

‘Brother is turning against brother.... We need a mind-set shift.’



REPORT of the Elgeyo Marakwet 2nd International Dialogue on Land & Human Security

by Dr Alan Channer
& Simon Thuo

In the context of a drought in Kenya that has put 3 million people in need of emergency food aid and killed millions of livestock, we report on an initiative inspired by the programme ‘Initiatives for Land, Lives and Peace’.

‘This Dialogue comes at a critical time, when we face challenges of insecurity caused by resource scarcity.’ said **H.E Alex Tolgos**, Governor of Elgeyo Marakwet County. *‘Scarcity of food, pasture and water has resulted in a brother turning against a brother.’*

Governor Tolgos was speaking at the Second North Rift Dialogue on Land and Human Security, co-organised by the Government of Elgeyo Marakwet County in partnership with ‘Initiatives for Land, Lives and Peace’ (ILLP) of IofC International. Other partners comprised the National Land Commission, the National Drought Management Authority, the World Agroforestry Centre, Kenya Commercial Bank and Transnational Bank.



50 participants, including national agency and county government officials, traditional elders and civil society representatives, gathered to address the theme of ‘Conflict mitigation through sustainable development’.

'We have lost 100 lives in the last year due to conflict [in Elgeyo Marakwet County]', H.E Governor Tolgos continued. 'We cannot afford to continue as before. We need a mind-set shift to address the problems in a sustainable way.'

The 'Dialogues on Land and Human Security' were pioneered by ILLP at the Initiatives of Change conference centre in Caux, Switzerland.

Dr Alan Channer, member of the international ILLP Steering Committee, thanked Governor Tolgos for a ground-breaking partnership in a keynote speech on 'The journey from Caux to Kerio Valley and beyond':

'These Dialogues were started because we know that the vicious cycle of environmental degradation and conflict can be reversed. Reviving degraded land, improving water management, restoring trust between people – these can heal entire ecosystems and give life to communities and the Earth in all its fullness.'

'Kenyans played an important role in the Caux Dialogues in 2014 and 2015. Then, in 2016, the first Dialogue outside Switzerland took place in Kenya - in Kabarnet, Baringo County.'

Proof of the success of that event is that it launched a process of dialogue.

Elgeyo Marakwet County Government took up the baton, and through your vision and commitment we are continuing that process today.'



'Since we started our collaboration,' Dr Channer continued, 'Elgeyo Marakwet County was one of two sub-national governments in Africa selected for the prestigious, US-based 'Open Government Partnership' programme; tribute to the fact that this county leads Kenya in the field of good governance. Good governance provides fertile ground for the successful implementation of 'Conflict mitigation through sustainable development'. As Laura Thompson, Deputy Director of IOM, affirmed in Caux in 2013: 'Effective public policies are only possible if lack of trust in and within governments is addressed. The rule of law and the inclusion of civil society are key for taking action to preserve land and security.'

Dr Channer read a message from ILLP Steering Committee member and World Bank consultant, **Dr Peter Rundell**:

'This Dialogue offers an opportunity to give practical reality to the gains that come from earning and giving trust, and using the discoveries of sustainable land restoration methods to create opportunities for collaboration instead of conflict, and for sharing instead of shooting.'

'This year, events have made the Dialogue even more timely. Well-publicised, and less-publicised, killings, and the silent suffering of pastoralists and farmers as climate change and short-sighted land use take their toll, remind us that future generations will pay a heavy price if we fail to take the opportunity before us.'

'Those who, like me, are the grand-children of colonial settlers bear a responsibility to redress some of the consequences of our forebears' blindness and prejudice. I can only ask that today's Kenyans forgive that painful past, and accept people like me as partners in a new way forward.'

Speakers and participants throughout the ensuing Dialogue responded to Governor Tolgos' call to generate a mind-set shift.

Dr Samuel Tororei gave an overview of the roots of land conflict in Kenya. *'I am touched by the apology shared by Dr Peter Rundell,'* Dr Tororei said. *'The colonial authorities were short-sighted but the post-independence governments have been equally short-sighted. Injustice is the cause of land conflict. However, force will not resolve the issues. So we have a key agenda before us. We need to empower dialogue.'*



A panel of legal experts from several Counties and the National Land Commission, facilitated by **Johnstone Kibor**, Coordinator, Peace and Security at Kenya's Ministry of Interior, discussed the root causes of land-based conflict. Heated debate ensued, with participants following and responding to live social media reports of fatalities in clashes between Pokot and Marakwet communities further north in the Kerio Valley.

Gunilla Hamne, founder/director of the Peaceful Heart Network in Sweden, shared how inner, unseen injuries caused by conflict can be the most difficult to heal – and how reactions to past conflicts can exacerbate present tensions.

Baringo County Executive Committee Member for Agriculture, **Caroline Lentupuru**, thanked Hamne for helping her to deal with the traumatic experience of caring for young children who had lost their parents in deadly cattle raids.

All the Dialogue participants lit candles in memory of the lives lost due to ethnic clashes and cattle rustling.

Major John Seii, Chair Emeritus of the Kalenjin Council of Elders, and Deputy Chair of the National Council of Elders, expressed his gratitude for the fresh partnerships being generated between County Government and traditional leadership structures, and called for urgent consultations between elders from all the communities involved in this conflict. He ended his speech with a traditional Kalenjin blessing.

Deputy Governor **Dr Gabriel Lagat**, whose vision had first brought the Dialogues from Caux to Kenya, brought the gathering to a conclusion by urging participants to adopt the 30 recommendations highlighted and agreed by participants.

These included:

- Strengthening the role of Councils of Elders, so that they can delineate inviolable clan boundaries; re-establish the mutual doctrine of *toiyot* that safeguards the right of access to water to all life; forbid encroachment onto the land of others and encourage sustainable land cultivation methods.
- Making the 'Dialogues on Land and Security', in partnership with ILLP, an annual event rotating in the affected counties of Kenya.
- Technical Officers to assist communities in sustainable range management, water harvesting and reseedling to restore natural capital.
- Formally adopting the 'EverGreening our World Declaration' forged at the World Agroforestry Centre in partnership with senior faith leaders and with the Advisory Unit on Peace and Reconciliation of the Executive Office of the President of Kenya, in order to foster 'Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration' and other forms of Evergreen Agriculture throughout the County.



A report of the Dialogue was broadcast by K24 on national television during primetime news under the headline 'Security in the North Rift – leaders of Elgeyo Marakwet call for peace'.



National TV news broadcast - Elders from Elgeyo Marakwet hold candles in memory of those who lost their lives in the recent clashes inflamed by drought and lack of pasture



H.E Governor Alex Tolgos is interviewed by the press



Participants at the Dialogue hear from Francis Kiplagat, former "Kenyan farmer of the year", at his mango orchard



An Elgeyo Marakwet elder at the mango farm



Gunilla Hamne, trauma & stress consultant, & facilitator



Major John Seii (left) at a break-out meeting with Elgeyo Marakwet traditional Elders



Dialogue participants join in traditional dances