

## **Role of culture in Protracted Pastoral Conflicts among the Samburu and Pokot of Kenya**

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**Abstract:** *The paper examines the role of culture in protracted pastoral conflicts among the Samburu and Pokot who occupy Samburu and Pokot Counties in North Rift Valley region. Conflicts among these communities normally involved cattle rustling which had been trivialized as a mere cultural practice. However, over time, there have emerged new trends, tendencies and dynamics leading to commercialization of cattle rustling. There has emerged a new system of predatory exploitation of the pastoral economic resources manifesting itself in the form of banditry and cattle rustling. The results have been disastrous as pastoral communities are displaced and many people either been killed or maimed and their properties stolen or damaged. The livelihoods of these groups have been completely cut. Many are trying to survive in completely new and difficult circumstances. It is against this background that the paper examines the role of culture in protracted pastoral conflicts involving Pokot and Samburu from Pokot and Samburu Counties in Kenya, respectively. The study provides a useful case study of examining in depth the role of culture as a source of conflict and a component in conflict resolution and priorities for conflict and crime prevention among the pastoral communities. The paper concludes with a call for stakeholders to enhance efforts for curbing conflict involving pastoralists in Kenya.*

**Keywords:** *Culture, Conflict, Pastoralists*

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### **I. Introduction**

Pastoralists are some of the most marginalized people in Africa. Pastoral conflicts have become widespread and increasingly severe and violent in North and North Eastern Kenya. Pastoralists derive their livelihoods mainly from the natural resources, including water, pasture and natural vegetation, and livestock. However, decline in access to these natural resources, and especially water and pasture, increasingly puts the pastoralists under intense pressure. As a result of the scarcity of their sources of livelihoods, they often find themselves fighting for survival (Pkalya, Adan & Masinde, 2003). In addition to competition for and exploitation of the limited natural resources, conflicts involving pastoralists are also associated with cattle rustling and the availability of illegal small arms (East African Standard, 2004, Pkalya, et al., 2003). Pkalya, et al. and Kratli and Swift adds that physical boundaries cutting across traditional migratory routes and wars in neighbouring countries also cause problems in accessing traditional grazing resources. Weapons entering Kenya from neighbouring war-torn countries are making raids increasingly dangerous and sophisticated. In addition to the traditional raiding, conflicts in the region have now taken an economic and political perspective. These factors have compounded and complicated conflict resolution and management processes, especially when the cultural values of the concerned pastoralists are taken into account.

The upsurge of pastoral conflicts in Kenya, and the entire Africa at large, is therefore a manifestation of a people's quest for self-identity, self-realization and supremacy. Such conflicts tend to become more protracted and volatile, especially when they hinge on such people's cultural values. Burton and Dukes (1990); Koza (1997); Bryne and Irvin (2000) observe that culture is a significant source of conflict and an important component in conflict resolution and reconciliation. Burton and Dukes affirms that culture is vital because it is a "satisfier". Moreover, cultural values are important to most members of the community. He points out that, indigenous societies were more inclined toward rituals that led to co-operative problem solving than to the type of confrontation and power bargaining advocated by the western world. Lederach and Coner (1990) also advocate the necessity of cultural and indigenous approaches to conflict resolution. In the African context, this would involve incorporating various traditional theories and practices into the contemporary general mechanisms of conflict resolution. Augsburg (1992) argues that in traditional cultures, there exist pathways in the ethnic wisdom for managing conflicts. This, he points out, may be lost due to the influence of westernization.

Indigenous cultures viewed conflict as a communal concern. Thus, the society was seen as having ownership of both the conflict and its context. However, the westernized conflict resolution approach puts more

premiums on personal and individual ownership. Most of the time it is a win-lose situation. On the other hand, grassroots peacemaking approach hinges on the premise that since most of the active players in any conflict situation are grassroots people, it becomes inevitable to involve this large segment of the society in the process of peace making and conflict resolution. This approach also presupposes that peace can be built from below. Traditional approaches of conflict resolution are an important component of the cultural heritage of African societies.

There are many assumptions that surround a people's perception and approach to culture in the field of conflict resolution. These assumptions rarely make explicit the fundamental concerns about the relevance, dominance and ideology underlying the meaning and purpose of conflict resolution. This study therefore, evaluated the role of culture as a source of conflict and a component in conflict resolution and reconciliation among the pastoral communities using a case study of Samburu and Pokot communities.

## **II. Objectives of the Study**

Historically, pastoral conflicts were less intense with minimum effects and considered as a harmless cultural practice of the involved communities. They were determined, sanctioned and controlled by the elders of the respective communities. Conflicts among these communities normally involved cattle rustling which had been trivialized as a mere cultural practice. However, over time, there have emerged new trends, tendencies and dynamics leading to commercialization of cattle rustling. There has emerged a new system of predatory exploitation of the pastoral economic resources manifesting itself in the form of banditry and cattle rustling. The results have been disastrous as pastoral communities are displaced and many people either been killed or maimed and their properties stolen or damaged. The livelihoods of these groups have been completely cut.

Many are trying to survive in completely new and difficult circumstances. It is against this background that the paper examines the role of culture in protracted pastoral conflicts involving Pokot and Samburu from Pokot and Samburu Counties in Kenya, respectively. The study provides a useful case study of examining in depth the role of culture as a source of conflict and a component in conflict resolution and reconciliation among the pastoral communities specifically Samburu and Pokot in Samburu, East Pokot and Laikipia Counties of Kenya

Specifically the study, addressed the following specific objectives:

- (i) To establish the various cultural components/institutions of pastoral communities (Samburu and Pokot)
- (ii) To establish the role of these cultural components in promoting peace or perpetrating pastoral conflicts
- (iii) To propose recommendations that may be used to address pastoral conflicts involving cultural dimensions.

### **Overview of the Protracted Conflict**

The Samburu and Pokot had lived in peace and harmony for many years. However, traditionally the two communities used to have fights of a smaller magnitude over access and control pasture and water, maximize their herd size, replenish stock in case of a reduction due to a calamity and/or rustling, and acquire livestock by an individual to be used in paying bride price and/or for personal gain. Elders amicably resolved these theft cases between the two communities through traditional conflict resolution mechanisms such as fines, repatriations, and community service.

In early 2006, conflict between the two communities exploded and intensified taking a different dimension. The conflict led to ethnic animosities spanning from March to October, 2006. The animosities were exemplified in the violence that led to loss of lives and damage of property. Signs of this conflict were raging over the years as a result of mistrust and competition over the scarce natural resources (pastures and water) in Laikipia district. Whenever the available pasture and water in the drought-prone Samburu and Pokot districts becomes too scarce to support the large and growing livestock numbers, pastoralists in these districts traversed to Laikipia District seeking to secure a lifeline. But each time they meet in Laikipia district, the two fight each other over access and use of the scarce pasture and watering points.

There has also been a historical perspective to the conflict between the two communities. The two communities used to live together and harmoniously in Laikipia district, while sharing the available grazing land and watering points for their animals since time immemorial. It is alleged that in 1968, the Samburu fought with the Turkana, when the former wanted to encroach on the Samburu land. The Samburu forged an alliance with the Pokots to fight the Turkana at Kanyaman in 1971-74. As a result, the Pokots requested to be allowed to graze and water their cattle on the Samburu side during this period. The Pokots promised to keep peace with the Samburus as they only wanted grass and watering points. Truly, they moved away to their land in Baringo District at the end of the drought.

In 1977-1978, the Ngoroko episode enabled the Pokot to acquire guns and ammunition. This further enabled them to execute a series of attacks on their neighbours including the once friendly Samburu. In December 1996, the Samburu also forged another alliance with the Pokots against the Turkana. Scores of

Turkana were killed at Lokorkor. After this attack, the Pokots became frequent visitors to Samburu; they started encroaching on the Samburu group ranches, especially parts of Amaiya and Malaso, the areas that experienced the recent conflict. This was unlike before when they used to come in search of pasture during the dry spells and go back at the onset of the rains. The reluctance of Pokots to move back home after the 2005 drought led to the eventual conflict in early 2006. The conflict between the two communities in 2006 was experienced mainly at the borders of Baringo, Samburu and Laikipia Districts. Members of the communities living at the border points especially in Tangulbei and Nginyang in Baringo County; Lunyek, Survey and Rumuruti in Laikipia County; and Leroki, Moriyo, Lolmolek Poro and Lolkeria in Samburu County raid each other for different reasons. Heavily armed raiders with sophisticated arms conduct the conflict. Many people lose their lives, and properties are stolen and damaged.

From the foregoing, it is evident that there were many core issues that triggered the animosity. These issues were very dynamic and complex in nature. This was because there were many confounding factors contributing to the conflicts, which tended to be mutually reinforcing. Some of the major causes of conflict include but not limited to competition over control and access to natural resources (land, pasture and water), intensified cattle rustling, proliferation of illicit arms, inadequate policing and state security arrangements, diminishing role of traditional governance systems, political incitements, ethnocentrism, increasing levels of poverty and idleness amongst the youth, among others. Implicit in these causes of conflicts is the cultural practices of the two communities. The study therefore evaluated the role of culture in promotion of peace or perpetration of conflict between Samburu and Pokot in Samburu and Pokot Counties, respectively.

### **Cultural Components of Samburu and Pokot and their Role in Conflict**

The cultural values and beliefs of pastoral communities manifest themselves through various components/institutions. It is the totality of these components that defines and identifies a particular community. These components also act as sources of conflicts and/or vital pillars for conflict resolution and reconciliation. This study sought to establish the various components of culture among Samburu and Pokot. All the sampled respondents reported that there were four major cultural components/institutions in the two communities. These cultural components included:

- (i) Generational lines and age-set organizations,
- (ii) Marriage,
- (iii) Moranism/warriors, and
- (iv) Rights of passage (circumcision).

The four cultural components were reported to be the pillars of the two communities and determine their socio-economic well-being. They influenced peace and tranquility in the area and determined their relationships with other neighbouring communities. Each of these components is discussed in details and how it propagated or enhanced conflict in the area.

### **Generational Lines and Age-Set**

The social structure of the two pastoral communities was largely based on generational lines and age-sets. Age-sets are ritual associations of people that (a) cut across kin linkages, (b) are structured into cycles of initiation, regularly apportioned according a fixed number of years, and named with a traditional series of names, and (c) are associated with specific values and behaviours. Age is an important factor in assigning social status and a man passes through various stages before becoming a powerful elder in his 30's. Age-sets serve as primary identification marker for their members in everyday life. In this study, all the 69 respondents recognized the existence of such generational lines and age-sets in their communities. They indicated that their communities had been structured in ways that conformed to differences in ages and had assigned different non-overlapping roles and duties to various age levels. Each age category had a specific duty to play in the community. Table 1 indicates the number of generational lines and age-sets that exist in the two communities.

Table 1: Number of Age-Sets in Pokot and Samburu Communities

| Community | Number of age-sets | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Pokot     | 4                  | 40        | 58.0    |
| Samburu   | 5                  | 29        | 42.0    |
| Total     |                    | 69        | 100.0   |

Table 1 indicates that the Pokot community had four generational lines and age-sets, while the Samburu community had five. The respondents reported that the criteria for creating the age-sets were based on age factor where people in the same age interval (for, example after every 15 years among the Samburu) were subjected to a common cultural rite (for example, circumcision, initiation or sapano) which bound them for a

common cause. The respondents from each of the communities were also asked to identify these generational lines and age-sets.

The four generational lines and age-sets among the Pokot community included:

- (i) Monung (young/childhood) aged 1-12 years and was determined through naming
  - (ii) Karachina (youth/warriors/morans) aged 13-31 years and was determined through circumcision and a special ritual ceremony
  - (iii) Murol (young elders) aged 32-45 years and was determined through approval and blessing from the elders in a special ceremony
  - (iv) Poi (elders) aged 46 years and older and are the highest authority
- NB// the ages are approximations and may vary with + or - 2years

In the Samburu community, the five generational lines and age-sets were determined at an age interval of 15 years and included:

- (i) Lkishami(young/childhood)
- (ii) Lmooli (new youth/warriors)
- (iii) Lkioro (former warriors)
- (iv) Lkishili (young elders)
- (v) Lkimamki (elders)

From the above information, it is observed that the generational lines and age-sets were structured in ways that depicted the young from the old, with the elders forming the senior generation set. The respondents enumerated the specific roles that each age-set played in the community. Table 2 summarizes the roles of each age-set.

Table 2: Roles assigned to age-sets in pastoral communities

| Age-set and community |                   | Role  |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---|
| Pokot                 | Samburu           |   |
| Monung                | Lkishami          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look after livestock (grazing and taking them to drink water)</li> </ul>   |
| Karachina             | Lmooli and Lkioro | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect and defend the community from any potential enemies</li> <li>• Protect, escort and move with the animals when looking for water and pasture during the dry season</li> <li>• Run errands on behalf of the community</li> </ul>         |
| Murol                 | Lkishili          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and make decision regarding community activities, for example, determining grazing lands and watering points</li> </ul>   |
| Poi                   | Lkimamki          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give blessing, approval, advice and guidance for the community activities</li> <li>• Oversee community cultural rites, including graduation from one age-set to another</li> <li>• Settle disputes within and outside the community</li> </ul> |

Table 2 indicates that the elders who formed the senior generation set in the two communities had political and spiritual roles in the society. The elders laid down rules and procedures to initiate warriors, settle disputes, sanction raiding expeditions and determine grazing areas in their nomadic pattern. The society therefore relied on their wise guidance, prayers and blessings. Their advanced age and experience was seen as indicating their close relationship with the spiritual world. Thus, their decisions on any issue were sacrosanct. The warriors/youth/morans constituted the junior generation set. Their role in society was to execute decisions agreed upon by the elders.

The elders, therefore, played an important part in defusing tensions and conflicts, which usually centered on the control of grazing land or water. They were reported to have well laid down procedures for settling disagreements in which all the parties to the conflict got a chance to put across their views. The elders were recognized as having authority to act as arbiters and give judgment on the rights or wrongs of a dispute submitted to them and suggest a settlement though they may have had no power of physical coercion by which to enforce them. They had their own herd and family (ies). Their interest was to ensure good relations in order to widen access to resources, to facilitate commercial activities and in general to promote security. However, the elders could also sanction conflict with another community in order to gain access to more resources or political power. Therefore, the role of the elders determined peaceful co-existence or conflict between the communities. They determined whether a conflict was to be resolved or not and when this was to happen. The study also established that there were rules governing the conduct of each generational line and age-set. These rules were set by the elders of the community.

Young men in the two communities represented a group waiting to start their own homesteads and own wealth. The aim of every young man was to increase his prestige and respect within the community, attract girls and be able to afford marriage. Security and peace of the community offered them few immediate advantages. They were highly mobile. It was also in their interest to shake up existing power relationships within the community and at times preferred to trade security for cattle, money or prestige. The young men were required to generate their own wealth that would assist them to marry and building their homesteads. This requirement placed of pressure on them to the extent of defying the laid down procedures of raiding another community to steal animals. Traditionally, all raids in the two communities were first approved by the elders, but because of the economic imbalance between them and the young men, the latter were time and again raiding other communities in secret without approval and blessing of the elders. Such unsanctioned raids by the young men in the two communities were a form of competition for control over resources (and ultimately power) between different age-sets.

Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940: xviii) and Kiplagat (1998:7), while recognizing the role of elders in pastoral communities, observed that elders had to act as arbiters in times of conflicts. The negotiation or reconciliation process in the pastoral traditional setting was seen as a re-establishment of relationships between people and also with their God and spirits – who were regarded as witnesses and active participants. Kiplagat points out: "There is a holistic approach to the process, working with the community as a whole, invoking spiritual forces to be present and accompany the community towards peace". The responsibility of the elders was to guide the negotiation towards an agreement, which would reflect as much as possible the consensus of all the parties involved. According to Baxter (1979), the control of the pastoral economy had for a long time been a monopoly of the elder age-set (men and women in different ways and degrees): the elders own the livestock, control resources and dispose of marriages. The young are poor by definition, to the point that should a young man inherit a herd and family responsibilities, he would become an "elder" regardless of his age. With respect to warfare, therefore, the notion of pastoralists should be disaggregated, to take account of the antagonistic interests between age-sets. Sometimes, the elders sanction conflicts as a matter of necessity to the community, while in other cases, the young people rebel against the elders as a way of stamping their identity and acquiring wealth.

### III. Marriage

Among the pastoralists, ties of kinship, marriage and friendship often bind people in communities and their neighbours. Marriage determines the posterity of the community and binds the involved families/communities together. This has a strong influence on the intensity and direction of a conflict, and speed of resolution and reconciliation process in any conflict situation. Therefore when there is a conflict between two groups that share marital ties, there is always pressure for a quick settlement of the dispute. As Gordon and Gordon (1996:235) point out, "when people of different descent groups must marry, live among, and cooperate with one another, their cross cutting ties together with the pervasive fear of feud constitute an important mechanism for the maintenance of social order". This study therefore established the common forms of marriage in the two communities. Table 3 depicts the common forms of marriage.

Table 3: Common forms of marriage among Samburu and Pokots

| Fom of marriage           | Frequency | Percent |
|---------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Traditional               | 58        | 84.1    |
| Traditional and religious | 11        | 15.9    |
| Total                     | 69        | 100.0   |

From Table 3, it is observed that 84.1 percent of the respondents indicated that traditional marriage was the most common form of marriage in their communities. This traditional marriage was reported to follow some laid down traditions rules and expectations. They were meant to promote and maintain the traditional values of marriage. Approximately 15.9 percent reported that there were traditional and religious marriages. They explained that traditional marriages followed the cultural traditions of the community, while religious marriages were common among families who were now embracing the modern religion. The religious marriages do not adhere to all the traditional rites of the community. However, the respondents indicated that whichever form of marriage that is practiced, its main role in the community was procreation and companionship (78.3 %) and continuity of the family and community lineage (21.7 %). This suggests that marriages were made for continuance of the community and companionship. In the two communities, women traditionally leave their clan and thus their social status is much lower than that of men.

The study also revealed that traditionally, the two pastoral communities respected very much the role of a woman in ensuring procreation and continuity; children borne of these marriages were valued as the future of the community. Therefore, during times of conflict, there were ethical code of war that ensured the respect and protection of women, children and the elderly. Respect for women was imperative since they represent the

origin (source) of life. The child represents innocence, while the elderly were considered to be closer to the spirit of the ancestors.

Traditional and religious forms of marriages in the two communities were reported to take place in two kinds of arrangements. We had intra-community marriages and inter-community marriages. Intra-community marriages involved a man and woman from the same community getting married, while inter-community involved a man and a woman from two different communities getting married. The respondents observed that the main reasons for intra-community marriages were to conserve culture and unity within the community; and promote the prosperity of the community lineage. Such marriages were reported to have lesser marital problems as both the husband and wife knew what their community expected from them. Therefore there were no contradiction in the roles and expectations of the two. Inter-community marriages aimed at promoting culture and interaction with other communities, and peaceful coexistence among community. This kind of marriage brought two communities together and thus strengthened their relationship and interaction. This could at times be utilized to solve any conflict between the two communities. However, any disharmony between the two communities could as well threaten these marriages as the husband and wife lived in suspicion of each other.

Either one of them could be suspected by the other community as the source of betrayal. The respondents also reported that social relationships and occasional inter-marriage between the Pokot and Samburu led to several married women running away and abandon their families during times of conflicts. This usually incenses the community that the married woman is running from, and at times retaliated through violence. It was also reported that during the time of conflict, a Pokot man who had married a Samburu woman and his two relatives were killed in cold blood at the home of in-laws when they went to visit them at Amaiya. Samburus took the visit as a mockery and betrayal by their son in-law.

The respondents also reported that marriage in the two communities could only take place between a mature and circumcised man and woman. Circumcision ensured that one is of the right age and understood the expected roles of marriage. However, in addition to circumcision, both the bride and bridegroom had to fulfill certain cultural conditions. Table 4 highlights the conditions for the bridegroom before marriage.

Table 4: Conditions for the bridegroom before marriage

| Conditions  | Frequency | Percent |
|---|-----------|---------|
| Well-behaved, mature, circumcised and able to pay dowry | 62        | 89.9    |
| Obedience and faithfulness                              | 2         | 2.9     |
| Successfully completed moranism                         | 5         | 7.2     |
| Total   | 69        | 100.0   |

Table 4 indicates that the bridegroom was supposed to be well-behave, mature, circumcised and able to pay bride price as reported by 89.9 percent of the respondents. This prepared the man to understand his expected familial responsibilities and be able to look for the required bride price on his own. Similarly, one had to be a moran this was a condition considered important so as to ensure that one was able to protect the family. This assured the community that the man is capable of efficiently handling his expected family duties. However, the idea of one being able to pay bride price seems to fuel raids since the would-be bridegrooms are usually poor without any properties. Therefore, young men who are waiting to start their own homestead sought to increase their prestige and respect within the community, attract girls and be able to afford marriage. However, because the elders have their own herd and a family, young men being highly mobile, organize raids to get pride with the approval of the elders. This generated into conflicts between the communities. It was reported that during the seasons when Pokot practice mass female circumcision (female genital mutilation – FGM), conflict was usually rife as young men have to acquire livestock to pay dowry once the girls graduate. Hence, raids become more frequent at this time. From the above marriage as a component of culture seems to fuel Conflicts. Being an important stage in life, men had to go for raids to acquire bride price.

For the bride, Table 5 highlights the conditions one had to fulfill before marriage.

Table 5: Conditions for the bride before marriage

| Conditions                           | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| Well-behaved, mature and circumcised | 62        | 89.9    |
| Obedience and faithfulness           | 7         | 10.1    |
| Total                                | 69        | 100.0   |

From the above table it is clear that a bride had to be well-behave, mature and circumcised. She was also supposed to be obedient and faithful. This assured that community that one was able to undertake the daunting familial responsibilities of procreation and taking care of the home. The study also established that during times of conflicts involving these communities, women were supposed to sing war songs in order to

psyche, taunt and incite their men fight more and hard. The songs were an important source of motivation of conflict. However, women were also reported to hold the key to conflict resolution and reconciliation in the area. Their ties to their lineage of birth were not fully severed with marriage. They are very passionate about peaceful co-existence within and among communities. By women marrying out of their clan and even community, they were key figures in inter-clan and inter-community linkages and could provide crucial channels for communication between rival clans and communities.

#### **IV. Warriors**

The study established that for one to qualify as a warrior/moran, he was supposed to be circumcised, mature, energetic and brave. The qualifications were based on the huge responsibilities that a warrior was expected to undertake. The warriors were recruited, trained, took an oath, approved and blessed by the community elders. The graduation ceremony of the warriors/morans was open and very elaborate as it ushered in a new group of community security.

The raids breach peace and security in the involved communities. In order to survive the raids and counter-raids, pastoral communities organize their young people to act as security groups that protect the community against their potential and actual enemies. Such groups of young people are commonly referred to as warriors or morans. In this study, all the respondents reported that their communities had warriors/morans. These warriors/morans played various roles as summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Role of the morans/warriors in the community

| <i>Role</i>   | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Protect and provide security in the community                 | 59               | 85.5           |
| Move with animals looking for pasture and water in dry season | 6                | 8.7            |
| Conduct raids when necessary                                  | 4                | 5.8            |
| Total   | 69               | 100.0          |

Table 6 indicates that the main role of the warriors/morans was to protect and provide security for the community. The warriors were reported to be responsible for protecting the community against their potential and actual enemies during raids and counter-raids. They also protected the animals during the dry season when they are moving from one area to another looking for pasture and water. The communities also used the warriors/morans to raid others when necessary. Therefore, the role of the warriors either perpetrated conflicts in the area through raids or provided security when raided. The activities of the warriors/morans influenced peace and security among pastoral communities. The respondents indicated that the warriors/morans were used in the recent conflicts to either raid or counter-raid the other communities. They were blamed to have been the major source of the conflicts. The conduct and activities of these groups in discharging their duties and responsibilities were governed and regulated by rules. The council of elders was the custodian of these rules in each community.

#### **V. Rites of Passage**

Pastoral communities are characterized by very distinct and profound rites of passage that ensure graduation from one generation or social status to another. One of the most identifiable rites of passage common in most of these communities was circumcision. This study established that the two communities (Pokot and Samburu) practiced female and male circumcision. In the Pokot community, circumcision was a compulsory part of the initiation of men. Women also undergo circumcision when one is about 12 years old. In the Samburu community, circumcision heralds a boy's transition to a moran, while female circumcision was performed on the day of marriage for girls (usually at around 16 years old). Table 7 highlights the importance of circumcision in the two communities.

Table 7: Importance of circumcision among Samburu and Pokot

| <i>Importance</i>                         | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent of 69</i> |
|---|------------------|----------------------|
| Bridge from childhood to adulthood        | 64               | 92.8                 |
| Promote honour and dignity                | 50               | 72.5                 |
| Allow one to own property                 | 42               | 60.9                 |
| Men to be allowed to join morans/warriors | 35               | 50.7                 |

From Table 7, 92.8 percent of the respondents indicated that circumcision marked the transition from childhood to adulthood. This prepared one for the forthcoming adult responsibilities in the community. This in itself was a right of honour and dignity as it bounded one to community virtues and values. For men, this right of passage allowed one to own properties, qualify to join morans/warriors and prepare for marriage later.

During circumcision, the initiates were given various teachings meant to assist them in adulthood. In the study area, during circumcision, male initiates were taught about their expected roles in the community; and the cultural beliefs, values and practices of the community. They were prepared to become warriors/morans and defend the community. Female initiates were also taught about their expected roles in the community; and the cultural beliefs, values and practices of the community. This prepared them for their future feminine responsibilities and duties in the community. The various teachings given to female and male initiates during circumcision were meant to inculcate community values and ethos. However, the teachings passed to initiates were reported to have opposite results during times of conflicts. Some stressed on the positive virtues of the community and how to live in peace and harmony with others. This was likely to enable the initiate to appreciate and recognize other communities and thus minimize cases of conflicts. Other teachings taught the initiates the need to always defend the community. Such teachings were harmful as the initiates were encouraged to stand for the community whenever there was a conflict. As indicated earlier, it was during the seasons when Pokots practice mass female circumcision (female genital mutilation – FGM), where conflict was usually rife as young men have to acquire livestock to pay dowry once the girls graduate. Hence raids become more frequent at this time.

## **VI. Effects of Protracted Conflicts**

The following are some of the effects of the conflicts between the Samburu and Pokot. Conflict between the two communities has always claimed lives and left scores of other people injured. The most affected are women and children who are more vulnerable due to physical strength. In the process, herds of livestock are also stolen and property destroyed.

Conflicts between the two communities cause destitution among the members. Raids directed at numerous homesteads simultaneously decimate an individual's livestock in a few hours and leaves destitute in the whole network of friends and relatives who were dependants. The violent conflict between the Pokot and Samburu also lead to a massive exodus of people, especially in OI Moran division, seeking for safety. People are displaced as they flee their homes for safety during the numerous series of raids by the heavily armed raiders. Majority of them seek refuge in neighbouring religious institutions and urban areas. Rumuruti division has become the natural refuge for the fleeing members of the two communities. The displaced people are threatened by starvation, malnutrition and outbreak of diseases in their refugee camps.

Protracted clashes and escalation of conflict causes a breakdown of contact between families and the community and consequently loss of lengthily constructed social networks (for example, inter-clan marriages and institutions). Families are displaced from their homes and flee for safety. Raiding and stealing animals deprives the affected people of a vital source of livelihood that result in increasing poverty levels and destitution. No farming activity takes place as people flee their homes and lived in fear and uncertainty. This compounds the poverty levels and increase cases of starvation and malnutrition in the area. People rely on the unpredictable alms and food relief for quite some time. As a result of insecurity in the area, schools are usually closed down and some teachers abandon their stations with many children dropping out of school altogether. Worse still, even the very scarce resources in the area are channeled to security-related matters such as purchasing of guns and ammunition at the expense of food and health.

The rights of the innocent people, especially women and children, are grossly violated due to reported cases of rape, abduction, physical assault, miscarriage and death during the entire time of raids and displacement. Pregnant women even miscarry and others give birth in the bushes while fleeing for their dear lives. Women lack access to basic and safe maternal facilities. The right of private property ownership is also abused.

## **VII. Conclusion**

From the findings of this study, the following recommendations about culture and pastoral conflicts could be drawn. Given the huge influence of culture on the way of life of pastoral communities, there is a need to revitalize customary law in conflict resolution. It should be noted that such law is not sporadic, but has great significance for its adherents as it has "passed the test of time". Such customs are the result of some systematic, carefully planned and designated patterns of behaviour – and thus not irrational or erratic. It is reflexive and adapts to reflect the changes in the society.

There is also need to incorporate indigenous methods and cultural values that could greatly contribute to restoration of peace, security, and stability and cordial relations among the pastoral communities in the area, all others at large.

Stakeholders concerned with peace-related issues to continuously empower the pastoral communities through peace education. These organizations should also be vetted by an independent body to examine their contribution to peace/conflict in their areas of operations.

Traditional leaders (elders) and the youth should be part and parcel of peace committees

Disarmament of the communities should be done in a fair and transparent manner that does not seem to favour any of them.

Land should be depoliticized through proper land demarcation and clear border boundary. The government should come up with ways of creating an all-agreed upon, defined and legal border boundary between communities involved in the conflicts.

Sensitize the communities on the need to share some the scarce resources (pasture and water) during times of prolonged drought season as they used to do in traditional days.

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