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## **Community-Based Strategies of Controlling Small Arms and Light Weapons Proliferation in West Pokot County, Kenya**

By

Matiko Chris Nyamohangah & Hamasi Linnet

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to assess the effect of community-based strategies of curbing small arms and light weapons proliferation in West Pokot County, Kenya. The study's motivation was based on the current prevalence of SALW among marginalized communities in Kenya, which has led to widespread insecurity. The study is guided by the following objectives; to evaluate the effectiveness of community-based strategies on curbing of SALW and to assess the challenges facing approaches of curbing SALWs within West Pokot County. Social Conflict Theory and System Theory of Conflict guide this study. This study employed mixed methods research design. The study utilized both probability and non-probability sampling techniques. Data was collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The quantitative data was then analysed using Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software while qualitative data was coded and analysed by doing an analytic induction using the theories. The Study findings were then presented in tabular format using percentages, frequencies and pie chart. Qualitative data was presented using graphic and interactive timelines that helped in tracking how the SALW has unfolded over time. Findings of this research showed that there is a problem in SALW in Pokot and surrounding communities. The study also established that economic marginalisation, historical rivalries, rites of passage and ethnic stereotypes all contributed to SALW. The study further affirmed that, sporting activities such as football, racing among other activities could act as alternative ways of sustaining security in west Pokot. The study concluded that Consistent access to small arms and light weapons has created intermittent conflicts and insecurity in pastoral regions in Kenya and, more specifically. The easy availability of SALW has greatly contributed to the levels of death and destruction wrought by the raids and conflicts in the region. Violent raid and conflicts have negatively impacted these communities, not only through the loss of human lives and destruction of property but also by limiting freedom of movement, contributing to the ineffective utilization of resources necessitating community-based strategies like *nyumba kumi*, public intelligence gathering in a bid to curb the menace.

**Key words:** Community-Based Strategies, Small Arms and Light Weapons, Kenya, West Pokot County, Proliferation of Arms

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### **Introduction**

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is posing danger to global human security. The UN Secretary-General noted that the SALW encourages a wide range of human rights crimes, including maiming and kicking, rape and other forms of sexual assault, torture and enforced disappearances, and forced juvenile recruitment by troops or armed groups. (UNCRD, 2017). The report mentions the widespread violations of human rights and socioeconomic progress that these weapons cause. It further notes that since the weapons are relatively cheap, simple, and light to handle, conceal, and transport, their excessive accumulation and global availability tend to exacerbate conflict situations by lengthening the duration and lethality of violence and by raising people's sense of security, which results in a sizable demand for weapons. (Osamba, 2016).

The United States of America is among the countries, which has experiencing gun violence due to increase in small arms and light weapons (SAWL). For instance, there is high number of illegal civilian gun possession within El Salvador in Central America where gun violence is highly on the rise. Some of the factors linked to such proliferation were lack of collective efficacy within the community to maintain public safety and security particularly within the socially disorganized neighbourhoods (Watkins & Alemayehu, 2016).

The famous Bamako Declaration on an African Common Position on the Illicit Proliferation, Circulation, and Trafficking of Small Arms and Light Weapons was drafted by member nations of the African Union during a summit held in Bamako, Mali, from November to December of the year 2000. The declaration stated that small guns undermine international humanitarian law, inspire terrorism, and fuel criminal activity in addition to aggravating violence, sustaining wars, and displacing innocent communities (Mkutu, 2008)

The problem of SALW has been a serious problem in Kenya since the post-independence. The country borders Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Indian Ocean. Refugees, militias and rebel groups as well as forces of the government are believed to be selling of ammunitions and guns to anyone willing to part away with some money. The continuous decrease in price, easy availability, weak communal counter-strategies and government security agencies laxity has led to significant proliferation of SALW in Kenya (Mkutu, 2008).

The African Security Review (2015) made estimation that there was about five million SALW within the rural areas and with east Africa and Horn of Africa pastoral communities. The report further noted that some of the community strategies adopted such as community awareness programs on the effects of SALW by faith-based organizations among the pastoralist's communities in Kenya such as the Pokot and Marsabit had yielded some fruits in controlling the prevalence of SALW within such areas. The report additionally opined that the community was working in hand with the government through community policing partnerships by providing intelligence to the police over illicit arms trade. Research within northern Kenya regions shows that the SALW propagated pastoralist violence had displaced over 190,000 individuals by the year 2014 (Pkalya, Adan, and Masinde, 2016).

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Among the defining insecurity features within West Pokot County is the issue of SALW proliferation and cattle rustling incidents. Since the advent of colonialism, West Pokot County has not actually known serenity and tranquillity. West Pokot County forms among the areas that are marginalized where the national government has up to date fail to offer sustainable security. This study holds that this kind of failure has contributed to major insecurity widespread marked by cattle rustling, underdevelopment and banditry. Conversely, citizens in most of the parts of the county have turn into arming themselves with SALW to safeguard themselves as well as their property (Kamenju *et al.* 2013)

Additionally, this study is of the view that political incitement; ethnic animosity and scarcity of resources have also led to the insecurity problem. This study notes that despite the government efforts to address the issue of SALW within West Pokot County through various approaches such as community policing, arming of KPR, disarmament operations, insecurity has been a persistent challenge within West Pokot County.

In Kenya, little or no studies have been carried out to scholarly tackle the issue of community-based strategies such as community policing, problem-solving approaches, community-based organizations and community awareness on controlling the issue of SALW proliferation in Kenya. Hence the need of the current study, which seeks to evaluate the effect of community-based strategies of controlling illicit small arms and light weapons in West Pokot County, Kenya

### **Statement of the Problem**

The issue of small arms and light weapons (SALW) presents a tremendous challenge. The proliferation of SALW in Kenya has led to an increase in insecurity incidents, slow economic growth, affecting learning school activities, loss of life and destruction of property, and forceful eviction of people. Responding to these incidents, various security and government agencies are working jointly with individuals and communities who are seeking alternatives to the problem of proliferation of SALW. The African Union annual report in the year 2015 estimated that about 645 million SALW are in circulation globally, over one hundred million are believed to be from Africa with Kenya being among the top ten affected countries. Further, the report notes that there exists a significant correlation between acquisitions of SALW and the de-escalation or escalation of conflicts into a full-blown civil war (UNCRD, 2017).

Human Rights Watch Cross (2017) notes that the percentage of the killed civilians in conflicts as a result of small arms use is estimated to be at about 35% of all the annual deaths in Africa. Moreover, United Nations-Habitat (2017), reported that between May 2014 and April 2016 in the capital city of Nairobi, about 37% of the population had been robbery with violence victims, while 16% of the respondents were physical assault victims. One of the questions that are clear in these empirical studies is whether the community is well organized and playing a crucial role in addressing the SALW in the country particularly within the pastoral communities in Kenya. Communities such as Marakwet, Pokot, Turkana and Samburu have been linked to various instances of insecurity such as cattle rustling due to proliferation of SALW.

Although the issue of SALW proliferation and how they basically affect the national security has been of major interest to researchers, policy analysts, security experts, community leaders and government agencies, making definitive nexus with various actors has always been a major challenge. For instance, arms traffickers, defeated rebels or deserting soldiers of the government may all carry ammunitions with them. However, such groups

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remain underground. Oblivious of the installation of new administrative governments within the conflict zones, curbing the proliferation of SALW within the hands of the civilians and other groups still basically remain to a major difficulty.

Oblivious of the government adopting measures such as arming of KPR, promotion of community policing activities, demobilization, disarmament and reintegration programs among such affected communities, controlling small arms and light weapons remains to be a nightmare. This begs the question as to whether the community is doing enough or do they understand their role when it comes to supplementing the government strategies in controlling the proliferation of SALW in Kenya. It is the aim of this study by looking at the effect of community-based strategies of controlling illicit small arms and light weapons in West Pokot County, Kenya by looking at community policing programs, problem solving approaches, community-based organizations and community awareness programs this study will make the most significant contribution in addressing the issue of small arms and light weapons in Kenya.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i) To evaluate the effectiveness of community-based strategies on curbing of SALW in West Pokot County, Kenya
- ii) To analyse the perspective of the community-on-community based strategies on curbing of SALW within West Pokot County
- iii) To examine the challenges facing community-based approaches of curbing SALWs within West Pokot County

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Effectiveness of Community-Based Strategies on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons**

It is estimated that illegal trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) accounts for one and half of all the global transfers of light weapons. SALW were the weapons which were dominant ammunitions utilized in all the 95% conflicts internally around the world in the period between 1996 to around 1989 (Bevan, 2008).

Although small arms and light weapons (SALW) do not in themselves contribute to the criminal activities and conflicts in which they are utilized, the wide illicit flows, accumulation and availability of such ammunitions tend to increase conflicts, democracy and good governance, impede social and economic growth and inhibit the development of social cohesion and stability, further explosion of crime, intensify violence and undermining peace treaties (Alkire, 2013).

Buzan (2016) noted that community-based awareness of the problems of weapons prevalence and trafficking arms, internationally and Africa also are welcomed greatly. This study holds that it is important to acknowledge the various community-based initiatives, agreements, and resolutions to address the problem that have recently been taken in Southern Africa (the Operations Rachel on collection of weapons and the Program of Action for curbing of illicit arms trafficking are recently among the most), the Sahara-Sahel, and the Middle East (for instance, the Mali moratorium on the export, import and manufacturing of weapons) and which are making an effect on the UN, OAU(AU) and its agencies and other members of the international community.

Programs for effective development of controls on legal arms transfers and possessions among state security forces and civilians remain inadequate. So too, are

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community-based programs to ex-combatants' disarmament, removing unlicensed arms from the civilians and safely disposes or destroy the surplus stocks of SALW or the illicit weapons, which have, been confiscated. Information exchange, transparency and consultation among the countries on these issues remain.

United Nations Development Programme (2014) noted that the pastoralism practice in Africa- herding of domestic animals on bush land which is open is constantly under threat from violence linked to the prevalence of SALW. A report by think-tank, Saferworld examines the condition in the border of Kenya-Uganda area and the publication by Mkutu (2008) confirms that there have been a number of attempts to resolve and prevent conflict on the border of Kenya-Uganda border.

There are several factors for these. First, land privatization has pushed pastoralists into smaller areas, insecurity and fuelling disputes. Secondly, land pressure and other resources have relatively grown as a result of the increasing severity of drought and regularity of drought leaving most of the pastoralists to be highly dependent on food aid (Mwagiru, 2010). Thirdly, this study notes that since independence, the traditional governance authority have been weakened, leaving them not being in a position to control resources as well as armed members of the community. Fourthly, cattle's rustling is conducted out on increasingly large scale and have turnout to be commercialized. This study notes that due to weak community-based strategies on curbing of SALW some of the businessmen are taking the definitive characteristics of local warlords.

### **Community Perspective on Curbing of Small Arms and Light Weapons**

Wepundi et al., (2016) noted that small arms and light weapons (SALW) regulation became the politics medium on the global agenda. It was the medium relative to the high landmines politics, the progenitor issues in most minds, but it was the topic of a feverish activity pace compared to the past years. Notably, in the late 1998, sixteen countries in West Africa signed an agreement binding to ban import, export and production of SALW for a three-year period of trial. Additionally, governments within the western hemisphere signed (and various ratified) a convention on illicit transfer and manufacturing of SALW (Watkins & Alemayehu, 2016). Negotiation for preparation of a global protocol against trafficking of firearms was started. While in 1998 during the summer period, the government of Canada made recommendation on a treaty delegitimizing military style small arms transfers to insurgent forces and as well as other actors of non-state (Swift, 2015).

South African Development Community, Economic Community of West African States, Organization of African Unity, Organization of American States and European Union all took up some elements of SALW regulation and almost every aspect of the United Nations (entailing, increasing the Security Council) engaged the debate in the previous years (Pkalya, Ruto & Mohamed, 2015). Majority of the prominent have been in Switzerland, South Africa, Norway, Netherlands, Japan, Canada and Belgium several of which hosted international governmental forums to discuss SALW prevention (Nganga, 2012). This study notes that the argument is that to degrees which are varying, each of these states has welcomed the "Ottawa model" of collaboration of government-NGO, specifically in the regions of brainstorming for funding programs, holding consciousness-raising seminars and policy initiatives to assisting of former combatants' reintegration and destroy and collect weapons (Mwagiru, 2010).

Ochieng (2012) noted that non-governmental organizations from the south and north came together to launch a coordinating structure the International Action Network on small



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arms and light weapons (SALW) to facilitate and rationalize their research, practical work and advocacy. This extraordinary explosion of activity is an outcome of the complexity and breadth of the SALW challenge. Osamba (2016) noted that the issue is broader than landmines both in regard to the scope of the challenge as measured by the quantity of SALW in irresponsible hands or the civilian death and casualties numbers and in regard to factors linked to the prevalence of these ammunitions. Whereas predominately landmines were perceived as a humanitarian issue, emanating from internal conflicts (generally), many viewed at the same time SALW prevalence as principally a police issue.

To others, it was an issue of conflict prevention or an issue of development. Each of these frameworks suggests various different priorities and remedial policies (Sandford, 2013). With SALW regulation there are a number of fissures, of which some have been utilized by the state to stave off economically or politically unpalatable measures of control. A principal divide is as to whether the major problem is the stocks existing of illicit weaponry in zones of conflict circulation or whether on-going legal transfers are basically of less concern (Umar, 2014). While some NGOs and governments sought a major conceptual framework to tie it all together, to address all the problem facets, still it is succinct that there is no holy grail. Hence, as is ongoing, an initiatives web is required to lower the oversupply and illegal use of these weapons.

At the same time, lest NGOs and governments burn out on fatigue initiative, they must jointly work even more closely to consolidate and prioritize major activity areas (Ramesh, 2017). This study is of the opinion that concentration on SALW will not be indefinitely; these parties, which are concerned, must identify and press for the furthest measures reaching to lower the dangers from SALW prevalence. This agenda entails shoring up the made agreements hence far, concentrating on accountability and transparency on legal transfers, regulating the flow of SALW to conflicting zones and banning supply of weapons by the state to insurgents (Pkalya, Ruto & Mohamed, 2015).

### **Challenges Facing Community Based Approaches on Curbing SALW**

A weak and at times corruption within the security architecture marked by poor border control measures and minimal police presence in most parts of northern Kenya forms an environment, which is favourable for illicit use possession and trafficking of SALW through corruption (Nganga, 2012).

Small arms and light weapons (SALW) demand is fuelled by the precarious existence of communities in underdeveloped regions of the nation as they battle for limited resources and defend their way of life (Wolfers, 2017). The combination of this with interethnic tensions that escalate into violence, such as livestock rustling attacks, forces civilizations to arm themselves for protection. Even worse, the government's inability to establish its authority by increasing law and order and providing services in Northern Kenya has fuelled the vital need for SALW in communities there.

The study holds the position that further weak structure of governance influences insecurity and prevalence of small arms and light weapons (SALW). For example, in listing the various factors leading to the demand for SALW among pastoralist communities, Mkutu (2008) opines that the primary causal factor is poor governance, while among the secondary casual factors are weakening customary governance institutions, diminishing the cattle numbers, the need to pay bride price and unemployment. However, there are other triggers, which are independent, such as cattle rustling, which are treated as a cultural challenge

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among most pastoralist communities in Eastern Africa region and Kenya. The impacts of SALW supply and misuse have long been felt throughout society of Kenya.

Pastoralist communities that face several difficulties (such as grazing land disputes and limited access to water for their animals) and a low police presence are particularly affected. Communities in the North Rift, Upper Eastern, and North Eastern zones are thought to suffer disproportionately from high SALW levels and instability (Wolfers, 2017).

The weapons range from MANPADS to AK series assault rifles one of which was utilized in shooting down a cargo aircraft belonging to Belarusian while delivering peacekeeping supplies in the year 2007 (Watkins & Alemayehu, 2016). This study will address this gap by looking at some of the community-based strategies in addressing the prevalence of SALW in Kenya. It also seeks to determine whether the SALW in Kenya are from the locals, refugees or private entities.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Conflict Theory**

The proponent of social conflict Theory is Karl Marx. Conflict theory reiterates the role of power and coercion in the creation of social order. Karl Marx perceived society as being fragmented into groups which are in competition for economic and social resources. Social order is upheld by domination, with power in the hands of those with the most significant social, economic and political resources (Wolfers, 2017)

Antonio Gramsci, an activist and philosopher from Italy, built on the work of Karl Marx by observing that the hegemony of culture the ability of the dominant group to win acceptance of its rule through beliefs, values, norms, and ideas is largely responsible for the broad acceptance of the rule. The social conflict theory contends that inequality genuinely exists because those who manage society's distribution of resources have a vested interest in defending their advantages. Those in positions of authority do not connect the people to society by a common set of ideals, but rather using force. This viewpoint emphasizes social control rather than agreement and conformity. People and organizations advance their own interests while attempting to take control of the resources available to the society (Watkins & Alemayehu, 2016).

Theorists of conflict oppose the status quo, encourage social change (even when it could be interpreted as a social revolution), and hold that the wealthy and powerful impose social order on the weak and the poor, in contrast to functionalists who preserve the status quo, avoid social change, and hold that people cooperate to affect the social order (Umar, 2014).

Although this social conflict theory looks at how conflict within the community may lead to proliferation of SALW the theory does not critically look at how systems put in place such as government agencies among other community-based approaches such as Faith Based institutions and Community Based Organizations crucial role in curbing of proliferation SALW, Hence the need of the second theory.

### **System Theory of Conflict**

System theory is an approach to social life that places an emphasis on how all the functional components operate together to achieve a certain goal. This viewpoint focuses on the fundamental elements that keep an organism together, and when conflict is present, the theory emphasizes how things typically disintegrate. A system theory of conflict aims to show how the components of the system do not always cooperate well. (Wolfers, 2017).

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The theory affirms how oppression is a component of society as a whole; its goal is to show how the production systems repress labour. The capitalist must push the workforce to work ever-increasing hours for as little pay as the owner will allow. However, this isn't because the owner is a dishonest person; rather, it's because the capitalist system requires that the capitalist conserve money, function profitably, and make a profit in order to live. (Umar, 2014).

According to the concept, human nature is ever evolving, and people in positions of authority always create ideologies to support their rule. Without the system, the beliefs will dissipate, creating a truly honest person free of deceit and smokescreens. (Ochieng, 2012). The systems theory addresses human attitudes that result from these relationships inside a given system, such as the sense of superiority, rather than just politics or economics. A system theory of conflict's primary goal is systemic change; this can be used to explain how possession of SALW contributes to a perception of supremacy.

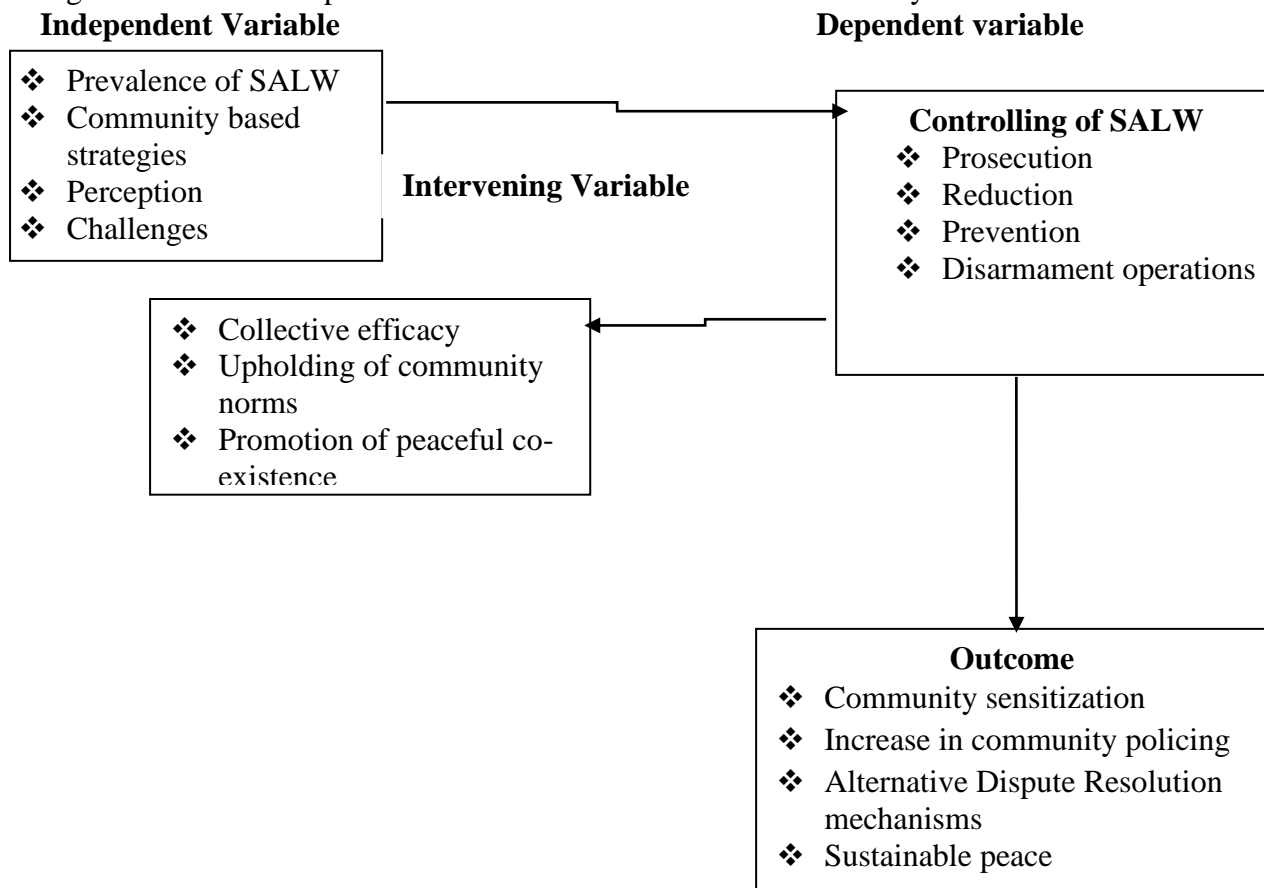
The theory can be utilized to imply rejection to status quo, where individuals indulge things to change the system. The report by Ramesh (2017) cited that the gap between the poor and the rich keeps on broadening as a result of high unemployment levels and policies for remuneration within the country; this has promoted high desperation levels among the youths increasing ultimately incidents of crime which can only result to civilians acquiring ammunitions for protecting themselves.



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### Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the important variables that are involved in this study



### Research Methodology

#### Research Design

In order to provide the quantitative and qualitative data required in responding to the research questions, this study aims to use a descriptive research design. This methodology will be used because it helps the researcher gain a thorough grasp of the situation under investigation, which is the impact of community-based initiatives for reducing the spread of small arms and light weapons in West Pokot County, Kenya. The study must keep track of any data regarding the kind, quantity, and sources of SALW.

#### Target Population

According to 2009 census West Pokot County has a population 512,690. However, for the purpose of this study the target population for this research included all National Police Service officers, Assistant County Commissioners (ACC), MCA's, Community Policing Committee members and community members in general.

#### Sample Selection

Using the Yamane formula, the study drew 35.9% in each category to come up with sample population. The total sample size is 193 participants.

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### **Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection instruments included structured questionnaires and interview schedules.

### **Structured Questionnaires**

This study used structured and semi-structured questionnaires to collect data from National Police Service officers within West Pokot County. The researcher's questionnaire was structured into five sections. Section A will contain socio-demographic data of the respondents. The themes of the objectives were captured in section B, C, D and E respectively of the questionnaire.

### **Interview Schedule**

The study also utilized interview techniques to collect data. The researcher used interview guide to collect data from Assistant County Commissioners (ACC), MCA's and Community Policing Committee members.

### **Data analysis**

Data analysis was done both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitatively, to characterize the fundamental characteristics of the study data, descriptive statistics must be used. This entails the use of percentages and frequency tables to identify any connections or interactions between different variables. Qualitatively, all the questions in the interview guide as well as the questionnaire shall be analysed using qualitative analysis. Qualitative data shall be analysed through content and thematic analysis.

### **Presentation And Discussion Of Findings**

Findings on Small Arms Light Weapons (SALWP) proliferation in West Pokot showed that **both** internal and external reasons are blamed for the spread of SALW in west Pokot. Most of respondents believed that illegal SALW were widely distributed throughout west Pokot. However, 21% thought there was a high proliferation of SALW in the area. The region's geographic location may be to blame for the variation.

These communities often move with their livestock from one place to another in search of pasture and water. This often creates conflict between these communities and their neighbours due to competition for the already scarce resources. Therefore, in order to replenish livestock lost during such periods, they always raid the neighbouring communities for livestock. Thus, causing conflict between or among them.

In nomadic herders' cultures, receiving dowry in the form of livestock is a customary practice. Young men who don't have livestock for bride prices are frequently necessitated to turn to cattle rustling as a last resort because of this cultural tradition. This has encouraged livestock rustling among the pastoral people in Ethiopia's South Omo, promoting heroic cultural behaviours.

The commercialisation of cattle rustling has aggravated the vice. Cattle rustling is perpetuated by wealthy businessmen who often fund raids for economic benefits accrued from the sale of the livestock (Gebre, Hadgu and Ambaye, 2005).

### **Magnitude of SALW in civilian hands in Kenya**

The study findings revealed that the number of illicit and licit SALW in the hands of civilians in Kenya has been growing over the years, with the year 2017 having the highest recorded

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number. Therefore, with the increase of SALW in the hands of a civilian, there has been a rise in insecurity in some parts of the country (Tlou, Motlalekgosi, & Mofokeng, 2021). In fact, one of the respondents (Respondent 4) who sought anonymity because of the sensitivity of the matter noted that civilian firearms outnumber the guns held by both the Kenyan police and the military.

These privately held guns far surpass the number held by Kenyan military and police. The military possess roughly 46,000 guns, while the police forces hold about 52,000. there are roughly 750,000 privately owned firearms in Kenya, but only 8,136 of those firearms are registered (Respondent 4, OI 12 22/06/2022).

### **Sources of Small Arms Light Weapons in West Pokot**

On sources of SALW, 88% of the respondents associated SALW proliferation in the region with the bandits. The bandits often acquire the SALW from neighbouring countries due to the porous borders of Kenya with her neighbours (Mkutu, 2007).

On the other hand, 22% of the respondents also implicated local businesses in the proliferation of SALW. Due to commercialisation of raids, local businesspersons have often sponsored youth to carry out raids by the provision of SALW. In an interview with a key informant, he noted that security agencies have also been implicated in lending and/or selling their arms to civilians due to the country's weak legislation on SALW control (Mittawa, 2022).

Although the bandits were blamed for the spread of SALW, the researcher was equally interested in learning their age.

### **Age Groups involved in SALW Trafficking**

Research indicates that individuals aged 21-30 years accounting for (57%) are the most responsible for the proliferation of SALW in West Pokot. They are followed closely at 31% with the age group of 31-40 years. This could be explained by the fact that the youth from the community are expected to marry and pay pride prices at these particular ages. The pride prices are paid in livestock. According to an elderly respondent, bride prices were and are still paid in cattle, which ranged from 20 cows or even more. Because of the high bride wealth, the youths who cannot raise the needed number of cows are forced to go and raid. .

### **Effectiveness of Community-Based Strategies on Curbing Proliferation of SALW**

In response to the increasing SALW violence, related crimes, and activities within the West Pokot region, various disarmament programmes have been initiated since the colonial period. The Kenyan government has conducted disarmament programmes among the pastoralist communities in order to reduce the number of SALW in the hands of civilians, which are used for cattle rustling.

A government official had this to say, “People voluntarily surrendered their guns. However, it became harmful to them since it made them vulnerable to those who were not disarmed. This made them to look like fools.” Therefore, this led to the disarmed clans' rearmament and the locals' unwillingness to surrender their guns in the disarmament process voluntarily.

In order to address the shortfalls of the disarmament by the government, community-based strategies have been introduced. Therefore, in response to the increasing violence,

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related crimes, and activities within West Pokot, various community-level efforts have been made to deal with the vice.

### **Community Based Strategies**

Scholars have suggested that a community-oriented strategy should be used to guarantee that local security requirements, concerns, and dynamics inform both local and national SALW management processes in order to address the issue of illicit SALW contributing to people's sense of insecurity. To increase accountability for the use of arms, the National Police Service should prioritize and encourage the creation and implementation of strong procedures for monitoring their use at local police stations (Mittawa, 2022).

Research also demonstrates that in order to maximize the impact of SALW, security services need improve their local and national coordination and harmonization efforts. The involvement of women, young people, and other marginalized groups in the development and execution of SALW control programs should be strengthened and supported by both state and non-state security actors (Kimokoti, 2022).

The study found out that *Nyumba Kumi* initiative has successfully brought into a halt the spread of SALW. Due to the collaboration between the community and security forces made possible by *Nyumba Kumi*, individuals responsible for the smuggling of SALW were caught. However, with the introduction of community policing initiatives like the *Nyumba Kumi*, the relationship has improved, thus allowing the security agencies to work together with the community in curbing various crimes (Oduor, 2022).

Community support for sporting events has been instrumental in engaging the youth from different communities by bringing them together. This helps in conflict resolution and peace building efforts since it has a trans-cultural and universal quality to it that provides a practical entry point for conflict resolution that can be lacking in some situations (Leshore, 2020).

### **Conclusion**

Consistent access to small arms and light weapons has created intermittent conflicts and insecurity in pastoral regions in Kenya and, more specifically, West Pokot. The easy accessibility of small and light weapons can be attributed to the fragile nature of the states in the Horn of Africa. These countries have experienced inter-state and intra-state conflicts, resulting in the proliferation of weapons in the region. Today, with the availability of cheap and easy-to-use high-powered assault rifles, namely the AK-47, the conflict has taken on epidemic proportions with increased fatalities and indiscriminate killings. The easy availability of SALW has greatly contributed to the levels of death and destruction wrought by the raids and conflicts in the region. Some merchants play a role in the conflict by trading weapons, ammunition, commodities, and information.

The violent raid and conflicts have negatively impacted these communities, not only through the loss of human lives and destruction of property but also by limiting freedom of movement, contributing to the ineffective utilization of resources. Thus, the communities have opted for community-based strategies like *nyumba kumi*, public intelligence gathering in a bid to curb the menace. These have registered successes, albeit with cases of challenges like lack of community awareness, resources, and political interference. Though the community-based strategies are useful ways of curbing SALW proliferation, there is a need to mitigate the divergent prospectus and considerate the community-based approaches between the security agencies and community members. The researcher recommends that community

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members should be fully sensitized on SALW implications and how they can tackle the menace by themselves. This will impact positively on their social economic well-being since it will diversify their source of income and demystify factors that lead to SALW dependency.

### **Recommendation**

Based on research conclusion, the researcher suggested the following areas for further research; Study should be carried out to determine the best way of controlling SALW already in the country which will contribute to sustained peace in Pokot and its environment. Also, Research should be carried out to look at how intergovernmental agencies can coordinate to stop trade and movements of arms from one border to another since porous borders and lack of coordinated intergovernmental agencies has brought about the SALW menace.



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