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INFLUENCE OF INDIGENOUS PEACE BUILDING STRATEGY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF INTERETHNIC CONFLICTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BUNGOMA COUNTY, KENYA

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Citation: Chebai, J.M (2017). Influence Of Indigenous Peace Building Strategy in The Management of Interethnic Conflicts for Sustainable Development in Bungoma County, Kenya. In: Isutsa, D.K. and Githae, E.W. *Proceedings of the Third Chuka University International Research Conference held in Chuka University, Chuka, Kenya from 26th to 28th October, 2016.* 455-462 pp

ABSTRACT

This study examined the efficacy of indigenous peace building strategies in the reconstruction of damaged inter-ethnic relationship between the Bukusu and Sabaot. It evaluated the role of elders in interethnic conflict management. The study is anchored on the backgrounds that inter-ethnic conflicts in the area under review and beyond is recurrent, widespread, ravaging humanity exemplified in countries like Bosnia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Namibia, Sudan, Nicaragua and Rwanda yet in equal measure or more anti-conflict mechanisms have been engaged by various actors to cultivate peaceful co-existence. The Bukusu-Sabaot conflict acquired prominence as early as 1963 and has kept recurring in different magnitudes. In 1992, it gained momentum causing deaths, massively uprooted and displaced population to camps of internally displaced persons while other victims crossed over the border and sought refuge in neighbouring countries Uganda and Tanzania. Worse still, the state of normalcy is yet to be achieved. The study assessed the effectiveness of indigenous peace building strategy in the management of interethnic conflict in Bungoma County. The study was informed by Social Constructivist theory. In order to address specific issues envisaged in the study objective both historical and descriptive research designs were used. Data collection instrument entailed interviews, including in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and documentary analysis. The researcher sampled population randomly, determining sample size based on 384 respondents as representative of 100000 in the population. Of necessity, the researcher purposively interviewed public leaders, traditionally recognized leaders, NGO officials and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Secondary data was used to compliment primary data. The data was corded and analyzed using qualitative techniques. The study established that ethnicity, political rivalry, prejudice, resource competition, mismanagement of electioneering process and weak judiciary were key elements in understanding Bukusu-Sabaot conflict, peace building and development. The study will assist policy makers in crafting a cohesive Kenyan society; equip national policy on conflict resolution and peace building and form a benchmark upon which other research can be founded.

Keywords: *Peace building, Strategy, Management, Ethnicity, Development*

INTRODUCTION

Despite the effort made by elders to limit ethnic hostility in Bungoma County through peace building its results has been mixed. Globally inter-communal conflicts grew overtime to include developed countries such that the ethnic violence once used as a gauge to distinguish developing from developed nations or society was reversed. Indeed, from 1980's ethnic hostility had touched all continents. In Europe, UK has recorded race riots while US has reports of reverse discrimination (Sandra, 2003). Kenya's ethnic equation disapproved the assumption that, a nation whose populace consisted of many ethnic groups rarely lapsed into ethnic conflict. Though endowed with many ethnic communities, Kenya is coupled with equal measure of ethnic strife and conflicts. Starting at independence in 1963, Kenya's two major political parties divided Kenyans into two major political blocks of majority community political party Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) minority community party. Interestingly, though the Bukusu and Sabaot fell amongst minority community, the party arrangement did not insulate inter-ethnic hostility between the two as was evident during the electioneering process of 1963. The advent of multi-party politics in 1990 widened inter-ethnic linkages which resulted into increased friction and violence between neighbouring but ideologically different communities including the Bukusu and Sabaot. By 2013, the conflicts in Bungoma County were estimated to have uprooted 5000 households, displaced more than 30000 people and had an estimated budget of Ksh 8.4million (IDP's Bungoma County Proposed and Estimated Budget April 28,2013). In essence therefore, efficacy of indigenous peacebuilding efforts in the face of recurrence Bukusu- Sabaot conflict has to be interrogated determining challenges in its implementation.

Statement of the Problem

The occurrence of ethnic conflicts in Africa, Asia, Europe and America underscore not only the continental nature of conflicts (Sandra, 2003) but also the global peace building initiatives in the management of ethnic related instability. The puzzle to the global community, which is also reflected in individual nation states like Kenya and to County government, is the escalation of conflicts in the face of indigenous peace building initiatives. According to Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict Final Report 1997, comparatively the 20th Century recorded the highest violence and loss of life. Of critical importance was that, 47% of the violent military conflicts were ethnic and 32% though did not involve violence they had major ethnic dimension (Nazli, 1983). Whilst this was happening, scholarly interrogation remained scanty (Trei, 2002).

Conflicts between the Bukusu and Sabaot in Bungoma County have recurred at different intervals since pre-colonial period and in varying magnitude alongside peace building initiatives. The violence has often resulted to loss of life, displacement of the populace, and redirected the path of economic growth to quelling of conflict. The situation was worse in 1992 following demands for multiparty political system in Kenya which apparently put the Bukusu and Sabaot communities sharply against each other. Efforts by the elders, state and non-state machinery to cultivate constructive interaction in the region has been going on for decades but internally displaced persons are not yet fully resettled. By 2013, Bungoma County was estimated to have 30000 displaced persons with an estimated budget of over Ksh.8 million (IDP's Bungoma County Proposed and Estimated Budget April 28, 2013).

So far there is scanty scholarly interrogation addressing in particular the Bukusu-Sabaot conflict in the context of influence of indigenous peace building on Kenya's sustainable development. Most studies for example, Khamala (2009) looks at gender dimensions of ethnic identities and conflicts in Kenya, the case of Bukusu and Sabaot, Wanjala (2013) looks at trauma interventions methods and healing among the Sabaot community during the (2006-2008) intra-violence in Mt. Elgon Kenya and Kamoet (2010), looks at the land question and intra-ethnic conflict in squatter enclaves of Mt. Elgon region but in all this works the influence of indigenous peace building strategy is off focus. It is thus important to interrogate the recurrence of Bukusu- Sabaot conflicts in the face of inter- communal and socio – cultural bonding of the two

communities. It is important to unearth the challenges of implementing indigenous measures of peace building.

Objective of the Study

The study examined the challenges of implementing indigenous measures of peace building in order to spur sustainable development in Bungoma County Kenya.

Research Question

What were the challenges of implementing indigenous measures of peace building in order to spur sustainable development in Bungoma County Kenya.

Justification of the Study

The findings of this study not only fills the knowledge gap but enriches Ministry of Internal Security the NGOs, FBOs and CBOs on the influence of indigenous peace building strategy to quell violence and contribute to sustainable development.

Theoretical Framework

Social Constructivism theory is the lens through which the research was visualized. To them ethnicity is manufactured rather than innate. Ethnic identity consists of inborn and social traits by extension a coalesce of some primordial and instrumentalist attributes Sandra (2003). These traits include appearance, place of birth, language, ancestral myths, subjective beliefs, political power of group, economics and religion (Nagel, 1986).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Study Area

In order to address specific issues underscored in each study objective, the researcher applied historical and descriptive research designs. The study was conducted in Bungoma County in Kenya. The County covers 2206.9 km² with total population of 1,375,063 consisting of about 172, 377 Sabaot and about 1202686 Bukusu Census of (KNBS 2009). The area was chosen because for many years it has witnessed recurrence of conflict and peace building initiatives by the elders, state and non state agents since pre- and post-colonial Kenya.

Target Population

The target population of study was 30571 from the nine sub-counties of Bungoma County.

Sampling Techniques

The researcher applied probability and non-probability sampling design. Stratified random sampling was used to accomplish probability sampling while Purposive, cluster and Snowball was used to achieve non-probability. Population was clustered into Sub-counties. Stratified random sampling was used to divide population into homogenous sub-groups the Sabaot, Bukusu and other minority groups and then a simple random sample in each subgroup was undertaken. Sample distribution was based on, sample size of 384 as representative of 100000 in the population in a descriptive research Ogula (1998).

Since the target population was 30571 therefore a sample population of 117 was appropriate. Proportionately, out of the 117 respondents the Bukusu, Sabaot and others (consisting of the minority groups, Teso, Kikuyu other Luhya communities) were 77%, 13% and 10% respectively in line with their numerical strength in the population as was reflected in 2009 census. Snowballing was used to reach special interest groups in eight Sub-Counties namely, respected elders of over 75 years, ex militant groups, chiefs, NGO's, FBO's, government officials, women and youths.

Data Collection

Both primary and secondary were consulted. Semi-structured interviews were used to ensure reliable, in-depth, systematic, comprehensive and quantifiable information was acquired (Kombo and Tromp, 2006).

Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion involved discussions of distinct homogenous groups of 6-8 persons from the Bukusu, Sabaot including youths and women separately.

Documentary Analysis

The researcher read and analysed public, private and personal documents.

Validity of Instruments

Expert judgment by supervisors improved validity of instrument Borg and Gall (1996).

Reliability;-

Piloting was done to pre-test research instruments Baker (1994) Basavanthappa (1998)

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following procedures were applied in data analysis; Studying the notes collected, organization by looking for cross-cutting trends, checking emergent patterns, corroborate, verify and network various parts. Data collected from the interview, Focus Group Discussion was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Indigenous Peacebuilding Strategies among the Bukusu and Sabaot

According to the Holy Bible conflict within humanity is as old as human race, having started in the Garden of Eden (Holy Bible Gen 3). What has been dynamic is severity resulting from continued technological improvement in the weapons used against man for extermination of man and the means of reconciliation thereof. It is from this premise that pre-colonial Bukusu-Sabaot had developed their own indigenous or community based institutions and mechanisms of ensuring peaceful coexistence by extension thus an indication that conflict between the two was not new but as old as the two communities coexisted (Makila, 1992). This is further evident in the elaborate nature of traditionally accepted peace keeping or peace building accepted by both sides despite them having different elders and background, Kakai (2000) Makila (1990). With emergence of nation state and non-state institutions, they became players in unending conflict and reconciliation of the Bukusu and Sabaot.

Indigenous peace processes among the Bukusu-Sabaot was broad based including peace keeping and peace building. The main actors in Bukusu-Sabaot peace building were elders and divine intervention. Key to its success depended on the law breakers' fear of the wrath of other community members and also the culprit's fear and their families of the evil that would befall them if they failed to abide by the community norms and practices, National Steering Committee on Peace building and Conflict Management (NSC acc. 5/4/2016). The invisible members among the Bukusu and Sabaot especially the ancestors were highly regarded as more powerful than living (Rop, 2016), such was also the basis of divine discernment and punishment of the culprits in the physical world by Supreme Being. To achieve such level of the community's norms, involved more than training but divination as well. Mungachi conflict of the Bukusu and Sabaot brought forth this features. This was where the Bukusu while enroot to visit their kin the Bakisu in what became Uganda were attacked by the Sabaot and killed Ambuchi (O. I), this incident triggered what came to be known as Chonge conflict.

The Bukusu warriors acted on anger overlooked their prophet's advice against fighting the Sabaots at time because the prophetic signs were in their disfavor. They instead attacked the Sabaot but many were killed (Tengeye O.I). The Sabaots prophecy on the other hand worked in their favour. The Sabaot prophet Chonge aware that the Bukusu would retaliate performed the *setaniki* ritual which involved slaughtering the animal,

mix with herbal medicine and gave it to the warriors. Some medicine was put on the path that the Bukusu were likely to use as they retaliated. The herb was to confuse the Bukusu not to attack from the south and therefore became an easy prey to the Sabaot. Indeed prophet Chonge succeeded, misled the Bukusu warriors, who played into the hands of the Sabaot and were killed in large numbers as their agony was underscored in the statement that their blood filled the Kabukoya stream and to this date the Bukusu do not drink water from this stream. Ambuchi (O.I Sept. 2016).

In all, however, the following are lessons that came to the fore regarding Bukusu-Sabaot conflict, the divination of the conflict between the two was evidence to the long period within which the two had conflicted and reconciled. The prophets were catalysts to the conflict, either supported immediate or long term intervention based on their divine interpretation hence supernatural intervention in the physical world. Refusal to abide by prophetic advice was blamed for Bukusu's piecemeal performance while Sabaot success was pegged to their adherence to the prophet's advice. Prophetic involvement was consequential in the psychological preparation of the warriors to go to war.

Tobacco was used for ceasefire and peace keeping among the Bukusu and Sabaot (Ambae O.I). This was used at a time when as the war raged and effects grew elders from of either side could throw tobacco to the other seeking peace Ambuchi (O.I, Sept 15, 2016). Immediately the warring groups' smelled tobacco, it signified a call to ceasefire and elders of the two would meet and negotiate peace Ambuchi (O.I Sept 2016). Shuttle diplomacy was engaged. Soito a Kony for example shuttled between Tachoni, Iyaya, the Bukusu leaders Wandabwa, Kukali and Kikai, Kakai(2000), Ambuchi (O.I Sept 2016). Iyaya, Wandabwa and Kukali warmly received the diplomat Soito and sealed an agreement. Iyaya slaughtering a cow for Soito and they ate a dog, a form agreement that involved the warring Bukusu and Sabaot elders cutting a puppy into two halves, the Sabaot took the head as the Bukusu took the hind, swearing never to fight as they speared the *Silulu* plant Ambuchi (O.I Sept. 2016). At Kikai, though the agreement was successfully arrived at between the diplomat Soito and his host Kikai but as the two parties celebrated the successful agreement, they disagreed and a fight ensued where Soito and almost all his men except one were killed. The survivor escaped and reported the incident to his kin the Sabaot triggering conflict between the Bukusu and Sabaot Kakai (2000).

In essence thus, the Bukusu and Sabaot had a clearly developed peace keeping and peace building procedures which though befitted their co-existence as independent and interdependent communities, Masakhalia (Nov 2011) but not without challenges as it happened between Soito and Kikai which showed lack of structure to guide celebrations after reconciliation. The first major challenge to Bukusu-Sabaot indigenous peace building strategy emerged with the advent of colonialism and the creation of a new structured centre of power situated above the traditional Bukusu-Sabaot eldership. Additionally the colonialists instituted the divide and rule policy which put communities at cross-purpose which became a fertile ground for the disintegration of traditional society, Masakhalia (Nov 2011). This was fueled when colonialists appointed African collaborators as chiefs while others came from non-royal background.

In what became Bungoma County for example the first colonial chief Murunga, was a collaborator. As early as 1908 and 1909 he forced the Sabaot and Bukusu to work on the road construction and as porters. This forced both the Bukusu and Sabaot to flee colonial rule to different places, Kakai (2000). As some moved to the mountain others went to squat on European farms in Trans Nzoia, while some Sabaots hid in the caves Kakai (2000). As Bukusu and Sabaot ran away Murunga complicated indigenous eldership by encouraging the Abakhayo, Abawanga and Teso to settle around Kimilil Kakai (2000). This compromised indigenous leadership in that the new entrants came from different cultural backgrounds from that of the Bukusu and Sabaot, for example unlike in their new area of settlement the Abakhayo and Teso did not undergo physical male circumcision. Similarly, as the Sabaot escaped, their farms were taken over by the Bukusu an indication that the cultural norms that ensured safety and respect for each other's property was fading <http://www.mountainvoices.org/k-th-conflictsasp>.

Though the Bukusu, Sabaot and the Abatachoni united and successfully resisted Murunga and his assistant Walucho 1930, the unity was temporal as was realized in subsequent events. In 1948 for example, the Bok elders also complained against a Bukusu chief Jeremiah Kukubo of knowingly addressed public meetings in Bukusu language which the Bok did not understand and that he favoured the Bukusu in the issuance of business licenses (Kakai, 2000). Other factors that emerged and challenged successful implementation of indigenous peace building strategies included religion. The colonial missionaries condemned African beliefs, practices and even culture as ungodly, Tugume (2015), Mbae (O.I SEPT.2016) yet this were the foundations upon which indigenous eldership was founded. The fact that Bukusu-Sabaot indigenous peace keeping and building strategies entailed rituals like cutting a puppy into two, spearing the Silulu plant by respected elders and use of herbal medicine and tobacco it remained condemned, Ambuchi (O.I 16). In essence as people became Christians, indigenous knowledge faded and so was the indigenous authority.

This was similarly true, that even the shared cultural underpinnings between the Bukusu and Sabaot inherent in shared cultural background of circumcision rites gradually became inconsequential. The traditional family bonding which accompanied the inter-communal marriages and dowry payment degenerated Tengeye (O.I). This traditional linkage declined over time, to the extent that initially a Bukusu girl who married to a Sabaot would undergo clitoridectomy without causing Bukusu Sabaot hostility but by 1990, it became offensive and was regarded as forced circumcision. Kakai (2000), Tengeye (O.I). This further weakened the inter-communal unity. Since nature hates vacuum the void that was created by the weakening indigenous peace keeping and peace building between the Bukusu and Sabaot paved way for new eldership from mission educated elite.

Emergence of New Eldership among Bukusu and Sabaot

Biased racially based colonial administration against the Africans, land alienation, forced labour, heavy taxation alongside colonial education outwitted the pre-colonial elder role and paved way for the new elders armed with education to deal with expanded needs of Africans' welfare for example in education, health, agriculture, European forced labor, racially based heavy taxation and self determination of African people. The Bukusu educated elite for example reacted by forming Kitosh Education Society MacArthur (2016) later renamed Bukusu Union. Other Bukusu associations included North Kitosh Farmers Association. Among the Sabaot was Sabaot Union and Tachoni Union for the Tachoni (Kakai, 2000).

Evidence for the working of new eldership among the Bukusu for example was noticed when in 1940 the Bukusu union worked with African District Council (Kakai 2000). In the same year the Bukusu union advocated for their own district which was realized 16 years later, with the creation of Elgon Nyansa District hived from North Nyansa District (Kakai, 2000).

As the names suggests, the new eldership was ethnic inclined and consequently encouraged and enhanced ethnic loyalties, Korwa(1998) that came to full fruition in the political parties that emerged thereafter. Among the Bukusu new elite elder was represented by Masinde Muliro. He founded Elgon Nyanza District Congress (ENDC), Kakai (2000) which sponsored him to contest in 1957. In 1959, Muliro formed Kenya National Party which later changed its name to Kenya African Peoples Party (KAPP). As independence struggles in Kenya beckoned Muliro's KAPP joined other mission new elites for example Moi's Kalenjin Peoples Alliance, John Keen's Maasai United Front and Ronald Ngala's Coastal Peoples Union and Somali National Association who in June 1960 formed Kenya African Democratic Union, KADU. Though, the Sabaot of Mt. Elgon belonged to the Kalenjin Community at that time led by Moi, in 1963 they rejected Moi's Kalenjin Alliance and by extension KADU because of Muliro's association with Moi. Instead Sabaot new elite Daniel Moss formed West Kalenjin Congress in 1962 Ogot and Ochieng (1995). In 1963 they voted with KANU.

After independence in 1963, Kenyatta having used the Kikuyu of Central Kenya as spring board to power he became obliged to reward them hence his leadership was overshadowed by his kin as reflected in his government appointments, more than a half of provincial commissioners were held by his close confidants from central Kenya, this was the same with government parastatal heads and statutory boards (Makozewe, 2016). After Moi came to power in 1978, he rewarded the Kalenjin whom he had used as spring board to acquire power. It was largely from this background that the advent of multipartism degenerated into ethnic contest between the Bukusu and Sabaot in Bungoma County. Though Masinde Muliro, Wamalwa Kijana fronted Mulitpartism but their communities were vilified by the Sabaots as being against the sitting president Moi and His Kalenjins who included Sabaot hence fueling Bukusu Sabaot conflict of 1990's. It follows that the glimpses of multiparty democracy introduced towards the end of 1950s led to the degeneration of Kenya into ethnic hegemony each led by a new educated elite with self and community interest but little, if any, national interest. Among the Gikuyu was Kenyatta, Odinga for the Luo, Muliro for the Bukusu, Moi for the Kalenjin, John keen for the Maasai. Unfortunately the new eldership, was not armed by the pre-colonial traditional wisdom pegged on cultural norms, nor was they trained to accommodate democratic principles in multi-ethnic society hence the escalation of conflict in Kenya specifically between the Bukusu and Sabaot till today.

Indeginious Peace Building Strategies in Post Colonial Kenya

Though indigenous peace building continued in the post-colonial Kenya, other players had to come on board in order to meet the expanded social, economic and political challenges of the independent government. The central government for example established Provincial administration structures from the grass root, the village elders, assistant chiefs, chiefs, district officers, district commissioners and provincial commissioners with various committees at each level hence strongly ate into indigenous peace building initiatives (NSC). The boundaries created by independent Kenya largely housed varying groups within the same district like Bungoma further fueling competition between Bukusu and Sabaot. This was particularly pronounced where one community was minority like the sabaot and majority Bukusu and inherent challenges of sharing the ever scarce national resources between minority-majority communities (Jacques and Oded, 2013). The point of contention in Bungoma was land and unequal representation between Bukusu and Sabaot at various committees including the County Council and Parliament. Since independence the Sabaot have always had one Member of Parliament.

In Bungoma, independent government hived of Sabaot's Mount Elgon administrative units from the larger Bungoma unfortunately the demarcation was done along ethnic lines between the Bukusu and Sabaot (UNDP AMANI PAPERS www.undp.org/content/dam/Kenya/docs/peacebuilding/Amani-Papers-mt-Elgon.Cs5-1). At one stage the two communities shared Elgon Nyanza District, then Bungoma district where the Sabaot had their clear cut Sub-location, later the Sub- location was elevated to location, division, a sub-district and then district in 1993. Today it is a Sub-county and a constituency within Bungoma County. Such arrangement put the two communities on intense competition hence a war path which politicians exploited for selfish political expediency compromising indigenous peace building arrangements. The geographical dividing line between the Bukusu and Sabaot has often been used as battle front. The continued erosion of indigenous peace building inherent in traditional eldership led to emergence of a new crop of elders consisting the then existing interest groups, politicians, provincial administration, the church, women ,the youths, the NGO'S and the traditional elders. The new eldership was effective in conflict response and quelling inter-communal animosity (NSC). Today peace committees in Bungoma County are arranged from the village to the county reflecting the interest groups but largely lacking clear demarcation of roles (NSC).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Colonial and post-colonial government's socio-political and economic structures worked at cross purpose with indigenous peace building strategy. Traditional pillars of peace building based on eldership, cultural norms, intermarriages and trade were clipped by the Colonial and Post-colonial governance, but failed to

heal Bukusu-Sabaot intergroup hostility. As a result skewed resource allocation, ethnic fear of survival, skewed justice system which permitted impunity and misuse of ethnicity as a mobilizing factor for political power, emergence of new educated elites whose survival was largely pegged on ethnicity, that characterized independent Kenya polarized the country along ethnic lines and by extension compromised indigenous peace building strategy. Largely however indigenous elder role never died but faded to the extent that it could not work in isolation of the government machinery that is government officials, judiciary nor with other interested parties the church and the new class of elders including the politicians and NGO's. Hence the study recommends that inclusive eldership training involving the new face of eldership, the traditional elders, the new educated elders, church and government machinery. Introduction of National Integration course underway in Chuka University to underscore continuity and discontinuity of indigenous peace building by comparing pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial and fill-up the missing link for Kenya's sustainable development to take effect on firm foundation.

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