

Pastoralists

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Diverse groups including Kalenjin (a collective term encompassing diverse indigenous peoples including the Kipsigis, Endorois, Tugen, Pokot and Sabaot), Maasai, Somalis, Borana and other groups.

Kalenjin 2.5 million (11%), Maasai 377,089 (1.76%), Somalis 45,098 (0.21%), and Borana (150,000), Ethnologue 1994, Somalis (420,000), Ethnologue 2000. Ilchamus and Endorois are also distinct pastoralist communities but they are unrecognised by the Kenyan State, and assimilated into the Kalenjin group.

Profile

The two arid northern provinces of Kenya comprise half the land area of the country yet are home to less than 3 per cent of the population, mainly nomadic pastoralists of many ethnic identities and many more tribal and clan affiliations and rivalries. These groups include various Kalenjin peoples, the Borana, and the Somalis. The Maasai are semi-nomadic pastoralists who live in the South, along the border with Tanzania. Some Kalenjin peoples, including the most numerous subgroup-the Kipsigis-also live in the South. The Kipsigis have largely abandoned their traditional pastoralist culture and become agriculturalists.

Historical context

From colonial times the government has treated the northern parts of Kenya mainly as a security problem. Other interventions have primarily been to try to persuade nomads to settle. Emergency powers have enabled the authorities to bypass the judicial system. Although a variety of colonial and post-colonial legislation has been alternately enforced or ignored, draconian measures are widely available and have often been used. These have included powers to arrest, move or detain people, confiscate or destroy livestock, prohibit gatherings, and impose a mandatory death penalty for illegal possession of firearms. The northern districts are Trust Lands with very limited defences against expropriation, an important factor in moves to privatize land, particularly for ranching.

Somali-speaking pastoralists attracted the greatest government hostility under the Moi regime. The eastern parts of northern Kenya are traditionally inhabited by Somalis of the Degodia, Ajuran and Ogaden clans. These areas have long been claimed by Somalia, with disavowals having limited impact on Kenyan suspicions. The inhabitants voted to secede from Kenya in a referendum held shortly before independence in 1963. The results were ignored by the incoming government, leading to a three-year secessionist war. A mixture of secessionist insurgency, inter-ethnic and clan warfare, and outright

banditry has characterized the region ever since. The 1977-8 war between Ethiopia and Somalia, and the civil war in Somalia in the 1990s, which created over a quarter of a million refugees, have led to armed incursions from Somalia and exacerbated instability.

Hostility between Somalis and the authorities have led to continuous conflict over efforts to control movement, such as the impounding of cattle, resulting in extremely serious abuses, including massacres in Garissa in 1980 (300 people) and Wajir in 1984 (up to 2,000) and 1987 (300). The impact of such killings affects all Kenyan Somalis - including those long-resident in urban areas - who feel themselves treated as second-class citizens. A specific grievance was the requirement since 1989 for Kenyan Somalis to carry a separate pink identity card, in addition to the national identity card carried by all Kenyans. This was ostensibly to distinguish them from Somali refugees, numbering about 220,000, who also suffered abuse at the hands of the authorities, including alleged rape by soldiers.

Competition among nomadic groups over cattle and grazing combined with periods of drought have perpetuated a way of life close to subsistence and seldom far from conflict - though most efforts at economic improvement have failed by upsetting the precarious equilibrium between people and resources. Conflict in Somalia has caused further widespread disruption, and the great availability of firearms has exacerbated traditional and more recent enmities.

Other groups have also faced harassment and persecution. Boran and Sakuye nomads have been subjected to wholesale confiscation of stock, disrupting social relations as well as economy. The creation of the Sibiloi Nature Reserve excluded Gabbra nomads from traditional summer grazing.

In the South, the Maasai have faced similar pressures to northern pastoralists. Under colonial rule, great swathes of Maasai land were confiscated for use by Europeans, a practice that continued under Jomo Kenyatta, who dispersed Maasai lands to agriculturalist peoples and drove the Maasai further into poverty. The Maasai fared better under Daniel arap Moi, himself a pastoralist, and many Maasai became staunch supporters of Moi's KANU party. A string of droughts have created intense pressure on the Maasai and led them into conflict with neighbouring peoples over water sources and grazing grounds, including clashes with the Akamba, Kipsigis, Kikuyu, and Kisii from 1999 to 2007. Straddling the border with Tanzania and featuring a distinctive culture, the Maasai have also come under pressure from a tourist industry that exploits Maasai culture and brings few proceeds to the local community. Maasai girls and women face the added threat of female genital mutilation (FGM). A survey by the Kenyan Ministry of Health in 1998 showed that around 90 per cent of Maasai girls and women are subjected to FGM, much higher than the national average of 38 per cent. A Maasai-founded refuge in the town of Narok, Maasai Education Discovery, has provided refuge to girls fleeing FGM since its founding in 1999.

Current issues

In 2008, the UN issued a warning that crippling drought and soaring food prices, was affecting over 1.3 million Kenyans – many of them in the North and North-East. Despite a string of dire warnings about the impact of the drought, the government largely ignored the looming crisis, and provision of emergency aid fell to the international community. This was the latest in a series of rapidly accelerating droughts where has left pastoralist communities more and more vulnerable. In a 2007 report, UNICEF reported that half of the total stock holding of pastoralists in the Horn of Africa had been wiped out. In a 2008 report, Oxfam identified the risks associated with climate change faced by pastoralists. Many of these communities are already dealing with the consequences of global warming – but national governments, such as Kenya's, have yet to identify strategies to help them. Crucially, the briefing paper 'Survival of the fittest: pastoralism and climate change in East Africa', identified the need for pastoralist communities to be consulted on adaptation processes, and for an end to development policies which

pushed communities to settle in resource-poor areas. Competition over dwindling resources has resulted in increasing conflict – and especially in rising levels of cattle-raiding.

In 2008, the Endorois community on the shores of Lake Bogoria in the Rift Valley reported that 500 of their kinsmen and women had fled cattle raids by the Pokot. Advances made by the Pokot had also pushed the Ilchamus pastoralists onto territory usually occupied by the Endorois. There had been no government assistance to help with the internally displaced people. In 2006, the Kenyan government had launched an operation aimed at collecting up to 30,000 illegally held weapons in Kenya's west. Local Pokot and Samburu people claimed that the operation was undertaken without adequate consultation and had sparked the flight of thousands of pastoralists across the border. Pokot cattle raids in 2006 drove thousands of Samburu into camps, and have been marked by widespread murder and rape.

Attempts to re-claim ancestral lands have also continued. In October 2006 and again in May 2008, Samburu pastoralists pressed claims to ancestral rights to graze their cattle on private farms in Laikipia. The security services moved in to forcibly evict the herders.

Similarly, in the South in 2006, Maasai herdsmen drove cattle into the Masai Mara game reserve to protest what they claimed was a corrupt allocation of 4,000 acres of park land to an elite Maasai developer. The Endorois pastoralist community has, however, opted to try to realise its rights to its territory around Lake Bogoria by taking the Kenyan government to court. MRG has been working closely with this community, who were displaced from their traditional territory when the area was declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1973. Attempts to seek redress at a national level have failed, so the Endorois have taken their case to the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. If successful, their case will have implications for many other minorities in similar situations across the continent.