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## ROLE OF PEACE COMMITTEES IN PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: A CASE OF TRANS MARA SUB-COUNTY

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### **ABSTRACT**

Peace Committees programme in Kenya was rolled out in all districts in 2009 following the 2007/2008 post-election violence to aid in peace-building and conflict management. The programme has not made major breakthroughs in peace sustenance, which calls for its evaluation. This study determined the effectiveness of peace committees in peace building and conflict management, involvement of women and youth in peace building initiatives, and local measures in place to prevent recurrence of ethnic conflict. Systematic sampling was used to select households in each division from where respondents were derived. A total of 120 respondents were sampled for the study. The researchers purposively sampled DCs, DOs, OCSs and OCPDs. Simple random sampling was used to get 10 representatives from 5 organizations (Civil Society and Faith-based Organizations) working for peace in the area. Majority of the people involved in ethnic conflict were aged between 18 and 30 years. The main cause of conflict was ethnic/clan animosity (61.1%). Peace campaigns yield much in peace building. Thus peace resolution initiatives such as meeting people in churches, schools and campaigns should be adopted. Provincial administrators were the first to respond during times of conflict because they lived among the community and had the logistical capacity to reach scenes of crimes to assist affected individuals. Peace affects all spheres of life including achievement in education at all levels.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In pursuit of sustainable peace, the international community through the United Nations (UN) has constantly employed political tools of diplomacy and mediation to help nations prevent and resolve conflicts peacefully to avert the suffering and destruction of war (Annan, 2005). Though conflicts are sometimes viewed normal and part of life as espoused by many scholars of conflict management including Dahrendorf (1969), Achoka (2010) and Okoth (2010), its effects on society is often rising to abnormal proportions which therefore calls for rigorous peace building aimed at sustaining peaceful co-existence. According to Allchin (2011), Burma's National Parliament approved the creation of a 'peace committee' to attempt to solve the country's ongoing and seemingly intractable ethnic conflicts. In Bangladesh, peace committee was majorly established to restore normalcy and confidence among the citizens during times of conflict (Chandan, 1971).

The committee model has come to be the preferred peacebuilding and making initiative for many nations facing recurrence of conflicts or those immediately coming out of conflict. According to Odendaal *et al.* (2006), peace committee is defined as a generic name for committees, or structures formed at the level of district, town or village with the aim to encourage and facilitate joint, inclusive peacemaking and building process within its own context. The context in this case is determined by the circumstances and conditions leading to formation of local peace committees. For instance, Cartwright and Jenneker (2005) while undertaking a study on peace committee in South Africa, noted that peace committee was designed to enable people manage their own affairs while giving priorities

to disputes. It engaged in among other things; mediating and resolving disputes, promoting tolerance within ethnically diverse society and also educating citizens in alternatives to violence (Ball, 1998).

In Nepal, local peace committees have demonstrated capacity to reduce levels of violence especially when there is sufficient early warning. Odendaal *et al* (2006) argues that it proved beneficial when the country was experiencing transition from one constitutional dispensation to another. Peace committees helped in problem solving and community building by facilitating a common forum where disputants could meet and have issues addressed. This helped to restore community confidence and thus contributed to peace building.

Peace committees are by no way, perfect institution guaranteed of success. They are mechanisms to build peace at local level under trying moments. In Uganda for instance, the Mercy Corps through the Pader Peace Program (PPP), successfully addressed the gaps in current peace building and conflict mitigation through its trained peace committees at sub-county and parish levels and also on monthly radio broadcasts (USAID, 2009). The Mercy Corps who are operating in Pader district of Northern Uganda where there had been long standing conflict of nearly 20 years between Lords' Resistance Army (LRA) and Uganda government, observed that peace committees have earned trust and respect from the communities that other government institutions such as courts have not been able to do due to corruption, high fees and lengthy bureaucratic processes (USAID, 2009).

Until very recently, security in Kenya was a preserve of government with stakeholders not given chance to be part of the process (Modogashe Declaration, 2005). Local peace committees therefore had their roots to the failure of the state to provide security and justice to its citizens. The community members in return took the initiative to manage their own conflicts since they could not also access the formal judicial system for lack of trust in government led conflict prevention interventions (AdanandPkalya, 2006:3).

However, in the recent years, broader and holistic approach has been developed through the national steering committee (NSC) which became functional in 2003. This testified the government commitment to enhance and inculcate participatory approach in all realms of life. Former provincial commissioner of North Eastern John Nandasaba was quoted saying "it is true that the government can indeed enforce peace however it is the responsibility of the community to create peace (Modogashe Declaration, 2005). It is in this context that peace committees have been established at various levels, including National, District, Divisional, Locational and Sub Locational levels (GOK, 2009). Since the inception of peace committees in Kenya, the committees have however performed with minimal success which therefore calls for evaluation of its effectiveness in peace building especially in Trans Mara district which has been facing sporadic ethnic clashes in the recent past.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Occasional conflict between farming and pastoral communities, rampant conflict over dwindling internal resources, coupled with the collapse of traditional pasture management practices, in Trans Mara sub county is in dire need for urgent attention (Vision and Strategy, 2005). As a result of conflict, many educational institutions are left vandalized or totally destroyed; people are left homeless, landless, abused, injured and even dead. For instance, in February 2008, a total of 385 houses and 8 schools were torched in Kirindon and Pirrar divisions of Trans Mara Sub County following a clash between Maasai and Kipsigis communities (KRCS, 2008). Most government reactionary interventions through the security agencies and provincial administration have done little to salvage the deteriorating situation. For instance, the Maasai clans of Moitanik, Siria and Uasin Gishu and Kuria clans of Nyabasi and Bwirege most often do resort to violent conflict over land ownership and grazing areas, (Conflict mapping: An Insider's perspective, 2011).

For a long time, women and youth form majority of those affected by conflict yet according to Adan and Pkalya (2006), the existing peace building mechanisms including peace committees have remained insensitive to incorporate gender and age in peace building initiatives. The semblance of peace building that has been witnessed in the recent past has been largely urban-centric and one-time event with much pre-occupation in media campaigns and youth exchanges (Klopp *et al*, 2010). This therefore has neglected the rural folk together with the peace building mechanisms in those localities.

Following the 2007/08 post-election violence, the government signed the national accord and embarked on peace building programs. Klopp *et al* (2010) acknowledges that though peace building has been undertaken by the government, the program has been highly unsuccessful owing to the fact that even out of the fraction of Internally

Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have returned and settled, many still do not have improved relations with their neighbours. And that even other government peace building operations such as “*Operation Rudi Nyumbani* (Operation return home), *Ujirani Mwema* (Good neighbourhood) and *Tujenge pamoja* (let’s build together)” have in several occasions run into problems which therefore calls for evaluation into the effectiveness and capacity of peace committees in peace building and conflict management in Kenya. The research question was: Are women and youth sufficiently involved in peace building initiatives in Trans Mara sub county? This study adopted both descriptive and historical research design. Since the study is majorly concerned with describing such things as attitudes, values and behavior, descriptive design therefore becomes adequate for the study. The researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches in data collection, analysis and presentation. Historical design assisted in exploring, explaining and understanding the past. The aim was to collect relevant information that provided baseline data upon which, the situation in post peace committee peace building was compared.

Trans Mara Sub County is located in the south western part of Rift Valley in Narok County. It consists of five administrative divisions namely; Kilgoris, Pirrar, Lolgorian, Keyian and Kirindon. In total it covers an area of approximately 2900 km<sup>2</sup>. The district lies between 00 50` South and 10 50` North and 340 35` East and 350 14` West. It borders the Republic of Tanzania to the South, Migori and Kuria districts to the West, Gucha, Nyamira and Bomet districts to the North and Narok district to the East (Trans Mara district annual report, 2009).

The study population specifically comprised of the Provincial administration officers (DC’s, DO’s, and Chiefs), Civic leaders, senior security personnel (OCS, OCPD), representatives of Civil Society Organization and Faith-based groups and local residents.

Sampling refers to the process of selecting a portion of the population that conforms to a designated set of specifications to be studied. Kendall and Kendall (2005) observes that sampling is advantageous for it allows the researcher to draw generalization and reduce bias. According to Nachmias and Nachmias (1996), sampling is necessary because it is extremely expensive and nearly impossible to collect data from all members of the study population. The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling procedures. Simple random sampling was used to get 10 representatives from about 5 organizations (Civil Society and Faith-based organizations) working for peace in Trans Mara district of Narok County. The organizations include Trans Mara Peace Net, Pro Mara, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, National Council of Churches of Kenya and Trans Mara Human Rights Network.

The researchers wrote all the names of the organizations in small pieces of paper, folded and put in a container, shake and later pick the first two pieces of paper to reveal names of the 2 organizations that qualified to have their representatives in the study. The selection of 10 representatives ensured equal number of males and females.

Civic leaders and chiefs also selected using simple random sampling whereby out of the 18 civic wards and 32 locations, 9 civic leaders and 16 location chiefs were sampled for the study. Purposive sampling ensures that only participants who are knowledgeable about an issue in question are selected (Brink, 1996). The researcher therefore purposively sampled DC’s, DO’s, OCS and OCPD. The greater Trans Mara district currently has 5 administrative divisions each under a DO, 2 Police Stations each headed by OCS, 1 Police division headed by OCPD and 2 DC’s one representing the newly created Dikirr (Trans Mara West) and the other Trans Mara East.

Systematic sampling was used to select households in each division from where respondents were derived. To ensure representativeness of the sample, the researcher employed stratified sampling method so as to ensure that each of the 5 divisions of Trans Mara Sub County had a fair share of participating in the study. Simple disproportionate sampling however, was equally be used alongside the strata (divisions) to allow stratum with greater variation in terms of population and ethnic orientation a fairly higher number of representatives in the study. The study utilized questionnaires, interviews, Focus Group Discussion and content analysis as the main tools for collecting data. The sources of data were primary and secondary. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Secondary data was derived from books, journals, internet and other publications by employing content analysis.

Qualitative data from FGD’s and Interviews was analyzed by coding common themes and presenting in form of generalized statements while Quantitative data from questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive and inferential

statistics. Measures of distribution, percentages and frequencies were applied in analyzing the data with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## RESULTS

From the findings on the gender of the respondent the study found that majority of the respondent as shown by 60.3% were male whereas only 39.7% of the respondent indicated that they were females, this shows that both genders in this region were almost equally represented. On the respondent age, the study found out that 44.6% of the respondent indicated that they were aged between 18 to 30 years, 31.7% of the respondent indicated that they were aged between 31 to 40 years, 15.8% of the respondent indicated that they were between 41 to 50 years, 5.9 % of the respondent were between 51 and 60 years, 1.4% indicated to be between 18 to 20 years and finally 0.7% indicated to be above 60 years. Majority of the respondents were in their youthful age and this was the best group to interview since they play the huge role in conflict scenarios.

### Highest level of education attained

On the level of education of the respondents in this study, the study found out that majority of the respondents had reached the primary level as shown by 47.9%, 22.6% of the respondents indicated that they had reached secondary level, 17% indicated to have reached the university level while as only 12% indicated to have reached college level as their highest level of academic qualifications. This shows that majority of these respondents were people who had dropped out of school due to conflicts in the study area.

### Peace Building and Conflict Management

The study was keen to investigate the likely cause of conflict in Trans Mara Sub County, from the study, majority of the respondents indicated that the main cause of conflict in the region was ethnic animosity as shown by 61.1%, 33.6% stated that the cause of conflict was resource based causes and finally 4.8% stated that crime has also been a source of conflict in the region. This indicates that ethnicity had contributed much to the conflict witnessed in the area. These findings concurs with the findings of Adan and Pkalya (2006) who observed that in most communities especially pastoralist communities where scarcity of resources was the main cause of conflict, resource management agreement helped to do reduce tensions among the many ethnic communities co existing together.

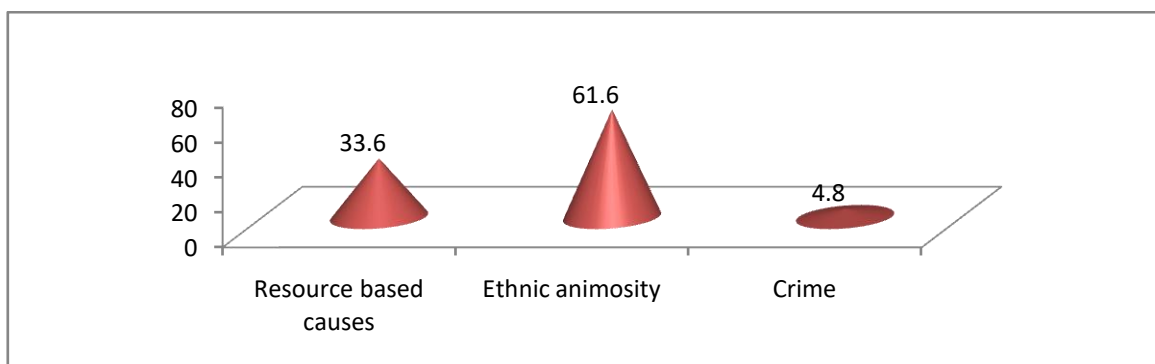


Figure 1: Conflict in Trans Mara Sub County

Table 1: Immediate institution that responds to resolve conflict

Immediate institution	Frequency	Percentage
Provincial administration	65	44.5
Religious leaders	21	14.4
Council of elders	42	28.8
Peace committee representatives	18	12.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The study also wanted to establish the most immediate institution that responded to resolve conflict whenever it occurred, from the study, majority of the respondents indicated that provincial administration played significant role in conflict resolution as shown by 44.5%, 28% of the respondents indicated that council of elders were always involved calm down the occurrences as shown by 28.8%, 14.4% indicated religious leaders and finally 12.3% indicated peace committee and representatives. This shows that all representatives in the community were in

involved in resolving conflict but the government played the significant role since it had resources and man power to bring volatile situations back to normalcy.

The research also wanted to establish the reason behind the institution mentioned in the previous question being the first to respond in times of conflict, from the study majority of the respondents indicated that the reason behind the provincial administration being the first to respond during these calling times is because they lived among the community as shown by 56.8%, 37% of the respondents indicated that it was because they had the logistical capacity required to reach the scene of crimes and assist the individuals affected. Others indicated that they were not aware as shown by 6.2%. This is a clear indication that much more is desired from the government. The government should increase the number of police posts and fully equip the police officers with all required equipments be it guns, vehicles, surveillance machines and high powered communication gadgets. This would assist in earlier detection of the few that may decide to cause conflict and deal with them appropriately rather act when it's too late.

On assigning the position of Peace committee representatives in terms of their speed of response to conflict situation whenever it occurred in Trans Mara, the study found out that majority of the respondents assigned peace committee representatives fourth as shown by 32.9%, 27.4% assigned it third, 22.6% assigned it second whereas only 17.1% assigned first. This shows that Peace committee representatives come at the far end in times of conflict resolution in the community.

On assigning the position of Council of elders in terms of their speed of response to conflict situation whenever it occurred in Trans Mara, the study found out that majority of the respondents assigned Council of elders third as shown by 31.5%, 28.1% assigned it fourth, 26.7% assigned it second whereas only 13.7% assigned first. This shows that Council of elders also comes among the last options conflict resolution in the community.

On assigning the position of Provincial administration in terms of their speed of response to conflict situation whenever it occurred in Trans Mara, the study found out that majority of the respondents assigned Provincial administration first as shown by 35.6%, 30.8% assigned it second, 19.9% assigned it fourth whereas only 13.7% assigned third. This shows that Provincial administration used to be the first in case of conflict in the region.

The researcher wanted to determine whether there was peace building programs being carried out to promote peaceful coexistence among communities in Trans Mara district, from the study majority of the respondents indicated that there were peace building programs being carried out to promote peaceful coexistence as shown by 65.8%, 21.2% indicated that there no such initiative whereas only 13% of the respondents who indicated that they did not know. This is a clear indication that the individuals in the region have realized the importance of peace initiatives programmes and have also realized that no peaceful coexistence could be achieved until all parties are brought to the same platform and be made to understand the importance of peace.

On whether the respondents were aware of peace committees in Trans Mara district, the study established that majority of the respondents indicated that there existed peace committees in the district as shown by 63.7% whereas only 36.3% who indicated that at no anytime there existed peace committees in the district.

On how the respondents became aware of the existence of peace committee in Trans Mara district, the study found out that majority of the respondents indicated that they became aware of these committees in public baraza, as shown by 45.2%, 30.1% indicated that they learned of existence through friends, 18.5% indicated that they heard of the committees from other sources and finally 6.2% indicated that they became aware of the peace committees over the radio. This is an indication that provincial administration which should conduct as much as possible barazas in the district so that they can preach peace and let the people know that its only with peaceful coexistence they will be able to exploit the economical resources they have and live a good life.

On the respondents opinion whether the civil society was doing enough to educate the community on the need for peace, the study established that 50% of the respondents indicated yes and 50% indicated no. This shows that the civil society is there but much impact not been felt in preaching peace and propagating for peaceful coexistence.

Among the reasons which made the respondents feel that the civil society has been doing a good job is because they prepared workshop for youth, women and men. They also encouraged people to live together and they educated people to trade together and live together. The civil societies have even taken these campaigns even in churches.

They have continued to mobilize the various stakeholders, provincial administrations, local community leaders towards peace initiatives.

The study also wanted to establish the respondent's level of agreement on the above statements, from the study majority of the respondents agreed that peace campaigns yield much in peace building as shown by a mean of 1.93, they further agreed that peace committee are effective approach to peace building and conflict management and that women are critical to be involved in decision making levels for peace building and conflict management as shown by a mean of 2.36. It was further established that Peace committee resolutions often result in peaceful co-existence and the government provides adequate support to peace committees in Trans-Mara.

The study also wanted to establish the age groups that participated in most of the ethnic conflict, from the study, it was revealed that majority of the people involved in ethnic conflict were aged between 21 and 30, as shown by 61%, others stated 31 to 40 as shown by 24%, 10.3% indicated 18 to 20 years, 3.4% indicated 51 to 60 and finally 1.4% indicated 41 to 50. This is an indication that the youths who are in their early adult hood are the most prone to participation in ethnic conflict. This has been brought about by poor education system making majority of them drop out of school and recruited in very dangerous gangs that carries out the raids. Low level of employment also plays a role in this. In case these young adults are fully absorbed into the labour markets there will no one to conduct these inhumane actions.

The study also wanted to establish whether the respondent's community was still relying on traditional measures of conflict resolution, from the findings majority of the respondents indicated that they were still relying on traditional measures of conflict resolution as shown by 85.6% whereas 14.4% indicated that they did not rely on the rely on traditional measures of conflict resolution.

On the most traditional conflict resolution measure being practiced in Trans Mara, the study established that council of elders was the most used practiced as shown by 63%, 18.5% of the respondents indicated intermarriages, 17.8% of the respondents indicated resource management agreement and finally 0.7% indicated others. This shows that traditional conflict resolution practices are still being practiced in the district.

### **Summary of the findings**

This research established that the main cause of conflict in the region was ethnic animosity and this was represented by 61.1%. These findings concurs with the findings of Adan and Pkalya (2006) who observed that in most communities especially pastoralist communities where scarcity of resources was the main cause of conflict, resource management agreement helped to do reduce tensions among the many ethnic communities co-existing together. It was further established that provincial administration played significant role in conflict resolution. This shows that all representatives in the community were in involved in resolving conflict but the government played the significant role since it had resources and man power to bring volatile situations back to normalcy.

The reason behind the provincial administration being the first to respond during these calling times is because they lived among the community and they had the logistical capacity required to reach the scene of crimes and assist the individuals affected. This is a clear indication that much more is desired from the government.

The research further established that there were peace building programs being carried out to promote peaceful coexistence. This is a clear indication that the individuals in the region have realized the importance of peace initiatives programmes and have also realized that no peaceful coexistence could be achieved until all parties are brought to the same platform and be made to understand the importance of peace. It was also revealed that that provincial administration should conduct as much as possible barazas in the district so that they can preach peace and let the people know that it's only with peaceful coexistence that will enable their children go to school and complete their education. This will enable them exploit the economic resources they have and live a good life.

It also came to the researchers attention that peace campaigns yield much in peace building and this was represented by a mean of 1.93. Peace committee are effective approach to peace building and conflict management and that women are critical to be involved in decision making levels for peace building and conflict management and Peace committee resolutions often result in peaceful co-existence and the government provides adequate support to peace committees in Trans-Mara.

The research also established that majority of the people involved in ethnic conflict were aged between 18 and 30. This is an indication that the youths who are in their early adult hood are the most prone to participation in ethnic conflict. This has been brought about by poor education system making majority of them drop out of school and recruited in very dangerous gangs that carries out the raids. Low level of employment also plays a role in this. In case these young adults are fully absorbed in the labour markets there will no one to conduct these inhumane acts. It also revealed that the community was still relying on traditional measures of conflict resolution and that council of elders was the most practiced.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that main cause of conflict in the region was ethnic animosity and that provincial administration played significant role in conflict resolution. It further concludes that the reason behind the provincial administration being the first to respond during these calling times is because they lived among the community and they had the logistical capacity required to reach the scene of crimes and assist the individuals affected.

This research also concludes that there were peace building programs being carried out to promote peaceful coexistence. This is a clear indication that the individuals in the region have realized the importance of peace initiatives programmes and have also realized that no peaceful coexistence could be achieved until all parties are brought to the same platform and be made to understand the importance of peace.

The study also concludes that peace campaigns yield much in peace building and peace committee are effective approach to peace building and conflict management and that women are critical to be involved in decision making levels for peace building and conflict management.

The study finally concludes that majority of the people involved in ethnic conflict are aged between 21 and 30. This has been brought about by poor education system making majority of them drop out of school and recruited in very dangerous gangs that carries out the raids. Low level of employment also plays a role in this. In case these young adults are fully absorbed in the labour markets there will no one to conduct these inhumane actions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study therefore recommends that peace resolution initiate such as meeting people in churches, schools and launching peace campaigns should be adopted in the peace preaching process. This would play a significant role in creating awareness of peace initiatives. Organisations should use vehicles such as trailers and even hold public meetings and renew the committee's mode of doing things.

Education and training of youths and women should be prioritised. This would empower them with more knowledge on what bring conflicts among communities and how to resolve it amicably.

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