

The role of informal peacebuilding initiatives in reducing violent incidents in the Turkana–Dassanech borderlands, along the Kenya–Ethiopia frontier

Nadio Philis Adukan¹
Lilian Machariah²

¹phylnad@gmail.com

²cikulilian@gmail.com

^{1,2}National Defence University, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The Turkana–Dassanech border region along the Kenya–Ethiopia frontier faces persistent inter-communal conflict driven by livestock raiding, resource scarcity, climate change, and systemic insecurity. Grounded in Security Governance Theory and Sociological Institutionalism, this cross-sectional, mixed-methods study evaluated the effectiveness of informal peacebuilding mechanisms in mitigating this violence. The target population encompassed community members, members of community peace committees, traditional elders members, local administrators and security personnel, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) involved in peacebuilding activities in the Turkana-Dassanech corridor. Qualitative insights were gathered via purposive sampling of 15 key informants and three focus group discussions, while the quantitative sample size was established using the Cochran formula, yielding 384 survey respondents. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic content analysis. The results show that community dialogue forums, traditional mediation, transboundary advocacy, and NGO-led programs were the most prevalent types of informal peacebuilding processes, with traditional elders being at the heart of reconciliation. The survey revealed a significant positive correlation between the two, and multiple regression demonstrated that informal peacebuilding significantly predicted a reduction in violence ($R^2 = 0.660$). However, climate-driven competition over resources and insecurity still pose an enduring risk to long-term peace, and important efforts must be made on the part of the state for stronger partnerships with communities. Future researchers must account for critical operational limitations, including regional volatility, environmental disruptions, and complex linguistic barriers requiring specialized local translation.

Keywords: Cross-Border Conflict, Community Participation, Informal Peacebuilding Initiatives, Traditional Conflict Resolution, Turkana–Dassanech Corridor

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, exclusively state-centric and top-down liberal peacebuilding models have increasingly demonstrated structural limitations in addressing protracted conflicts, frequently resulting in a fragile "negative peace" that fails to resolve root grievances (Jackson, 2021). Consequently, contemporary security scholarship has shifted toward hybrid security governance, which emphasizes the co-production of security through collaborative networks that integrate formal state authority with locally grounded, socially legitimate institutions (Stremlau & Voyvodic Casabó, 2025).

In Africa, these dynamics are severely complicated by arbitrary colonial borders that partitioned cohesive ecological and ethnic systems, creating volatile "borderlands" characterized by geographic isolation and weak state penetration (Zartman, 2021). Continental conflicts in these peripheral zones are driven by environmental stress and institutional fragmentation, as formal state security apparatuses often operate parallel to, rather than in tandem with, indigenous mechanisms (Bagayoko et al., 2016; Boege & Rink, 2019).

The Horn of Africa epitomizes these cross-border vulnerabilities, where rigid, militarized security paradigms clash with necessary pastoralist mobility across porous frontiers (Odhiambo, 2013). Within this region, traditional livestock raiding, once culturally regulated for wealth redistribution, has transformed into commercialized, highly lethal transnational organized crime fueled by small arms trafficking (Mkutu, 2008). This commercialization has systematically eroded customary authority, demonstrating the inadequacy of purely coercive state interventions and highlighting the necessity of integrated cross-border conflict resolution frameworks.

A quintessential manifestation of this borderland crisis is the Turkana–Dassanech corridor along the Kenya–Ethiopia frontier, particularly within the volatile Todonyang border zone. In this arid ecosystem, climate-induced scarcity of water and grazing resources intensifies inter-communal friction and retaliatory violence (Adano et al., 2012). To mitigate these clashes, a diverse array of informal peacebuilding mechanisms has emerged, including traditional mediation by community elders (*Akurus*), peace dialogues, and cross-border peace committees facilitated by civil

society organizations (Wakjira, 2025). While these grassroots initiatives leverage deep cultural norms and social capital to command high moral legitimacy (Modise, 2025), their long-term efficacy is constrained.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ideally, the Kenya–Ethiopia borderland should function as a secure frontier where state sovereignty and indigenous conflict-management mechanisms complement each other within a collaborative framework (African Union commission, 2020). In this optimal scenario, traditional elders utilize localized cultural legitimacy to regulate pastoral resource competition, facilitate transboundary dialogue, and mitigate friction before it escalates into transnational violence. However, the Turkana–Dassanech corridor currently suffers from chronic instability and commercialized livestock raiding driven by small arms proliferation and transnational criminal networks (Mkutu, 2008). Coercive, state-centric security operations remain logistically and operationally disconnected from borderland realities, while climate-induced resource scarcity and armed youth systematically erode the customary authority of traditional leadership structures (Alemneh, 2025).

The critical gap is the lack of empirical evidence evaluating the measurable impact of these informal initiatives on violence reduction, compounded by a failure to structurally integrate local peace infrastructure with formal state security strategies (Wakjira, 2025). This study addresses this deficit by assessing the effectiveness of community-led peacebuilding mechanisms and identifying operational pathways to reconcile state sovereignty with community autonomy through a sustainable, hybrid cross-border security framework.

1.2 Research Objective

To assess the role of informal peacebuilding initiatives in reducing violent incidents in the Turkana–Dassanech corridor along the Kenya–Ethiopia border.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Security Governance Theory

Security Governance Theory, pioneered by Rosenau in 1992 and expanded by Krahmann (2003), explains the paradigm shift from centralized, state-centric security "government" to fragmented, network-based "governance." The theory asserts that contemporary security is no longer a state monopoly; instead, it is co-produced through a polycentric network of state, non-state, private, and traditional actors. In fragile borderlands, this manifests as *hybrid security governance*, where formal state law enforcement and informal community structures coexist to manage cross-border risks. For the Turkana–Dassanech corridor, this framework conceptualizes how state security organs, traditional elders, peace committees, and NGOs interact to generate collective security.

While Security Governance Theory effectively maps the multi-actor architecture and relational networks within the borderland, it exhibits a significant conceptual limitation. It operates primarily on a functionalist assumption that security networks form and persist based on structural utility, resource sharing, and operational efficiency. Consequently, the theory fails to explain *why* local communities systematically prefer and adhere to informal peace structures over formal state security apparatuses, even when state mechanisms possess superior material resources and statutory authority. It ignores the deep-seated cultural compliance, historical trust, and cognitive frameworks that sustain local systems.

2.1.2 Sociological Institutionalism Theory

To address this analytical deficit, the study integrates Sociological Institutionalism, formulated by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and advanced by Hall and Taylor (1996). This theory posits that institutions gain compliance and survive not through functional efficiency, but by achieving "social legitimacy" and aligning with broader cultural norms, symbols, and shared belief systems. Within the Turkana–Dassanech corridor, informal peace mechanisms—such as mediation by traditional elders (*Akurus*) and indigenous justice systems—derive their authority from "taken-for-granted" cultural appropriateness. By combining both frameworks, the study captures both the structural networks of security provision (Governance) and the cultural legitimacy that dictates their community acceptance (Institutionalism).

2.2 Empirical Review

Recent research has shown that informal peacebuilding can still be an effective tool to resolve the conflicts arising from resources access in pastoral communities along the borders. Alemneh (2025) conducted a study on the Kenyan side of the Kenya-Ethiopia border, where indigenous institutions, elites, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and intergovernmental organizations together mitigate conflict through mediation, dialogue and mutually mediated resource sharing. The factors that were found to hinder sustainable peace in the study included, however, environmental degradation, water and pasture scarcity, livestock raiding, and inadequate institutions in

coordinating. The study found that introducing several peacebuilding methods really proved to be very helpful in the conflict management process and in preventing backlash violence.

It has also been noted that the level of community involvement is an important factor in determining the success of a peacebuilding operation. Okeyo et al. (2025) explored the effects of trust building strategies on the implementation of Community based peace building projects in Northern Kenya. The study identified 10 key factors derived from the data gathered from NGOs who did peace building activities and showed that increased transparency, stakeholder involvement, and ongoing dialogue were significant to improving peacebuilding programmes. Historical grievances and alleged ethnic mistrust and conflict over natural resources however persisted to throw obstacles in the way of peacebuilding efforts. The authors call for enhancing local participation and building up local institutional capacity to enhance long-term peace outcomes.

Thus, the role of indigenous institutions and customary governance has been the subject of much research. Traditional leaders, religious institutions including faith-based organisations, women's groups, youth organisations, and civil society groups have complementary roles for fostering social cohesion and aiding the harmonious management of local conflicts across Ethiopia, according to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2025). The report highlights that culturally legitimate institutions facilitate dialogue, reconciliation and community ownership of peace processes in situations where formal systems do not have a high level of legitimacy. The Horn of Africa Initiative (2025) also identified that there was value in embedding peacebuilding in the service of livelihoods, humanitarian assistance and local governance in border areas of conflict, as this reinforces social cohesion and resilience.

Recent studies recognize the beneficial impact of informal peacebuilding but they generally recognize that the root causes of conflicts must be addressed in the process of achieving sustainable peace. Alemneh (2025) identified the drivers of violence in the Kenya–Ethiopia borderlands as climate change, illicit small arms, and how migrants travel across the border and weak government coordination. Similarly, Kochore and Bagaja (2024) noted that increased movement of people, reconfiguration of trade and governance, and adaptation of infrastructure still impacts conflict landscape and social dynamics along the Kenyan–Ethiopia border, reinforcing the importance of coordinated peacebuilding efforts that engage members of communities as well as strengthen support by the state. These studies demonstrate that informal peacebuilding, with good institutions, inclusive governance, and continued cross-border activities, can significantly lower the risk of violence.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted mixed method approach with cross sectional case study design that helps assess the effectiveness of informal peacebuilding in mitigating violent incidents in the Turkana-Dassanech corridor. A mixed methods approach was deemed suitable as it allowed for both quantitative and qualitative data to be collected and analysed, while allowing for both data sets to be combined to gain a broadened perspective of the effectiveness of the community-based peacebuilding initiatives. The use of cross-sectional design enabled gathering data at one point in time, and the use of the case study design facilitated an in-depth examination of the informal peacebuilding processes in the study area.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out in parts of the Todonyang border corridor within the Territory of Turkana County in the Kenya-Ethiopia border area. The region was intentionally selected due to the background of whooping conflicts between communities, based on raiding of livestock, competition over natural resources, insecurity across borders and in an area that has been plagued with them for long. Other than that, several forms of the informal peacebuilding process have been introduced in the region involving community members, traditional leaders, government agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve peaceful co-existence.

3.3 Target Population

The target population encompassed the community members, members of community peace committees, traditional elders members, local administrators and security personnel and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are involved in peacebuilding activities in the Turkana-Dassanech corridor. These groups have been selected because they have relevant firsthand information and experience on conflict dynamics and informal peacebuilding efforts in the study area.

3.4 Sampling and Sample Size

Purposive sampling was used in the study to select key informants and participants for qualitative data collection due to their knowledge and active participation in peacebuilding activities. The Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size of the quantitative survey, which resulted in 384 respondents. Additionally, 15 people were

purposefully identified and recruited for key informant interviews and 3 focus group discussions for deeper qualitative insights into the informal peacebuilding efforts and their impact in mitigating violent events.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Structured Questionnaires and Key Informant Interview Guides and Focus Group discussion guides were used to gather data. Data collection methods were presented by structured questionnaires to the informants, and key informant interviews and focus group discussions were used for the collection of qualitative data. Data triangulation is made possible when multiple data collection methods are used to increase the credibility, validity, and reliability of the study's findings.

3.6 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistics involving frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations for the summary of the informal peacebuilding initiatives efforts of the respondents. Additionally, regression analysis was done to establish relationship between the reduction in violence in the Turkana–Dassanech corridor and the informal peacebuilding initiatives. Themes, patterns, perceptions and experiences related to the effectiveness of the community-based peacebuilding interventions identified through qualitative data retrieved from the interviews and focus group discussions were drawn out of the interviews through thematic content analysis.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the ethical principles which has been established during the process of research. The purpose of the study was explained to participants, and their participation was voluntarily. The informed consent was obtained before data collection and were made places of confidentiality and anonymity to respondents. The data will be kept confidential and treated only for academic purposes. The other participants were given details of their entitlement to discontinue participation in the study without any ill effects at any time.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Response rate

The researcher distributed 384 questionnaires and received 300 responses which was 78%. The researcher was able to conduct 15 key informant's interviews and 3 FGDs.

4.1.1 Effectiveness of Informal Peacebuilding Initiatives in the Turkana–Dassanech Corridor

The objective of this study was to assess the effectiveness of informal peacebuilding initiatives in reducing violent incidents in the Turkana-Dassanech corridor. To address this objective, structured questions were asked and results presented in the following subsections;

Inter-Communal Peace-Building Initiatives: The study sought to examine the Existing Inter-Communal Peace-Building Initiatives and the results were as presented in the Table;

Table 1

Existing Inter-Communal Peace-Building Initiatives

Peace-Building Initiative	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dialogue and Traditional Mediation	105	35.0
Joint Resource Management and Economic Cooperation	18	6.0
Gender and Climate Adaptation Programs	12	4.0
Transboundary Peace Advocacy	84	28.0
Cultural Events	15	5.0
Cross-Border Governmental Cooperation	66	22.0
Total	300	100.0

The results in Table 1 show that the most frequent inter-communal peace building activities were dialogue and traditional mediation, with 35.0% (105) of the responses. This was followed by transboundary peace promotion (28.0%, 84) and by cross-border cooperation between governments (22.0%, 66). Joint resource management and economic cooperation received 6.0% (18) of the cultural events, and cultural events received 5.0% (15). The lowest proportion (12%) was for gender and climate adaptation programs. The results indicate that local communities are still depending on traditional dialogue forums and borderland interaction processes as means of resolving conflicts and facilitating peaceful coexistence in the borderland.

The qualitative results also confirmed that the role of traditional elders and the local dialogue forums are still relevant in peacebuilding processes. One of the respondents said that:

“The elders of the Turkana and Nyangatom communities intervened after the conflicts between the two communities, and to date they are sharing resources peacefully, instead of seeking revenge because the elders were encouraging dialogue.” (Respondent 28, personal interview, 17 March 2026).

These results concur with Tesfaye Abate, (2024), who stated that the quest for sustainable peace in conflict-ridden communities is dependent on the participation, dialogue and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms of the people. Similarly, Bor and and Muoka (2025) found that in the northern region of Kenya and the Horn of Africa, traditional elders and cross-border peace committees are critical in lieu of mediation of pastoral conflicts. Thus the study validates the fact that in the Turkana-Dassanech borderland informal and community-based peacebuilding processes continue to play critical role in ensuring peace and security.

Participation in Community-Led Peace Meetings: Respondents were asked to indicate if they participate in Community-Led Peace Meetings and results were as presented below;

Table 2

Participation in Community-Led Peace Meetings

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	183	61.0%
No	117	39.0%
Total	300	100.0%

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents, 61.0% (183), indicated that they had attended a community peace meeting in the past 24 months, whereas 39.0% (117) had not attended community peace meetings. The results indicate that community peace meetings are still viable as a tool for addressing conflict and fostering coexistence among the Turkana and Dassanech communities in the grassroots level. The high level of participation is further evidence of the growing awareness of the local communities of the importance of dialogue and collective action as means of handling cross-border tensions and against retaliatory violence.

The qualitative results also showed that community-led peace meetings have played a large role in curbing planned revenge attacks and facilitating communication between opposing groups. One of the respondents said that:

“A community led peace meeting was held to which elders, community members and security officials were invited and dialogue and negotiations took place, with neither side threatening any more violence.” (Focus Group Discussion Participant, Todonyang, 20 March 2026).

The results are corroborated by (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2023) who found that community involvement in local peace meetings builds trust, helps prevent conflict, and facilitates pastoral communities' cooperation in the Horn of Africa. Similarly, Vanin et al., (2025) found that grassroots peace dialogues continue to play an effective role in mitigating cross-border tensions as they promote local ownership of the peace processes, and they provide for timely peace mediation before conflict becomes violent. Most Influential Actors in Community Peace Meetings: Respondents were asked to indicate Most Influential Actors in Community Peace Meetings and findings were as revealed below;

Table 3

Most Influential Actors in Community Peace Meetings

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Traditional Elders	235	78.3%
Women	9	3.0%
Youth	16	5.3%
Government Representatives (Chiefs/Administrators)	32	10.7%
Other (Specify)	8	2.7%
Total	300	100.0%

Table 3 reveals that traditional elders were seen as the most influential (235) of the community peace meetings, with 78.3% of people responding as such. Chiefs and administrators (10.7%, 32) and youth (5.3%, 16) represented 10.7% and 5.3% of the government representatives respectively. Other actors made up 2.7% (8) while women made up 3.0% (9). The results indicated that the traditional elders still play a pivotal role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes in the borderland of Turkana/Dassanech because of their cultural legitimacy, authority, and their local knowledge of conflict processes. The qualitative results also showed that the elders are very trusted since they know the customs and traditions of the communities and their historical relations with each other. One of the respondents said that:

“When the elders from Kokuro heard that their animals were being taken, they contacted elders from Ethiopia, and via discussion they persuaded the warriors to not conduct the intended revenge raid.” (Respondent 13, personal interview, 16 March 2026).

The results also show that women and youth remain under-represented in the process of peace decision making, even though they suffer from the effects of conflict. This indicates that peacebuilding institutions in the borderland continue to be predominantly male and male-led and senior-focused. The results concur with Adano et al., (2012) findings that the traditional elders are still identified as the most credible mediators in the pastoral conflict resolution process in the Horn of Africa as they are morally authoritative and culturally legitimate. On the same note, Ejere (2021), noted indigenous leadership structures remain a significant factor in grassroots peacebuilding particularly in the marginalized borderland communities where formal state institutionalization and trust level are limited.

4.2 Trends in Inter-Communal Violence

The study sought to examine the Trends in Inter-communal violence, and results were as presented below;

Table 4

Trends in Inter-Communal Violence

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Much Less	33	11.0%
Slightly Less	100	33.3%
The Same	42	14.0%
More Frequent	100	33.3%
More Deadly	25	8.4%
Total	300	100.0%

Table 4 presents mixed perceptions on the trends of inter-communal violence between Turkana and Dassanech communities. The results show that half of the respondents (100) indicated that violence had slightly increased in the last 5 years, and the same percentage (100) said violence had increased. In addition, 14.0% (42) said that the amount of violence was the same, and 11.0% (33) thought that the amount of violence was much less. Fewer, 8.4% (25), saw the conflict to be increasing in deadly force. While peacebuilding efforts might have helped to lower violence in some parts of the borderland, insecurity and retaliatory attacks persist.

The qualitative results indicated that although dialogue and peace meetings have promoted reconciliation between some communities, some communities are still periodically attacked and their livestock are being raided, which poses a threat to peace and tranquility in the long term. One of the respondents described the process as:

“Recently, we mediated a conflict between the Nyangatom and the Turkana in Kibish to stop them from killing each other, but there are still tensions whenever they steal livestock or when community’s cross borders during drought.” (Key Informant Interview, Todonyang, 20 March 2026).

The results suggest that some progress has been made in the process of peacebuilding in the Turkana-Dassanech borderland, though it continues to be fragile, owing to the frequent occurrence of resource competition, climate change stress, and insecurity in the region. The results align with the results of Etzhold and Müller-Koné (2023) that, in some parts of northern Kenya, pastoral conflicts have decreased thanks to the local peace initiatives, but violence tends to flare during droughts and when livestock move. In a similar vein, Shetahun, (2023) discovered that in borderland communities, peace agreements are often poorly implemented and continue to face natural resource conflicts.

4.2.1 Effectiveness of NGO and Faith-Based Peace-Building Programs

Respondents were asked to reveal the Effectiveness of NGO and Faith-Based Peace-Building Programs and results were as presented below

Table 5

Effectiveness of NGO and Faith-Based Peace-Building Programs

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Effective	92	30.7%
Effective	117	39.0%
Neutral	50	16.7%
Ineffective	17	5.6%
Less Effective	24	8.0%
Total	300	100.0

The results listed in Table 5 reveals that majority of the respondents had positive perception about the peacebuilding efforts of NGO and Faith-Based Organization. Of the 300 who responded, 39.0% (117) found the programs to be effective and 30.7% (92) found them to be very effective. Fewer than 5.6% (17) said that the program was ineffective, and 8.0% (24) said it was less effective. The answers indicated that there is a great acceptance of NGO and faith-based approaches in the Turkana–Dassanech borderland especially those that emphasize dialogue, healing, and community engagement. In the interviews, some respondents described the ease with which NGOs' activities are more accessible and community-based than formal government programs. One respondent remarked:

“Most peace talks facilitated by NGOs include elders, women and youth, which means that their voices are heard, and they help resolve conflicts more quickly.” (Focus Group Discussion Participant, Todonyang, 22 March 2026).

Some respondents noted that the implementation of peacebuilding activities is often very dependent on donor funds for NGOs and faith-based peacebuilding operations, and that this can also have an impact on the sustainability of peace operations once the donors stop funding them. However, the results show that non-state actors have emerged as key counterparts in peacebuilding, especially where the state is absent. The results align with Adano et al. (2012) finding that community-based NGO interventions achieved bigger trust if they integrate community culture and engage the local people. On the other hand, Vanin et al. (2025) identified that a grassroots peacebuilding campaign promotes dialogue, builds community resilience and is a part of sustainable conflict resolution among pastoral borderland communities.

4.2.2 Traditional Justice Systems and Conflict Resolution

The study sought to assess respondent's perception on the Traditional Justice Systems and Conflict Resolution and results were as noted in the Table below;

Table 6

Traditional Justice Systems and Conflict Resolution

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Disagree	33	11.0%
Disagree	17	5.7%
Neutral	58	19.3%
Agree	83	27.7%
Strongly Agree	109	36.3%
Total	300	100.0%

The responses to the Table 6 suggest that the traditional justice systems are very much seen as fair and effective conflict resolution mechanisms within the Turkana–Dassanech borderland. A combined 64.0% of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that traditional justice systems resolve conflicts more fairly than formal courts, with 36.3% (109) strongly agreeing and 27.7% (83) agreeing. 16.7% disagreed with this statement, and 19.3% (58) were undecided. The results indicate that many members of the community remain more satisfied with the alternative justice mechanisms, due to their familiarity, accessibility and ability to resolve disputes faster than formal justice mechanisms. On the interviews, traditional justice systems are often perceived as more functional in solving pastoral problems, because elders are knowledgeable about how things are done locally, about grazing patterns and clan relations. One respondent explained:

“Elders make decisions more readily accepted because elders understand the traditions and they do not look for punishment, but they seek to reconcile.” (Focus Group Discussion Participant, Todonyang, 20 March 2026).

The findings show that the use of restorative practices with traditional elders helps to avoid revenge killings and maintain peace between neighbouring communities. The results are similar to those of Wakjira, (2025), who reported a high level of trust in an indigenous justice system in pastoral communities as it considers dialogue, compensation, reconciliation and restoration of relationships rather than a punitive legal process. Similarly, Etzhold and Müller-Koné (2023) reported that community-driven peacebuilding has been instrumental in decreasing pastoral conflict as communities discuss the issue and seek mediation; Boege and Rinck (2019) also noted that the traditional means of handling conflict builds peace pact and facilitates peaceful co-existence in borderland communities.

4.2.3 Authority and Influence among Young Men

This subsection aimed at presenting respondent's perception on Authority and Influence among Young Men and results were as presented in the Table;

Table 6*Authority and Influence among Young Men*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Armed Commanders	33	11.0%
Traditional Elders	267	89.0%
Other (Specify)	0	0.0%
Total	300	100.0%

As indicated in Table 7, traditional elders continue to be the most influential authority figures for young men in the Turkana–Dassanech borderland. The majority of the respondents (89.0% or 267) said they hear more from traditional elders than from armed commanders, whereas 11.0% (33) said they heard more from armed comrades than from traditional elders. No answers were given for other responses. These findings indicate that, despite the presence of armed groups and the prevalence of inter-communal violence, elders continue to enjoy a great amount of respect and authority in their communities. The interviews also showed that elders have a critical role to play in discouraging revenge attacks, in negotiating peace agreements and as guides to young warriors in periods of tension. One respondent stated:

“Those involved in fighting are normally advised by the elders, and many youths still respect the decisions made during community meetings.” (Focus Group Discussion Participant, Todonyang, 20 March 2026).

The results indicate that traditional leadership is still alive and continues to play a meaningful role in stabilising local peacebuilding and conflict management in the corridor of Turkana – Dassanech. This finding is in line with Bor and Muoka, (2025) work which showed that traditional elders and peace committees in northern Kenya are very instrumental in mediating pastoral conflicts and promoting peaceful co-existence in the pastoral regions. Similarly, Ibrahim (2023) noted that elders have cultural legitimacy and play major roles in decision-making processes, with which pastoral youth come to rely and seek guidance from elders in cross-border communities with great reverence. Correlation Analysis Pearson Product Moment Correlation was carried out to assess the relationship between the four informal peacebuilding indicators with the reduction of violent incidents in the Turkana–Dassanech borderland.

Table 7*Correlation Matrix*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Participation in Community Peace Meetings	1				
2. NGO/FBO Peacebuilding Programmes	.562**	1			
3. Traditional Justice Systems	.614**	.587**	1		
4. Traditional Elders' Influence	.598**	.542**	.663**	1	
5. Reduction in Violent Incidents	.531**	.603**	.671**	.718**	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results show that all four informal peace building indicators are statistically significantly ($p < 0.01$) positively related with a decreased number of violent incidents. The highest correlation with decreased levels of violence was for traditional elders' influence, while the lowest was for participation in community peace meetings, finding a $r = 0.718$ and 0.531 respectively. The other indicators: traditional justice systems, followed by NGO and faith-based peacebuilding programmes and having no significant association with decreased violence levels. The results indicated that the greater the interaction of informal peacebuilding mechanism, the lower was the incidence of inter-communal violence in Turkana-Dassanech corridor.

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to answer the question of how the four indicators of informal peacebuilding initiatives have an influence on the reduction of violent incidents.

Table 8*Model Summary*

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error
1	0.812	0.660	0.655	0.476

The R² value of the model was equal to 0.660, which simply means that the four informal peacebuilding indicators together account for around 66.0% of the explained variability in the reduction of the number of violent incident scenarios. Other related explanations of this remaining 34.0% could include climate variations, lack of resources, livestock raiding, and insecurity across borders.

Table 9

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	107.846	4	26.962	119.087	.000
Residual	54.854	295	0.186		
Total	162.700	299			

The regression model was statistically significant as expected ($F(4,295) = 119.087, p < 0.001$) — including the informal peacebuilding indicators together, they significantly predict the reduction of violent incidents.

Table 10*Regression Coefficients*

Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.826	0.192		4.302	.000
Participation in Peace Meetings	0.174	0.047	0.166	3.702	.000
NGO/FBO Peacebuilding Programmes	0.211	0.052	0.198	4.058	.000
Traditional Justice Systems	0.259	0.055	0.267	4.709	.000
Traditional Elders' Influence	0.318	0.048	0.347	6.621	.000

The regression results show the four indicators all make a significant contribution to violent incidents ($p < 0.001$). The effect of the role of traditional elders turned out to be statistically the highest predictor ($\beta = 0.347$), following that of traditional justice systems ($\beta = 0.267$), NGO and faith-based peacebuilding programmes ($\beta = 0.198$), and community-led peace meetings ($\beta = 0.166$). The results indicate that the influence of culturally legitimate institutions and their increased community involvement is closely linked with peace and security good of the Turkana–Dassanech borderland.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study can conclude that informal reconciliation efforts have contributed to lowering the rate of violence and enhancing peaceful coexistence in the Turkana – Dassanech. Community-based dialogue forums, traditional mediation processes, peace dialogues, organisations such as NGOs, and indigenous justice systems have helped to resolve conflict, reconcile differences, and avert retaliatory attacks among communities on the borders. In the face of newly emerging security threats, traditional elders continue to play a very important role in helping to lead peace processes and build cohesion among the community. However, key conflict drivers, such as the competition for water and grazing resources, livestock raiding and insecurity across the border and climate change, continue to pose a risk to continued peace improvement. Thus, challenging and improving the capacity of informal peacebuilding mechanisms on the agenda, and boosting partnership with formal security institutions is important for sustainable peace and security.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends enhancing informal peacebuilding practices by boosting support of traditional elders, peace committees and community dialogue processes, as they have proven to be effective in curbing tensions among communities in the Turkana-Dassanech borderland. Resolving early warning, conflict prevention, and coordinated response to insecurity requires some institutionalization of collaboration between the community-based peace structures and formal security agencies by governments in Kenya and Ethiopia. In addition, the capacities of development partners, non-governmental organizations and faith-based organisations to support peacebuilding programmes with a focus on youth engagement, women's participation and inter-border cooperation, should be enhanced. In addition, the study calls for investments in sustainable resource management, climate adaptation and livelihood diversification as a way to mitigate the root causes of conflict and building lasting peace and security in the border area.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that they do not have any known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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