

AT A GLANCE

ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES & SECURITY

JULY 2026

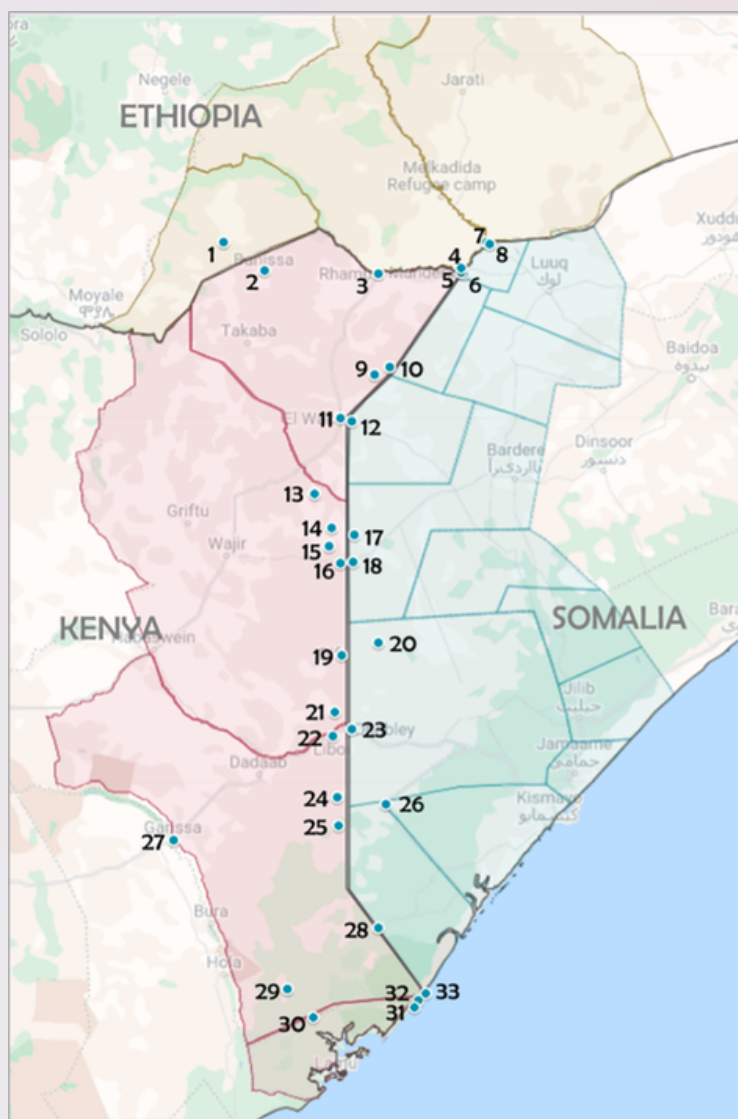


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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Deris Wanaag was a three-year project (2023–2026) strengthening peace, security, and community resilience across the Kenya–Somalia–Ethiopia borderlands. Through UK and Dutch funded partnerships, the project addressed structural drivers of instability by expanding economic opportunities, strengthening education and skills pathways, and promoting social cohesion in fragile border corridors.

Across these borderlands, insecurity is not solely a security-sector issue; it is deeply rooted in economic exclusion, youth unemployment, fragile education systems, and limited state presence. In many borderland corridors, competition over livestock routes, illicit actors taxing trade, corruption and lack of viable employment intersect with clan tensions and recruitment vulnerability. Deris Wanaag positioned livelihoods and education as tools contributing to stabilisation – directly addressing the opportunity gaps that underpin fragility and exacerbate vulnerability to recruitment into violence, including al Shabaab.



- 1- Mubarak, Ethiopia
- 2- Banissa, Kenya
- 3- Rhamu, Kenya
- 4- Suftu, Ethiopia
- 5- Mandera town, Kenya
- 6- Beled Hawo, Somalia
- 7- Dolo Ado, Ethiopia
- 8- Doolow, Somalia
- 9- Lafey, Kenya
- 10- Damasa, Somalia
- 11- El Wak, Kenya
- 12- El Wak, Somalia
- 13- Khorof Harar, Kenya
- 14- Konton, Kenya
- 15- Konton, Kenya
- 16- Gerille, Kenya
- 17- Darussalam, Somalia
- 18- Gerille, Somalia
- 19- Diif, Kenya
- 20- Diif, Somalia
- 21- Dadajabula, Kenya
- 22- Liboi, Kenya
- 23- Dhobley, Somalia
- 24- Hamey, Kenya
- 25- Amuma, Kenya
- 26- Hosingow, Somalia
- 27- Garissa town, Kenya
- 28- Kulbiyow, Somalia
- 29- Ijara, Kenya
- 30- Bodhei, Kenya
- 31- Kiunga, Kenya
- 32- Ishakani, Kenya
- 33- Ras Kamboni, Somalia

Locations of Deris Wanaag-supported initiatives in the Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia borderlands.



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I. ECONOMIC & LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTIONS

COUNTRY		ACTIVITIES	PEOPLE REACHED	KEY INTERVENTIONS
	Kenya	14	730	Beekeeping · Women trader groups · Enterprise training · Vocational skills & VSLAs (Village Savings and Loan Associations) · Youth entrepreneurship
	Somalia	13	700	VSLAs · Fishing value chain · Women trader groups · Youth enterprise · Cross-border trade
	Ethiopia	8	145	Beekeeping · Youth cooperatives · Cooperative strengthening · Youth enterprise

TOTAL



35 economic activities · 1,575 people reached

54% women | 36% youth | 2% persons with disabilities

Women in the borderlands face significant cultural and political obstacles. However, Deris Wanaag’s political economy and conflict analysis (PECA) suggested that women who are successful in business are more likely to gain social influence. Therefore, Deris Wanaag’s economic empowerment activities deliberately targeted women. In Somalia, women in particular benefited from VSLA initiatives and women trade networks. Ethiopia’s portfolio was youth-intensive, focusing on cooperative enterprise models, while Kenyan projects balanced adult and youth engagement across multiple livelihood streams.



II. EDUCATION & SKILLS INTERVENTIONS

Deris Wanaag’s education programming supported the stabilisation of fragile learning systems along the Mandera-Lafey-El Wak corridor and the Wajir-Jubaland corridor.

These interventions restored learning continuity, strengthened institutional trust, and increased access to education in underserved border communities.

AGGREGATE EDUCATION RESULTS



48
schools supported



23
teachers recruited
(9 absorbed into
TSC payroll)



647
additional
students
enrolled



201
female teacher
trainees enrolled
in MTTC



21
vocational scholarships
provided for border
youth



Photo: Mr. Muktar, a veteran retired teacher and FADC staff member, leads a mentorship session on teacher enrolment at El Wak Girls Secondary School, El Wak town, 12th Feb 2025.

III. IMPACT NARRATIVE: HOW LIVELIHOODS & EDUCATION GENERATED SECURITY DIVIDENDS

1. Economic Opportunity Reduced Vulnerability to Al-Shabaab Recruitment

Deris Wanaag's economic interventions were implemented in fragile border settlements where a lack of livelihood opportunities push young people toward migration, illicit trade networks, and recruitment into armed groups. By expanding predictable income pathways and strengthening local economic systems, the project reduced the economic frustrations and grievances that frequently underpin recruitment narratives.

“When income comes from honey, people stay. Movement reduces, and with less movement there is less conflict.”
— Community elder, Banisa, Kenya

“When the fishing groups became organised, tension reduced. Young men are busy — and busy youth are peaceful youth.”
— Local administrator, Ras Kamboni, Somalia

Across corridors, opportunity began to replace uncertainty reducing the appeal of high-risk coping strategies.

2. Economic Diversification Reduced Clan-Based Competition

Historically, survival in many parts of the borderlands – including in much of Mandera and Wajir – has depended heavily on livestock mobility and informal taxation systems, both of which operate within zero-sum resource environments. These systems often intensify inter-clan tensions, particularly during drought periods when access to pasture, water, and trade routes becomes contested. By introducing diversified income streams including beekeeping, women-led trade enterprises, vocational businesses, and fishing cooperatives, Deris Wanaag shifted economic incentives away from resource competition toward market-based cooperation. Households became less dependent on contested natural resources and increasingly engaged in structured trade and enterprise systems.

Women trader groups strengthened cross-border economic interdependence between Wajir and Jubaland, improving trust, reducing transaction disputes, and promoting cooperative problem-solving during periods of tension.

“Now we trade together, not against each other. When there is tension, we talk first.”
— Woman trader, Konton, Wajir, Kenya

As livelihoods diversified and trade networks expanded, economic cooperation began replacing territorial competition, contributing to a gradual reduction in conflict triggers.

3. Women's Economic Agency Strengthened

With **62 women benefiting from Deris Wanaag's economic activities and 201 women entering the teaching profession as a result of Deris Wanaag**, gender inclusion was a visible stabilisation outcome across project areas. Women's increased access to income strengthened household resilience, reduced reliance on negative coping strategies, and improved children's school retention. In several corridors, women traders and VSLA members emerged as informal mediators during market disputes and community tensions, using their economic roles and social networks to promote dialogue and de-escalation. Increased financial autonomy also enhanced women's influence in household decision-making, contributing to reduced domestic stress and improved community cohesion.

4. Investment in Education Signalled State Presence

Teacher shortages in remote border settlements have long reinforced perceptions of state neglect, particularly in insecurity-affected corridors where non-local teachers are reluctant to serve. By **supporting 48 schools and recruiting 23 teachers across the Wajir–Jubaland corridor**, Deris Wanaag-supported initiatives restored learning continuity and rebuilt community confidence in education services. Teacher deployment focused on fragile locations including Konton, Khorof Harar, Diif, Riba, and Qarsa (Kenya) and Derusalam and Gerille (Somalia). Of these, nine teachers were absorbed into the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) payroll, signalling institutional commitment and sustainability, while the remainder continue to be retained through community support mechanisms, demonstrating strong local ownership.

Mentorship efforts contributed to 418 new enrolments at Mandera Teachers Training College (of which 48% were women). Improved teacher presence - and associated perceptions of improved safety - contributed to increased pupil enrolment across border schools, with 208 additional learners recorded, while 21 at-risk youth received vocational scholarships at Wajir Polytechnic to pursue market-relevant skills.

Looking forward: Radicalisation Risk & Sustainability

Considerations

Despite the project's progress, structural vulnerabilities continue to shape insecurity dynamics across the borderlands. Consolidating the gains achieved requires **sustained investment in resilient economic ecosystems, climate-adaptive livelihoods, and stable education systems capable of absorbing and equipping growing youth populations.**

Conclusion

Deris Wanaag demonstrated that targeted opportunity expansion generated measurable security dividends in fragile border environments. By simultaneously addressing economic exclusion, youth unemployment, and education fragility, the project reduced key structural drivers of instability while easing pressures linked to clan competition and resource conflict. Expanded livelihood pathways, women's economic participation, and youth enterprise support have strengthened household resilience and social moderation, while education support and teacher deployment have reinforced confidence in public institutions. Together, these gains contribute to strengthened institutional legitimacy and improved social cohesion, reinforcing resilience across fragile border corridors and positioning opportunity expansion as a cornerstone of preventative security architecture.



Photo: A member of the Khorof Harar women traders group supported by Deris Wanaag through WRAI making traditional mats using sisal, 18th December 2024.