



# Flowing together

## Learning Event for Stakeholders in Water, Peace, and Security Initiatives in Turkana County

### ABSTRACT

This working paper summarises a learning event as part of water, peace and security (WPS) implementation in Turkana county. The event brought together state and non-state stakeholders involved in interventions related to WPS with the aim of consolidating best practice from Water and Peace nexus work in Turkana county and at the national level. The learning event provided a platform for key actors to discuss information generated from project implementation, identify key lessons learned, and emerging themes, and agree on ways of adapting the best practices in their respective institutions and organizations.

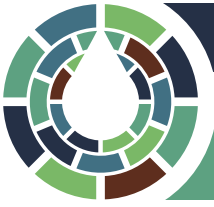
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### Unravelling the water, peace and security nexus

The interplay between water resources, peace and security is increasingly gaining attention as the world grapples with the challenges of climate change, population growth, and intensifying resource competition. As the sector evolves, several emerging trends are shaping the discourse around this critical intersection. One of the most pressing trends revolves around the impact of climate change on water resources. Rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, and a surge in extreme weather events, especially in arid and semi-arid areas of Africa, are culminating in heightened water scarcity. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of conflicts arising over access to and distribution of water resources, as seen, for example, in Kenya. Furthermore, population displacement, another emerging trend, also intersects with water peace and security concerns. The climate-induced challenges and conflicts compel populations, especially pastoralists, to migrate in pursuit of water and pasture. This migration places additional stress on regions already grappling with water scarcity, thereby exacerbating protracted intercommunal conflicts.

Another trend shaping the discourse is the emergence of large-scale projects. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, for instance, has ignited tensions between Ethiopia, Sudan and



Group photo of the stakeholders in the meeting © International Alert

Egypt. The Kenyan government's growing interest in water and the blue economy presents potential for economic growth, but the risk looms that inadequate management could trigger conflicts. Relating to this trend is the issue of disjointed sectoral investments, spanning governments, multilateral organisations and county administrations. This lack of coordination creates confusion and tensions across various levels of governance. In Kenya, the evidence of poor coordination is palpable, particularly in ambitious projects such as the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPPSET) initiative and community projects by non-governmental organisations. Fragmented investments in such projects result in the inconsistent development of water resources, contributing to intercommunal tensions.

In a bid to unpack these issues and promote integrated, inclusive, and informed approaches to address WPS risks in Turkana County and beyond, International Alert and Wetlands International facilitated a learning event on the 12–13 July 2023 in Eldoret, Uasin Gishu County. The event brought together state and non-state stakeholders involved in interventions related to WPS to consolidate best practice from the WPS

partnership work in Turkana County and at the national level. The findings from the learning event are presented in sections 2 to 4 of this synthesis paper.

*“We say, ‘Water is life’ and if you don’t have access to water, your life is at risk.”*

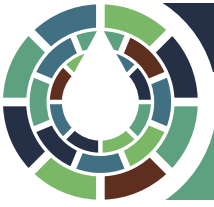
Emmy Auma, Country Director, Kenya and Horn of Africa, International Alert

### Best practice in the WPS sector

The pursuit to address water-related challenges in Kenya has given rise to a diverse and innovative tapestry of initiatives. They are all united by a shared commitment to a people-centered approach that places local communities at the heart of decision-making.

The learning event included presentations from the following organizations: Kenya Water and Sanitation Network (KEWASNET); National Youth Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Parliament; Imarisha Naivasha;





Participants in market place presentation © International Alert

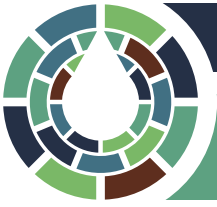
Turkana Pastoralist Development Organization (TUPADO); United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-Nawiri; and Friends of Lake Turkana (FoLT). The diverse presentations highlighted the innovative approaches fostering water security and promoting peaceful coexistence in Kenya, outlined below.

**Water budgets and performance tracker:** KEWASNET has emerged as a champion of advocacy and policy influence, harnessing the power of civil society organisations (CSOs) to shape national and county governments' policy frameworks. An initiative known as 'The Voice' highlights the critical role CSOs play in influencing policy-making processes and ensuring that the voices of the people are heard. The Voice is an annual CSO report that tracks performance and budget for annual investments in the water resources sector in Kenya. This unique approach has accelerated advocacy outcomes at county and national levels by providing a reference point for county governments to use when developing water resources management policies.

**The National Youth WASH Parliament:** This plays a crucial role in advocating for meaningful and ethical youth engagement in water resource management in Kenya. The parliament fosters

civic participation and holds duty bearers accountable through social accountability tools such as community-led monitoring and community score cards. The youth parliament has county chapters that hold quarterly forums on water resources management. The reports generated from these forums are presented to the national youth parliament speaker, similar to the Kenyan bicameral parliament system. Their success is evident in the establishment of youth-informed policies such as the forthcoming Kakamega County Youth policy, and the Kakamega County Sexual and Gender-Based Violence policy and the Busia Menstrual Hygiene policy that are now in place.

**The public-private-people partnership:** Imarisha Naivasha sets an inspiring example through its successful public-private-people partnership. The Lake Naivasha Basin integrated management framework serves as a guiding beacon, demonstrating how community interests can be balanced with sustainable ecosystems. The initiative has engaged national and county governments, commercial flower growers, water resource users, community forest associations, water service providers, beach management units, pastoralists, CSOs, local farmers, land



owners and the business community in dialogues, leading to gradual improvements in ecosystem health, biodiversity, and water quality, as well as improved equity in water resource use, increased stakeholder awareness of integrated landscape management, and reduced erosion and degradation.

**Multi-stakeholders' dialogue:** TUPADO aims to reduce water-related conflicts by engaging stakeholders in dialogue and capacity-building. TUPADO focuses on building understanding of the water-related context, mobilising county and local water and peace structures, and encouraging peace committees and water users' associations to participate in conflict resolution. By facilitating dialogues among stakeholders, TUPADO contributes to the resolution of conflicts over contested resources such as fish and territories in the Lake Turkana region.

**Community-led conversations:** FoLT's focus on transforming water-related problems into collaboration opportunities in the Lake Turkana Basin is commendable. It advocates for community-led conversations, women and youth engagement, public participation, and early warning and adaptation mechanisms. By fostering inclusive dialogues and community-driven initiatives, FoLT promotes understanding and collaboration among pastoral communities, leading to improved water resource management and peaceful coexistence.

**The hybrid committee model:** USAID-Nawiri, the Catholic Diocese of Turkana and the Turkana County Government formed a hybrid committee to bring together different local committees to collectively manage water-related drivers of conflicts. At the county level the hybrid committee supports the meetings of the County Peace Actors Forum, a coordination platform for peace and security actors in Turkana County. Through capacity-building and early warning systems, the hybrid committee empowers communities to participate actively in decision-making processes and resource management.

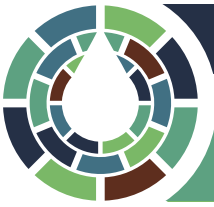
**Regional blocks peace and cohesion framework:** The regional economic blocks, such as the Frontier Counties Development Council (FCDC) and the North Rift Region Economic Block (NOREB), are emerging as effective intra- and inter-county

peacebuilding players. They encourage the development and implementation of context-specific peacebuilding and conflict management policies. For example, the Peace and Cohesion Sector Forum in FCDC coordinates peace initiatives among member counties, contributing to reduced intercommunal and cross-county conflicts. Collaborative initiatives, such as community wildlife conservancies, demonstrate that cooperation can effectively address the disjointed implementation of water-related projects in a conflict-sensitive manner by ensuring that local context is reflected in policies and programmes.

#### *People-driven solutions that work*

"I attended a peace meeting in Kibich, where an unfortunate situation arose. On one side, the Turkana region had abundant grass, while the Nyangatom pastoralists on the Ethiopian side (Nyangatom community) had none, but they had access to the Napuu River. This disparity led to a prolonged stalemate, as the Turkana people refused to share their grass with the Nyangatom, and in turn, the pastoralists denied the Turkana people access to water from the Napuu River. I urged them to brainstorm and devise solutions that could foster harmonious coexistence... Remarkably, after two days of contemplation, they reached a consensus. Their solution was simple yet profound: whenever the Turkana needed water, the Nyangatom would provide security to ensure their safe passage to the Napuu River. In return, when the Nyangatom required grazing in Turkana's grasslands, the Turkana would reciprocate by providing security for them."

Peter Eripete – County Secretary Turkana



### *Community wildlife conservancies*

Community wildlife conservancies in some arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) such as Samburu play a vital role in resolving water-related conflicts by promoting sustainable water management practices and fostering collaboration among local communities. Collaborative water-sharing agreements between communities and wildlife stakeholders raise awareness about the importance of preserving water sources for both human and wildlife needs, reducing competition and disputes over limited water supplies and promoting peaceful co-existence. Additionally, conservancies invest in water infrastructure to benefit both communities and wildlife, while regular meetings and mediation processes help resolve grievances peacefully. By conserving and restoring natural ecosystems, conservancies enhance water retention capacity and support groundwater replenishment, benefitting local communities and wildlife alike.

### Exploring challenges in WPS interventions

As highlighted, there are examples of innovative intervention and best practice in the WPS sector, but there is still further need for integrated, inclusive WPS practice in Turkana County. Below are some of the challenges that emerged during the learning event:

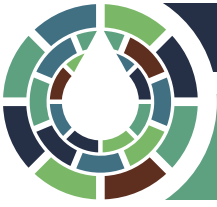
**Disjointed development and mismanagement of water infrastructure:** Stakeholders, including county governments and non-government organisations, implement projects independently, often bypassing the opportunity for collaborations that could lead to more comprehensive and sustainable outcomes. The result is redundant projects, stalled water initiatives, and insufficient facilities to harness rainwater during wet seasons. These deficiencies collectively contribute to tensions over the allocation of water resources, as demonstrated by the 2021 water-related conflict analysis by the WPS project.

**Limited data collection and storage, learning and communication:** A major constraint for planning is a lack of information and poorly developed information-sharing systems. Research studies on the complex relationships between water, peace, and security provide critical insights for decision-makers; however, research and knowledge-sharing remain foundationally weak due to a lack of collaborative platforms to bring together researchers, policy-makers, practitioners, and local communities to facilitate the exchange of innovative ideas and solutions. In addition, low adoption of advanced technology that could transform the monitoring and management of water resources has impacted the role of research in the water and peace sector. Technologies such as remote sensing, geographic information systems (GIS), and data analytics provide real-time insights into water availability, viability and usage, helping decision-makers to formulate effective strategies. This information gap inevitably impairs the effectiveness of water resource management in preventing water-related conflicts.

**Poor holistic and integrated development:** Despite the potential benefits for water resources development, fragmented investments in large-scale investments such as the LAPPSET project have resulted in inconsistent development of water outcomes and missed opportunities for holistic progress. The government plans to build 100 mega dams in various parts of the country to address drought and food security challenges, but most of these are in crop-producing counties, with few in the pastoralist counties. These projects, along with alterations in land use such as the construction of expansive infrastructure in ASALs, coupled with overgrazing, have led to a contraction of grazing lands and consequent conflicts. Disputes over the ownership of significant infrastructure by disparate communities, extending beyond their historical territorial boundaries, serve as further catalysts for tensions.

**Incongruous water-related laws, policies, and institutional frameworks:** Policy frameworks established at various levels of governance collide within the formal county and national governance arrangements and with the traditional, informal methodologies employed by communities to manage local water resources.





This results in an intricate balancing act between customary practices and modern governance structures. Meaningful community participation in the formulation and execution of policies and projects is limited. This deficiency is particularly detrimental to the inclusion of marginalised segments of the population, such as women, young people, older people, and people with disabilities.

These issues underscore the imperative for multifaceted and cooperative approaches that are sensitive to the intricate interplay between climatic shifts, water resources, local conflicts, and effective governance mechanisms.

*“Strengthening partnerships is key to managing water as a key driver of conflict.”*

Rose Mackenzie, Embassy of The Netherlands in Kenya

## Recommendations for improved WPS interventions

The learning event identified several ways in which governments, donors, and civil society can work towards improving integrated WPS interventions to benefit vulnerable drylands communities in Turkana county and beyond. These include the following recommendations:

- Set up and put into action a comprehensive and collaborative framework that involves multiple sectors by managing water resources effectively.
- Improve access to information by actively disseminating and using data on water resources and conflicts, obtained through research by institutions and universities, to inform practical interventions and avoid duplication of projects and policies.
- Empower and engage local communities by involving community-led structures in water resource management and conflict resolution.
- Broaden the scope of the Turkana Peace Actors Forum to include the water sector and hold regular coordination meetings on the effectiveness of responses to water and conflict-related issues.
- Facilitate continuous and meaningful community dialogues along the Lake Turkana region belt.
- Advocate for and drive policy implementation, harmonization, and enforcement at the county level, ensuring that conflicting policies are addressed effectively to support both water resource management and peacebuilding efforts.
- Invest in well-planned water infrastructure projects, with a strong focus on water harvesting techniques that cater to specific community needs and encourage community ownership.

## References

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## Water, Peace and Security (WPS) Partnership

The Water, Peace and Security (WPS) partnership helps stakeholders to identify and understand water-related security risks and undertake timely, informed and inclusive action for conflict prevention and mitigation. The WPS Partnership is funded by The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the opinions or policies of our donor.