

**“A war that hurts us twice”**  
**Inside Kenya’s war on terror: community perspectives on security in Mandera county**

**August 2020**

“A war that hurts us twice”

**Inside Kenya’s war on terror:  
community perspectives on  
security in Mandera county**

**August 2020**

## Acknowledgements

This report was authored by Bénédicte Goderiaux, Thomas Nyagah, Naftali Kiplimo Ruttoh and Abdullahi Dimbil. Generous inputs into the research design and implementation as well as the final report came from Abdi Ali, Julia Poch, Alastair Carr, Larry Attree, Abdullahi Hassan, Kaltuma Abdirahman and Ibrahim Abdi Ali. The authors are also grateful for the time and support lent by several international NGOs and community organisations, as well as two community organisers in the region who helped facilitate and shape the research, and also the time offered by interviewees and focus group participants whose contributions form the basis of this paper. The paper was edited by Jessica Summers and designed by Jane Stevenson. Any errors remaining in the report are the authors' own.

## Acronyms

<b>AMISOM</b>	African Union Mission in Somalia
<b>AP</b>	Administration Police
<b>ATPU</b>	Anti-Terrorism Police Unit
<b>CVE</b>	Countering violent extremism
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>FGS</b>	Federal Government of Somalia
<b>IED</b>	Improvised explosive device
<b>KDF</b>	Kenyan Defence Force
<b>KES</b>	Kenyan Shillings
<b>KPR</b>	Kenya Police Reserve
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>RBPU</b>	Rural Border Patrol Unit
<b>STRIVE</b>	Strengthening Resilience against Violent Extremism project
<b>TFG</b>	Transitional Federal Government (Somalia)
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

© Saferworld, August 2020. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without full attribution. Saferworld welcomes and encourages the utilisation and dissemination of the material included in this publication.

**Cover photo: Men transport goods from Somalia into Kenya while passing by Kenyan policemen at the border, in the town of Mandera.**

© Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

# Contents

<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Patterns and perceptions of violence and insecurity</b>	<b>5</b>
Al-Shabaab violence and its impact	5
Responses by the Kenyan security forces	9
Clan conflicts and tensions	11
Violence against women and girls	14
<b>3 History and layers of conflict, marginalisation and injustice</b>	<b>19</b>
Kenya's intervention in Somalia	19
A history of conflict with Kenya's central government	20
Access to justice and essential services	21
Marginalisation of minority clans	21
Gender norms and women and youth marginalisation	22
<b>4 Evolving responses to insecurity: one step forward, one step back</b>	<b>26</b>
Addressing clan tensions in Mandera	27
Cross-border peacebuilding	27
Improving relations between the security forces and communities	27
'Countering violent extremism' initiatives	29
Tackling gender inequalities	31
Improving access to healthcare and education	31
Donors' security assistance and aid	32
<b>5 Conclusion and recommendations</b>	<b>36</b>



Passengers travelling to Nairobi wait to be searched for weapons by Kenyan police, in the town of Mandera at the Kenya-Somalia border.

© Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

# Executive summary

---

**This report looks at Mandera, a county in Kenya whose many challenges have been complicated by its exposure to violence and repressive responses by al-Shabaab and Kenyan security forces and a range of programmes to ‘counter terrorism’. It describes the range of structural challenges that underpin insecurity in the county, and how the various responses by authorities, civil society and donors are impacting on people living in Mandera, drawing on the perspectives of those caught up in what one person described to us as ‘a war that hurts us twice’.**

Situated in Kenya’s volatile north-east frontier region, Mandera straddles borders with Ethiopia and Somalia and, tied to them, multiple layers of the region’s conflicts. Too often people living in Mandera find themselves caught in the line of fire as Kenyan security forces, clan militias or al-Shabaab fighters compete to enforce their interests on Mandera’s communities and recruit individuals for their own ends. This contest has resulted in insecurity, repression and underdevelopment for most people in Mandera. Alongside the trauma of historical injustice and upheaval, Mandera’s communities have endured years of marginalisation and the consequent stagnation of public services and economic opportunities.

Complicating these circumstances are the inequalities and divisions within Mandera county, between the predominant Kenyan Somali population and recent migrants from across the Somali border, between clans that span the Kenya-Somali border and among generations and even households. Neither the Kenyan national government, Mandera’s devolved authorities nor international donors have been unaware of these issues. Yet while their approaches to build peace and security in the county have sometimes made modest progress, these gains are fragile, and jeopardised by outstanding grievances and ongoing failures that heighten feelings of exclusion and injustice in the area.

To look more closely at the impacts of these interventions on patterns of violent conflict in Mandera, Saferworld spoke with community members, local authorities, security forces and NGOs about their experiences of and views on insecurity, its various strands, layers and impact, and how they thought the situation could be improved. We found that insecurity was still a major source of fear for communities in Mandera who regularly found themselves, their schools and hospitals on the receiving end of attacks by al-Shabaab. In desperate need of state protection, they have instead been targeted by blunt and even abusive responses by Kenyan security forces, which have led to disappearances and even deaths of suspected al-Shabaab sympathisers.

Unfortunately, this retaliatory cycle of violence rests upon and contributes to others, including several long-standing clan conflicts, which have shifted and intensified in some respects following the migration to Mandera of Somalis of various clans fleeing violence across the border and more recently following the introduction of devolved authorities in the region. Al-Shabaab has proved adept at manipulating these feuds and resulting grievances to recruit fighters and garner sympathy. However, it relies mostly on anger and suspicion towards the central Kenyan state, whose security forces have had notorious and controversial roles on both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border. Building on common perceptions of marginalisation by the Kenyan state, al-Shabaab has attacked ‘non-local’ people, targeting public services, businesses, development initiatives and infrastructural projects, and thus reducing their presence.

The twin challenges of insecurity and exclusion from power particularly harm minority clans, women and young people who have little representation in

devolved authorities, NGO community engagements or community-level decision-making forums. Patriarchal gender norms have also constrained the ability of communities to adapt to worsening economic conditions, with too few opportunities for young men to take on reliable jobs and play their traditional roles as breadwinners, placing additional strain on them and the women in their families who are forced to generate additional income. This plays into the hands of al-Shabaab as well as feuding clan leaders who can offer resources to lure young men into violence. These conflicts all feed into violence against women and girls,

whether as a direct result of fighting, or in the form of sexual and gender-based violence in the domestic sphere.

To begin to address Mandera’s security challenges, the Kenyan authorities, international donors and civil society have taken a variety of steps. Mandera’s communities highlighted some promising, though modest, developments including more inclusive political representation in county structures, the risky work of cross-border peace initiatives and the constitution of a locally recruited and largely trusted police reserve. The latter has been credited with reducing attacks by al-Shabaab. However, these initiatives have not made major inroads in ending ongoing abuses or providing justice for historical and more recent abuses by security forces. Reform and redress in this area would fundamentally improve relations between communities and national police and military forces. Meanwhile, the reportedly unbalanced composition of the new police reserve, and the low salaries of its members, have caused some concerns.

The research clearly showed that security forces in the area were beginning to recognise the pitfalls of a heavy-handed security response, and there is growing appetite to build trust with communities. At the same time, donor resources and attention have been focused on ‘countering violent extremism’ (CVE) projects. While these have sometimes facilitated much-needed interaction and cooperation among communities and the security establishment, they have not been effective at ending insecurity and raised worries that those participating in them may be targeted by al-Shabaab. Until security forces can heal the wounds opened by past abuses, demonstrate their own accountability to communities and build a solid track record of protecting people from the multiple threats they face, CVE is unlikely to yield lasting change.

The international support for Kenya’s security establishment has proved persistent despite the often destructive role Kenya’s security forces have played in Mandera, historically and in recent years. Such defence and counter-terrorism cooperation not only risks legitimising or even resourcing abuses that occur in the region – it can also entrench an important driver of conflict, an obstacle to building trust and to preventing attacks by al-Shabaab.

If they wish to help make people in Mandera feel safe and secure, donors should not just support the modest progress made by security forces in engaging and protecting Mandera’s communities. They must also call for an end to security forces’ abuses and for accountability. At the same time, donors can play an important role in addressing the gaps in governance and development identified by Mandera’s communities, including by tackling gender inequality and lack of access to education, health and justice. In particular, this support should seek to reverse the marginalisation felt by minority clans and young

“  
The twin challenges of insecurity and exclusion from power particularly harm minority clans, women and young people who have little representation in devolved authorities, NGO community engagements or community-level decision-making forums.

”

people while working to shift the gender norms driving discrimination against women and girls.

This report begins by tracking a brutal cycle of violence in Mandera which has trapped people between persistent al-Shabaab attacks and heavy-handed Kenyan security forces' operations, while clan-related tensions and sexual and gender-based violence wreak havoc away from the headlines. Chapter three investigates the historical context that brings these trends to life: legacies of marginalisation and repression by the Kenyan state; regional and local conflicts spilling over from across the Somali border; and social norms that exclude minority clans and impose harmful and unequal roles onto women, men, girls and boys. Chapter four then reviews the various approaches to address these sources of insecurity by different levels of government, international donors and civil society groups. The report finds reasons for modest hope and serious concern, all of which have significant implications for donor assistance and government policy in the region.



Somalis in Mandera market on the Kenyan side of the Kenya-Somali border.

© Kim Haughton/Alamy Stock Photo

## 1

# Introduction

---

**Four years after 36 quarry workers were killed in Koromey in Mandera county,<sup>1</sup> the fear was still palpable when one of our interviewees recalled the gunshots she heard as the night attack took place.<sup>2</sup> Somalia's armed group al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the killings, which took place on 2 December 2014 just 15 kilometres from the county's capital, Mandera town. Only two weeks before, they had ambushed a bus 30 kilometres from Mandera town on its way to Nairobi, executing 28 people selected as non-Muslim passengers, including teachers travelling to their homes for December holidays.<sup>3</sup> In these 'twin attacks', those targeted were non-Muslim Kenyans working in the north-eastern region but who were from elsewhere, who are referred to as 'non-locals' in Mandera.**

Al-Shabaab is believed to have started abducting aid workers and others in Mandera as early as 2008. But it scaled up and intensified its attacks in the county and across Kenya from 2013. Garissa county – also in the north-eastern region – suffered a devastating siege on its University College in April 2015,<sup>4</sup> in which 147 students were killed.

The intensification of al-Shabaab's attacks is widely seen as a response to Kenya's military intervention in Somalia in October 2011.<sup>5</sup> Dubbed 'Operation *Linda Nchi*' ('protect the country'), Kenya's intervention was triggered by the spillover of Somalia's conflict into the country and increasing kidnappings by Somali armed elements targeting tourists and aid workers. It ostensibly aimed to tackle such threats, push back against al-Shabaab's control over territory (and Kismayo port) in Somalia, and create a buffer zone in the Jubaland region that lies just across the border. As part of the intervention Kenya has supported Somali forces friendly to Kenya such as the Ras Kamboni militia led by Ahmed Mohamed Islam 'Madobe', now President of the Jubaland Federal Member State Administration.<sup>6</sup>

“  
The intensification of al-Shabaab's attacks is widely seen as a response to Kenya's military intervention in Somalia in October 2011.  
”

Apart from seeking to oppose Kenya’s operations inside Somalia, in the 2014 twin attacks, al-Shabaab appears to have been targeting non-Muslims to avenge Kenya’s domestic counter-terror crackdown on Muslim communities.<sup>7</sup> Kenya’s harsh security

“

**The war with al-Shabaab hurts us twice: they dress like us, look like us and speak like us. When the Kenyan forces come they don’t differentiate between al-Shabaab and Kenyan citizens. And when al-Shabaab comes they attack us pretending we’re not Muslims.**

Community member.

”

forces come they don’t differentiate between al-Shabaab and Kenyan citizens. And when al-Shabaab comes they attack us pretending we’re not Muslims.”

response to fears of growing al-Shabaab recruitment within Kenya has disproportionately affected Kenyan ethnic Somalis and Somali refugees and diaspora.<sup>8</sup> Partly due to it sharing a border and long-standing cross-border clan ties with southern Somalia, Mandera, populated predominantly by ethnic Somalis, has borne the brunt of the cycle of retaliatory attacks between al-Shabaab and Kenya’s military and other security forces.

As community members told Saferworld:

“The war with al-Shabaab hurts us twice: they dress like us, look like us and speak like us. When the Kenyan

In the past three years, attacks attributed to al-Shabaab in Mandera have generally reduced in scale; however – though less high-profile – smaller ‘hit and run’ attacks still occur today.<sup>9</sup>

Following the reported presence in Mandera of Abdirashid Hassan Abdinur (Janan), a Jubaland security minister who had escaped detention by the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) authorities in Somalia, the FGS forces and militia loyal to the Jubaland administration fought in Belet Hawo in February–March 2020 and the clashes spilled over into Mandera, causing fear and displacement among people. Al-Shabaab is said to have exploited the resulting security vacuum to renew attacks.<sup>10</sup> Communities living near the porous border with Somalia are particularly vulnerable to these attacks. In November 2018, Saferworld conducted interviews in Mandera with community members from its six sub counties, local authorities, security forces and NGOs, to explore people’s views about the prevalent insecurity, its various strands, layers and impact, and how they thought the situation could be improved. While the Kenyan government, local authorities and civil society have taken some steps to address violence and insecurity, progress has been fragile.

## Notes

- 1 DW (2014), 'Gunmen kill 36 Kenya quarry workers', 2 December (<https://www.dw.com/en/gunmen-kill-36-kenya-quarry-workers/a-18105000>)
- 2 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant, November 2018.
- 3 *Al Jazeera* (2014), 'Al-Shabab massacres 28 Kenyan bus passengers', 23 November (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/11/killed-kenya-bus-attack-201411226446296802.html>)
- 4 See also: Saferworld (2017), 'Inside Kenya's War on Terror: Breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa', 27 July (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/long-reads/inside-kenyaas-war-on-terror-breaking-the-cycle-of-violence-in-garissa>)
- 5 Saferworld focus group discussion participants and interviews with county government officer, civil society workers.
- 6 Saferworld (2017), 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: Breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa', 27 July.
- 7 *Al Jazeera* (2014), 'Al-Shabab massacres 28 Kenyan bus passengers', 23 November (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/11/killed-kenya-bus-attack-201411226446296802.html>)
- 8 Human Rights Watch (2014), 'Kenya: Halt Crackdown on Somalis', April 11 (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/11/kenya-halt-crackdown-somalis>); Amnesty International (2014), 'Kenya: Somalis scapegoated in counter-terror crackdown', 27 May (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/05/kenya-somalis-scapegoated-counter-terror-crackdown/>)
- 9 For example, on 15 August 2019, two people were killed in an al-Shabaab attack in Fino, Mandera South. On 20 August, al-Shabaab was reported to have destroyed a communication mast and clashed with Kenyan police reservists in Kheira Ali, Mandera East. See: Gamonde B (2019), 'Al-Shabaab militants destroy communication mast and attack village in Mandera', *Business Today*, 20 August (<https://businesstoday.co.ke/al-shabaab-destroy-communication-mast-and-attack-village-in-mandera/>); Otsialo M (2019), 'Suspected Shabaab militants destroy phone mast in Mandera', *Daily Nation*, 20 August (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/One-shot-in-Mandera-Shabaab-attack/1183298-5242252-9w13ljz/index.html>)
- 10 Mutambo A (2020), 'Kenya-Somalia border tension risks strengthening Shabaab', *Daily Nation*, 18 March (<https://www.nation.co.ke/kenya/news/kenya-somalia-border-tension-risks-strengthening-shabaab-255920>)



A man looks out of a bus as it travels to Nairobi, alongside a police vehicle escorting it through Mandera town, at the Kenya-Somalia border.

© Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

## 2

# Patterns and perceptions of violence and insecurity

**Communities in Mandera are caught up in attacks by al-Shabaab and a repressive response by Kenyan security forces. Though communities living close to the border are most affected, all people in Mandera suffer when the armed group targets education and health professionals and facilities. The insecurity has added to existing clan conflict dynamics, risking further exacerbating them, with significant impacts on marginalised groups already exposed to long-standing patterns of violence and discrimination, including minority clans, women and young people.**

## Al-Shabaab violence and its impact

Al-Shabaab attacks in Mandera appear targeted not only at security forces and infrastructure, but also at non-local professionals and people living locally who they associate with the Kenyan authorities. Though primarily affecting communities living near the border, the violence has reverberated throughout the county, hampering people's access to services.

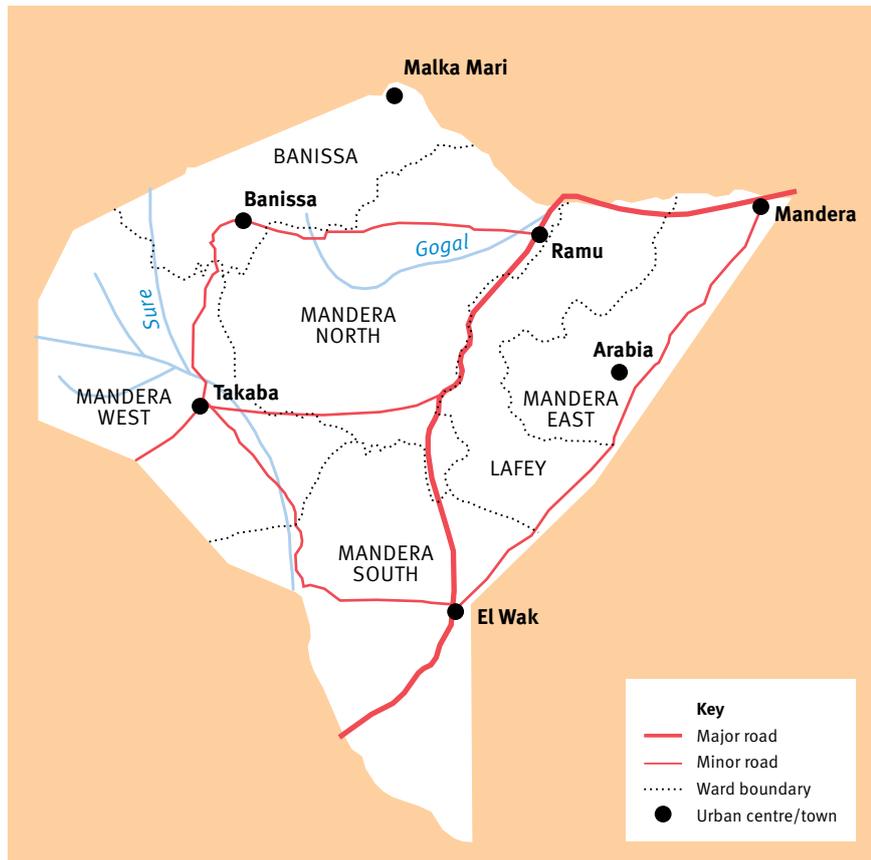
Assorted military operations oppose al-Shabaab in Somalia, including FGS forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), into which the Kenyan Defence Forces fighting in Somalia were incorporated in 2012. Kenya's military involvement in Somalia is focused mainly on the Jubaland region that borders Mandera, Wajir and Garissa counties in Kenya, which have endured frequent and devastating al-Shabaab attacks. In Jubaland, Kenyan forces support the Ras Kamboni forces associated with Ahmed Madobe – the President of Jubaland whom Kenya has supported militarily and politically.<sup>11</sup> Despite all their efforts, much of the countryside in the wider Jubaland region of southern Somalia remains under the control of al-Shabaab.

Mandera East, Lafey and Mandera South sub-counties all border Somalia. For communities in these areas, al-Shabaab attacks – believed to come from across the border – are a prime source of insecurity.

### Kenya



### Mandera county



Since 2018 there have been fewer attacks in Mandera East,<sup>12</sup> where Mandera town is located, but more in Lafey and Mandera South. Community members attributed this to increased border patrols and better security provision in Mandera East – in particular the presence of locally recruited members of the Kenyan Police Reserve (KPR), an auxiliary police force supporting the police. Some have also expressed concern that attacks have recently moved deeper into Lafey and Mandera South.<sup>13</sup>

Many community members and analysts see al-Shabaab attacks in Mandera – and more widely in Kenya – as aiming to create divisions among the population and exploit existing tensions and grievances.<sup>14</sup> Interviewees attribute some attacks to al-Shabaab’s military, political and economic goals whether in Somalia or Kenya, and their readiness to take advantage of security gaps in Mandera to strike.<sup>15</sup>

Many of the attacks have targeted members of the Kenyan security forces, including through grenade attacks on patrols near the border and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted on roads used by security forces,<sup>16</sup> or during armed confrontations: “In 2017 there was an attack against the Equity bank in El Wak – they fired indiscriminately and killed two young men and one police officer. They come by cars that don’t have number plates.”<sup>17</sup>

People felt that the targeting of smaller police posts gave al-Shabaab easy ways to claim success.<sup>18</sup> Some said the group even took credit for attacks it didn’t perpetrate – publicising them on its website for propaganda purposes.<sup>19</sup> Several participants in discussions also highlighted the death toll among relatives enrolled in the KPR, including one who told us: “My relative who was in the KPR was killed in 2016, after trying to protect me.”<sup>20</sup>

Civilians have also paid a heavy price, whether in targeted assaults or roadside explosions that hit all travellers, particularly in the areas of Lafey, Kutulo, El Wak and Mandera East.<sup>21</sup> As one interviewee stressed: “There is a common misunderstanding that the people of Mandera and the northern parts of Kenya encourage and support these kinds of groups. Contrary to this misconception, people in Mandera have suffered a lot because of al-Shabaab in the region.”<sup>22</sup>

Non-locals, mostly professionals such as teachers, health workers and construction and quarry workers have been specifically targeted. Many of those interviewed thought the objective of such attacks was to create ethnic and religious divisions among Mandera society, given the presence of non-locals of Christian faith.<sup>23</sup> One person said: “They are trying to create divisions and stir conflict between the Christians and the Muslims in Mandera.”<sup>24</sup>

Others pointed to a pattern of attacks during Islamic holidays including Eid and Ramadan, or on Thursday nights or Friday mornings. This was interpreted as a way for the armed group to use religion and exploit the belief that in the event of death, perpetrators will go to heaven.<sup>25</sup> Another underlined that non-locals represented easy targets for attacks as they often lived together in isolated compounds, with little to no security protection.<sup>26</sup>

Although less frequent in the past three years, attacks on schools and teachers still occur. Several participants in a focus group discussion recounted one such attack on a boys’ high school which occurred on 10 October 2018 in Arabia:

“Two teachers, both Kenyan non-locals, were killed in Arabia, just before the start of the secondary school exams. It was about midnight, I heard gunshots and hid under my bed. The two teachers were killed in the compound where they were living, next to the police and far from town. They were killed by a shooting or an explosion through the window. Two KPR intervened against the attackers, but they didn’t have enough ammunition. Some children were there too, revising for their exams but they managed to run away. We believe al-Shabaab was responsible; it is not the first time they attack us.”<sup>27</sup>

Attacks against schools and teachers have had a devastating impact for communities in Mandera, as many non-locals, who represent the majority of the teachers’ workforce, have left the county or refused to take up posts there. The Teachers Service Commission withdrew up to 3,000 non-local teachers from the north-eastern region of Kenya in response, causing a crisis in the education system.<sup>28</sup> Some community members highlighted the timing of the attack on the Arabia Boys’ High School – just before the start of secondary school exams – saying it was chosen to disrupt schooling and state education provision in the area. For many families, resulting school closures mean that children simply don’t go to school – unless their families can afford to send them to private schools.

The April 2019 abduction by suspected al-Shabaab militants of two Cuban medical doctors in Mandera town – who had been posted there to fill existing shortages of health professionals – hastened the departure of foreign doctors from Wajir, Garissa and Lamu counties. Quarry workers have also been a prime target for suspected al-Shabaab attacks over the past five years. One recent attack was on 3 May 2018, when three quarry workers were killed and one injured in

“  
There is a common misunderstanding that the people of Mandera and the northern parts of Kenya encourage and support these kinds of groups. Contrary to this misconception, people in Mandera have suffered a lot because of al-Shabaab in the region.

Central government agency worker.

”

Mandera South.<sup>29</sup> Some focus groups highlighted why: “Our people here don’t have the skills for quarrying. Quarry workers are targeted either to bring division between our communities and those from other parts of Kenya, or sometimes as a result of business rivalries. Killings create fear and people leave, so some businesses will thrive when others leave.”<sup>30</sup>

Although the nature of links between local businesses and al-Shabaab is difficult to ascertain, observers and community members have reported that many businesses in Mandera have to pay taxes to al-Shabaab for protection.<sup>31</sup> Some interviewees also thought that some of the quarry attacks must have involved local informants.<sup>32</sup>

Local government workers are also at risk. Several people highlighted the killing of two local administrators (area chiefs), one in 2015 and one in 2017:

“The Arabia elder chief was Mukhtar Ibrahim. He was killed in 2015 as he was leaving Arabia to Mandera town. He was passing by a place called Leydi when the vehicle he was travelling in encountered armed men. The driver stopped the bus and the masked men took him away, marched him to the border and later killed him. He was killed because he was an administration chief.”<sup>33</sup>

“The chief from Omar Jillo, Dekow Abey Sirat, was killed because he was working for the government, probably because he was responsible for preparing the list of people needing Kenyan IDs. If chiefs refuse

to put people on their list because they are not from the area, they will be killed for revenge.”<sup>34</sup>

According to interviews, area chiefs are targeted because of suspicions that they provide intelligence to the government, for refusing to let other clans’ livestock graze on their land, or for refusing pressure to register non-Kenyans. As administration chiefs they are in charge of registering citizens in their area to receive ID cards. ID cards are particularly contentious: reportedly, administration chiefs are often bribed

to provide ID cards to members of their clan from across the border, including to boost the number of voters for elections.<sup>35</sup>

Some communities noted that al-Shabaab also conducts and increases attacks around election periods.<sup>36</sup> According to residents from Lafey sub-county: “In July 2017, during the election campaign, a government delegate going to Lafey was attacked – his vehicle was hit by explosives planted on the road and then it was ambushed. When soldiers came to the scene, five more were killed”.<sup>37</sup>

Several interviewees suggested attacks are sometimes timed to enforce al-Shabaab’s collection of taxes from communities and businesses in Mandera. Communities are asked to give *zakat* (alms) according to the Islamic principle of charity, while businesses pay tax for their protection, for bringing goods from Somalia and on the profits they make.<sup>38</sup> Al-Shabaab is thus able to control some of the resources and revenues in Mandera, using the same tactics as in Somalia.<sup>39</sup> Some participants in group discussions complained about the coercive nature of such taxes: “Al-Shabaab takes *zakat* from communities by force, even if we have already given *zakat* as our religious duty. Al-Shabaab takes one goat per every 40 you have and two camels per every 100 you have.”<sup>40</sup>

Telecommunication masts have been a target of choice. Destroying masts disrupts communications between the various security forces, including ahead of and during attacks, and hampers wider mobile networks for the population.<sup>41</sup> Transport within Mandera county and towards inland Kenya is regularly suspended after or in anticipation of attacks, disrupting commuting and livelihoods.<sup>42</sup> This includes hindering the movement of goods from Somalia.<sup>43</sup> These, together with attacks on vehicles and the risks of explosives and ambushes on roads have had the cumulative effect of reinforcing the isolation of whole communities – making it extremely difficult for county authorities and services to reach them: “Al-Shabaab has destroyed telecommunication masts from Safaricom, attacked houses and vehicles. In Mandera East we have suffered a lot. Our area has been totally cut off; we feel marginalised.”<sup>44</sup>

Others added: “The other impact is that we are cut off, vehicles can’t come to our area as they are hijacked, so the economic and social impact is huge. Teachers are killed, which has a very big impact on education, there is much less provision. Business activity also goes down. Medical doctors and NGOs don’t come to these areas because of insecurity, children don’t go to school, and there is a rise in psychological problems.”<sup>45</sup>

While communities living in sub-counties bordering Somalia are most affected, the impact of the attacks is pervasive throughout Mandera and the wider north-eastern region. As one person from a sub-county bordering Wajir said: “The effect is that when attacks occur in Mandera or Wajir, health workers, teachers, housemaids, quarry workers and engineers flee, they leave our service industry because they are targeted.”

Insecurity has also stunted the movement and provision of aid.<sup>46</sup> This is damaging in a region prone to regular droughts and food insecurity<sup>47</sup> and with some of the lowest development indicators in Kenya,

“Al-Shabaab has destroyed telecommunication masts from Safaricom, attacked houses and vehicles. In Mandera East we have suffered a lot. Our area has been totally cut off; we feel marginalised.”

Focus group discussion participant.

including one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.<sup>48</sup>

Attacks have also created a pervasive sense of fear. As one woman told us: “Once it’s 6pm, people lock themselves in their homes for fear of attacks. Even when women are in labour, ambulances won’t come. We used to be able to get help in cases of banditry for instance, but these days no one will come to your rescue. One woman who had raised the alarm at an attack was shot, so now no one will shout for help. At night you may be attacked, and even if you call the security forces, they don’t respond immediately. They fail to respond on time and people are killed.”<sup>49</sup>

Residents from Mandera West sub-county told us: “Now any stranger coming to our area instils fear. People who travel by foot are not trusted, even relatives. We are always on alert, the trust between communities, even between us and our children is diminishing.”<sup>50</sup>

## Responses by the Kenyan security forces

While communities identified al-Shabaab violence as a primary concern, they also pointed to the behaviour of government security forces as a major source of insecurity. In fact, they feel caught between the two. Participants in a focus group gave the example of a woman who lost three children:

“One of her children was killed by al-Shabaab who came and accused her son of being an informant for the Kenyan security forces. When the Kenyan forces were looking for al-Shabaab with helicopters, they killed her daughter. Then she had one son killed by the Kenyan forces. This woman was in great pain and became mad.”

Kenya’s security response has involved serious human rights abuses, which have fuelled communities’ distrust and fear of the security forces, hampering an effective response to attacks by al-Shabaab and risking fuelling sympathies for the armed group. Communities have also criticised the security forces for failing to prevent and protect them from attacks – with the notable exception of the recently constituted local police reserve – and for corrupt practices.

Several military and security agencies are involved in counter-terrorism operations combating al-Shabaab in Mandera. They include the Kenyan Defence Force (KDF), the Directorate of Military

Intelligence (a department of the KDF), the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU), other National Police Service units described to us as the Administration Police (AP),<sup>51</sup> including units such as the Rapid Deployment Unit and the Rural Border Patrol Unit (RBPU) and the KPR.<sup>52</sup> Prison personnel also play a role in the state counter-terrorism response. In addition, AMISOM<sup>53</sup> units are said regularly to cross the border into Kenya.<sup>54</sup>

In areas bordering Somalia and most exposed to al-Shabaab attacks, various branches of the security forces are present but, with the exception of the local police reservists (KPR), they are often considered part of the problem for communities: “In Lafey, there are six KDF camps and there is also [a] Rural Border Patrol Unit (RBPU). But they have become terror for us. We only have ten KPR posts.”<sup>55</sup>

The presence of security agencies with different chains of command – but all reporting to the national government – has hampered accountability and contributed to mistrust between them and the local population, who don’t make distinctions between their various roles. A lack of coordination between the various security organs is also hindering effective security provision.<sup>56</sup> Communities see security agencies – who largely come from outside the north-eastern region – as ignorant of the local language, culture and terrain: ‘Most of the security agencies are not drawn from the local population. They lack cultural understanding’.<sup>57</sup>

Abuses reportedly committed by security agencies against the population in Mandera include extra-judicial killings, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, beatings and security swoops on whole communities. Communities did not mention cases of rape or other forms of sexual violence by the security forces in Mandera, but sexual and gender-based violence as a whole in the county is probably under reported, due to the stigma and shame that its survivors suffer. There are past reports of security forces using sexual violence, including the rape of women in the context of collective punishments against Mandera’s communities,<sup>58</sup> as well as KDF troops raping women in Gedo in Somalia.<sup>59</sup>

Mandera is one of the counties most affected by extra-judicial killings, disappearance and torture, with the Kenya National Human Rights Commission documenting 22 cases in 2015.<sup>60</sup> People have been arbitrarily arrested or shot on suspicion of links to al-Shabaab: “Until 2016, the police made arrests for no reason. If the KDF arrested you, they would take you to their camp near the airport – a safe house where they tortured people.”<sup>61</sup>

“

Once it’s 6pm, people lock themselves in their homes for fear of attacks. Even when women are in labour, ambulances won’t come.

Focus group discussion participant.

”

“

**We hear of mass graves – we don’t know how many people are buried. The government is not ready to acknowledge them.**

Human rights worker.

”

Several interviewees highlighted the case of a man arrested at a bus terminal in Mandera town. He remains unaccounted for, despite his parents selling their possessions to pay bribes requested by the security forces to divulge his fate.<sup>62</sup> Community members reported that Fino, a ward in Lafey sub-county, has been particularly affected, with dozens of residents reported ‘disappeared’ or killed.<sup>63</sup> The discovery of bodies in shallow graves in the county and beyond, some of them reportedly identified as individuals previously arrested by the security forces, has added to public anger and distrust.<sup>64</sup> “We hear of mass graves – we don’t know how many people are buried. The government is not ready to acknowledge them.”<sup>65</sup>

While less suspected killings and disappearances have been attributed to the security forces since 2017, abuses still occur. A pattern of retaliation against communities living near places where security forces have been victims of attacks seems to continue, as reported by residents of several sub-counties: “Government security doesn’t respond the way it is needed. They react hours after an incident, when the attackers have already run away. Then the security forces come to the scene and start beating everyone. When you give them information, they will question you in a way that implies that they suspect you. This does more harm than good. Instead of responding immediately to attacks, they respond by targeting the innocents.”<sup>66</sup>

Residents living in or near the site of attacks have been beaten by security forces, in what they describe as ‘collective punishment’. For instance, in September 2018, following the explosion of an IED in the El Wak area, members of the KDF and the ATPU were reported to have burnt property, beaten up residents of Daba city and arrested some of them.<sup>67</sup> At least 22 residents were said to have been injured in the operation.<sup>68</sup>

Community members recounted other abuses: “The Kenyan security forces respond by attacking the community instead of the attackers. In our area a 90-year-old man, his 80-year-old wife and two young men were abducted by the Kenyan forces. They abused her.”<sup>69</sup> Another said: “There was an attack in El Wak and the security forces beat up an old man and he died. The government can be a threat to us.”<sup>70</sup>

Some said that young men and especially animal herders were particularly suspected, because some al-Shabaab members use back roads and the bush to avoid detection: “Al-Shabaab came to our area once and there were explosions. Then the KDF and other security forces came to look for al-Shabaab,

found young men who herd animals and immediately suspected them; they killed some of them.”<sup>71</sup> According to a security officer, records of arrests show that a majority are men from communities living in areas adjacent to the border with Somalia.<sup>72</sup>

As many people told us, these operations are counter-productive: collective punishment fans fears of being arrested, punished or killed, hampering the reporting of critical security information to the security forces: “We can’t give information to the Kenyan forces, we have no trust as we get under suspicion. We are fearful. There was an incident in our area during which three men were killed by al-Shabaab, but instead of helping us, the Kenyan forces shot dead another man.”<sup>73</sup>

Such behaviour has also bred resentment among community members, leading some to sympathise with al-Shabaab against perceived government oppression.<sup>74</sup> “Whenever military or police vehicles are hit by these IEDs, communities are rounded up and collectively punished. As a result, al-Shabaab use this as a bargaining chip to convince people to join them”.<sup>75</sup> Another said: “In a way, al-Shabaab is better because they don’t burn our houses or commit these executions. Some of our people have disappeared, up to now we don’t know their whereabouts. We have many youth missing, we would like to know about their fate.”<sup>76</sup>

We encountered much resentment at Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia and its negative consequences on Mandera. The intervention was strongly opposed by Kenyan Somali politicians and elders from the north-eastern region.<sup>77</sup> Some focus group participants told us: “If only the KDF was removed from Kismayo and elsewhere in Somalia and were defending their own country instead of fighting in another one!”<sup>78</sup>

The government’s recruitment of young men from Mandera and the wider north-eastern region into a militia to support Kenya’s allies in Somalia – before its own military intervention in 2011 – may also have backfired.<sup>79</sup> The fate of many of those young men is unclear. Some are said to have been killed, others to have joined clan militias, but “some of the youth ended up joining al-Shabaab, as they were lured with promise of huge sums of money which the government could not offer.”<sup>80</sup> A civil society worker summed up the feelings of many:

“Sometimes we feel like al-Shabaab and the security forces are working together to kill us. People ask questions such as ‘the KDF and the TFG [Transitional Federal Government – Somalia’s interim national authority up to mid-2012] recruited people and armed them and then they joined al-Shabaab. Why are they now killing us?’”<sup>81</sup>

Many felt that those who do give information about security threats are not properly protected: their identities are often not concealed, exposing them to revenge.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, many also felt that when security threats are reported, little action is taken by the security forces. “Reporting to security personnel is often stifled by the fear of victimisation and sometimes the lack of action on the information shared.”<sup>83</sup>

Communities also point to inadequate security presence near areas vulnerable to attacks: “We feel marginalised as we don’t have many security forces present in our area: we have the KDF, the AP [Administration Police] and the RPB [Rural Border Patrol Unit] but in a very small number. There are only four posts for our town.”<sup>84</sup> The result is that security forces have reached the site of attacks too late – sometimes hours late.

The security forces were also blamed for not securing the border with Somalia. “People can cross into Kenya unchecked. There is no permanent force along the border.”<sup>85</sup> Many pointed at the issue of rampant corruption and bribe-taking by Kenyan security forces at border points: “Security checks at the border point are compromised with officers receiving bribes of as little as KES 200”.<sup>86</sup>

There are three official border crossings. They include Belet Hawo, the Somali town opposite Mandera town across the border, and El Wak.<sup>87</sup> Officially, the border is closed, and people from Somalia are not allowed to enter Kenya, except for humanitarian reasons.<sup>88</sup> People say that in reality, bribes at border points and smuggling through unmanned parts of the border allow people, including suspected al-Shabaab members, and goods to cross unchecked. Contraband includes not only sugar, rice and other goods, but also weapons.<sup>89</sup> Discussing a foiled al-Shabaab plan to attack Kenya in 2018, the United Nations (UN) Monitoring Group on Somalia described how those involved were able to cross the border unchecked: “The plot provides an apt illustration of the nexus between corruption and insecurity; police statements from the arrested al-Shabaab operatives show that they were able to pass with little interference back and forth across the porous Kenya-Somalia border, facilitated by bribes to various security forces and/or officials on both sides.”<sup>90</sup>

The authorities even started building a wall on the border with Somalia to prevent further incursions. It starts from Border Point 1, at the junction of the Mandera triangle between Somalia, Kenya and Ethiopia – a wire fence that so far extends just a few kilometres. The construction of the wall has been halted several times and has been mired in controversy. There have been accusations from residents of Belet Hawo that it was encroaching on

their land,<sup>91</sup> and concerns about it limiting cross-border trade, seasonal pastoral migrations and the movement of people for family visits and basic services – for instance Somali children attending schools in Kenya.<sup>92</sup> From the Kenya side, there are also concerns about the loss of government tax revenues from cross-border trade, as well as the cost and effectiveness of building a wall over the 680-kilometre-long border with Somalia.<sup>93</sup> In Mandera, views about building a wall on the border differed, with some believing that it would help control the porous border and people crossing it, and others seeing it as an expensive initiative that would do little to improve security or prevent attacks by al-Shabaab.

“

People can cross into Kenya unchecked. There is no permanent force along the border.

Research participant.

”

## Clan conflicts and tensions

Al-Shabaab attacks and the retaliatory repression by Kenyan forces are by no means the only sources of insecurity in Mandera. They add another layer of violence to long-standing clan conflicts and tensions centred on competition for resources and political power, which have been accentuated by devolution in some respects. Al-Shabaab has tried to take advantage of these dynamics, and the conflict with al-Shabaab risks fuelling further clan divisions and marginalisation of minority groups.

Mandera has a population of approximately 1.1 million people, composed of four main clans with ties straddling the borders in Ethiopia and Somalia and neighbouring Wajir county in Kenya: the Garre, the Murulle, the Degodia and the ‘corner tribes’ (a group of clans with smaller numbers in the county, also referred to as ‘minorities’). The Marehan – a dominant clan in the Gedo region of Somalia who moved in significant numbers to Mandera following state collapse in 1991 – are included in the ‘corner tribes’ but have also sought recognition as the county’s ‘fifth clan’.<sup>94</sup>

Intercommunal conflict between clans, centred on competition for scarce resources such as water and grazing land, and around disputed boundaries, has long been a feature in a region prone to droughts, with livelihoods dominated by pastoralism.<sup>95</sup> Sometimes clan conflicts have been particularly deadly. Warring clans and their militia have been reported to inflict extreme pain and loss of dignity upon their opponents by targeting children, women, the elderly and religious leaders. Interviews and



focus groups have highlighted conflicts between the Garre and the Degodia as a prime source of insecurity in two areas less affected by al-Shabaab attacks: Banisa sub-county, bordering Ethiopia, and Mandera North. Meanwhile, tensions between the Garre and the Degodia over water points and grazing land extend to neighbouring Wajir county, which Mandera West borders. Both clans are reported to seek support in these conflicts from their counterparts in Ethiopia.

In Lafey and El Wak, tensions between the Garre and the Murulle revolve around disputed administrative and political boundaries, particularly in Alango Gof, which has a permanent water point with conflicts over the location of development projects such as schools and a borehole.<sup>96</sup> Interviews also highlighted that Marehan communities from Somalia

sometimes crossed over to Lafey, causing intergroup conflict, including tensions with the Murulle.

Devolution, introduced by Kenya's new constitution in 2010,<sup>97</sup> has increased tensions between clans as they compete for political positions, both in the county government and the national parliament. With political positions giving access to influence, budgets and contracts, elections have become a 'winner-takes-all' scenario, involving competition mainly between the majority clans: "The resources from the county government have benefitted one clan only, with lucrative contracts awarded to them."<sup>98</sup>

In addition, the delineation of new political constituencies (wards) by the national Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, not always in line with previous administrative boundaries, has



The Somali border, Mandera, Kenya.  
© Kim Haughton/Alamy Stock Photo

fuelled tensions. For instance, there has been conflict between the Garre and the Degodia around Ashabito ward, administratively situated in El Wak sub-county but politically in Mandera North sub-county.<sup>99</sup> Clans try to extend their presence in the different sub-counties in order to get more political representation, and this has led to ‘voter importation’, a practice encouraging clan members from other areas, even from Ethiopia or Somalia, to register in electoral constituencies to vote for the clan’s favoured candidate.<sup>100</sup> The corner tribes have complained of being the ones losing out most from such political competition, with little representation in the county political structures and therefore less access to resources.<sup>101</sup>

Some communities also pointed to the practice of establishing unlicensed ranches, with land fenced

off, preventing pastoralists who need grazing land from entering.<sup>102</sup>

Most interviewees stressed that clan conflicts and violence involving al-Shabaab were unrelated: “Al-Shabaab is not a tribal problem. Al-Shabaab comes from outside.”<sup>103</sup> Many highlighted the difference between al-Shabaab attackers and clan militias: “They are different from other militias. They attack at night, are usually masked and recite koranic verses.”<sup>104</sup> A security officer confirmed that, while certain clans were more represented among people arrested on suspicion of links with al-Shabaab, this largely reflected who was living along the border: “Al-Shabaab is composed of all clans”.<sup>105</sup>

Nonetheless, instability and insecurity generated by clan conflicts give al-Shabaab more space to thrive,

including because managing clan conflict can divert the limited resources of authorities and security forces.<sup>106</sup> Al-Shabaab’s knowledge of local clan and land politics enables it to plan its movements in Mandera.

Some community members also highlighted al-Shabaab’s ability to exploit grievances of those with kinship ties to victims of security force abuses. Likewise, al-Shabaab recently sought to exploit the marginalisation of the minority clans in Mandera to try and recruit them.<sup>107</sup> Some interviews and analyses also identify a risk that aggrieved or weaker clans may seek al-Shabaab support to counter majority clans’ domination of land, resources and political power.<sup>108</sup>

The conflict with al-Shabaab has also exacerbated tensions with people from Somalia living in Mandera: “There has been a large influx of Somalis into Mandera county since they share a border. With Kenyans threatened by Al-Shabaab, fingers tend to be pointed towards the Somalis in Mandera county. This has resulted in a lot of tension cropping up between the Somalis of the two countries. There is also a disparity of wealth between Kenyan Somalis and Somalis from Somalia. Somalis from Somalia are wealthier than their Kenyan brothers and sisters. In fact, the local market in Mandera is mainly supplied and run by Somalis from Somalia. This makes the locals powerless, as they are very dependent on this relationship to meet their daily needs.”<sup>109</sup>

This negative perception of people from Somalia, particularly from the Marehan clan – the dominant clan in Gedo in Somalia – was evident in some of the discussions:

“We are affected by the war in Somalia. Refugees fled from Somalia to our area, they brought inferior behaviours which we didn’t know before. They started radicalising our children, there are more killings, abductions, child-to-child stabbings. They started to cut down trees to get charcoal as they had no other livelihood.”<sup>110</sup>

“There are communities along the border who also make up these militias.”<sup>111</sup>

In these respects, then, although clan affiliation is not seen as being connected to al-Shabaab, the armed group is able to take advantage of competition between clans to further its objectives. The conflict with al-Shabaab has also heightened tensions between dominant clans in Mandera and those more recently arrived from Somalia. According to a civil society worker:

“The majority of the displaced from Somalia were the Marehan, the dominant group among the corner tribes. The rise of the insurgent group, some of whom have relatives in Kenya, results in collective

suspicion that the Marehan community sympathises with al-Shabaab.”<sup>112</sup>

Tensions between the Garre and the Marehan in El Wak, driven in part by competition between Marehan sub-clans in Somalia, had already erupted in armed clashes in 2004 and 2005, leading to killings and displacement that pre-date the emergence of al-Shabaab.<sup>113</sup>

## Violence against women and girls

Women’s status and roles in Mandera are constrained by patriarchal gender norms, according to which they take care of children and household duties, while men are expected to provide income and protection – entrenching women’s economic dependence on men. In pastoral and rural communities, women are responsible for building nomadic shelters, looking after home herds of sheep and goats and fetching water, while men look after livestock for trade. In farming communities, both women and men work. In urban areas there are also women engaging in small-scale trade. Women are under-represented in decision-making structures, whether at community, clan or political levels and have poor access to sexual and reproductive health services.<sup>114</sup>

Women and girls feel specifically affected by the conflict, in a context where violence against women is already prevalent. Girls are particularly exposed to sexual and gender-based violence, including forced early marriages, formalised through customary bride price payments, ‘defilement’<sup>115</sup> and female genital mutilation (FGM).<sup>116</sup> Although defilement, FGM and early marriages are prohibited in Kenyan law, they are prevalent in Mandera.<sup>117</sup>

Comprehensive data about rapes and other forms of sexual violence in Mandera is lacking. These abuses are probably under-reported due to the stigmatisation of survivors, in a context where sexual relations outside wedlock are considered to bring shame to the victims’ families. A national survey on crimes in 2018 indicates that 36.9 per cent of respondents in Mandera reported rape and 25.9 per cent defilement (by comparison 27.7 per cent reported terrorism).<sup>118</sup> In 2018, a helpline to report gender-based violence was established in the county.<sup>119</sup> Women have little access to justice and protection, with sexual violence cases usually dealt with through traditional courts (*maslaha*) rather than the formal justice system.

IN A 2018  
NATIONAL  
SURVEY ON  
CRIMES,  
**36.9**  
PER CENT  
OF  
RESPONDENTS  
IN MANDERA  
REPORTED  
RAPE AND  
**25.9**  
DEFILEMENT.

Focus group discussions with women and girls highlighted their exposure to violence in Mandera in the course of al-Shabaab attacks, the Kenyan security forces' response, and clan conflicts. Sexual and gender-based violence also occurs in the domestic sphere and in the community: "There are rape cases not necessarily linked to tribal conflict. Domestic violence is also prevalent, with men beating their wives."<sup>120</sup>

Many women in the sub-counties bordering Somalia explained that they felt more vulnerable than men in case of attacks by al-Shabaab: they are responsible for gathering and protecting children before being able to flee. Men do not have this responsibility: "Often our men run away for their life, leaving the women who can't run away because of the children."<sup>121</sup>

Al-Shabaab tends to primarily target men, reflecting gender roles according to which men engage in fighting and fill security roles; hold clan, public and political positions; and provide income for their families. However, women have not been spared in its attacks. In the November 2014 bus attack, nine women out of 28 passengers were killed.<sup>122</sup> Women from Mandera West recounted the case of an old woman who was tied to a tree and questioned by suspected al-Shabaab members: "This incident happened between Takaba and El Wak. This was a shocking and depressing incident that had never happened before. It made a big impression on people."<sup>123</sup>

Women reported that in Lafey, there were cases of young women and girls who had been abducted, taken across the border and raped: "Young women suffer more than older women. They can sometimes be raped."<sup>124</sup> It is difficult to confirm how prevalent this is as women tend not to report these issues given the social stigma for survivors of sexual violence. Others reported that in Mandera South, there were cases of girls who had been married off to young al-Shabaab leaders.<sup>125</sup>

There are also cases of women killed in the context of counter-terrorism and other law enforcement operations by members of the Kenyan security

forces. Human rights organisations have raised the case of a woman tea-seller who was arrested in December 2015 by suspected security force members and whose body was found in a shallow grave a few days later.<sup>126</sup> Kenyan authorities denied responsibility for her death, stating that she may have been killed by al-Shabaab.<sup>127</sup>

Interviews with women from Rhamu in Mandera North reported that in November 2018, a woman was killed by a member of the security forces, who were looking for her son on suspicion of drug offences.<sup>128</sup> Women and children are increasingly targeted in clashes between clans, in contradiction with Somali traditional norms on the conduct of conflict.<sup>129</sup> Women and girls also reported abductions and sexual violence against women as a long-standing feature of clan conflicts, with men abusing women as a way to attack the rival clan's 'honour'.<sup>130</sup>

All focus group discussions with women highlighted the repercussions for women when men relatives are targeted by or participate in violence, because of their economic dependence on men, and the belief that boys will look after their parents in the future.

One group said: "Violence affects mainly women: mothers provide the daily bread. Men are idle and don't work. Women leave home early to get the family's daily bread. Their sons can be kidnapped by the security forces or forced to join al-Shabaab. If their house is attacked, they risk being killed, as women often keep the house when the men are out. All mothers understand the pain of losing a son to killing or recruitment."<sup>131</sup>

Overall, it is clear that in Mandera, gender norms drive violence against women and worsen women's economic precarity and social marginalisation. Transforming these dynamics – which make women and girls particularly exposed and vulnerable to the consequences of the conflict with al-Shabaab – should be an essential component of a comprehensive response to insecurity in Mandera.

“

Often our men run away for their life, leaving the women who can't run away because of the children.

Woman focus group discussion participant.

”

## Notes

- 11 While the FGS has recognised Ahmed Madobe as ‘interim’ president of a Jubaland Interim Administration with a mandate of two years following disputed elections in August 2019, Madobe has since rejected the move and demanded full recognition of a four-year term.
- 12 Though al-Shabaab still has the ability to strike even in Mandera town itself, as seen in the April 2019 abduction of two Cuban medical doctors posted in Mandera to boost health services. See: *Al Jazeera* (2019), ‘Gunmen abduct Cuban doctors near Kenya’s border with Somalia’, 13 April (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/gunmen-abduct-cuban-doctors-kenya-border-somalia-190412082110117.html>)
- 13 Saferworld focus group discussion; Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 14 International Crisis Group (2018), ‘Five years after Westgate: Still a menace in East Africa’, 21 September (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/265-al-shabaab-five-years-after-westgate-still-menace-east-africa>)
- 15 Saferworld interview with peace worker.
- 16 International Crisis Group (2018), ‘Five years after Westgate: Still a menace in East Africa’, 21 September.
- 17 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant from El Wak, Mandera South.
- 18 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth, November 2018.
- 19 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 20 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant, November 2018.
- 21 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth, November 2018.
- 22 Saferworld interview with central government agency worker.
- 23 Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 24 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant, November 2018.
- 25 Saferworld focus group discussions with youth, participant, November 2018; Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 26 Saferworld interview with local government official, November 2018.
- 27 Saferworld focus group discussions, November 2018. See also: Muraya J (2018), ‘2 teachers killed by suspected Al-Shabaab militants in Mandera’, *Capital News*, 10 October (<https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2018/10/2-teachers-killed-by-suspected-al-shabaab-militants-in-mandera/>)
- 28 *Daily Nation* (2020), ‘Kenya: MPs Summon Magoha, Mutyambai Over Teacher Crisis in North Eastern’, 23 February (<https://allafrica.com/stories/202002230008.html>)
- 29 *Daily Nation* (2018), ‘Al-Shabaab attacks quarry workers in Mandera’, 3 May (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Al-Shabaab-attacks-quarry-workers-in-Mandera/1183298-4543942-qs818fz/index.html>)
- 30 Saferworld focus group discussion, November 2018.
- 31 Saferworld interviews with government agency worker, aid agency worker; Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 32 Saferworld focus group discussion, November 2018.
- 33 Saferworld interview, residents from Arabia, November 2018. See also: *BBC News* (2015), ‘“Al-Shabab” abducts and kills Kenyan chief near Mandera’, 24 April (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-32446943>)
- 34 Saferworld focus group discussion, participants, November 2018. See also: Astariko S (2017), ‘Mandera East chief shot three times at home’, 18 May (<https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/north-eastern/2017-05-18-mandera-east-chief-shot-three-times-at-home/>)
- 35 Saferworld interview with government agency worker.
- 36 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 37 Saferworld focus group discussion, resident from Lafey, November 2018.
- 38 Saferworld interviews with civil society worker, business person, November 2018.
- 39 Saferworld (2018), ‘Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia’s civil war: time for a new approach’, November, p 10 (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1191-counter-terror-and-the-logic-of-violence-in-somaliaas-civil-war-time-for-a-new-approach>)
- 40 Saferworld focus group discussion, participants.
- 41 It should be noted that the Kenyan Defence Forces are similarly accused of destroying telecommunication masts in Somalia, particularly those of the Hormuud telecommunications company. Al-Shabaab does not attack Hormuud masts in Somalia. See also: Shabelle Media Network (2019), ‘Somalia: KDF destroys Hormuud telecom mast on Somali border’, *All Africa*, 17 January (<https://allafrica.com/stories/201901180202.html>); Dahir A (2019), ‘Is Kenya waging a war on Somalia’s economic lifeline?’, *TRT World*, 18 September (<https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/is-kenya-waging-war-on-somalia-s-economic-lifeline-29907>)
- 42 See for instance the recent suspension of bus transport in Mandera in June 2019: *Daily Nation* (2019), ‘Terror threat: public transport suspended in Mandera’, 9 June (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Terror-threat--Public-transport-suspended-in-Mandera/1183298-515052-10g5kmf/index.html>)
- 43 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 44 Saferworld focus group discussion, residents from Mandera East, November 2018.
- 45 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant, November 2018.
- 46 See: *Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques* (2015), ‘North-Eastern Kenya: A Prospective Analysis’, December (<http://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ENG-Observatoire-Prospective-Huma-NORTHEasternKenya-12-2015.pdf>)
- 47 For a recent situation update see: Famine Early Warning System Network, National Drought Management Authority and World Food Programme (2019), ‘Kenya Food Security Outlook Update’, August ([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/KENYA\\_Food\\_Security\\_Outlook\\_Update\\_August2019\\_Final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/KENYA_Food_Security_Outlook_Update_August2019_Final.pdf))
- 48 See sections on ‘Violence against women and girls’ (p 14) and ‘Gender norms and women and youth marginalisation’ (p 22).
- 49 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant, November 2018.
- 50 Saferworld focus group discussion with women from Mandera West, November 2018.
- 51 Officially the Kenyan Police and the Administration Police were merged in the National Police Service following security sector reforms in Kenya in August 2011.
- 52 According to section 110 of Kenya’s National Police Service Act, the Kenya Police Reserve can be recruited to assist the police in maintaining law and order and preserving peace.
- 53 The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is the African Union peace enforcement operation supporting the FGS to establish control over territory.
- 54 Saferworld focus group discussions, November 2018; Saferworld interview with human rights worker, November 2018.
- 55 Saferworld focus group discussion, resident from Lafey.
- 56 Saferworld focus group discussions; Saferworld interviews with civil society worker and security officer.
- 57 Saferworld interview with NGO worker.
- 58 See: Human Rights Watch (2009), ‘“Bring the Gun or You’ll Die”: Torture, Rape, and Other Serious Human Rights Violations by Kenyan Security Forces in the Mandera Triangle’, 29 June (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/06/29/bring-gun-or-youll-die/torture-rape-and-other-serious-human-rights-violations>)
- 59 Saferworld interview with human rights worker, November 2018. See also: *Garowe Online* (2018), ‘Somalia: Kenyan troops accused of rape and killings in Gedo’, 3 August (<https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-kenyan-troops-accused-of-rape-and-killings-in-gedo>)
- 60 Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2015), ‘The error of fighting terror with terror’, September (<http://www.knchr.org/Portals/0/CivilAndPoliticalReports/Final%20Disappearances%20report%20pdf.pdf>); see also: Human Rights Watch (2016), ‘Deaths and disappearances: Abuses in counter-terrorism operations in Nairobi and North-Eastern Kenya’, 20 July (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/07/20/deaths-and-disappearances/abuses-counterterrorism-operations-nairobi-and>)
- 61 Saferworld interview with human rights worker.
- 62 Saferworld focus group discussions. See also: Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2015), ‘The error of fighting terror with terror’, September, p 20.
- 63 Saferworld focus group discussions with residents in Fino and with youth.
- 64 See for instance: *The Standard* (2015), ‘Outrage as shallow graves with fresh corpses found in Mandera’, 7 December (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000184738/outrage-as-shallow-graves-with-fresh-corpses-found-in-mandera>); *Daily Nation* (2017), ‘Five bodies found in shallow grave in Mandera’, 4 July (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Five-bodies-found-buried-in-shallow-grave/1183298-3998742-4ujkcr/index.html>)
- 65 Saferworld interview with human rights worker, November 2018.
- 66 Saferworld focus group discussion with women.
- 67 Saferworld focus group discussions with Mandera South residents and youth.
- 68 *NTV Kenya* (2018), ‘22 injured as KDF, ATPU raid Daba City in Elwak, Mandera County’, video, YouTube, 26 September (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYg-nB2q4vg>); *KTN News Kenya* (2018), ‘The cry of Mandera: residents beaten by security agent’, video, YouTube, 1 October (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bjOu6jDXnw>)
- 69 Saferworld focus group discussion with women.
- 70 Saferworld focus group discussion participants.
- 71 Saferworld focus group discussion, Mandera South residents. See also: *Daily Nation* (2018), ‘Family in Mandera claims police killed 3 men found in thickets’, 13 September (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/family-cries-for-justice-after-3-kin-found-dead/1183298-4757608-1dfjg2z/index.html>). Another man was reportedly killed by the security forces in a demonstration following the deaths, and two non-local quarry workers were also reported killed in unclear circumstances. See: *Daily Nation* (2018), ‘Three killed in Elwak protests over mysterious deaths’, 13 September (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Three-dead-after-Elwak-demon-turns-chaotic/1183298-4758616-vkb2wqz/index.html>)
- 72 Saferworld interview with security officer.
- 73 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant.
- 74 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth, November 2018.
- 75 Saferworld interview, peace committee member, November 2018.
- 76 Saferworld focus group discussion.

## Notes continued

- 77 See Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', 4 July, p 60 (<https://www.interpeace.org/2017/07/voices-challenges-mandera-county/>)
- 78 Saferworld focus group discussion.
- 79 See: United Nations Security Council (2010), 'Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1853 (2008)', 10 March ([https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/467A5CB05AD7E446492576EA0004325D-Full\\_Report.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/467A5CB05AD7E446492576EA0004325D-Full_Report.pdf))
- 80 Saferworld interview with peace worker.
- 81 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 82 Saferworld focus group discussions, November 2018.
- 83 Saferworld interview with peace worker, November 2018.
- 84 Saferworld interview with Mandera East residents, November 2018.
- 85 Saferworld focus group discussions and interviews, November 2018.
- 86 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth; Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 87 European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa (2016), 'Cross border analysis and mapping – Cluster 2 Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia', August (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/ref-homresearch/research-papers/file115290.pdf>)
- 88 Saferworld interview with security officer.
- 89 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth; Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 90 United Nations Security Council (2018), 'Somalia report of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, S/2018/1002', 9 November ([https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2018\\_1002.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_1002.pdf))
- 91 Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', 4 July, p 58 (<https://www.interpeace.org/2017/07/voices-challenges-mandera-county/>)
- 92 European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing the Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa (2016), 'Cross border analysis and mapping – Cluster 2 Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia', August (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/ref-homresearch/research-papers/file115290.pdf>)
- 93 Saferworld interview with security officer. See also: *Daily Nation* (2019), 'Sh3.4bn Kenya-Somalia border wall puzzle lingers', 7 April (<https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Sh3-4bn-Kenya-Somalia-border-wall-puzzle-lingers/1056-5060214-dfj7ogz/index.html>)
- 94 Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', 4 July (<https://www.interpeace.org/2017/07/voiceschallenges-mandera-county/>)
- 95 See for instance: Menkhaus K (2015), 'Conflict assessment 2014: northern Kenya and Somaliland', Danish Demining Group, March (<https://land.igad.int/index.php/documents-1/countries/kenya/conflict-3/538-conflict-assessment-2014-northern-kenya-and-somaliland/file>)
- 96 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth from different sub-counties, November 2018.
- 97 See Saferworld (2018), 'Delivering on the promise of peace? Devolution, inclusion and local conflicts in Kenya', August (<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1182-delivering-on-the-promise-of-peace-devolution-inclusion-and-local-conflicts-in-kenya>)
- 98 Saferworld interview with aid worker, November 2018.
- 99 Saferworld focus group discussion.
- 100 Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', 4 July (<https://www.interpeace.org/2017/07/voices-challenges-mandera-county/>)
- 101 Saferworld interview with minority clan members.
- 102 Saferworld focus group discussion.
- 103 Saferworld focus group discussion.
- 104 Saferworld focus group discussion with women.
- 105 Saferworld interview with security officer.
- 106 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, peace worker, November 2018.
- 107 Saferworld interview with civil society workers; Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 108 Saferworld interviews with observers. See also: Menkhaus K (2015), 'Conflict assessment 2014: northern Kenya and Somaliland', Danish Demining Group, March (<https://land.igad.int/index.php/documents-1/countries/kenya/conflict-3/538-conflict-assessment-2014-northern-kenya-and-somaliland/file>)
- 109 Saferworld interview with government agency worker.
- 110 Saferworld focus group discussion, November 2018.
- 111 Saferworld focus group discussion, November 2018.
- 112 Saferworld interview with peace worker, November 2018.
- 113 Menkhaus K (2015), 'Conflict assessment 2014: northern Kenya and Somaliland', Danish Demining Group, March (<https://land.igad.int/index.php/documents-1/countries/kenya/conflict-3/538-conflict-assessment-2014-northern-kenya-and-somaliland/file>)
- 114 Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (2012), 'Realising Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in Kenya: A myth or reality?', April ([http://www.knchr.org/portals/o/reports/reproductive\\_health\\_report.pdf](http://www.knchr.org/portals/o/reports/reproductive_health_report.pdf))
- 115 According to Kenya's Sexual Offences Act (2007), 'A person who commits an act which causes penetration with a child is guilty of an offence termed defilement'.
- 116 Saferworld focus group discussions with girls, women; Saferworld interviews with civil society workers, November 2018.
- 117 According to UNICEF, the rate of FGM among Kenyan Somalis was 94 per cent in 2017. "We face the issue of forced early marriages – there is no consultation with us. FGM is also a big issue. The Children Act says that no marriage should take place before you are 18 and in Islam the father should have consent of the daughter; but this is not respected in practice. Young girls who are forcibly married may get pregnant and then abandoned. There are lots of girls who drop out of school after they are married during the school holidays. There was a case of a headteacher being arrested for these reasons." Saferworld focus group discussion with girls, November 2018.
- 118 National Crime Research Centre (2018), 'Mandera County Crime Outlook 2018' (<https://www.crimeresearch.go.ke/mandera/>)
- 119 See: Ministry of Public Service and Gender, State Department for Gender (2018), 'Speech by Hon. Safina Kwekwe Tsungu, Principal Secretary for Gender Affairs during the official launch of the GBV hotline 1195 in Mandera county on Thursday 29th March 2018' (<https://gender.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/SPEECH-BY-HON.-SAFINA-KWEKWE-TSUNGU-PRINCIPAL-SECRETARY-FOR-GENDER-AFFAIRS-DURING-THE-OFFICIAL-LAUNCH-OF-THE-GBV-HOTLINE-1195-IN-MANDERA-COUNTY-ON-THURSDAY-29TH-MARCH-2018-.pdf>)
- 120 Saferworld focus group discussion with women from Banisa.
- 121 Saferworld focus group discussion with women from Mandera South and Lafey. Women feel similarly exposed during clan clashes: "Women are most affected because they are responsible for children. If there is a tribal conflict, the man fights with the guns on the frontline, but women can't leave their children, animals and property. They are grounded."
- 122 *The Guardian* (2014), 'Kenya bus attack survivor tells how gunmen selected their victims', 23 November (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/23/kenya-bus-attack-survivor-tells-how-gunmen-selected-their-victims>)
- 123 Saferworld focus group discussion with women from Mandera West, November 2018.
- 124 Saferworld focus group discussion with women.
- 125 This issue needs further research. In Somalia, al-Shabaab has (often forcibly) recruited men and boys to fight, and women and girls as 'wives', who would cook, bear the children of the armed group's combatants, become informants and fundraise. For recent information on this issue, see Crisis Group (2019), 'Women and al-Shabaab's insurgency', June (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/b145-women-and-al-shabaabs-insurgency>)
- 126 See: Human Rights Watch (2016), 'Deaths and disappearances – Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations in Nairobi and in Northeastern Kenya', July, the case of Isnina Musa Sheikh, pp 46–48.
- 127 See: Yusuf M (2015), 'No Mass Graves Found, Says Kenya Interior Minister', *VOA*, 9 December (<https://www.voanews.com/africa/no-mass-graves-found-says-kenya-interior-minister>)
- 128 Saferworld interview with women from Rhamu, Mandera North. See also: *The Daily Star* (2018), 'Police shoot woman dead, Rhamu residents protest', 14 November (<https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/north-eastern/2018-11-14-police-shoot-woman-dead-rhamu-residents-protest/>)
- 129 Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera'.
- 130 "In Banisa, whenever there is conflict between the Garre and the Degodia, girls are abducted or raped and stop going to school." Saferworld focus group discussion with women and girls from Banisa, November 2018. Some interviews highlighted the support provided by women to clansmen in intercommunal conflicts: "Women and youth are used as mobilisers of clan conflicts, custodians of money, conducting intelligence and sometimes in sneaking arms into Mandera". Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 131 Saferworld focus group discussion with women, November 2018.



People use rafts to cross the Dawa river bordering Kenya and Ethiopia near the town of Mandera.

© Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

## 3

# History and layers of conflict, marginalisation and injustice

**Conflict dynamics in the Mandera triangle, at the crossroads between Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, have regional dimensions. Kenya's political, security and economic interests in Somalia, which underlie its intervention there, reverberate in Mandera. The history of conflict and marginalisation between Mandera and Kenya's central government compounds underdevelopment in Mandera, particularly affecting groups such as minority clans, women and young people who already suffer discrimination. Such issues lie in the way of sustainable security and development in Mandera.**

## Kenya's intervention in Somalia

Across the border from Mandera, the Gedo region falls under Somalia's Jubaland administration, which is led by Ahmed Madobe, who is based in Kismayo and enjoys KDF support. Kenyan troops incorporated in AMISOM are responsible for Lower and Middle Juba in Somalia, while AMISOM's Ethiopian contingent is responsible for Gedo, but there are also non-AMISOM KDF troops in Gedo.<sup>132</sup> Kenyan authorities are trying to improve coordination between their security forces in Mandera and those active in Somalia, as well as AMISOM, Somalia's National Army and Jubaland forces, but there is little evidence that this is having a positive impact for people in Mandera.<sup>133</sup>

On the security front, a civil society activist told us that Gedo is a "human rights free zone".<sup>134</sup> With little effective monitoring and reliable information emerging from conflict-affected areas, abuses committed by parties to Somalia's armed conflict in Gedo are not recorded adequately.<sup>135</sup> Kenyan authorities provide little information about the conduct of their military operations in Somalia, especially regarding casualties among Kenyan troops, as demonstrated in the battle of El Adde in 2016, when al-Shabaab overran a KDF/AMISOM base in Gedo, killing many Kenyan soldiers.<sup>136</sup>

It is alleged that people in Somalia have been killed and women sexually assaulted by the KDF, and that abuses have also been committed by the Jubaland security forces (which the KDF supports). However, given the limited transparency and human rights monitoring, as we heard: “nobody really knows what the KDF is doing there”.<sup>137</sup> Abuses against civilians by FGS troops, federal administration forces and militias, and AMISOM have fuelled grievances and intensified conflict dynamics in Somalia.<sup>138</sup>

Kenya also has important economic interests in Somalia, and part of the rationale for Operation *Linda Nchi* was to take control of Kismayo port, through which al-Shabaab was benefitting from the charcoal trade. The KDF, along with the Jubaland administration they helped to install and the Ras Kamboni militias, has been able to profit from sugar and charcoal smuggling since seizing Kismayo, with routes to transport sugar through northern Kenya, including Mandera, serving the whole of Kenya.<sup>139</sup> Al-Shabaab and the Jubaland authorities reportedly had an agreement to share revenues from the charcoal trade which broke down in 2015.<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile, the Kenyan and Somali governments have contested a long-running legal maritime dispute over parts of the Indian Ocean, supposedly rich with oil and natural gas deposits.<sup>141</sup> Kenya also receives funds for contributing troops to AMISOM.

In 2020, conflicts between the FGS, the Jubaland Administration and in turn its Kenyan backers have come to a head. In March 2020, FGS forces engaged troops loyal to the Jubaland Administration in and around Belet Hawo in Gedo as they attempted to re-arrest the Jubaland Security Minister Abdirashid Janan, who had recently escaped from detention in Mogadishu and was later sighted in Mandera.<sup>142</sup> The minister had been detained since August 2019 in Mogadishu in relation to serious human rights abuses, including killings, torture, unlawful detention, illegal renditions and obstruction of humanitarian aid in the Gedo region.<sup>143</sup> At least 11 were killed in the fighting in Gedo, which led to mass displacement on both sides of the border, as Jubaland forces entered Mandera, apparently with the support of resident KDF forces.<sup>144</sup> The support of Kenya’s government and army for a man considered to have escaped justice for serious human rights abuses and the presence of Somali armed militia in Mandera, exposing Mandera’s civilians to grave risks, have sparked outrage in Mandera’s communities and local politicians. Meanwhile, both governments accused the other of interfering within their respective territories. In recent years, Kenyan officials have hinted at forcibly annexing parts of Jubaland to stabilise its ‘buffer zone’ against

al-Shabaab.<sup>145</sup> In addition, al-Shabaab has apparently exploited the recent tensions between the Kenyan and Somali governments, increasing the frequency of attacks on civilians and security forces in the weeks following the fighting in Belet Hawo.<sup>146</sup>

## A history of conflict with Kenya’s central government

Mandera, like neighbouring Wajir and Garissa counties, has had a troubled history with Kenya’s national government. The three counties, together with Jubaland (now part of Somalia), formed the Northern Frontier District before Kenya became independent from Britain.

After independence, a Northern Frontier District Liberation Front formed and demanded to join a greater Somalia, leading to conflict with the Kenyan government in the 1963–67 ‘Shifta War’. Kenyan forces used harsh tactics to quell the revolt, including round-ups of villagers, collective punishments, rapes, and the killing of livestock.<sup>147</sup> The state of emergency imposed on the region was only lifted in 1991.<sup>148</sup> After the Shifta War, further abuses have been etched into people’s collective memory – notably the Malkamari massacre in Mandera in 1981 and the Wagalla massacre in Wajir in 1984, where as many as 3,000 people from the Degodia clan are thought to have been killed in a ‘disarmament’ operation.<sup>149</sup>

The legacy of these conflicts and the punitive state response remains important. Citizens in the north-east have long complained of discrimination: it is hard to obtain identity cards, which are often demanded by the police and are grounds for harassment. Identity cards also determine access to some state services.<sup>150</sup> The government’s police operation ‘*Usalama Watch*’ (‘safety watch’) which began in 2014 – aimed to combat irregular migration and ‘terrorism’ – resulted in arbitrary arrests and detentions, harassment and attempted expulsions of people of Somali ethnicity in Kenya, helping to entrench feelings of discrimination and persecution among Kenyan Somalis which al-Shabaab can exploit to garner support.<sup>151</sup>

The Mandera triangle has also been destabilised by the spillover of instability from Somalia and Ethiopia. The fall of Somalia’s Siad Barre regime in 1991 pushed large numbers of people into Mandera and spread weapons around the region, contributing to lethal violence.<sup>152</sup> Many people saw this as

“**Mandera, like neighbouring Wajir and Garissa counties, has had a troubled history with Kenya’s national government.**”

important: “Before the fall of Siad Barre we never used to see weapons, but afterwards, everyone started to buy some”.

This issue will not be easy to address. While many people felt that citizens should not be allowed weapons, others felt that being well armed was important for self-defence.<sup>153</sup>

## Access to justice and essential services

The perception that Mandera is marginalised by the central government is reflected in people’s concerns about the justice system there. According to a civil society worker: “Access to justice is problematic here. There is only one court. The closest other court is 300 kilometres away.”<sup>154</sup> Cases linked to national security and ‘terrorism’ are generally processed not in Mandera, but in the High Court in Nairobi, 1,000 kilometres away, reinforcing feelings of isolation and marginalisation from state institutions.

We were told that communities see courts as punishing and unfriendly, and that people who are poor have enormous difficulties accessing justice. A civil society worker pointed to harsh sentences handed down by the court in Mandera for petty offences, giving the example of someone sentenced to three years’ imprisonment for selling charcoal in November 2018. Another problem is alleged interference in investigations by police who reportedly sometimes accept bribes to settle cases out of court. Mandera is also affected by the lack of a functioning justice system across the border in Somalia. According to a human rights worker, the majority of prisoners in its correctional centre hail from Somalia, and most are convicted of petty crimes.<sup>155</sup> People often prefer accessing justice through customary laws (*Xeer*). These are believed to dispense more rapid justice (such as compensation instead of prison terms) – but because they reinforce patriarchal gender norms, they can prove deeply problematic when applied in response to cases of rape and other cases of sexual and gender-based violence.

The marginalisation of people in Mandera is underlined by the county’s development indicators. In 2015–16, Mandera was ranked as the Kenyan county with the highest poverty rate.<sup>156</sup> According to the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), in 2015 net enrolment in primary school was 27.2 per cent in Mandera (18.2 per cent for girls), compared to a national average of 88 per cent, although more recent figures suggest an improvement.<sup>157</sup>

A 2013 United Nations Development Programme study estimated that about 60 per cent of young people were unemployed in north-eastern Kenya, with women’s unemployment rate higher than men’s, specifically among older youth.<sup>158</sup> Mandera county had the highest maternal mortality rate in Kenya at the time of the 2009 census; in 2015, its maternal mortality rate was 3,795 deaths per 100,000 live births, one of the highest in the world, compared to Kenya’s national average of 448 deaths per 100,000 live births, though the Mandera county authorities report this is now improving.<sup>159</sup>

Kenya’s devolution process since 2010 has opened a major avenue to address Mandera’s deep marginalisation within Kenya. According to a civil society worker: “Injustices such as the Malkamari and the Wagalla massacre were great sources of conflict but this has since changed with devolution, as communities feel that they have an opportunity to govern themselves.”<sup>160</sup>

However, insecurity and discrimination affecting specific groups, including minority clans, women and youth, still present major obstacles to tackling unequal access to health, education and justice. Insecurity, most notably attacks by al-Shabaab on mostly ‘non-local’ education and health professionals, has further undermined service provision in Mandera and other counties neighbouring Somalia.

## Marginalisation of minority clans

Minority clans suffer from the political competition that privileges dominant clans, diminishing their representation in county institutions and thus their communities’ access to services. Interviews have pointed to discrimination “in terms of development opportunities and representation in the county assembly. This therefore results in growing resentment and a feeling of being ostracised from development.”<sup>161</sup>

As a member of a minority clan explained to us: “Our children are from a poor background and have no means to survive. They end up picking sand in riverbeds to sell for very little and are exposed to crocodiles and the harsh sun. Villages where we live are destitute. Young people can’t get a job because they have no education. We need a school in our area. The child mortality rate in Mandera East is very high, the school drop-out rate is high – this is often because children have to become heads of household. We have basic protection needs that are

IN 2015,  
NET  
ENROLMENT  
IN PRIMARY  
SCHOOL WAS  
**27.2**  
PER CENT IN  
MANDERA  
(18.2 PER CENT  
FOR GIRLS)  
COMPARED TO  
A NATIONAL  
AVERAGE OF  
**88**  
PER CENT

not met and we are seen as an inferior community. We have a representative in the county government, but he can't reach everyone and everywhere.”

Many people highlighted how al-Shabaab attempts to exploit the marginalisation of minority clans to recruit them. As one person told us: “Al-Shabaab takes advantage of the vulnerabilities of minority groups to marshal support and recruit new people. For instance, most of the ‘corner tribes’ are not considered Kenyans, so they have limited representation in the political sphere and lag behind in development. Al-Shabaab uses this to gain support.”<sup>162</sup>

## Gender norms and women and youth marginalisation

Patriarchal gender norms have constrained women's empowerment and entrenched inequality between women and men in Mandera. Women are under-represented in clan and political governance structures. Three women were appointed as county executive members out of ten members, and there were no elected women members of the county

assembly in the 2017 elections, which means that 16 women had to be nominated to fulfil the two-thirds gender rule.<sup>163</sup> Mandera, like other counties, has a women's representative at the national assembly, who plays an important role in promoting women's rights and supporting practical initiatives to improve the lives of women and girls.<sup>164</sup> At home, women have little decision-making power. Polygamy in Mandera is high in comparison to the rest of Kenya at 35 per cent,<sup>165</sup> and so are divorce rates.<sup>166</sup>

” Women and girls have little access to protection and redress from the justice system when subjected to violence. According to a civil society worker: “The defilement of minors . . . is an issue. There are cases of rape, though some girls are also forced into prostitution. There are community agreements to settle the issue and the girls suffer the consequences.”<sup>167</sup>

Because sexual relations outside wedlock are considered to bring shame to a girl's family, communities favour protecting the family's ‘honour’ over girls' safety. Some of the women interviewed

said that teenage pregnancies were due to a rise in ‘immoral lifestyles’, blaming the younger generation for not adhering to traditional social and cultural norms. A human rights worker explained: “Here we have a system of traditional justice, through the elders, outside of the formal courts' system. In rape cases their interventions are not satisfactory. They negotiate a sum of money from the perpetrator's community and what goes to the victim is very low.”<sup>168</sup> The *maslaha* system may also be used to force women and girls who have been raped to marry the perpetrator, particularly when rape results in pregnancies.<sup>169</sup>

Inequality between girls and boys is also apparent in education: primary school enrolment was 18.2 per cent for girls, compared to 27.2 per cent for boys in Mandera in 2015, according to UNICEF.<sup>170</sup> Recent figures from Mandera county put the net school enrolment at 42.4 per cent, with 64.4 per cent for boys and 35.5 per cent for girls.<sup>171</sup> Girls' low enrolment in schools is related to gender norms favouring boys as future income providers, while girls are destined to marry and look after the home and children, and many girls also drop out of school because of child marriage.

Several factors have increased women's social and economic burden in Mandera. They include men's absence when herding or travelling for work outside the county, high unemployment, lack of livelihood opportunities and the high divorce rate. In addition to taking care of the home and of children, they are increasingly breadwinners. The lack of jobs and livelihoods in Mandera has made it hard for men, and especially young men, to fulfil their traditional role of breadwinner. Women told us: “The lack of jobs and opportunities for men means that women have to provide for their children on their own and have to find food every day. This should be men's responsibility traditionally. There are a lot of divorces here.”<sup>172</sup>

Most women we interviewed explained that polygamy, poor access to sexual and reproductive health and a lack of livelihood opportunities for all contribute to children being neglected and create a fertile ground for recruitment of boys and young men by al-Shabaab: “Men are allowed up to four wives, who can have six or seven children due to the lack of family planning, and the father can't pay for all the children. So the children will end up falling for economic incentives.”

According to a community-based organisation, destitution leads some women, especially divorcees and those whose husbands have died, to collaborate with al-Shabaab as informers to survive.<sup>173</sup>

Mandera has one of the highest child poverty rates in Kenya.<sup>174</sup> The links between shifting gender roles,

### “

**The lack of jobs and opportunities for men means that women have to provide for their children on their own and have to find food every day. This should be men's responsibility traditionally. There are a lot of divorces here.**

Woman focus group discussion participant.

### ”

unemployment, low opportunities for livelihoods and the risks of becoming involved in violence were delineated clearly by women participants in a focus group discussion: “Some children are ill-treated by step-parents who don’t provide them with food. Our men don’t take their responsibilities. In our culture the man should provide everything: food, shelter, etc. But this has become the responsibility of the mother, who needs to get out to find jobs to buy food for her children. We have to leave home early and come back late. Children have no role model. If the man gets challenged, he can beat up his wife and children. The rate of divorce is high in our area. This has become a habit for men as there is a lack of jobs and education. Sixty per cent of Somali men are not educated. They chew *miraq* [khat] and become restless. Men and youth who have no money and no jobs are more susceptible to join these groups [al-Shabaab] to earn a living.”<sup>175</sup>

Women in focus group discussions also highlighted the detrimental psychological impact of violence, and in particular attacks on teachers and schools, on children, who also suffer from school closures.

Many interviews highlighted that young men’s limited access to education and livelihood opportunities exposes them to violence, drugs and recruitment by clan militias or al-Shabaab: “Violence in Mandera is primarily driven by unemployment among the youth, low literacy levels limiting opportunities for the youth and competition over scarce resources that support the pastoralists’ way of life.”<sup>176</sup> A businessman said: “The youth are the most at-risk group as they are easily lured into joining the Somalia-based militant group for financial reasons.”<sup>177</sup>

Women voiced concerns especially about the future of young men: “We fear the recruitment of our boys who finish school or university but have no jobs to go to and get involved in drug abuse.”<sup>178</sup>

“Young men sometimes join al-Shabaab. Once a child finishes school there are no jobs, he remains idle, so he’ll join because of unemployment. In the case of tribal conflicts, we would know where our children run to, but with al-Shabaab we don’t know – they disappear. You can’t have a mediation with al-Shabaab to locate your child.”<sup>179</sup>

Despite their exposure to poverty and violence, and the role they often play in conflict in Mandera,<sup>180</sup> women and youth are greatly under-represented in community, clan and political decision-making structures and are seldom involved in peace and security discussions.<sup>181</sup> Young people told us: “Women and youth are less involved in the design and implementation of peace and security initiatives despite them being the most affected. Most of the peace resolutions are passed and disputes settled by older men – women and youth have no voice.”<sup>182</sup>

According to civil society workers: “Young people are targeted for recruitment into al-Shabaab and clan conflicts but are absent from governance structures. Elders (mostly men) are the ones who participate in security meetings, even those that touch on women and youth issues.”<sup>183</sup> Young people also told us that even some NGO interventions were skewed towards involving elders rather than women and youth.<sup>184</sup>

“

**Women and youth are less involved in the design and implementation of peace and security initiatives despite them being the most affected. Most of the peace resolutions are passed and disputes settled by older men – women and youth have no voice.**

Focus group discussion participant.

”

## Notes

- 132 Website of the AMISOM military component: <http://amisom-au.org/mision-profile/military-component/>; Saferworld interviews with civil society workers.
- 133 Saferworld interview with security officer; Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 134 Saferworld interview with human rights worker.
- 135 The human rights unit of the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM) issued a comprehensive report on the protection of civilians in December 2017. It has also published monthly updates on human rights in Somalia, and regular reports of the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council have a section on the protection of civilians, but these remain succinct.
- 136 The exact number of casualties remains disputed. For an account of the battle of El Adde, see: International Peace Institute (2016), ‘The Battle at El Adde: The Kenya Defence Forces, al-Shabaab, and Unanswered Questions’, July ([https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1607\\_Battle-at-El-Adde.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/1607_Battle-at-El-Adde.pdf))
- 137 Interview with human rights and NGO workers; see also *Garowe Online* (2018), ‘Somalia: Kenyan troops accused of rape and killings in Gedo’, 3 August (<https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/somalia-kenyan-troops-accused-of-rape-and-killings-in-gedo>)
- 138 See: Saferworld (2018), ‘Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia’s civil war: time for a new approach’, November.
- 139 See: Rawlence B (2015), ‘Black and White: Kenya’s Criminal Racket in Somalia’, *Journalists for Justice*, November (<https://ifjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Black-and-White-web.pdf>); Allison S (2015), ‘Think Again: Who profits from Kenya’s war in Somalia?’, Institute for Security Studies, December.
- 140 Saferworld (2018), ‘Counter-terror and the logic of violence in Somalia’s civil war: time for a new approach’, November.
- 141 Hattem J (2020), ‘Kenya and Somalia’s Long-Simmering Territorial Dispute Threatens to Boil Over’, *World Politics Review*, 6 April (<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/28660/the-long-simmering-kenya-somalia-maritime-dispute-threatens-to-boil-over>)
- 142 Ombati C (2020), ‘Tension in Mandera as Somali troops clash with Jubaland’s in neighbouring town’, *The Standard*, 3 March (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001362645/somali-troops-clash-sets-panic-in-mandera-town>)
- 143 Amnesty International (2020), ‘Somalia: Kenya must arrest and return escaped Jubaland minister to face trial in Mogadishu’, 2 February (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/02/somalia-kenya-must-arrest-and-return-escaped-jubaland-minister-to-face-trial-in-mogadishu/>)
- 144 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2020), ‘Somalia: Flash Update No.1 on displacement in Gedo region, Jubaland as of 05/03/2020 [EN/SO]’, 5 March (<https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-flash-update-no1-displacement-gedo-region-jubaland-05032020-ens0>)
- 145 *DW* (2020), ‘Could Kenya annex chunks of Somalia?’, 13 March (<https://www.dw.com/en/could-kenya-annex-chunks-of-somalia/a-52725856>)
- 146 *Garowe Online* (2020), ‘Al-Shabaab raids Mandera, kills four amid tensions in Gedo Region’, 12 March (<https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/world/africa/al-shabaab-raids-mandera-kills-four-amid-tensions-in-gedo-region>)
- 147 Whittaker H (2015), ‘Legacies of Empire: State Violence and Collective Punishment in Kenya’s North Eastern Province, c. 1963–Present’, *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43 (4), pp 641–657 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/03086534.2015.1083232>)
- 148 Interpeace (2017), ‘Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera’; International Crisis Group (2015), ‘Kenya’s Somali North East: devolution and security’, 17 November (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-s-somali-north-east-devolution-and-security>)
- 149 These abuses have been documented in more or less detail by Kenya’s Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission, established in 2007: TJRC-Kenya, ‘Report of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission’.
- 150 International Crisis Group (2015), ‘Kenya’s Somali North East: devolution and security’, 17 November (<https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/kenya/kenya-s-somali-north-east-devolution-and-security>)
- 151 *Ibid.*
- 152 Menkhaus K (2015), ‘Conflict assessment 2014: northern Kenya and Somaliland’, Danish Demining Group, March (<https://land.igad.int/index.php/documents-1/countries/kenya/conflict-3/538-conflict-assessment-2014-northern-kenya-and-somaliland/file>)
- 153 Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 154 Saferworld interview with human rights worker, November 2018.
- 155 Saferworld interview with human rights worker.
- 156 According to the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (2018), ‘Kenya Economic Report 2018’.
- 157 UNICEF (2018), ‘Situation analysis for children and women in Kenya, 2017’, April (<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/situation-analysis-children-and-women-kenya-2017>); Mandera County Government (2018), ‘Mandera County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022: second edition’, p 53 (<https://www.manderaassembly.go.ke/docs/MCG%20CIDP-%20complete%20-1.pdf>)
- 158 See: UNDP (2013), ‘Discussion paper: Kenya’s Youth Employment Challenge’, January, p 49 ([http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Poverty%20Reduction/Inclusive%20development/Kenya\\_YEC\\_web\(jan13\).pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Poverty%20Reduction/Inclusive%20development/Kenya_YEC_web(jan13).pdf))
- 159 United Nations Population Fund (2015), ‘Transforming Mandera County’s Deadly Reputation For Maternal Health’, 18 October (<https://kenya.unfpa.org/en/news/transforming-mandera-county%E2%80%99s-deadly-reputation-maternal-health>); UNICEF (2018), ‘Situation analysis of children and women in Kenya, 2017’, April (<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/situation-analysis-children-and-women-kenya-2017>); Mandera County Government (2018), ‘Mandera County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022: second edition’, p 49 (<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/situation-analysis-children-and-women-kenya-2017>)
- 160 Saferworld interview with peace worker. See also: International Crisis Group, ‘Kenya’s Somali North East: Devolution and Security’ and Interpeace, (2017), ‘Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera’.
- 161 Interview with member of corner tribe, November 2018.
- 162 Interview with peace committee member, November 2018.
- 163 See for instance: National Democratic Institute (2018), ‘A Gender Analysis of the 2017 Kenya Elections’, February ([https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20Analysis%20of%202017%20GeneralElections%20FINAL%20High%20Res%20for%20Printer%20-%20NEW%20COVER\\_small.pdf](https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Gender%20Analysis%20of%202017%20GeneralElections%20FINAL%20High%20Res%20for%20Printer%20-%20NEW%20COVER_small.pdf)); Issak E M (2018), ‘Challenges of negotiated democracy and women’s political representation: a case study of Mandera County Assembly’, December (<http://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/105718/ETHILA%20MOHAMUD.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>)
- 164 The Women’s Representative is currently Amina Gedow Hassan, a peace activist: <http://www.parliament.go.ke/node/3241>
- 165 See for instance: Kinuthia K (2018), ‘Kenya polygamy highest among pastoralists’, *Business Daily*, 8 April (<https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/news/Kenya-polygamy-highest-among-pastoralists--/539546-4377890-10bbrqx2/index.html>)
- 166 See Mandera County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022: <https://www.manderaassembly.go.ke/docs/MCG%20CIDP-%20complete%20-1.pdf>
- 167 Saferworld interview with peace worker, November 2018.
- 168 Saferworld interview, human rights worker.
- 169 See for instance: *The Daily Nation* (2018), ‘Maslaha: Where goats and cash are used to pay for rape’, 4 March (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/wajir/Goats-used-as-fines-for-rape-in-Wajir/3444790-4328392-nnkfxcz/index.html>)
- 170 UNICEF (2018), ‘Situation analysis for children and women in Kenya, 2017’, April (<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/situation-analysis-children-and-women-kenya-2017>)
- 171 Mandera County Government, ‘Mandera County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022: second edition’, p 53, (<https://www.manderaassembly.go.ke/docs/MCG%20CIDP-%20complete%20-1.pdf>)
- 172 Saferworld focus group discussions with women from various sub-counties.
- 173 Saferworld interview, civil society worker, November 2018.
- 174 UNICEF (2018), ‘Situation analysis for children and women in Kenya, 2017’, April (<https://www.unicef.org/kenya/reports/situation-analysis-children-and-women-kenya-2017>)
- 175 Saferworld focus group discussion with women, November 2018.
- 176 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth. See also: *Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques* (2015), ‘North-Eastern Kenya: A Prospective Analysis’, December (<http://www.iris-france.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/ENG-Observatoire-Prospective-Huma-NORTHEasternKenya-12-2015.pdf>); Menkhaus K (2015), ‘Conflict assessment 2014, Northern Kenya and Somaliland’, Danish Demining Group.
- 177 Saferworld interview with business person, November 2018.
- 178 Saferworld focus group discussion, participant.
- 179 Saferworld focus group discussion with women.
- 180 As noted, women do play a role in clan conflicts. They are expected to support their clan and encourage men who fight through poems and praise. Saferworld focus group discussion with women. See also: Interpeace, (2017), ‘Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera’, p 35.
- 181 Though women in north-eastern Kenya have previously been actively involved in local peace committees to resolve clan conflicts. See for instance: UNDP (2010), ‘Dynamics and Trends of Conflict in Greater Mandera’, Amani Papers, May ([http://www.undp.org/content/dam/kenya/docs/Amani%20Papers/AP\\_Volume1\\_n2\\_May2010.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/kenya/docs/Amani%20Papers/AP_Volume1_n2_May2010.pdf))
- 182 Focus group discussion with youth (girls and boys), November 2018.
- 183 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 184 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth, November 2018.



A policeman looks on as Kenyan teachers demonstrate outside the parliament building in Nairobi on 3 February 2015, citing insecurity in Mandera after teachers were killed in November 2014.

© Simon Maina/AFP via Getty Images

## 4

## Evolving responses to insecurity: one step forward, one step back

---

**The Kenyan authorities and civil society have taken some steps to address the declining security situation. Mandera's communities have noted some progress, albeit modest, including more inclusive political representation in county structures and the establishment of a locally recruited police reserve, trusted by communities. There is more awareness among some security force officers of the pitfalls of a heavy-handed security response, and there are more attempts to build trust with communities. There have long been local cross-border initiatives to foster peaceful relations between communities in Kenya and Somalia, but they are undermined by the wider dynamics of Somalia's armed conflict.**

The introduction of a so-called 'softer' approach, through the implementation of Kenya's Countering Violent Extremism Strategy in Mandera, is not considered effective by communities, not least because of the inability of security forces to protect people against retaliation by al-Shabaab and persistent impunity for security agencies. Donors' security assistance to Kenya has been oriented towards countering terrorism and 'violent extremism', risking fuelling security agencies' abuses rather than contributing to genuine and effective security sector reforms.

There are also initiatives to address gaps in governance and development identified by Mandera's communities, including access to education, health and justice by women, men, girls and boys. These need to be supported and prioritised to provide a safer environment to border communities, address the marginalisation of minority clans and young people, and transform gender norms driving discrimination against women and girls.

## Addressing clan tensions in Mandera

Some of the people Saferworld interviewed acknowledged that there were small improvements in the security situation, partly due to reduced political tensions between clans in Mandera. The August 2017 elections saw the re-election of Ali Roba to the post of governor, despite this being opposed by the Garre council of elders, an influential group that sought to define the predominant clan’s political representation.<sup>185</sup> Many attributed this to

the efforts of the governor, despite being a Garre himself, to make the county executive more representative of the different clans in the county, including minority clans: “Currently Mandera is relatively peaceful and this can be attributed to a more equitable representation of the different clans in the county leadership.”<sup>186</sup>

Communities in Banisa sub-county in particular reported that the national government had taken positive steps to address the long-standing conflict

between the Garre and the Degodia, including by removing fences on grazing land and holding cross-border peace meetings.<sup>187</sup>

However, the risk of clan conflicts remains, and with it the potential for al-Shabaab to play on marginalisation and divisions within Mandera or between clans living along the border and inside Somalia. Communities and civil society have underlined that reducing clan conflicts, providing more inclusive access to resources and power at the county level and reinforcing social cohesion all need to be part of the strategy to address al-Shabaab-related insecurity.

## Cross-border peacebuilding

There are long-established peace committees led by elders to resolve disputes between clans living across Mandera and Gedo in Somalia, but they cannot handle matters related to the conflict with al-Shabaab:

“There are peace groups who can help in case of tribal conflicts but communities living along the border can’t get involved in mediation with

al-Shabaab. There is a lot of fear, we cannot talk about it for fear of retaliation.”<sup>188</sup>

The work of local peace actors has been hampered by Kenya’s military intervention in Somalia, as the increase in killings of civilians and destruction of property has negatively affected cross-border dialogue. In Somalia, traditional methods for addressing grievances between groups have been weakened because elders have been intimidated by al-Shabaab.<sup>189</sup>

People in Somalia involved in cross-border community discussions with counterparts in Mandera face acute risks. We were told that several people involved in peace discussions in Gedo had been killed or abducted.<sup>190</sup>

Clearly, communities and authorities in Mandera and Gedo have little means to address the complex and intense insecurity in Somalia. Beyond the complex layers of conflict in Somalia, from intra- and inter-clan competition, tensions between Somalia’s federal government and federal member states, and the war between al-Shabaab and other armed groups and the government, there are also Kenyan, regional and other international interests, including those of the Gulf states, that fuel conflict.

## Improving relations between the security forces and communities

Most communities in Mandera approve of the county’s initiative to recruit people living locally in the KPR, whom they trust and credit with reducing attacks by al-Shabaab. However, persistent abuses by security forces hamper attempts to improve relations between communities and national police and military forces.

Following the al-Shabaab attack on Garissa University in 2015, the Kenyan authorities appointed a respected Kenyan Somali leader, Mohamud Saleh, as north-eastern regional security commissioner.<sup>191</sup> He spearheaded a significant change in the security response to al-Shabaab violence, by improving relations between the security forces and communities in north-eastern Kenya and through recruiting and deploying security forces who are from the localities for their better understanding of the context and local dynamics. In Mandera, this translated into the county government supporting

“  
Currently Mandera is relatively peaceful and this can be attributed to a more equitable representation of the different clans in the county leadership.

A member of a corner tribe.

”

the recruitment of people living locally in the KPR, with about 900 to 1,000 recruited by the end of 2018. The county contributes financially by providing stipends of 15,000 KES/month to 350 KPRs,<sup>192</sup> though the KPR is formally under the purview of the national government.

Communities in Mandera East credited the fall of large-scale al-Shabaab attacks to the increased presence of KPR in their area. “The work done by the county through supporting the recruitment of KPRs to support the police has led to improved security in Mandera.”<sup>193</sup> Community members say they are willing to share information on security threats, but a lack of trust towards the security forces has hindered cooperation. People feel that they can trust locally recruited KPR: “The reporting is done through the local chief and KPRs who are trusted by the people.”<sup>194</sup> According to a civil society worker:

“Locals have trust in the KPRs, owing to the fact that they are civilians who live among the communities, hence they are comfortable sharing information with them as opposed to the police or the military.”<sup>195</sup> People felt police officers living in their own compounds were less trustworthy, and less responsive than the KPR in both acting on information about security threats and intervening in case of attacks.

All community representatives we spoke to said that more local KPR members should be recruited, to address both insecurity and unemployment in Mandera. However, some expressed concern about their low pay compared to the regular police, and the fact that they are paid from county rather than national funds: “The KPR help people but the other security officers are paid from taxpayers’ money. Kenyan Somalis are part of Kenya and should be deployed as security forces here. We need security units composed of all Kenyan Somalis. We shouldn’t be merely ‘homeguards’ or police reserves.”<sup>196</sup>

Some people also resent that the KPR – despite being more proactive in responding to attacks and security threats than national security forces – does not get the same recognition: “When policemen sleep, security is handled by the KPR. In fact the other security forces harm civilians. But the KPR are so poor: they only get 15,000 KES per month. They should be absorbed in the police force.”<sup>197</sup>

One group said: “A native of El Wak, a KPR, responded to an al-Shabaab attack, together with two KDF soldiers. He killed two al-Shabaab attackers but ran out of ammunition and then was killed. Two non-locals and two KPR died in this incident. The Kenyan forces who came afterwards didn’t even collect the body of our man. His name was Ahmed Mohamed and he left two wives, one with eight children and the other with five.”<sup>198</sup>

One person from a minority clan alleged that some have to pay to get recruited into the KPR: “Another barrier to security is corruption. Our children need to pay bribes to be recruited . . . Our children have capacity but no money, if you’re poor and can’t get a job you end up joining radicalised groups.”

A civil society worker also felt there were potential risks due to the composition of the KPR and its lack of adequate training: “Seventy per cent of them are Garre. Should any new clan conflict start, will they take sides? There are some who are former drug addicts, others from clan militias. There are a lot of small arms available in the county already – is this really sustainable?”<sup>199</sup> A security official also acknowledged that the KPR had not received sufficient training in handling weapons.<sup>200</sup>

While many communities approve of the KPR, trust towards national police units and the military remains low. A security official acknowledged to us that this mistrust was due to unprofessional conduct in investigations, and that relations with the public were now improving.<sup>201</sup> However, people have also told us that, to improve trust, national authorities need to recognise the abuses committed as part of counter-terrorism operations in recent years, and disclose the fate of the Mandera residents who are missing. The relatives of those missing continue to suffer distress, trauma and financial difficulties. According to a civil society worker:

“Dozens of women have lost sons, brothers, fathers or husbands. They went to the court to ask about their fate. There is not enough trauma counselling and psychological support for them. This situation has destroyed their livelihoods. Nobody cares about them.”<sup>202</sup>

Communities most affected by these abuses have decried Mandera’s exclusion from an amnesty offered by the government to al-Shabaab defectors:<sup>203</sup> “The amnesty wasn’t applied here in north-eastern Kenya. Suspects were taken from their homes and disappeared.”<sup>204</sup> The amnesty initiative, announced in April 2015 as part of Kenya’s shift to a ‘softer’ approach to counter-terrorism, had mixed results elsewhere in Kenya. There has been little transparency about the fate of returnees, the risks they face, whether the offer of amnesty is being honoured and how rehabilitation is conducted.<sup>205</sup>

This mirrors the lack of an adequate demobilisation, disarmament and rehabilitation strategy for other groups who have been involved in organised violence in Mandera, including members of clan

“  
Dozens of women have lost sons, brothers, fathers or husbands. They went to the court to ask about their fate. There is not enough trauma counselling and psychological support for them. This situation has destroyed their livelihoods. Nobody cares about them.

Human rights worker.

”

militias and Kenyan Somalis and Somali refugees recruited by the Kenyan government to fight in Somalia in 2009. Civil society workers in Mandera highlight the general absence of a response strategy, including for issues such as drug use, identified as a growing issue for local youth.<sup>206</sup>

The persistence of ‘collective punishments’ by the security forces and recurrent allegations of corrupt practices is another obstacle to improving trust with communities. One aid worker told us: “In Mandera there is one step forward and one step back in terms of building relations, when the security forces are attacking people.”<sup>207</sup>

There have been efforts made to extend Kenya’s community policing model *Nyumba Kumi* (ten households) to Mandera, including recently under the banner of ‘countering violent extremism’ projects financed by donors. People told us that while the initiative dates from 2013, it did not start in Mandera until 2017.<sup>208</sup> There are ongoing initiatives such as discussions between security officers and community members, which security officials say are helpful. However, lack of trust in security forces, and particularly fear that giving information on security incidents will expose communities to suspicion, hinders progress. Some community members feel that using a reporting platform where information can be given anonymously rather than through face-to-face interaction with the police may protect them better.<sup>209</sup>

These initiatives have yet to translate into meaningful and sustainable reforms to make the security forces accountable.<sup>210</sup> Of course, this is an issue that affects not only Mandera, but also the whole country. Kenya has been grappling with human rights abuses by the security forces and police reforms for decades.<sup>211</sup> While an Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) has been established in Kenya and has opened investigations into alleged police abuses, in practice accountability is rarely achieved.

Despite the concerns noted here, the KPR approach of ensuring that people are involved in providing security for their communities appears to have had some success and has the trust of communities. It also appears to be part of a growing trend in Kenya, coming after the regional security commissioner’s initiative to improve relations between the public and security actors. The deployment of people from Mandera as KPRs has significantly helped reduce the tempo of attacks in the county.

## ‘Countering violent extremism’ initiatives

According to the people we spoke to, Mandera’s communities do not see countering violent extremism (CVE) projects as being effective. There are concerns that consultation has not been inclusive, that the concept of ‘violent extremism’ does not reflect the local context, and most importantly, that participating in these initiatives exposes people to threats, particularly from al-Shabaab.

In September 2016, Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta launched a National Strategy to CVE in Kenya, as a way to complement counter-terrorism operations with engagement at the community level on the drivers of ‘violent extremism’. A ‘counter-terrorism and de-radicalisation department’ was established within Mandera’s county government in 2016 to deal specifically with this issue. Before the department’s establishment, both peacebuilding and CVE-related activities were handled by the county’s peacebuilding and cohesion unit.<sup>212</sup>

Kenya’s various counties have been asked to adopt county-level CVE action plans, supported by donors. Internationally, these are being presented as a success.<sup>213</sup> In Mandera, a CVE action plan was adopted in April 2019, after stagnating for months, reportedly because of competition at the county level for the funds it could provide and their allocation.<sup>214</sup> Some of the activities, which have been carried out by the ‘de-radicalisation’ department for some time, consist of holding consultation forums between community members, county government and security officers. Others aim to sensitise communities as to the ‘dangers of radicalisation’ and ‘extremist ideologies’. In addition, a number of CVE initiatives are carried out under donor-funded NGO programmes, some of which aim to improve relations between communities and security forces. Attempts to build trust between communities and security agencies are undercut by persistent security force abuses. Unless and until abuses by the security forces are effectively addressed and stopped, it is unlikely communities will embrace CVE programmes in Mandera.

Communities and civil society workers expressed some concerns about CVE initiatives in Mandera. There are complaints that some groups were not consulted in preparation of the county action plan, including human rights activists, women, youth and minority groups, and people living in hard-to-reach areas.<sup>215</sup> Others note that while “CVE is becoming a fashionable term”, the understanding of what drives



Men refuel an airplane in the town of Mandera at the Kenya-Somalia border.

© Goran Tomasevic/Reuters

people to join groups such as al-Shabaab is very general. As Saferworld noted in our case study of Lamu county, the notion of ‘violent extremism’ does not resonate locally or help to design effective and context-appropriate interventions.<sup>216</sup> CVE programmes in Mandera seem to consist mostly of workshops to explain the dangers of joining al-Shabaab or how to recognise ‘signs of radicalisation’, as underlined in our interviews:

“Much of this work has entailed holding sensitisation forums targeting ‘at-risk groups’, women and youth as well as religious leaders and elders. Many of the interventions take the form of trainings on CVE. There is no unified or defined approach to issues related to CVE.”<sup>217</sup>

Communities complain that these do not help to address their practical security needs and are not well adapted to the local context. One serious concern relates to the risk for those who participate in CVE projects in a context of continuing insecurity and dangers for people associated with government-led security initiatives. Civil society organisations explained that, with insecurity hampering access to communities exposed to al-Shabaab violence, the implementation of CVE-related initiatives was left to them.<sup>218</sup> One person told us:

“While there have been interventions by the county and NGOs, they do not reach at-risk groups in the remotest areas owing to insecurity. As such, there is

a need for strong collaboration between civil society organisations and security personnel. At the same time, interventions by civil society organisations or military and police deployments sometimes expose communities along the border to more risk as al-Shabaab targets them on the grounds that they do not comply with their ideas.”<sup>219</sup>

Similarly, religious leaders and local chiefs have been targeted by both al-Shabaab and the Kenyan forces. Being seen as cooperating with one side brings the real risk of threats and retaliation from the other side. As one person told us: “Efforts to include religious leaders in CVE activities, especially preaching and countering al-Shabaab ideologies and the misinterpretation of the Quran, has been affected by the suspicion that al-Shabaab has spies (*amniyat*) in mosques.”<sup>220</sup>

People involved in community policing efforts face similar risks: “Efforts to include youth in policing committees spearheaded by the chiefs are hampered by the general fear of attacks by al-Shabaab, especially on community policing representatives. Chiefs have been in the past targeted, and some killed hence the fear and the

“  
Efforts to include youth in policing committees spearheaded by the chiefs are hampered by the general fear of attacks by al-Shabaab, especially on community policing representatives. Chiefs have been in the past targeted, and some killed hence the fear and the apprehension by communities to fully embracing the *Nyumba Kumi* initiative.

Research participant.

”

apprehension by communities to fully embracing the *Nyumba Kumi* initiative.”<sup>221</sup>

People living in Somalia and involved in cross-border discussions with counterparts in Mandera arguably face more risks than people living in Kenya.

For them, any suspicion of association with Kenyan or international security initiatives would bring the threat of being killed by al-Shabaab.

There are also well-documented abuses by the security forces of people suspected of links with al-Shabaab, showing the dangers that people alleged to be vulnerable to al-Shabaab recruitment could be exposed to. While communities and civil society

organisations are well aware of these dangers, there is little indication that adequate measures are taken to ensure that government or donor-funded CVE projects avoid placing people at further risk. Even less clear are signs that they represent a thoughtful attempt to overcome the deep barriers to trust between communities and abusive security agencies.

There needs to be more reflection about the supposed complementarity between counter-terrorism, intelligence operations and ‘CVE’ activities. Attempting to conflate peacebuilding and community policing activities under the umbrella of CVE, amid ongoing targeting by al-Shabaab of people it associates with the Kenyan authorities and counter-terror operations, could increase the dangers for people targeted by or participating in such projects, compromising their potential for success.

Women had been sidelined in consultations for CVE programmes and in their design and implementation. Some women interviewed did receive some training on ‘radicalisation of children’ – which in itself reinforces stereotypes about women’s roles as mothers and carers of children. These women expressed interest in participating in more CVE initiatives – in part because donors favour this new agenda, in a region where aid is scarce and frustrated by the difficulties of access.

## Tackling gender inequalities

As mentioned in chapters two and three, unequal gender norms and power relations underpin significant violence in Mandera. There is a

continuum of violence against women in all spheres, from the direct threat posed by al-Shabaab, to the violence directed at men relatives which has severe consequences for women.

Some promising civil society initiatives are emerging that focus on improving women’s access to justice, such as working with paralegals to provide legal aid to victims of abuses, and training communities and local chiefs as to the different roles and mandates of customary and statutory laws, to reduce recourse to the *maslaha* system for rapes and sexual assaults.<sup>222</sup>

## Improving access to healthcare and education

As communities told us, healthcare and education have been devastated by prevailing insecurity in Mandera, with teachers and schools in particular directly targeted. Healthcare and education are the most pressing needs for people in Mandera, and school closures particularly affect women and girls, adding to mothers’ responsibilities for looking after children and reducing further prospects of future livelihoods, deepening women’s already entrenched marginalisation.

Lack of access to healthcare and education is fuelled by insecurity, and fuels it in turn. This presents enormous challenges for the county and national authorities for which there are no quick fixes. More accountable and responsive security provision, including for non-local professionals, would help extend essential services to those who need them most. This needs to be coupled with long-term strategies at national and county levels<sup>223</sup> to train and employ people in the health and education professions – including in particular women, youth and minority groups, who bear the brunt of gaps in services and unemployment. Notable recent initiatives include the establishment of a Technical Training Institute and a Teacher Training College, supported by Mandera county authorities.

When we asked why there were so few locally recruited teachers and construction workers, we were told that people aspired to become health professionals but not teachers or construction workers. Those who can afford to study often opt to train for the business sector:

“Teaching is a profession that many here don’t like. People prefer to opt for other jobs. Also, education is hampered by poverty, people can’t afford to pay

“  
Any suspicion of association with Kenyan or international security initiatives would bring the threat of being killed by al-Shabaab.

”

college fees. Those who can pay for business administration studies. Many children stay at home and don't go to school. Our communities are pastoralists. Often our animals die from drought and we don't have enough money.”<sup>224</sup>

One civil society worker detected a tendency for people to associate education with teachers' strict discipline, and see it in a negative light, suggesting a need to promote quality education, and sensitise teachers and the public.<sup>225</sup> By contrast, he explained, efforts to train and recruit Mandera residents as health professions are expected to fully staff the health sector within a few years.<sup>226</sup> County authorities claim to have made efforts to improve access to health, including transport to health facilities and the expansion of community health centres, health infrastructure and quality. Almost 80 per cent of the health workforce is now made up of people from Mandera.<sup>227</sup>

## Donors' security assistance and aid

Kenya has been a close ally of Western governments in the 'war on terror'. The US, the UK and the EU<sup>228</sup> have provided military or security assistance to the Kenyan authorities, as well as funding for CVE interventions in the country, stepping up their support since 2015. This is in spite of the Kenyan security forces' human rights record and persistent allegations of corruption against them.

In 2015, the US increased its security assistance to Kenya, providing about USD\$114 million, mainly in support of counter-terrorism military operations.<sup>229</sup> US assistance increased in 2016 to \$127 million, though in recent years security assistance has gone down, with about \$5 million allocated for the year 2019. The reasons for this reduction appear to be a greater priority given to the Counter-Islamic State of Iraq and Syria Train and Equip Fund by the US government, rather than concerns about abuses by Kenyan security agencies.<sup>230</sup> The US has also sold weapons to Kenya, including \$15 million of arms sales recorded for 2014<sup>231</sup> and a \$418 million deal for the sale of military aircraft in 2017.<sup>232</sup> In May 2019, the US and Kenya signed bilateral agreements, elevating their defence and counter-terrorism cooperation.<sup>233</sup> US aid includes funding for CVE projects, including for the development of county action plans such as Mandera's.<sup>234</sup>

In 2015, the UK deepened its long-standing cooperation with Kenya through the signing of a Defence Cooperation Agreement, including military

training and support for maritime security.<sup>235</sup> The two countries also signed a new security compact to strengthen cooperation on CVE, border and aviation security and criminal justice issues. The compact mentions support to Kenya for addressing the drivers of conflict, working with communities, developing a cross-government approach to insecurity and the establishment of an annual strategic dialogue between the two countries.<sup>236</sup> It was renewed in August 2018.<sup>237</sup> Military training has focused on tackling IEDs, in addition to UK support to Kenyan units within AMISOM in Somalia.<sup>238</sup> In addition, the UK Foreign Office has confirmed its close working relationship with Kenya's counter-terrorism units such as the ATPU.<sup>239</sup> The Foreign Office also has a £3.9 million programme supporting CVE projects.<sup>240</sup>

After the al-Shabaab attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi in 2013, the EU allocated Kenya €19 million to support its counter-terrorism efforts under the Instrument contributing to Security and Peace, including €2 million on a CVE project 'strengthening resilience to violent extremism' (STRIVE), €6 million to counter-terrorism financing and €11 million for regional counter-terrorism law enforcement.<sup>241</sup> The EU also funds CVE projects linked to improving youth employment and economic opportunities (€19 million, in north-eastern Kenya and elsewhere).<sup>242</sup>

Despite the well-documented abuses committed by Kenya's military and security forces, including the ATPU, this has not halted international support for Kenya's security sector. Mandera's communities have identified human rights violations by the security forces as an important driver of conflict, an obstacle to building trust and to preventing attacks by al-Shabaab. Apart from the real risks that international security assistance may be used in the commission of abuses, continuing defence and counter-terrorism cooperation in spite of such concerns could be seen as a signal that in reality, donors tolerate abuses.

International donors contribute substantial humanitarian and development aid to Kenya, including Mandera. The US gave over \$617 million in humanitarian and development aid to Kenya in 2019.<sup>243</sup> UK humanitarian and development aid to Kenya is budgeted at £169 million for 2019–2020.<sup>244</sup> The EU also provides aid to Mandera (and other counties in Kenya deemed vulnerable) including in the areas of food security; legal empowerment, aid delivery and access to justice; governance and peacebuilding, including cooperation for cross-border conflict management; and maternal health.<sup>245</sup>

“  
Education is hampered by poverty, people can't afford to pay college fees. Those who can pay for business administration studies. Many children stay at home and don't go to school.

Mandera East resident.

”

Valuable projects to enhance legal aid for people in Mandera and improve their access to justice – and to extend health services – should include providing legal and psychosocial support to those who have suffered abuses in counter-terrorism operations. In addition, given the underlying tensions between clans, particular attention should be given to make aid conflict sensitive and ensure it enhances gender equality and improves access to resources for marginalised groups, especially young people and minority clans, and tackle the sources of tensions that communities have identified. Finally, international aid should also have a greater focus on improving access to education and ensuring employment opportunities in Mandera, particularly for women and girls, as communities have identified this as a priority need.

## Notes

- 185 See: Mburu P (2016), 'Governor Ali Roba fights off elders' decree on 2017 elections', *The Standard*, 27 September (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000217504/governor-ali-roba-fights-off-elders-decree-on-2017-elections>)
- 186 Saferworld interview with member of corner tribe, November 2018.
- 187 Saferworld focus group discussions with women and men from Banisa sub-county, November 2018.
- 188 Saferworld interview with peace committee member.
- 189 Saferworld interviews with peace committee member, peace worker.
- 190 Saferworld interviews with peace committee member, peace worker.
- 191 Saferworld (2017), 'Breaking the cycle of violence in Garissa'. Mohamud Saleh was replaced in 2018 by Mohammed Birik, a public administrator originally from Mandera.
- 192 Saferworld interviews with county government officer, residents from Mandera East, civil society workers.
- 193 Saferworld interview with peace worker.
- 194 Saferworld focus group discussion with young people.
- 195 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 196 Saferworld interview with human rights worker.
- 197 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 198 Saferworld focus group discussion with Mandera South residents. See also Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', p 41.
- 199 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 200 Saferworld interview with security officer.
- 201 Saferworld interview with security officer.
- 202 Saferworld interview with human rights worker.
- 203 See: Ombati C (2015), 'Kenya announces amnesty and reintegration to youth who denounce Al-Shabaab', 14 April (<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000158358/kenya-announces-amnesty-and-reintegration-to-youth-who-denounce-al-shabaab>)
- 204 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 205 See for instance: Yusuf M (2016), 'How Kenya's al-Shabab amnesty is a loaded gun', *The New Humanitarian*, 31 August (<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/investigations/2016/08/31/how-kenya-s-al-shabab-amnesty-loaded-gun>); Center for Strategic and International Studies (2018), 'Kenya's Struggling Amnesty Experiment: The Policy Challenge of Rehabilitating Former Terrorists', 26 October (<https://www.csis.org/analysis/kenyas-struggling-amnesty-experiment-policy-challenge-rehabilitating-former-terrorists>)
- 206 Saferworld interviews with civil society workers. For the lack of demobilisation of youth, see Interpeace (2017), 'Voices of the people: Challenges to peace in Mandera', p 63 and p 73.
- 207 Saferworld interview, November 2018.
- 208 Saferworld interview with civil society worker.
- 209 Saferworld focus group discussions.
- 210 Saferworld interviews with security officer, civil society workers.
- 211 See for instance: Spencer L (2018), 'Obtaining Justice', Democracy in Africa, 14 November (<http://democracyinfrica.org/obtaining-justice-extrajudicial-killings-kenya/>)
- 212 Saferworld interview with county government worker, November 2018.
- 213 For example a draft USAID CVE policy for public comment: USAID (2019), 'Countering Violent Extremism Through Development Assistance', October, p 9. It states that 'Capacity building can be designed to strengthen country systems, such as in Kenya, where a national CVE strategy led to the subsequent development of county-level action plans that, with USAID support, mobilized local governments and communities to collaborate. The national-level commitment to incorporate civil society and community-level partners into this planning was designed to build trust, increase information-sharing and limit radicalization among disaffected community members in areas vulnerable to terrorist recruitment.'
- 214 See: Otsialo M (2019), 'Mandera County's action plan against extremism bearing fruit', *Daily Nation*, 2 April (<https://www.nation.co.ke/counties/mandera/Mandera-rises-from-years-of-terror-attacks/1183298-5053224-ykwyr3/index.html>); Saferworld interviews with consultants and civil society workers. Action plans are 'owned' by the counties, with funding expected to come from their budget as well as associated donor-backed projects.
- 215 Saferworld interviews with civil society workers.
- 216 Saferworld interviews with civil society workers, November 2018. See also: Saferworld (2017), 'Section V. Countering violent extremism: not yet a peace strategy' in 'Inside Kenya's war on terror: the case of Lamu', 12 April (<https://saferworld-indepth.squarespace.com/v-countering-violent-extremism-not-yet-a-peace-strategy>)
- 217 Saferworld interview with peace committee member, November 2018.
- 218 Saferworld focus group discussion with youth, November 2018.
- 219 Saferworld interview with peace committee member.
- 220 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 221 Saferworld interviews with civil society and peace workers.
- 222 Saferworld interviews with civil society workers.
- 223 Pre-school education is devolved to counties but primary and secondary education remain prerogatives of the central government.
- 224 Saferworld interview, resident from Mandera East, November 2018.
- 225 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 226 Saferworld interview with civil society worker, November 2018.
- 227 Mandera County Government, 'Mandera County Integrated Development Plan 2018–2022: second edition', p 47 (<https://www.manderaassembly.go.ke/docs/MCG%20CIDP-%20complete%20-1.pdf>)
- 228 EU member states also provide bilateral assistance for counter-terrorism and CVE.
- 229 Security Assistance Monitor, 'U.S. security aid to Kenya' (<https://www.securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Kenya/>); see also: Security Assistance Monitor (2015), 'U.S. Counterterrorism Aid to Kenya: Focusing on a Military with Motivation and Corruption Problems'.
- 230 Gould J (2017), 'Trump budget proposal slashes Obama's counterterrorism partnerships fund', *Defense News*, 23 May (<https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2017/05/23/trump-budget-proposal-slashes-obama-s-counterterrorism-partnerships-fund/>)
- 231 Security Assistance Monitor, 'U.S. security aid to Kenya'.
- 232 Council of Foreign Relations (2017), 'U.S. Arms Sales to Kenya', March (<https://www.cfr.org/blog/us-arms-sales-kenya>)
- 233 Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2019), 'Kenya, US sign bilateral strategic agreements', 9 May (<http://www.mfa.go.ke/?p=2629>)
- 234 The U.S. Department of State's aid on counter-terrorism is not accounted for in US counter-terrorism spending. It defines counter-terrorism aid as 'Combat transnational terrorism, especially from al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and adherents using a strategic counterterrorism approach that focuses on 1) countering violent extremism; 2) building the capacity of civilian law enforcement and criminal justice institutions to address threats within their own borders; and 3) building stronger relationships with our partners around the world – in order to engage in a broader, more comprehensive counterterrorism effort that treats civilian institutions, to include the justice sector and law enforcement, as a critical part of building effective partner capacity to counter terrorism.' See: Stimson Study Group on Counter-Terrorism Spending (2018), 'Protecting America while promoting efficiencies and accountability', May ([https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/CT\\_Spending\\_Report\\_o.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/CT_Spending_Report_o.pdf))
- 235 *The Star* (2015), 'Uhuru meets Cameron in show of softening UK-Kenya relations ahead of visit', 29 September (<https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2015-09-28-uhuru-meets-cameron-in-show-of-softening-uk-kenya-relations-ahead-of-visit/>)
- 236 British High Commission Nairobi (2015), 'UK and Kenya commit to greater cooperation on defence and security', 30 September (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-and-kenya-commit-to-greater-cooperation-on-defence-and-security>)
- 237 British High Commission Nairobi (2019), 'Second UK-Kenya security dialogue takes place in Nairobi', 11 March (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/second-uk-kenya-security-dialogue-takes-place-in-nairobi>)
- 238 British High Commission Nairobi (2016), 'UK-Kenya conduct joint military training', October (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-kenya-conduct-joint-military-training>)
- 239 See: UK government's response to Freedom of Information Request 8 June 2015 ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/625744/0200-15\\_LETTER.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/625744/0200-15_LETTER.pdf))
- 240 See: UK Foreign Office, 'CSSF East Africa programme summary' ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/630248/Countering\\_Violent\\_Extremism\\_East\\_Africa\\_2017.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630248/Countering_Violent_Extremism_East_Africa_2017.pdf))
- 241 European Commission (2015), 'The EU's work in Rwanda, Kenya and Uganda', 16 September (<https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/eus-work-rwanda-kenya-and-uganda>)
- 242 Delegation of the European Union to Kenya (2018), 'EU assistance to Mandera County', September ([https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mandera\\_o.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mandera_o.pdf)); See also: EU Trust Fund, 'Collaboration in cross-border areas of the Horn of Africa', ([https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/brochure-final-web\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/brochure-final-web_1.pdf))
- 243 Security Assistance Monitor, 'U.S. security aid to Kenya'.
- 244 UK Development Tracker, 'Kenya' (<https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/KE/>)
- 245 Delegation of the European Union to Kenya, EU assistance to Mandera County, September 2018, [https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mandera\\_o.pdf](https://eeas.europa.eu/sites/eeas/files/mandera_o.pdf); See also: EU Trust Fund, 'Collaboration in cross-border areas of the Horn of Africa' ([https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/brochure-final-web\\_1.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/euetfa/files/brochure-final-web_1.pdf))



Young Kenyan men take water out of a well for their camels. Mandera has a lack of clean drinking water and suffers from water shortages.

© Fayed El-Geziry/NurPhoto via Getty Images

## 5

## Conclusion and recommendations

---

**People in Mandera have borne the brunt of conflict between al-Shabaab and Kenya's security forces and have been exposed to abuses by both sides. The violence has particularly affected groups that already suffer discrimination, including minority clans, women and girls and young people.**

**There is an urgent need to provide a safer environment for people in Mandera, in particular border communities, through tackling abuses by the security forces and restoring the trust of communities. To improve security, the authorities should build on recent positive steps, including fairer political representation of clans in county structures and the recruitment of local police reservists who are trusted by communities and responsive to their concerns, while ensuring that they don't result in abuses against the communities, such as gender-based violence.**

To move towards sustainable peace, it is crucial to address the marginalisation of minority clans and young people, and the gender norms that drive discrimination against women and girls. Although devolution has the potential to reverse Mandera's legacy of marginalisation and underdevelopment, it has also exacerbated competition between clans. Women are still greatly under-represented in leadership positions and local decision-making structures. The Kenyan government and donors should focus on the priorities identified by Mandera's communities and civil society groups: access to education, health and justice, particularly for women and girls, young people and minority clans.

Mandera's fate is inextricably linked to that of Kenya's neighbours Ethiopia and Somalia, and the resolution of the armed conflict in Somalia. It is in Kenya's interest to play a constructive role for sustainable peace in Somalia, rather than pursuing short-term military and economic objectives with destabilising consequences.

Other international actors of course play an important role in counter-terrorism, stabilisation and security assistance to Somalia's armed forces and AMISOM.<sup>246</sup> At a time when the future of the AMISOM mission is being considered,<sup>247</sup> and amid ongoing discussions about how to bring peace and security to Somalia, the Kenyan authorities and the international community should also remember that people's security in Mandera – and indeed, in Kenya as a whole – hangs in the balance.

## Recommendations

### 1. Improving the security forces

The county and national authorities should pursue efforts to deploy locally trusted security forces, ensuring that the KPR in Mandera is fully integrated into formal police forces, receives adequate training and remuneration, is representative of all clans and accountable for its conduct.

Abuses by the security forces are a major source of insecurity for people in Mandera, and the bribing of border and security officials facilitates al-Shabaab activities.<sup>248</sup> In response, the Kenyan authorities should pursue comprehensive security sector reforms to build forces that effectively protect people

and are accountable. Specific efforts should be made to ensure that people in Mandera are able to lodge complaints about human rights violations and corrupt behaviour by the security forces safely, that victims of counter-terrorism operations receive legal aid and redress, and that the IPOA is accessible to Mandera’s communities and is able to fulfil its oversight functions effectively.

“**Specific efforts should be made to ensure that people in Mandera are able to lodge complaints about human rights violations and corrupt behaviour by the security forces safely.**”

Given the slow progress in addressing abuses and improving security agencies’ behaviour in Mandera, rigorous and transparent safeguards should be in place to ensure that international defence, security, counter-terror and other assistance does not contribute to rights violations or further corruption and does not place communities already exposed to violence at further risk – whether in Mandera, in Kenya or indeed in Somalia. Ensuring that the devolved and national-level government authorities address abuses, open themselves up for accountability, and support victims of security forces’ violence, including in the form of legal aid and psycho-social services, should be a priority of donors’ engagement with Kenya.

To this end, donors should redouble their calls for an end to security forces’ abuses and for accountability, and support community-driven efforts to improve the security situation and ensure the accountability of all those involved in hostilities and security provision.

### 2. Addressing communities’ security priorities

Local and national authorities and donors should reflect on communities’ views that CVE programmes in Mandera have thus far been insufficiently inclusive, exposed them to real threats and been ineffective. Communities will not feel safe cooperating on security initiatives until the security forces provide better protection from attacks and improve their behaviour, and the justice system provides guarantees of due process and accountability in cases of abuse. The authorities and donors should pursue peacebuilding and community policing initiatives but avoid linking them to ‘deradicalisation’ and ‘countering violent extremism’.

Thorough risk assessments should be conducted to ensure that CVE initiatives do not place community-based organisations and/or the purported beneficiaries at risk of retaliation, including by al-Shabaab. CVE programmes that could place people at risk should be halted. People participating in peacebuilding and community policing efforts should be consulted in assessing risks for themselves and their communities and have access to effective protection measures.

Likewise, efforts to resolve the violence described in this report should address communities’ concerns that CVE programmes demonstrate a poor understanding of the factors underpinning participation in local violence. As communities explained, CVE has been too focused on ‘sensitising’ and ‘deradicalising’ potential sympathisers rather than addressing their practical security needs. Instead, peace, human security or development programmes based on in-depth consultation with communities regarding their concerns and priorities and designed to address them would be more effective.

### 3. Tackling gender-based violence and discrimination

The Kenyan authorities and Kenya’s international donors should undertake more research into violence against women and the perpetrators of such violence in Mandera. They should conduct gender and conflict analyses before designing interventions, to ensure that they are gender sensitive and gender transformative. To improve the reporting of gender-based abuses, they should make sure that police and judicial officers trained in sexual and gender-based violence, including women

officers, are deployed in Mandera. Health and social service providers should also be trained to provide adequate physical, psychological, social, economic and medical support to women and girls recovering from violence. Local and national authorities, and international donors, should build strategies to address the barriers that women and girls face to access justice, including patriarchal gender norms and social stigmatisation.

Efforts to improve women and girls' access to justice, health and education should be coordinated with interventions to address gender-based violence, enhance awareness of and respect for women and children's rights, increase women's access to decision-making and governance structures, ensure their meaningful participation in political processes, reduce their social and economic dependence on men and transform harmful gender and social norms. As women themselves have made clear, they need sustained, material support to transform structural gender inequalities, achieve social, economic and political equality and reduce the impact of the conflict on them.

In addition, given the dangers of retaliation against communities participating in CVE projects identified earlier, funders and organisations looking to enhance women's participation in CVE programming must ensure that they conduct gender-sensitive risk assessments in consultation with women and girls, and that they have gender-sensitive measures in place to protect them from such risks.

#### 4. Addressing local tensions and inequalities

Sustained efforts should be pursued at county and national government levels to address the drivers of conflict between clans, which devolution has in some respects exacerbated. As communities in Mandera have told us: "To address clan conflicts, clarity should be made on land boundaries, structured ways of resources sharing should be established and the sharing of positions at the political level should be equitable."<sup>249</sup>

The Kenyan authorities and Kenya's international donors should tackle as a priority the marginalisation of minority clans, women and youth and ensure they participate equally and meaningfully in peace and security consultations and decision-making structures. They should work to ensure their equal access to information, resources and services, particularly in the education, health and justice sectors. Donors should support strategies to improve the provision of education in Mandera, and in particular girls' access to education, including

through training and employing Mandera's marginalised groups in this sector.

Local and national authorities should adopt a coherent and human rights-based strategy to demobilise, disarm and reintegrate those who have been involved in violence, including young people – whether as members of clan militia, recruits for the Kenyan-supported Somali forces or al-Shabaab. Such a strategy should be designed to ensure that those who leave violence behind are adequately protected from retaliation, and have access to rehabilitation and reintegration services, including medical and psychosocial care, education and vocational training, and socio-economic support. Those suspected of criminal offences should have access to fair judicial procedures, with due process guarantees. Such procedures should take into account mitigating factors, such as coercion and deception leading to recruitment and participation in violence.

#### 5. Kenya's involvement in Somalia's conflict

Finally, Kenya should use its influence to play a constructive role in pushing for peace in Somalia as a whole. Currently, Kenyan troops in Somalia are widely perceived to have committed abuses against civilians, contributed to illicit war economies that concentrate wealth among conflict actors and degrade the environment, while also supporting the Jubaland Administration against the FGS.

To contribute to peace and security in Somalia and along its own border, Kenya must use its considerable influence to open space for dialogue and trust-building between Somalia and Jubaland. It should also ensure that its forces in Somalia are used primarily to bolster the safety of people in areas where they are present, coordinating with community representatives and civil society groups and acting in accordance with their concerns. Abuses against civilians, including the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure, as well as instances of smuggling by Kenyan forces and its Somali allies, should be investigated transparently, the perpetrators sanctioned and victims supported accordingly. Likewise, the Kenyan government should pursue an exit strategy for AMISOM that enhances the safety of civilians, rather than leaving security vacuums for any actor to fill without the say of resident communities.

“Abuses against civilians, including the destruction of livelihoods and infrastructure, as well as instances of smuggling by Kenyan forces and its Somali allies, should be investigated transparently, the perpetrators sanctioned and victims supported accordingly.”

”

Unless the Kenyan government and county authorities begin to focus on the roots of insecurity in Mandera county, rather than victimising and making collateral damage out of the communities worst affected by it, the ‘war that hurts twice’ will continue to wreak havoc in and around Mandera for many years to come. Foreign governments that invest heavily to support Kenya’s security have a crucial role to play to ensure that their resources and their projects improve the safety of people living in Mandera first and foremost.

## Notes

- 246** See for instance: United Nations Security Council (2018), ‘Somalia report of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, S/2018/1002’, 9 November ([https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2018\\_1002.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2018_1002.pdf))
- 247** See: UN Security Council (2019), ‘Security Council Extends Mandate of African Union Mission in Somalia, Authorizes Troop Reduction, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2472 (2019)’, 31 May (<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13828.doc.htm>). See also: AMISOM (2020), ‘AMISOM, Somali security forces and international partners discuss drawdown and future operations’, 5 February (<https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/amisom-somali-security-forces-and-international-partners-discuss-drawdown-and-future>)
- 248** See chapters two and three.
- 249** Saferworld interview, civil society worker, November 2018.

## About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe in a world where everyone can lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from fear and insecurity. We are a not-for-profit organisation working in 12 countries and territories across Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

## SAFERWORLD

The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square  
London N1 6HT, UK

Phone: +44 (0) 20 7324 4646

Email: [general@saferworld.org.uk](mailto:general@saferworld.org.uk)

Web: [www.saferworld.org.uk](http://www.saferworld.org.uk)

 [www.facebook.com/Saferworld](https://www.facebook.com/Saferworld)

 [@Saferworld](https://twitter.com/Saferworld)

 [Saferworld](https://www.linkedin.com/company/saferworld)

Registered charity no. 1043843

A company limited by guarantee no. 3015948

ISBN 978-1-912901-17-3

