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The role of faith-based organisations in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region

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Introduction / Background

- ▶ Peace is defined as the absence of widespread physical violence. The term is derived from Galtung's (1976) idea of positive peace where non-violence, social justice and ecological sustainability remove the causes of war by addressing the root causes of war.
- ▶ The former UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali in his article entitled *Agenda for Peace* defined peace building as the action to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).
- ▶ According to Jeong (2003) a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding involves engaging a variety of actors working through different means to achieve peace.

Statement of the problem

- The 2006-2008 intra-ethnic conflict between the Soy and Ndorobo was devastating leading to the loss of many lives and property.
- The human rights abuses meted by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) and military left the residents psychologically traumatised.
- Above all, the conflict tore the social fabric which bound the clans together as one community and resulted in feelings of fear, hatred, suspicion and mistrust in the once united Sabaot society.

Statement of the problem

- In an effort to enhance the impact of their peacebuilding efforts, various actors embarked on post-conflict peacebuilding process in Mt Elgon region.
- However, no study known to the researchers has been conducted to ascertain the role of faith-based organisations in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region. This study therefore seeks to identify the faith-based organisations and their role in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region.

Study objectives

The study aimed to:

- 1 Identify the faith-based organisations (FBOs) involved in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region.
- 2 Examine the contribution of faith-based organisation to peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region

Brief literature review

- According to Jeong (2003) a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding involves engaging a variety of actors working through different means to achieve peace.
- Track One is the level of official diplomacy involving governmental and international actors at which conflicts are resolved, ceasefires agreed and peace accords signed.
- Track Two attempts to achieve positive peace through cooperative means by engaging a range of unofficial contacts and interactions between and within states including the civil society, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), media, academia, businesses, experts and community-based organisations (CBOs) (Abdulrahman & Tar, 2008; UNDP, 2009).
- Diamond and MacDonald (1991) suggested an all-inclusive approach to peacebuilding referred to as Multi-Track Diplomacy which is a holistic approach to conflict transformation.

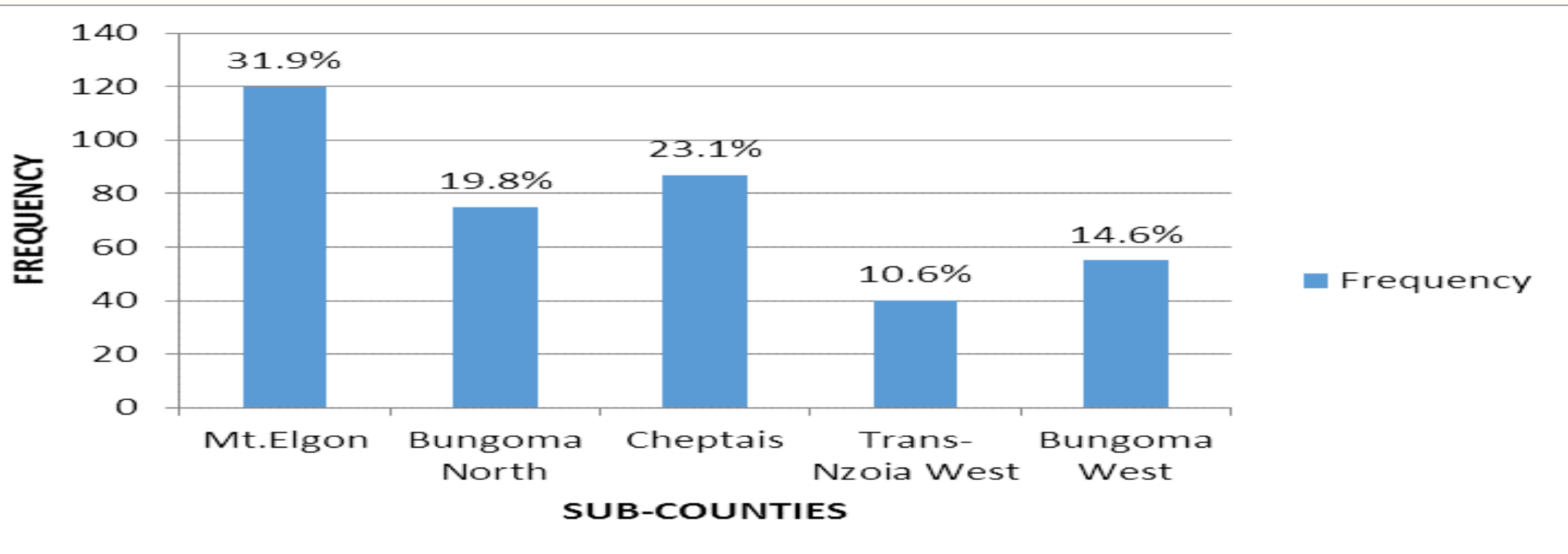
Methodology

- The study was conducted in Mt Elgon region in Bungoma (Mt Elgon & Cheptais Sub-Counties) and Trans Nzoia West in Trans Nzoia counties.
- The research adopted a phenomenological approach with a mixed method in data collection and analysis.
- The main data collection method was qualitative in-depth interviews both individually and in groups although field notes from observations and document analysis were used to complement the findings.

Methodology

- Both probability and purposive sampling were used in the selection of units for study.
- The researcher employed probabilistic sampling in the selection of sites and individuals for quantitative study. Purposive sampling was used in selection of FBOs and individuals for study

Findings



Findings / Results

- Three major faith-based organisations were involved in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region. These were the Justice and Peace Commission (JPC), the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) and the Anglican Church of Kenya (ACK).

Findings / Results

. Initiation of intra-ethnic dialogue

■ in April 2011, the Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya (FPFK) sponsored a general peace conference for the Sabaot people at Mabanga Agricultural Training Centre (ATC) in Bungoma-Mabanga Peace Accord in 2011.

Findings / Results

- FPFK & CJPC conducted rehabilitation for ex- SLDF
- The churches conducted cleansing ceremonies in Cheptais Sub-County
- The Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) conducted a demobilisation exercise of the militia groups among the youth in the region
- Justice and Peace Commission trained community paralegals (people trained to deal with legal issues) to reach out to the youth in Mt Elgon region to accept the govt amnesty and surrender.
- **Psychosocial counselling** for affected youths, widows and orphans
- **Economic empowerment**- for youth & women groups

Findings / Results

Human rights

- The FPFK & ACK enlightened widows on their rights. The women were enlightened on legal inheritance of land and their right to remarry.
- JPC offered pre-trial detention programmes to the arrested SLDF suspects. This involved working with inmates in penal institutions and helping prisoners understand trial processes through the trained paralegals.

Findings / Results

- JPC also referred the youth who had been tortured to Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU) for legal action. The paralegals also reached out to the vulnerable groups in the community to sensitise them on their rights.
- JPC used local FM stations e.g Kaalya FM, Imani Radio & West FM to reach to community members.

Conclusions

- The FBOs which were involved in peacebuilding in Mt Elgon region were the Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya, the Justice and Peace Commission and the Anglican Church of Kenya.
- The FBOs were involved in initiating the intra-community dialogue in the region which led to reconciliation between the Soy and Ndorobo clans of the Sabaot community.
- the FBOs promoted psychosocial healing programmes for the traumatised residents in the region, advocated for the human rights of the affected populations and empowered the residents economically.

Recommendations

- In order to realise peace in Mt Elgon region, the study recommends:
- there should be local peace initiatives by the community members. This was because most non-state actors in the region relied on donor funding and their programmes were bound to be short-lived.
- The actors should use ICTs for networking and collaboration in order to avoid duplication of peace programmes in the region
- And the actors (especially non-state actors) should avoid misusing the media for their selfish gain such as giving false reports in order to continue receiving funding from donors.

Areas for further study

- The role of women in peacebuilding in conflict torn societies in Kenya.
- The role of ICTs in restoration of interpersonal communication in Mt Elgon region



END

THANK YOU