I have six critical remarks and one final statement:

1st critical remark:
What are communities? Concepts which are used, like ‘ethnic’, ‘tribal’, ‘clan’, or ‘lineage’ are all rather fluid and can rather easily be manipulated by public opinion managers, by politicians by NGO representatives, and by researchers. These identity concepts, if connected to ‘community’ are often naively used. Often also without enough regard for the fact that these identity communities are layered, both vertically and horizontally, and also this layering is dynamic, and prone to manipulation. 

So-called communities consist of many different individuals, and many of those individuals want arms, not only for community purposes (“to defend our villages”), but for personal gain: looting of cattle for commercial purposes, as part of a command and trade chain in which many (but not all) members of the local elite participate.

2d critical remark:
In the papers there is an easy use of images, of simple categorisations, like ‘raiders’, ‘criminals’, ‘guerrillas’, ‘vigilantes’, ‘idle youth’, ‘moran’, but also: ‘pastoralism’, ‘pastoralists’, and there are rather simple statements about “resource competition between agriculturalists and pastoralists”. E.g. Cappon: the Marakwet are NOT pastoralists; Pokot always regarded them as ‘chebleng’, ‘poor ones’, because they did not have cattle. The problems with the Pokot mainly started after some Marakwet leaders acquired cattle after 1985 and started to use the Kerio Valley for grazing. That increased competition for water, for pasture, but even then we have to be careful: were rivers blocked by Marakwet agriculturalists so that Pokot could no longer go to the Kerio River for water? No! And what about wells? There was hardly any competition for wells! And pasture: Pokot cattle mainly needs pasture in Marakwet lands in dry periods, during droughts, often when there is no real agricultural activity in places where cattle come. If there is: often the after-harvest remains provide useful feed, and in some cases more than the original vegetation, that is partly impossible to consume for cattle. Be careful about conflict stories related to ‘resources’: always ask: when do they take place: rainy season? Dry season? During droughts? Often the reasons are beyond resource competition. The major impact of people like Homer Dixon, and Kaplan, with simple, and often wrong images has spoiled a scientific debate about these matters. Indeed: some conflicts are resource conflicts, but often many conflicts which appear to be resource conflicts are a culmination of many other problems, and access to natural resources, or competition for the use of natural resources only is a very minor cause if you unravel those conflict histories.

3d critical remark:
If people say they need arms to defend themselves: then who are the enemies? Often it is a combination of many different ‘images of identities’: other ethnic groups, other clans, personal enemies due to personal, or lineage animosities, strangers who are seen as ‘lootable’,
without too much risk, or strangers who represent an image (e.g. religious enemies), but next to these types of enemies often 'the government', or the police/the administration police, the army, or the GSU, are seen as the enemies. I think it is fair to say that most killing in the Horn is related to the use of force by government people, or pseudo-government, like the SPLA. In the common language of NGOs today everyone talks about ‘empowerment’. However, the best empowerment often is arming people against the aggression of ‘their own’ governments, or ‘their own’ liberation armies. If I would be a Pochon today, I would remember the ways the army has treated my clansmen in the 1980s (and until today) and I would never surrender my guns to a Government which can not be trusted. I would also remember the way the government looted the people’s cattle as revenge, or as a blackmail tool. On the other hand my ‘memory’ of ‘government’ would not only be coloured negatively. Pokot remember that the Colonial government did not marginalise them at all (so: it is simply not true that ‘governments tend to marginalise pastoralists’): it were British DCs who strongly supported the Pokot conquering of major areas which used to belong to Karimojong in the West, during the 1920s, although at the expense of some areas in the Southern Pokot highlands, which went to White (Army) settlers in these same 1920s.

4th critical remark:
It is obvious that most pastoralist households in the regions described can’t feed themselves any more on a subsistence-herd basis (needed > 4 TLU/capita). They either need to grow food, or they need to get involved in commercial activities, to buy food. Livestock trade is a very important and lucrative way to do so because of generally (very) favourable caloric terms of trade. Trade chains become crucial and traders become key people for survival. Looted animals now have become prominent elements in these trade chains, with traders-cum-politicians-cum local leaders often quite involved. If you want to curb this: how to do it? The British in the 1930s succeeded to control armed cattle theft (lots of weapons entering Kenya from Ethiopia since the early 1900s) by branding cattle, checking all cattle, especially during vaccination campaigns and at livestock markets, following all looted animals by experienced trackers, collective punishments of whole villages if looters were traced, punishment of these looters involving local elders. Now cattle branding is being discussed again as a possibility. Technically more 21st century methods are possible: chips, with cattle identity info and even GPS devices, but even if you would do that: who should do the checking? Often County Councils are also part of the game.

5th critical remark:
Cappon highlights the role of junior elders as in-betweens, as potential peace brokers between the ‘aggressive youths’ and the complacent senior elders and laibons/spiritual leaders. He finds those junior elders often in positions as teachers, chiefs, police officers etc. They are educated, and can make a difference. He is right. However: don’t be naive! Who are these junior elders? After the drought and disasters of the 1970s and early 1980s there was a proliferation of aid, with churches coming in and rapidly expanding education, connected to school food. Many people in their tens and twenties went to school then. These men and women are now between 30 and 50 years old: the junior elders (and the eldest ones becoming senior elders). Some of those people indeed got jobs and are the ones Cappon sees as those useful in-betweens. However, the large majority of those educated junior elders never succeeded to get any salaried job, and in this group there is massive frustration with failed development. They now face a dilemma: would they send their children to useless education, that had become rather expensive in the 1990s? Education did not bring them benefits, or worse even: their children look at their ‘educated but useless’ fathers with contempt , and
nowadays increasingly refuse to go to school. These children easily join the loot groups, to earn respect and income with their peers, and hoping for respect from their elders. For women ‘junior elders’ it often is an even more difficult story: going to a Christian school in the 1980s often meant that they could not be circumcised. After school they could not get any income based on their education, while on the other hand they could not properly marry according to local custom because they still are ‘children’, uncircumcised. Even if they marry, and get children of their own, often these mothers do not want their children to go through the same ordeal, and do not stimulate their children to go to school. With lower labour input in cattle (often less than five cattle -if any- per household), and not enough labour needs in agriculture and odd jobs, the youth is abundantly available for more lucrative tasks, if they are mobilised for (armed) looting. It is risky, but often much more rewarding, both economically and culturally.

6th critical remark:
Don’t use easy language about the role of churches and NGOs, engaging themselves in ‘peace campaigns’ nowadays. I am not saying it is useless, what they are doing. However: it is also the new money making machinery, using clever words for consumption by the donors, and continuing an aid-dependent attitude, but no longer using the ‘development language’, but the ‘peace language’. Churches as well as NGOs are often competing for the aid market, are supporting particularism, and internal strife, are often representing ethnic, local interests. So-called community-based peace workers can of course sometimes do very useful work, but are often also connected to specific parts of the community, and representing specific identities. Not only rifts and differences exist between the different churches, but even within churches (e.g. the Swiss-German Roman Catholics supporting the Marakwet versus the Irish Catholics supporting the Pokot of eastern West Pokot).

Final word
If you really want to end the ample presence and use of small arms, look at the cost-benefit situation of tolerating, having and using arms by the local elite: what is the cost of acquiring and maintaining guns/weaponry, what are the (perceived) costs and benefits of theft, looting, trading stolen animals, engaging in ‘illegal trade’, and what are the costs of having defence forces in your area? Arms will only stop being popular if, for the local elite, the costs of proliferation of arms become higher than the benefits. So: make the cost for the local elite high for them and lower the benefits for them.