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FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO PROLIFERATION OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS AMONG THE RENDILLE COMMUNITY IN MARSABIT COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This research paper assessed the factors contributing to proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons among the Rendille community in Marsabit County-Kenya, and adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population was 477 people drawn from the Rendille Community, Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, and Non-Governmental Organizations, from which a proportionate sample size of 150 participated in the study. Questionnaires, interview schedules and Focused Group Discussions were used in collection of primary data which was corroborated with existing secondary data. Convergent parallel mixed method of data analysis and presentation of the findings was used, where quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics with frequencies, percentages and graphs being used, while qualitative analysis involved the use of narratives and quotes. Ethical consideration including confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent of the respondents were strictly adhered to. Additionally, prior written permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, and other County administrative organs were also sought prior to conducting the research study. Based on the findings, it was found out that the major factors contributing to proliferation of small arms and light weapons among the Rendille community included the readiness for revenge attacks (counter-offensive strategy), conflict over resources, boundary disputes, cattle rustling, inter-ethnic conflicts, and political differences among the various ethnic groups living in the County. The researchers recommended that national government should recruit, equip and deploy adequate security personnel to Marsabit County to provide the requisite security and secure the porous borders from arms traffic flow. With the help of the County Government of Marsabit, national government can identify development projects that provide an alternative source of income to the pastoralist communities. Lastly, further research was recommended on the implication of primordial social linkages among the transnational border communities in proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Keywords: Small Arms and Light Weapons, Proliferation, Security, Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Globally, there is a total estimate of 975 million Small, Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), and with over 100 million located in Africa, and above 30 million are found in sub-Saharan Africa (Alley, 2019). It is further documented that from the global statistics of SALWs, over 650 million are in civilian hands (either as licensed or illegally owned) and thus posing grave danger to human security and especially in conflict prone areas around the world (Detzner, 2017). Small arms are designed for personal use and ranges from light machine guns, sub-machine guns, machine pistols, fully automatic rifles and assault rifles, and semi-automatic rifles, while light weapons includes portable weapons designed for use by several persons serving as a crew and includes heavy machine guns, automatic cannons, howitzers, mortars of less than 100 mm calibre, grenade launchers, anti-tank weapons and launchers, recoilless guns, shoulder-fired rockets, anti-aircraft weapons and launchers, and air defence weapons (Eve, 2017).

Traditionally, SALWs were developed for use by government forces (military and police). However, the end of the Cold War unleashed an outbreak of callous intra-state and inter-state conflicts resulting in proliferation of SALWs especially to vigilantes, militia groups, rebels, terrorist groups, war profiteers and private citizens pursuing their group and individual interest rather than state interests (Detzner, 2017). Mwenga (2017) observed that the proliferation of SALWs has complicated conflict resolution efforts in various parts of the world including in the Middle East, Latin America, South East Asia and the horn of Africa. A study by Ndawana and Ghuliku (2018) noted that small arms are attractive tools of violence because they are widely available, low in cost, extremely lethal, light in weight, simple to use, durable, highly portable and can easily be concealed. Most small arms and light weapons would not be lethal without their ammunition and World Arms Survey posit that over 12 billion bullets are produced annually across the globe (Alley, 2019). Ammunition and explosives thus form an integral part of small arms and light weapons used in conflicts. They include cartridges (rounds) for small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines, explosives, and mobile containers with missiles or shells for single-action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems that are used by civilians during war (Ndawana and Ghuliku, 2018).

A study by Alley (2019) noted that Small arms and light weapons proliferation and use especially during violent conflicts have been particularly devastating in the Middle East (e.g. in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon), South East Asia (e.g. in Thailand, Vietnam, and Philippines), Latin American states (such as in Colombia and Mexico) and in a number of African states (such as in Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo), where machine guns, rifles, grenades, pistols and other small arms and light weapons have killed and displaced many civilians. In 1994 alone, ethnic conflict in Rwanda left more than 800,000 people murdered, and estimated 300,000 civilians also died in Burundi and are largely attributed to use of SALWs by vigilantes, militia and rebel groups (Jekada, 2005). In the last two decades, the World Arms Survey noted that an average of 500,000 people get killed annually and attributed to use of SALWs. Such weapons are frequently recycled from country to country, and their ownership is transferred among fighters, security forces and war profiteers (Detzner, 2017). The negative effects of such weapons are felt not only in the immediate conflict area, but also in neighbouring countries and regions as well (Ndawana and Ghuliku, 2018). Small arms and light weapons can easily spread across porous borders, igniting violence in adjacent areas that may have experienced peace in the past. In some societies, these surplus weapons may create a "culture of violence" that traps the whole populations in an endless cycle of war as witnessed in Syria, Colombia and South Sudan (Alley, 2019). The destructive effects of arms proliferation on peace and security are well attested - including exacerbating conflicts in weak states and undermining peace efforts, facilitating human rights offences, and as being one of the largest single contributors to corruption world-wide (Mwenga, 2017).

Owing to the destructive nature of illicit SALWs as witnessed in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Syria, Colombia, DRC, South Sudan and Rwanda where such weapons have been used to commit crimes against humanity, genocide and forceful eviction of human population, the United Nations, regional organizations (such as EU, ASEAN, ECOWAS etc), Government of states, and a wide range of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have initiated efforts to curb the proliferation of SALWs and to remove such weapons from areas of conflict (Eve, 2017). The United Nations through UN Programme of Action (2001) sought to have member states adopt a Program of Action (POA) on Preventing, Combating and Eradicating the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons (Alley, 2019). Some of the major commitments of the UN Programme of Action (UNPOA) included; making illicit gun production/possession a criminal offense, establishing a national coordination agency on small arms and light weapons, identifying and destroying stocks of surplus weapons, keeping track of officially held guns, disarming, demobilizing and reintegration of ex-combatants, including collecting and destroying their weapons etc (Ibid). The UNPOA however, is not binding and does not indicate how to regulate small arms and light weapons among civilian populations. Regionally, the European Union (EU) on 19th November 2018 adopted the EU Strategy against illicit Firearms, Small Arms and Light Weapons and their Ammunition, which for instance required member states to license all gun holders and declare unlicensed SALWs illegal and punishable by law (Detzner, 2017).

In Africa, regional blocs have also established initiatives to address SALWs for instance ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, their Ammunition and Other Related Materials, and the SADC Protocol on Firearms, Ammunition and Related Materials (Eve, 2017). The ECOWAS Convention on SALWs for instance, is binding to all member states and took effect from 2009. It requires member states to ban international small arms and light weapons transfers (except those for legitimate self-

defense and security needs, or for peace support operations), ban transfers of small arms and light weapons to non-state actors that are not authorized, stringent regulatory scheme for anyone wishing to possess small arms and light weapons and a strong management standards to ensure the security of weapons stockpiles (Mc Cullum, 2016). In Eastern Africa, Kenya is a signatory state to the 2004 Nairobi Protocol, which sought to strengthen the Nairobi Declaration of 2000 and legally commits the 11 signatory states (DRC, Burundi, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Seychelles) to concrete actions, including mandatory gun registration and a ban on the civilian ownership of military assault rifles (like the AK-47), to deal with the problems caused by small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions (Ndawana, et.al. 2018). It requires these countries to incorporate provisions into their national laws including the following; ban on civilian ownership of automatic and semiautomatic rifles, registration of all guns, regulation of gun storage and competency testing for prospective owners, restrictions on the number of guns a person can own, uniform minimum standards regulating the manufacture, control, possession, import, export, transit, transport and transfer of small arms and light weapons, standardized marking and identification of small arms and light weapons, regulation of security companies and uniform tough sentencing for unlicensed gun possession (Mohamed, 2018).

As a country, the government's intervention is its Kenya National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons (KNFP) which brings together relevant government ministries and departments, civil society organizations and stakeholders to coordinate all arms control and management approaches under the UNPOA (Wepundi, et.al 2012). To achieve this, the government crafted KNFP technical and policy sub-committees in all the regions with a special focus on regions with rampant illicit SALWs and those that share international borders with other countries like Marsabit County which is the focus of this study. The committees are also tasked with building the capacity and creating awareness to the community on the negative effects of illicit trade and use of SALWs. In addition, government administers this by deploying competent and skilled officers who participate in disarmament processes and maintaining law and order (Alley, 2019). Further, despite Kenya not being a manufacturer or a producer of SALWs, it has various legislative and administrative provisions on arms management and control. They include; Firearms Act, Police Act, Explosives Act, Penal Code, Armed forces Act, customs and excise Act, wildlife Act, Extradition Act, immigration Act, administration Police Act, Refugee Act, Prisons Act and Forest Act (Shyaka et.al. 2006). These constitutional Acts are supported and applied together with other provisions, all of which seek to regulate supply and use of SALWs which contributes to achievement of UNPOA international safeguard standards.

Despite existence of both international and domestic efforts to contain the spread of SALWs, empirical studies shows existing loopholes in the eradication of illegal supply and demand for SALWs and a significant percentage of SALWs are used for unlawful purposes by civilians especially among the pastoralist communities in Kenya (Alley, 2019; Nyariki and Amwata, 2019 and Osamba, 2000). Pastoralist communities have encountered underlying challenges associated with proliferation of small arms and light weapons all of which gradually lead to their undermined overall security, loss of lives and livestock, decreased trade and investments, denial of education and health, violence and ethnic conflicts (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019). This further affects livelihood and socio-economic activities contributing to increasing poverty and declining living standards among most pastoralist communities (Schilling, et.al 2012). This research paper focused on the factors contributing to proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille community of Marsabit County in Kenya.

Marsabit County is the largest of Kenya's 47 counties and is part of the approximately 80% of the country's landmass classified as Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) where the primary livelihood is mainly pastoralism (Mkutu, 2006). Administratively, the county has 4 sub counties; Moyale, North Horr, Saku and Laikipia. This study was concentrated in Laikipia and Saku sub counties because they are inhabited by the Rendille community. The ethnic groups that predominantly live in Marsabit County includes; Borana, Burji, Dassanech, Gabbra, Rendille and El Molo (Mohamed, 2018). Minority ethnic communities includes; Garre, Samburu, Sakuye, Turkana, and Waata. The plurality of Marsabit's inhabitants belongs to the Borana ethnic group, together with the second- and third-largest communities, the Gabbra and Rendille, who constitute a significant majority of the population. As noted by Mkutu (2006), these various communities are largely dependent on pastoralism where they herd cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels which provide them with milk, meat, hides and skins as well as means of transporting heavy loads (mainly donkeys and camels). Livestock keeping is also considered as a source of prestige and wealth. While there are government laws and regulation regarding possession and use of firearms, this county has been documented among high risk areas on proliferation of illicit SALWs.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Globally, proliferation of illicit SALW continues to pose grave danger to human security with hundreds of thousand lives lost annually and continued human displacement and destruction of property (Alley, 2019; Ndawana and Ghuliku, 2018; Detzner, 2017; Eve, 2017; Mwenga, 2017; Jekada, 2005). Although there is considerable evidence about positive impact of arms control interventions on illegal possession and use of SALWs for instance in USA, EU states and even in West Africa, much is yet to be achieved in the Horn of Africa including in Kenya. While the Kenyan government have comprehensive domestic laws and policies such as Firearms Act, Penal Code and the National Police Service Act as well as a pool of international treaties against proliferation of SALWs, pastoral communities as well as government security officers have experienced repeated and deadly conflicts characterized by use of SALWs. Even under the new 2010 Constitution, doubt has been cast on the efficacy of the various domestic laws and

policies as well as international treaties in curbing the spread and use of SALWs especially in the Northern Frontier Counties in Kenya, and it's against this background that this study sought to interrogate the factors contributing to proliferation of small arms and light weapons among the Rendille community in Marsabit County, Kenya.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research paper is an output of a study that was conducted in Marsabit County using a survey research design. The target population was 477 people drawn from the Rendille Community, Ministry of Interior and National Coordination, and Non-Governmental Organizations, from which a sample size of 150 respondents participated in the study. Questionnaires, interview schedules and Focused Group Discussions were used in collection of primary data which was corroborated with existing secondary data. Convergent parallel mixed method of data analysis and presentation of the findings was used, where quantitative data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics with frequencies, percentages and graphs being used while qualitative analysis involved the use of narratives and quotes. Ethical consideration including confidentiality, anonymity and informed consent of the respondents were strictly adhered to. Additionally, prior written permission from the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation, and other County administrative organs were also sought before undertaking the study.

Table 3.1 Sample Size

Target Population	Specific Cohorts	Target Number	Samples Size
Rendille Community	Community Elders (<i>Nyumba Kumi</i> , clan elders and village elder)	100	30% of 100=30
Government Officers from Ministry of Interior and National Coordination	County Commissioner (CC)	1	Purposive = 1
	Deputy County Commissioners (DCC)	2	Purposive =2
	Assistant County Commissioner(s) (ACC)	5	Purposive =5
	Chiefs	63	30% of 63 =19
	Assistant Chiefs	127	30% of 127 =39
	Office of County Police Commander or representative	12	30% of 12 =4
	Office of the County Director Criminal Investigation	17	30% of 17 =5
	Police Officers (Anti-Stock Theft Unit)	100	30% of 100 = 30
Non-Governmental Organizations	Field Officers	150	30% of 150 =45
Total		477	150

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Subsequent sections present findings in relation to the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents as well as the major findings on the factors contributing to proliferation of small arms and light weapons among the Rendille community in Marsabit County, Kenya.

4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section discusses the demographic characteristics of the respondents in terms of their gender, age, marital status, level of education and religion, and Table 4.1 below provides a summary of the findings.

Table 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Category	Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	92	68.1
	Female	43	31.9
Age in Years	18-35	18	13.3
	36-53	57	42.2
	54-71	48	35.6
	72 and above	12	8.9
Marital Status	Single	8	5.9
	Married	115	85.2
	Widowed	12	8.9
Level of Education Completed	Primary	16	11.9

	Secondary	36	26.7
	Diploma	28	20.7
	Bachelor’s Degree	53	39.3
	Post-Graduate Degree	2	1.4
Religious denomination	Catholics	13	9.6
	Protestant	25	18.5
	Islam	91	67.4
	Others	6	4.5

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Analysis of the findings in Table 4.2 indicates that 92 (68.1%) of the respondents were male while 43(31.9%) were female. The study noted that 18(13.3%) respondents were of age bracket 18-35 years, 57(42.2) were of age bracket 36-53 years, 48(35.6) were of age 54-71 years while those above 72 years were 12(8.9%) respondents. As indicated, from the findings, 105(77.8%) of the respondents were aged between 35-71 years implying the great responsibility they have in relation to various societal responsibilities. The study also established that 8(5.9%) respondents were single, 115(85.2) respondents were married while 12(8.9) of the respondents were widowed. This finding is congruent with the age of the respondents where all the respondents were above 18 years and are constitutionally endowed to marriage. In relation to education, 16(11.9%) respondents only completed Primary school level of education, 36(26.7%) completed Secondary school education, 28(20.7%) had Diploma level of education, 53(39.3%) had a Bachelors Degree and only 2(1.4%) respondents had attained a Post-Graduate Degree. Regarding religious denomination, 13(9.6%) of the respondents subscribed to Catholicism, 25(18.5%) were protestants, 91(67.4%) were Muslims while 6(4.5%) subscribed to other religions (such as Hindu or Traditional African Religion) or had no religion at all (Pagans). This finding was in line with GOK (2019) report that indicated most of the Northern Frontier Communities subscribed to Islam as their Religious denomination. Generally, these findings represents a population that is largely Muslims; made of adults in their prime age with knowledge on community history; generally semi-skilled given the level of education; but in stable family relationships.

4.2 Factors Contributing to Proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille in Marsabit County

The study sought to establish the major factors contributing to proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille in Marsabit County and the findings were as indicated in Figure 4.3.

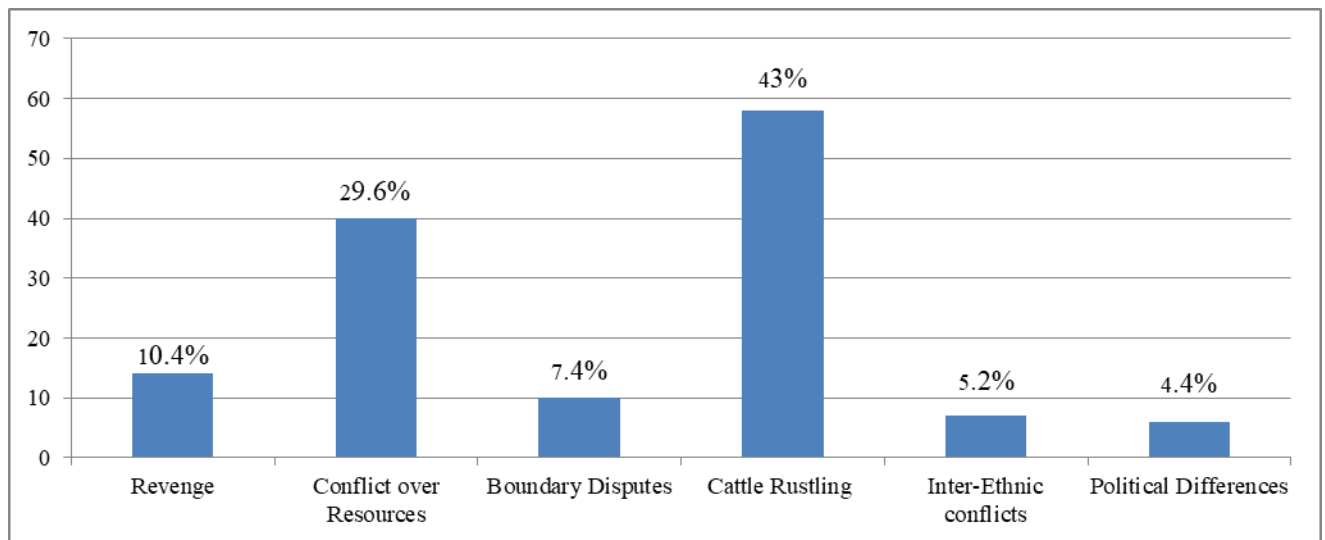


Figure 4.3 Factors Contributing to Proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille in Marsabit County

As indicated in Figure 4.3, the readiness for revenge attacks was raised by 14(10.4%) respondents as a factors contributing to proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille in Marsabit County, 40(29.6%) attributed it to conflict over resource and 10(7.4%) respondents cited boundary disputes. Additionally, 58(43%) attributed proliferation of SALWs to cattle rustling, 7(5.2%) cited inter-ethnic conflicts while 6(4.4%) of the respondents cited political differences.

From the findings, it emerged that the greatest factor contributing to proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille in Marsabit County was cattle rustling. Rendille community is one of the pastoralist communities in Kenya whose livelihood revolves around livestock keeping (rearing of cattle, sheep, goats, donkeys and camels). Key informants noted that apart from livestock being the

source of basic needs such as milk, meat, hides and skins, it is also considered as a source of prestige and wealth. Based on this background, the community acquires firearms as a means of protecting their lifeblood resources from their neighbouring communities (such as Borana, Samburu and Turkana) who equally have strong attachment to livestock as a source of livelihood. This study affirms the Relative Deprivation Theory adopted in the study that where two or more groups are in pursuit of certain human needs, conflict is likely to occur if one of group perceives an attempt by another group to deny them their needs. However, before such conflicts occurs, the competing groups often develops offensive and counter-offensive strategies which under this study, manifests itself in the form of acquisition (proliferation) of SALWs by the Rendille community. In addition, the Rendille community believes in continuous stocking of livestock based on the view that large number of livestock is associated with wealth and prestige. Focused Group Discussion with community elder revealed the centrality of owning large herds. One elder quipped that;

Traditionally, the community believed that all livestock were given to them by Wakh (God) as a blessing and whenever they go out to other communities (cattle rustling) to increase their stock, they are just bringing back what they had loaned them (other communities)... (FGD, Male, 72 Years)

It was apparent from the FGD that according to the Rendille community, all livestock belong to them and handed down to them by *Wakh* (Pre-Abrahamic deity) as custodians, and cattle rustling is thus considered a means of getting back what belongs to them as a means of restocking. This finding conforms to Manasseh et.al, (2012) that religious and cultural attachment to livestock by pastoralist communities in Kenya entrenches perennial cattle rustling. FGDs with local administrative leaders noted that cattle rustling had also turned into a lucrative business venture with local business entrepreneurs and politicians getting involved. It was noted that subsequent to improvement of infrastructure such as roads in the county, well coordinated cattle raids had been witnessed with such roads being used in transportation of stolen livestock to most urban cities in Kenya where demand for meat is high.

The study also noted that conflict over resources such as water and pasture significantly contributed to proliferation of SALWs, as cited by 40(29.6%) of the respondents. It was established that Rendille community largely inhabited a vast arid and semi arid part of Marsabit County from Merille River and Serolivi in the South to Loyangalani in the North, from Marsabit and Merti in the East to Lontolio in the West where according to Kenya Metrological Department Statistics, it experiences an annual average of 20.1° Celsius and 500mm of rainfall. The inadequate rainfall and high temperature makes water and pasture, the second most valued resource after livestock among the Rendille community. An interview with a key informant drawn from a local NGO, noted that;

The members of the Rendille community have armed neighbours such as the Borana and Turkana who are equally in need of grazing land and water. During droughts, these communities moves around looking for these resources and extremely violent conflicts have been witnessed in the past such as between the Rendille and Borana... (Key Informant, Female, Aged 46 years)

Evident from the response was that harsh climatic conditions often leads to scarcity of pasture and water across the County and other communities such as the Borana, Samburu and Turkana who are also nomadic pastoralist are forced to look for the same resources. The Rendille community is thus forced to acquire firearms in anticipation of any confrontation with already armed communities. Based on the centrality of livestock among the Rendille community as a source of wealth, prestige and food (such as milk and meat), armament become the only choice for a favourable offensive or counter offensive attack should their water points and grazing land are encroached by other communities. In such a volatile environment characterized by the struggle for survival and relative deprivation among hostile communities, inter-community 'arms race' is witnessed in an effort to outcompete each other. An interview with a Key Informant from an NGO, noted that perceptions of the control and management of resources in the county have contributed significantly to conflict. The informant noted that some Non-Governmental development projects and humanitarian interventions such as borehole drilling for water and vaccination of livestock are sometimes misconstrued by the dominant Borana community to favour Rendille Gabra, Burji (REGABU) in their implementation and thus aggravating the tensions. Based on this perceived favoritism, the Rendille with close allies (Gabra and Burji) who are predominantly wealthy but minorities in numbers have partnered in acquisition of firearms as a deterrence and defensive mechanism against any perceived threat from the Borana community and thus contributing to proliferation of SALWs. Conflict over resources among the Rendille therefore, transcend beyond pasture and water points for livestock, to development project such as water points initiated by NGOs and veterinary services and other county development projects.

The study also indicated that perceived threat from other neighboring communities' has led to Rendille's readiness for revenge and thus contributing to proliferation of SALWs in Marsabit County. As noted by Alley (2019), Kenya's frontier communities have historically lacked effective state security services. This has served to drive tensions into open violence as it has allowed communities to 'manage' their own security, including by taking advantage of readily accessible light weapons and resorting to violence. In this context, the Rendille community has also opted to 'manage' their own security through acquisition of firearms. During an FGD with community elders, one of them noted that;

As a community, we have been left under the mercies of our neighbours who are always armed. We initially thought that the county government will help but so far, nothing has been forthcoming... (FGD, Male, Aged 67 years)

Evident from his response was that the Rendille community had resorted to armament as a deterrent and a counter offensive strategy. Armament was perceived by the community as strategy of retaliation/revenge should the government security forces fails to protect them and their livestock from hostile neighbours. It also emerged that despite promulgation of a new constitution that seeks to enhance equitability in resource sharing, it was established that such an objective is yet to be achieved among the different communities in Marsabit County. The feeling of marginalization by certain communities becomes a recipe for inter-ethnic animosity which heightens tension among them.

Inter-ethnic conflicts that are prevalent in the County as cited by 7(5.2%) respondents have contributed to the Rendille community reorganizing themselves on a counter-offensive strategy. FGDs with the local community elders revealed that Marsabit County shares a long and porous border with the Oromia of Ethiopia who largely supplies SALWs to the Borana, Dasneetch and Gabra. As these ethnic communities straddle the two countries and migrate in search of water and pasture, ethnic conflicts with their neighbours including the Rendille usually emerge. Such conflicts often escalate even as every ethnic community develops alliances as a counter offensive strategy. The prevalent inter-ethnic conflicts among various pastoralist communities in the county predispose the Rendille to acquire fire arms and to develop alliances with other ethnic groups such as the Gabra, Burji, and Garre. It was further noted that even where there are no direct ethnic clashes between communities, continued insecurity due to absence of government security force predisposes community to armament.

The study also established that contestation over grazing and administrative boundaries in Marsabit County leads to conflict and Rendille community has been a victim. It was noted that the Rendille community have had several confrontation with the dominant Borana community on grazing lands especially during dry seasons. Inter-community boundary dispute in relation to grazing land have contributed to armament by the Rendille community as a defensive strategy against Borana invasion and violation of grazing boundaries. Further interrogation also noted that Rendille often maintain alliance with minority Gabra community to contain Borana encroachment to their grazing lands.

Subsequent to promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, administrative boundaries are still being established, contested, and negotiated. FGDs with local administrative officers (chiefs and sub-chiefs) noted that a widespread perception amongst Borana people is that the Rendille, Gabra and Burji are continually in pursuit of political influence, and land has become central to and accelerated conflict between the two communities. It was observed that land especially in relation to community boundaries has ignited tension between the communities and the Rendille community had resorted to armament as defense strategy against any possible attacks. A key informant noted that;

All the communities in Marsabit County are pastoralists and land is a key resource because it serves as a grazing ground. New boundaries set by IEBC, has been viewed by the Rendille community as an attempt to restrict the area under their control and thus raising tension among communities... (KI, Male 58 years)

The study also established that political differences among the various communities had contributed to Rendille armament for fear of political conflicts. An interview with prominent local Rendille political leader and FGDs with community elders revealed that traditionally (before the year 2010), in what is now Marsabit County, Marsabit North was mainly inhabited by the Borana and Gabra communities, and Marsabit South occupied by the Rendille community was established. Consequently, violence broke out between different ethnic alliances, operating according to the old rules of territorial invasion and theft of livestock. Following pressure from local political leaders, Marsabit North was further subdivided into North Horr and Saku constituencies, reflecting Gabra and Borana interests respectively. However, rather than reducing the conflict between the two communities, the division increased tensions and conflict between the two.

Subsequent to promulgation of the 2010 constitution, ethno-political alliances and balance of power in the county has greatly been witnessed. For instance, the Gabra, Burji, and Rendille communities have formed a political alliance named REGABU in order to take county and national level political positions from the majority Borana, whose numerical dominance meant they are widely expected to capture most of the available seats. In amidst alliance and counter-alliance formation, inter-community suspicion often leads to armament where political leaders incite and sometimes encourage members of their communities to protect what 'rightly' belongs to them. A review of 2013 election in the county with key informants noted that from the REGABU alliance, the governorship went to the Gabra community, the deputy governorship to the Burji, the senator position to the Rendille, and the women's representative to the Garre community. The Gare community (a minority Somali clan) won the county women's representative seat and two wards in Moyale while only Saku and Moyale parliamentary seats went to the Boranas.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that conflict over resources, boundary disputes, cattle rustling in the region, inter-ethnic conflicts and political differences among the various ethnic groups living in Marsabit County have significantly contributed to the proliferation of SALWs among the Rendille community. The researchers therefore, recommend that the government

should recruit, equip and deploy adequate security personnel to Marsabit County and by extension, the entire Northern Frontier Counties in order to provide the requisite security and secure the porous borders from arms traffic flow. In partnership with the county government, the national security agencies should establish a partnership framework to help guide and coordinate efforts to monitor, control and reduce the proliferation of SALWs in the region. The national government in partnership with the Northern Frontier Counties should establish a broad based monitoring, reporting and cooperation framework for early warning and early response integrating the members of the public through initiatives such as community policing and *Nyumba Kumi* initiatives. Further there is need to engage community leaders in curbing illicit arms trafficking through the identification of gun runners, trafficking routes and gun markets. Improving terms and conditions of law enforcers, properly equipping them in terms of intelligence gathering and all response capabilities will significantly contribute in dealing with illegal arms. This can involve improving road infrastructure in Marsabit County to open up the entire region in terms of economic activities and also enhance border control mechanisms. The findings of this study also form the basis for future research for instance on the implication of primordial social linkages among the Transnational border communities in proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

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