CONFLICT SNAPSHOT

Conflict Evolution

In the run up to the general election, Kenya is faced with camouflaged ethnic and regional alignments to propel political leaders to power, resulting in a highly competitive and polarised pre-election phase. While the political atmosphere in the coastal region and Garissa county appears to be one of "near normalcy", undercurrents of impending tensions are threatening peaceful elections.

Search for Common Ground (Search) in collaboration with the Human Rights Agenda (HURIA), Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), Kiunga Youth Bunge Initiative (KYBI), Tana River Peace, Reconciliation and Development (TRPRD) and Ijara Women for Peace has established an Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) system through embedded community observation and social media listening, with the aim to harness the shared intelligence between communities, civil society organisations, and government authorities to identify and address imminent threats to peaceful elections, particularly looking at conflict trends, drivers and locations that could potentially trigger or experience violence. Social media listening monitors online conversations, with a focus on Facebook and TikTok, to track hate speech and misinformation trends and how these could potentially affect conflicts offline.

Between *noon on August 10 and noon on August 11*, 2022, while the situation along the Coast and Garissa remained relatively calm, the following events were recorded by embedded observers, disaggregated by categories and specific locations. Events reported included cases of **vote rigging** claims **(3)** and *Political clashes (1)*. Other concerns from the social media listening were around **unverified election result declaration***s* and **gendered bullying**. Specifically:

Vote rigging claims were reported in three **(3)** counties including Lamu, Kwale and Garissa counties. In Lamu county, at ***mokowe tallying centre,*** election officials (the Presiding officer) were found with ballot papers. The incident is alleged to have been orchestrated by members of parliament and county assembly candidates.

In Kwale county, tallying of votes was suspended at ***matuga constituency tallying centre*** after several election officials including Presiding officers were found trying to stuff ballot papers inside the ballot boxes. Similarly, in Kinango constituency election officials reported to be strategically going slow. Over 70 presiding officers were stranded with the results at ***Matumbi primary school***, Kwale county. Two political campaigners reported having been arrested in possession of illegal ballot boxes.

In Garissa County, at ***Dadaab tallying centre***, unknown civilians stormed the tallying centre armed with knives and pangas. The suspected group of civilians were alleged to have been hired by a political candidate to cause chaos and instil fear hence disrupting the exercise.

Political tension was witnessed in ***Malindi tallying centre*** involving fist fights between the member of parliament and county assembly candidates over the vote tallying process.

Unverified election results declarations: there have been multiple messages on social media claiming that specific candidates had won their respective positions despite the commission mandated for election management (IEBC) having specifically cautioned against people making winning declarations. In the post below the social media user claims that the residents of Lamu have sent Fahim and his puppets home. Other posts claiming that specific politicians had won were also seen to be posted by social media users in Mombasa, Kwale and Kilifi.

> ***Post****: Lamu county has decided. Fahimu na vibaraka zake wamekwenda nyumbani. (In English: Lamu county has decided. Fahim and his supporters have gone home)*
>
> ***Reactions***
> - Mutachuchu mukipata majibu (In English:*You will be surprised by the final results)*
> - Vibaraka nuksi wa fahim vipi mwahisi vipi sasa? (In English: *Fahim's supporters, how do you feel now?)*

In ***Garsen***, Tana River County, anxiety ahead of the election results mounted due to unverified figures circulating on social media and streamed in the mainstream media (TV channels).

Gendered bullying: Posts bullying a female gubernatorial candidate in Kilifi emerged as a response to online information that she had lost the position she was vying for to her opponent. Some of the insults towards her highlighted through our social media listening show a trend we have been witnessing in the lead up to the election.

> ***Post 1****:Aisha Jumwa is feeling menstruation, I don't know why .*
> ***Post 2****: Breaking News: Aisha Jumwa attempts suicide*
>
> ***Reactions:***
> - Aisha Jumwa atingize miti sasa sio kiuno (In English: *Aisha Jumwa should shake trees now not the waist)*
> - There was no way the slay queen Aisha Jumwa could win this.

Search for Common Ground