

## **DEVOLUTION AND INTERCOMMUNAL CONFLICTS IN MARSABIT COUNTY-KENYA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of devolution on inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The specific objectives were to explore the influence of county resource management on inter-communal conflicts, to examine the effect of county leadership composition on these conflicts, and to assess the role of peace building initiatives in mitigating inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The study focused solely on Marsabit County, and its findings are relevant only within that context. The study was grounded in conflict theory and utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining both exploratory and correlational research designs. The target population included household heads, county government officials, administrative leaders, religious leaders, and individuals involved in peacebuilding efforts in Marsabit County. The sample consisted of 100 household heads. A questionnaire was used to gather data from household heads while data from key informants was gathered using interview guides. SPSS was utilized to analyse data collected using questionnaires. Descriptive analysis was applied to characterize the respondents and analyze their differing perceptions of devolution and its impact on inter-communal conflicts, using means and percentages. Inferential data analysis was conducted using Chi-

square test. The quantitative results were presented in tables and figures. Data from interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis. From the analysis, there was statistically significant relationship between resource management policies and inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County ( $\chi^2=8.723$ , P value=0.013). The findings imply that resource management practices significantly influence the occurrence of conflicts in Marsabit County. There was statistically significant relationship between county leadership composition and inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County ( $\chi^2=11.952$ , P value=0.018). The findings suggest that the composition of county leadership influence the dynamics of inter-communal conflicts. The relationship between peace building initiative policies and inter-communal conflicts was statistically significant ( $\chi^2=10.678$ , P value=0.030). The findings imply that county peace building initiatives play a meaningful role in influencing the state of inter-communal relations. The findings offered rich insights that would create and implement policies both at the county and national level that will contribute to conflict resolution. It also greatly contributes to the literature on the role of devolution on inter-communal conflict.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Devolution has gained increased recognition in the modern governance. This is a type of administrative in which governance and administrative functions and responsibilities are

dispersed and delegated to regional administrative units. This form of governance has without doubt emerged as the most ambitious form to ever be invented in the quest of delivering services and availing resources at the state, regional and local levels (Pasquier, 2021). Historically, a large number of governments across the world have adopted this form of governance which has given it much power. This form of governance ensures that resources are equitably distributed from the urban areas to the grassroots levels, it promotes social and economic development at both national and regional levels, it enables the minorities and the marginalized people to reap the benefits of self-governance and to be in charge of their development (Kasyula, 2022).

Presently, devolved form of governance has been adopted in different parts of the world due to the associated benefits. In Europe, the UK and France are good examples that have successfully adopted this form of governance. People in the UK began calling for a devolved form of government in 1970 in Wales and Scotland (Lesch & McCambridge, 2021). However, this wasn't accomplished until the Scottish people sought a governance system with authority over the collection of tax in their region in 1997. The Welsh Assembly was established as a result of the citizens of Wales taking the same course. Similar to this, in Scotland, the people established their own assembly in 1998, which allowed them to make their own decisions.

In the United States, devolution gained some currency in 1953 when the American Municipal Association proposed an approach to decentralize power and to devolve governance functions to municipals (Ileri & Ochieng, 2022). This approach led to the adoption of 12 states and establishment of various local governments in order to promote autonomous self-governance. The local governments were given the powers and authority to exercise all suitable powers that were within the confines of the constitution, and the local government's charter. Just like in other states, the main aim was to increase freedom and liberties and to make sure the people are in charge of their development and decision making. It was viewed as a way of increasing inclusivity and as a means of fostering strong relationship between the people at subnational levels and the national government.

In Srilanka, the decentralization and devolution process have occurred in various pace as the government seeks to address political and socio economic issues in the country. However, the process has not been effective due to bureaucratic support and lack of political will (De Alwis, 2020). In the two countries, just like in other nations, the decentralized form of administration was adopted in order to delegate some of the administration functions to local governments. It was considered as a better way in which service delivery would be improved and as a means of fostering transparency and accountability.

In Africa, situation in regards to devolution differs from other regions as there are only a few countries that have adopted decentralized forms of governance. Most of the countries in the region still bear a centralized form of governance where decision making is solely done by the state government (Nyikadzino & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). However, there is increased quest for constitutional reforms in order to diffuse the immense powers through the introduction of subnational political and administrative units which promote the inclusion of the citizens in

decision making, which fosters resource sharing and that promotes accountability and public participation.

In South Africa, devolution was established through the enactment of the 1996 constitution which marked a break from the centralized form of governance that was characterized by abuse of power, inequalities, and underdevelopment (Pieterse, 2020). Devolution was marked by the creation of 9 provinces which were aimed at improving service delivery and social economic and political development. This has enabled the government and other development agencies to invest considerable resources for local community development and to improve the livelihoods at the grassroots.

In Kenya, devolution dates back to 1963 after the independence. This was however not long lived as a result of lack of a good basis. The devolved form of governance was created by the 2010 constitution which offered for the creation of the 47 counties under Article 6. The main purpose of this form of administration was to devolve resources, power, and to increase participation and representation of the people at the local and grassroots levels (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). It was considered as the best way to unlock the country's economic potential through the distribution of responsibilities. Through decentralization, the counties were permitted to identify problems facing the people and plan and implement policies and plans to solve the problems.

The Article 174 of the Constitution outlines various purposes and aims of devolution. These include giving the people self-governance powers and to enable them participate in decision making on matters that affect them. Devolution, also was meant to recognize the rights of the communities to manage their own affairs to be in charge of their development (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). The implementation of the Act came into operation in 2013 which saw the 47 counties getting operational. This marked a complete transition from the centralized governance form which was in place since independence. This was perceived as a means of solving a myriad of challenges that the central government had such as marginalization, inequalities, and misappropriation of resources. After the establishment of the devolved governance, a number of regulations and policies were established to improve the functioning of the devolved system of administration.

One of the major aims of devolved governance in Kenya was to improve resource management and allocation. Proper management and distribution of resources would help to improve equity and curb conflicts among communities. However, devolution has not yet achieved this objective. While decentralized governance has many benefits, it has been faced by numerous challenges (McCollum et al, 2019). There has been evident disharmony that have been brought about by scramble and competition for resources. Since devolution allows members of clans and communities to express their wants, it has given rise to identity groups that are in conflict within the diverse society. In the end, this causes discord and conflicts.

The challenges facing devolution has made it impossible to meet the intended goals. While devolution is viewed as a means through which community challenges can be resolved, it has

not succeeded and has caused conflicts in some cases (Mutinda & Mbataru, 2020). In some cases, it fuels and promotes intercommunal conflicts both at regional and national levels. Also, the decentralized form of governance cause conflicts when decisions are made based on communal cocoons and when such decisions are not favorable to all. This occurs when during policy design and implementation, management of resources and participation and social inclusivity. This as a result causes intercommunal and inter-clan conflicts.

The devolved form of governance is characterized by abuse of political power, unequal and skewed resource distribution, and marginalization of some regions and communities (Ogwora et al, 2018). This as a result leads to conflicts as the marginalized communities strive to fight for their rights and as the benefiting community strive to safeguard their interests. In this study, the purpose was to determine whether there is a relationship between the intercommunal conflicts and devolution in Marsabit County.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The purpose of this study was to examine whether devolution has changed the dynamics of inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County. There have been increased cases of inter community and inter-clan conflicts in Marsabit County. This has led to community division (Wasike, 2021). This county is a home to 14 ethnic communities, that is Elmololo, Watta, Konso, Ameru, Samburu, Gabbra, Rendille, Burji, Daasanach, Garreh, Sakuye, Turkana, Somali and Borana. The Borana, Gabbra and Rendille are the dormant communities in terms of the numbers and the vastness of the areas they occupy. Together, the three communities drive and influence all the political, social and economic agenda.

The Borana and the Gabbra are the most featured communities in conflicts in the county (Maelo & Harris, 2021). The enmity which was previously linked to scramble for pastures and water has greatly changed with the incoming of the devolved governance and the conflict dynamics are now greatly linked to county politics. The conflicts are greatly fueled by the need to sustain political power and gains. Also, the other marginalized communities tend to fight for their rights and fair share of the resources which cause disharmony and constant conflicts among them.

While various interventions have been put in place to deal with the conflicts, far reaching results have not yet been achieved. The aim of this study was to analyse the role of devolution in curbing inter-communal conflicts. Devolution was inceptioned in Kenya with an aim of solving the various social economic challenges that had been affecting the citizens perennially in different regions (Mbuba, 2018). Devolving resources, political power and citizen involvement in decision making were aimed at unearthing the long time factors that had been contributing to conflict between communities. However, the aims of devolution have not been achieved so far. The decentralized form of governance is characterized by abuse of political power, resource mismanagement and misappropriation of resources and skewed distribution of resources. This has in turn led to marginalization of some communities (Kivoi, Wanyonyi & Naeku, 2022).

## **Research Objectives**

The study seeks to meet the following specific objectives;

- i. To determine the influence of county resource management on inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit county.
- ii. To establish explore the influence of County leadership composition on inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit county.
- iii. To explore the influence of peace building initiatives on inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The first section discusses the theories that underpin the study. The second section reviews other studies related to the role of devolution on inter-communal conflicts. The third section summarizes literature review, highlighting research gaps, while the final section presents the conceptual framework of the study.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study will be anchored on conflict theory. This theory offers a socioecological perspective that have been developed and expanded over time by different author. While the theory is not attributed solely to one author, Karl Max is one of the key figures associated with it (Siregar, 2022). The theory views society through a lens of power differentials, social inequalities and conflicting interests among different groups in the society. The theory views society as being in a state of continuous struggles and change whereby, power plays a central role in shaping social structures, social interactions and social institutions (Dahrendorf, 2022). The conflict argues that there are different social classes that exist in the society whereby, each class has its own goals and interests. The differences among the classes are attributed to differences in economic factors such as income, wealth, and access to resources. The theory accentuates that the divisions leads to unequal distribution of resources, unequal distribution of power, opportunities, and privileges within the society.

One of the key concepts in conflict theory is the notion of social stratification. This refers to the hierarchical arrangement of individuals and groups on the basis of different factors such as power, status and wealth (Carchedi, 2023). According to conflict theory, social stratification propagates inequality by creating advantages for some groups while disadvantaging others. These differences in opportunities and resource distribution causes competition, tension, and conflict between different social classes (Mehta, 2020). Additionally, the proponents highlight the role of social institutions such as the government, educational systems, and the media in perpetuating and reinforcing existing power dynamics. According to the theory, these institutions are often controlled by dominant social groups and serve to maintain the status quo by legitimizing and justifying the unequal distribution of resources and opportunities.

Besides the social class, conflict theory emphasizes other types of social inequality such as those based on gender race, and ethnicity (Monk, 2022). Social conflict and power struggles

within society are further aggravated by these intersecting forms of oppression. In addition, conflict theory argues that social change occurs through struggle and conflict between opposing forces, what is known as dialectical change (Mol, 2022). This involves the clash of interests, values and ideas which leads to the emergence of new social norms and structures. According to the proponents of conflict theory, this ongoing process conflict and change is crucial in addressing injustices and attaining a more just and equitable society.

Conflict theory was considered relevant and applicable in the study. By examining power dynamics, social inequalities, and institutional changes, the theory helped to analyse how devolution contributes to addressing historical grievances, promoting inclusive governance,

### **Empirical Review**

Devolution is a specific type of decentralization in which power is transferred from the central government to other divisions at sub-national level. It is a form of governance whereby planning and management of some specific functions are delegated to sub-national administrations (Nyikadzino & Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2020). In this form of governance, there is delegation of responsibilities and power to local government for independent implementation. In this system of governance, citizens elect local leaders, and the federal government funds the local government to perform a variety of development projects for the people (Lind, 2018).

One of the roles of devolution is to ensure there is equitable management and distribution of resources in order to curb and mitigate conflicts (Kimenyi, 2018). The available research shows that devolved governance contribute to conflict resolution by ensuring the resources available are fairly distributed. This is achieved through effective leadership, effective resource management and distribution, and effective peace building mechanisms. A good instance is the study conducted by Habib (2022) to analyze the Rohingya host community conflict over scarce resources in Bangladesh. The study identified that the conflicts were caused by disputes and disagreements over the management and distribution of the available resources. The disagreement over the resources destroy the existing relationships between the communities which in turn threaten peace and coexistence. Failure to mitigate the situations resulted to conflicts between the communities.

In another study, Aborisade (2020) sought to analyze the insecurities linked to inequality in Africa and concluded that unequal distribution of resources is a major cause of conflicts and violence in most areas in Africa. This occurs due to poor leadership which leads to skewed resource allocation. Also, conflicts occur due to constant intimidation of the marginalized communities by the beneficiaries. The less powerful retaliate through conflicts, terrorism, and other behaviors that threatened peaceful coexistence of the communities.

Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2019) analysed the causes of conflicts between communities in Nigeria and identified that in Nigeria, poor governance and poor leadership have been the key cause of resource related conflicts in Nigeria. Conflicts occur as a result of resource ownership, distribution, access and rivalry over the existing natural resources mainly petroleum resources. These conflicts have greatly undermined human rights enjoyment, security, and democracy. It



was evident that conflicts can occur as a result of poor leadership and governance. Poor leadership facilitates abuse of human rights and creates a conducive environment for corruption and nepotism. These deprive other people and other communities of their rights to access and use the available resources.

In another study, Zakarie and Hared (2021) sought to analyse the cause and consequences of conflicts in Somali as well as the conflict mitigation strategies that have been put in place. The study identified that the major poor leadership, clan and clannism were the major causes of conflict in the country. Poor leadership created avenues for corruption, clan members' militarization, inequalities and extreme poverty. All the conflict mitigation strategies including the promotion of democratic governance, promotion of free elections, promotion of free market based reforms and other initiatives have all failed to promote peace among the communities.

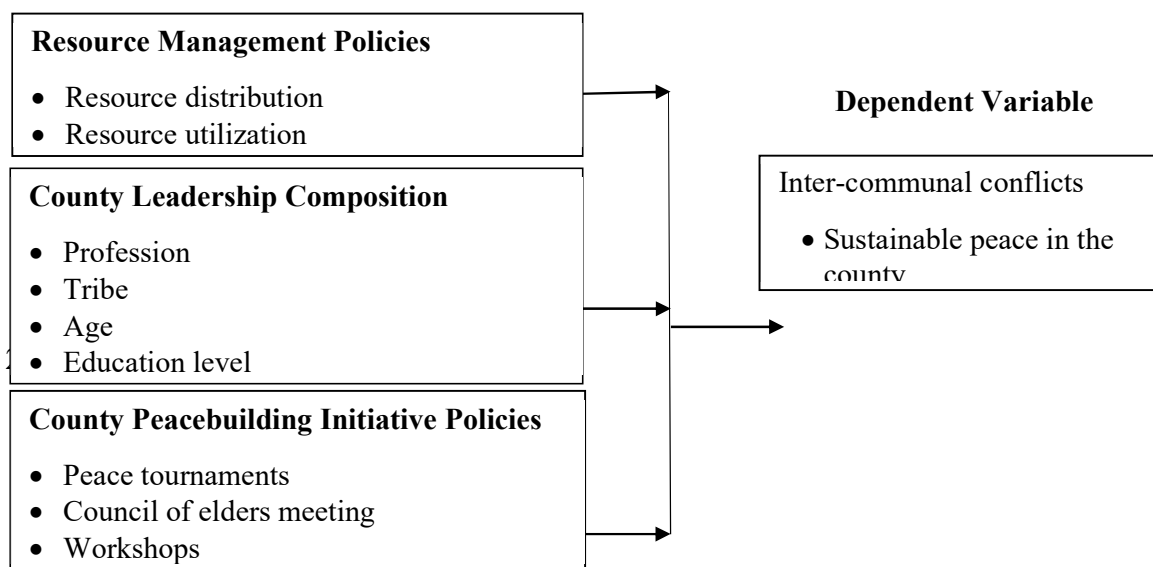
Locally, Ali (2021) sought to determine how conflicts in Mandera are linked to devolution and identified that devolution has contributed to inter-clan conflicts in the county. The study identified that the majority of the respondents from the county were not satisfied with the manner the county resources were distributed. This leads to escalated contest over the resources which leads to conflicts and feud between and among clans. The study identified that poor resource allocation was attributed to poor leadership whereby those in leadership have a tendency of allocating resources to the people who belong to their ethnic groups and leave out others who do not share the same ethnic profiles. This triggers unprecedented conflicts and clashes between the communities as the marginalized fight for inclusivity while the favored communities tend to safeguard their interests.

Lind (2018) conducted a study to analyze devolution and its influence on conflict in Northern Kenya. The study identified that counties in northern Kenya have benefitted from a windfall of public resources under devolution coinciding with an influx of national and global investment in the region's infrastructure and resources. While there have been repeated instances of conflict in northern Kenya, devolution has to some cases helped to define the region's changing relationship with the Centre, including resource and infrastructural development. This shift has been particularly pivotal in addressing historical grievances over resource allocation and infrastructural neglect. With greater autonomy granted to counties, in Northern Kenya, there has been an observable change in local resource management and development initiatives tailored to community needs.

### **Conceptual Framework**

This framework presents the study variables and indicates how the variables interrelate. In this study, the independent variable is devolution. This was operationalized as county resource management policies, county leadership, county peacebuilding initiatives and county resource distribution policies. Intercommunal conflicts was the dependent variable. It is hypothesized that intercommunal conflicts in Marsabit County are caused and fueled by county resource management policies, county peace building policies, county leadership and county resource distribution policies. The study argues that intercommunal conflicts are likely to be facilitated by devolution which is characterized by deeply entrenched identity politics and communal and clan chauvinism. The conceptual framework is presented as follows;





## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed research method. The use of mixed research was deemed suitable as it helps researchers gain in-depth and contextualized quantitative and qualitative results with more predictive power as compared to the use of a single research design (Grønmo, 2019). This method allows triangulation thus helping to give rich insights on the research phenomenon

This study adopted mixed research methods involving both exploratory and correlational research designs. These two designs made it possible for the researcher to use both descriptive and inferential data analysis methods. Exploratory design helped to describe and analyze the devolution and the existing situation in regards to intercommunal conflicts. The correlational design on the other hand helped to analyze the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variables. In this case, the correlational design helped to determine the relationship between the devolution and inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County.

The study was conducted in Marsabit County. This is the second largest county in the country covering a total area of 66,923.1 square kilometers (Mutanda & Kimaru, 2022). The county shares boundaries with Turkana County to the west, Samburu County to the southwest, Isiolo County to the south, and Ethiopia to the north. The county has four sub counties, that is Laisamis, Saku, North Horr, and Moyale. There are about 459,785 people living in the county, as per the most recent census in 2019. The county is located in Chalbi desert belt, the driest part of the country. As a result, only 3% of the county's total land area is used for arable farming, mostly in the vicinity of Mount Marsabit (Gudere, Wemali & Ndunda, 2021).

This county is a home to 14 ethnic communities, that is Elmolo, Watta, Konso, Ameru, Samburu, Gabbra, Rendille, Burji, Daasanach, Garreh, Sakuye, Turkana, Somali and Borana. Historically, almost all ethnic groups in the county have made their livings as pastoralists which is the main economic activity (Roba & Kikwatha, 2021). They mainly keep camels, cattle, goats, and sheep. The average temperature in the county ranges between 15 and 26 °C and an

annual rainfall between 200 and 1,000 millimetres. The long rainy season occur between April and May and the short rainy season is experienced between November and December.

The target population comprised of the household heads in Marsabit County, the officials from the county government of Marsabit and administrative leaders within the county. According to 2019 census data, there are 77,495 households in Marsabit County which will be part of the target population for the study (KNBS, 2019). The purpose of including the households was that they are directly and indirectly affected by inter-community conflicts and they are therefore well placed to give data on devolution and its impact on inter-communal conflicts. The purpose of including the county government officials was that they partake in the implementing the county projects including those linked to peace and conflict resolution. The purpose of involving the administrative leaders was that they are well conversant with the various places within the county as well as all the activities and operations undertaken within the county. The inclusion of different categories of respondents made it possible to obtain varied views regarding devolution and its impact on inter-communal conflicts within Marsabit County.

Different sampling methods and procedures were used. Stratified sampling method was used with sub counties forming the strata. The sub counties are Laisamis, Saku, North Horr, and Moyale. Stratification ensured that all the areas within the county were included and that the sample was well representative. In each sub-county, simple random sampling was used to select the households for the study. Religious leaders, ward representatives, county government officials, leaders of peace and conflict resolution groups, and administrative leaders were selected using purposive sampling. This is a sample selection method whereby the respondents are selected based on a predetermined criterion. In this study, the key informants are well conversant with devolution, inter-communal conflicts dynamics and the effects of devolution on the inter-communal conflicts within Marsabit County.

The sample size of households included in the study was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula which gave a representative sample of 100 households. A questionnaire was used to collect data from the households heads. This tool was economical to use to collect data from a large number of households. A 5 point Likert scale was used to measures the respondents' ratings to various statements related to the implementation of safety standards in the schools. The rationale of interviewing the county government officials and the administrative leaders was that they are well conversant with devolution and the inter-communal conflicts dynamics within the county. They were therefore well placed to offer rich insights on the effects of devolution on the inter-communal conflicts within Marsabit County. The interviews were conducted by the researcher using face to face interaction method.

Qualitative analysis was used to analyze data collected using interviews, audio, notes and pictures. Quantitative analysis on the other hand involved the use of scientific computation methods to analyze quantitative data. This was done using SPSS version 28. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the respondents and to analyze the different perceptions of the respondents in regards to devolution and the effect on inter-communal conflicts. This was done

using mean, and percentages. Inferential data analysis was done using Chi square test. This was used to analyze the relationship between devolution and inter-communal conflicts.

Qualitative data analysis was employed to examine the data collected through interviews, utilizing thematic analysis. This method involves reading through a data set to identify categorize and interpret different emerging themes. In the case of this study, thematic analysis involved the scrutiny of the data collected using interview method from the key informants, grouping and interpreting different themes. The findings here were presented as narratives with use of direct quotations in some instances.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

The researcher distributed 100 questionnaires, of which 77 were dully completed, resulting in a response rate of 77%. According to Mugenda & Mugenda (2003), a response rate of 50% or higher is considered adequate for obtaining reliable findings. Hence, the response rate achieved in this study was sufficient to provide dependable insights into devolution and inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County, Kenya. The analysis on age distribution revealed that 10.39% of the household heads were between 18-25 years old, 28.57% were between 26-35 years old, 32.47% were between 36-45 years old, 16.88% were between 46-55 years old, and 11.69% were over 55 years old. Overall, the majority of respondents were between 26-45 years old. This suggests that most of the household heads in the study fall within the economically active age group of 26-45 years.

The findings on gender distribution indicated that 70.13% of the respondents were males and 29.87% were females. The findings imply that the majority of the respondents were males. This can be attributed to the fact that in pastoralist communities, men typically dominate decision-making processes.

The findings on educational level of the respondents indicated that 36.36% of the respondents had not attained formal education, 25.97% had attained primary education, 19.48% had secondary education, 11.69% had college certificate and 6.49% had undergraduate degrees. The findings indicate that although respondents were distributed across different education levels, the education level was generally low among the agro pastoralists. A significant proportion of the respondents have not attained formal education, which may limit their understanding and involvement in issues such as devolution and inter-communal conflicts.

The analysis on occupation of the respondents indicates that 55.8% of the respondents engaged in livestock keeping, 28.6% are agro pastoralists, 9.1% are involved in trade and own businesses and 6.5% engage in other occupations. The findings imply that the majority of respondents rely on livestock keeping as their key source of livelihood. This reflects the significance of pastoralism in the county's economy and culture. A notable proportion are agro-pastoralists which suggests that the households to some extent have diversified their livelihoods.

### **Intercommunal Conflicts**

The purpose of the analysis in this section was to evaluate inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The majority of the respondents (55.84%) were of the opinion that the current

state of peace and coexistence among communities in Marsabit County was poor, 19.48% had neutral perception on the current state of peace and coexistence among communities in Marsabit County and only a small proportion had the perception that the current state of peace and coexistence among communities in Marsabit County.

Agreeing to the views given by household heads, one of the chiefs interviewed had this to say

*"As local leaders, we see tensions rise over simple issues that could have been addressed with proactive conflict management and fair resource allocation. We need more structured and consistent peacebuilding efforts, especially those involving all community members, to rebuild trust and foster understanding between groups." (Chief 2, 2024).*

The findings indicate a significant concern regarding the state of peace and coexistence in Marsabit County, with a majority of respondents perceiving it as poor. This suggests that intercommunal conflicts remain a prevalent issue, undermining social harmony and stability in the region. The neutral perceptions from a smaller portion of respondents may reflect either uncertainty or a lack of strong opinion on the matter. T

On how often inter-communal conflicts have occurred in the last one year, 44.16% reported that inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit county occur occasionally, 22.08% reported that conflicts occur often, 9.09% reported that conflicts occur very often, 12.99% reported that conflicts occur rarely and 11.69% reported that conflicts have not happened in the past one year. Similar views were raised by the key informants. One had this to say;

*"Although inter-communal conflicts have not been occurring all the time, they remain a persistent problem in our county. We need continuous engagement with communities to identify and address the root causes of these conflicts." (Ward Administrator 1, 2024)*

The findings imply that inter-communal conflicts remain a recurring issue in Marsabit County, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting occasional occurrences. While some respondents noted that conflicts happen often or very often, a smaller proportion observed rare or no conflict over the past year. This suggests that although the frequency of conflicts may vary, inter-communal tensions persist, highlighting the need for sustained efforts in peace building and conflict resolution to address the underlying causes and reduce their occurrence.

### **County Resource Management and Inter communal Conflicts**

The aim of the analysis in this section was to examine the relationship between county resource management and inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County. First, the study sought to determine whether the county government of Marsabit has been effective in the management of resources.

The analysis findings indicated that 88.31% felt that the county government of Marsabit has not been effective in the management of resources. Only a small proportion felt that the county government of Marsabit has been effective in the management of resources as indicated by 11.69%. The findings imply that the respondents are neutral regarding the county government's efforts to enhance equality among natives as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts. However, they expressed disagreement with the county's efforts in ensuring fairness in resource

distribution, inclusive decision-making, and the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in reducing conflicts. This suggests that the respondents perceive significant gaps in the county's approach to addressing inter communal conflicts, especially in terms of fairness, inclusivity, and the tangible impact of peace building strategies.

The findings are in tandem with the results of a study done by Habib (2022) on conflicts over scarce resources in Rohingya host community in Bangladesh. The study identified that conflicts were caused by disputes and disagreements over the management and distribution of the available resources. The disagreement over the resources destroyed the existing relationships between the communities which in turn threatened peace and coexistence. Similarly, a study by Ali (2021) on the links between devolution and conflicts in Mandera identified that the majority of the respondents from the county were not satisfied with the manner the county resources were distributed. This led to escalated contest and conflicts over the resources.

For the respondents who felt that the county government has not been effective in resource management, 42.86% reported that the major hindrance to effective resource management has been corruption, 25.97% reported that ineffective resource management is as a result of clan chauvinism and prejudice, 16.88 reported that poor resource management was as a result of nepotism and 14.29% reported that poor resource management was a result of other reasons. The findings imply that while there are numerous factors that contribute to poor management of resources by the county government, corruption was reported by majority as the major hindrance. This indicates widespread perceptions of unethical practices and lack of accountability in governance. Chauvinism and prejudice, other factors that stood out, are linked to ethnic or clan biases, which increase feelings of inequality and exclusion. This fuels inter-communal tensions. Nepotism further undermines trust by favoring personal connections over merit, which promotes resentment among communities.

Corruption, nepotism, ethnic and clan biases emerged also emerged as key concerns among the key informants. One of the local leaders had this to say;

*"In my view the county government is trying as far as resource management is concerned. However, corruption and nepotism are dragging us behind and they are contributing to inter-communal conflicts. Nepotism has made some people to benefit while others have not. Only those connected to the leaders benefit from resources. This caused bitterness and resentment among some communities." (County Government official 3, 2024)*

Another informant had this to say;

*"In my ward, I feel that many people are excluded from the benefit-sharing process. This sows a seed of distrust among them. It creates some type of resentment that works against peace campaigns. " (Ward Administrator 6, 2024)*

The respondents reported that when formulating and implementing resource management policies, there is a need for the county government to promote transparency and accountability as foundational principles. They emphasized the need for eradication of corruption through strict oversight mechanisms, regular audits, and active citizen engagement in monitoring resource allocation and use. Another aspect advocated by the respondents was inclusivity. The

respondents advocated for policies that address the diverse needs of all communities within Marsabit. This would involve equitable resource distribution that transcends ethnic, clan, or social divisions, ensuring no group feels marginalized. They also highlighted the significance importance of promoting meritocracy in appointments and decision-making processes to eliminate and curb nepotism and promote public trust.

Another factor stressed by the respondents was the need for community participation in policy making. They reported that there is a need to encourage local stakeholders to contribute insights and solutions tailored to the unique challenges faced by the communities. One ward administrator had this to;

*"Marsabit is home to diverse communities, and unless every group feels included, we will always face tension and conflict. I agree that resource distribution must be equitable and fair, with a deliberate effort to include all communities regardless of tribe or clan. Policies that unite rather than divide are critical for peace and progress." (County Executive 1, 2024).*

They recommended the need for education and awareness campaigns to make sure that citizens understand the policies and their benefits. This promotes a sense of ownership and cooperation. Furthermore, the respondents emphasized the need for investment in conflict-sensitive approaches to resource management, emphasizing peace-building initiatives that address underlying grievances and promote dialogue among communities. With such measures in place, resource management will not only meet development goals but also strengthens social cohesion in the county.

*"When we focus on inclusive dialogue and equitable resource management, we're not just meeting development targets. We are also promoting trust and unity among our people. Social cohesion is very important, and it can only be achieved if every group feels their needs are being considered and their voices heard." (Youth leader 1, 2024).*

Analysis was done further to determine how the respondents perceive county government resource distribution policies and the contribution to inter communal conflicts in Marsabit county. The findings are presented in the table below;

***Table 1: County government resource distribution policies and the contribution to intercommunal conflicts***

<b>Statement</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
The county government of Marsabit has been successful in the implementation of policies related to resource management	77	2.0909	.76402
Ineffectiveness in the county government resource management policies has been a major cause of inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County.	77	3.1039	1.15376
Clan and communal politics are the major hindrance to the design and implementation of resource management policies	77	2.4416	.78629
The county government of Marsabit leadership policies make sure that the resources in the county are effectively managed and utilized	77	1.7922	1.00443



The analysis revealed that the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement that the leadership policies of the Marsabit county government ensure the effective management and utilization of the county's resources (Mean=1.7922, Std=1.00443). They disagreed that the county government of Marsabit has been successful in the implementation of policies related to resource management (Mean=2.0909, Std=.76402) and that clan and communal politics are the major hindrance to the design and implementation of resource management policies (Mean=2.4416, Std=.78629). The respondents were neutral on whether the ineffectiveness of the county government's resource management policies has been a significant cause of inter-communal conflicts in Marsabit County (Mean=3.1039, Std=.1.15376).

The findings show a general lack of confidence among respondents in the effectiveness of Marsabit County's leadership and policies concerning resource management. There was a strong perception that the county government has not ensured proper management and utilization of resources, and its attempts at implementing resource-related policies have been largely unsuccessful. Clan and communal politics were also viewed as huge obstacles to the formulation and execution of resource management policies. However, there were divided opinions on whether the ineffectiveness of these policies is directly linked to inter communal conflicts. This reflects some uncertainty about the relationship between the shortcomings of the county government and social tensions in the county.

### **Leadership and Inter communal Conflicts**

Analysis was done to determine the influence of county leadership composition on inter communal conflicts in Marsabit county. First the respondents were asked to indicate whether leadership of county government of Marsabit has been satisfactory.

The analysis findings indicated that 63.64% thought that the county leadership is not satisfactory and 36.36% thought the county leadership was satisfactory. The findings reveal a general dissatisfaction with county leadership in Marsabit, with many perceiving it as ineffective in addressing inter communal conflicts and supporting peace building initiatives.

The insights obtained from the households' heads corroborated with the views of the key informants. One informant had this to say in this regard;

*"I am not satisfied with the county government leadership and governance. I feel that leadership positions are dominated by individuals who favor their clans, and this makes the rest of the people feeling excluded. Resources are often directed to areas where their clans live, leaving others struggling." (Administrative leader 5, 2024)*

*"Clan-based favoritism is tearing our county apart. Instead of uniting us, I feel that it sets communities against one another because each clan feels like they are being shortchanged." (Chief 3, 2024)*

The results indicated that the main inspiration of leadership in Marsabit county government is control of resources as represented by 64.94%. Only 35.06% reported that the county government of Marsabit was inspired by the need to offer services to all the communities in Marsabit County.



The findings imply a perception of leadership that mainly prioritize resource allocation and power dynamics, potentially contributing to inter communal tensions. The relatively smaller proportion of respondents who believe that leadership is inspired by a commitment to serving all communities reflects a lack of inclusivity and equitable service delivery.

The respondents were further asked to rate the extent to whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements pertaining to the Marsabit county government leadership and the contribution to conflict resolution.

**Table 2: County government leadership and the contribution to conflict resolution**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.</b>
The county leadership composition is representative in terms of professional qualification, tribe, age and educational level.	77	3.0260	.87320
The Marsabit county government leadership has promoted fairness in the allocation and management of resources.	77	2.1039	.78781
The Marsabit county government leadership has promoted transparency in the resource allocation and management	77	2.0390	.86514
The Marsabit county government leadership has promoted accountability in the allocation and management of resources.	77	2.0260	.90283
County leadership has been effective in conflict management.	77	3.0130	.95275

The analysis findings indicated that the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that county leadership has been effective in conflict management (Mean=3.0130, Std=.95275) and that the county leadership composition is representative in terms of professional qualification, tribe, age and educational level (Mean=3.0280, Std=.95275). They disagreed that the Marsabit county government leadership has promoted fairness in the allocation and management of resources (Mean=2.1039, Std=.78781), that the Marsabit county government leadership has promoted transparency in the resource allocation and management (Mean=2.0390, Std=.86514), and that the Marsabit county government leadership has promoted accountability in the allocation and management of resources (Mean=2.0260, Std=.90283).

Similar views were given by the key respondents. One had his to say;

*" I can say that the county government is trying to manage conflicts, but the efforts don't seem to have lasting solutions. It is hard to say if they're effective or not. What I can say is that the county government is just doing the bare minimum." (County Executive 2, 2024)*

The findings indicate mixed perceptions of the effectiveness of Marsabit County's leadership in conflict management and representation. Although the respondents were neutral on whether county leadership has been effective in managing conflicts or representative in terms of qualifications, tribe, age, and education, there was clear disagreement regarding its fairness, transparency, and accountability in resource allocation and management. These findings indicate significant concerns about governance practices and suggest a lack of trust in the ability of the county government leadership to transparently and equitably manage resources. This leads to broader social and political challenges in the county.

The findings are in tandem with the results of a study conducted by Zakarie and Hared (2021) who in a study on the cause and consequences of conflicts in Somali as well as the conflict mitigation strategies that have been put in place, it emerged that poor leadership, clan and clannism were the major causes of conflict in the country. Poor leadership created avenues for corruption, clan members' militarization, inequalities and extreme poverty. Similarly, a study by Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2019) on the cause of conflicts between communities in Nigeria established that poor governance and poor leadership have been the key causes of resource related conflicts. Conflicts occurred as a result of resource ownership, distribution, access and rivalry over the existing natural resources mainly petroleum resources. Poor leadership facilitated abuse of human rights and created a conducive environment for corruption and nepotism.

### **County Peace Building Initiatives and Inter communal Conflicts**

The analysis in this section sought to determine the influence of county peace building initiatives on inter communal conflicts. First, the study sought to determine whether there are local mechanisms put in place to resolve inter communal conflicts and disputes in Marsabit County.

The analysis results indicate that 84.4% reported that there are local mechanisms put in place to resolve inter communal conflicts and disputes in Marsabit county and 15.6% reported that there are no local mechanisms put in place to resolve inter communal conflicts and disputes in Marsabit county. The findings imply that a significant majority of respondents acknowledge the existence of local mechanisms for resolving inter communal conflicts and disputes in Marsabit County. This suggests that the communities within Marsabit county rely greatly on community-based and traditional conflict resolution strategies to address disputes.

The key informants had similar views as households' heads. One county official had this to say;

*"Our policies on conflict resolution exist, but enforcement is weak. Many people feel their grievances are not heard or addressed transparently, which escalates tensions. Strengthening these systems should be a priority."(County Executive 1, 2024)*

Similar views were shared by one of the chiefs interviewed.

*"As local leaders, we are often called upon to mediate disputes that arise because of these gaps. What is needed is stronger oversight, clear communication about resource distribution processes, and better inclusion of all stakeholders in decision making. Only then can we rebuild trust and reduce tensions in our communities." (Chief 4, 2024)*

Analysis was done to determine how the respondents perceive the effectiveness of various mechanisms used to resolve inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County.

**Table 3: Effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms**

<b>Conflict resolution mechanisms</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
Clan elders	77	1.5844	1.18489
Peace tournaments	77	1.4675	1.00766
Workshops	77	1.4935	1.07144
Religious sanctions	77	1.6104	1.19380
NGOs	77	1.5974	1.18388
County peace initiatives	77	1.6883	1.30040

From the analysis, the respondents reported that clan elders are slightly effective in resolving conflicts (M=1.5844, Std= 1.18489). Other mechanisms were rated as slightly effective in resolving conflicts included religious sanctions (Mean=1.6104, Std= 1.19380), NGOs (Mean=1.5974, Std=1.18388) and County peace initiatives (Mean=1.6883, Std=1.18388). Peace tournaments (Mean=1.4675, Std=1.00766) and workshops (Mean=1.4935, Std=1.07144) were reported as ineffective in solving conflicts.

The key informants raised similar concerns regarding the effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms. They reported that while there are mechanisms put in place, they are not very effective in addressing the root causes of conflicts. One respondent had this to say;

*"Us local leaders together with others such as church and mosque leaders, village elders and NGOs try to help, but in many cases, our impact is not much felt because we don't always have the money and resources needed. We need stronger collaboration with the government to make our efforts more effective." (Chief 4, 2024)*

Similar views were given by the peace and conflict resolution group leaders, ward representatives, and youth leaders.

*"Our efforts are often affected by a lack of resources and the inability to engage all communities consistently. Although we do what we can, greater support from the county government can help us to achieve better results." (Youth leader 2, 2024)*

*"The council of elders hold respect and they play a huge role on conflict resolution. But it is good for them to be offered enough resources and their decisions must be implemented by strong policies that are enforceable on the ground. This will offer long lasting solutions (County executive 1, 2024)*

The findings suggest that existing conflict resolution mechanisms in Marsabit County are perceived as only slightly effective, with no approach standing out as particularly impactful. Clan elders although are traditional pillars of conflict resolution, are considered as providing limited effectiveness. Similarly, religious sanctions, NGOs, and county peace initiatives were not perceived as sufficient in addressing the complexities of local conflicts. Peace tournaments and workshops, often used as community engagement tools were viewed as particularly ineffective in resolving conflicts. These results imply a need for more effective, inclusive, and innovative approaches to conflict resolution that address the underlying causes of disputes and build on existing frameworks.

The findings corroborated the results of a study by Krause (2017) on the role of the non-violence and civilian agency in communal war in Jos, Nigeria whereby the findings indicated that the community elders were instrumental in peace building. Community elders play a crucial role in restoring peace by emphasizing forgiveness and reconciliation between those directly affected by the perpetrators of conflicts and the wider community. Similarly, a study conducted in Lake Chad, Congo Basin among the Mbororo pastoralist by Nagabhatla et al (2021), the findings indicated that the community elders promoted security by promoting peace and coexistence among the pastoral communities. The study revealed that most of the groups experienced a reduction in tension due to the resource management agreements made by the elders on behalf of the communities.

Analysis was further done to find out the extent to which the county government of Marsabit undertake various measures to resolve inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County.

**Table 4: Conflict Resolution measures adopted by the county government**

<b>Conflict Resolution measures adopted by the county government.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std</b>
Advocacy	77	3.0519	.35895
Mediation	77	3.0779	.31482
Improvement of local peace building strategies	77	3.0130	.54996
Mapping out conflict resolution strategies	77	3.0126	.59590

The respondents reported that the county government has a moderate extent adopted advocacy measures to resolve inter communal conflicts in Marsabit county (Mean=3.0519, Std=.35895), mediation (Mean=3.0779, Std=.31482), improvement of local peace building strategies (Mean=3.0130, Std=.54996), and mapping out conflict resolution strategies (Mean=3.0126, Std=.59590). The findings suggest that while the county government of Marsabit has put efforts such as advocacy, mediation, improving peace building strategies, and mapping conflict resolution approaches, these initiatives may not yet be fully effective or widespread.

The findings by the household heads corroborated with the views of the key informants. One had this to echo in this regard;

*As a county government official, I acknowledge that we have made some progress in addressing inter communal conflicts through advocacy and mediation efforts. For example, we have organized several forums to bring communities together and improve dialogue. However, in my opinion, these efforts are not enough and we need to do more." (County Executive 2, 2024).*

Similarly, one of the local leaders had this to say;

*"Although the county government is trying its best, more needs to be done to make these initiatives more helpful. The initiatives need better funding, coordination, and collaboration with community leaders, NGOs, and other stakeholders." (Chief 1, 2024).*

The respondents were also asked to evaluate several statements regarding the role of the Marsabit county government in mitigating conflicts within the county.

**Table 5: County government contribution towards mitigation of conflicts in Marsabit county**

Statements	N	Mean	Std
The county of Marsabit enhances equality of all communities as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts	77	3.0000	.16222
The county of Marsabit ensures there is fairness in distribution of resources as a means of curbing intercommunal conflicts	77	2.2078	1.11612
The county government of Marsabit ensures that all communities are included in decision making on matters of development as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts.	77	2.0130	1.06984
The county Government of Marsabit peace building initiatives have been effective in curbing intercommunal conflicts.	77	2.7013	1.06456

Respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that the county of Marsabit enhances equality of all communities as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts (Mean=3.0000, Std=.16222). They disagreed that the county of Marsabit ensures there is fairness in distribution of resources as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts (Mean=2.2078, Std=1.11612), that the county government of Marsabit ensures that all communities are included in decision making on matters of development as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts (Mean=2.0130, Std=1.06984) and that the county Government of Marsabit peace building initiatives have been effective in curbing inter communal conflicts (Mean=2.7013, Std= 1.06456).

The administrator could further elaborate:

*"The peace building initiatives we have seen so far are well-intentioned, but they do not adequately address the root causes of conflicts. To truly reduce inter communal tensions, we need more inclusive and transparent governance, where every community feels represented and valued. The county government must actively involve stakeholders at the grassroots level to create solutions that resonate with the people and address their unique challenges." (Ward Administrator 3, 2024).*

The findings imply that the respondents are neutral regarding the county government's efforts to enhance equality among natives as a means of curbing inter communal conflicts. However, they expressed disagreement with the county's efforts in ensuring fairness in resource distribution, inclusive decision-making, and the effectiveness of peace building initiatives in reducing conflicts.

### **Inferential Analysis**

The purpose of the analysis in this section was to determine the relationship between devolution and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. This was done using Chi square tests. The results indicated that there was no statistically significant relationship between resource management policies and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. This is because the p value=.013 was less than 0.05. The findings imply that resource management practices significantly influence the occurrence of conflicts. The findings indicate the critical role of equitable and effective resource management in promoting peace and reducing conflicts in the county.

**Table 6: Resource Management Policies- Chi-Square Results**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.723 <sup>a</sup>	2	.013
Likelihood Ratio	7.667	2	.022
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.252	1	.012
N of Valid Cases	77		

On the relationship between county leadership composition and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County, the p value obtained was 0.018 which is less than 0.05. This implies that there was significant relationship between county leadership composition and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit. The findings imply that there was a statistically significant relationship between county leadership compositions and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The findings suggest that the composition of county leadership potentially in terms of representation, inclusivity, or fairness—plays a critical role in influencing the dynamics of inter communal conflicts.

**Table 7: County leadership composition- Chi-Square Results**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.952 <sup>a</sup>	4	.018
Likelihood Ratio	12.303	4	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	.559	1	.455
N of Valid Cases	77		

On the relationship between peace building initiative policies and inter communal conflicts, the p value obtained was 0.03 was less than 0.05 implying that there was statistically significant relationship between county peace building initiatives and inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The findings imply that county peace building initiatives play a meaningful role in influencing the state of inter communal relations.

**Table 8: County leadership Composition-Chi-Square Results**

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2- sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.678 <sup>a</sup>	4	.030
Likelihood Ratio	12.073	4	.017
Linear-by-Linear Association	10.001	1	.002
N of Valid Cases	77		



## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

The study sought to determine the role of devolution on inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The study concludes that the county government of Marsabit has struggled to implement effective and equitable resource management strategies. Inefficiencies, coupled with systemic challenges such as corruption, nepotism, and ethnic biases, have significantly hindered efforts to promote peace and coexistence among communities in the county. As a result of these inefficiencies, trust in governance has been eroded which has in turn increased feelings of exclusion and created an environment that promote inter communal tensions.

Leadership practices emerged as another significant factor that contributes to the occurrence and persistence of inter communal conflicts in Marsabit county. The study concludes that the county leadership in the county mainly prioritizes resource control over equitable service delivery. The lack of focus on fairness and inclusivity has increased divisions and diminished trust in the county leadership and governance structures. Generally, the study concludes that the county leadership structures has not embraces more transparent, accountable and community driven approaches to governance to rebuild confidence among constituents and lay a foundation for sustainable peace and coexistence among communities in the county.

Inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County have also been influenced by county peace building initiatives. Traditional mechanisms led by clan elders and religious leaders, although culturally significant, lack the necessary integration with modern governance structures to provide sustainable peace and coexistence among communities in the county. Additionally, the existing peace initiatives are often not adequately funded and are not well coordinated. This limits their effectiveness in curbing inter communal conflicts in the county.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The study concludes that the county government of Marsabit has struggled to implement effective and equitable resource management strategies. The county government is therefore recommended to prioritize the implementation of effective and equitable resource management strategies. The county government is recommended to ensure transparency and accountability in resource allocation processes in order to rebuild trust among the communities. The county government is recommended to establish effective oversight mechanisms to eliminate and curb corruption, nepotism, and ethnic biases in order to promote inclusivity and fairness in governance.
- ii. The study concluded that the county leadership in the county mainly prioritizes resource control over equitable service delivery and has not played significant role in curbing inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County. The county government leadership is thus recommended to have a transformative shift toward transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. There is a need for the county government to institutionalize community-driven decision-making frameworks that involve diverse ethnic and cultural groups in governance. Also, there is a need for the county government of Marsabit to introduce or improve leadership training programs to equip leaders with



conflict-resolution skills and an understanding of the value of inclusivity in promoting coexistence among communities.

- iii. Inter communal conflicts in Marsabit County have also been influenced by county peace building initiatives. Traditional mechanisms led by clan elders and religious leaders, although culturally significant, lack the necessary integration with modern governance structures to provide sustainable peace and coexistence among communities in the county. Additionally, the existing peace initiatives are often not adequately funded and are not well coordinated. This limits their effectiveness in curbing inter communal conflicts in the county. The County government is recommended to fund and support and coordinate traditional peace building mechanism and integrate with modern governance structures to attend a lasting peace within the county

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