

## Chapter 33

### Ethnic Conflicts and Farming in Kenya: Special Reference to Trans-Nzoia County

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#### Abstract

During the Past three decades, perennial conflicts involving the communities of Western Kenya have assumed an increasingly violent nature. In most cases, the conflicts have affected farming activities, resulted in the deaths of dozens of men, women and children, and the theft of thousands of livestock besides hampering other developmental activities. The purpose of the study was to investigate the implications of ethnic conflicts on farming and development in Trans-Nzoia County in Kenya. Objectives of the study were to investigate the causes of ethnic conflicts in Kenya; establish the consequences of ethnic conflicts in Kenya; to establish the government's response and other stakeholders to the ethnic conflicts in Kenya; and to identify strategies for conflict management to the ethnic clashes in Kenya. The methods used were questionnaires and interview guides for data collection. The study targeted Members of the County Assembly who serve the affected region, other regional administrators, members of Parliament in the County and the members of the community. The study found out that Conflicts between Communities living in Trans-Nzoia were perennial. The Pokot are involved in fighting with the Marakwet, the Marakwet and the Nandi, and the Luhya could clash with the Sabaot within the period while other non-Kalenjin tribes suffered as a result. The non-Kalenjin tribes in this sense would consider the Kisii and the Kikuyu among others. Some of the causes for these conflicts are generated from issues touching on land policy. In Kenya, the practice of individualizing public land has created more people to be without land and has generated new types of disputes over ownership. Nevertheless, the statutory or private tenure has continued to hold a privileged position over the customary tenure in Kenya. Usually, the relationship between the two is asymmetrical in the sense that the power vested in the former is dominant over the later and it is enhanced through the judiciary. Where the customary law is subordinated to the state law, a situation of centre-periphery relationship is created. Political interference and patronage may also come into play. Another view is that of multiple 'stakeholders' where there exist various claims of ownership and access. The stakeholder presents differing interests and takes positions over claims to the land, often causing resources-based conflicts. Another cause is the result of what the government termed as equipping the pastoral communities with guns so that they retaliate over cattle rustlers which turned up to be weapons against one another. Poor distribution of state resources is a contributing factor worthy consideration and the infrastructure that is; inadequate availability of essential facilities and amenities such as water, hospitals, schools, roads, etc. as opposed to the later, is in essence a trigger to ethnic tensions. The study recommends that any person whether licensed or not who employs a fire-arm to gain undue advantage must be restrained. In this case we recommend that further studies be conducted to find ways and means by which the indignity that a victim of the illegal use of Small Arms and Light Weapons is subjected to could be termed as atrocity and or a terrorist act punished under international law.