



## East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences

[ejass.eanso.org](http://ejass.eanso.org)

Volume 6, Issue 2, 2023

Print ISSN: 2707-4277 | Online ISSN: 2707-4285

Title DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37284/2707-4285>

EANSO

EAST AFRICAN  
NATURE &  
SCIENCE  
ORGANIZATION

Original Article

### Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya

Jacqueline Wanjiku<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Egerton University, P. O. Box 536, Egerton, Kenya.

\* Author for Correspondence Email: [wanjikujacqueline02@gmail.com](mailto:wanjikujacqueline02@gmail.com)

Article DOI : <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1563>

#### Date Published: ABSTRACT

10 November 2023

**Keywords:**  
*Tales of Turmoil,*  
*Trends and*  
*Legacies,*  
*Resource Conflict,*  
*Women,*  
*Laikipia West Sub-County*

This article discusses trends of inter-ethnic conflict in Laikipia West Sub-County and the effects of the conflict on women. Inter-ethnic conflict in the study area can be traced back to the period before 1895 when the white settlers began establishing their homes in Laikipia County. Prior to the British colonization, this area was largely dominated by the Maasai and Samburu communities who were pastoralists. With the coming of white settlers most of the lands were seized and the communities displaced from their areas. Many white settlers opted to practice ranching since most of the lands were semi-arid. Later immigrants resulted to irrigation agriculture leading to the horticultural boom in Laikipia in the 1980s. With the coming of the whites and the existence of inadequate pastures for the pastoral communities, the area has continued to witness unceasing conflicts. This article examined the historical trends of the conflict and the effects of conflict on women in Laikipia West Sub-County. This study employed the conflict theory by Karl Marx. In respect to this, data was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained from the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi and from oral interviews with relevant informants. Secondary data was obtained from relevant books, journal articles, internet, theses, and conference papers. Data obtained was then evaluated and analysed. Data was analysed in three analytical frames namely: theoretical framework, documentary review and content analysis.

#### APA CITATION

Wanjiku, J. (2023). Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(2), 264-278. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1563>

#### CHICAGO CITATION

Wanjiku, Jacqueline. 2023. "Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences* 6 (2), 264-278. <https://doi.org/10.37284/eajass.6.2.1563>.

#### HARVARD CITATION

Wanjiku, J. (2023) "Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(2), pp. 264-278. doi: 10.37284/eajass.6.2.1563.

#### IEEE CITATION

J., Wanjiku "Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya". *EAJASS*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 264-278, Nov. 2023.

## MLA CITATION

Wanjiku, Jacqueline. "Tales of Turmoil: Unravelling Trends and Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia West Sub-County, Kenya". *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, no. 2, Nov. 2023, pp. 264-278, doi:10.37284/eajass.6.2.1563.

## INTRODUCTION

Conflicts have been witnessed across the African continent. While some of these conflicts are fuelled by socio-economic and political competition, others have arisen due to deep rooted ethnicity along the "divide and rule" policy of the colonial administration.<sup>1</sup> Ethnic interests set the pace of conflict between the Nuer and Dinka communities of South Sudan. This decimated ethnic cohesion and political patriotism.<sup>2</sup> A case in point is that between the majority Hutu rising against the designated politically and economically powerful minority Tutsi in Rwanda. Monopoly over economic resources and control of political power by one ethnic group to the exclusion of the others could explain the origin of these conflicts.<sup>3</sup>

Inter-ethnic conflicts have continued to be witnessed between Kenya and its neighbouring countries since the colonial era to date.<sup>4</sup> Stavenhagen argues that conflict is a state of disharmony where state parties compete for perceived or real interests out of unmet needs. According to him, conflict can be considered ethnic when it involves organized political movements, mass unrest, separatists action and civil wars with opposing lines drawn along ethnic motives.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, inter-ethnic conflict involves distinct plural societies living in a certain geographical area while intra-ethnic conflicts involve internal feuds within a singular ethnic identity. Ethnic conflicts in Laikipia West Sub-County can be traced way back even before the white settlers began establishing their homes in

Laikipia. Prior to British colonization, Laikipia was under pastoralism by the Samburu. Most of the lands were seized and the pastoral communities displaced from their areas with the coming of the colonialists.<sup>6</sup>

Laikipia West has been faced with challenges of ethnic-conflicts over the years. Conflicts within a country affects its neighbours and pose threat to regional security and stability and emerges as a key concern to policy makers.<sup>7</sup> Despite various studies being conducted on conflict in Laikipia a detailed study on the trends of resource conflict in Laikipia West and the effects of the conflict on women is yet to be fully documented. The leading cause of the conflict is presumed to be the conflict of interests between farmers on one hand and pastoralists on the other hand. The conflict in the constituency is bound to intensify with the increasing climatic change and the decrease in pasture and water for the animals. It is clear that several factors have led to inter-ethnic conflict in Laikipia West Sub-County. This article therefore endeavoured to understand trends of inter-ethnic conflict in Laikipia West and its effects on women.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is also a reasoned statement meant to clarify, guide, and interpret the findings of research.<sup>8</sup> This study employed conflict theory with the aim of developing a framework for understanding the evolution of resource conflict in Laikipia West Sub-County. Marx's conflict theory notes that there are two basic groups of

<sup>1</sup>M, Mamdani. *Saviours and Survivors*. (New York: Pantheon Books and Colophon, 2009), p.27

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), pp.44-50.

<sup>3</sup> O. Nnoli., *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> R. M., Vanzwanenberg and A. King., *Colonial history of Kenya and Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Bureau, 1975) p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> R. Stavenhagen., *Ethnic question: rhetorical issues*. (Dubrovnik: 1991), p. 3-6.

<sup>6</sup> Republic of Kenya, Laikipia West District Development plan 2008-2012(Nairobi: Government Printer, 2009), pp.1-55.

<sup>7</sup> G. Tsebelis, *how political institutions work*, (Princeton: Princeton University press), p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> P. Oliver, "writing your theses now, 2009, (New Delhi': Sage publication India), p. 943.

people: the wealthy and the poor. Conflict theory studies the social control that the rich have over the masses. Marx believed that one society or organization only functions in order to try and better their social situations resulting in some social upheavals.

According to Marx, the existence of different social classes is the continuous source of inevitable conflict and change on the social structure occurring through violent upheavals affecting class composition. Marx sees the human society as a collection of competing interest groups and individuals each with their own motives and expectations. Agreements only appear among those who share similar privileges, leading to unequal distribution of scarce resources. Laikipia West is inhabited by people of different ethnic groups all having different likes, values and interests. The competing interest groups end up engaging each other in unending conflicts as they try to safeguard their own likes and interest amid the scarcity of resources.

### Trends of Conflict in Laikipia West

Laikipia West Sub-County has continued to witness recurring inter-ethnic conflict over the years. The Sub-County is multi-ethnic and comprises of pastoralist communities such as Maasai, Samburu, Pokot, Tugen, Nandi and Bantu communities such as Kikuyu and Kisii.<sup>9</sup> Before the coming of the white settlers, communities residing in the vast Laikipia plains practiced hunting and keeping animals, then, conflicts were minimal. When Kenya was declared a British Protectorate, the British government in Kenya began the construction of the Kenya- Uganda Railway in 1896. The railway was to facilitate exploitation of economic resources in the interior

of Kenya and the landlocked Uganda, resources that were going were going to assist in the running of the economy.<sup>10</sup> At that time t the British government encouraged white settlers to engage in agricultural activities in crop farming and animal keeping.<sup>11</sup> This mode of colonial economy led to land alienation from African communities through colonial land policies.<sup>12</sup> White settlers were allowed to occupy any land owned by the Africans that seemed to lie idle and underutilized.<sup>13</sup> Africans were pushed to living in reserves and in deplorable conditions as most of their lands had been taken over by the white settlers. In this process, natives of Laikipia lost most of their land. Africans living in reserves were forced to provide labour in the large farms and forced to pay taxes to the colonial government. The British Colonial Government consequently used village headmen and the chiefs to recruit African labour for the colonial economy<sup>14</sup> Around the 1920s, most communities had lost their land to the white settlers and this period saw a few members of the Agikuyu, Abaluyia, Ameru, Abagusii, Somali and Turkana joining the Maasai, Nandi, Pokot, Tugen and the Samburu as labourers of the settlers. Most of the Somali and Turkana occupied Rumuruti Division of Laikipia County in the 1950s<sup>15</sup>

In the 1950s political associations and movements had come up to fight for their land and to resist oppression from the colonial government one such groping was the Mau-Mau movement. As the Mau-Mau wave affected the neighbouring Nyandarua and Nyeri counties, the relationship between the Africans and the Europeans in Laikipia worsen.<sup>16</sup> During this period, inter-ethnic conflicts were restricted to the colonial chiefs, sub-chiefs, community elders, the District

<sup>9</sup> P. Lemoosa, "A Historical Transformation of Pastoral Economy of Samburu of North-Central Kenya, 1900 – 1963" (M.A. Thesis. Kenyatta University, 1998). P.28.

<sup>10</sup> G. Were and D. Wilson, *East Africa through a Thousand Years*, (Nairobi: Evans Brother (Kenya) Limited, 1987). p. 25.

<sup>11</sup> P. Waweru, "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism under Colonial Rule from, 1909 – 1963". (Ph.D. Thesis. Egerton University, 2006). p.32.

<sup>12</sup> W. R. Ochieng, *A modern History of Kenya*, (Nairobi: MacMillan Educational Publishers, 1985) P.42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>14</sup> W. R. Ochieng, *A modern History of Kenya*, (Nairobi: MacMillan Educational Publishers, 1985) P.42.

<sup>15</sup> KNA/DC/LKA/1/7/ Annual Report, 1957.

<sup>16</sup> KNA/DC/LKA/1/5, Annual Report, 1954.

Emergency Committee (DEC) and the District Security Committee (DSC).<sup>17</sup> The Mau-Mau struggle intensified animosity between the British colonial administrators and the Africans.<sup>18</sup>

After Kenya had gained independence, people were really waiting to gain back their lands and resources from the white settlers as promised by the leaders. This was not the case however as there was skewed allocation of resources which included land.<sup>19</sup> Unfulfilled promises resulted to ethnicity as communities sought to unite for political legitimization and domination.<sup>20</sup> Allocation of resources and politics was based on ethnicity and ethnic kingpins of communities acted as mediums between their communities and the state for acquisition of resources and favours.<sup>21</sup> During this time, the MP for Laikipia West Constituency was G.G. Kariuki, a Kikuyu. The relation between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin in Laikipia West Sub-County took a twist in 1975 when J.M Kariuki, a Kikuyu leader was killed. Before his body was found, the then Vice President, Daniel Arap Moi kept on assuring Kenyans that J. M. Kariuki was in Zambia.<sup>22</sup> The Kikuyu joined university students in national wide protests against the government creating tension between the Kalenjin and Kikuyu in Laikipia. In addition to this, in the 1970s, the government continually used armed communities' militia to secure the Agikuyu land resources by making alliances with them against the Kalenjin in the former Rift Valley Province.<sup>23</sup> This increased hostility between the Agikuyu and Kalenjin

communities in Laikipia resulting to an increase in banditry activities.

The Agikuyu community had greater economic prosperity and dominance and were more self-consciousness than the pastoral communities in Laikipia.<sup>24</sup> They resulted to buying land through land buying companies. Such companies included Laikipia West Company, Mathira Land Buying Company among other land buying companies.<sup>25</sup> This saw an influx of Bantu communities in Laikipia after purchasing land from the companies. Gichane, a former chief in the area recounted the population in Laikipia rising greatly in the 1960s and 70s after many Kikuyu bought land.<sup>26</sup> Only a few pastoralist communities bought land from the land buying companies. The majority of the pastoral tribes lived in former reserves in Manyattas and moved from time to time in search of pasture for their animals. Many of the Bantu communities who bought land in Laikipia West Sub-County became absentee landlords.<sup>27</sup> The pastoralists grazed their herds at will on these lands. The sale of former European farms to other communities and land buying companies has over the years been a source of dispute by the pastoralists who feel that they were deprived of their ancestral land and that the presence of those other communities is an interference with their grazing rights in the area.

The unchecked balance of power was evident and had set grounds for inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya and in Laikipia by the time Kenyatta died. The Bantu and Nilotic communities in Laikipia were

<sup>17</sup> KNA/DC/LKA/2/2 – Handing Over Report, 1950 - 1958

<sup>18</sup> P.G. Okoth and B.A. Ogot. (Eds). *Conflicts in Contemporary Africa*. (Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, 2000), pp. 35-38.

<sup>19</sup> S. W. Nasongo & G. P. Murunga, (Ed). *The struggle for Democracy* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2007) pp. 25-40.

<sup>20</sup> G. P. Okoth and B. A. Ogot, (Ed) *Conflicts in Contemporary Africa* (Nairobi: Jomo Kenyatta Foundation, 2000). pp. 12-15.

<sup>21</sup> W.R. Ochieng, W. R, *A modern History of Kenya* (Nairobi: MacMillan Educational Publishers, 1985) P. 25.

<sup>22</sup> S. W. Nasongo and G. P. Murunga, (Ed). *The struggle for Democracy* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2007) pp.30-40.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. P.45

<sup>24</sup> A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), pp.55-60.

<sup>25</sup> S. W. Nasongo and G.P Murunga. (Eds). *The struggle for Democracy*. (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2006). pp. 47.

<sup>26</sup> Gichane, OI, 15 Sep.2021.

<sup>27</sup> A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), pp.90-110.



incompatible.<sup>28</sup> This was also noted by Kuki who alleged that without her the area would have been turned into a grazing zone and poachers' paradise.<sup>29</sup> The pastoral communities have often provoked tragic confrontation by grazing their livestock on crops of the Bantu communities.<sup>30</sup>

After Moi took over power from Jomo Kenyatta as the second president, he dismantled GEMA comprising of Bantu communities and approved ethnic groupings of Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana, and Samburu (KAMATUSA) because they supported KANU.<sup>31</sup> By 1981, development of regions largely depended on the loyalty of their leader and people to the president. This meant that regions that did not show loyalty to him and the KANU government risked being consigned to economic and political oblivion.<sup>32</sup> Due to inequality in the KANU government Maina Njenga formed the *mungiki* group to respond to economic sabotage directed to the Kikuyu and to register political indignation at the negative political targeting on the community.<sup>33</sup> However, the *mungiki* menace was greatly felt in Laikipia County after 1997.

Out of frustration and desperation, the non-pastoral tribes of Laikipia held a march in 1996 carrying the body of a victim who had been murdered by the pastoralists in the course of cattle rustling.<sup>34</sup> The residents expressed anger at the government for lack of concern about their security. Previous complains by the non-pastoral tribes had not elicited any assistance from the

Police. The march led to the government sending armed security men into the area to evict pastoralists communities who used to invade non-pastoralists land in search of pastures but this did not materialize.

Wide scale and tragic inter-ethnic clashes were first witnessed in Laikipia County in 1998.<sup>35</sup> Inter-ethnic raiding became prevalent from the 1990s.<sup>36</sup> On January 1998, armed Pokots stole 15 goats in an attack at the home of Esther Mburu. The assailants were followed by Kikuyu warriors who caught up with them and managed to recover ten goats. In response to this, the Kikuyu launched an attack in the home belonging to a Pokot. They cut and killed forty goats, maimed his cattle, and burnt his house. Retaliatory attacks over such killings within communities in Laikipia County have become spiral.<sup>37</sup> In response to this, a peace meeting was organized between the Kikuyu and the Pokots. Before the start of this meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1998, Pokots demanded that their tribesmen be compensated for all animals lost.<sup>38</sup> Despite efforts to restore peace between the warring communities, peace was not achieved.

On January 14, 1998, Pokots and Samburu raiders raided Kikuyu homes killing two people and burnt houses belonging to the Kikuyu in Olmorani area leading to massive migration of people.<sup>39</sup> People sought refuge in Ol Moran Catholic Church, and other churches in Sipili and Kinamba.

After the attacks that ended on 16<sup>th</sup> January, the Kikuyu felt the government was condoning the

<sup>28</sup> S. W. Nasongo and G. P. Murunga, (Ed). *The struggle for Democracy* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2007) pp.60-70.

<sup>29</sup> K. Galmann., *I dreamed of Africa*, (London: Penguin, 2012). p.45

<sup>30</sup> A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), pp. 60.

<sup>31</sup> S. W. Nasongo and G. P. Murunga, (Ed). *The struggle for Democracy* (London: Zed Books Ltd, 2007) pp.71-74.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pp.61-63

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 64

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. 66-80.

<sup>35</sup> IRF. (2009). *The Root Causes and Implications of the 2007-2008 Post Election Violence*. Nairobi: IRF/KTT

<sup>36</sup> K.A. Mkutu, "Guns and Governance in the Rift Valley: Pastoralists Conflicts and Small Arms" (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 2008), p.32.

<sup>37</sup> K. A. Mkutu, "Small arms and light weapons among pastoral groups in the Kenya-Uganda border areas" Volume 106, No.442:47-70 2007

<sup>38</sup> A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), pp.60-70.

<sup>39</sup> K.A. Mkutu, "Guns and Governance in the Rift Valley: Pastoralists Conflicts and Small Arms" (Nairobi: East Africa Educational Publishers, 2008), p. 36.

attacks. Neither did Jonathan Soi, the commanding officer Ngarua Police station then nor the Chief Inspector make arrangements for the provision of food and security for refugees.<sup>40</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> January 1998 over 100 Kikuyu men armed with *pangas*, knives and *rungus* confronted raiders at Mutamaiyu. However, many of them were killed by pastoralists' gunshots rendering their revenge mission a disastrous one.<sup>41</sup> To some communities, raiding is considered as a heroic activity that brings out the prowess in a man.<sup>42</sup> The tribal clashes effectively ended on 18th January, as thereafter no incidences of tribal clashes were reported.

In May 2007, armed cattle rustlers raided Kikuyu homes in Olmoran areas of Laikipia West. The raiders took 200 heads of cattle. However, the armed cattle rustlers were killed by the Kenya Police in Olmoran area during a cattle recovery operation.

In March 2008, about 60 young Kikuyu men were killed in Rumuruti area of Gatundia in a retaliation attack after one Turkana man was burnt to death after being caught stealing goats from a Kikuyu family. To the Turkana community, the act of burning bodies, whether alive or dead is against their traditions, hence the retaliation.<sup>43</sup> Revenge attacks over such bizarre killings have become more and more frequent in Laikipia West.<sup>44</sup>

In April of 2017 herders launched attacks on private ranches that left several people, including Britons, dead. Tristan Voorspy, an Ex-British Soldier, was killed by armed pastoralist herders in

Sossian ranch while inspecting his lodges which he co-owned.<sup>45</sup> On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, of the same year, Kuki Galmann a conservationist and the author of *Dreamed of Africa*, was shot and badly injured by herders when they invaded her Ar Nyiro Ranch, otherwise known as Laikipia Nature Conservancy, which she owned. The properties destroyed during invasions in Sossian Ranch include Chali and Romeo hotels. In another invasion at Al Maisor Ranch in Rumuruti, Pokot herders killed two workers and drove in their cattle to graze. The range of attacks between herders and whites is because the Europeans claim original land settlement rights while pastoralists, among them Maasai, claim Laikipia as their ancestral land which was alienated during the 1911 agreement.<sup>46</sup> However, normalcy has resumed. The conflict escalated prompting the international organization that stands with indigenous communities to write an open letter to the president raising concerns on the confrontations between herders, Samburu, Maasai, and the Pokot that has led to massivedeaths and violation of human rights by the police sent to quell the violence.<sup>47</sup>

On July of 2017, a contingent of Anti-Stock Theft Unit police officers ran into an ambush in Matwiku village in Laikipia West Sub-County (LWSC). Six police officers were killed by armed bandits including a Deputy Police Commandant while those who were injured were airlifted to Nairobi for treatment.<sup>48</sup> This incidence remained deeply etched in the minds of most residents and was echoed by most informants as one of the

<sup>40</sup> A.M. Akiwumi., Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. (Nairobi: Government Printers, 1999), p.65.

<sup>41</sup> F. K. Warurii, "Inter-ethnic conflict: Trends, Causes, Effects and Intervention in Rumuruti Division of Laikipia county, Kenya 1963-2010" (MA Thesis: Kenyatta University, 2015), p.85.

<sup>42</sup> P. Lemoosa, "A Historical Transformation of Pastoral Economy of Samburu of North- Central Kenya, 1900-1963" (M.A Thesis: Kenyatta University, 2012), p.52.

<sup>43</sup> F. K. Warurii, "Inter-ethnic conflict: Trends, Causes, Effects and Intervention in Rumuruti Division of Laikipia county, Kenya 1963-2010" (MA Thesis: Kenyatta University, 2015), p.85.

<sup>44</sup> A. M. Akiwumi, "Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya", (Nairobi: Government Printers 1999) p.19.

<sup>45</sup> S. Smith, "Former British Army officer Tristan Voorspy shot dead in Kenya", *Evening Standard*, 06 March, 2017, p.5

<sup>46</sup> K. Kabatesi, "Brutality won't settle Laikipia Conflict", *The star*, 17 September, 2021, p.19.

<sup>47</sup> Cultural Survival, open letter to the president of the Republic of Kenya H.E Uhuru Kenyatta over the situation in Laikipia, broken land, Broken lives of the pastoralists people in Laikipia and Samburu,

<sup>48</sup> S. Njuguna, "Six police officers killed in Bandit attack in Laikipia West", *Daily Nation*, 12 July, 2017, p.13.

deadliest attacks. Matara, a resident of Matwiku, narrated how the government had sent reinforcement to the police headquarters in Kamwenje and how the convoy was ambushed just before they reached Kamwenje. According to him it was a well-planned. It showed that the then chief *Simba* was conspiring with the rogue herders by providing them with information that made it easy for the herders to carry out the attack as they were waiting for the police in the bushes. That is how the officers were ambushed, resulting in many of them being injured and some dying.<sup>49</sup> In November, at least 300 cattle were allegedly killed by police in Ratia village during a shootout with rogue herders in Laikipia West.<sup>50</sup>

A Standard newspaper report indicated that four more schools were closed in Laikipia West following the rising rates of insecurity, bringing the total number of schools closed to eight. On the previous day parents from Ndindika primary and secondary as well as Mbogoini and Arabal schools together with their children, marched to the Assistant County Commissioners office at Kinamba engaging police in running battles. The parents were also protesting the killing of three people in the previous week by suspected bandits. Among those killed was a General Service Unit (GSU) Officer.<sup>51</sup> Rising cases of insecurity have seen hundreds of families from Matwiku, Wangwachi and Olmoran area flee.

**Plate 1: The Mukutan Lodge on fire in Laikipia Nature Conservancy**



**Source:** [africanspicesafaris.com](http://africanspicesafaris.com)

By August, students were yet to return to schools as insecurity continued to hit Laikipia County. Due to insecurity, some parents were camping at police units such as Kanja Forest Service and others at police camps. To counter this, the then Rift Valley Regional Commissioner, Mr. Natembeya, stated that at least twenty police officers were deployed in each school to provide security. Affected schools included Ndindika

Secondary School that was temporary closed among others.<sup>52</sup> A discussion with Kamotho, a former principal of Ideal School, revealed that conflict was the main reason that led to the school shutting down. According to him, as conflict continued to intensify, parents were afraid of

<sup>49</sup>Matara, OI, 14 Nov. 2021.

<sup>50</sup> M. Kurgat, "Resign over Laikipia cattle shooting, Matiangi and Boinett told", *The star*, 06 November 2017, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> J. Mugambi, J. Munyeki, "Laikipia residents terrified about surge in banditry killings", *The Standard*, 03 August, 2021, p.16.

<sup>52</sup> S. Njuguna, "Bandits push students, teachers out of Laikipia West", *Daily Nation*, 04 August, 2021, p. 4.

enrolling their children in the school which was still growing, leading to the school collapsing.<sup>53</sup>

The National Security Advisory Council (NSAC) held an emergency meeting on September 4 2021 on insecurity in Laikipia County amid rising tension in the region. On the previous day, two people had been killed by armed bandits in three different attacks in Mirango and Ratia village in Olmorani ward. The attack also left a class eight pupil at Mirango primary school nursing gunshot wounds.<sup>54</sup> According to Sergeant Kiprop, the attack happened just a few days after 50 armed bandits attacked Kamwenje General Service Unit (GSU) command centre in Laikipia West fatally injuring a GSU officer.<sup>55</sup> Leaders of Laikipia West who included the governor wanted the National Police Reservists (NPRs) redeployed in the area. Leaders claimed that the withdrawal of reservists had left residents vulnerable to banditry attacks and cattle rustling. In the past, ethnic violence was left to be resolved by the District Emergency Committee and the District Security Committee.<sup>56</sup>

On September 11, Interior Cabinet Secretary Mr. Matiangi led a high-level security team in a visit to the affected areas where he announced a raft of measures including deployment of an elite police unit to Olmorani aimed at restoring sanity in the region. He visited houses that had been torched by bandits earlier that day. Some houses torched include those of National Police Reservists in the Dam Samaki area. In part of the solutions the Cabinet Secretary CS announced the deployment of GSU to join other formations in restoring order in the affected areas. He also said that surveyors would be deployed to Laikipia to expedite the land titling process and review and recommend action on lapsed land leases.<sup>57</sup> Wasiwasi, a businessman operating in Laikipia West recounted that people have been living in fear due to frequent attacks that result to them closing their businesses so early

and as conflict continue to spread, the purchasing power of the people is greatly reduced.<sup>58</sup>

In the recent skirmishes in Laikipia, the government sent a message to the bandits via the Rift Valley forceful disarmament exercise following the recent killing of two policemen and two soldiers at the Laikipia Nature Conservancy. Disarmament exercises came hardly a day after bandits killed two Kenya defence forces (KDF) soldiers and two General Service Unit (GSU) officers in Laikipia after they were shot dead at Ngerecha in Kamwenje village of Laikipia West. This happened as the KDF soldiers were digging a trench at the Laikipia Nature Conservancy (LNC) to deter bandits from moving stolen animals.

Over time, Laikipia West has continued to grapple with issues of insecurity and banditry attacks which now target households. There has also been commercialization of livestock theft practices, animals which are now sold in towns such as Nairobi, Nyahururu and Naivasha for slaughter.

## **COLONIAL LEGACIES OF RESOURCE CONFLICT ON WOMEN IN LAIKIPIA WEST**

### **Accessibility on Maternal Care in Community Health Centers**

Laikipia West is home to the Laikipia Nature conservancy otherwise known as Kuki Galmann ranch. The Kuki Galmann ranch has endeavoured to be part of the community by contributing to the welfare of the people and the community at large. The Kuki Galmann ranch also known as Al Ar Nyiro ranch offers employment opportunities to the neighbouring community some work as game ranchers, others as cooks, managers within the institution and others act as security personnel

Kamuru, a tour guide working at the ranch alludes that the conservancy has greatly aided in

<sup>53</sup>Kamotho, OI, 18 Nov. 2021

<sup>54</sup> W. Maina, "Bandits still roam freely as school reopen in Laikipia", *Daily Nation*, 13 Sep, 2021, p.20.

<sup>55</sup>Kiprop, OI, 21 Oct. 2021.

<sup>56</sup> KNA/DC/LKA/2/2

<sup>57</sup> S. Njuguna, "Matiangi unveils new measures to beef up security in Laikipia", *Saturday Nation*, 11 Sep, 2021, 10

<sup>58</sup>Wasiwasi, O I, 09 Nov. 2021



alleviating poverty by offering numerous employment opportunities to the people.<sup>59</sup> Apart from offering employment opportunities, the ranch has been participating in community projects through the Kuki Galmann foundation. The ranch has aided in sponsoring the education of needy students in the area and educating the local community on the importance of environmental conservation while also has provided books and water storage tanks to schools since Laikipia is arid. Other projects supported by the foundation include health facilities. Health facilities supported by the ranch include the Kuki Galmann health facility in Matwiku shopping centre. The health facility has been aiding locals by providing maternal care and family planning services to pregnant mothers

while also offering treatment of basic ailments to the locals residing in this area. This has seen an increase in the number of women seeking antenatal services in the area. Provision of subsidized health services has been beneficial considering that the nearby health centre is more than three kilometre away and often, people flock in this health centre to get treatment when ill. Cheptoo a nurse in this facility alludes that roughly the facility receives 30- 50 patients a day and has greatly aided in decongesting the Mastoo health centre which previously used to handle very many patients.<sup>60</sup> According to Wangechi, a local trader in this Centre, the health facility has really aided them in accessing health services which was initially not within the locals reach.<sup>61</sup>

**Plate 2: The Kamwenje Health Centre, a government facility serving the locals**



**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 29 November 2021

<sup>59</sup>Kamuru, OI, 17 Oct. 2021.

<sup>60</sup>Cheptoo, OI, 29 Nov. 2021.

<sup>61</sup>Wangechi, OI, 29 Nov. 2021.

**Plate 3: The Kuki Galmann Health Centre located in Matwiku Centre.**

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 29 November 2021

### **Gender Based Violence in the Clustered Homesteads**

As conflict continues to worsen in various parts of Laikipia West Sub-County, residents have continually migrated from these areas to safer areas. Over the years residents of Kamwenje, Matwiku, Njorua Ndindika among other areas have continued to flee from their homes which have been left unoccupied with unattended farms. Most of the affected people move to small centres in the areas that are viewed to be more secure and camp there as they wait for guns to be silenced. Some of these immigrants live as internally displaced persons in different areas of Laikipia such as Rumuruti and Kinamba.<sup>62</sup> Other immigrants have come together to form groups where they make contributions which they then use to buy land which is then subdivided among the group members. Each member is given a small

portion of land where they mostly build semi-permanent houses and having settled here, they now seek employment opportunities (*Kibarua*) in the nearby farms owned by locals. This has led to the emergence of clustered homes in rural areas similar to those found in slums commonly known as *Gishagi*. Abuse, mostly cases of gender-based violence (GBV) and children being molested are quite high in this slums. As a result of poverty, most children do not attend schools and those who are privileged often go for days without food and girls cannot afford sanitary towels. This has led to high school dropout rates, early pregnancies, and the rise in cases of gender-based violence. According to Githaiga, a local village elder one in three girls have in one way or another experienced physical or emotional violence and molestation, cases which are often solved in out of court agreements.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> P. Waweru, "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism under Colonial Rule, 1909-1963" (PhD Thesis: Njoro: Egerton University, 2006), p.60.

<sup>63</sup> Githaiga, OI, 29 Nov. 2021.



**Plate 4: Some of the clustered houses in Mwenje**

**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 20 November 2021

### **Death, Displacement of People and Changing of Gender Roles**

Resource Conflict has often resulted to massive death and destruction of property of unknown value. In the recent skirmishes and those of the past, people have lost their lives as they try to protect their properties and animals from being stolen. Those who show signs of resistance against the attackers are killed. Wanjeri, a teacher in one of the local schools, emotionally recalled when bandits in the volatile areas of Kamwenje gunned down her husband. According to Wanjeri, her husband was killed when he dashed out of their house during the wee hours of the night to intercept herders who had taken off with their animals from fleeing. It was in this ordeal that she lost her husband.<sup>64</sup> She has since relocated to safer areas of Milimani Shopping Centre where she resides with her children. This is not an isolated

case as many more widows and widowers have lost their spouses in similar ordeals. This has resulted in women taking over roles previously considered to be men`s and men taking over roles previously considered to belong to women.

In recent times, Laikipia residents have raised concerns that herders invading their farms were a major cause of insecurity which have often led to loss of lives and property.<sup>65</sup> It was due to such conflicts that owners of some ranches such as Kuki Galmann and Tristan Voorspy were left with gunshot wounds after they were attacked by illegal herders who forced their way into these ranches trying to get pasture for their animals during the dry months. Armed forces have also not been spared in such ordeals. There have been frequent attacks that have resulted to death of police officers and National Police Reservists (NPRs) who often are sent to quell the violence.

<sup>64</sup> Wanjeri, OI, 26 Nov. 2021.

<sup>65</sup> Daily Nation, Residents fear for their lives as herders invade, August 16, 2021 p. 18.

Armed herders are so much conversant with the environment and the physical terrain, making it easy for them to stage successful attacks against the police. According to area residents led by Lekulal a 98-year-old residence of Kamwenje village, the police are equally afraid of the attackers since they are in possession of sophisticated guns which are not even used by the Kenya police.<sup>66</sup> To Lekulal death was an everyday affair, so normal such that they were already used to it. Lekulal' statement collaborated with Leshekwet's a long-distance herder who claimed that death to them was as such much part of their lifestyle as was living to see their herds grow.<sup>67</sup> Survivors of such ordeals have to live with permanent disabilities and some with bullets edged in their bodies due to these attacks. In cases where men lose their lives, women are often left as the sole providers in these families. Affected residents often flee from the war prone zones leaving the areas unoccupied. This has resulted to a refugee problem in Laikipia West Sub-County

### **Inequality in the Access of Education for Girls**

Laikipia West has often appeared in the media as an unsafe haven due to frequent insecurity that continue to rock the area. Insecurity status in Laikipia has greatly affected the lives and lively hoods of the people. When attacks are launched, normal day to day activities are affected. Among the affected amenities in Laikipia are schools. Research carried out by Mwenda found that the conflicts in Laikipia County have had a far-reaching impact on the state of education in the County.<sup>68</sup> In the recent skirmishes, schools were shut down as students rarely turn up in schools due to fear of being attacked on their way to school.

According to Pkalya, in situations of armed violent conflict, schooling is frequently disrupted through closures, imposition of curfews by the government and displacement of learners together

with their families. In some instances, schools are also destroyed.<sup>69</sup> Gichohi, a teacher at Umoja secondary school asserts that in some instances, students report to school at eight and leave for home as early as 3:00 pm with the number of girls attending school being lower than their male counterparts.<sup>70</sup> Although education levels in Laikipia West are generally low, there has been efforts by the Laikipia Nature Conservancy in Laikipia West to improve the education levels. Several education centres in the area are supported by the Kuki Galmann ranch through the Kuki Galmann foundation. The Kuki Galmann foundation offers scholarships to students who post exemplary results while also donating books and learning materials to nearby schools.

Sospeter, a high school teacher at Ndindika secondary school recounted the many times that the conservancy supported the school by providing foodstuffs and water tanks as life changing, statements also supported by Kimaiyo of Mahua secondary school.<sup>71</sup> Despite efforts shown by the conservancy to improve the education levels, learning institutions close from time to time due to insecurity in some parts of the constituency. Learning institutions affected by the skirmishes include Mbogoini, Ndindika secondary school, Umoja day secondary school among others. Students often must report to school late and leave early before the scheduled time so as to give them ample time to reach home before the attackers' strike. Some students especially girls drop out of school to take care of the young ones after their parents lose their lives in life threatening attacks leading to high school dropouts and consequently low literacy levels in Laikipia West. Other youths who drop out of school engage in drug taking and trafficking, stealing, arson, rape, and other criminal activities.<sup>72</sup> This situation depletes the progressive levels of the community's source of livelihood. If

<sup>66</sup>Lekulal, OI, 28 September. 2021.

<sup>67</sup> Leshekwet, OI, 01, Nov. 2021.

<sup>68</sup> M. Mwenda, Complexities of Natural Resources Conflict in Kenya: A Case Study of Laikipia Conflict, (University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 2018). pp. 53-55

<sup>69</sup> Pkalya et, al 2008.

<sup>70</sup> Mrs. Gichohi, OI, 15 September. 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Sospeter, OI, 17 Sep. 2021.

<sup>72</sup> M. Mwenda, Complexities of Natural Resources Conflict in Kenya: A Case Study of Laikipia Conflict, (University of Nairobi, Nairobi, 2018). pp. 53-57.



nothing is done to improve the education status, then the cycle of poverty will continue among the residents. Ibrahim and Jenner assert that this

confines more and more people to pastoralism as the only source of livelihood.<sup>73</sup>

**Plate 5: Mwenje High School located in Mastoo among the schools affected by conflict.**



**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021

**Diversification of Income Generation Through Tourism Activities**

It was in 1970 when Kuki Galmann came to Kenya together with her husband with the desire to carry out cattle ranching. After scouting for land, they came across the Ol Ari Nyiro, a ranch that an absentee landlord, Colin Francombe, owned. It was after several visits in Francombe's ranch that Kuki finally decided to purchase it. They practiced agriculture by stocking thousands of sheep and cattle a venture that later changed on seeing how the nearby ranches had been destroyed leaving wildlife with no habitants.<sup>74</sup> Laikipia West then became a home to one of the most lucrative conservancies. The Kuki Galmann ranch in Laikipia West Constituency is a home to many wild animals that attracts tourists from all over. The ranch is endowed with lodges that act as good

tourist resting points when they visit the conservancy.

The area bordering the conservancy and Baringo County offers a good view of Lake Baringo at a distance and a cool breeze from the lake. In the recent past, neighbouring communities were greatly involved in bead work and crafting, items which would be sold to tourists visiting the conservancy. The conservancy also employed many locals in the area either directly or indirectly.<sup>75</sup> However, the full potentiality of this land is untapped due to frequent conflict. The area is highly prone to banditry attacks which is aided by the expansive uncultivated lands acting as proper hideouts and the presence of highly armed bandits from the neighbouring Baringo County. Kuki regarded that without her, the area would be regarded as a poacher's paradise since the Pokots knew Ol Ari Nyiro from time immemorial as it had once been their territory where they had run

<sup>73</sup>D. Ibrahim, "Wajir Community Based Conflict Management", (Paper presented to the USAID Conference on Conflict Resolution in the Great Horn of Africa, June 1997), p.12.

<sup>74</sup> The Daily Nation, A tale of Love, Death, and the Battle for Kuki Galmann's 100,000 Acre Ranch in Laikipia. September 19, 2021 p.15.

<sup>75</sup> Saitoti, OI, September. 2021

cattle and goats.<sup>76</sup> Frequent conflicts have led to land as a natural resource being underutilized. In a separate instance, bandits attacked and burned down the prestigious Muktann lodge in Laikipia West Constituency hence affecting tourism activities in Laikipia. According to Watisha, investors seeking to invest in tourism agree that

there is so much potential in Laikipia that is if a lasting solution to frequent insecurity is found.<sup>77</sup> However, this has remained a wish with the current bloody clashes in the area as the herders perceive a lot of land owned by ranchers as being idle.<sup>78</sup>

**Plate 6: Laikipia West Constituency border with Baringo County**



**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 3 September 2021

**Plate 7: The former expansive Matwiku Market in Laikipia West.**



**Source:** Photograph taken by the author on 20 October 2021

<sup>76</sup> K. Gallmann”, *I Dreamed of Africa*”, (London: Penguin, 2012). P. 148.

<sup>77</sup> Watisha, OI, 23 September. 2021

<sup>78</sup> The Daily Nation, December 30, 2018 p.25.



### Ethnic and Gender Dictated Leadership

Ethnic leadership is also one of the legacies of conflict in Laikipia West. The East African of 24 January states that although Laikipia is multi-ethnic, killers only target the kikuyu.<sup>79</sup> Mwangi Kiunjiri and other politicians from the area allege the killings as the work of the private army assembled by certain top Kanu leaders to ethnically cleanse the districts of opposition-minded Kikuyu.<sup>80</sup> Conflict is rampant in Laikipia West Constituency and has often spread its wings to affecting the leadership in this constituency. In Laikipia, community leaders have been accused of riding the wave of violence for political gains and thus being complicit.<sup>81</sup> Due to incompatibility of the multi-ethnic communities living in Laikipia West, all communities want to elect leaders from their own ethnic group so as to protect their interests over those of their neighbours. The Kikuyu for example want to elect a leader from their own ethnic group so as to protect their interests in farming in the region a situation that people from other ethnic groups replicate. Ethnic leadership has seen a dominance of men in the elected positions, as they are often considered as being stronger and worthy competitors with those from other ethnic groups as compared to their female counterparts.<sup>82</sup> This is so despite some female leaders having better ideologies as compared to those of their counterparts. An informant that sort enormity narrated that this is evident as when the electioneering period nears, some pastoral communities tend to forcefully evict Bantu communities residing in Laikipia so as to stop them from exercising their democratic rights of voting so that in the end only a leader inclined to their ethnic group will be able to clinch the leadership position.<sup>83</sup> This has greatly affected leadership and service delivery to the people of Laikipia West.

### CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, therefore, the study observed that indeed there has been a series of ethnic-conflicts that have greatly resulted to gender disparities in Laikipia West Sub-County. Conflict have greatly evolved from large-scale to small-scale conflict targeted on households. In this study, historical trends of ethnic-conflict and the Colonial Legacies of Resource Conflict on Women in Laikipia have greatly been discussed. While some colonial legacies are positive, such as support given to the educational sector and hospital, some effects are negative such deaths and destruction of properties among many others. According to Marx, the social control that the rich have over the masses is the continuous source of inevitable conflict and change.

<sup>79</sup> Africa Research Bulletin: Political, Social and Cultural Series, February 2000. pp. 5-7.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>81</sup> G. R. Fox, "Maasai Group Ranches, Minority Land Owners, and the Political Landscape of Laikipia

County, Kenya. *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2018, pp. 473-493.

<sup>82</sup> Informant one, OI, 01 Sep 2021.

<sup>83</sup> Informant two, OI, 02 Sep 2021.