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Country Profile: Kenya

Kenya is located on the eastern coast of Africa, bordered by Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Although the country is largely unaffected by landmines and unexploded ordnance, the easy accessibility of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to national security. These weapons exacerbate regional conflicts and are especially detrimental in pastoral communities.¹

Landmines and UXO

Kenya signed the *Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction* in 1997. The military completed the destruction of its 35,774 stockpiled AP mines in August 2003. Although the country is not a member of the *Convention on Cluster Munitions*, the government maintains that it has never used, produced or stockpiled cluster munitions.²

However, UXO still presents a problem for Kenyans, particularly in the pastoral, northern regions. The contamination stems from the British military conducting years of live-fire trainings as well as the Mau Mau rebellion, a revolt against the British military in the northern provinces from 1952 to 1960. The trainings took place within the Archer's Post and Dol Dol regions of the Samburu district but still affect an estimated 600,000 Kenyan citizens. Since 2001, the British army has actively worked to demine these areas and train its Kenyan counterparts in clearance techniques.³

From 1999 to 2010, explosive remnants of war caused 83 casualties (25 killed/58 injured), according to the *Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor*.⁴ In 2010, the *Landmine Monitor* identified 25 civilian casualties resulting from ERW; 22 were children. These numbers may underestimate the situation, however, as no legitimate data collection programs exist within the country.⁴

While Kenyan survivors have similar access to assistance resources as other persons with disabilities, community aid availability is limited. In 2002, the British Ministry of Defence offered financial compensation to 1,046 individuals who suffered some type of injury from landmines resulting from the training areas where the British army conducted its trainings.⁴



Figure 1. Kenya
Figure courtesy of CIA World Factbook.

Small Arms and Light Weapons

A significant portion of Kenyan casualties result from the accessibility of SA/LW. One of the key ways that SA/LW proliferation affects the average Kenyan is evidenced in Northern Kenya, where the lifestyle of the northern tribes centers around livestock. It is a common practice for young warriors to steal animals from other villages.⁶ Since these tribes measure wealth by the size of a man's herd, many of the young men raid the neighboring villages to increase their status. Furthermore, in the past Kenyan police have distributed ammunition to the northern tribes, particularly in the Turkana province, to ostensibly aid the tribes in defending themselves against the raiders from the nearby Sudanese and Ugandan pastoral villages. However, this practice has had adverse effects, and the ammunition becomes easily accessible to anyone. The assassination of Silence Chirara, the head of the Kenyan branch of the World Food Programme in 2008, was conducted using the same ammunition that the police had distributed to the Turkana villages.⁶

Conventional Weapons Destruction

The Regional Centre on Small Arms emerged in 2005 as a result of the *Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa*,

which was signed 15 March 2000. RECSA oversees and coordinates the efforts of the 15 member states in preventing and eradicating SA/LW stockpiling and trafficking.⁸ RECSA is headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. Between 2008 and 2009, with support from its member states and international donors, select army officials and law enforcement officers from each of the 12 member states underwent training in the use of electronic firearm marking.⁹ Marking enables the countries to uniquely identify each weapon, making it easier to trace the firearms as they are sold from manufacturers to consumers.

Since 2006, the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM/WRA) has granted US\$2,291,787 to RECSA in an effort to support SA/LW nonproliferation in Kenya and other member states.¹⁰ This money funded the purchase and deployment of 26 SA/LW marking machines, arms brokering and stockpile security workshops, and logistical support, among other activities. The U.S. Government also funded a second round of training in the use of electronic firearm marking equipment for the remaining member states in 2009.¹¹

In January 2003, the Kenya National Focal Point on Small Arms and Light Weapons was established. This interagency group is primarily responsible for coordinating the actions taken on SA/LW within Kenya's borders. Some of the organization's major accomplishments consist of developing the National Policy on SA/LW (currently awaiting submission to the cabinet from the Minister of the Provincial Administration and Internal Security, but it is undergoing partial implementation alongside the Proposed Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management and the Protocol on Cattle Rustling) and establishing and training Provincial and District Task Forces.^{12,13} Perhaps more importantly, KNFP initiated the process to establish RECSA and acted as the conduit through which Kenya signed the Nairobi Agreement, which authorized RECSA's creation. Lastly, from 2003-2010, KNFP collected and destroyed more than 25,000 SA/LW.¹⁴

Mine/UXO Risk Education

The majority of Kenyan citizens do not receive any form of mine/UXO risk education. The Samburu District, located in the Rift Valley province in northern Kenya, requested in 2002 that the Kenyan army conduct MRE in the area, as UXO

still endangers the villages in Samburu. Several nongovernmental organizations often collaborate with local organizations to provide some form of mine/UXO risk education. For example, the Jaipur Foot Project, a project of the Nairobi Rotary Club, often works with the local Boy Scout movement in order to spread its message more effectively.³

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