

TOPAID

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

According to the 2019 National Household Population Census, pastoralists comprise approximately 20% of Kenya's 49 million people. The myriad of challenges faced by pastoralists in Kenya include marginalization from mainstream development, lack of adequate social services including education, water, sanitation and health services, poor housing facilities, inadequate access to information, suppression of cultural rights, inaccessibility to identification documents, frequent inter and intra-ethnic conflicts that sometimes spawn across counties and countries, food insecurity, vulnerable livelihoods, adverse impacts of climate change including droughts and floods, deterrent cultural practices (that promote gender inequity, gender based violence in all its forms, infringement on the universal right of suffrage and other fundamental rights and freedoms), uneven distribution of resources, human-wildlife conflicts, illegal land dispossession, as well as facing major hurdles in their quest to access justice. Their voices are muted in local and national decision making forums and their representation and participation in the decision making events and institutions is barely noticeable.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 recognizes pastoralists as marginalized groups under Article 260 and contains numerous other provisions which could effectively address pastoralists' challenges if well implemented. However, a decade after the Constitution came into force, the situation for most pastoralists remains the same, if not more-dire.

A number of international, regional, national and local civil society organizations have been set up solely to tackle the challenges faced by pastoralists in Kenya. Nonetheless, almost all of these work in the northern areas of the country where pastoralists are the main, if not exclusive, inhabitants of the territory.

The circumstances are rather different for pastoralist communities living in the southern region of the country, particularly in **Tana River, Kwale, Kilifi, Taita Taveta and Lamu Counties**. Despite sharing the same challenges with their counterparts in the north, pastoralists in the coastal region face other unique drawbacks. They are minority communities

in these counties, facing dual marginalization – nationally as pastoralists and locally as minorities. There are hardly any CSOs in the South that exclusively focus on the unique challenges faced by pastoralists.

The coastal region is also insecurity prone. In the last decade, the national government determined that coastal residents as dissidents after their political leaders called for cessation from the rest of the country. This has resulted to in impromptu declarations of curfews which affect the pastoralists' nomadic way of life, ethnic and religious profiling, illegal detentions and torture - informed by religious allegiance to Islam and denial of identification documents to pastoralist youth who are mainly Muslims.

The region also faces constant attacks by the Somali-based Al Shabaab terrorist group. Radicalization and Violence Extremism find fertile ground in this region, especially targeting Muslim pastoralists' youth who are additionally disillusioned by their poor socio-economic circumstances. Resource-based conflicts are also common between pastoralists and farming communities. Their geographic location is also more susceptible to drought and flooding, leading to loss of lives and property and livelihood insecurities.

TANA ORGANIZATION FOR PASTORALISTS AID

In 2019, a number of pastoralist community members from the coastal, cognizant of the aforementioned situational challenges, resolved to undertake formal, structured and effective measures to play a part in providing sustainable solutions to pastoralists in their region.

Consequently, the Tana Organization for Pastoralist Aid (TOP AID) was established in 2019 being a non-governmental organization registered under Article 10 of Non-Governmental Act of Kenya.