted to provide Public Policy interventions to contain the persistent inter-ethnic conflict. However, the National and County governments must do more to achieve lasting coexistence between the various ethnicities within Isiolo County.

RECOMMENDATION

The study findings highlighted gaps that enabled the formulation the following recommendations, which could inform better public policy intervention to resolve the inter-ethnic conflicts in Isiolo County:

The National and County Governments should take a lead role by proactively resolving inter-ethnic conflicts by promoting peace through equitable representation in the county administration. The communities will be able to address their grievances within the government framework.

Both the National and County governments should involve all the stakeholders in mitigating the effects of climate change. Food security should be prioritized and actualized through practical measures to reduce over-reliance on rainfed agriculture and budgetary allocation to agricultural initiatives.

The National and County government should empower the youth through government funding to reduce unemployment rates. The financial support will help reduce the poverty levels and enable the youths to contribute to national economic development.

The government should take action against the perpetrators of ethnic conflicts by making them accountable for their actions. The local county government should enhance security by involving the community in the spirit of stakeholder involvement.

The National and County governments should prioritize providing quality education to the children by equipping schools and making them accessible to all children.

REFERENCES

1. Abdille, A. (2017). "Ethnic Contest and Electoral Violence in Northern Kenya."
2. Ali, R., A. Barra, C. Berg, R. Damania, J. Nash, and J. Russ.(2015) "Infrastructure in Conflict-Prone and Fragile Environments." *World Bank Group*, 2015. https://openknowledge. worldbank.org/ bitstream/handle/10986/22005/Infrastructure0ic0 Republic0of0Congo.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.
3. Button, K., Doh, S., & Yuan, J. (2010). The role of small airports in economic development. Journal of airport management, 4(2), 125-136.
4. Casey, K., Glennerster, R., & Miguel, E. (2015). The GoBifo project evaluation report. Assessing the impacts of community driven development in Sierra Leone http://www. povertyactionlab. org/publication/gobifo-project-evaluationreport-assessing-impacts-community-driven-development-sierra-l Accessed, 26.

5. Chen, Y. (2021). Laying the tracks: The political economy of railway development in Ethiopia's railway sector and implications for technology transfer(No. 2021/43). Working Paper.

6. Chiutsi, S., & Saarinen, J. (2017). Local participation in transfrontier tourism: Case of Sengwe community in great Limpopo transfrontier conservation area, Zimbabwe. Development Southern Africa, 34(3), 260-275

7. Future Agricultures. (2014, June). The Politics of Pastoral Violence: A Case Study of Isiolo County, Northern Kenya. https://assets.publishing. service.gov.uk/media/57a089c4ed9 15d3cfd000408/FAC_Working_Paper_095.pdf

8. Henderson, E.A. (2010). Ethnic Conflicts and Cooperation. Encyclopaedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict. 746-758. 10.1016/B978-012373985-8.00062-3.

9. Homer-Dixon, T. F. (2010). Environment, scarcity, and violence. Princeton University Press. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/ ar/131951587730959660/pdf/Rapid-Assessment-on-Institutional-Architecure-for-Conflict-Mitigation-Isiolo.pdf https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/191933/isiolo-conflict-analysis.pdf

10. Humphreys, M., & Weinstein, J. M. (2008). Who fights? The determinants of participation in civil war. American Journal of Political Science, 52(2), 436-455.

11. Jebet, V. (2016). "5,000 Illegal Firearms to Be Destroyed in Isiolo." Nation. Last modified August 14, 2016. https://nation.africa/kenya/counties/isiolo/5-000-illegal-firearms-to-be-destroyed-in-isiolo-1228338.

12. Kamau S. (2020). "Influence of ethnic conflicts on learners' access to education in public primary schools at Sigowet sub-county of Kericho county-Kenya." Ph.D. diss., UoN.

13. Kioko, E. M. (2017). Conflict resolution and crime surveillance in Kenya: Local peace committees and Nyumba Kumi. Africa Spectrum, 52(1), 3-32.

14. Lee, H. (2017). "Majority Af?rmative Action in Malaysia: Imperatives, Compromises and Challenges." *Global Centre for Pluralism*, 2017.

15. Lund University. (2023, February 9). International and national policy intervention. The International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics | The International Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics. https://www.iiiee.lu.se/research/international-and-national-policy-intervention

16. Mac Ginty, R. (2014). Everyday peace: Bottom-up and local agency in conflict-affected societies. Security Dialogue, 45(6), 548-564.

17. Nzioka, B. M. "Factor Influencing the Implementation of Ethnic Conflict Management Strategies in Kenya: A case of Moyale District." Master's thesis, University of Nairobi, 2012.

18. O'Brien, C. (2007). Integrated community development/conflict resolution strategies as 'peace building potential'in South Africa and Northern Ireland. Community Development Journal, 42(1),114-130.

19. Rasmussen, P. (2001)"Nations' or 'States': an Attempt at Definition." *Global Policy Forum.* Last modified 2001. https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/172/30341.html 9 Ibid.

20. (2015) "Isiolo County conflict analysis." 2015. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/191933/isiolo-conflict-analysis.pdf.

21. (2015). Saferworld briefing: Isiolo County conflict analysis.

22. Spierenburg, M., & Brooks, S. (2014). Private game farming and its social consequences in post-apartheid South Africa: contestations over wildlife, property and agrarian futures. Journal of Contemporary African Studies, 32(2), 151-172.

23. Wansai, S.(n.d). "Resolving Ethnic Conflict – Civic Nationalism: a Theoretical Tool for the Ending of Civil War?" Transnational Institute. https://www.tni.org/en/article/resolving-ethnic-conflict.

24. Watitu, R. N. (2014). Factors influencing the role of civil society on peace building in Kenya: A case of Nairobi county(Masters dissertation, University of Nairobi).

25. World Bank Group. (2019). ISIOLO COUNTY, KENYA: Rapid Assessment of the Institutional Architecture for Conflict Mitigation.