

Contextualizing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Flood-Prone Non-ASAL Regions Of Kenya: Lessons Beyond the Arid Lands

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Abstract- While much of Kenya's peacebuilding focus is on the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs), flood-prone non-ASAL regions face distinct conflict challenges often overlooked in national peace strategies. This manuscript explores the socio-environmental drivers of conflict in flood-affected lowlands and lake regions, especially in counties like Kisumu, Homa Bay, Busia, and Tana River. Drawing from recent disaster responses, community-based frameworks, and policy gaps, the study highlights how flooding intensifies land disputes, resource scarcity, displacement, and ethnic tensions. It argues that effective conflict resolution in these regions requires adaptation of peace mechanisms to account for the unique dynamics of water-based disasters, population density, and livelihood pressures.

Indexed Terms- - Arid Lands, Conflict, Flood, Climate

I. INTRODUCTION

Non-ASAL flood-prone regions of Kenya, including parts of the Lake Victoria Basin and lower Tana River Basin, face seasonal flooding with increasing frequency and severity. These areas are agriculturally productive and densely populated, contrasting sharply with the sparsely inhabited ASALs. Despite these differences, peacebuilding strategies are often generalized, overlooking the localized drivers of conflict in flood-prone zones. The aim of this study is to contextualize conflict dynamics in flood-affected areas and propose differentiated approaches to peacebuilding that align with environmental and social realities.

II. METHODS

The study used a qualitative review of existing literature, disaster management reports, peace committee evaluations, and interviews from flood-prone counties. Case studies from Budalang'i, Ahero, Tana Delta, and Nyando provide grounded insights into the intersection of flooding and conflict [2]. Thematic analysis was used to cluster key conflict drivers and identify institutional gaps.

III. RESEARCH FINDINGS

Key Conflict Drivers in Flood-Prone Regions

-Land Tenure and Displacement Seasonal flooding displaces thousands, creating temporary or prolonged land occupation scenarios that trigger disputes over boundaries and ownership [3]. Unlike in pastoralist ASALs, conflicts here often occur between settled agricultural communities, leading to prolonged legal and communal land disputes.

-Strained Public Services and Humanitarian Competition

Disasters strain education, health, and sanitation infrastructure. Limited relief often leads to perceived ethnic or political favoritism, aggravating communal tensions [4]. Unlike ASALs, the higher population density in flood zones amplifies competition.

-Livelihood Loss and Economic Insecurity

Farmers in flood zones suffer recurrent crop losses, leading to food insecurity and dependence on relief [5]. Youth unemployment rises as floods destroy local economies. Unlike ASAL pastoralists who may migrate, residents here are largely immobile, compounding frustration and vulnerability to political manipulation.

-Ethnic and Political Fault Lines In multi-ethnic flood-prone counties, competition for recovery resources and political patronage during floods may inflame pre-existing tensions, particularly during election cycles [6]. Conflicts often manifest in access to aid, resettlement sites, and reconstruction funds.

- Gaps in Existing Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

- Lack of Flood-Responsive Peace Committees: Peace committees in flood-prone areas are often inactive during emergencies, with mandates not explicitly including disaster-induced conflicts [7].
- Weak Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Peacebuilding: DRR and conflict management are handled by different institutions with minimal coordination, unlike emerging integrative models in ASAL counties [8].
- Neglect of Local Knowledge in Flood Prediction and Mediation: Traditional forecasting and local conflict resolution mechanisms are rarely integrated into formal disaster response systems [9].
- Limited Participation of Women and Youth in Recovery Planning: Recovery processes often bypass local women and youth groups, despite their key role in resilience and mediation [10].

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish and train flood-sensitive peace committees with DRR capacity [11].
- Integrate conflict sensitivity into county flood management and contingency plans [12].
- Formalize the role of traditional mediators in resolving displacement-related conflicts [13].
- Promote inclusive recovery dialogues involving women, youth, and marginalized groups [14].
- Develop conflict-sensitive resettlement policies and post-disaster land adjudication systems [15].
- Coordinate humanitarian interventions through a peacebuilding lens, especially in ethnically diverse regions [16].

CONCLUSION

Flood-prone non-ASAL areas in Kenya face unique but often under-acknowledged conflict risks. These arise not from resource scarcity like in ASALs, but

from population pressures, displacement, and weak institutional coordination. Localized and disaster-sensitive conflict resolution strategies must be developed to foster peace and resilience. By learning from ASAL innovations while tailoring to the context of flood dynamics, Kenya can strengthen national peace frameworks that are both inclusive and adaptive.

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