

IGAD experts call for increased funding to boost resilience in border communities

BY GATHIGIA NG'AARI

Experts from IGAD member states have called for increased funding to foster resilience among border communities covered by the regional bloc.

According to IGAD's Deputy Executive Secretary, Mohamed Ware, resilience is a common thread in the lives and livelihoods of border communities, which are often neglected and marginalized by distant capitals.

During discussions focused on cross-border resilience programming in IGAD's Karamoja, Moyale, and Mander clusters, located in the border areas of Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya, Ware emphasized the need for border communities to be resilient.

He added that any assistance to them, whether humanitarian interventions or social development investments, must start with preserving and strengthening their resilience.

"I encourage development partners and member states to allocate funding to promote knowledge sharing across all IGAD clusters," he asserted.

He emphasized that engaging diverse stake-



IGAD Deputy Executive Secretary, Mohamed Ware (L) confers with State Department for the Arid and Semi-Arid lands (ASALs) and Regional Development Principal Secretary Kello Harsama during IGAD's press briefing held in Nairobi.

holders, securing long-term funding, and enhancing collaboration among member states and development partners are essential for fostering a resilient and sustainable future.

Ware noted that border communities are largely pastoralists and agro-pastoralists, depending on increasingly unreliable and erratic rainfall.

"Often victims of the extremes of climate impact, these communities endure cycles of drought and floods, often in the same year, and some-

times several times," Ware added.

He observed that with limited infrastructure in border areas, humanitarian and relief efforts are often too little and late.

Further, Ware reckoned that borderlands are often hideouts of criminal elements due to inadequate policing and security services hence communities become victims of banditry, livestock rustling, arms trafficking and racketeering.

"The strong arm of the law and periodic

incursions of heavily armed security forces are sometimes the only meaningful interaction with government authorities, and they often leave misunderstanding, resentment and hostility behind," he disclosed.

He at the same time maintained that communities on the border are vital for individual member states security since states at the local and national level need their goodwill, cooperation, and partnership to secure their borders.

"The Project Building Resilience to Food and Nutrition Security in the Horn of Africa (BRE-FONS) mobilized \$162 million across five countries, with additional funding from the Green Climate Fund, which is expected to inject \$151 million, supporting IGAD's goals for long-term sustainability," he said.

Ware noted that management of river basins that often traverse the border needs to be depoliticized, with the establishment of non-political, technical, and competent River Valley Management Authorities that take rivers' cyclical impact on border communities.

He pointed out that advancements in technology, such as mobile

applications for data collection and GIS mapping, mobile money and banking, access to information through the internet, access to market prices for inputs and farm and livestock products all empowered borderland communities in ways unthinkable a few years ago.

"With their legendary dynamism, and resilience, I am optimistic about the prospects for the lives and livelihoods of border communities," he said.

Kenya's State Department for the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) and Regional Development Principal Secretary (PS) Kello Harsama said that Kenya and Uganda signed a MoU on September 13, 2019, in Moroto, whose objective was to accord communities on both sides of the border better cooperation, peaceful co-existence and bridge isolation gaps.

"The Programme document has been developed and validated by both countries," he re-affirmed, adding that the Ministry was in the process of reviewing the MoU between Kenya and Ethiopia and initiating the MoU between Kenya -Somalia and Kenya-South Sudan.