



Effectiveness with County Government Economic Strategies in Promoting Sustainable Peace: A Case Study of Baringo County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of economic empowerment as a peacebuilding strategy in Baringo County, Kenya, addressing the persistent challenge of inter-ethnic conflicts and instability between 2012 and 2024. Employing a descriptive research design guided by Conflict Transformation Theory, the study integrated quantitative and qualitative methods. Data were collected through questionnaires and oral interviews, with respondents selected via random sampling. Both primary and secondary sources were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with results presented in tables using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between county-led economic empowerment initiatives such as community development funding, agricultural diversification, and capacity-building for small-scale traders and sustainable peace. These programs enhanced economic resilience, reduced inter-ethnic tensions, and redirected youth from conflict to peacebuilding activities. The study concludes that economic reforms are vital for reducing instability and fostering lasting peace in Baringo County. It recommends increased investment in community development, promotion of agricultural diversification, and institutionalization of capacity-building programs to strengthen economic resilience and consolidate peace. This research underscores the critical role of economic empowerment in mitigating conflict and promoting sustainable development, offering actionable insights for policymakers in conflict-prone regions.

Key terms: Community capacity building, conflict transformation, economic empowerment, inter-ethnic tensions, sustainable peace.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

The effectiveness of county government economic strategies in promoting sustainable peace lies in their ability to reduce poverty, create inclusive opportunities, and strengthen social cohesion (UNDP East and Southern Africa, 2024). In Baringo County, initiatives such as community development funding, agricultural diversification and capacity-building for small-scale traders foster economic resilience and minimise inter-ethnic tensions. These strategies not only improve livelihoods but also shift vulnerable groups, particularly the youth, away from conflict toward productive engagement. Evidence shows that when local governments invest in equitable economic empowerment, communities experience enhanced stability and trust across social divides (Hernandez, 2021). Thus, county-led economic reforms are central to sustaining peace and development in conflict-prone regions (United Nations, 2022).

Economic empowerment activities serve as strategic instruments in peacebuilding and violence prevention in developed countries. In the United Kingdom, social deprivation as a cause of civil unrest is addressed through economic inclusion in post-riot recovery strategies, as outlined in the *Levelling Up White Paper* (2022). Locally based initiatives in Preston and Wigan increase local employment by 13 per cent and lead to a reduction in anti-social behaviour. In the United States, economic interventions such as Chicago's *Cure Violence* and Baltimore's *READI* programs provide job placements, therapy, and stipends to at-risk youth, reducing shootings by over ten times their cost and generating a public safety return of over \$10 per dollar invested (Avram, 2024). These examples demonstrate that in developed states with high capacity, economic dis-empowerment remains a significant source of violence, and locally based empowerment programs foster both social stability and long-term peace.

Similarly, Economic empowerment is being realised as a development tool in developing contexts as well as a source of sustainable peacebuilding (UN Women, 2024). In Mexico, cash transfers combined with violence prevention programs have been shown to dramatically decrease domestic violence and increase female labour force participation, rising to 52 per cent compared to 38 per cent without the programs, and

cash transfers in high-crime areas (e.g., SEMUJERES-informed CCTs) resulted in 25 per cent reduction in intimate partner violence and increased maternal investment in education (Charamnac, 2017; GIWPS, 2016; Baranov, 2022). In Colombia, despite the failure of top-down interventions following the 2016 FARC accord to increase employment because of institutional weaknesses, bottom-up models such as the Association of Peasant Workers of the Carare (ATCC) demonstrated that community-based cooperatives can foster peace by sharing resources and social trust (ATCC, 2012; Fajardo-Steinhäuser, 2023).

In the developing world, economic empowerment initiatives play a key role in reducing violence and strengthening community resilience. In Bangladesh, the Ultra-Poor Graduation (UPG) model developed by BRAC reduces extreme poverty by 95 per cent, lowers land-related conflicts by 31 per cent within two years, enhances women's decision-making power, and decreases domestic violence (BRAC, 2023; UNDP Bangladesh, 2023). In Afghanistan, the *Peace through Business* program raises women's income by 40 per cent, reduces local conflict incidences by 27 per cent, and promotes women's participation in governance (IEEW, 2024; UN Women, 2023). Similarly, in the Central African Republic and Chad, trauma-informed savings groups and vocational training for ex-combatants increase income and decrease interpersonal violence, with 68 per cent of women in cooperative farming reporting greater community acceptance and reduced exposure to gender-based violence (CRS, 2023; World Bank, 2023; UN Women, 2023).

In conflict-affected African states, economic empowerment remains central to peacebuilding, though significant implementation challenges persist. In Libya and Ethiopia, programs for economic recovery and job creation are introduced, yet their impact is undermined by bureaucratic inefficiencies and weak institutional delivery, with only 30 per cent of enterprise funds in Ethiopia reaching beneficiaries (UNDP Libya, 2022; Kefale, 2023; World Bank, 2023). In Sudan, livelihood efforts in Darfur show potential but are constrained by ongoing instability (UNDP Sudan, 2023). Uganda's Youth Livelihood Programme supports over 163,000 young people, with 76 per cent

reporting income growth, although loan recovery and limited regional access remain concerns. In East Africa, the BRACE4PEACE initiative effectively reduces violent extremism by providing vocational training and enterprise opportunities, resulting in a 29 per cent decline in extremist recruitment in Garissa and fostering inter-clan collaboration in Somalia through more than 3,000 women-led cooperatives (UNDP, 2024; UNDP East and Southern Africa, 2024). Collectively, these cases demonstrate that economic empowerment serves as a sustainable peacebuilding tool when designed to be context-specific, inclusive, and integrated with broader governance frameworks.

Baringo County in Kenya's Rift Valley has long faced inter-communal violence driven by resource competition, livestock theft, political marginalisation, and chronic underdevelopment, with the Pokot, Tugen, and Ilchamus communities frequently clashing over grazing lands and water sources (Mkutu, 2020). Between 2012 and 2022, more than 600 people were killed and over 80,000 displaced, while state-led security interventions remained largely reactive and ineffective in addressing underlying socio-economic drivers (Kiptoo, 2023; KNCHR, 2023; Okumu, 2021). Devolution since 2012 has enabled counties like Baringo to roll out localised initiatives such as the Youth Enterprise Development Fund and Women Enterprise Fund, alongside NGO programs by World Vision, ACTED, and Mercy Corps that promote enterprise training and cooperative development among marginalised groups (Government of Kenya, 2019; Muya, 2025; ACTED, 2021; Mercy Corps, 2022). However, the long-term peace impacts of these interventions remain unclear, underscoring the need for focused research on how inclusive economic empowerment can sustainably address conflict drivers, foster inter-group cohesion, and promote peace in this historically marginalised and resource-constrained region.

Statement of the Problem

Baringo County is still struggling with the problem of inter-communal violence, which is caused by historical marginalisation, lack of resources, and economic opportunities. In spite of the implementation of several government and non-governmental economic empowerment initiatives, including the Youth Enterprise Development Fund, Uwezo Fund, and

vocational training programs between 2012 and 2024, the county is among the most conflict-prone and economically marginalised regions in Kenya, with poverty levels of over 58.6 per cent, and a youth unemployment rate of 35.4 percent (KNBS, 2022). The frequent violent conflicts between communities such as the Pokot, Tugen, and Ilchamus, especially in Baringo South and Tiaty, highlight the inefficiency of the existing interventions in the resolution of the underlying causes of conflict (KNCHR, 2023; International Crisis Group, 2023). Although these strategies might have enhanced livelihoods to some degree, their role in peacebuilding is not well understood, which begs the question whether the existing economic models are well-suited to the conflict dynamics and socio-political realities of the region.

The literature on economic empowerment in Baringo has been largely sector-specific in terms of outcomes like income generation or employment, with little or no discussion on how this has a direct or indirect impact on peacebuilding. As an example, research by Amambia (2018), Mkutu (2020), and Chebet (2022) shows that economic interventions like vocational training and microfinance have had limited economic impacts, but have not had a significant effect in reducing ethnic tensions, resource-based conflicts, and displacement. In addition, the results of Amambia (2018) indicate that the youth funds have low uptake because of the continued insecurity and mistrust among the communities, further undermining the effectiveness of these programs. This lack of correlation between economic empowerment and conflict resolution indicates a major knowledge gap. This study assessed the degree to which the economic strategies of county governments can lead to sustainable peace, providing a more comprehensive and conflict-sensitive development in Baringo County. The general objective of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of the economic empowerment strategy in peace building in Baringo County, Kenya, 2012 -2024.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Economic Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Peace

The study by Baeriswyl and Oris (2023) examined the connection between social participation and life satisfaction among older adults in Switzerland and the

role of various social practices and social inequalities. Their research emphasised the diversity of social engagement and its impact on well-being and the role of social inequalities in increasing disparities in life satisfaction among older people. The authors claimed that fair social participation leads to better life satisfaction as it helps to feel a part of the community and be involved in its life. This is unlike the present study, which examined the effectiveness of economic empowerment in enhancing peacebuilding in Baringo County. Whereas the above focuses on social participation and its implications on well-being in a high-income setting, the following study will focus on economic empowerment as a means of peace-building in a low-income and conflict-prone region. This difference pointed to a change in the perception of individual well-being in developed settings, compared to systemic economic approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Baringo County.

In Indonesia, UNDP (2023) investigated how rural economic revitalisation in post-conflict areas of Aceh, where separatist violence had destroyed livelihoods and social cohesion over decades, was playing out. Their research sought to establish whether specific economic recovery programs, especially micro-credit schemes, agricultural subsidies, and rural infrastructure development, led to sustainable peace. They concluded that community-based economic programs lowered the re-engagement in conflict by more than 40 per cent, especially when they were accompanied by inclusive village governance structures. The contextual gap in the Indonesian case is that it is highly central government-oriented in its reintegration policies, unlike Kenya, where the Baringo case has a devolved system, which requires localised and participatory approaches.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, Richmond (2022) studied the post-war reconstruction programs to foster economic interdependence among ethnically divided communities. The paper has assessed cross-ethnic business projects and joint farming cooperatives funded by international donors. In a longitudinal study of 390 businesses and structured interviews, they found that communities with common economic interests saw a 35 per cent rise in inter-ethnic cooperation and decreased identity-based conflicts. Although the study highlights the importance of

economic interdependence in transforming conflicts, its conceptual limitation is that it does not consider environmental factors, including drought and resource scarcity, that play a critical role in conflict processes in Baringo County.

In Morocco, Ben-Meir (2019) discussed the role of rural entrepreneurship and cooperative farming in the construction of peace in historically marginalised areas of the Middle Atlas region. The results showed that greater access to micro-financing and market linkages increased youth participation, decreased rural-urban migration and improved inter-village relations. The researchers pointed out the effectiveness of women-led cooperatives in reducing communal conflicts. Nevertheless, there is a methodological gap because the study did not use a conflict analysis framework to directly quantify peacebuilding outcomes, an aspect that is central to understanding the nexus of economic activity and peace in volatile environments such as Baringo.

In South Sudan, Deng (2012) examined the effects of the economic reintegration of IDPs and ex-combatants on communal peace in Unity State. Their research was based on cash-for-work schemes, livestock restocking and vocational skills training funded by the UNDP and local NGOs. They used a quasi-experimental design with 600 participants and discovered that beneficiaries of such programs were 60 per cent less inclined to engage in retaliatory violence compared to non-beneficiaries. However, sustainability was an issue because funding was not consistent, and the community was not involved. This is an indication of a structural gap, like Baringo, where most economic interventions are not anchored and aligned with local governance structures in the long-term perspective.

In Turkana County, Mkutu (2020) did an evaluative study on cross-border trade as a peacebuilding mechanism among pastoralist communities along the Kenya-Uganda border. The research was carried out through surveying 320 traders involved in livestock and handicraft trade, and interviews with members of the peace committees. The results indicated that cross-border markets enhanced inter-community trust and resulted in a 22 per cent reduction in conflict cases in contested grazing areas. Nevertheless, the study identified other challenges, including poor

infrastructure and intermittent insecurity, as a factor that poses a gap in the operations of integrating peacebuilding and economic planning, which is also common in remote wards in Baringo County.

In Laikipia County, Mutuku and Ndungu (2022) discussed the role of community conservancies that incorporated eco-tourism and grazing rights management in the economic empowerment and conflict mitigation. A participatory rural appraisal of 12 conservancies and 480 households revealed that households involved in income generation activities through the conservancies, such as guiding, beadwork, and echo-ranching, had a 45 per cent increase in household income and reported a higher tolerance to ethnic diversity. The paper highlights the effectiveness of inclusive, benefit-sharing systems in multi-ethnic, resource-poor regions. However, a policy gap was found, with most conservancy frameworks not being integrated with county development plans, necessitating the need to have coordinated, peace-sensitive economic strategies in counties such as Baringo.

Theoretical Review

In order to carry out the research, the study adopted Conflict Transformation Theory in determining the role of economic empowerment in promoting peacebuilding in Baringo County.

Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation Theory is a theory of protracted social conflicts that was first proposed by John Paul Lederach (2003) and is based on the idea that the transformation of the relationships, structures, and cultural narratives that perpetuate violence should be the primary goal of conflict resolution rather than the resolution of the dispute. The theory is based on the fundamental principles of dialogue, local involvement, relationship-building, and

structural change, which are all focused on establishing sustainable peace through long-term and inclusive engagement. It highlights the need to have local ownership, empowerment of marginalised populations, and to change the systemic disparities, an approach that is especially relevant in conflict-affected, resource-poor areas such as Baringo County. Theorists like Schirch (2022) and Wanis-St. John (2023) have also reaffirmed the usefulness of this theory by highlighting the significance of relational peacebuilding and context-sensitive approaches that focus on the agency of the grassroots.

The theory, however, has not been without criticism. Mac Ginty (2021) warns that the theory can romanticise local agency, neglecting the role of established state and elite interests, and Richmond (2022) criticises its normative focus, saying that it does not adequately consider asymmetric power relationships that characterise most post-conflict societies. Nevertheless, Conflict Transformation Theory is a useful and flexible analytical framework, particularly in evaluating how localised economic approaches in Baringo, like youth enterprise funds, women cooperatives, and conservancy-based livelihoods, can be used to promote peace. Its focus on tackling the root causes, such as exclusion, inequality, and poverty, is also in line with the need to build social cohesion and inter-communal trust in historically marginalised pastoralist environments.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). In this research, Economic empowerment is the study's independent variable, whereas peacebuilding and sustainability are the dependent variables.

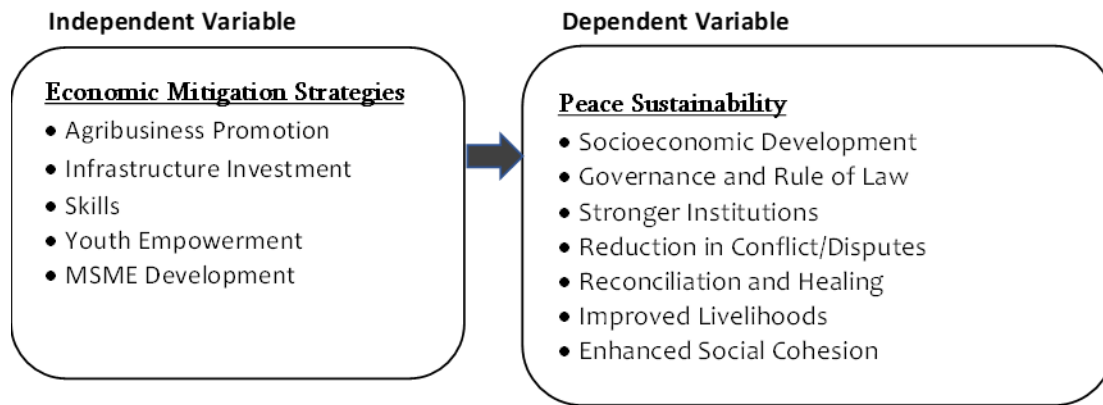


Figure 1. Conceptual framework (Researcher, 2025).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive research design within a qualitative framework to examine the relationship between economic empowerment and peace-building in Baringo County. The design allows flexibility in data collection and analysis, making it suitable for exploring complex processes. Methods such as interviews, observations, and document reviews capture stakeholders' experiences and perceptions on how economic strategies influence social cohesion and conflict. The study focuses on violence-prone sub-counties Tiaty, Baringo North, and Baringo South, where conflicts over resources and marginalisation are common. The target population of 160 included household heads, community leaders, NGO and CBO representatives, and government officials, selected for their roles as beneficiaries, influencers, implementers, or policymakers. Using the Yamane (1967) formula, a sample size of 114 was derived at a 95 per cent confidence level, comprising 14 key informants interviewed and 100 community members surveyed.

Purposive and snowball sampling ensured the inclusion of informed and hard-to-reach participants. Data collection employed structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis, while a pilot in West Pokot enhanced tool reliability. Validity was tested using KMO and Bartlett's Test, while reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha scores above 0.7. Ethical clearance was obtained from Kenyatta University, NACOSTI, and Baringo County authorities, with informed consent and confidentiality upheld. Quantitative data were examined using SPSS for both descriptive and

correlation analyses, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The mixed-methods approach strengthens triangulation and provides comprehensive insights into the impact of economic empowerment initiatives on peace-building in Baringo County.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics

Government Economic Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Peace

The study assesses the county government's economic strategies for promoting sustainable peace in Baringo County. The results are shown in Table 1 below.

Based on the findings, most of the study participants concurred that the collaboration between the county government and NGOs in economic empowerment initiatives has been beneficial to peacebuilding ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.62$). These findings are consistent with those of Mutuku and Ndungu (2022), who discovered that the benefit-sharing models of the Laikipia County conservancies, especially those that are co-managed by NGOs and county governments, have greatly enhanced inter-ethnic collaboration and minimised conflict.

Respondents also agreed strongly that the community development projects have led to collaboration and less competition among different groups due to the allocation of funds ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.68$). These results are consistent with Deng (2012), who found that in post-conflict South Sudan, formal community initiatives facilitated the mending of ethnic divisions through the sharing of resources

Table 1: Government Economic Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Peace

Statements	Mean	Std. Deviation
Baringo County government has been providing support to youth and women empowerment programs, which have helped in long-term peace in the region.	4.30	.68
Access to economic opportunities has been increased through infrastructure development projects like roads and market centres, which have reduced conflicts.	4.13	.66
The capacity-building initiatives that the Baringo County government has initiated for small-scale traders have enhanced the economic stability and peace in households.	4.34	.88
The sharing of funds to carry out community development projects has created cooperation and lessened competition among different groups.	4.36	.68
Baringo County government-led public forums to address economic grievances have gone a long way in reducing tensions among local residents.	4.04	.62
The collaboration between the Baringo County government and the NGOs in economic empowerment initiatives has contributed positively to peacebuilding.	4.52	.62
The agricultural diversification programs have been promoted by the Baringo County government, and this has promoted economic resilience and minimised dependency on conflict-prone resources.	4.34	.71

Source: Field Data (2025)

Immediately after, government sponsorship of agricultural diversification initiatives was identified to have promoted economic stability and decreased reliance on conflict-sensitive resources ($M = 4.34, SD = 0.71$). In areas such as Baringo South, crop irrigation and fish farming investments have diverted the community's attention away from cattle-rustling to more productive activities. According to K12, irrigation and greenhouses made young men less concerned about raids, as they now farm to earn money. This is reflective of what UNDP (2023) in Aceh, Indonesia, have found that economic revitalisation programs greatly decreased the relapse into conflict when livelihoods became reliable.

Also, capacity-building programs launched by the county government to support small-scale traders were identified to enhance household economic stability and peace ($M = 4.34, SD = 0.88$). In semi-urban settings in Baringo, like Kabarnet and Marigat, market businesses run by youth and women have flourished because of training opportunities. K14 observed that women are now breadwinners with the skills in soap-making and marketing, and this has brought dignity and peace at home. The findings are similar to those of Ben-Meir (2019), who underlined the peacebuilding

impact of cooperative training and micro-enterprise development in rural Morocco.

Respondents also concurred that the support of the county government in the empowerment of youth and women has helped to bring long-term peace in the region ($M = 4.30, SD = 0.68$). The projects, like women revolving funds and boda-boda loans to the youth, were especially transformative. According to one youth leader, the loans provided an alternative to guns, and now they ride to earn money, not to wage war. These results corroborate Kiprotich (2023), whose research in Baringo North identified youth enterprise groups as a source of social inclusion and inter-ethnic trust-building.

In the meantime, infrastructure development programs like roads and market centres were attributed to the improvement of access to economic opportunities and the reduction of conflicts ($M = 4.13, SD = 0.66$). Improved roads enabled the pastoralists to access markets within a short time, which minimised conflicts at watering points. K17 pointed out, "People used to fight at the crossing of the rivers; now they just walk to town to trade." These results are consistent with those of Mkutu (2020), who found the

same in Turkana, where infrastructure enhanced access and inter-community trade.

Finally, the participants concurred that county government-sponsored public forums to address economic grievances were a major factor in reducing tensions between communities ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.62$). Community dialogue forums provided forums to air grievances and plan together. It is during these barazas that Pokot and Tugen elders started to discuss

shared grazing lands once again. This is in line with Galtung (1996) and Lederach (2003), who stressed participatory dialogue as a principle of structural peacebuilding.

Economic Empowerment and Its Impact on Peacebuilding

The study sought to determine the economic empowerment and its impact on peacebuilding. The findings are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Economic Empowerment and Its Impact on Peacebuilding

Statements	Mean	Std. Dev
Economic empowerment programs in Baringo County have resulted in major reductions in local conflicts because they offer alternative sources of income to the people.	4.36	.76
Economic empowerment programs have led to the community having more financial resources to use, and this has minimised the use of violence to solve conflicts.	4.26	.58
Skills development and vocational training programs have equipped people with the skills to prevent conflicts and become part of peaceful community-building.	4.21	.78
Economic empowerment activities, including microfinance and entrepreneurship, have led to trust and cooperation between previously warring communities.	4.18	.70
Economic empowerment has also created employment opportunities, and this has greatly minimised the number of youths engaging in violent acts and social unrest.	4.34	.62
Inclusion of both men and women in economic empowerment initiatives has enhanced social cohesion and peaceful relationships in the community.	4.11	.89
Empowerment programs in agriculture have effectively closed the divide between pastoralists and farmers, leading to peaceful coexistence and less inter-communal conflicts	4.11	.922

Source: Field Data (2025)

The study established that economic empowerment initiatives in the Baringo County have contributed to the reduction of conflicts in the area through the creation of alternative sources of income ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.76$), and that job creation through these programs has resulted in the significant reduction in the number of youths engaging in violent activities and social unrest ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 0.62$). This is in line with the fact that providing individuals, especially idle youth, with a source of livelihood they can depend on lowers the economic motivation to engage in cattle rustling and inter-communal violence.

The results also indicated that the greater access to financial resources due to the empowerment programs has decreased the use of violence to resolve

conflicts ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.56$), and skills-development and vocational training programs have given people the skills needed to avoid conflict and participate in building a peaceful community ($M=4.21$, $SD=0.78$). The income-generating ventures trained to the community members have not only empowered them economically, but also psychologically, which has created self-reliance and resilience in them. In line with Structural Violence Theory (Galtung, 1969), the inequalities and inability to access resources must be addressed to achieve peace. These findings further resonate with Farmer (2004), who argues that the capacity-building of individuals breaks the cycle of systematic economic exclusion that is a common cause of violent retaliation.

In addition, the research has determined that microfinance and entrepreneurship initiatives have also contributed to building trust and cooperation among the previously warring communities ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.700$), and the inclusion of both men and women in these programs has enabled social cohesion and enhanced peaceful relations ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.89$). These programs have not only transformed the lives of people, but also made them interdependent, thereby minimising mistrust because they involve whole households, across ethnic lines. In the light of a Peacebuilding Theory (Galtung, 1996; UNDP, 2023), these results demonstrate the importance of participatory and inclusive approaches in the long-term stability of multi-ethnic, resource-scarce environments such as Baringo.

Respondents also concurred that agricultural empowerment programs have helped to narrow the

differences between pastoralists and farmers, leading to peaceful coexistence and a decrease in inter-community conflict ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 0.92$). These initiatives have increased food security and market integration in a region that historically has been prone to drought-related tensions. Such comprehensive approaches strike a chord with the model of rural revitalisation in Aceh by UNDP (2023) that involved agricultural subsidies as a factor in the maintenance of peace.

Inferential Statistics

Correlations

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients measuring the strength and direction of relationships between the dependent variable, Sustainable Peace in Baringo County (Y), and the County Government's Economic Strategies (X_1).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation

		Sustainable Peace in Baringo County	Government's Economic Strategies
Sustainable peace in Baringo County	Pearson Correlation	1	.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	89	89
Government's Economic Strategies	Pearson Correlation	.277**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	89	89

Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$ (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data (2025)

The results showed a significant positive correlation between county government economic strategies (X_1) and sustainable peace in Baringo County (Y) ($r = 0.28$, $p = 0.004$). This suggests that county-level interventions, including infrastructure development, youth and women empowerment programs, and policy-driven resource allocation, play a crucial role in conflict reduction. These results are similar to the propositions of Peacebuilding Theory (Galtung, 1996; UNDP, 2023) that government-supported inclusive development initiatives can alter structural grievances and foster long-term peace.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: It is clear that there is a statistically significant and positive relationship between the

economic strategies of the county government and sustainable peace in Baringo County, which points to the importance of devolved development in conflict mitigation. One of the most effective strategies was the collaboration with NGOs in joint economic empowerment initiatives. The study concludes that government economic policies, especially those that involve collaboration with NGOs, have been very instrumental in promoting peace in Baringo County. Community development funding, agricultural diversification and capacity building of small-scale traders were cited to have helped in creating economic resilience, decreasing inter-ethnic tensions, and changing the youth focus on conflict to productivity. Youth and women empowerment initiatives, such as access to revolving funds and small

loans, were considered transformational in terms of stabilising households and promoting social cohesion. Market centres and roads were constructed, and this improved access to economic opportunities and reduced conflicts based on resources. Moreover, county government-led public forums were perceived as effective avenues of raising economic grievances and restoring inter-community dialogue, which is consistent with the findings of earlier studies on participatory peacebuilding.

Recommendations: In light of the study's findings, several recommendations are proposed to enhance peacebuilding through economic empowerment in Baringo County. There is a need to strengthen community-based businesses by investing in cooperative societies, savings groups, and joint income-generating activities that promote interdependence across ethnic boundaries. These

collaborative economic models not only sustain livelihoods but also act as peacebuilding mechanisms by fostering trust and reducing competition over scarce resources.

Inclusive empowerment programs are scaled up, particularly those targeting youth and women in conflict-prone areas. Allocating additional resources to vocational training, financial inclusion, and micro-enterprise development equips vulnerable populations with sustainable income opportunities and decreases their likelihood of engaging in violent activities. It is also necessary to institutionalise peacebuilding forums. County authorities hold regular participatory forums where economic grievances are raised, discussed, and addressed collectively. These forums are grounded in conflict transformation principles to ensure that underlying tensions are handled constructively.

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