

HUMANITARIAN  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME

**NORTH-EASTERN KENYA**  
*A Prospective Analysis*

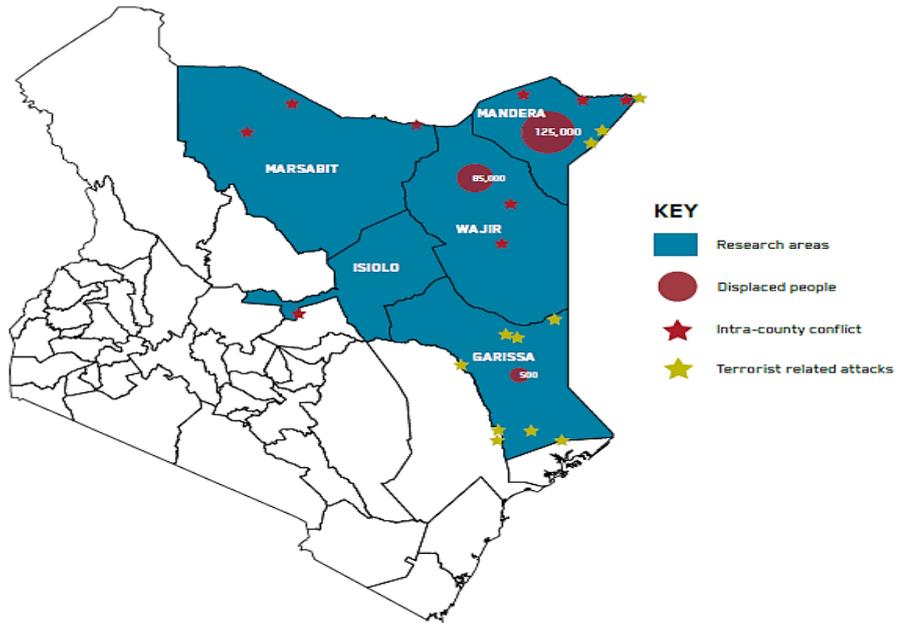
December 2015

HUMANITARIAN FORESIGHT THINK TANK

*This report will assess the context in Northern Kenya with a focus on the spill-over effect of the situation in Somalia and its wider implications. Particular focus will be paid to the security dynamics impacting humanitarian space and the extent of the caused humanitarian gaps. A five year outlook will be provided looking at conflict trends and triggers but also highlighting positive indicators that emerged in recent years that might contribute to a more sustainable development of the counties.*

## INTRODUCTION

Decades of conflict and violence in Somalia have influenced Kenya's centre as well as its periphery. Yet, indicators of a spill-over effect are primarily experienced in the north-eastern counties due to their geography, ethnic proximity, and refugee influx. The instability in Somalia, the porous border, and population movements have



Source: Danish Demining Group (2014) Conflict Assessment: Inter county disputes and terrorist attacks

caused the formerly known North Eastern Province (NEP)<sup>1</sup> to face continuous insecurity. The area is one of the most chronically insecure zones of the country, characterized by high volatility through periodic outbursts of inter-communal violence, as well as attacks by Al-Shabaab.

Due to years of marginalization, conflict and other re-curent shocks, Wajir and Mandera counties continue to be characterized by high levels of needs and vulnerabilities. The North Eastern Counties continuously display low development indicators, poverty and the prevalence of acute malnutrition that are significantly higher than the rest of the country. Security restrictions and violent incidents have resulted in a challenging operational environment for NGO's, leading to the relocation of several non-local NGO staff as well as contributing to shrinking humanitarian space. Due to recent terrorist attacks by Al-Shabaab, many non-local teachers and health workers have refused to return to the area, leaving behind large gaps in the health, education and nutrition sectors.

<sup>1</sup> This document refers to North Eastern Province (NEP), which currently constitutes three newly devolved counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera.

However, in recent years, there have been several indicators highlighting positive developments in Wajir and Mandera. Devolution is perceived to have triggered a more equal and fair distribution of resources at county level, contributing positively to the development of the counties, laying the framework for a general trend of more sustainable growth and improvements in the humanitarian situation.

## CONTEXT INDICATORS

The situation in Wajir and Mandera continues to be characterized by high levels of insecurity through inter-communal fighting as well as the cross-border Al-Shabaab insurgency across the borders, further intensifying the humanitarian situation. Despite the presence of several underlying triggers of conflict, there are also positive indicators, which might lead to an improvement of the situation in the long-term.

High levels of uncertainty define the current situation, therefore some of the following triggers and accelerators have to be monitored to assess the development of the context.

Trigger/ Accelerator	Event/ pertinent factor	Impact
<i>Trigger – Violence</i>	2017 Elections	Electoral violence was low in the NEP during the PEV of 2007/2008 and also in 2013. However, devolution enhanced benefits from political office and inter and intra-clan competition raise fears that the 2017 elections might spark increased politically engineered communal violence. If elite-pacts over the allocation of key seats in the government are brokered in advance, this will significantly lower the risk of PEV.
<i>Accelerator – instability</i>	Drought	Re-current prolonged droughts prompt migration of people and livestock to water sources even if they are within a clans' territory this might instigate conflict over access to resources. With droughts, which are likely to intensify in the future, already having a significant negative impact on the humanitarian situation, further clashes might aggravate needs through displacement and limited access in the affected region.
<i>Accelerator – unrest</i>	Devolution	The shift of resources from the central government to county level has increased the gains from political offices, which might cause inter-communal conflicts over political power and allocation of offices.
<i>Trigger – instability</i>	Withdrawal of the KDF from Somalia	As Kenya's security situation has been significantly impacted by its military operations in Somalia, there is some political debate over a withdrawal of troops. While some sections of

		the political class remain firm on Kenyan commitments in Somalia, others question the benefits of presence in Somalia. A withdrawal of Kenyan forces might have direct security implications on Northern Kenya (such as reinforced border controls, construction of walls on the border and increased security measures within the area).
<i>Accelerator – violence</i>	Increased inter-communal fighting	Increasing scarcity of resources, primarily of arable land and water might intensify inter-communal conflicts. The resource allocation at the county level has increased the gains of political office and might trigger clan fighting over political power. Outbreaks of communal fighting are likely to further exacerbate the humanitarian situation causing large-scale displacement and restricted access to affected communities.
<i>Accelerator – instability</i>	Al-Shabaab increases attacks / Violent extremism	Increased attacks by Al-Shabaab and its Kenyan affiliate, Al Hijra in the country as well as the NEP are anticipated to further destabilize the fragile security situation. A repressive response from the security is likely to further alienate and marginalize the local population, increasing the pool of recruits for Al-Shabaab. In addition, the insecurity would further aggravate the humanitarian situation due to shrinking humanitarian access and the gaps created by health and education workers refusing to return to the areas.
<i>Accelerator – unrest/ instability</i>	Increasing economic grievances and inequality	The high level of unemployment and poverty prevalent in the NEP in combination with the large youth bulge facing limited economic opportunities and increasing marginalization might turn them into a willing recruitment pool for the insurgency, clan militias as well as criminal gangs. Due to the proliferation of weapons in the region, the combination of these factors might create further instability in the counties through a spike in criminal activity, inter-communal fighting and terrorist attacks.

#### Positive indicators

<i>Accelerator– stability</i>	Devolution	The devolved government structure and a fairer resource allocation at the county level established more inclusive governance that is closer to the people. Through political participation, conflict is reduced and inter-communal dialogue strengthened. Accountability of the government towards the people is also enhanced through more inclusive governance
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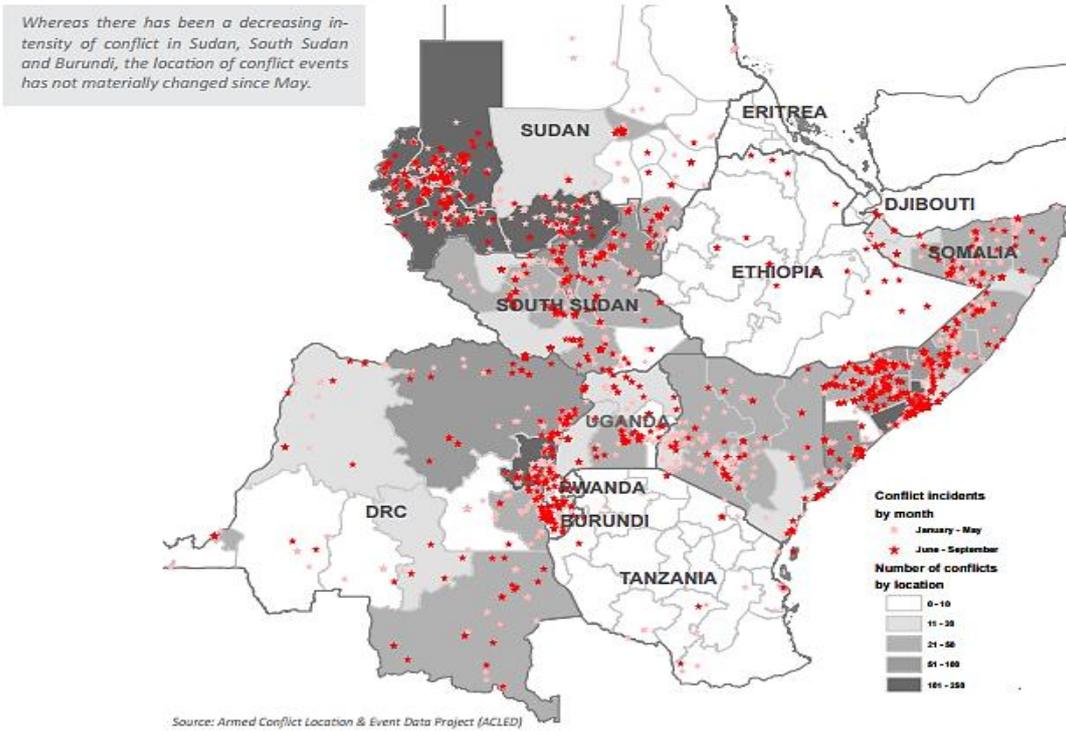
<i>Accelerator-stability</i>	Restructuring of the security services	Recent restructuring of security forces in the NEP including appointment of an ethnic Somali security chief and increased hiring of Somali personnel achieves to stabilize the security situation through enabling a more inclusive approach towards the local population and a deeper understanding of local dynamics and enhanced access. The recently witnessed trend of a decrease in inter-clan fighting further improves the security situation
<i>Accelerator--stability</i>	Development	Vast amounts of resources are spent on the infrastructure development in the north-eastern counties, leading to increased access to social services. Improvement in infrastructure developments also increases economic growth through investment and trade with the neighbouring countries.
<i>Accelerator-stability</i>	Civil Society	Civil society engagement increases inter-communal dialogue and a lays the framework for a more sustainable peace in the region. Local councils of elders increasingly mitigate inter-communal conflict and reduce clashes significantly. The anticipated EU trust fund with its aim on enhancing civil society in countries of origin further strengthens these trends.

## SECURITY CONTEXT

The conflict in Somalia had a significant spill-over effect on the security situation in Kenya and especially on the North-East. In Mandera and Wajir counties, security dynamics are coined by inter-communal fighting as well as the cross-border insurgency. While Al-Shabaab attacks have attracted significant attention, clan fighting remains the major source of violence in the counties, with a substantial impact on the humanitarian situation being responsible for massive displacements. While Al-Shabaab remains a threat to local stability and security, the worsening insecurity in Kenya highlights that the group was able to benefit from the country's entrenched structural divisions. The group has drawn on regional and ethnic divisions as well as exploiting existing longitudinal continuities in how the centre relates toward the periphery. Stirring anxiety and fear is integral to how Al-Shabaab seeks to advance its ambitions in the country<sup>2</sup>. Due to the volatile security situation in northern Kenya, humanitarian access and the delivery of services was limited, with the education and health sectors most affected in the first half of 2015<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home

<sup>3</sup> OCHA (October 2015). Humanitarian Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region October-December 2015



Source: ACLED, Proliferation of conflicts (Oct. 2015)

Nevertheless, there have also been gradual improvements in the security situation following a reduction of clan fighting as well as the re-shuffling of the security forces improving the relations with the local communities.

## AL-SHABAAB

**1.1.1.** *The Linda Nchi operation in 2011 with the aim to create a buffer zone from the spill-over of insecurity from Somalia triggered the expansion of Al-Shabaab into Kenya causing terrorist attacks to increase in scale and number. The group has built a cross-border presence and clandestine support network among the Muslim population in the north-east, in Nairobi, and on the coast. In 2014, the Al-Shabaab ideologue Sheikh Fuaad Mohamed Khalaf “Shongole” declared that the group had shifted the conflict to inside Kenya. He called on all Muslims in Kenya to “take revenge and take up arms and fight the Kenyan government, make their regime collapse”<sup>4</sup>.*

### 1.1.2.

**1.1.3.** *Al-Shabaab violence has affected primarily the North-Eastern provinces, Nairobi, and the Coast. However, its activity in the country remains characterized by peaks and lulls, with spikes of high-fatality violence, and low-activity periods. This*

<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home

*indicates shifting cycles of violence in the country, which are likely to persist. Since 2014, a pattern of clustering at the sub-provincial appears to have emerged in the NEP and the coast. In 2014/5, Mandera and Wajir experienced a series of terrorist attacks mainly targeting non-locals, security forces and government representatives. The frequency of attacks spiked between April and June 2015 amounting to 39 incidents, particularly in Garissa and Lamu counties, but also in Mandera and Wajir resulting in the death of 186 people and injury of 144<sup>5</sup>. The recent incidents and the deliberate targeting of non-Muslims and non-locals have compounded the already complicated security situation, resulting in the refusal of many non-resident workers to return to the counties. This trend intensified following the bus attack in Mandera and the assassination of Kenyan Christian teachers by Al-Shabaab in July 2015. As non-locals contribute significant part of the work force in the NEP the attacks subsequently affected primarily the health and education sectors leaving humanitarian gaps and the efforts to return health and education professionals to the affected areas are unlikely to occur soon<sup>6</sup>.*

Al-Shabaab's pattern of deliberately targeting non-indigenous and non-Muslim civilians, strategically exploits Kenya's religious and ethnic divisions. Recent tactics indicate a shift from the earlier strategies of the group, which in 2011 and 2012, engaged in lower-intensity, indiscriminate attacks in Nairobi, such as grenade attacks on buses, shopping areas and social venues. Recent violence by the group exploits local dynamics and targets the periphery as well as the centre, illustrating Al-Shabaab's adaptation to political conditions in Kenya and its ability to manipulate them to their advantage<sup>7</sup>. In the NEP the Al-Shabaab threat is compounded by inter-communal rivalries leaving space for the group to expand and to manipulate the clan dynamics furthering their goal of making the North ungovernable<sup>8</sup>.

Al-Shabaab continues to rely heavily on Kenyan recruits and draws on a wide support network in Kenya. Deep-seated injustices and marginalization among Kenya's minority ethnic and religious groups have provided fertile ground for Al-Shabaab propaganda. In northern Kenya pastoral poverty, inequality, and high unemployment contribute to social-economic grievances that facilitate the recruitment of young men into armed groups including Al-Shabaab. Social or political marginalization and repressive responses are further drivers of radicalization. The large refugee and displaced populations in northern Kenya serve as an additional pool for recruitment<sup>9</sup>. In addition, the deepening influence of Wahhabism, forming much of the core theological message of Al-Shabaab has also contributed to the radicalisation of Kenya's young Muslims<sup>10</sup>. Successful recruitment by Al-Shabaab contrasts the government's failure to address youth radicalization, which is as much a foreign as well as a home-grown problem.

Another noteworthy shift of Al-Shabaab's modus operandi in the North-Eastern and Coast provinces has been the seizing of remote villages and rural mosques in May, June, July and

<sup>5</sup> OCHA (04.08.2015). Inter-communal conflict and AOG related incidents by county (January - June 2015)

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (April 2015). Humanitarian Situation Report Kenya April-June 2015

<sup>7</sup> Lind, J. and Dowd, C. (15.04.2015) Understanding Insurgent Margins in Kenya, Nigeria and Mali

<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home

<sup>9</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>10</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home

November 2015<sup>11</sup>. Although the occupations were brief and likely symbolic, they highlight the presence of Al-Shabaab in the country and the challenge the security forces face to secure the borders and the rural areas. The taking control echoes the evolution of Boko Haram in West Africa, seizing areas in the neighbouring countries particularly in Cameroon, exercising excessive force towards the local population during the raids into neighbouring villages. In contrast to Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab has reportedly not used any violence during its temporary incursions but preached to the village population. Moreover, as Boko Haram is increasingly under pressure, the group has shifted their tactics away from occupying territory towards suicide attacks. Except for a short timeframe it is unlikely that Al-Shabaab could seize and hold territories in Kenya due to their diminished capabilities and heavy presence of Kenyan security forces.

The security situation has been aggravated by mistrust between the government and local communities and the lack of a coherent security strategy. While the re-shuffling of the security sector in the NEP has been a positive indicator towards a more inclusive approach with the Somali communities, there remains a deep-seated distrust between the two entities. The repressive security response has further alienated the Somali and Muslim communities, constituting a major driver of youth radicalization.

## INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICT

*1.1.4. Inter-communal fighting remains a major cause of violence in the region and likely to experience re-current cycles of violent episodes in the future. There was a spike in 2014 and a relative decrease during 2015<sup>12</sup>. During the first half of 2015, 273 incidents of inter-communal violence were reported resulting in 310 deaths and 195 injuries as well as triggering the displacement of 216,294 people, with the NEP counties and Rift Valley most affected. The widespread proliferation of small arms has fuelled the clashes and made them more lethal. A predominant driver of conflict between the clans is access to resources, which is likely to intensify over increasing scarcity of water and pasture aggravated by population growth, land degradation, natural hazards and climate change. This has led to increased competition over already scarce resources, resulting in more violence in the regions especially amid the large proliferation of weapons<sup>13</sup>. Clan dynamics continue to persist in the NEP, resulting in a multitude of feuds and historical grievances that can quickly be rekindled to justify an armed attack.<sup>14</sup>*

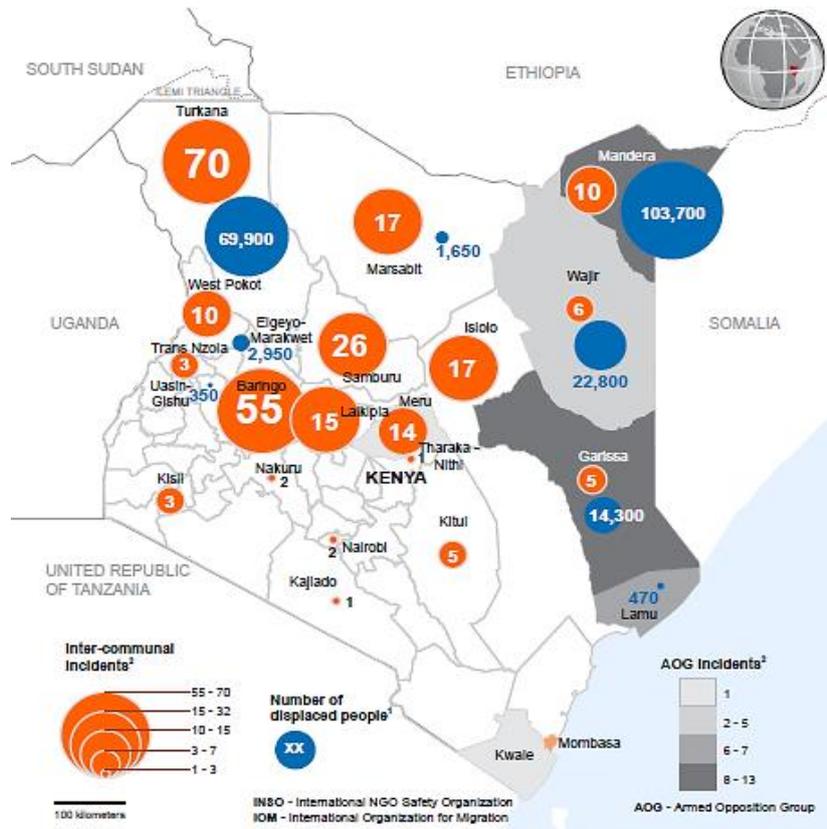
### 1.1.5.

<sup>11</sup> ACLED (August 2015). Al Shabaab in Kenya: Emerging Dynamics and Shifts

<sup>12</sup> OCHA (04.08.2015). Inter-communal conflict and AOG related incidents by county (January – June 2015). The years 2013-2014 were especially violent in northern Kenya, as Mandera, Wajir, and Garissa counties saw the worst inter-communal violence in all of Kenya, resulting in 125,000 displaced persons in Mandera and 85,000 in Wajir.

<sup>13</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (21.05.2015) 3 key trends that lie beneath a silent displacement crisis in Kenya's north-east

<sup>14</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland



Source: OCHA, Inter-communal conflict and AOG related incidents by county (January – June 2015)

The frequency of inter-clan clashes has highlighted that underlining conflict dynamics persist in the counties. While devolution holds many possibilities for a more inclusive approach and conflict settlement, it also holds a potential for conflict as it has increased the gains from the political office and resources on the county level. Consequently, the large new county budgets have increased the stakes surrounding elections. The political elite successfully mobilized clans to vote in blocs to maximise the control over county government revenues, and, as a result, elections are more likely to generate politically driven communal violence. The post-election phase of the devolved county government might spark clan conflict. Most recently in Mandera County, constituency and county boundary changes was a trigger in re-eruption of a longstanding feud between the Garre and Degodia. Minority clans caught in the middle were forced to choose the ally most likely to protect their perceived collective interests<sup>15</sup>. Northern counties in particular have struggled to deal with its internal conflicts, including over inclusive and fair distribution of posts and resources. Yet, disagreements over resources remain and county leaders have done little to ease tension between the different competing clans, so inter-clan clashes now look increasing like inter-county conflict<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> International Crisis Group (November 2015). Kenya’s Somali North East: Devolution and Security

<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home. In May 2014, inter-clan fighting broke out along the border areas of Wajir and Mandera Counties, setting into motion a series of retaliatory attacks. In

**1.1.6.** *The Kenyan security forces remain primarily focused on counter-terror operations. Clan clashes and communal violence are treated as secondary issues, as evident in the slow response to inter-communal clashes. There is an increasing inter-connectedness between the clan fighting and Al-Shabaab activity as the group exploits and manipulates clan dynamics to expand, increasingly feeding into the insecurity in the NEP<sup>17</sup>. Next to Al-Shabaab activity, the re-current clan clashes continue to have a substantial impact on the humanitarian situation in Mandera and Wajir. They have negative consequences for socio-economic activities and are responsible for massive displacement and human loss.*

### **1.1.7. OUTLOOK**

Northern Kenya is likely to witness a continuation of current dynamics, characterized by the Al-Shabaab insurgency and periodic inter-clan fighting. Due to the strategic interplay of religion, clan dynamics, ethnicity, and political interests, armed groups are likely to maintain their presence in the region. Targeted attacks against non-locals, government officials and security forces are likely to persist, adding to the perception of insecurity in the counties resulting in the relocation of non-local workers.

As underlining drivers of conflict persist, insecurity is likely to prevail. Furthermore, increasing resource scarcity, high population growth and the proliferation of weapons might add to further inter-communal conflicts. The large youth bulge combined with limited economic opportunities creates a recruitment pool for clan militias, criminal gangs and terrorist groups. Devolution has increased the gains from political posts at county level intensifying competition over political control. Nevertheless, devolution holds the potential to contribute to a sustainable peace through a more equal distribution of resources and accommodation of the interest of various stakeholders.

The re-structuring of the security forces as well as local peace initiatives also serve as positive indicators for a more sustainable peace. However, the relationship between Kenyan security forces and local communities in the NEP remains strained by antagonism and distrust. Inter-communal conflict might reduce in scale and impact as communal-agreed land 'demarcation' and peace-building efforts is enhanced both by the local authorities and the national government. In the event of a KDF withdrawal from Somalia, whether it happens tactically or hastily, it is likely to have huge implications on the security situation, especially in the border towns.

## **POLITICAL DYNAMICS**

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Relations between ethnic Somalis and the Kenya state remain defined by deep mistrust shaped by the tensions between Kenya and Somalia and the outbreak of the Somali conflict in 1991. The treatment of the Kenyan state of its ethnic Somali population has contributed to the 'othering' of Kenyan-Somali citizens, straining their attitude towards the state and gave rise to their sentiment as second-class citizen, damaging the social contract<sup>18</sup>. While, Kenyan Somalis especially in the NEP have been subject to marginalization by the state, there has been a gradual shift in the Kenyan government through the rise of Somalis in Kenyan national politics over the past two decades,

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spite of the peace-building efforts by the various actors, the conflict situation escalated into the month of August 2014. Triggered by political supremacy in the north

<sup>17</sup> Insight on Conflict (October 2014). Clans, conflicts and devolution in Mandera, Kenya

<sup>18</sup> Lind, J. (April 2015). Tangled Ties: Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya

largely benefitting the Somali communities and the NEP<sup>19</sup>. Moreover, Kenyan ruling parties are increasingly relying on Kenyan-Somalis as political allies, as well as vote baskets. The rise of Kenyan-Somalis in national politics also shifted the public perception of them and they are increasingly perceived as genuine stakeholders in public affairs. This suffered a severe setback following the terrorist attack on Westgate and the onset of Operation Usalama<sup>20</sup>.

## DEVOLUTION

In August 2010, 68 percent of Kenyans voted for a new constitution marking a significant development in the country following the post-election violence. Large parts of the Somali population in the NEP voted in favour of the new constitution. The main changes include the reduction of the powers of the president, the strengthening of the parliament and decentralization<sup>21</sup>. Devolution was advanced through the creation of new counties, with allocated budgets in charge of most service delivery in their counties. This marked a change from past policies where district and provincial commissioners and their staff were appointed directly by and responsible to the central state<sup>22</sup>.

Poor governance, economic mismanagement, unequal distribution of resources, high levels of corruption and the marginalization of communities and regions characterized the previously highly centralized political system. These dynamics were particularly evident in northern Kenya, contributing to both inter and intra-communal mistrust, tension, disillusionment and subsequent conflicts<sup>23</sup>. To reverse these trends, devolution was adopted to create a more inclusive system of governance and a fairer distribution of political and economic resources across the country based on the idea that a higher level of public participation as well as policy-making closer to the people would increase the effectiveness of governance and reduce conflict.

Devolution entails the hope for a more accountable, locally owned government and is widely supported by the residents of the Northern Kenya. Northern Kenya county officials stated that since the beginning of devolution it has brought more development to the region than witnessed during the preceding 50 years. As the three north-eastern counties were identified as most marginalised, they are therefore among the leading recipients of devolved funds. Mandera County alone received USD 88 million in 2015/2016, the highest allocation of funds after Nairobi and Turkana<sup>24</sup>. The benefits are evident in the county with an improvement of the health and educational infrastructure. In Wajir, positive developments are witnessed with The World Bank ranking the county top of all 47 counties for the amount of its nationally devolved funds being spent on development projects, amounting to 58 per cent<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>20</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>21</sup> The 2010 constitution divides Kenya into 47 counties, each of which are set to have their own executive and legislative branches of local government; responsible for agriculture, transportation, trade licenses, sanitation, pre-primary education, village polytechnics and most health facilities. While overall policy in these areas may still be drawn up by the national government, counties will be in charge of implementation and service delivery. At least 15 percent of the national budget will now go to these county governments, with provisions for additional funds under certain circumstances

<sup>22</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>23</sup> International Peace Support Training Centre (July 2014). Devolution and Inter-communal Conflicts in Kenya

<sup>24</sup> Daily Nation (10.02.2015). Nairobi and Turkana to get biggest share of county cash from July

<sup>25</sup> International Crisis Group (November 2015). Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and Security

Despite the improvements devolution brought to the NEP, the implementation continues to be hindered by inter-communal conflicts, cronyism, a lack of transparency and clarity on the functions of devolved institutions and rampant corruption. While devolution is fundamental in achieving sustainable development of Wajir and Mandera as well as inclusive governance, it might also spark conflicts such as between counties over borders, between local communities over control of the government and its revenues, and between county governments and the central state over disputed lines of authority and shared powers<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, devolution increases the competition over political seats in elections likely to spark fierce competition in a system, where the rewards of political office are substantial. Therefore, while decentralisation is an important peace-building and state-building mechanism they also carry risks of corruption, conflict, and elite capture. Nevertheless, there are significant opportunities in new governance mechanisms to address both historic as well as emerging drivers of conflict and violence. As substantial public resources and decision-making powers are shifted to county-level governments, it might also be easier to accommodate the different interests of the various stakeholders. Though some elites at the centre think devolution causes increased corruption and violent political competition at the county level, there is fierce support in the NEP for devolution, where its implementation is regarded as essential to ensure that resources are spread more equally<sup>27</sup>.

### **MARGINALIZATION OF NORTHERN KENYA**

The alienation of the North Eastern Province dates back to colonial rule and post-colonial governments maintained the military administration in the NEP, reinforcing many of the legal provisions resulting in its isolation. Hence, a long history of neglect and marginalisation of the north-eastern regions and a failed struggle for secession after Kenya's independence in 1963 have resulted in grievances of the local communities against the Kenyan state, exacerbated by the substantial underdevelopment of the NEP. The residents of Mandera and Wajir hold numerous grievances against the state and local ethnic groups or clans in both areas view themselves as minorities in the wider national arena. The respective governments are often suspicious of these groups' and their loyalties to the state<sup>28</sup>.

In Mandera and Wajir Counties, the marginalization as well as the unequal distribution of resources has resulted in low development indicators, including poor infrastructure and limited access to basic services such healthcare and education. Mandera is the county with the poorest access to services. Kenya remains one of the most unequal societies in the world and in comparison with the other Kenyan counties poverty and underdevelopment are high across the NEP, which routinely ranks at the bottom of regional development rankings. Poverty rates in the north range from 49% in Garissa to 89% in Mandera<sup>29</sup>.

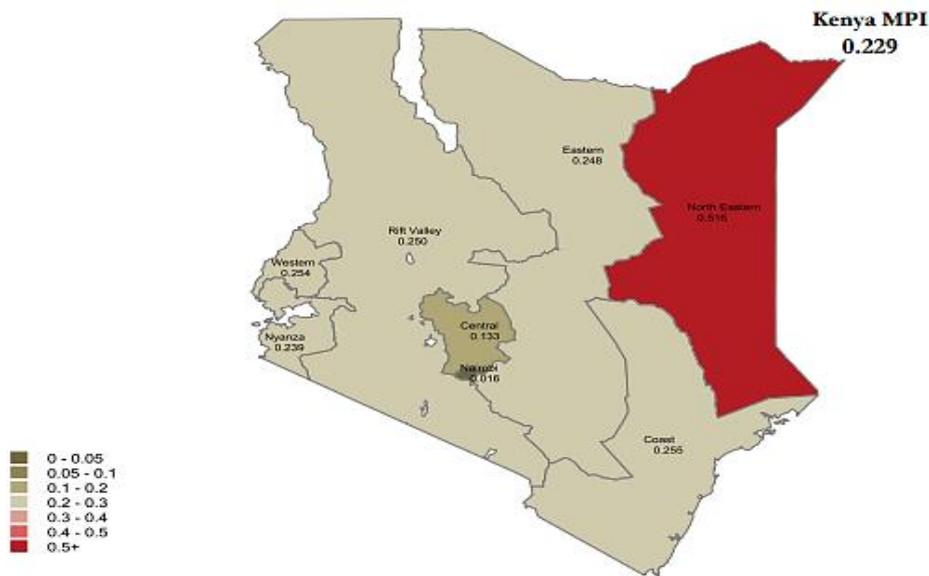
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<sup>26</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>27</sup> Lind, J. (April 2015). Tangled Ties: Al-Shabaab and Political Volatility in Kenya

<sup>28</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>29</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland



Also here are some positive indicators as devolution has shown some progress in the counties as the 2011 Constitution acknowledges a communities' right to manage their own affairs and advance their development through self-governance and increased participation in decision-making.<sup>30</sup>

## OUTLOOK

Following the ratification of the new constitution and the decentralization process, significant developments have been witnessed within the NEP due to the resource allocation at county level, which will cause further development of the region. However, competition over political posts and current insecurity have proved challenging to the devolution process providing more incentive for localised conflict. The political environment is characterised by political contestation over group claims to and control over key resources, including land, employment, and state revenues. Moreover, issues such as low levels of political governance, a weak rule of law and rampant levels of corruption remain addition challenges are expected to persist in the counties and the wider country and are likely to remain unaddressed in the near future. The reinforcement of the Somalis in the national government will further change the dynamics and improve the standing of the Somalis but the mistrust even with the groups are likely to remain

## SOCIAL DYNAMICS

The social make-up of the NEP counties differs significantly from other counties due to its large ethnic Somali population and geographic location. Clans remain a dominant factor of social and political life in Wajir and Mandera. The clan system implements social traditional structures and is the primary provider of social services for its members. Moreover, the large presence of IDP's and refugees also shape the dynamics in the NEP.

<sup>30</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (21.05.2015) 3 key trends that lie beneath a silent displacement crisis in Kenya's north-east

## CLANS

Tribal or clan identities are a significant organising principle of the social and political life in Mandera and Wajir. In the NEP identity is expressed through lineage or clan belonging. Somali clannism is fluid with the specific situation at hand determining which level of a clan or sub-clan identity is salient, however recently clan identities are increasingly hardened<sup>31</sup>. Though some of the clans populating Wajir and Mandera counties are viewed as Somali, their identity is of higher complexity. The history of communal conflicts has left many dead or displaced, deepening these identities and making it easy for individuals to mobilise clans and tribes and to recruit for armed violence<sup>32</sup>.

Clan belonging is further manifested through neo-patrimonial politics, the struggle of competing political elites to control and distribute resources within their own clans. The political elite seek to control funds, resources and local economic opportunities through the mobilisation of clan affiliations and loyalties. Therefore, clan affiliations, and clan identity, are embedded in the local political economy in which clans compete. Elites are not bound by traditional restraints, yet they utilize the networks and connections of clans to mobilise for their own purposes<sup>33</sup>.

With access to resources constituting a primary driver of inter-communal conflict, tribal or clan identity remains of significant importance in reference to communal claims on land. The pastoral zones of Wajir and Mandera are divided among communities, with clans committed to protecting their rights to land. Historic shifts in the control of land, the result of conquest and migration by more numerous and powerful groups at the expense of others, has been a driving force in the NEP over the last decades. These dynamics continue, resulting in a multitude of feuds and historical grievances that can quickly be rekindled to justify an armed attack<sup>34</sup>.

## MARGINALIZATION OF THE SOMALI AND MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

The longstanding marginalization of the Somali communities by the Kenyan government and the wider society towards the Somali population has enforced the perception of otherness as well as their being second-class citizen. In particular the repressive response of the security forces and the practice of collective punishment have enforced perceived divisions and mistrust<sup>35</sup>. Though there have been positive developments in the integration of the Somali communities within the Kenyan state, the recent Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks and the response by the Kenyan security forces reinforced a we-versus-them culture. For Kenya's Somali and Muslim populations, Usalama Watch has reaffirmed their worst suspicions of the state as a source of injustice and insecurity<sup>36</sup>. The Al-Shabaab's threat turned the spotlight on Kenya's large native ethnic Somali population, who's "Kenyan-ness" has been historically questioned. Well before Westgate, the large Somali-speaking communities in the centre and periphery became the target of official and popular

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<sup>31</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>32</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>33</sup> Anderson, D. and McKnight, J. (23.09.2015). Understanding al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya

<sup>34</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>35</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch (2015). World Report 2015: Kenya

repression. The increase in the terrorist attacks intensified police harassment of Somali communities and practices of collective punishment<sup>37</sup>.

## YOUTH BULGE

The NEP is currently experiencing a youth bulge with a high percentage of the population between the age of 15 and 24. Moreover, the fertility rate in North-eastern Kenya is the highest (5.9 percent (a decrease from the 7 percent in 2003) of any region of Kenya with a country with one of the highest population growth rates in the world. North-eastern Kenya's "dependency ratio" is also significantly higher than the rest of the country and almost double that of some other regions<sup>38</sup>.

High levels of poverty and unemployment combined with the large youth population might render communities vulnerable to armed conflict, both because they fuel grievances and produce large numbers of idle and frustrated youth who can be more easily recruited into armed or criminal groups.

## OUTLOOK

Clans are likely to remain the predominant factor of shaping social dynamics in the NEP and are expected to continue to remain. Somalis are traditional and proud people that hold on to their system of clan and sub-clan structures and this unlikely to disappear. The youth bulge likely to remain a demographic issue due to the high fertility. There is also increased rural-urban migration, fuelling unemployment and social-economic grievance and tensions.

Marginalisation is anticipated to persist due to the deep entrenched tribal societal structure, deep mistrust between communities, social divide and underlining societal issues and is unlikely to be overcome soon, which could be used as recruitment tool by armed or criminal groups. The 'equalisation fund' enshrined in the new constitution is likely to decrease marginalization at least gradually as more financial resource is allocated. In addition, corruption at the top will likely push ongoing initiatives to allocate more resources to the counties, further strengthening the ability of local communities in northern Kenya to invest more resources locally.

## HUMANITARIAN CONTEXT

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The situation in Wajir and Mandera continues to be characterized by high levels of needs and vulnerabilities. Years of marginalization coupled with periodic hazards of drought, floods and clan conflicts have trapped the population in a re-current cycle of chronic poverty and economic hardship<sup>1</sup>. The conflict and periodical cycles of drought had significant social and economic effects on the affected communities. Poverty has been entrenched through low income, breakdown of community institutions and dissolution of the social community's structure. Natural hazards, localized inter-communal conflict, disease outbreaks, and limited access to social services contribute to sustained humanitarian needs in the NEP<sup>39</sup>. The increased frequencies of droughts are diminishing the ability of households to cope and recover between drought cycles. Although

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<sup>37</sup> International Crisis Group (25.09.2015). Kenya: Al-Shabaab – Closer to Home

<sup>38</sup> Danish Demining Group (2014). Conflict Assessment Northern Kenya and Somaliland

<sup>39</sup> Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment (Kira) (September 20015). Mandera County IDP's Situation Report

food insecurity has gradually improved since 2011, nearly 1.1 million people required emergency food assistance as of August 2015<sup>40</sup>.

While the continuing clan-fighting has prompted large displacement, recent insecurity promoted by Al-Shabaab attacks has created humanitarian gaps in the health and education sector. Many non-local health and education workers have cited the fear of insecurity and chose not to return to Mandera or Wajir. The pull-out of workers intensified following especially following the attack on the bus in Mandera and the assassination of several Christian non-local teachers. Moreover, the insecurity in the NEP has also increased movement restrictions and has posed additional stress on the operational environment of the NGO's restricting in their movements, mainly in the Dadaab.

## IDPs AND REFUGEES

*1.1.8. The north-east regions account for over 95 per cent of the overall 220,000 IDPs in Kenya. During the first half of 2015, inter-communal conflict led to the displacement of 103,000 people in Mandera and 22,800 in Wajir<sup>41</sup>. Many households continue to be effected by inter-clan conflict and have fled to make shift camps in Mandera North and South. Host communities and IDP's have displayed high levels of needs, with priorities being food, water and shelter assistance<sup>42</sup>. Inter-clan clashes have substantially reduced after May 2015, many of the displaced within Mandera county, were able to return, but the overall security situation has remained tense<sup>43</sup>.*

Somali refugees have a significant presence in Kenya, amounting to 420,199 refugees with a majority of them settled in the Dadaab and Alinjugur refugee camps. The authorities and international organizations have initiated a small-scale repatriation program, but the situation in Somalia currently does not allow for large-scale repatriation. Though there has been a considerable drop in arriving refugees in 2015, new arrivals are still registered accounting to 6,217 new refugees since January 2015<sup>44</sup>. Somali refugees remain highly dependent on humanitarian aid.

## NUTRITION

In 2015, 1.1 million people were acutely food insecure<sup>45</sup>. This represents a 31 per cent decline in the number of food insecure populations since February 2015 indicating a general improvement in household food security conditions<sup>46</sup>. Areas most affected by food insecurity include the north-eastern pastoral areas, where poor long rains performance, conflict and insecurity, influx of internally displaced persons, water scarcity, closure of the border hampering cross border trade, livestock diseases, poor livestock market and high food commodity prices have impacted on food security<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> USAID (September 2015). Kenya. Food Insecurity.

<sup>41</sup> OCHA (04.08.2015). Inter-communal conflict and AOG related incidents by county (January – June 2015).

<sup>42</sup> Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment (Kira) (September 20015). Mandera County IDP's Situation Report

<sup>43</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (21.05.2015) 3 key trends that lie beneath a silent displacement crisis in Kenya's north-east

<sup>44</sup> UNHCR. Kenya

<sup>45</sup> Government of Kenya (August 2015). The 2015 Long Rains Season Assessment Report

<sup>46</sup> Government of Kenya (August 2015). The 2015 Long Rains Season Assessment Report

<sup>47</sup> IPC (31.08.2015). Kenya Long Rains Assessment

Nearly 240,000 children were estimated to be acutely malnourished in Kenya as, an improvement compared to previous months. Global acute malnutrition (GAM) exceeds the 15 per cent emergency threshold in Mandera and Wajir counties. In Mandera, global acute malnutrition was 24 per cent in September 2015 and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) was 4.1 per cent<sup>48</sup>. The situation has however deteriorated in Wajir North from poor to critical with prevalence of GAM increasing from 8.8 per cent to 14.3 per cent <sup>49</sup>. The situation remains critical but has demonstrated signs of improvements with MUAC levels of 17.2 per cent <sup>50</sup>.

## HEALTH

*1.1.9. Outbreaks of disease remain rampant and endemic in Mandera and Wajir, aggravated by limited access to health services. In Mandera county almost 3,800 women in every 100,000 die during childbirth each year, compared with the national average of 360, and 860 in Somalia<sup>51</sup>. The top five common causes of morbidity for children under-fives and the general population were: disease of the respiratory system, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and skin diseases. There was a noted increase of Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (URTI) in Mandera among under-fives and general population attributed to poor sanitation, scarcity of water and poor hygiene practices <sup>52</sup>. Cholera remains a persistent concern in northern Kenya.*

## IMPACT OF THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

In the first half of 2015, humanitarian access and delivery of essential basic social services was significantly constrained in Wajir and Mandera due to inter-communal violence and terrorist attacks. The security situation in the north-east is volatile, with frequent incidents and implications for the safety of humanitarian workers. In recent months, deteriorating security conditions have caused some relief agencies to withdraw staff from affected areas, including Garissa's Dadaab refugee camp complex.<sup>53</sup>

*1.1.10. Since January, attacks by suspected members of the al-Shabaab armed group in the NEP have prompted many non-local health and education workers to leave the region, negatively affecting the availability and quality of education, health care services, and nutrition assistance. 1,200 teachers have refused to resume their duties in the NEP Kenya citing insecurity. This has affected both access to, and quality of,*

<sup>48</sup> Kenya Inter-Agency Rapid Assessment (Kira) (September 2015). Mandera County IDP's Situation Report

<sup>49</sup> Government of Kenya (August 2015). The 2015 Long Rains Season Assessment Report

<sup>50</sup> Government of Kenya (August 2015). The 2015 Long Rains Season Assessment Report

<sup>51</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (21.05.2015) 3 key trends that lie beneath a silent displacement crisis in Kenya's north-east

<sup>52</sup> Government of Kenya (August 2015). The 2015 Long Rains Season Assessment Report

<sup>53</sup> USAID (September 2015). Kenya. Food Insecurity. In late May, international non-governmental organization (NGO) Médecins Sans Frontières evacuated more than 40 staff from Dadaab, and the Kenya Red Cross Society moved staff from the camp complex to nearby Dadaab town. As of June, some international NGOs had also imposed new movement restrictions in the Dadaab area in response to security concerns and reported that insecurity was adversely affecting the implementation of humanitarian programs and services

*education for 80,000 school pupils, resulting in the closure of 122 schools with 32,000 pupils unable to access schooling in northern Kenya, upper-eastern and Coast regions<sup>54</sup>. Secondary schools are most affected, but primary schools especially along the Kenya–Somalia border are also without teachers.*

***1.1.11.** Access to healthcare in counties affected by insecurity is limited by the closure of hundreds of health centres, due to a lack of staff. The departure of large numbers of health workers in northern Kenya caused by insecurity impacting negatively on the quality of health and nutrition services provision in most health centres and community health workers are left to provide health services. 11 of 26 health facilities in Mandera have closed because staff has left the county<sup>55</sup>. A scheduled polio vaccination campaign in northern Kenya had to be postponed indefinitely due to insecurity. Limited Humanitarian access in the NEP has also affected life-saving nutrition interventions and preventive high-impact nutrition services in north-eastern Kenya<sup>56</sup>.*

## OUTLOOK

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Cuts in humanitarian funding and access remain the main challenges in the NEP and are likely to continue in the future<sup>57</sup>. The refusal of government health and education workers to return to the NEP due to insecurity will have a long-term impact on humanitarian gaps in the counties as the workers are unlikely to return in the near future.

The current El Nino is also assessed to have a substantial impact on the humanitarian situation, likely to cause increase flooding through protracted rainfalls in the NEP, which might lead to displacement, the destruction of infrastructure, as well as the outbreak of water and vector-borne disease, further increasing the strain on the ill-prepared health sector. Cholera is a particular concern since the outbreak in 2014 and might be aggravated by above average rainfalls<sup>58</sup>. While it is difficult to assess the cycle and impact of the ENSO oscillation, La Nina which tends to follow El Nino events could lead to increased drought conditions in the NEP further impacting on the dire humanitarian situation.

As access gets limited for international actors, more local organisations and local government are expected to play more roles in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Disaster Management Agencies such as National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) will be expected to develop further links with grass-root community-based organisations such as women and youth groups, in delivery of this assistance. The focus of the international agencies will then evolve to more capacity-building role and possibly engagement in cross-border operations as the refugee return process is expected to gain momentum in the years to come.

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<sup>54</sup> OCHA (October 2015). Humanitarian Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region October-December 2015

<sup>55</sup> UNICEF (05.02.2015). Humanitarian Situation Report Kenya.

<sup>56</sup> OCHA (October 2015). Humanitarian Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region October-December 2015

<sup>57</sup> OCHA (October 2015). Humanitarian Outlook for the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region October-December 2015

<sup>58</sup> Kenya Meteorological Department (2015). Seasonal Forecast

## CONCLUSION

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The situation in Wajir and Mandera remains defined by several dynamics and various uncertainties that are likely to define the context over a five year outlook. Many of these such as the upcoming elections, devolution and Al-Shabaab activity are able to trigger further violence in the region and cause increased instability. However, positive indicators such as development and the devolution are also underlining stability factors for the region and might be able to contribute to a more sustainable development and a reduction of conflict.

As outlined above, there remains a spill-over effect from Somalia and northern Kenya continues to be characterized by high levels of insecurity due to inter-communal fighting and cross-border terrorist attacks. Fluctuating levels of insecurity are likely to prevail in the region, with lulls and spikes in violence impacting on the humanitarian space. While the likelihood of further insecurity is high, there are also positive indicators for stabilization of the security situation. The restructuring of the security services and the appointment of an ethnic Somali to lead the local security management enforces a better understanding of the local dynamics as well as more inclusive approach including the Somali communities.

Devolution following the 2010 constitution was welcomed by the majority of the NEP and holds the potential of a more equally spread allocation of resources as well as a governance system closer to the people. However, due to the increased gains from devolved budgets at country level, there is an increased incentive for inter and intra-clan fighting.

Current social dynamics are likely to persist and the NEP will continuously be shaped by clan dynamics. The perceived marginalization of the Somali and Muslim communities will continue to fuel mistrust between the community and the state, but the increasing involvement of ethnic Somalis in government and county affairs sets a positive trend, although many underlining issues remain unaddressed.

The humanitarian situation remains a major concern in Mandera and Wajir through cyclical shocks, marginalization, high refugee caseload and conflict with high levels of poverty, displacement, malnutrition and frequent outbreaks of diseases. While devolution has shown some improvements in the social service infrastructure, the security incidents attributed to al-Shabaab that mainly target non-locals have caused humanitarian gaps through the relocation of many health and educational workers, who are unlikely to return so in the near future. ■

# NORTH-EASTERN KENYA

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*Humanitarian Foresight Think Tank*

*A think tank under the*

**HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME**

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INSTITUT DE RELATIONS INTERNATIONALES ET STRATÉGIQUES

2 bis rue Mercoeur

75011 PARIS / France

T. + 33 (0) 1 53 27 60 60

[contact@iris-france.org](mailto:contact@iris-france.org)

@InstitutIRIS

[www.iris-france.org](http://www.iris-france.org)