CROSS-BORDER REGIONAL COOPERATION FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACEBUILDING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITIES' SUPPORT TO MARSABIT COUNTY AND SOUTHERN ETHIOPIA

(Concept Note)

Background

The national boundaries of most African countries were artificially carved out during the colonial era without due consideration to the socioeconomic and cultural links of the communities who live in the region. Colonial powers arbitrarily demarcated the territorial boundaries of nations and separated the same ethnic groups between different states. Examples of divided communities in East Africa include, but are not limited to, the Somalis who live in Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia; and the Borana and Gabra as well as other Communities who live in Ethiopia and Kenya; and the Masai in Kenya and Tanzania. After independence, most African countries decided to maintain the boundaries' *status quo* so as not to create political tensions between states and possibly ignite border conflicts.

This demarcation indicates a misunderstanding of the complex inter-ethnic relationships in the region by establishing segments that are neither historically separate, nor politically and economically viable.[1] Oftentimes, this separation has led to conflicts, encouraging secessionist demands as witnessed in Northeastern Kenya or Ogaden in Ethiopia when the Somali ethnic groups demanded for independence or unification with Somalia.

However, despite these artificial separation, the relations and links between communities from the same ethnic group but who now live in different countries have continued to flourish in many aspects, including trade in goods and services, use of common natural resources; and participation in social and cultural activities. For example, it is important to note that cross-border movements of the Borana and Gabra communities is not only attributed to the search for pasture and water, but also due to the necessity of going on a pilgrimage to traditional holy sites in Ethiopia and gathering

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[1] Schlee, G. (1991). "Traditional pastoralist: Land use strategies." *Range management handbook of Kenya* (Vol. 2). Nairobi: Ministry of Livestock Development, Republic of Kenya.

in large clan settlements on given lunar dates for blessing ceremonies or other ritualistic activities.[2]

Communities in border regions are oftentimes spatially and hierarchically removed from the decision-making centres and the capital cities, whose decisions have minimal bearing on the specific problems and potential of these regions. This has left most border regions socially and economically marginalized compared to other regions. To mitigate this problem, many African countries, Ethiopia and Kenya included, embarked on a decentralization and devolved system of governance in a bid to empower local communities and promote effective local governance (the process of governing at the local level; and the dynamics of government and civil society relations in the course of building a democratic society at the local level) to achieve effective popular participation and democratization of their respective societies so as to reduce poverty and attain equitable and inclusive growth.

The central feature of this approach is the emphasis on a people-centred development that fosters the self-organising and participatory capabilities of local communities, and strengthens local institutions. It is a process through which communities enter into partnership with local governments, the civil society organizations and the national governments in a bid to reduce poverty, inequality, unemployment, and improve human rights and social justice.

With the change of government in 1991, Ethiopia embarked on a decentralized framework that saw the regionalization of the country, political devolution and fiscal decentralization designed and implemented. Under the regionalization framework, nine ethnically-based regions and two administrative regions were created. In Kenya, the promulgation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010 on 27 August 2010 paved the way for the realization of a devolved system of governance and provided for the setting up of 47 County Governments. The constitution devolved power to the counties with the intention of bringing both decision-making and financial resources closer to the people; and to enhance citizen's participation in local development.

Empirical studies show that poverty is closely connected with lack of access to basic services and infrastructure such as public health, water and sanitation, education, roads and electricity. Decentralization was implemented in many countries, including Ethiopia and Kenya, after the realization that a decentralized local government is more effective than a central government in meeting the needs of the population due to the physical proximity to affected communities. Decentralization also leads to more

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[2] Schlee, G. (1991). "Traditional pastoralist: Land use strategies." *Range management handbook of Kenya* (Vol. 2). Nairobi: Ministry of Livestock Development, Republic of Kenya.

democratic decision-making, transparency and accountability in service delivery since planning and monitoring are conducted in a participatory manner.

With decentralization policies in place in many African countries, the need for cooperation between economically and culturally linked border regions has emerged as one of the most important area-based development strategies for strengthening a regional cooperation that promotes peace and sustainable development. That is the rationale behind the recent initiative launched in October 2014 by the UN Secretary General, IGAD Council of Ministers and the World Bank President aimed at boosting economic growth, reduce poverty and promote business activities in the Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda) through, among others, cross-border cooperation.

Cross-border cooperation within a shared geographic area and other economic interactions creates opportunities for (a) trade, investment and tourism; (b) use and effective management of natural resources; (c) improved infrastructure; and (d) facilitates cross-border movement of people. In this regard, the ever-increasing competition for, and conflict over the use and management of resources in border areas, such as pasture and water, lakes, rivers, among other resources, has increased the need for cross-border and area-based development strategies and cooperation so as to bring about sustainable peace and development in Africa.[3]

In brief, there is a growing recognition of the need to transform the border regions from being "barriers" and into a "bridge" in order to give the communities on both sides of the border opportunities for better cooperation and bridge isolation gaps so as to improve their livelihood and socioeconomic conditions; effectively managing and conserving their resources, and strengthening their cultural understanding and trust that ultimately brings about sustainable peace and development.[4] It has also created opportunities for conflict prevention, resolution and management and building and strengthening between UNCT and IGAD.

Problem Analysis

On the other hand, if not planned and managed properly, cross-border relations could also result in an increase in conflicts, proliferation of small arms, human and drug trafficking besides general instability that leads to loss of lives and property.[5]

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[3] Gooneratne, W. & Mosselman, E. (1996). "Planning Across the Borders": Border Regions in Eastern and Southern Africa," *Regional Development Dialogue*, 17(2):136-152.

[4] Totemeyer, G. K. H. *et. al*. (1996). Editorial Introduction. *Regional Development Dialogue*, 17(2): iii-vii.

[5] Asfaw Kumssa, *et. al*. (eds.) (2011). *Conflict and Human Security in Africa: Kenya in Perspective*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan Publisher.

The current situation in Marsabit and southern part of Ethiopia is a case in point. The causes and patterns of conflict in this region are complex and intertwined with poverty, ethnicity, and competition over scarce resources, environmental degradation, influx of illicit arms from neighboring countries, and cultural practices such as cattle rustling which is currently commercialized. Others include inadequate policing and state security arrangements. Shrinking economic opportunities for the communities in the border region is also both a cause and effect of violent conflict in the region. Given the fact that pastoralism is the main source of income for both the Borana and Gabra communities, competition over control and access to natural resources such as pasture and water have contributed to violence conflicts among these communities. Yet, these resources are scarce and under increasing pressure due to climate change and population growth.

These conflicts have led to massacres and devastating loss of property among the affected individuals and communities. Available evidence indicates that lack of alternative livelihood and some traditional/cultural values contribute to age-old practices like cattle raiding and rustling, leading not only to inter communal conflicts but deaths as well. For example, a conflict that erupted between the Borana and Gabra in 2005 resulted in the death of over 90 and displaced 9,000 people. This tragic incident, referred to as the Turbi massacre, was triggered when one ethnic group raided and took the livestock of the other[6]. As recently as August and September 2013, there were clashes between Borana and Gabra communities that resulted in deaths and destruction of property. The conflict claimed over 200 lives and about 100 houses were burnt and displaced close to 53,968 people.

The population is largely nomadic. As such, their movement is not confined to Kenya alone, but transcends international boundaries into Ethiopia and vice versa. These inter-regional and cross-border movements oftentimes lead to conflicts over water and pasture. Consequently, in these pastoralists' region, a large number of households have been displaced from their original settlements due to conflicts arising from cattle rustling and inter clan disputes. In this regard, it is important to recognize the regional dimension of conflict; the dynamics of the ethnic composition of the community along the border regions, and the spill-over effects of conflict from Ethiopia.

Migration through Marsabit-Ethiopian border can also take irregular forms such as human trafficking or people smuggling, or entry into Kenya without proper authorization or documentation. Although many migrants travel using legal means, irregular migration has become a worrying phenomenon and is contributing to regional

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[6] *Ibid.*

insecurity. To address this problem, special attention has to be placed on strengthening state security institutions, border control and encouraging governments to adopt proper national and regional migration policies and legislation.

The region has high levels of poverty, food insecurity, low levels of education, high levels of civil insecurity and low levels of gender development. Despite bearing the heaviest burden of poverty and the problem of inaccessibility to infrastructure services, participation of women in development decision-making is significantly low in the County. Due to cultural, societal and community perceptions of the role of women in the society, women continue to be denied access to planning and decision-making forums that make crucial decisions on development issues in their communities. This notwithstanding the fact that women and the youth (both girls and boys) play a key role in every segment of the society.

The other problem is related to youth unemployment and marginalization, which leads to the radicalization of this important group of the society, forcing them to join terrorist groups. According to UNDP, "radicalization is a process by which an individual or a group comes to adopt increasingly extreme political, social, or religious ideals and aspirations that reject and/or undermine acceptable mainstream social norms and values.[7]" To address the challenges of radicalism and terrorist threats in the region, this project will focus on the root causes of the problem, which are intertwined with social cultural, economic, political and psychological factors. Extremism, which often evolves into terrorism, has its origin in human insecurity, which is linked to exclusion, poverty, marginalization and lack of access to resources and power. But not all extremists or terrorists are from poor families or poverty-stricken societies. As the recent experiences from the Garissa incident and other European countries have shown, extremists and terrorists are not always poor or uneducated individuals or groups. The problem should therefore be looked at on a case by case basis, and avoiding generalization as well as the often used approach of "one size fits all."

In the case of Kenya, radical extremism and terrorism have their roots in economic deprivation, marginalization, poor governance, land issues, poverty in certain regions of the country (example, the North Eastern and the Coast regions). At the same time, Somalia, which has been a failed state for the past two decades, has become the breeding ground and a base for *Al Shabaab* from where this terrorist groups plan and launch their attacks on Kenya. Therefore, in fighting radicalism and terrorism, focus should be on promoting human development, democracy, freedom and human rights in Kenya, while at the same time strengthening and rehabilitating the failed state in Somalia through institutions building, economic development and winning the hearts and minds of the society.

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[7] UNDP (2015). *Radicalization in Africa: Some Initiatives*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: UNDP

The military and security approach to radicalism and terrorism should be combined with economic and social development. In the absence of economic and social development, the war against extremist radicalism and terrorism will not be won. Inadequate security measures to deter cross-border incursions, and the dynamics of ethnic composition in the border areas have also complicated the growing tendency of extremism and terrorism strategies and endeavours. This can be partly blamed on the colonial heritage of these countries, which divided different communities into various countries.

It is therefore important to look beyond the immediate causes of extremism and address the root causes, which are poverty, high unemployment, marginalization, poverty, and high income and social disparity, perception of marginalization as well as the challenges of building a failed state. In this regard, it is essential to design socioeconomic policies that will increase household incomes, create employment opportunities, promote equity, increase access to education and social services, and create sustainable livelihoods for the communities where extremist groups are recruiting their foot soldiers. This should go hand in hand with providing support for the weak Somali state to enable it gain legitimacy and societal support, without which the extremists and terrorist groups cannot survive.

This project will give special attention to the concerns of women, youth and disadvantaged groups in the society. This will be done in a bid to enhance their active participation at every stage of the project, and will involve them in the various livelihood projects, among others, so that they can fully benefit from the project.

The project will also focus on building the capacity of women and youth by enhancing their technical skills in creating income-generating activities geared at improving their socio-economic well-being and self-reliance skills. Apart from eroding their livelihoods, conflicts and drought, and the subsequent famines, have had devastating effects on the communities. To improve their socio-economic conditions, it is important to design and implement projects and programmes that help them to support themselves through activities that enhance their self-reliance and improve their livelihood. The strategy is to focus on integrated development.

At the sametime, it is important to design and implement conflict resolution programmes to avert possible conflicts between the various ethnic groups by raising awareness among them and enhancing their livelihoods. Focus will be on building new skills for alternative livelihood creation and conflict prevention with the objective of empowering them and enhancing their economic independence.

The project will also endeavour to address the clash between formal and customary laws which have contributed to the erosion of the role and power of community leaders. A recent study indicated that Somali youth (80 per cent) trust clan

elders more than politicians[8]. To be effective, conflict resolution and management strategies would immensely benefit from strengthening traditional systems of conflict resolution mechanisms and linking them with the formal institutions. This would reinforce the role of traditional social systems in governance and resource management for communities in the region.

The purpose of this project is to set out the interventions required to bring the area to the same threshold as the rest of the country. Once that has been achieved, they will require no conscious deliberation or special attention because their unique needs and circumstances will automatically be addressed within mainstream policy and development planning. The region will always be different – in its ecology, livelihood, cultures, and aspirations – and that diversity will be valued and respected.

UNCT Initiative to Support Cross-Border Cooperation

Recently, the UNCT initiated a cross-border and area-based development project titled "Cross-Border Regional Cooperation for Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development: International Communities' Support to Marsabit County and Southern Ethiopia."

The main objective of this cross-border and area-based programme is, in the short-run, to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience of communities affected by conflict in the border region through identification and promotion of sustainable livelihood projects and conflict management strategies. In the long-run, the programme aims to economically empower the communities through a judicious mix of socio-economic transformative programmes that include infrastructure development, industrial and agricultural development projects, and the development of health and educational facilities. To achieve these objectives, the project will focus on long-term conflict transformation initiatives that will be designed and implemented at multiple levels (*Immediate emergency and humanitarian phase, building resilience*; *and sustainable development project phases)* aimed at changing the current political landscape and socioeconomic conditions of the Marsabit County and the Southern part of Ethiopia. The objective of this project is in line with the Government of Kenya's policy as stipulated in MTP 2 to establish "effective peace and conflict structures throughout the country; re-engineering the national government coordination mechanism to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts efficiently and effectively; and enhancing the capacity of international cross border conflict management.[9]"

The economy of the region is dominated by mobile pastoralism, while in the better-watered and better-serviced semi-arid areas, a more mixed economy prevails,

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[8] Institute for Security Studies. (2014). *Radicalisation and Al-Shabaab Recruitment in Somalia*. ISS Paper 266. September 2014.

[9] Government of Kenya (2013). *Second Medium Term Plan (2013-2017): Transforming Kenya: Pathway to devolution, socio-economic development, equity and national unity*. Nairobi: Author. P. 45.

including rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, agro-pastoralism, small-scale businesses based on dryland products, and conservation or tourism-related activities. The ecology of semi-arid areas allows for the intensification of production in a way that the ecology of arid areas does not. Meanwhile, urban towns across the region are creating an urbanised population with different needs and aspirations. This diversity requires a disaggregated policy response and differentiated interventions.

The project recognizes the fact that most of the conflicts in Marsabit and Southern part of Ethiopia is either due to competition over scarce natural resources or are politically instigated. This is further compounded by the easy availability of sophisticated Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs), rendering these inter-communal conflicts very deadly and often leading to massacres and huge losses of property among the affected individuals and communities. After the weapons of warfare finally go silent, the communities find themselves pushed deeper into poverty. Indeed, available evidence indicates that lack of alternative livelihoods and weakened traditional/cultural values contribute to retrogressive age-old practices such as cattle raiding and rustling, leading not only to destruction of property, but results in deaths as well.

The project will address these challenges and endeavour to change them into opportunities by increasing cross-border cooperation in trade, investment, employment creation, income generation and effective and equitable utilization of natural resources. In this regard, the project will not only address social injustices and economic inequalities, it will also improve the communication skills and mindsets of communities that are fighting over scarce resources, mainly pasture and water. Traditional resource utilization and conflict resolution mechanisms of both communities will also be revived and strengthened to bring about peace and equitable resource utilization. At the same time, the project will come up with effective and amicable means of resource utilization that is acceptable to all sides so as to promote equity, efficiency and sustainability.

Consultations to ensure local ownership

Towards this end, the RC held a constructive and productive discussion on February 17 2015 with His Excellency the President of Kenya who promised her the full support of his government to this UNCT initiative. The RC and UNCT had also in the last few months been engaged with a cross-section of leaders from the County that have included the Governor, Senator, Members of Parliament (MPs), members of the Marsabit County Assembly, civil society groups and the business community. The RC also held a consultative meeting in September 2014 with UNCT and the Government of Ethiopia on this initiative and discussed ways of bringing together the UNCTs of both countries and the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya to effectively collaborate and implement this cross-border and area-based development project. Representatives from nine UN and

other development agencies also conducted a reconnaissance mission to Marsabit County from 3 to 8 November 2014 where they met with the Governor, County Government representatives, CSOs, etc. They discussed the challenges and opportunities in the County and explored areas of possible collaboration with the aim of bringing about sustainable peace and development in the region.

A consultative workshop was also organized in Nairobi on 16 June 2015 for the UN Country Teams of Ethiopia and Kenya as well as other stakeholders to discuss the modalities of collaboration and partnership in designing and implementing the cross-border and area-based programme for Marsabit and Southern Ethiopia.

Methodology

The project will use participatory action research to understand the dynamics of conflict in Marsabit as well as in the cross-border area and identify the root causes/impacts of conflict, as well as possible factors or stakeholders that could contribute to sustainable peace in the region. In this regard, the research will be conducted with a problem and policy goal in mind, and aims at providing a scientific explanation to the dynamics of conflict, its context and possible intervention areas so as to avoid negative impacts and maximize on benefits. The project will use both qualitative and qualitative research methodologies to address the specific objectives of the study. This will be done through focus group discussion; questionnaires, face-to-face interviews; key informant interviews, etc. GIS technology will be used to collect and map the spatial data on both sides of the area to enable the stakeholders to understand the spatial distribution of resources as well as available infrastructural facilities.

Similarly, tailor-made capacity building programmes on conflict management and peace-building, as well as alternative livelihood projects, will be designed and implemented to improve the skills and knowledge of the local communities in preventing conflict and bringing about sustainable peace and development. Emergency and long-term development projects will be designed and implemented to address the immediate humanitarian concerns and long-term development objectives of the project with the sole objective of bringing about lasting peace and sustainable development in the region.

The project will widely engage volunteers through the UNV modality at all stages of its implementation to ensure respective performance of the activities of the project under the conditions of cost-efficiency and inclusive participation. The project will benefit from volunteers under the UNV modality by securing relevant inclusive participation of people on the ground and proper interactions between communities with the focus on youth.

Phases of the Project

Phase 1: *Preparatory and Immediate emergency response*. This phase will focus on enabling and facilitating the smooth implementation and completion of the terms of the Moyale peace agreement and will address the immediate humanitarian needs of the people affected by conflict. It is also a preparatory phase where dialogue will be pursued between various stakeholders to discuss and agree on the modalities of implementing the project (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Critical Path for the Preparatory Phase

Critical Path for the Preparatory Phase (Tentative)

Local level Act.	POLICY LEVEL ACTIVITY	INSTITUTIONAL AND TECHNICAL LEVEL ACTIVITIES				
May – Dec. 2014	Jan. 2015	3-4 March	23-24 March	16-20 March	10 May	June - August
Consultation with community leaders and county Gov. , CSOs & UNCT	Discussion between the President of Kenya, the Prime Minister of Ethiopian and the UN GS about the project in Addis during the AU Meeting.	Mission by representatives of RCO to Addis to meet and discuss with UNCT Ethiopia. Swedish Embassy, Regional and Federal Government of ET.	Visit by Nordic development partners and UNCT team to Marsabit to discuss short-term as well as long-term technical & development assistance programmes.	UNCT retreat in Nairobi to be attended by UNCT Ethiopia and Kenya as well as representatives of the Governments of Ethiopia and Kenya.	Dev't Partners' Round Table Breakfast Meeting	Preparation & CIDP Scale up Wshop and Launch of the Project

Phase 2: *Building the foundation for resilience*. This face will assess the root causes of conflict, livelihood vulnerability and capacity gaps and implement conflict prevention and management and alternative livelihood creation strategies, and also support the effective implementation of the Marsabit County Integrated Development Plan.

- Overall assessment of opportunities and recurrent problems and causes or impacts of cross-border conflicts;
- Effectively diagnose cross-border socioeconomic and political dynamics, based on similarities and complementarities on both sides;
- Peace-building, cohesion and integration support; and
- Livelihood support and effective and equitable utilization and management of natural resources.

Phase 3. *Initiation of sustainable development*. A continuation of the project with tangible, social, economic, environmental and infrastructural development projects:

- Support the development of livestock, agriculture and industrial projects;
- Assist with water projects, including irrigation and borehole schemes;
- Support the promotion of trade, investment and tourism; infrastructure development; building of schools and health facilities; and facilitate cross-border movement of people; and
- Solidify sustainable peace, cohesion and integration between the communities on both sides of the border.

Output of the project

- All displaced members of the community resettled and rehabilitated;
- Causes and impacts of conflict in the region identified and appropriate intervention strategies suggested;
- Socioeconomic and environmental challenges and opportunities of the region identified;
- Cross border conflict management initiatives launched to bring together UNCT and government bodies from both the Ethiopian and the Kenyan side to address the spillover effects of conflicts and livelihood concerns;
- Appropriate capacity building programs on conflict resolution, peace-building and prevention of internal displacement designed and implemented to improve the skills and knowledge of the people of Marsabit on conflict management and peace-building;
- The community's socioeconomic status improved through the alternative livelihoods projects and programmes;
- Short and long-term sustainable development projects identified and implemented;
- Social cohesion achieved and communities have become resilient against conflict, climate and natural shocks;
- Youth radicalization reduced in the region; and
- Various UN agencies and other partner organizations brought together under the UN motto of "Delivering as One" to effectively and efficiently promote sustainable peace and development in Marsabit and Southern Ethiopia.