

A photograph of a crowded street in an informal settlement in Kenya. In the foreground, a man in a white t-shirt with 'SAFERWORLD' printed on the back is gesturing towards a large group of people, including many children. The street is lined with multi-story brick buildings, many of which have laundry hanging from their balconies. The sky is overcast, and the overall atmosphere is one of a busy, densely populated community.

SAFERWORLD

PREVENTING VIOLENT CONFLICT. BUILDING SAFER LIVES

SAFERWORLD

Kenya

Introduction

Kenya is a multi-ethnic country that experiences several types of overlapping conflict. These include conflict over resources, cycles of election-related violence, sexual and gender-based violence, increasing numbers of attacks by non-state armed groups, and violence associated with law enforcement, including extra-judicial killings by the police and attacks on police officers.

The impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has reinforced these conflict dynamics. For instance, sexual and gender-based violence (including by law enforcement officers) increased in the first half of 2020. Measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have also had adverse effects on businesses and household income, with immediate and long-term implications for food security, social cohesion, crime and human rights. This has taken place against a backdrop of weak governance, growing inequality, and erratic and extreme weather.

It is ten years since Kenya adopted a new constitution that set in motion a devolution of power to newly created counties. The outcomes of devolution so far have been mixed. While there have been benefits, it has also created new centres of power, and some communities remain marginalised from political processes. This has led to conflicts both within counties over local political positions and between counties over access to natural resources, while weak accountability mechanisms have allowed corruption to thrive. Large-scale infrastructure projects and oil and gas exploration have taken place with minimal local consultation, which raises tensions and reinforces conflicts between different communities that are in competition over resources – especially in arid and semi-arid areas where livestock migratory routes are frequently affected.

Competition between communities and clans for political supremacy has characterised the political landscape since independence and remains the major challenge to stability in Kenya. Violence involving non-state armed groups also undermines stability, both in coastal and north-eastern areas of the country and increasingly in urban areas.

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We have suffered all forms of conflicts! And now the al-Shabaab attacks have made it worse. In fact, the focus now is not on ethnic conflict anymore, the main source of threat now is al-Shabaab.

A member of the National Assembly, Mandera North, during a donor consultative meeting, February 2020.

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Batula Hassan, chairperson of Mandeleo ya Wanawake Laisamis, gives her thoughts on ways forward during Saferworld's County Peace Conference in Marsabit in June 2015.

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About us

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 has been working in Kenya since 2000 at national, sub-national and community levels. We work with a range of civil society and governmental partners to transform policies and practices so that they support peace and security. Over the past 20 years, we have contributed to positive change in the areas of community security, election violence, resource-based/climate-related conflicts, conflict-sensitive development and investment, small arms and light weapons control, and police reform. In all our work we prioritise accountability, inclusion and participation, especially of women and girls.

We work with:

- communities
- women's groups
- political leaders
- county governments
- the media
- the police
- businesses
- youth leaders
- people with disabilities
- faith-based groups
- local peace committees
- traditional leaders

OVER
20 YEARS
WORKING ON PEACE,
SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE.

CARRIED OUT PROJECTS
AND RESEARCH IN
22 COUNTIES.

PROVIDED SUPPORT TO
89
PARTNER ORGANISATIONS
AND COMMUNITY GROUPS
OVER THE PAST FIVE YEARS.

REACHED
58,687
MEN, WOMEN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE THROUGH
PROJECTS, INCLUDING
110 STATE AND NON-STATE
INSTITUTIONS.



CONDUCTED
AT LEAST
20
TRAININGS BETWEEN 2014
AND 2019, REACHING 1,106
MEN, WOMEN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE.

PUBLISHED
22
PIECES OF RESEARCH,
ANALYSIS AND GUIDANCE
SINCE 2000.

IMPLEMENTED
5
ELECTION SECURITY
PROGRAMMES BETWEEN
2010 AND 2017.

SINCE 2017,
CARRIED OUT
3
RESEARCH PROJECTS
TO RAISE AWARENESS OF
ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES
TO RESPONDING TO
VIOLENT ARMED GROUPS.

Saferworld's Naftali Ruttoh gives a presentation during groupwork sessions at a learning event related to a climate change governance project.
© Saferworld

A photograph of four young people sitting on concrete steps outside a building with large windows. From left to right: a young man in a dark blue jacket and patterned shirt is gesturing with his hands while speaking; a young woman in a patterned vest over a black top is listening; another young woman in a red t-shirt and black skirt is laughing; and a young man in a dark suit and light-colored shirt is smiling and holding a brown folder. The background shows a building with white-framed windows and a blue wall.

Saferworld and partners' achievements in Kenya

- We supported engagements with policymakers and members of parliament, leading to the adoption of the Kenya Police Policy by the national assembly in 2015 – a national framework to guide efforts to prevent conflict and build peace.
- We supported the establishment and training of community action groups to advocate for accountable service delivery.
- We improved security in selected communities by supporting community policing, including confidence-building and dialogue between youth and the police.
- We were a founding member of the Usalama Reforms Forum, which champions police reform in Kenya.
- We pioneered a climate change governance project in 2018 in Samburu County as a response to resource-based conflicts made worse by climate change.
- We supported the formation of the Peace and Cohesion Sector Forum, the first ever regional framework for peace and cohesion in northern Kenya.
- We provided training for media companies, journalists and editors on conflict-sensitive journalism.
- We produced research on critical issues, such as how political settlements affect peace and security, the impacts of devolution on inclusion, and alternatives to countering 'violent extremism'.
- We supported mediation by religious leaders to address electoral tensions ahead of the 2017 elections – this led to the formation of the Dialogue Reference Group of religious leaders, which continues to engage on issues of national concern, such as corruption and COVID-19.
- We promoted inclusive and accountable governance of natural resources (such as land, pasture and water) to help support peace, security and resilience in communities in northern Kenya affected by climate change.

Following a student dialogue session hosted by Saferworld, a group of student participants have a chat outside the university's business school. The dialogue was related to election violence at university campuses, and was organised by Universities and Colleges Student Peace Association of Kenya (UCSPAK) and supported by Saferworld.

© Alexandra Azua Hale/Saferworld

John Losila Nawezi, a youth representative from Loyangalani, takes notes during Saferworld's County Peace Conference in Marsabit, June 2015.
© Emmanuel O Productions

Our approach

We take a people-centred approach to tackle issues that cause insecurity. Core approaches underpinning our work include conflict sensitivity, gender sensitivity and working across multiple levels. This means advocating at a national level, based on programme experience, and making sure that the diverse voices of the people we work with in different counties are included.

Our programme uses evidence and analysis to influence the priorities, policies and legislative agendas of the Kenyan national government, county authorities and state agencies, including the National Police Service, the National Steering Committee on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management, the National Cohesion and Integration Commission, and regional bodies such as the Frontier Counties Development Council.

Within our long-term goal of transforming the structural drivers of conflict and violence in Kenya, we currently focus on three main objectives:

- to reduce ethnic and political violence linked to electoral processes
- to strengthen land and natural resource governance, so that it is more inclusive and conflict sensitive
- to increase community voices and participation in addressing the drivers of violence associated with non-state armed groups

A student responds to the question 'What is peace to you?' as part of a dialogue related to election violence at university campuses, organised by Universities and Colleges Student Peace Association of Kenya (UCSPA) and supported by Saferworld.
© Ramon Sanchez Orense/Saferworld

Our work

Supporting young people

The vast majority (an estimated 75 per cent) of Kenya's population is under 35 years old. Young Kenyans face many challenges, including high unemployment and a lack of opportunities, which can be factors behind their involvement in political violence and susceptibility to exploitation by the political elite. During elections – a long-standing source of division in Kenya – it is crucial that young people have opportunities to speak and be heard. This is particularly important as young people often bear the brunt of heavy-handed state responses to protests or activism around elections. Without proper representation – economically, socially and politically – young people will continue to be excluded from opportunities for peace, justice and democracy in Kenya.

Saferworld and partners are working to ensure that young people can engage peacefully with elections in Kenya. We create spaces for youth dialogue, and promote peaceful alternatives to addressing grievances and frustrations with violence.

In the run up to the 2017 elections we worked closely with young people to support their participation in the election process, providing platforms for them to engage in conversations both pre- and post-election. We also supported youth-led and youth-focused organisations to be at the centre of coordination efforts by civil society organisations towards ensuring peaceful elections. Since 2019, we have worked with young people to enhance their influence in ongoing national conversations regarding cohesion, inclusivity and better governance.



CASE STUDY

Mathare's generation shapers:

Building peace in Nairobi's 'ghetto'

"When you make it to 30 years old here, most of the young people believe you are old", says Samuel Kiriro, a resident of Mathare, one of Kenya's biggest slums and home to half a million people. "Most men die when they are 25 or 26 through drugs, health issues, or being shot by the police."

Mathare is a short drive away from the hotels and shopping malls in Nairobi, but it couldn't be further detached from the wealth and glamour of Kenya's capital. For Samuel, it is home. "I was born and raised here in Mathare." Like many others in the slum, Samuel got caught up in fighting when he was younger and spent time behind bars. Since getting out, he has been fighting for the rights of young people. Samuel is the founder of **Ghetto Foundation**, a community-based organisation – supported by Saferworld, Peace Brigades International and Mathare Social Justice Centre – working to develop the skills and knowledge of young people in building peace and protecting human rights in Mathare. It also works to connect young people in Mathare with educational, social and economic opportunities. "We call them 'hard-to reach' because they are young people who might have been caught up in crime before and are now reformed, or still might be involved in criminal activities," says Samuel.

Young people make up 70 per cent of the population of Mathare. They are often raised by a single parent and have few educational or employment opportunities. Many turn to crime to escape poverty and build a future for themselves. "Crime is real in the ghetto of Mathare, because this is the easiest employment that you can get," says 26-year-old Tobias Orao, a volunteer for Ghetto Foundation. "It doesn't need any qualifications."

Alongside widespread crime, police harassment of young people in Mathare is also common, ranging from arbitrary arrests to excessive and unlawful use of force in the name of maintaining law and order. Such excessive force can lead to extrajudicial killings. In Mathare and in Nairobi's Dandora neighbourhood alone, Kenyan police have shot dead at least **21 young boys** who they suspected were criminals. But many human rights activists believe the number is much higher. "The issue of extrajudicial killings has become normalised here," says Samuel.

A foundation for the community

"The youths are the ones in danger; they are the ones who are active," says David 'Difeh' Lichuma, 28. "Also, most of them are jobless. So Ghetto Foundation came to save those who are lost and empower them." Difeh was jailed in 2015 for violent robbery. He is a perfect example of the young people that Ghetto Foundation has reached out to. He is the co-founder of Ghetto Foundation's 'Generation Shapers', an initiative that offers a chance for young people to meet up every Saturday and get involved in activities ranging from human rights classes to refuse clean-up campaigns across Mathare.

Generation Shapers not only offers a vital space for the many young people who come to its weekly sessions, but it also helps develop the leadership skills of Difeh and others who volunteer to make it happen. "We came up with the idea of Generation Shapers because all of the politicians say that the youth are the future generation, of which they are supposed to be mentors," says volunteer Tobias. "But how can you mentor them without giving them opportunities? That's where Ghetto Foundation and Generation Shapers come in."

"We want to have a name that relates to us. We don't want to pretend to be something we're not," says Samuel. "We come from this ghetto, so we want to be a foundation for this community." Like all of its volunteers, Samuel's dedication to Ghetto Foundation is clear: "This building we're in now is actually my house. I sacrificed the house to start an office and Ghetto Foundation is still here today." But his dedication to the organisation is also a commitment to young people's futures. "My hopes are seeing the transformation of young people who can then take over Ghetto Foundation from me as the founder. We want to see Ghetto Foundation as a youth-led organisation and community centre."

Tobias, one of many who has benefitted from Samuel's guidance, seems willing to take on the challenge. "It is upon us who are in the light to push the agendas that are affecting our community. I can see a bright future."

"My hopes are seeing the transformation of young people who can then take over Ghetto Foundation from me as the founder. We want to see Ghetto Foundation as a youth-led organisation and community centre."

Samuel Kiriro, founder of Ghetto Foundation.

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Conflicts around elections are not single events – they often reflect the historical fractures of society.

Emmy Auma, Saferworld's Kenya Country Manager.

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Kisii residents gather round a street theatre performance, led by youth, on political participation.
© Ramon Sanchez Orense/Saferworld



A voter casts his ballot at a polling station in Eldoret, Kenya.
© Afromusing/Flickr

Elections

Following a hotly contested election in 2017, Kenya witnessed increased levels of inter-community and political polarisation that saw the country split into two opposing sides – one supporting the ruling party and the other the opposition, which threatened to destabilise the country with serious socioeconomic and political consequences. A concerted push from civil society, religious institutions and the donor community eventually led to a truce between the president and the leader of the opposition, known as the ‘handshake’. Following the truce, an initiative was launched to enhance national cohesion and find lasting solutions to systemic issues that, among other things, manifest as recurrent electoral violence; this is known as the ‘Building Bridges Initiative’. The truce has, however, totally transformed the political landscape in the country and presented new challenges in the form of ideological differences in areas that are traditionally homogenous voting blocks, as well as political realignments within the ruling party.

Together with our partners, we support communities to resolve emerging political conflicts and engage peacefully in electoral processes. We bring together historically adversarial groups – including people of different political affiliations and from different communities – to talk constructively in safe spaces, break down barriers, increase appreciation of each other, build mutual trust and forge resilient relationships for sustainable peace. This builds on the understanding that while people of different ethnic groups, political party affiliations, age, gender and other identities live together and have contact through day-to-day activities, they still have limited opportunities to discuss issues of concern – which are magnified around election periods, leading to violence.



Radio panellists in Radio Shahidi studios during the radio talk show, May 2017.

© Saferworld

CASE STUDY

Peace over the airwaves: Pre-election dialogues in Kenya

Prior to general elections in August 2017 – and amid an ongoing drought that exacerbated local tensions – the political atmosphere across Kenya was turbulent. Amid these challenges, Saferworld and partners promoted peace through radio discussions on conflict-related issues that we feared could be flashpoints for violence during and after the election campaign.

As ongoing drought affected East Africa, resource-based conflict in Kenya became increasingly prevalent, with reports of land-related violent incidents and revenge attacks. This hostility over access to and control of natural resources overlapped with elections in which different communities engaged in competition for political power – a potentially toxic combination that increased the likelihood of violence.

With media reports and campaigns intensifying, ethnic and historical divisions among different groups were regularly exploited by politicians looking to gain support, using the frustration of citizens as a catalyst. Within this political landscape, it was vital that people had ‘safe spaces’ and public platforms to discuss issues that were likely to escalate and to work collectively to avoid violence.

Tension in Isiolo County

In Isiolo County, pastoralists and farmers have a long history of conflict. Pastoralists (mobile farmers who adapt to changing environments) and farmers (static agriculturalists fixed to owned land) regularly clash over water distribution, access to resources, and methods of grazing. Isiolo County was also a hotspot of electoral violence in 2007–08, where inter-communal disputes between two groups fighting for political control resulted in a number of deaths.

Saferworld worked with the Catholic Justice & Peace Commission Isiolo to facilitate discussions between pastoralists and farmers, as part of a larger pre-election initiative to address hostilities through meetings and discussions in hotspot areas in an attempt to prevent further violence.

Radio as a tool for peace

Due to its combination of affordability and accessibility, radio remains the most popular and widespread form of media in Isiolo County, despite a growing youth population that embraces the online world. With wide coverage that reaches

the most remote areas of the county, talk shows and audience call-ins encourage people to voice opinions that would otherwise remain unheard. For this initiative, we engaged with local station Radio Shahidi as a platform for promoting peaceful co-existence and debate between communities and individuals affected by a combination of historical conflict and drought – issues that were brought into focus by the elections.

Radio Shahidi in Isiolo County is considered ‘impartial’ in comparison to other stations that are perceived to have political bias or have previously aggravated disputes – a common problem with local media that often fuels tensions through hate speech. The need for impartiality in this case was essential for all voices to be heard. With tensions across the county rising, communities often shied away from voicing their concerns due to a fear of victimisation. The show created an anonymous and safe space for citizens to raise issues without becoming targets of violence.

Bringing together pastoralists, farmers and various other community members to engage on issues that could cause conflict between them, the discussion also involved panellists from various communities to ensure that a wide range of people were included. Well-balanced conversations allowed participants and listeners to hear and relate to the difficulties of each other’s situation, constructing a space of empathy and understanding.

As worsening conditions sparked fresh disputes over water access and sharing, these discussions were just the start. Saferworld’s Country Manager Emmy Auma noted the importance of facilitating discussions: “Conflicts around elections are not single events – they often reflect the historical fractures of society”. This indicates how important conflict resolution is, both during and between election periods.

Following the radio discussion, a face-to-face meeting was held between pastoralists and farmers who agreed to work together to produce guidelines on resource access. Despite difficult circumstances, the initiative demonstrated that radio is not only a tool for raising awareness and sharing information, but can be effective in mobilising community groups and leaders to find ways to resolve conflict.

Looking to the future

These efforts were a starting point for generating a tangible impact on people’s safety and security during the election period. For that impact to be sustained between elections and replicated across the country there needs to be: a high-level political commitment to building a more peaceful, just and inclusive society; an active and engaged Kenyan civil society raising awareness and promoting peace; and responsible, conflict-sensitive media such as Radio Shahidi and others to give communities and individuals a platform to raise grievances and deal with them peacefully.

As the 2022 election draws close, there are already concerns that the peace and stability that has been in place since the ‘handshake’ – which took place between Kenya’s President Uhuru Kenyatta and the leader of the opposition Raila Odinga after the 2017 elections – may be short-lived. Obvious rifts in the ruling Jubilee Party and shifts in political alliances threaten to re-ignite tensions between communities, particularly communities living in the Rift Valley region that have enjoyed relative calm since the 2007 post-election violence. With the potential for political violence growing, Saferworld and partners have embarked on interventions geared towards mitigating conflicts and promoting ethnic reconciliation – by promoting dialogue at the community level and supporting the participation of communities, including women and youth, in county and national-level conversations in the lead-up to the election.

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What is said on social media can be taken seriously by local people which results in clan wars, especially if it is said by high-profile politicians and lawyers.

Woman participant in a focus group discussion, Wajir.

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Climate change governance

The effects of climate change in Kenya can be seen most clearly in the country's arid and semi-arid lands. Communities living in these regions depend almost entirely on pastoralism – a livestock production system that is vulnerable to climate change, such as unpredictable weather variations and prolonged drought. Consequently, scarcity of water and pasture often leads to multiple inter-community clashes and conflicts. As drought cycles get longer and rainfall patterns become more sporadic, competition and clashes over resources – especially water and pasture – grow. Gaps in policy and legislative frameworks, particularly in the arid and semi-arid lands, have resulted in little guidance on how to find out about and address community needs around natural resource management, including conflicts resulting from tensions over access, management and use of increasingly scarce shared resources.

With partners, we work with county government authorities in northern Kenya to help them better address the impacts of climate change, especially conflicts that occur as a result of competition over scarce water and pasture resources. We also help communities to work together and lobby county authorities to address challenges associated with climate change.

Since July 2018, we have supported a policymaking process with the Samburu county executive and assembly, which will result in a legislative framework that incorporates community priorities and perspectives and which offers practical solutions to ensure structured access and sustainable use of grazing and rangeland resources. We have also supported the strengthening of regional peace infrastructure in northern Kenya to alleviate conflicts in the region – for example, by supporting the formation of the Peace and Cohesion Sector Forum within the Frontier Counties Development Council.

CASE STUDY

Communities at the centre: Ending resource-based conflict in Samburu county

Samburu – one of the driest counties in Kenya – has suffered years of conflict within and across county boundaries, which has been worsened by climate change.

While efforts have been made to address these conflicts, they have been limited due to weaknesses in governance mechanisms as well as gaps in policy and legal frameworks within and across counties. Existing rangeland management initiatives are largely community based and led by traditional institutions and customary laws, and are neither recognised nor enforced by the government. This undermines the authority of pastoralist communities and their institutions to manage rangelands sustainably. “Climate change is real, it is important for the common citizen to know how they are affected and the role they need to play,” explained Christine Namunyak, a member of a community group in Waso ward.

With our partners Pamoja for Transformation Trust and Drylands Learning and Capacity Building Initiative, we sought to influence policy and practices that contribute to peace in Samburu county and the frontier region. We mobilised

communities and supported them to develop community-level platforms and conduct community-driven conversations to identify and collate priorities. Through training and ongoing accompaniment, we strengthened county government knowledge and skills to put in place inclusive processes and collaborative actions for effective legislation on natural resource management.

Community buy-in

To do this, it was important to build trust and promote the need for collective action among affected communities. We supported communities to identify trusted community members and facilitated the formation of five ward-based community action groups (WCAGs), who worked with their communities to identify priorities to present at the county level – through meetings with relevant county authorities – in order to inform policymaking processes. With partners we also provided tailored training for WCAGs on relevant areas such as policy advocacy and legislation, conflict sensitivity

and climate change, to enable them to effectively consult with their communities, overcome differences, collate key issues into advocacy plans for engagement with authorities, and monitor progress.

Through these sustained engagements, community priority issues have been included in a draft Rangeland Management and Planned Grazing Policy that is currently being finalised. “We are glad that we have been able to create awareness, enabling community voices to form part of decisions that are made by authorities and policies that are developed on their behalf,” said Christine from the Waso WCAG. According to Daniel Lesaigor, Samburu County Chief Officer of Special Programs, the policy holds “a lot of promise for finding lasting solutions for peace in Samburu and beyond”. Crucially, the involvement of communities from the start has created community-wide buy-in and support for the policy, which the county will ultimately develop into law.

Christine Namunyak, a member of the County Action Platform from Waso ward, Samburu county, airs her views during a learning event as part of the climate change governance project.
© Saferworld

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We have to accept that climate change is real, and we need to do something about it.

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Speaker of Samburu County Assembly during a training on rangeland management, climate change and policy formulation held in Nakuru town, May 2019.

Human rights, safety and security

Along with our partners, we work to build trust and relationships between communities and the police in informal settlements within Nairobi that have suffered numerous cases of extrajudicial killings, such as killings by police of alleged criminals. Public opinion sometimes glorifies these types of extrajudicial killings, so we create opportunities for increased and improved positive engagements between communities, human rights defenders, the police, and law and court officials, with a focus on an honest and balanced view of extrajudicial killings.

With partners we run workshops for the media on how to report on extrajudicial killings in humane and transformative ways, raising awareness of the importance of reporting on these issues and of using analysis to avoid biases and pre-determined narratives by the police. We train representatives from the judiciary, community justice centres, and the police, prisons and probation departments to reflect on access to justice and the adoption of human rights approaches to prevent extrajudicial killings.

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We create opportunities for increased and improved positive engagements between communities, human rights defenders, the police, and law and court officials.

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Gender, peace and security

In many parts of Kenya, patriarchy (especially in pastoralist regions), inequalities, and discriminatory political and power structures inhibit effective conflict prevention, inclusive peace, and women’s rights and participation. This is, however, changing – albeit slowly – with the potential and role of women in peacebuilding at the local and national level becoming more prominent.

Saferworld recognises that the ways in which men and women experience conflict and how they are impacted by it differ considerably. We integrate a strong gender perspective in our programming, working with partners to understand the particular challenges faced by women and girls and supporting women’s participation in local dialogue processes, local and county-level decision-making, planning and budgeting processes, policymaking, and peace processes. By including a gender focus in our planning and programming, we ensure that issues that surface in the programme design phase – especially those raised by women and girls – are addressed in implementation.

We promote gender and social inclusion in our work by making sure that women are proportionately represented and involved in the formation of community action groups and other local structures within our programme interventions. Where necessary, we convene women-only forums so that women have safe spaces where their voices and priorities are amplified, documented and included in local-level and county-level consultations and advocacy. We also identify existing women’s groups within key platforms – such as the women’s group within the Pastoralist Parliamentary Group – and work with them in promoting policy and legislation that supports women and encourages their participation in decision-making, development and political processes.



Grace, a Turkana Elder from Emeret village in Isiolo County. Grace was active with the Isiolo Working Group to support women’s access to voting. Saferworld worked with the Isiolo Working Group to promote peaceful elections through community interaction.
© Abraham Ali/Saferworld

Evidence and analysis

We have conducted and published influential research to untangle complex drivers of communal and resource-based conflicts, as well as fighting between security forces and non-state armed actors such as al-Shabaab. In Garissa, Lamu and Mandera counties, we spoke with community members, civil society, government authorities, security forces and donors to determine how international support for the ‘war on terror’ in East Africa has helped to enable unaccountable state violence against civilians while obscuring the root causes of insecurity and undermining civil society initiatives for peace. The research made recommendations to donors and government authorities for alternative, people-centred approaches to providing security.

We also carried out research exploring how devolution has affected inclusion and conflict dynamics in Kenya, particularly in Isiolo County in the country’s historically marginalised north. The research findings revealed some positive results of devolution in Isiolo, including an increase in financial investments in the county, and a rise in employment. Engagement between citizens and the government is improving, and people are closer to democratic processes that directly affect their lives. More health facilities, early childhood development facilities and pockets of enhanced infrastructure can be seen. Many of the new health services are dysfunctional however, while some improved stretches of roads have not been maintained and are now impassable. Infrastructural developments are largely concentrated around Isiolo town, at the expense of the county’s peripheries. The positive gains often mask structural identity-based inequalities, which devolution not only failed to address, but may have exacerbated.






SAFERWORLD

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Front cover photo: A member of a youth street theatre group presents to the crowd in Mathare, Nairobi.
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Back cover photo: Nick Ondwat, a member of Kisumu Joint Integrated Forum, reads the public information board during a Kisumu People's Parliament meeting.
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