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## **Background**

The Somali East cluster areas of Kenya and Somalia have a long history of conflict that has in the past caused heavy loss of life and property and that over time has led to worsening of relationships among the parties concerned. Conflict in the region is dynamic and changes fast and it is multi-faceted and multi-level and involves many actors. The security situation along the border areas have also been complicated by the regional and international dynamics of the conflicts contexts.

This situation requires broader and concerted effort linking the formal government process in Kenya with the traditional and administrative institution in Somalia to manage any spillover effect of the violent conflict in Kenya and Somalia. Such efforts need to prioritize support for security forces and traditional response units in the transformation of violence in Somalia and at the border.

Mandera town has always been a peaceful cross-border town until the formation and upscale in the activities of the Al-shabab militia. Fighting between the militia and the TFG Somalia forces have led to insecurity in the once peaceful town, to the extent that one can't walk at night due to the risk involved. Curfews have been imposed in the town for more than two and a half years in order to ensure the safety of the Kenyan people. This new cross-border conflict dynamic along the Kenya/Somalia border has had a negative impact on Mandera's peace and stability..

In the beginning of the year 2011, tension and fear has gripped the people in Mandera-Kenya and Suftu, Ethiopia as a result of TFG-Somalia and Al-Shabaab conflict that has led to many deaths and injuries in Baled Hawa Somalia. More than 5000 Kenyans have been displaced and have moved to neighboring locations like Khalalio, Rhamu town, Aresa, Hareri, safer locations in Mandera town and Arabia.

During the conflict, two Kenyan women died, 15 injured and there has also been a lot of damage to properties along the border. People displaced by the fighting moved to find refuge in other safer parts of Mandera County. A number of houses in villages neighboring the border were destroyed when a cross fire ensued between the TFG soldiers who were taking refuge in Mandera town and the Al Shabab.

This has led to a huge influx of more than 20,000 (local community estimates) refugees who ran from the war-torn Somali town of Baled Hawa into Kenya border and more than 60,000 in the interior of Somalia. The refugees abandoned their livestock due to the prevailing drought and conflict in the region. This presents a huge humanitarian crisis that calls for urgent humanitarian intervention.

Despite the situation being volatile, some refugees settled at Moi Stadium in Mandera town though most them were later transported to a new site-Garba Qoley-

15 Kms out of Mandera town. Due to the health crisis in the camp, outbreak of cholera was reported at Moi Stadium. The District Steering Group had numerous strategic meetings for interventions from 7<sup>th</sup> March with most of the international humanitarian organization such as UNICEF, WFP, UNOCHA, ICRC, KRCS, and ECHO-EU.

A pressing dynamic was cited within Mandera town about high proliferation of Small Arms and Light weapons that is feared to increase crime in the town especially during the night. This conflict, which has been fueled by influx presence of extremist organizations/factions e.g. Al-shabab and the TFG Somalia, is feared to spread beyond the borders of Somalia country creating unrest within the Horn of Africa that, is negatively affecting the stability of neighboring countries.

### **Current Situation**

Currently there isn't much Al-shabab activity, though individual assassinations within Kenya have been witnessed. A former District Commissioner of Baled Hawa along side with a humanitarian Worker (Advancement of Small Enterprise Program), were killed by groups believed to be Al-shabab. There have been assassinations of individuals both from Kenya and Somalia, especially those who seek refuge in Mandera Kenya from across Baled Hawa Somalia.

Recently, a Kenyan police officer manning the Mandera-Baled Hawa border was killed in a remote-controlled explosion on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2011 in Township Location. Three of his colleagues escaped barely unhurt but sustained minor injuries.

Somalia and Kenyan humanitarian workers in Mandera are still being targeted for assassination by the militia; among those that the Al Shabaab are looking for is Mr. Ahmed Ismail who works for Gedo Peace Consortium that hosts the Somalia CEWERU. Ahmed was also a former DC, Baled Hawa Somalia. They are targeting him because of the fact that he was in the previous government and is a supporter of the TFG.

Seven armed militia men suspected to be Al Shabab were spotted recently in the town, their motif being unknown, but the security forces have been very alert especially when it comes to cross border incursions. Security officers have developed their own mechanisms to track such information, sourcing early warning information from different places.

Beled Hawa is now under the control of the Transitional Federal Government. Along Ethiopian troops are manning the border at Suftu-Ethiopia while on the Elwak Somalia border-TFG troops are in the front line.

Security has been beefed up at the border of Somalia-Kenya, the Kenyan Security officers are beefing up and ready to deal effectively with any external and internal aggressions.

## **Implications**

- Serious proliferation of SALWs due to the high influx of refugees from Somalia into Northern Kenya.
- Fleeing armed men from Al-Shabaab might cross over to Kenya and start highway banditry along Mandera-Wajir- Garissa highway.
- Lack of motivation of Somali TFG soldiers might hamper and affect Kenya's strategic plans

## **Recommendations (to all actors including active and relevant CSOs, CBOs and the CEWERU)**

There is need for a joint security operation to crack down the Al-shabab insurgents with the help of TFG, Somalia to create a buffer zone .This is the model the Ethiopian troops engaged in and have made an advance penetration into Somalia, therefore possibilities of Al-shabab insurgent attacking the border becomes very hard.

There is need to conduct a raid on houses belonging to foreigners in Mandera- Mandera has become safe haven for any person with ill motives to destabilize peace and human security. Its believed more than 5000 permanent houses erected in Mandera town alone belong to foreigners. This is creating a lot of tension and fear in this area.

The security operation being conducted by the security personnel to continue- currently the security forces are conducting operations during night time as late as 3:00 a.m. There is need to continue and strengthen this operation.