

RESEARCH BRIEF

UNPACKING THE CLIMATE-MIGRATION-EXTREMISM NEXUS: MAPPING THE COPING STRATEGIES OF KENYAN PASTORALISTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper explores the complex and interwoven connections between climate-induced environmental degradation, resource-based conflict and the coping mechanisms adopted by pastoralists. It draws on interviews with 140 individuals in drought-affected Garissa and Turkana, two focus group discussions and 15 key stakeholder interviews conducted in late 2022 and early 2023.

A first finding is that temperature increases, coupled with slow and sudden-onset climate events, are placing pastoralist livelihoods under increasing pressure. These challenges are manifesting in conflict, usually over boundaries or access to shared resources, both within and between communities. Intra-community conflicts tend to be more frequent but can generally be contained, whereas inter-community conflicts often entail high levels of violence, including sexual violence. An important subset of these inter-community conflicts involve cattle rustling/animal raids and armed robbery/highway banditry. These acts have increased sharply in the past decade and have become significantly more violent, somewhat due to a proliferation of small arms. This is especially problematic in tribal areas, where norms of collective responsibility and retaliatory justice create cycles of violence that are difficult to interrupt.

Against these challenges, pastoralists increasingly regard migration or joining a violent extremist or non-state armed group as strategies for mitigating their exposure to unemployment and poverty. These pathways, however, are not clear cut and in many ways challenge dominant policy thinking.

For example, while a vast majority view migration as highly correlated with climate-induced loss of livelihoods, pastoralists do not wish this for themselves. Instead, they have a strong preference to remain on their land, either indefinitely despite the hardships, or for as long as this is viable. Of those that do view migration positively, most want to continue to work as pastoralists, and therefore consider relocation to another rural area, either in their own or another country, as preferable to an urban location. This suggests that concerns over rapid urbanization or climate-induced refugee movements are perhaps overblown, or at a minimum premature.

That joining a violent extremist or non-state armed group is considered another potential solution is neither new nor surprising. Such groups targeting drought, poverty and disaster-affected communities – usually by offering employment or security – have been documented not only in the Sahel, but also in South Asia and Central Asia.¹ What is more surprising is how one group – al Shabab – seems to be adapting their operating tactics to the local environment. The group was described by respondents, not as an ideologically-driven entity regulated by strict Islamic precept, but as a non-state armed group which operated more along the lines of a Private Military Corporation, available (for a price) to protect or plunder. Indeed, a significant number speculated that individuals who had joined the group did so as a means to protect their land and community from raiding/rustling, or as a vehicle to perpetrate such crimes on rival communities. The act of 'joining' al Shabab also appeared to mean something different in the Garissa/Turkana context. For most, membership was more of an affiliation with rolling responsibilities, as opposed to a full-time in situ commitment. What these observations mean more broadly is unclear, however it can be said that violent extremist groups are actively penetrating tribal political structures and seeking to consolidate their ambit of influence and control.

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In terms of addressing these phenomena, it is clear that ‘climate-proofing’ pastoral livelihoods is the preferred course of action for affected individuals, and that most likely to protect against armed groups capitalizing on community vulnerabilities. Indeed, as these groups consolidate their role as providers of security and insecurity, there is a high risk of destabilization – for communities, Kenya and the wider region. The irony is that while adaptation and mitigation assistance is sorely needed in locales such as Garissa and Turkana, these are the places to which it is not flowing. Indeed, as set out by the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in 2022, of the 30 countries with the highest climate vulnerability scores, none ranked among the 30 top recipients of climate financing.² There are of course reasons behind this, albeit not good ones. Chiefly, foreign investment in African agriculture markets is perceived as high risk with low returns. Development actors likewise remain hesitant to finance innovative adaptation and mitigation technology, especially in the absence of an enabling technical and governance environment. However, if we step back to consider the bigger picture, such reasoning is counter-intuitive. Garissa and Turkana’s environmental fragility, vulnerability to conflict and exposure to violent extremism are precisely the reasons why challenges around technology transfer and uptake need to be prioritized and overcome.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

In the arid and semi-arid regions connecting the Sahel, Sahara Desert and Horn of Africa, resource-based conflicts intersect with pastoralism — a livelihood strategy woven into the fabric of communities grappling with environmental fragility and socio-economic vulnerability. In the Republic of Kenya, pastoralism sustains approximately 9 million people with assets exceeding USD 1.1 billion, primarily in the form of cattle.³ However, the efficacy of pastoralism as a sustainable livelihood strategy is increasingly threatened by climate change-induced environmental degradation, particularly in regions like Garissa and Turkana.

Kenya's natural environment is particularly fragile. The nation faces an 'extremely high' ecological threat risk, with water and food security rated at the highest level of concern (5/5), and natural disasters rated at 3.2/5.⁴ These vulnerabilities are most pronounced in the arid and semi-arid areas (covering around 80 percent of Kenya's landmass⁵), where pastoralism and basic agriculture serve as the predominant livelihood. Although pastoralists have honed techniques to cope with erratic and severe weather conditions, the impacts of climate change have exponentially increased their vulnerability.⁶ Arid and semi-arid areas are particularly at risk of increased intensity droughts and floods,⁷ with knock-on impacts including soil erosion, land degradation and pest breakouts.⁸ Moreover, considering that poverty impacts more than 80 percent, any decline in agricultural productivity and livestock numbers is particularly problematic.⁹ Over the past 20 years, droughts have forced approximately 30 percent of livestock owners to abandon pastoralism, and elevated livestock mortality to 10–15 percent above historical trends in affected areas.¹⁰ Most recently, in the period 2020–2022, the drought — a direct result of four consecutive failed rainy seasons in the Horn of Africa region¹¹ — affected 23 arid and semi-arid land counties,¹² forcing 4.4 million people into acute food insecurity.¹³ On the other hand, even though flooding has typically affected communities in the west and southeast of Kenya, near major rivers, 2023 has seen more impacts in arid and semi-arid areas not traditionally prone to flooding, like Turkana.¹⁴

Unsurprisingly, one major consequence of these climate impacts is climate migration. Contingent upon the

sensitivity of the factors involved, climate change functions either as an accelerator or a multiplier, leading to population movements. In the arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya, drought has significantly impacted water availability and pasture, forcing pastoral communities to move from one region to another.



Garissa County, nestled in Kenya's North Eastern Province and bordering Somalia, epitomizes the challenges faced by pastoralist communities in this regard. Characterized by low-lying terrain and scant surface water, the county has a low population density (14 people per km² relative to the national figure of 66), with the inhabitants concentrated in small pockets around water points. Garissa exhibits high poverty levels (60–68 percent of the population being classified as poor or very poor), with youth unemployment and lack of opportunities among the most significant concerns.¹⁵ Drought and flooding further exacerbate the precarious livelihoods of its predominantly ethnic Somali population. Pastoralism — the primary means of livelihoods in 95 percent of all wards — was decimated by the drought.¹⁶ By 2022, 82 percent of the settlements in Garissa reported residents leaving, for a total of over 42,500 households.¹⁷ Additionally, 92 percent of the settlements experienced livestock loss or unproductive land, which caused over 72,600 pastoralist 'dropouts'.¹⁸ For community members dealing with food and water scarcity, as well as loss of livelihood, coping mechanisms included seeking alternative livelihoods, selling livestock, and families relocating together in search of more hospitable living conditions, leading to a rise in border crossings between Kenya and Somalia¹⁹



Similarly Turkana, a pastoral region reliant on livestock herding, grapples with diminished livestock and increased competition over dwindling grazing lands, both consequences of rising temperatures and unpredictable rainfall patterns.²⁰ The traditional reliance of the region on natural resources for food and livelihood, its historic marginalization and lack of infrastructure make Turkana especially vulnerable to changes in the environment. In 2022, it was reported that 3,694 households in the County experienced absentees.²¹

Amidst these environmental and socio-economic challenges, violent extremist groups pose a significant threat. The principal group is al-Shabaab, whose activities are deeply intertwined with the country's social and political landscape.²² Initially based in Somalia, this al-Qaeda-affiliated jihadist group has expanded its reach into neighbouring countries since 2011.²³ Marginalized communities, particularly Muslim areas, have traditionally been the targets of recruitment, and the organization tries to weave social-economic and political grievances into a wider narrative of Muslim persecution to consolidate its goals.²⁴ This narrative finds fertile ground in areas like Mombasa and Nairobi, where radical extremist groups have formed networks by affiliating with mosques, using them as channels for recruitment and funding.

Another recurrent target is youth. Over 70 percent of Kenya's population is under 30 years old. Young people experience a high sense of disenfranchisement, mainly resulting from unemployment and limited livelihood choices, as well as social and political marginalization.²⁵ Al Shabaab and other organised groups in the region leverage

these vulnerabilities. By successfully capitalising 'on the perceived or real economic deprivation, marginalisation, poor governance, land issues, and poverty',²⁶ they manage 'to radicalise and recruit the bulging youth population into violent extremist and terrorist acts'.²⁷ Additionally, these organizations offer services (ranging from educational scholarships to infrastructure development) to make membership more appealing.

METHODOLOGY

The aim of this research is to gain insight into the coping strategies and decision-making adopted by pastoralists impacted by climate change-induced loss of livelihoods. Specifically, the authors sought to better understand whether and under what circumstances individuals would consider (i) migrating, either within or outside of their country, and/or (ii) joining a non-state armed group or violent extremist group. The authors also sought information on interventions that might mitigate against such decision-making, including the roles of local and national authorities.

To achieve this, an 11-question semi-structured survey was administered (using local dialects) to 140 randomly selected male pastoralists living in Turkana and Garissa. Questions covered participants' understanding of climate change and its impacts; the specific impacts of climate change observable in their locales; the relationship between these impacts and community violence; participants' perspectives on migration; participants' perspectives on joining non-state or violent extremist groups; and prevention and mitigation strategies. This information was complemented by 15 key stakeholder interviews aimed at ground-truthing and further unpacking specific themes identified through the surveys. The locales of Garissa and Turkana were selected on the basis of their high exposure to the negative impacts of climate change, predominance of pastoralism and presence of violent extremist and non-state armed groups in the area. All surveys were anonymized and any identifying data removed prior to analysis.

The messages contained in this paper should not be taken as instructive, but interpreted relative to the respondent sample size (140) and the conditions under which the data was collected. Specifically, the following caveats should be noted. Interview data, especially when collected in

contexts of fragility or poverty, are problematic to analyze. To mitigate against this, an ethical and safeguarding protocol was developed and applied to the data collection and analysis process. The purpose and specificities of the research were fully explained to interviewees, and consent obtained. Interviews were conducted individually, however the authors acknowledge that research subjects may have still favoured answers likely to better their situation or protect themselves. It is noteworthy that the questionnaire was designed with a strong emphasis on present and future context, with a view to eliciting opinions as opposed to self-narratives. Finally, some data anomalies should be noted. Participants were not required to answer all questions, leading to total answer sets of less than 140 for some questions. Reciprocally, participants were permitted to select more than one answer for some questions, leading to answer sets of more than 140.

PART 2: THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND COMMUNITY-LEVEL CONFLICT

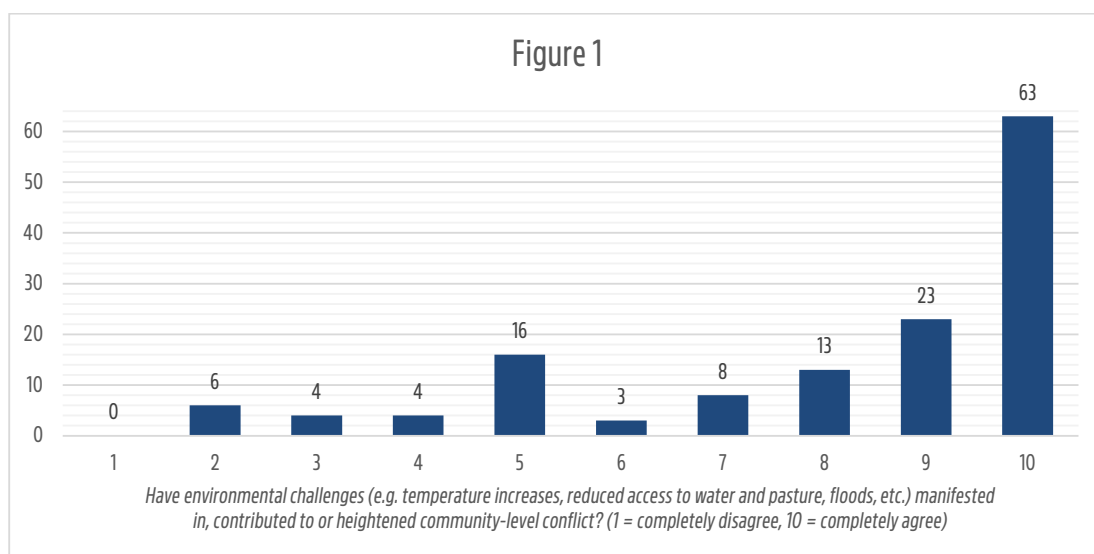
A first question posed to pastoralists concerned whether environmental challenges (defined as the negative impacts of climate change, such as temperature increases, reduced access to water and pasture, floods, etc.) were manifesting in or contributing to community-level conflict. As set out in figure 1, a vast majority of respondents identified a strong correlation between these phenomena. It is noteworthy that respondents had a sophisticated understanding of climate change, including its manifestation in both slow

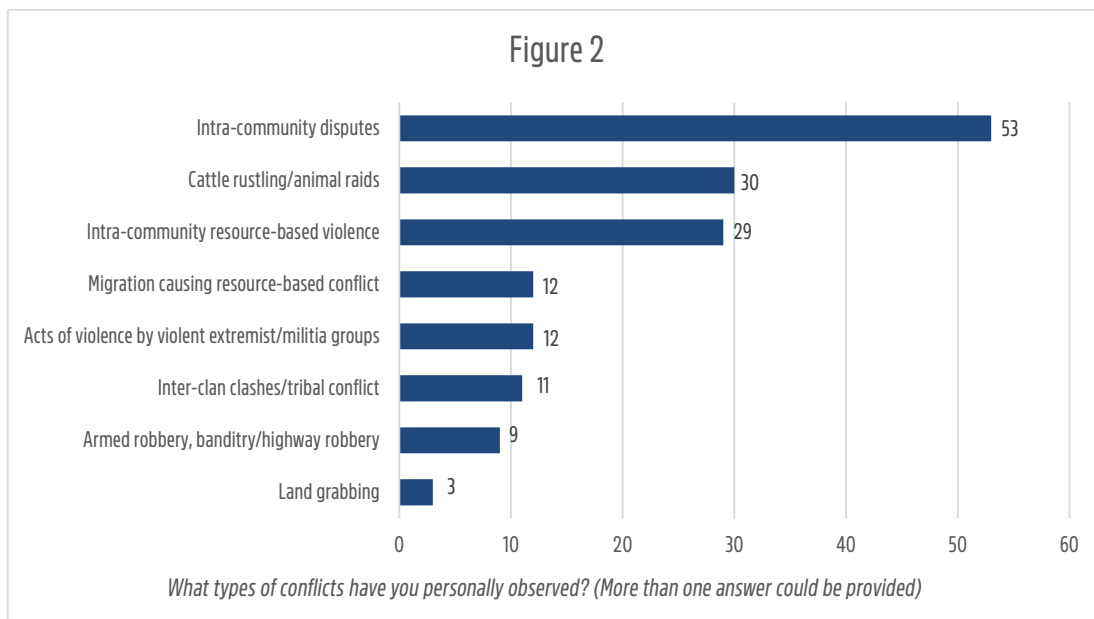
and sudden-onset disasters, as well as its connection to broader externalities, such as flooding being associated with disease outbreaks in cattle.

It is also noteworthy that the majority of respondents who selected a score of 10 (completely agree) went on to describe incidents that involved physical violence, such as animal raids or cattle rustling. Those who selected scores of 8 or less were more likely to go on to cite a non-violent act, such as an inter-family dispute.

Respondents were then asked to identify examples of such community-level conflict. The most frequent response concerned intra-community disputes (53), most often involving competition over resources (such as water) or disputes with local leaders around their response (or lack of) to the challenges faced by pastoralists. Most of the specific examples proffered related to low-level disagreements between families and acts of youth ‘disrespecting’ rival families. More serious events included disputes linking large groups of interconnected families and leading to the boycotting of certain areas and places of livelihood, destruction of property (including agricultural equipment and infrastructure), and exploiting connections to village leadership structures to discriminate against competitors.

Twenty-nine references were made to ‘intra-community violence’, whereby competition for resources/conflicts over resources manifested in secondary acts of violence. Examples included: destruction of property, such as fences, to allow livestock to move into a neighbouring farm area (9); physical altercations between youths connected to a





broader dispute between two families over resources (7); and gender-based violence, which respondents connected to the ‘general climate of lawlessness’ that accompanied the increase in cattle rustling and banditry (4).

The other main group of conflicts were ‘inter-community’ and concerned, for example, boundaries, access to common resources (streams, water points), exploitation/overuse of shared resources, the sale of products at below market rates or under preferential terms, etc. An additional 11 references were made to ‘tribal conflicts’; these concerned historical disputes over boundaries that had recently reignited or that had recently turned violent. An important subset of these inter-community conflicts involved cattle rustling/animal raids (30), armed robbery and highway banditry (9). Focus group discussions indicated that these acts have increased steeply in the past decade and have become more violent (several respondents spoke to the

use of small arms and sexual violence).

Twelve references were made to conflict stemming from migration. These concerned families (or sometimes groups of families) that had attempted to relocate to a more fertile rural area or peri-urban area. In these cases, disputes had arisen with local inhabitants who were resistant to a further degradation of scarce resources, such as water or pasture.

A final situation referenced was acts of violence perpetrated by non-state or violent extremist groups (12). As discussed in part 4 below, this is an emerging phenomenon, whereby communities align with a non-state or extremist group to either perpetrate raids or cattle rustling on a rival community, or alternatively to offer community members physical protection while they engage in rustling/raiding.

CATTLE RUSTLING

Historically, pastoral groups have engaged in conflicts over scarce natural resources vital for their herds – grazing pasture, water sources and transitory routes.²⁸ These disputes often manifest as ‘cattle rustling’, which involves the theft of another group’s livestock, governed by strict rules of engagement and disengagement.²⁹ Historically, cattle rustling served a dual purpose: it was both a redistributive and livelihood-preserving tool during droughts or disease outbreaks, and a social practice – demonstrating heroism, facilitating dowry payments and enabling participation in initiation rites.

Over the past two decades, however, cattle rustling has become more frequent, larger in scale and more violent. While this escalation is facilitated by the proliferation of small arms and commercialization of raiding,³⁰ it

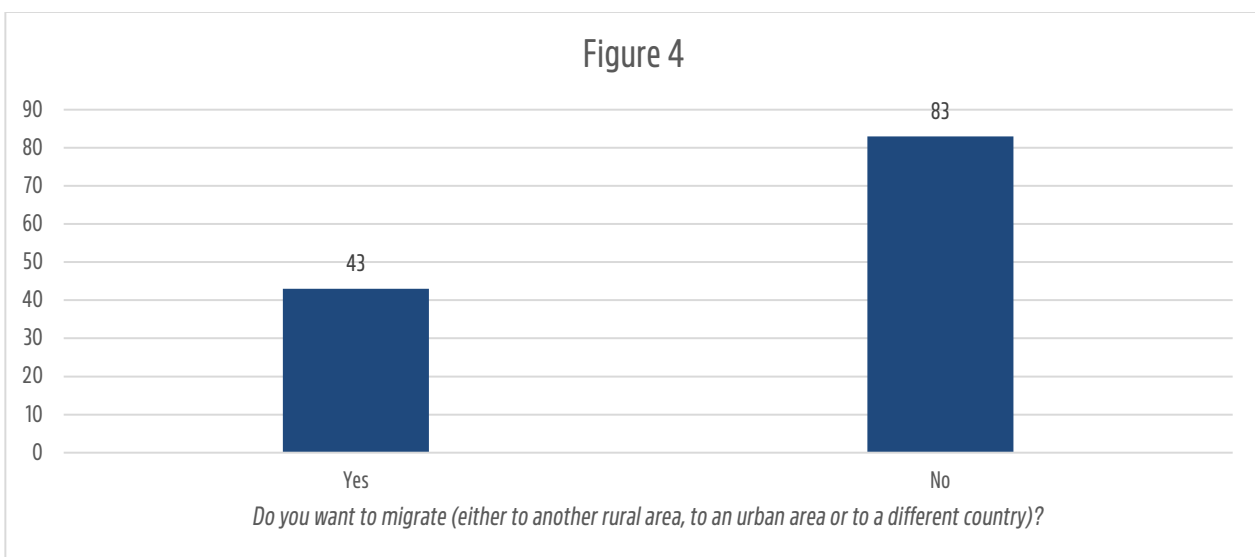
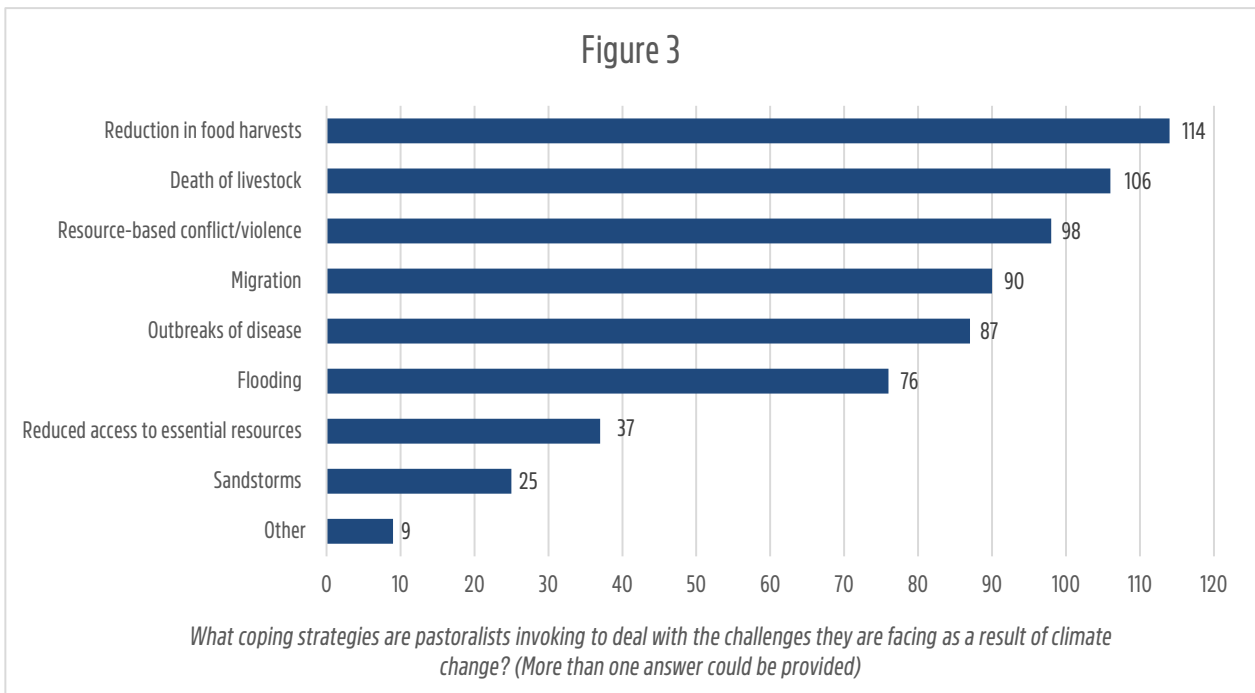
is fuelled by climate-induced resource scarcity.³¹ Increased temperatures and reduced rainfall have led to prolonged periods of drought and severe flooding, limiting access to and the quality of water and grazing pasture.³²

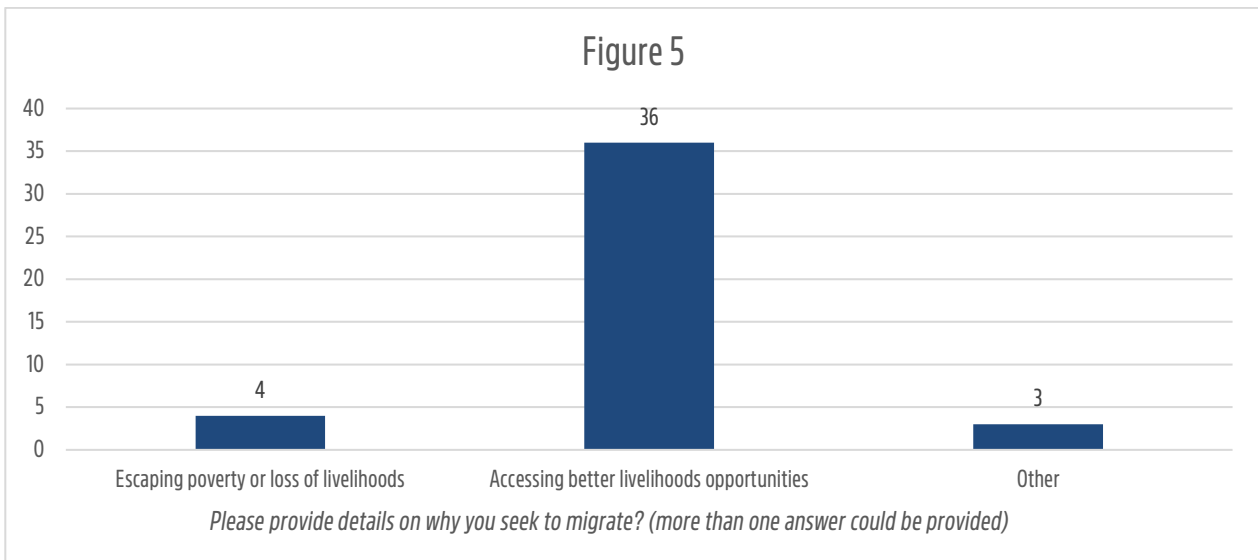
These environmental pressures have altered the dynamics of conflict among pastoral groups, leading to more frequent resource alliances and leaving smaller, less powerful groups vulnerable to raids and violence. Resource scarcity has moreover transformed the traditional function of rustling by weakening its redistributive purpose and invoking a violent, retaliatory dimension, resulting in cycles of violence that are challenging to interrupt.

PART 3: MIGRATION AS A RESPONSE TO NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

In the questionnaire, survey participants were asked to identify the main consequences for pastoralists resulting from the negative impacts of climate change. Migration was identified by 90 out of 140 participants. As set out in figure 3, participants also listed four other consequences at similar levels: reductions in food harvests, death of livestock, resource-based conflict and disease outbreaks.

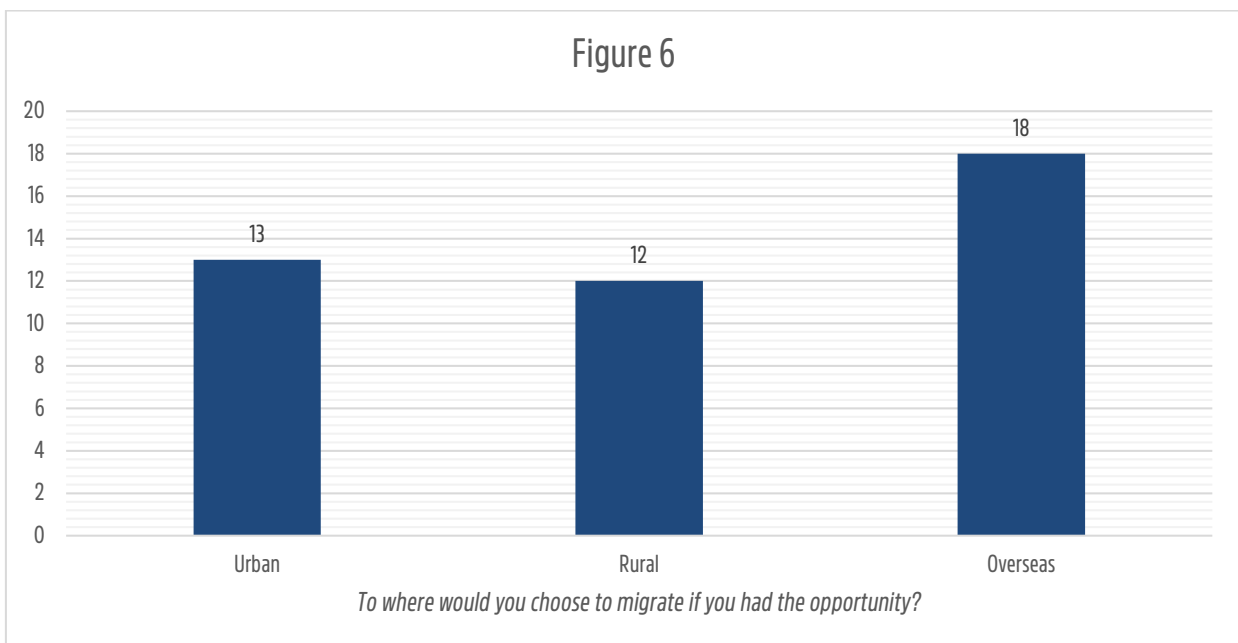
Respondents were then asked to share their personal views on migration as a response to the challenges currently faced — specifically, whether they desired to migrate, either to another rural area, to an urban area or to a different country. A minority (43) responded affirmatively. When asked to elaborate on their answers, 36 stated that they wished to pursue better livelihood opportunities, with 14 specifically noting that they wanted access to better quality pasture.





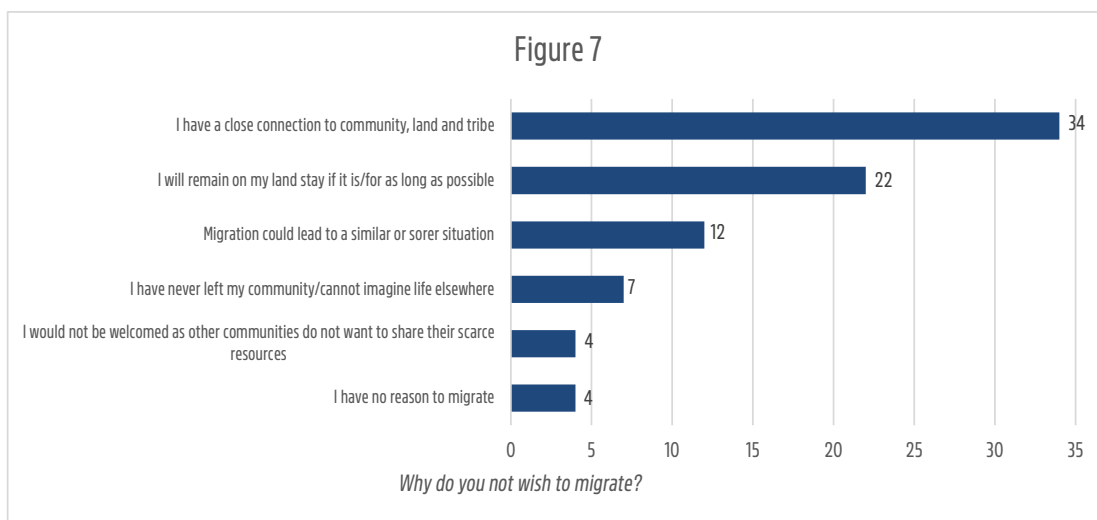
Respondents were fairly evenly distributed in terms of where they would migrate given the opportunity: overseas (18), an urban area (13) or a rural area (12). Upon analyzing which overseas locations respondents preferred, most listed neighbouring countries such as Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. This challenges the assumption that most pastoralists would migrate to a developed or more developed country if they had the chance. Interestingly, some respondents indicated that migrating to a rural area in a different country would be preferable to a rural area in their own country, as under the former scenario they would be less likely to face discrimination or exclusion

on the basis of their tribal affiliation. This is consistent with other literature documenting how, as pastoralists move toward areas with greater water availability, conflicts with non-pastoral communities, farmers and ranch owners have increased.³³ These conflicts typically revolve around proprietary rights (formal or informal) to watering points or boreholes,³⁴ unauthorised grazing (caused by narrowed corridors separating pastoral and agricultural areas) and social disputes when pastoralists, often representing distinct clans, attempt to integrate into new social structures.³⁵



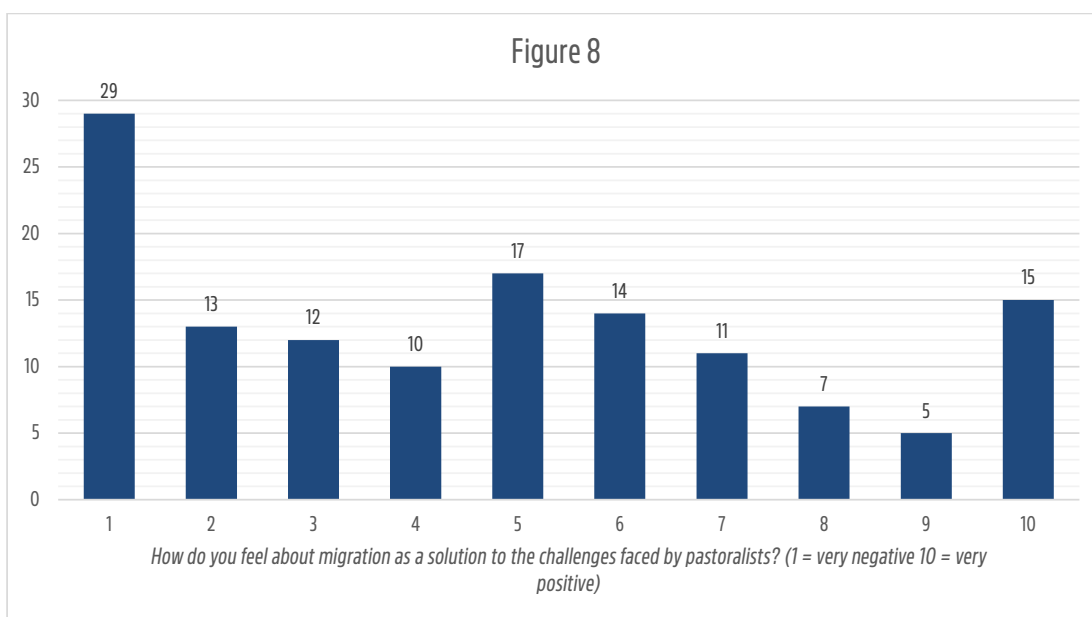
However, a significant majority of respondents (83) stated that they did not desire to migrate. The most commonly cited reason was that they were most comfortable in their community environment and felt a strong connection to their land and/or tribe (34). Many explained that their land had been in their family for generations, and that it would be disrespectful to abandon both established tradition and the effort invested by their ancestors. A significant number of respondents (22) stated that they wanted to remain on their land if at all possible, or would do so until their situation became untenable. Upon further discussion, it appeared that these respondents'

desire to stay was predicated on receiving adaptation and mitigation assistance from the national government or international development agencies. Said another way, respondents felt that without adaptation and mitigation assistance to maintain their current livelihood, migration might become inevitable. A small number of respondents (4) indicated that they would not migrate because they would not be welcome in another community due to the environmental situation, i.e. that other communities would not be willing to share their already scarce resources with newcomers/families from another tribe.



Looking at the data as a whole, it seems that while most respondents regard migration as a possible coping mechanism, they do not wish this for themselves. A majority want to remain on their land, but for many this will be contingent on receiving adaptation and mitigation

support. Of those that see migration as a possible coping mechanism, most want to remain in the pastoral sector and would relocate to rural areas either in their own or another country.



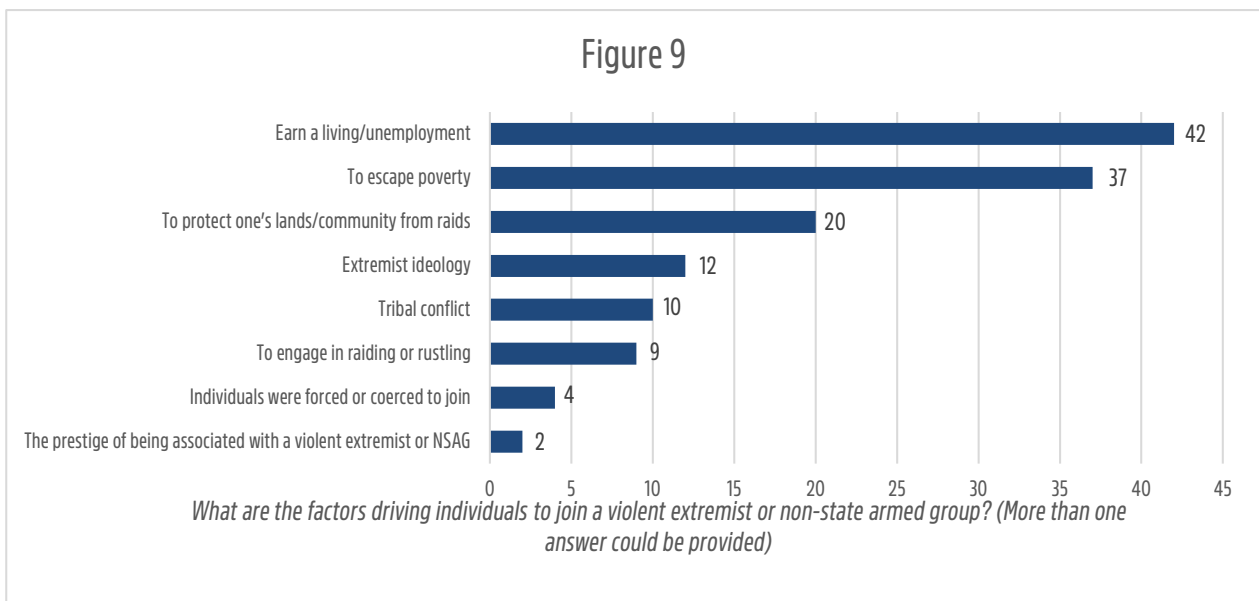
PART 4: JOINING A VIOLENT EXTREMIST OR NON-STATE ARMED GROUP AS A RESPONSE TO THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Respondents were asked whether they had observed a link between climate change-induced loss of/reduction in livelihoods and individuals joining violent extremist or non-state armed groups. A majority (84) answered this in the affirmative and a minority (14) in the negative. It is important to highlight that in this context, ‘joining a group’ does not automatically imply leaving one’s community to live and work with the group on an exclusive basis. In most cases, ‘joining’ can be better described as an affiliation or commitment to a group, with rolling, periodic or fluid responsibilities. It is also noteworthy that although the most active and frequently referenced group was al Shabab, respondents’ accounts of this group were atypical in that they did not describe it as subscribing to a strong Islamic ideology or related political aspirations.

Figure 9 shows that, when asked to speculate on the issues driving individuals to join a violent extremist or non-state armed group, a majority (42) cited unemployment or a desire to earn money. This answer was closely followed by poverty (37), with 12 of these respondents specifically highlighting that joining a group was often immediately rewarded with a ‘gift’ of food stuffs or livestock.

Twenty respondents stated that individuals were joining violent extremist or non-state armed groups to protect their land, livestock or communities from raids, while 9 speculated that individuals were joining such groups as a means to engage in raiding. These answers speak to an evolving phenomenon of violent extremist and non-state armed groups perpetrating raids or rustling on communities, either for their own benefit or as part of an alliance with a rival community. In focus group discussions, it was noted that such raids are often violent and are increasing in intensity and frequency. Also relevant is the 10 respondents that cited ‘tribal conflicts’ as drivers of group membership — something data collectors linked to extremist and non-state armed groups becoming increasingly involved in tribal affairs with a view to benefiting from subsequent discord.

Only 12 respondents believed that individuals were joining a violent extremist or non-state armed group because of their extremist ideology. This again speaks to the atypical presentation of al Shabab in the contexts under examination, i.e. one tending towards a generic non-state armed group as opposed to one exhibiting a strong ideological identity.



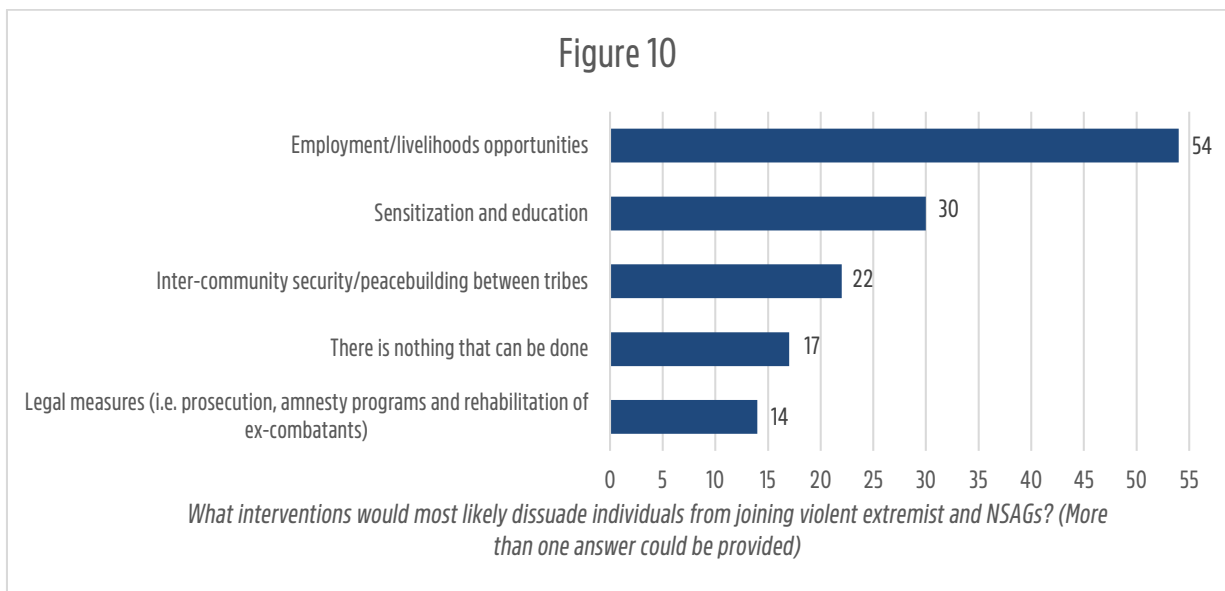
PART 5: PATHWAYS FORWARD AND CONCLUSIONS

Respondents were asked to provide their perspectives on the types of interventions that would most likely dissuade individuals from joining violent extremist and non-state armed groups. Interestingly, 17 respondents stated that nothing could be done. They further explained that the drivers were too deeply embedded in the social fabric, and/or that once individuals reached a certain level of desperation, it was impossible to redirect them.

Of those that responded affirmatively, a vast majority cited the importance of creating employment and livelihoods opportunities. When asked to provide additional details, many stated that the focus should be on youth employment, including in the areas of sustainable agriculture and community development. Focus group discussions elaborated the perspective that climate mitigation and adaptation assistance was required for current livelihoods to be sustained over future years. There was also a strong perception that such assistance was being delivered by governments and/or international development actors in other comparable settings, creating confusion as to why the arid and semi-arid areas were being overlooked.

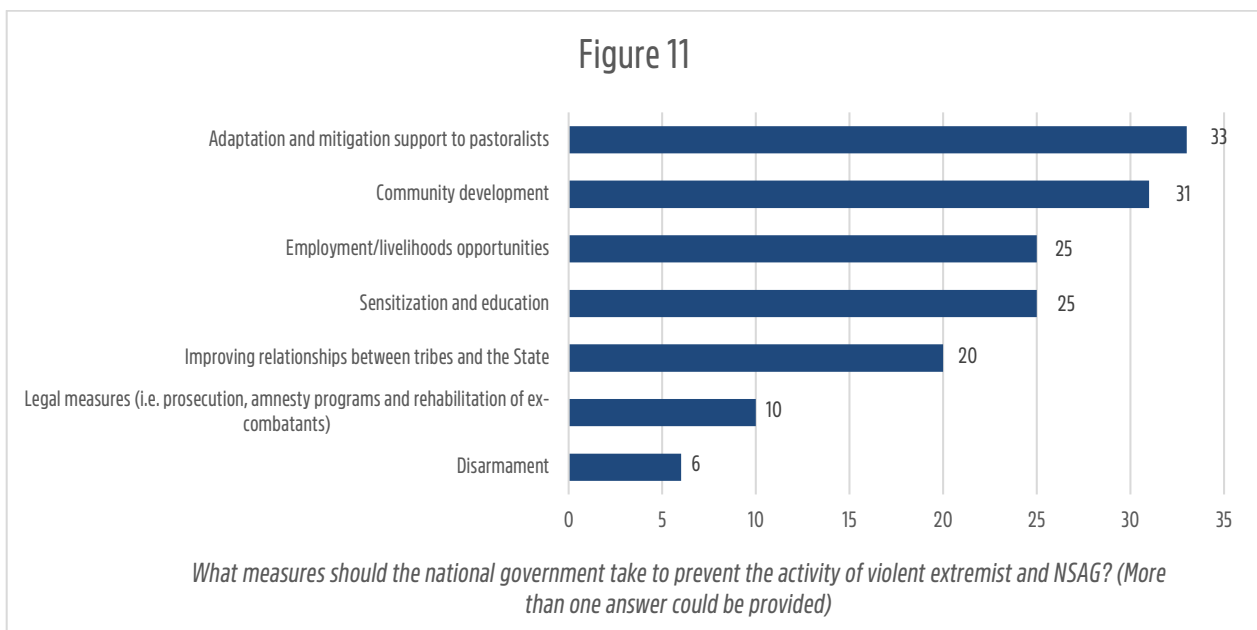
The next most frequently cited intervention concerned sensitization around the dangers of extremist groups, recruiting techniques and the reality of engaging in armed violence. Some respondents noted that youth lacked understanding of the complex ways that community vulnerabilities and tribal rivalries were being exploited by non-state armed groups. Relatedly, 22 respondents cited the need for heightened community security and peacebuilding between tribes. Focus group discussions again reiterated that inter-community violence — especially that involved violent extremist and non-state armed groups — was steadily increasing and becoming more intense. Moreover, it was suggested that resource scarcity, tribal discord and violence were working in a mutually reinforcing manner, and that cyclical violence was particularly difficult to arrest in the tribal areas.

Although they were minority views, it is important to note the 14 respondents that cited legal measures to counter the phenomenon of violent extremism. Examples of such responses, however, varied considerably, from arrest and prison sentences at one extreme, through to amnesties and rehabilitation at the other. It is noteworthy that several of these respondents highlighted the risk of re-recruitment into a violent extremist group, especially when an individual returns to their community but is unsuccessful at reintegrating or has no livelihoods opportunities.



Turning to respondents' perspectives on what the government should do to combat the activity of violent extremist and non-state armed groups, five areas were highlighted. A first intervention was to deliver adaptation and mitigation support to pastoralists affected by the negative impacts of climate change. This is somewhat unsurprising, given that the sample comprised pastoralists in climate-affected communities. However, it does highlight that respondents saw such assistance as a government responsibility, as opposed to a generally desirable form of support. A second area was community development. Focus group discussions revealed that this meant different things to different respondents. Examples included that communities should be 'climate resilient' (using renewable energy, engaging in sustainable agriculture techniques and growing heat-resistant crops), that communities should develop alternative forms of income generation that were not susceptible to climatic events; that communities should have better

infrastructure and services; and that communities should strengthen governance (eliminate nepotism and corruption, modernize tribal structures, etc.). A third area highlighted was to expand livelihoods opportunities. Again, focus group discussions revealed that the emphasis needed to be on youth, who were deemed more likely to migrate and most vulnerable to recruitment by a violent extremist or non-state armed group. Sensitization and education related both to adaptation and mitigation techniques, and to higher quality basic education. Finally, respondents noted that relationships and coordination between tribes and the State needed to be strengthened. In focus group discussions, participants noted several challenges, including a sense that arid and semi-arid areas were marginalized, as well as opportunities, including that the government should assume a lead role in quashing violent extremist and non-state armed groups, and lead a process of nation-wide peacebuilding.



PART 6: CONCLUSION

This paper delves into the intricate connections between climate-induced environmental degradation, resource-based conflict and the coping mechanisms adopted by pastoralists in Kenya's arid and semi-arid regions, particularly in the counties of Garissa and Turkana. Drawing on interviews, focus group discussions and key stakeholder interviews, the authors unravel these intersecting challenges by giving voice to the concerns of those who are directly affected by them.

The survey respondents widely recognize that environmental challenges, i.e. the adverse impacts of climate change — temperature increases, reduced access to water and pasture, floods, etc. — are closely linked to and associated with community-level conflicts. These conflicts can vary in their intensity and violence, but they irrefutably add to the burden faced by pastoralists.

Against these challenges, migrating or joining violent extremist or non-state armed groups can be seen as strategies for mitigating pastoralists' exposure to unemployment, poverty and insecurity. However, this analysis has shown that although migration is certainly among the main consequences of the negative impact of climate change, it is rarely the preferred solution. And even when it is, pastoralists typically wish to move to another rural area, so as to remain in the pastoral sector. On the other hand, participants confirmed the strong correlation between climate-induced environmental degradation and their inclination towards affiliating with violent extremist or non-state armed groups. As outlined earlier, these groups effectively exploit the challenges individuals face, providing appealing services and means to those who opt to join their ranks. It is however noteworthy that ideology plays a very small role in encouraging pastoralists to join violent extremist or non-state armed groups. Indeed, the primary motivations for joining are often pragmatic rather than ideological, encompassing the pursuit of resources, food, alleviation from poverty and security.

By shedding light on the multi-dimensional nature of these phenomena, this research seeks to inform policy and practice aimed at fostering inclusive development, environmental sustainability and resilience in Kenya's vulnerable regions. In responding to these challenges, the following recommendations should be considered:

Inter-clan conflict must be viewed as highly connected to worsening natural resource shortages including in water, livestock fodder and arable land. Where justice systems subscribe to norms around collective responsibility and retributive justice, such conflict can become cyclical and difficult to interrupt. Solutions to resource scarcity need to be approached through a lens of peacebuilding and the renegotiation of traditional inter-clan agreements that regulate resource sharing and redistribution.

It may be necessary to revisit assumptions that compromised rural livelihoods will inevitably or imminently result in cross-border migration and urbanization. At least for this sample, there is a strong desire on the part of pastoralists to remain on their land, but support in terms of adaptation and mitigation is required. Finding solutions to channelling such assistance into fragile and conflict-prone contexts must be considered a priority. In this regard, adaptation and mitigation assistance should be seen as part of a broad prevention strategy against conflict spillovers, violent extremism and the rise of non-state armed groups.

Violent extremist groups are capitalizing on the resources situation to gain support and broaden their following. These groups are also exploiting tribal fissures and becoming engaged as both a protection and a pillage actor. Against these dynamics, joining a violent extremist group is largely seen as a coping mechanism by pastoralists. Giving better options is the ideal solution, including through community development, livelihoods support and adaptation/mitigation. To this end, it is important to invest in communities affected by conflict and to enhance their socio-economic conditions. Through resilience, rehabilitation and sustainable livelihood opportunities, the aim is to present them an alternative narrative to radicalization and violent extremism.³⁶

END NOTES

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- 3 See <https://theconversation.com/kenyan-pastoralists-how-changing-livestock-markets-could-reduce-conflict-176489>.
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FORGOTTEN THREATS IN CLIMATE-FOOD SECURITY

This project examines the nexus between food insecurity and climate insecurity, as a critical yet under-addressed topic, both in research and in policy debates. It concentrates on themes including damage to food systems during armed conflict, the risks associated with large-scale land leasing and resource extraction contracts, and food insecurity as a driver of participation in non-state armed groups. This work aims to unpack existing evidence, identify knowledge gaps, and chart possible action pathways. Moreover, with a view to building knowledge and promoting a more evidence-based debate on these extant risks, the projects seeks to bring together experts in human rights, food systems, climate change, security/conflict and gender for a frank and open exchange of ideas.

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**The Geneva Academy
of International Humanitarian Law
and Human Rights**

Villa Moynier
Rue de Lausanne 120B
CP 1063 - 1211 Geneva 1 - Switzerland
Phone: +41 (22) 908 44 83
Email: info@geneva-academy.ch
www.geneva-academy.ch

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