

## **NOMADIC CHILDREN IN KENYA: EXAMINING THE PLACE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THE CONFLICT-LIVELIHOOD-VULNERABILITY INTERFACE**

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### **Abstract**

*Nomadic pastoralists of Kenya occupy the drylands of the country that make up roughly 80 per cent of the total land area. The defining attributes of these areas include soil moisture deficiency, ethnic conflict and food insecurity. Nomadic pastoralism, the local mainstay is challenged by the cross-pollination of environmental vagrancy, ethnic conflict and poor social services. This subjects children to perennial mobility in the rangelands and, hence, hard-to-reach with social services. The migration increases children's vulnerability and exposes them to conditions that are counterproductive to their growth and development. Consequently, the children are unable to access quality social services including water, health, education and food. This increases their vulnerability to different shocks due to the relative deprivation occasioned by the apparent conspiracy of the social and natural environments. This article uses secondary data to understand the nexus between conflict, livelihood and vulnerability, and the place of social work in the nomadic children of Kenya, and its implications on nomadic children. We conclude that conflict and nomadic pastoralism combine to expose nomadic children to numerous adversities. Henceforth, we recommend social work intervention to moderate nomadic children's vulnerability and augment their welfare.*

**Keywords:** Children, Conflict, Livelihood, Nomadic Pastoralism, Vulnerability

### **The Nomadic Pastoralists of Kenya**

The nomadic pastoralists of Kenya comprise about 30 per cent of the country's total population of about 47 million people but inhabit a larger proportion of the country's land mass. They are mainly of Nilotic and Cushitic ethnic origin including Somali, Borana, Orma, Wardei, Turkana and the Maasai. While they are largely nomadic, some segments of these communities are tending towards sedentarisation and diversification of livelihood as coping mechanisms. This is a function of population pressure, climate change and encroachment of the rangelands by the largely agricultural communities.

The principal occupation of the nomadic pastoralists is livestock husbandry and so, they keep large herds of cattle, goats and sheep. The livestock have deep-rooted socio-cultural and economic values and hence, the nomads' over-dependence and quasi-religious attachment to them (Kona, 1999; Omosa, 2005). Consequently, the pastoral nomads are in constant conflict as they engage in cattle raids or conflicts

over water and pasture for their livestock. The scarcity of water and pasture represents deprivation that strains their relationships not only between them and the government but also with other neighbouring communities.

It is pointed out that cattle raid that was once a traditional sporting activity has since metamorphosed into an illegal commercial venture, especially with the entry of the gun (Kona, 1999; Odegi-Awuondo, Namai & Mutsotso, 1994; Osamba, 1999). In such circumstances, children are subjected to violence; others may be maimed, orphaned or sexually assaulted by combatants. It is noted that firearms can easily be found in the country, thanks to unstable neighbouring countries reinforced by international border porosity. For example, Somalia that borders Kenya along the drylands, has had civil war and without a viable central government since 1991 courtesy of a *coup de tat*. Along Kenya's international border with Ethiopia and Sudan, there are heavily armed communities that have for years maintained frosty relationships with their respective governments. This has seen cross-border migration and trafficking of arms and ammunition to the deterioration of security in the drylands of Kenya.

In addition, North Western Uganda that borders Kenya is another volatile region inhabited by heavily harmed communities on both sides of the border, the Pokot and Karamajong nomadic pastoralists of Kenya and Uganda, respectively (Osamba, 1999). Hence, given that these communities have nomadic pastoralism as their livelihood, there is always tension that translates into armed conflict over natural wherewithal and livestock. The resultant cross-border conflict has been more or less the governance archetype in these areas. Indeed, the larger Karamoja area on the Kenya-Uganda border suffers from a combination of climate change, cross-border migration and conflict (UN, 2014).

The foregoing has heightened human insecurity and poverty indices that are comparatively higher than the other areas of the country (KNBS & SID, 2013; UN, 2014). A state of human insecurity results in general community-wide deprivation that makes the lives of children most unrewarding and more precarious. The resultant deprivation leads to strain in society that may be manifested in the form of deep-seated feeling of injustice and at worst, violence. It is worse for children, especially when they are withdrawn from school to accompany their parents to safer areas when violence becomes unbearable (Omosa, 2005). Worse still, others may be recruited into combatants or combatants' wives, where they may lose their lives (Save the Children, 2005).

Some of the nomadic pastoralists have cultural practices that stand in the way of children's self-actualisation. For example, while Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is rampant as a rite of passage among some Kenyan communities, forced early marriages come in to compound the ability of the girl child to make a choice for her own benefit (Mwenzwa, 2014; Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011; Mwenzwa & Onduru, 2011). These practices are detrimental to children while impeding development in a major way. For example, low literacy rates mean lowly compensated economic

engagements, which leads to a vicious cycle of poverty, which partly explains high poverty indices among dryland resident communities.

Children who are born and grow up in the foregoing circumstances start life from a great disadvantage. This increases their vulnerability to natural and anthropogenic shocks including drought, famine, conflict, floods and diseases. In general, the dryland context itself is challenging, with a highly mobile population, poor infrastructure, vast distances between schools and other public amenities, which are compounded by snail-paced change of negative cultural practices (Republic of Kenya, 2009). In addition, community participation in education is limited, poverty levels are high and learners with special needs face stigma, isolation and discrimination (Mwenzwa, 2014)

Moreover, child labour, in many cases in its worst forms in ASALs of Kenya, is also a challenge (Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011; Mwenzwa, 2013). As such, while there are various opportunities to meet the needs of the nomadic children, the challenges seem overwhelming. The foregoing demonstrates relative deprivation as far as the nomadic pastoralists are concerned. This points to possible social strain in society, putting the poor, elderly and children in relatively more disadvantaged positions.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

Essentially, every human endeavour has a theoretical grounding including nomadic children of Kenya's vulnerability amid conflict and shaky livelihood. This chapter was guided by two theoretical frameworks, the structural strain and relative deprivation. Robert Merton developed the Structural Strain theory as an extension of the functional perspective on normlessness (Abraham, 1982). This theory traces the origins of normlessness and deviance to the tensions that are caused by the gap between cultural goals and the means available to people for attaining the goals (Abraham, 1982; McLauhlin, Muncie & Hughes, 2003; Watts, Bessant & Hil, 2008).

According to the Structural Strain Theory, culture establishes goals for people in society while social structure provides (or fails to provide) the means for people to achieve those goals. In a well-integrated society, people use accepted and appropriate means to achieve the goals that society establishes, in which case, the goals and the means of the society are in balance (McLauhlin, Muncie & Hughes, 2003; Watts, Bessant & Hil, 2008). It is when the goals and means are not in balance with each other that anomie is likely to occur. This imbalance between cultural goals and structurally available means can lead an individual into deviant behaviour such as engagement in armed ethnic conflict. This is the case in the arid areas of Kenya that are principally inhabited by nomadic pastoralists.

In these areas, there are goals to be achieved yet the means of achieving them are not available to some people. In this case, it is important that the nomadic pastoralists are facilitated to achieve self-actualisation like other communities through the provision of quality social services. However, these are hardly available in qualities that ensure human security. As such, these conditions bring strain to society as people compete

over the few resources and opportunities available. Many times, the competition leads to inter and intra-community strain manifested in the form of competition and conflict. In such circumstances, some people are disproportionately affected including children.

In these circumstances, some people not only reject both the established cultural goals and the accepted means of attaining them, but they go further and substitute them with new ones. These are likely to lead to conflict as such people rebel against the society, which defines nomadic pastoralists in Kenya who remain highly armed not only to defend themselves against neighbouring communities but also against security personnel. The foregoing speaks to Relative Deprivation Theory, a recognition and associated feeling that one is deprived with respect to some comparative dimension such as economic welfare (Seepersad, 2009; Saleh, 2012; Tropp & Wright, 1999). Such discrimination may lead to feelings of injustice and frustration, and hence, conflict. A look at social service provision in the drylands of Kenya compared to the high potential areas depicts glaring inequalities, that fertilise the ground for possible violence against authorities in the former.

Relative Deprivation Theory can explain outcomes such as collective destructive behaviour, negative ethnicity and attitudes toward authorities (Seepersad, 2009). Hence, the rebellion and militancy observed among many nomadic pastoralist communities in Kenya can partly be explained. For Saleh (2012), where minorities experience inequalities as opposed to other ethnic groups, ethnic conflict is quite likely. This is because feelings of deprivation imply a sense of entitlement among the disadvantaged in that they feel they deserve the privileges that others have (Tropp & Wright, 1999). The actual failure to get what one thinks is their entitlement becomes a recipe for possible violence.

As literature including government documents attests, the infrastructure for education, health, roads and security that is provided to nomadic pastoralists of Kenya leaves a lot to be desired as shown in Table 1 and 2, compared to those in Table 4. These indices are likely to implant in the nomadic pastoralists an aggressive attitude towards authorities and hence, open rebellion and violence against neighbours and the government. A case in point is the 10 November 2012 incident in which over forty (40) security officers were killed by bandits in the Baragoi area within Samburu County (Mwenzwa, 2015). Such conflict impacts negatively on local tranquility and, therefore, increasing children's vulnerability.

## **Materials and Methods**

This chapter is the result of a study that involved the analysis of secondary data which aimed at bringing to the fore the interface of conflict, livelihood and nomadic children vulnerability. The latter is associated with livelihood, political ecology and spatial analysis (Matyas & Pelling, 2012). In particular, data from both the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) and the Commission for Revenue Allocation (CRA) was relied upon based on the fact that it was recent and coming immediately

after the promulgation of a new constitutional dispensation in Kenya, in 2010. The chapter has, therefore, employed textual and content analysis of literature to discern meaning and implications of the utilised secondary data and concluded that the vulnerability of the nomadic children of Kenya is increased by both natural and anthropogenic activities including conflict, aridity and scarcity of natural wherewithal.

The data that was principally relied on was collected in 2014 from the local people by government agencies: the KNBS and the CRA. The tests were subjected to content analysis to determine who said what, to whom and why. Such analysis was particularly important for determining the message's reliability and validity and making inferences from a position of information. In addition, literature was subjected to textual analysis to determine the competence of the writers in terms of their standing and believability in addition to their positions and roles in society. The documents were determined to have been written by authors versed in the subject matter who exhibited the professionalism required of academic work. As government agencies, the expectation is that the data depict the true state of affairs of the concerned communities.

## **Findings**

The study aimed at doing an exposition through the analysis of secondary data and understand the interconnectedness between conflict, livelihood and the vulnerability of children in the drylands of Kenya and how social work practice could intervene. From the analysis, two themes have emerged: children, nomadic lifestyle and conflict on one hand and; children's vulnerability in the drylands of Kenya. On the other hand, these themes point to the fact that on one hand when conflict affects livelihood in the form of livestock husbandry, nomadic communities are adversely affected in various ways. This may necessitate self-defence strategies and migration to safer areas, which increases children's vulnerability and heightens human insecurity. A look at the emergent themes is important to bring out the understanding of the interface between conflict, livelihood and children vulnerability nexus in the drylands of Kenya. It is the exposition of the interface that informs conclusions and attendant recommendations for social work intervention going forward.

## **Children and Nomadic Lifestyle: Conflict, Livelihood and Vulnerability Nexus**

### *Children, Nomadic Lifestyle and Conflict*

While children in general, form a vulnerable segment in society (Githinji, 2009), this vulnerability differs across time and space. For the Kenyan nomadic child, the current policies, despite their good intentions, remain ineffective in meeting children's needs in appreciable proportions (Omosa, 2005; Suda, 2003). While some of the policies and laws are somehow out of touch with the needs of the nomadic child, others are unviable in the circumstances in which nomadic children live (Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011; Omosa, 2005; Odegi-Awuondo, Mutsotso & Namai, 1994; Pkalya, Adan & Masinde, 2003). However, the policy environment has generally improved significantly in recent years,

with free primary and day secondary education and the development of a policy for nomadic education (Republic of Kenya, 2003; 2005b; 2007; 2008; 2009). In addition, the National Special Needs Education Policy (Republic of Kenya, 2010) is yet another pointer to a window of opportunity to meet the needs of the child including those of the nomadic pastoralists. In particular, these children stay in the drylands that are characterised by below standard social services and inadequate resources that are necessary for human well-being. This implies suffering for whole communities and more so, for children.

A look at the Kenyan international borders along the drylands reveals significant cross-border movements of people and livestock throughout the year (Osamba, 1999; UN, 2014; Acacia Consultants, 2011; Pkalya, Adan & Masinde, 2003). As such, when communities interact amid a scarcity of common resources, they are likely to engage in conflict courtesy of resource scarcity. The consequences of such conflict on the communities at large and children in particular, are dire. They may be attacked by other communities and lose their livestock to raiders or disease. In addition, the nomadic lifestyle requires that families have to migrate from time-to-time in search of pasture and water for their livestock. In other times, they are forced to migrate when insecurity is unbearable particularly when invaded by cattle raiders from neighboring communities and across the border. In the North-Eastern Region, this has been heightened by the infiltration of the Al Shabaab militants from Somalia, who not only attack locals but also security personnel and the public at large. A case in point is the Garissa University terrorist attack in Garissa Town on 2 April 2015 that left 148 fatalities.

In addition, the recurring drought cycles within the larger Karamoja area lead to heightened out-migration of pastoralists across the Kenya-Uganda border in search of water and pasture. This tends to increase the contact between pastoralists in cattle grazing and watering points, a principal recipe for cross-border conflict (Sheekh, Atta-Asamoah & Sharamo, 2012; UN, 2014). Sometimes, when conflict combines with weak child protection policies, they expose them to untold vulnerabilities not just regarding basic needs but importantly, their survival. This is especially true when they have to migrate together with their parents to safe havens or transit camps as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Omosa, 2005; Suda, 2003; UN, 2014).

Vulnerability is conceptualised as the risk of adverse outcomes such as poverty, ill-health, social marginalisation, poor educational attainment, starvation, malnutrition, insecurity and the possibility of harm among other issues. It is increased by the inability of those affected to withstand the impacts. This may be a function of among others, the availability of resources, resilience capacity and climatic conditions, and in the context of children, it is compounded by their inability to cope unassisted (Leach, 2007). While children's vulnerability is increased by the unavailability of resources, the social and physical environment in which they live does not provide them with appropriate safety nets. The foregoing has the potential to result in imbalanced child physical, social and moral development. Hence, children

and adolescents remain vulnerable due to their age and the fact that their provisioning and social protection against shocks is dependent on adults (Chiwaka & Yates, 2003).

The foregoing may produce short or long-term negative impacts on families, necessitating intervention of social work nature. For example, flooding may be a physical environmental shock that may have short-term impacts on people's lives including temporary loss of dwelling. On their part, war and conflict could be seen as long-term political shocks whose impacts may be felt far and wide including an impact on the economy. A case in point regarding the foregoing is that conflict in South Sudan and Somalia is partly responsible for incidences of terrorism and armed robbery in Kenya, due to the smuggling of arms and ammunition (Omosa, 2005; Murunga, 2005; Mwenzwa, 2013). Generally, the disabling impact of conflict means increased vulnerability amid runaway poverty and other development indices. Children caught in such conflict are expected to be affected more disproportionately than adults.

As a result, such children may be harmed or orphaned, leaving in them an indelible psychological trauma. At the very worst, they end up losing their lives. In addition, this may be compounded by inadequate access to basic social services including food, education, health, water and security. Indeed, education and health care may be seen as luxuries that the children have to do without. This results in a vicious cycle of poverty in which children, women and the aged are likely to be more affected (IBRC, 2010; Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011; IFRC, 2010; Idris, 2011). Such deprived circumstances may lead to inter-generational poverty transfer.

Nomadic pastoralists particularly those in the areas popularly known as Northern Kenya are among the poorest, marginalised and most deprived people in the country (Sheekh, Atta-Asamoah & Sharamo, 2012). This situation is compounded by the cross-pollination of both natural and anthropogenic activities in the form of weather variability, unreliability and unpredictability in the midst of ethnic conflict and cattle theft. The combination of water and pasture scarcity in the midst of armed conflict leads to heightened risk of harm, food insecurity and malnutrition in these areas (UNICEF, 2011). Children caught up in such circumstances are left at the mercy of nature and raiders, and the consequences are dire. This is more so, when they are orphaned and left alone in transit camps (Acacia Consultants, 2011; Pkalya, Adan & Masinde, 2003), where they may be attacked, face malnutrition and starvation, especially when conflict dissuades relief supplies.

Nomadic pastoralism implies the inability to access social services such as education and health. Indeed, Idris (2011) avers that while nomadic pastoralism amounts to missed educational opportunities, access to education is equal to exit from pastoralism. It is noted that the migration of pastoralists is sometimes not a function of pasture and water, but a result of activities such as invasion by armed gangs. The children's vulnerability that results from missed education and other opportunities is known to lead to high mortality rates and a bleak future for the children. As a result, the deprivation induced by a combination of conflict, migration, weather patterns and food insecurity accentuates the precarious situations nomadic children have to contend with.

### *Children's Vulnerability in the Drylands of Kenya*

Children like other people, have a right to social services including quality health care, safe drinking water, shelter, security, food, education and adequate protection from shocks. However, this is far from reality for children in the drylands of Kenya. Moreover, there are acute gender differentials regarding access to social services with the girl child having to jump over more hurdles to access education (Mwenzwa & Rosana, 2011; Mwenzwa & Onduru, 2011). This disproportionately increases their vulnerability to shocks not only as children but also as adults. While girls may be withdrawn from school and forced into marriage, conflict may come to compound the already bad situation. Boys, on the other hand, may be forced by conflict to drop out of school or voluntarily do so to help fight the enemy (Murunga, 2005; Omosa, 2005; Suda, 2003). These work to their disadvantage as they make them more maladjusted, not only as children but also as adults in the future.

While the institutional framework for the protection of children in Kenya and globally is adequate, its implementation leaves a lot to be desired. It is expected that children are protected from shocks by their families and communities and that the institutional framework only comes to reinforce the foregoing. However, many are not lucky enough to enjoy such protection in appreciable measures, part of the problem being the socio-economic status of their families and the physical environment in which they live. Children's vulnerability gives rise to various socio-economic problems with adverse consequences on their growth and development. The foregoing is better illustrated by alluding to some welfare indicators as shown in Table 1 for the largely arid counties of Kenya.

**Table 1: Welfare Indicators for Arid Counties of Kenya**

Arid Counties	Selected Welfare Indicators/Rates (%)		
	Literacy	Food poverty	Absolute poverty
Garissa	28.3	42.9	73.4
Mandera	9.6	82.4	87.9
Wajir	8.9	71.9	83.9
Tana River	48.3	54	76.9
Isiolo	35.5	76.5	71.6
Marsabit	4.2	82.5	91.7
Baringo	63.2	59.2	59.8
Samburu	12.5	67.5	73
Turkana	7.3	92	94.4
West Pokot	30.5	60.9	69.4
<b>Average</b>	<b>24.83</b>	<b>68.98</b>	<b>78.20</b>

**Source:** Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2011; CRA, 2011



As shown in Table 1, on average, the arid counties post extremely low literacy rates that explain the high levels of poverty therein. Part of the problem is environmental vagrancy and over-reliance on livestock husbandry. In much of these areas, dryland farming is ruled out and, therefore, elevating livestock to the apex of livelihood activities. Given the weather conditions in these areas, the onset of a dry spell leaves livelihood wobbly, with the consequence of possible poverty traps. Children in such circumstances are, therefore, deprived of multiple needs, which is tantamount to violation of human rights.

Indeed, poverty and illiteracy affect and reinforce one another with devastating effects on children and adults alike. Even after the Government of Kenya started implementing the free primary school education programme in 2003, education indicators in the drylands including enrolment, transition, completion, retention and performance are unimpressive. Such children end up as herders and casual labourers and even worse recruited into armed gangs by cattle rustling warlords and terrorist groups. With the current economic trends in the country, it can safely be concluded that children in such circumstances are disadvantaged given their vulnerability to the impacts of floods, drought, inflation, conflict and famine. This is mainly because their communities are deprived of many-folds, a condition, which strains relationships leading to both intra and inter-ethnic conflict, which makes the lives of nomadic children worse off.

With low levels of literacy as shown in Table 1, the affected are unexpected to have many livelihood alternatives. For example, the modest educational achievement registered among pastoral-nomadic communities cannot allow their children to compete with those from other communities on an equal footing when it comes to securing self-actualising opportunities (Mwenzwa & Rosana, 2011). They are therefore left with the option of engaging in casual and unskilled manual work including child labour, sometimes its worst forms (ILO, 1999; Mwenzwa & Njaramba, 2006). Some of the undertakings they engage in are not only poorly paid but also erratic. Altogether, sustainable livelihood in these areas is more theoretical than practical. There is, however, a slight improvement in the largely semi-arid counties as Table 2 attests.

**Table 2: Welfare Indicators for Semi-Arid Counties of Kenya**

Semi-Arid Counties	Selected Welfare Indicators/Rates (%)		
	Literacy	Food poverty	Absolute poverty
Kitui	50.9	50.8	63.8
Makueni	69.2	56.4	64.1
Kwale	57.0	71.1	74.9
Taita Taveta	84.2	48.1	57.0
Laikipia	70.1	39.7	50.5
Narok	27.7	28.3	26.7
Kajiado	50.2	11.6	11.6
<b>Average</b>	<b>58.5</b>	<b>43.7</b>	<b>49.8</b>

**Source:** Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2011; CRA, 2011

As shown in Table 2, in the semi-arid counties, there is a slight improvement in the literacy levels that are likely to lead to improvement in welfare indicators including decreased poverty. This implies education has a great role to play in poverty reduction. Table 2 shows that literacy levels are slightly higher than those in the largely arid counties. There is still much more that needs to be done given that poverty levels remain a significant impediment to the realisation of national development (Republic of Kenya, 2007; 2008). With both food and absolute poverty indices about 50 per cent on average, it implies that dependency ratios are high, making access to basic needs largely a mirage. Consequently, access to social services including education for children is a preserve of a few as others remain at the periphery. Nonetheless, in the largely high potential areas of the country, education has a direct impact on poverty alleviation as attested by Table 3.

**Table 3: Welfare Indicators for High Potential Counties**

High potential Counties	Selected welfare indicators/rates (%)		
	Literacy	Food poverty	Absolute poverty
Kiambu	79.1	25.5	22.5
Meru	50.1	15.7	48.5
Kisii	60.8	51.9	43.9
Kericho	70.6	39.1	42.9
Nandi	71.8	45.7	47.5
Kakamega	55.4	51.7	27.2
<b>Average</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>38.3</b>	<b>38.8</b>

**Source:** Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2011; CRA, 2011

Whereas there are differences between the arid, semi-arid and high potentials areas, it is clear that there is a direct relationship between physical environment and human welfare. Literacy increases with decreasing aridity and poverty as the foregoing data attests. For example, weather conditions in the drylands prohibit meaningful agriculture, minimising the opportunities for livelihood diversification (Mwenzwa & Njaramba, 2006). As economic opportunities dwindle, families slide into poverty, making access to education for children more of a luxury than a necessity. The resultant vulnerability makes children and adults alike, destitute.

Weather conditions including drought and El Nino leave a devastating effect on livestock, the predominant livelihood in arid areas to the disadvantage of pastoralists. In addition, cattle theft has had an effect on both livestock loss and human lives. Consequently, natural and anthropogenic events impact negatively on the incomes of the dryland communities. This, in turn, affects children's schooling, health and physical security. In addition, cultural practices in these areas are counterproductive particularly to girl child education, with far-reaching implications on their social development (Wagner, 2015; Mwenzwa & Masese, 2011). Some of the practices imply discontinuation of schooling, and dwindling prospects for self-actualisation.

*Social Work and the Moderation of Children's Vulnerability*

Shaky livelihood occasioned by the scarcity of natural resources particularly water and pasture is the principal driver of migration and conflict among the nomadic pastoralists. This cross-pollinates with conflict amid low development indices making nomadic pastoralists highly vulnerable to shocks such as floods, drought and human and livestock diseases. The onset of either leaves the nomads at the periphery of society, necessitating social work intervention as follows:

First, relative deprivation is partly responsible for constrained relationships among the communities living in the drylands of Kenya, resulting in conflict with devastating impacts of development as it increases adverse outcomes. As a result, the indigenous institutions of governance must be re-activated and strengthened so that conflict is dealt with at the local level. Social workers need to be equipped to re-activate these institutions to give them a voice in resolving conflicts at the local level. This is expected to reduce the vulnerability of children a great deal. Social workers have an obligation to engage the government and influence its action on cross-border surveillance to reduce the influx of arms and ammunition. Such is expected to minimise cattle raids and armed ethnic conflicts that increase children's vulnerability.

Second, ethnic conflict in the drylands of Kenya is endemic, hence, the need to ease the strained relationships and sustainably prevent ethnic conflict. This requires social workers to collect information regarding local conflict, from which it is expected that they can liaise with the government and other development agencies to develop and deploy conflict early warning systems. Such are expected to help the local populace and government detect conflict before they occur and prevent them. The foregoing is based on the reasoning that response to conflict has largely been reactionary through the deployment of security forces after the fact. This is expected to shield communities in general and children in particular from the adverse consequences of conflict.

Third, in the drylands of Kenya, there are firms that need to scale up their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. In particular, there are cement manufacturing, oil prospecting, salt extracting, coal and limestone mining and power generation firms in these areas. Moreover, government-owned firms in the drylands including Kenya Wildlife Service, Kerio Valley Development Authority, Kenya Energy Generating Company and Geothermal Development Corporation, need to plough some of their profits in CSR activities locally. Social workers should identify local community-felt needs and engage the firms in having the latter scale up of their CSR activities, especially in child protection.

Fourth, in-country and cross-borders, cattle raids are common, and have institutionalised insecurity in the drylands. This has worked to socialise children into armed conflict, graduating from simple combatants into armed warriors and may eventually become cattle rustling lords. Subsequent induction of other children into livestock theft and ethnic conflict implies near-permanent insecurity. Here, social workers have a role to play in breaking this cyclic socialisation into armed conflict. We, therefore, root for a robust social rehabilitation of nomadic

children to guarantee future peace and reduction in children's vulnerability. Social workers should identify the most vulnerable of children and determine their needs followed by their rehabilitation. This is expected to provide the necessary paradigm shift by re-orienting the energies of the children into more constructive activities. The foregoing includes schooling, sports, theatre arts and technical skills.

Fifth, of late the government of Kenya has introduced several social protection schemes including cash transfers to the poor, aged and widows. While this may make some difference in the lives of beneficiaries, this is not sustainable given the state of the economy and the runaway corruption in Kenya. Indeed, it may institutionalise dependency rather than self-reliance. Hence, there is a need for change in the way social protection, especially for children is implemented. It is recommended that social workers engage the government and development agencies to provide nomadic children with education in boarding schools, in areas away from their conflict-prone neighbourhood. This argument stems from the observation that literacy increases with decreasing poverty and vulnerability. Most importantly, educating nomadic children amounts to showing them how to fish instead of giving their parents fish. This becomes an insurance for the future of children to reduce their vulnerability.

Finally, given the importance of appropriate information for facilitating decision-making, there is a need for continuous research to understand the changing nature of nomadic children's needs. Social workers have a duty to influence policy and legislation leading to the establishment of a National Children Research Laboratory in Kenya, specifically meant for research on children. Such an institution can be very important as a resource center for children information in general and nomadic children in particular. The institution can act as a storehouse of data on children so that any intervention is done from a point of information.

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