

# Challenges Facing Management of Intractable Conflicts in West Pokot and Turkana Counties in Kenya

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## Abstract

Africa is in the midst of challenges emanating from globalization, wars and intractable conflicts that have negative effects. Intractable conflicts in west Pokot and Turkana counties have provided greater challenges to conflict management efforts in the region. The overall objective of this study was to; establish challenges facing management of intractable conflicts in west Pokot and Turkana counties. Specific objectives were to; identify effects of managing intractable conflicts, establish methods used in managing intractable conflicts and determine factors influencing challenges facing management of intractable conflicts in west Pokot and Turkana counties. Research question was; what were the challenges facing management of intractable conflicts in west Pokot and Turkana counties? Descriptive and correlational study designs that were cross sectional in nature were used. Total study population was 893,779, probability and non-probability sampling methods and random and non-random sampling techniques were used and sample size of 380 was determined. Data were collected and analyzed using computer packages SPSS version 17 and excel. Chi square tests revealed that there were significant differences of involvement of youths compared a long side other people in promoting intractable conflicts. Hence they were negatively contributing to sustainable development. Chi square tests established that there were significant differences among the strategies used in managing intractable conflicts. Other strategies were significant a long side preaching peace and were positively contributing to sustainable development. Chi square tests revealed that there were significant differences among causes of failures of communities to resolve intractable conflicts. Other causes failures were intractable conflicts being source of wealth that negatively contributed to sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties.

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Key words: *intractable, conflicts, challenges, west Pokot, Turkana, strategies, management and effects*

## 1. Introduction

Intractable conflicts normally arise as a result of the disagreements between two or more people, groups or communities. It also arises from, lack of alternative sources of livelihood, diminishing role of traditional institutions of conflicts management, political incitement, non-responsive government's policy and inter-ethnic animosity (Advarneg, 2011). Conflict destroys the ability of affected communities to carry on normally, but also presents special opportunities (UNDP, 2000). Globally, over 30 wars and violent conflicts are being waged. Approximately 40% of interstate conflicts have lasted for at least 10 years and 25% of wars have lasted for more than 25 years (Vallacher, 2010). Africa has the reputation of being the world's leading place of conflict, war, poverty and instability (Porter *et al.*, 2005). The northern Kenyan pastoralists are nomadic ethnic groups, their movements is one of the major source of misunderstanding and conflicts between them and their neighbors (Nganga, 2012). Turkana, Pokot and Karimojong communities have been stealing livestock from each other for centuries (Lorelle, 2007).

The study conducted by AU (2010) suggested that intractable conflicts between west Pokot and Turkana counties are about an ethnic boundary dispute between them and are usually fuelled by politicians. Roba (2006) also suggested that intractable conflicts in these areas could attribute to; loss of assets, human life and

environmental degradation that should support sustainable development. Despite the increased conflict resolution efforts, intractable conflicts persist to exist hence contribute negatively to sustainable development in these counties (Huho, 2012). According to Kristensen and Nairesiae (2009), and Van Den (2006) stated that despite the studies and interventions that have been conducted in the two counties, intractable conflicts still exist.

The Kenyan economy performed below its potential since 1980s, with low economic and employment growth decline in productivity. Per capita income also declined from USD271 in 1990 to USD 239 in 2002. The government revenue fell from 29% of GDP in 1999/2001 to 22% in 2002/03; economic performance remained weak due to terrorism alerts that took toll on the tourism industry (GoK, 2008). West Pokot and Turkana counties' economy is majorly dependent on pastoralism, so their conflicts are mostly associated with livestock raiding. Since early 1980s, disputes have arisen as a result of small arms that became more available within those counties (CDG, 2009).

Culture is understood within the context of its transformative possibilities (Russett *et al.*, 2004). Traditionally, West Pokot and Turkana people practiced pastoralism that is labour-intensive process that keeps children and young men actively engaged in a full-time basis (Obutho and Ojwang, 2000). Livestock raiding has become increasingly violent since the early 1980s. It also becomes 'commercialized' in the northern parts of Kenya. After 1981, no year has been 'peaceful' as several large raids occurred in the 1990s. Elders and politicians sometimes are playing double standards. Some 'ngoroko' are well known even by political and administrative officials. Though, few are apprehended and mostly they disregard traditional institutions and act with impunity (Orindi *et al.*, 2007).

The environment forms the bedrock of productive sectors and is a key to poverty reduction and improvement of livestock (GoK, 2011). Land is the major underlying factor accounting for ethnic tensions that characterized the electoral processes in Kenya in 1992, 1997 and, 2007 general elections (GoK, 2009). In extreme cases of pasture and water shortages, they migrate to more insecure areas. Most livestock owners from the lake region usually migrate northwards, while those from the southern shores migrate to interior westwards (Oyugi, 2002).

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The overall objective of this study was, to establish challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in West Pokot and Turkana counties.

### **1.2.1 Specific objectives were to;**

- (i) Determine economic challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties.
- (ii) Establish cultural challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties.
- (iii) Identify political challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties
- (iv) Determine environmental challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties

## **1.3 Main research question**

The overall research question was what were the challenges facing management of intractable conflicts on sustainable development in west Pokot and Turkana counties?

## **2.0 Research Designs And Methods**

West Pokot and Turkana counties are found in the North West part of Kenya and are found in the north rift valley region. This study was conducted in both West Pokot and Turkana counties. Their population was a total of 893,779 people as per the census document of 2009-2010. The study collected data through interviews and direct observation from; household members, opinion leaders, religious leaders, local politicians, local business people, provincial administrators and the local professionals.

This study applied different study designs, descriptive and cross sectional designs were used to establish factors influencing of intractable conflicts and their contributions to sustainable development in the study area. This study used both random and non random sampling methods that were both probability and non probability sampling techniques. Whereby, in probability sampling, snowballing, random and convenient sampling techniques were used to identify respondents. Non probability sampling techniques used were; quota and purposive sampling techniques were used to identify key persons that were included in the study for data collection. Multiphase sampling structure was used to identify the quota for data collection in.

### 2.1 The sample size determination

An estimated population of the two communities was 893,779; that was a proportion of 45%; according to census document for 2009-2010. Sample size for qualitative data collection was calculated using (Fischer *et al*, 1983) formula for populations more than 10,000.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 p(1-q)}{d^2}$$

Based on the calculations 380 people were interviewed during household data collection from the two counties and they were proportionately divided between the two counties. West Pokot had a total population of 396,000 and had a sample size of 168 while Turkana had a total population of 497,779 and had a sample size of 212 respondents.

### 3.0 Results And Discussions

#### 3.1 Community members involved in intractable conflicts

Every community has got people who play different roles in their communal functions. This study investigated and established that the following groups of people were involed in promoting intractable conflicts and the level of their involvements as shown in Figure 3.1. It can also assist in the implementation of conflict resolution strategies that are more effective.

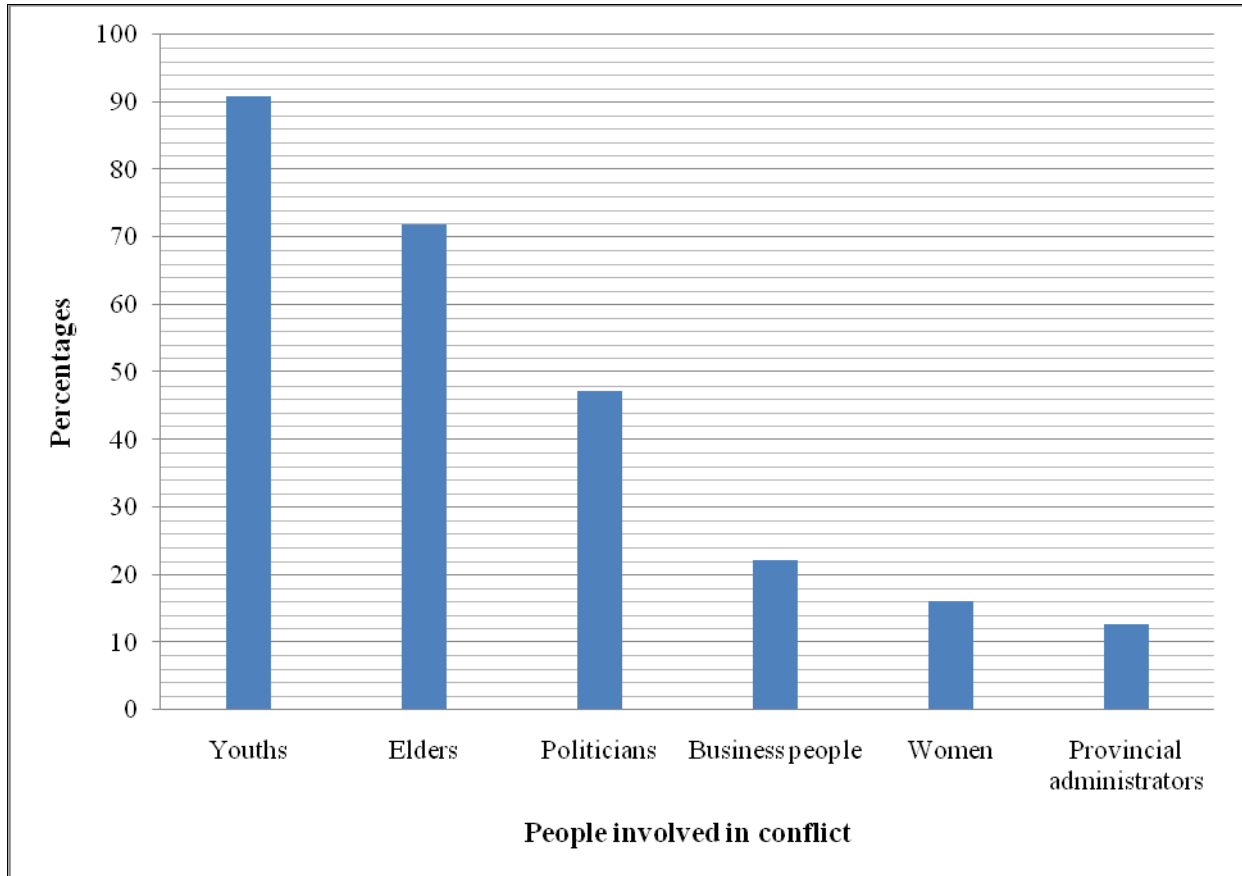


Figure 3.1 Community members involved in intractable conflict

When comparing youths' involvement in promoting intractable conflicts against other people. Chi square tests revealed that there were significant differences of their involvement between; elder [ $\chi^2=380.33$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], women [ $\chi^2=381.50$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], business people [ $\chi^2=383.94$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], politicians [ $\chi^2=381.22$ ;  $p<0.05$ ] and Provincial administrators [ $\chi^2=383.95$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. This association established that these other people were involved in promoting intractable conflicts a long side youths in this region.

Figure 3.1 shows that 91% (346/380) of the household respondents revealed that youths were involved in promoting intractable conflicts in one way or the other in the study area. The higher level of involvement of youths in intractable conflicts was an indication that it is an exercise that requires a lot of energy, innovations, and there are a lot of expectations to fulfill it. Therefore, the reasons of their involvement must be meaningful and deeply rooted in them. Their involvement can also be driven further by; cultural and economic factors for them to actualize their expectations and esteems. This finding is supported by a research that was conducted by Ajayi *et al* (2009) supported this finding as it also established that the involvement of youths between the age of 13 – 30 years both boys and girls in intractable conflicts. At the same time, the findings of this study were also supported by; qualitative research which revealed that youths were engaged in raids more than any other person. Youths at times could go to raid without the involvement of the elders for their blessing as is the procedure.

The peace building interventions in that region involved the elders but left youths out yet youths were the most people who conduct raids. The fact that they are left out from the main intervention circles can be the main reason for less achievement of the broad objective of peace initiative, that have been implemented in that region.

### 3.2 Items looted during raids because of intractable conflicts

Different items are normally looted during raids that are conducted in every community in intractable conflicts with one another. They were correlated and the following were identified to be included in further study. They were analyzed and the final results were as shown in Figure 3.2. That was brought about by intractable conflicts in that region.

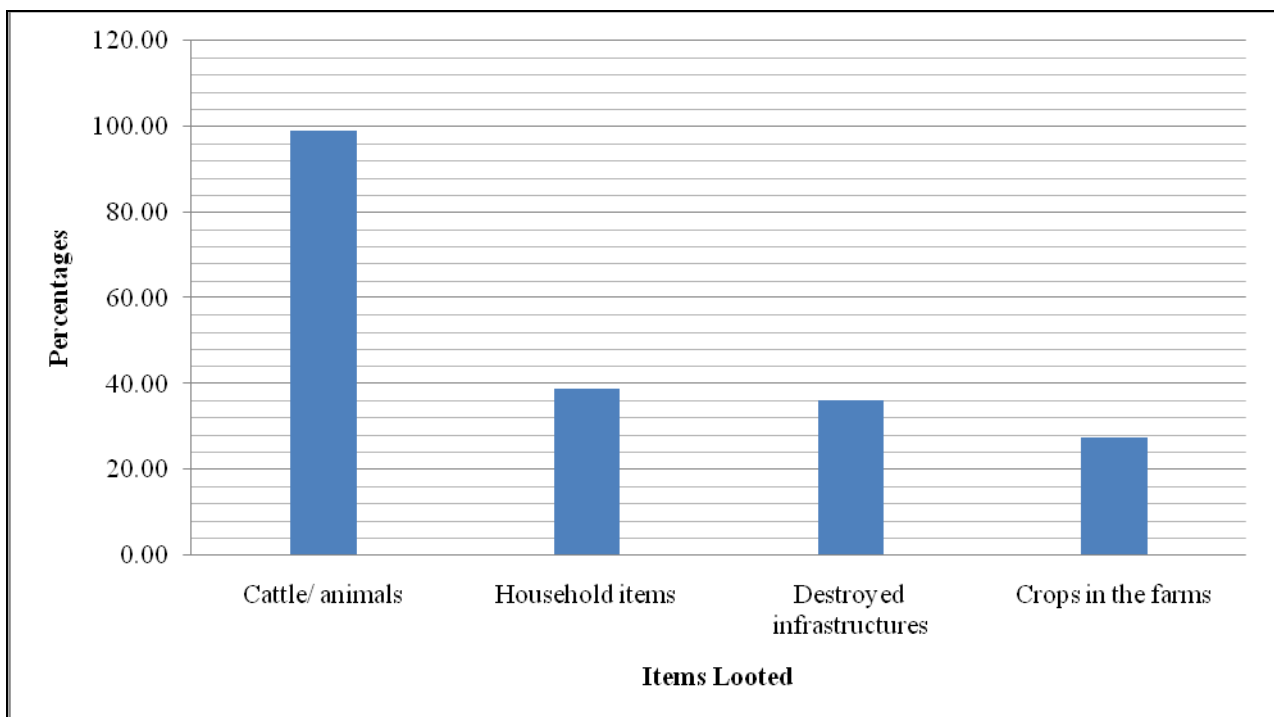


Figure 3.2 Items looted during raids because of intractable conflicts

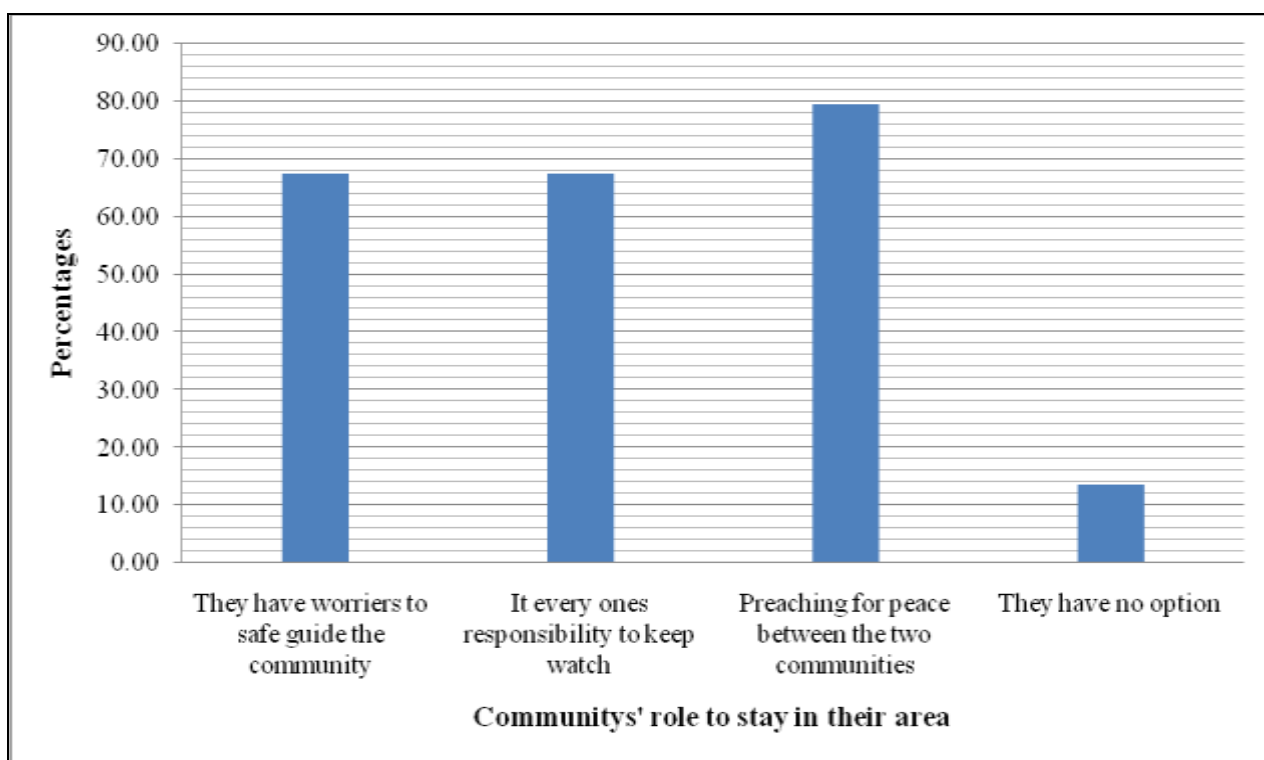
When comparing cattle / animals that were usually looted as a result of intractable conflicts in the region against other items as shown in Figure 3.2. Chi square tests were done and revealed that there were significant differences between; household items [ $\chi^2=380.21$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], destroyed infrastructure items

$[\chi^2=382.33; p<0.05]$  and crops in the farms  $[\chi^2=380.01; p<0.05]$ . This association indicates that these other looted items also have effects on intractable conflicts, alongside cattle/animals in the region.

Figure 6.3 indicates that 99% (376/380) of the household respondents determined that the looted items during the raids were mainly cattle/ animals. It is clear that when a strategy to resolve conflicts is to be developed, then the targeted items have to be put in consideration for intervention. In that region livestock is the main source of economy and that is the reason for existence of intractable conflicts around them. The finding of this study is supported by findings of a research that was conducted by Muhugeta and Hagman (2008) which established that these two communities are pastoralists and the main item they had in common is livestock. However, the qualitative research findings at the same time revealed that even other house hold items were; destroyed, looted and human lives were also lost during the time of raids. This can express the high extent to the complexity of the intractable conflicts in those two counties. The complexity has moved to high level such that to resolve it effectively also needs a combination of methods.

### 3.3 Strategies communities used to stay in their conflicted counties

Communities have a role to play in their areas of jurisdiction to ensure that they continue staying in regions. The following areas were identified by this study as shown in Figure 3.3.



**Figure 3.3 Strategies used to continue stay in those conflict areas.**

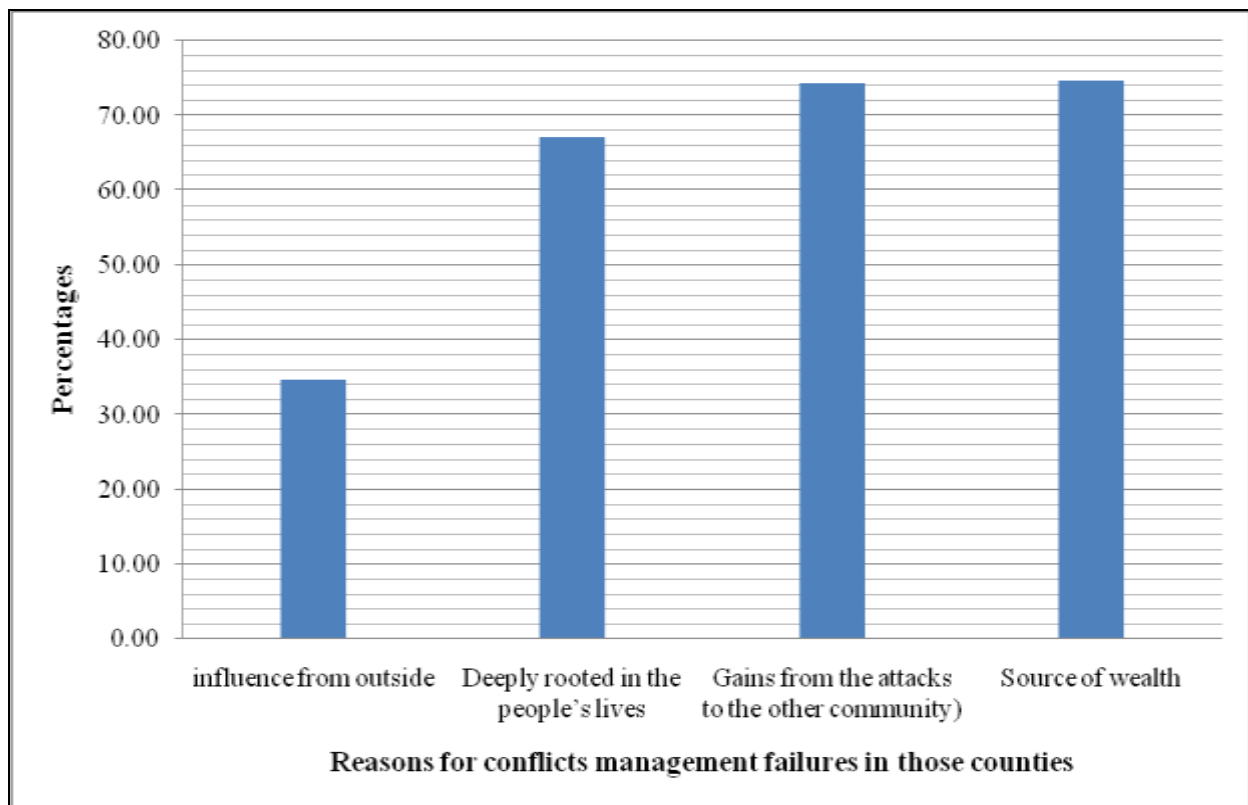
When comparing preaching peace between the two counties as a strategy to continue staying in those conflict areas against other strategies. Chi square tests established that there were significant differences between; having worriers to safe guard the community  $[\chi^2=383.401; p<0.05]$ , every ones responsibility to keep watch  $[\chi^2=380.210; p<0.05]$  and no option in place  $[\chi^2=380.37; p<0.05]$ . This association established that these other strategies were used and important a long side preaching for peace between the two counties.

Eighty percent (304/380) of the household respondents identified that peace was preached between the two counties for them to stay in their respective counties as revealed in Figure 3.3. Preaching peace is widely used as a method of resolving violent intractable conflicts and plays a very important role in that region. It is then important to include other methods to resolve intractable conflicts in that region that can bring a lasting peace. The result of this study is in agreement with finding of UNDP (2011) report which, indicates that individuals in that region adopt accommodation strategy as they have strong values to their communities and they have to continue in good relationship with the other community they are in conflicts with above the

attainment of their own specific goals. This finding is also supported by USAID (2005) study which determined that accommodation is one of the strategies that is used by those two communities as they are preaching peace conceded to most of the demands with the aim of gaining good relations, accompanied by good will and option to achieve greater goals in the future. That is untrue according to qualitative research finding whereby, majority of the respondents revealed that they stayed in the state of survival for the fittest. They also had their communal control strategies to monitor, control and prevent the raids that could come in their community such as “Loibons” young community soldiers and staying in “Kraal” which are small groups of households staying together in a particular section of the area for security reasons.

### 3.4 Causes of failure of communities to resolve intractable conflicts

Those two communities tried to resolve their intractable conflicts by themselves in that region. They have also used different methods to resolve intractable conflicts, but those efforts failed because of different reasons as revealed in Figure 3.4.



**Figure 3.4 Causes of failures of communities to resolve intractable conflicts**

When comparing source of wealth as a cause of failure of communities to resolve those conflicts by themselves against other causes. Chi square test was done and revealed that there are significant differences between; influences from outside [ $\chi^2=407.64$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], gains from the attacks to the other community [ $\chi^2=433.39$ ;  $p<0.05$ ] and deeply rooted in the people's lives [ $\chi^2=380.05$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. This association determines that there are other causes of failure a long side being source of wealth in those two counties.

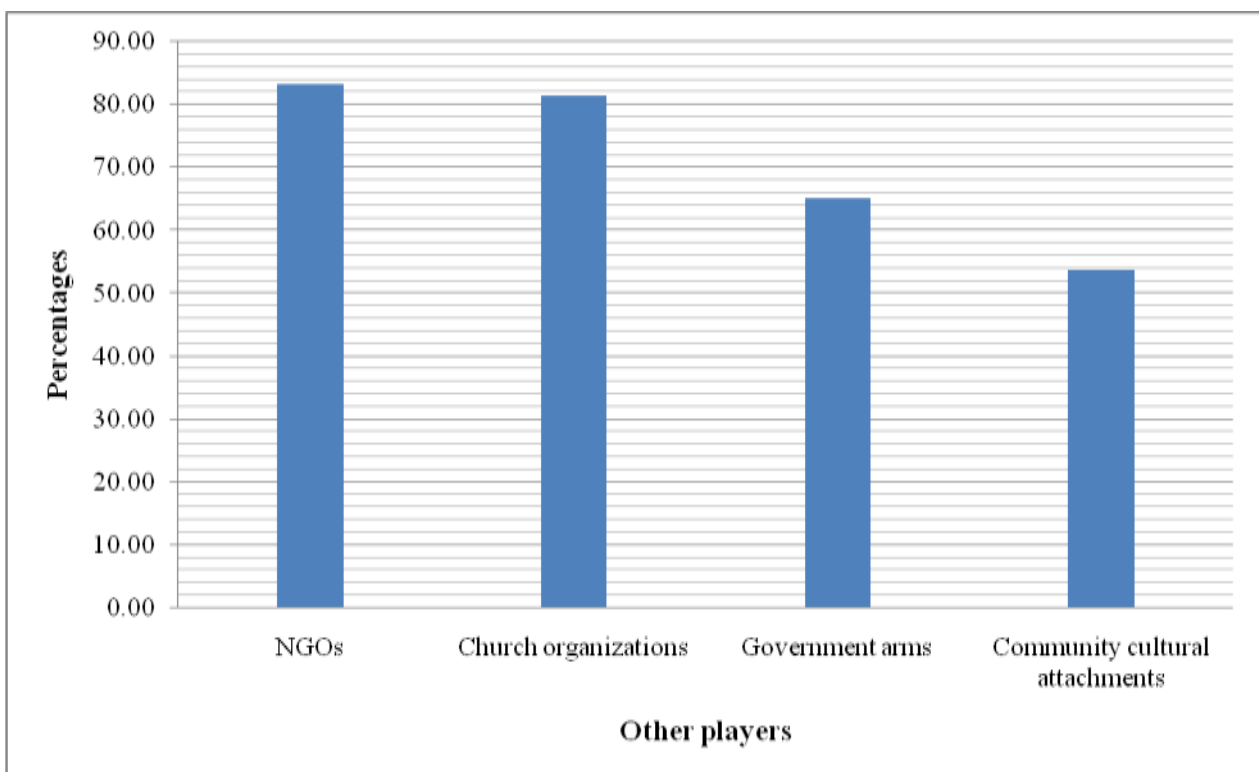
Figure 3.4 shows that 75% (285/380) of the household respondents revealed that the efforts to resolve intractable conflicts failed, because it was a source of wealth for those two counties since they are pastoralists. Their lives depend on livestock and one of the causes of conflicts in that context is cattle raids which is their main income earner. For a more permanent conflict resolution strategy to be attained, it needs another method to be applied in the same line of economic factor. The strategy will assist to compliment with livestock as chief income earner then they can divide their attention in regards to that. This finding is supported by CDG (2009) report which confirms that the intractable conflicts of those two counties are mainly associated with livestock raiding and since 1980s disputes arose due to the availability of small arms. The availability of small arms was argued strongly on their use, with those communities' members and a

large number of them reveal that, they do not use guns against one another but to protect their livestock. They added that if they are disarmed yet their neighbors have more powerful ones and once their enemies realize that they are disarmed. Their neighbors will kill them with a lot of ease and all their animals will be taken by, the other community they are in intractable conflicts with.

During this study 70% (266/380) of the household respondents also identified that the attempts to resolve conflict failed because of the gains individual perpetrators received from the other county. The perpetrators of intractable conflicts involve almost everyone in that region. The difference is only in the role they played. This finding is in agreement with Sarah (2011), which established that cattle raiding usually take place when there is scarcity of water and pasture or disease depleted a community's livestock, and then it is conducted with the aim to replenish the lost number. It is equally important for cultural and social identity, political and economic organization of pastoral communities that live in those two counties. Cattle raids are also part of the ritual process to ensure that young men can prove that they are ready for manhood. Accumulation of livestock shows the increase in personal status and also reflects the wealth growth status of a person in a community (GOK, 2009).

### 3.5 Players involved in managing intractable conflicts

Staying together of community members is important as they work and share everything together. Other players were involved in persuading them to stay together. Figure 3.5 shows different players and their levels of their participation in resolving intractable conflicts in that region.



**Figure 3.5 Players who promoted staying together**

When comparing, NGOs against other players who promoted these two counties to stay together in a conflict situation as is indicated in Figure 3.5. Chi square test was conducted and identified that there are significant differences that exist between; church organizations [ $\chi^2=413.58$ ;  $p<0.05$ ], government arms [ $\chi^2=424.96$ ;  $p<0.05$ ] and community cultural attachments [ $\chi^2=383.56$ ;  $p<0.05$ ]. This association indicates that these other players promote peace in those counties a long side other non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Figure 3.5 indicates that 83% (315/380) of the household respondents established that NGOs played a major role for them to continue staying in those conflict counties among others. The finding of this study was in

agreement with the finding of the qualitative research findings, which also revealed that NGOs in those counties were mainly focusing on conflict resolution. They use different methods to manage intractable conflicts; majority of them employed preaching peace were than other methods that were identified in this study. The fact that the majority of players are NGOs and the method they employ mostly is preaching peace but that does not mean that there are no other players and other methods that can be used to resolve intractable conflicts in that region. It is prominent that they are few and have limited focus to adequately manage intractable conflicts in those two counties. The finding of this study was also supported by The World Bank (2011) report which also reveals that during conflicts those communities were disruptive and the state lost its ability to maintain law and order. Therefore, there is a need to call for urgent humanitarian assistance, post conflicts reintegration and stabilization by other development partners both from within and outside the communities.

### 3.6 NGOs involved in resolving intractable conflicts failed

Despite the efforts that have been used, intractable conflicts still exist in the two counties. Therefore Table 6.6 shows that the NGOs played an important role in resolving intractable conflicts but their efforts failed because they did not fully understand the dynamics of conflicts in that region.

**Table 3.1 NGOs involved failed because they did not understand the dynamics**

			What players promote to stay on(NGOs)			Total
			Yes	No	NR	
What caused (not understand the dynamics of)	Yes	Count	256	25	1	282
		% of	67.4%	6.6%	.3%	74.2%
	No	Count	53	37	0	90
		% of	13.9%	9.7%	.0%	23.7%
	NR	Count	3	1	4	8
		% of	.8%	.3%	1.1%	2.1%
Total		Count	312	63	5	380
		% of	82.1%	16.6%	1.3%	100.0%

Chi square test of NGOs involvement in resolving intractable conflicts failed against their understanding of the dynamics of those communities with expected counts less than 5 was done. Ignoring none responses, Fisher’s exact test was done and significant difference was revealed with P-value of 0.000. This is indicating an association between NGOs involvement failure to resolve intractable conflicts and their understanding of those communities’ dynamics in those two counties.

Table 3.1 indicates that 67.4% (256/380) of the household respondents revealed that NGOs failed because they did not understand the dynamics of intractable conflicts in that region. Conflicts have their own dynamics that one must understand before any intervention is started. Probably NGOs may go to work in those counties and do not do an in-depth analysis of intractable conflicts that lead them to achieve less of the amount of objectives that is expected hence contributes negatively to sustainable development in the region. It is equally important for them to include all the parties that are in the region both the ones involved and not



from within and out of the counties in conflicts. That kind of approach of analysis can give the clear and real view of those intractable conflicts so that they can employ the best combination of methods to resolve them. According to Maiese (2003), confirms that the finding of this study is correct, since NGOs are using different approaches as different projects focus no varied aspects of conflict resolution strategies, because there is no one perfect method to resolve conflict.

#### 4.0 Conclusions

Economic factor was established as influencing conflict more than the rest, it caused shortage of water and pasture for their livestock hence and scramble for other resources. Culturally, the two communities have strong attachments to the livestock and they were unwilling to migrate from that intractable conflicts situation because they prefer to stay in their ancestral land. Involvement of energetic and creative youths complicated management of intractable conflicts. Elders and politicians in west Pokot and Turkana were playing double standards. Major environmental concerns included: environmental degradation, environmental hazards and disasters. The scarcity of water, pasture and other natural resources greatly affects the ability of these two Counties negatively.

#### 5.0 Recommendations

- (i). The community member needs to be engaged in other more profit making economic activities other than livestock.
- (ii). The community members must be enlightened on the importance of turning some of the large numbers of their herds into other assets.
- (iii). They needs to be educated on the modification of their strong cultural attachment to livestock.
- (iv). All youths must be involved in all conflict resolution processes so that they own peace building.
- (v). Elders and politicians must stop playing double standards in resolving intractable conflict and understand and accept the importance of maintaining sustainable peace in the region.

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