

Full Length Research Paper

Inter ethnic conflict in Kenya: a case of Tharaka-Tigania conflict, causes, effects and intervention strategies

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ABSTRACT

Conflict is a threat to human life. It arises when two or more parties have incompatible goals. This study sought to assess the factors influencing continuous conflict between the Tigania and Tharaka communities in Meru, Kenya. The study was motivated by the need to investigate the root causes of the continuous conflict between related communities which coexisted for ages only to start clashing in the recent past yet the government security mechanisms and indigenous institutions that traditionally managed conflicts in the community contained the conflict in the past. Johan Galtung's conflict theory and analysis that seeks to understand the root causes of conflicts, structure and dynamics of conflicts and its actors with an aim of suggesting possible resolution strategies was used. The study adopted a descriptive study design. Purposive sampling was used to select the sample size. Questionnaires were used to collect data from both the affected people in Tigania and Tharaka Districts. An interview schedule was also administered to collect data about the conflict from among opinion leaders. It was revealed that there exists continuous conflict between Tigania and Tharaka communities of the greater Meru region. Access to and control of scarce resources was found to be the main cause of the conflict. Other factors causing the conflict included politics of self interest, border disputes, land adjudication and government policy. Impacts of the conflict were; disruption of economic activities, environmental degradation, displacement of people, physical harm and death. Intervention mechanisms to end the conflict included establishment of Njuri Ncheke border arbitration committee and peace building initiatives through public gatherings.

Keywords: Conflict, conflict analysis, conflict intervention mechanisms, conflict resolution.

INTRODUCTION

In Africa today, there is a high level of violent conflict not just in situations where Law and order have broken down entirely, but also where conditions are deemed to be relatively stable. According to Suliman (1996), there is no single cause of conflict nor is there often any single pre-condition for sustainable peace. The vast majority of groups engaged in contemporary armed conflicts define themselves on the basis of their identity, whether of a national, ethnic or cultural character (Mulu, 2008). This sharpens ethnic identity and chauvinism promoting the doctrine that those specific regions of a country 'belong' to the groups who originally occupied them. This is

further complicated by perceived inequalities among cultural groups in status, economic well-being, access to power as for instance seen between Turkana and the Pokot of Kenya.

The manner in which colonial authorities drew up local and national territorial boundaries in Africa was based on a rather simplistic understanding of the nature of ethnic communities. In Nigeria for example, communities that understood themselves using quite different ideas, were thrown together and designated as 'tribes' on the basis of similarities in language alone (Laremont, 2002). In other cases national borders split communities in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity in Provinces or Districts.

This colonial arrangement forced into political entity people who lived apart. It also separated people who lived together undermining the natural process of state creation and nation building (Okoth, 2010). This has been

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a major source of conflict among communities in some African countries.

According to Mazrui, (2008) access to and control of valuable natural resources has been a critical factor in occurrence of violence in Somalia and Sudan. The structure of natural resources in the regions is unevenly distributed with pockets of abundant natural resources to regions where natural resource scarcity is common. The use and control of resources motivated by greed and grievances related to inequitable distribution of land and natural resources has been an underlying cause of armed conflict (Mulu, 2008).

In Kenya conflicts among neighbouring communities have been witnessed. For instance, the Turkana and Pokot have had sporadic conflicts. Their conflicts arise out of scarcity and competition over pasture and water as well as border disputes. The disputes are compounded by minimum routine interaction and communication between the two communities. (Government of Kenya, 2006) The conflict occurs in the context of weak or non-existent structures and institutions for conflict prevention and response. Colonial experience in Kenya has meant that land often forms the backdrop to a variety of conflicts. A predominantly agricultural land potential combined with consolidation, adjudication and registration of land defined territorial concepts of ethnic living space within the country. These have combined in various degrees to make land in Kenya a hot political issue clearly explained by the clashes in the Rift Valley in 1992, 1997 and 2007 (Wamwere, 2008). The pastoral communities in Kenya clash over traditional grazing lands. The conflict is made worse by harsh climatic conditions and recurrent drought prevailing on the Pokot side and marginalization of pastoral communities from main stream development.

The Ameru form part of the Eastern Bantus. They are made up of the Igembe, Tigania, Imenti, Mwimbi, Muthambi, Tharaka and Chuka sub-ethnicities. They occupy the North Eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya. Their land is drained by eastward flowing streams which form rivers of various sizes (Nyagah 1998). The Tigania and Tharaka of greater Meru region migrated together and have long historical ties. They occupy today's Tigania East, Tigania West and Tharaka Districts. They have co-existed peacefully through their indigenous institutions, government of council of elders called Njuri Ncheke. The Njuri Ncheke handled day to day matters of the communities and specifically paid attention to settlement of disputes arising from border disputes, criminal cases and all matters of justice (Rimita, 1988). With the introduction of colonial system of government, the greater Meru region like other parts of the country has been administered through the central government. However, the last ten years have witnessed bloody conflicts between the Meru communities especially in the area occupied Tigania and Tharaka.

Statement of the Problem

Armed conflicts have at best prevented people from developing their bountiful human and natural potential. At worst, the conflicts have given rise to conditions of near hopelessness (Kuria, 1994). Tigania and Tharaka communities have co-existed peacefully since their migrations and settlement. They have traded, intermarried and shared many social festivals. They had an indigenous institution called Njuri Ncheke council of elders. The Njuri Ncheke council formed an effective government that kept law and order and settled disputes among the community (Kangoi, 1974). After independence, the government took over the role of maintaining law and order and settling disputes through the court system. The greater Meru region has since been sub-divided into Districts. All the Districts have an administrative office led by District Commissioner who chairs the District Security Council. Each district has a functional judicial system. However, Tigania and Tharaka communities have experienced unending conflicts spanning a decade despite existence of institutions that ought to have solved the conflicts. It is therefore clear that the Tigania and Tharaka conflicts are unique with deep rooted causes that require careful analysis and resolution.

Objectives

The study investigated:

- a) The factors that influence continuous conflict between the Tigania and Tharaka communities of the Meru region
- b) The impact of the conflict among the Tigania and Tharaka communities
- c) Intervention mechanisms that could be applied to resolve the conflict between Tharaka and Tigania communities

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the broad framework of the conflict theory and analysis, as advanced by Galtung, (1996). Conflict theory looks at the non-violent and creative handling of conflict in detail. The conflict theory involves a critical investigation into the; causes of the conflict, structure and dynamics of the conflict, the actors in the conflict and the outcomes.

In detail, the historical background and context of the conflict so as to understand the genesis and dimension of the current events in the conflict showing the conflict as it

Table 1: Residence of Respondent

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Tigania East District | 49 | 56.3 |
| Tharaka District | 38 | 43.7 |
| Total | 87 | 100.0 |

is on the ground and giving different versions of the events is analysed. The theory holds that at this stage the personalities and personal perspectives of the individuals will emerge and the conflict taking place will be maintained by show of interests, positions, feelings and outside pressures on the parties. It asserts that whoever is involved in the conflict needs a deeper understanding of the conflict and get a factual account to be of value. The root causes of the conflict, the parties in the conflict and their roles and interests in order to bring to an end or reduce the conflict are investigated.

To understand factors contributing and fuelling conflicts in the Tigania and Tharaka Communities, therefore, there is need to look into the root causes of the conflict, identify the parties and their interests and understand their values with an aim to resolve the conflict and attain sustainable peace.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey design was used to investigate the root causes, effects and intervention mechanisms of the Tharaka and Tigania conflict. The target population was from the area directly affected by the conflict in Tigania and Tharaka Districts. These were: Kathangachini, Twanthanju and Gatue in Tharaka District totalling 700 people. In Tigania District, the areas directly affected were Ankamia, Kunati, Giithu, Igarii with a population of 800 people. Both communities had a total population of 1500 people directly affected by the conflict (Government of Kenya Report 2007). Also targeted were the two District Commissioners in Tigania and Tharaka District. The study also targeted 10 Councillors who served the affected region and also the two members of Parliament in the area. Also targeted was the Njuri Ncheke Arbitration Committee made up of 16 members who served in both communities.

Purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample from people directly affected by the conflict in the two districts where the researchers visited the provincial administration offices in Tigania and Tharaka Districts to obtain a list of the people directly affected by the conflict in both communities. The researchers then classified the people into homogeneous groups depending on how they were affected by the conflict i.e. those who lost property in the conflict, those who lost relatives in the conflict, and those who were displaced by the conflict and those who

sustained injuries in the conflict. Four (4) people were selected from each category in Tigania District to make a total sample of sixteen (16) people. Twelve (12) people were picked from the four categories in Tharaka District. All the political leaders (Counsellors and Members of Parliament) in Tigania and Tharaka areas affected by the conflict were included in the sample. These were; ten councillors and two members of parliament. All the members of the Njuri Ncheke boundary arbitration committee were also included in the sample.

FINDINGS

Distribution of respondents

To ensure the distribution of respondents from both districts housing the communities in conflict were represented; care was taken to target affected persons from both communities. From table 1 above, out of the respondents interviewed 56.3% came from Tigania East District which had more people affected by the conflict while 43.7% came from Tharaka District, this shows that the residence in Tigania East District showed a lot of interest in the study.

Influence of Politics on Conflict

Respondents were requested to respond to a likert type of question to show the extent to which politics influenced the conflict. From table 2 below, 67.8% of the respondents agreed that politics greatly contributed to the conflict. Rivalling communities perceived that their security, perhaps their very survival, can be ensured only through control of power by one of "their own" making conflicts inevitable. Twenty two (25.3%) said the influence of politics was moderate while 4.6% of the respondents said that there was no extent and only 2.3% said it was a small extent. The informants interviewed especially members of the provincial administration concurred with the responses given in that they argued that politicians incited the residents. Struggle for political power in the Tigania-Tharaka conflict is not different from other politically instigated conflicts. These clashes are attributed to political incitement, tribal tensions and polarizations. Aspirants to political office harp on the high value attached to land to woo a support base, often

Table 2: Extent to which politics fuelled the conflict between Tigania and Tharaka Communities

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Great extent | 59 | 67.8 |
| Moderate extent | 22 | 25.3 |
| Small extent | 2 | 2.3 |
| No extent | 4 | 4.6 |
| Total | 87 | 100.0 |

Table 3: Presence of established boundary between Tigania and Tharaka

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| No | 20 | 23.0 |
| Yes | 67 | 77.0 |
| Total | 87 | 100.0 |

Table 4: Institutions under Conflict

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Yes | 81 | 93.1 |
| No | 6 | 6.9 |
| Total | 87 | 100.0 |

deliberately or unwittingly inciting communities against each other over land ownership (Kamungi, 2001). For instance the 1992 and 1997 politically instigated conflicts in Kenya were motivated by the wish for the ruling political party KANU to remain in power following incitement by politicians and political parties formed along tribal lines (Wamwere, 2008).

Boundary dispute

The researchers sought the respondents' opinions on the existence of a boundary between the two communities and whether the boundary was a major cause of the conflict. Table 4 above shows that 77.0% of the respondents agreed that there was an established boundary between Tigania and Tharaka communities while only 23.0% said that there was no established boundary existing between the two communities.

However, responses given by the persons interviewed indicated that there was a disagreement on where the boundary should be between the two communities. These responses were critical in this study because they were a pointer to what may be the cause of conflict in Tigania Tharaka region. The above views by the respondents were supported by the key informants interviewed. The key informants argued that the border dispute was a nagging affair especially after the boundary

creating the new districts was established where some families and related families were split. Where some Tharaka people were placed in Tigania District and vice versa, the residents resisted and they wished the boundary be established along land owned by the communities but not land marks such as roads, rivers and other physical features. The feeling that the establishment of the boundaries creating the new districts was dividing cohesive communities giving them different identity worked against cohesion and identity in that the Tharakas placed in Tigania and Tiganias placed in Tharaka felt that they were losing their identity. According to Akerlund (2005) identity is a basic human right and that the social nature of humankind's survival is structured around group identity of some form of religion, culture or language. Further, group identity affords people the opportunity to belong and the promise of stability and continuity. Akerlund (2005) advises that to manage ethnic conflicts it is crucial to recognize and respect individual or group identities. Creation of the district boundary may have ignored the ethnic identity hence causing and escalating the conflict.

Conflict over public utilities

The respondents were requested to indicate whether there were some public institutions under contention in

Table 5: Causes of Tigania - Tharaka conflict

| Cause | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Land ownership and land use | 82 | 94.25 |
| Boundary dispute | 80 | 91.95 |
| Influence of political leaders | 50 | 57.47 |
| Marginalization and poverty | 57 | 65.52 |
| Lack of security | 2 | 2.30 |

Table 6: Effects of conflict

| Effect | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| It affects the running of social and economic activities | 85 | 97.70 |
| Loss of property and displacement | 87 | 100.00 |
| Hurt/injured in the conflict | 50 | 57.47 |
| Death of relatives and friends | 20 | 22.99 |

the area. Table 5 above shows that, 93.1% of the respondents agreed that there were public institutions whose ownership were in conflict between Tigania and Tharaka communities, only 6.9% responded NO.

They further stated that the public institutions were, schools open, air markets, churches, health centre, chief camps and cattle dips among others. These disputed public facilities are mainly along the border and when the new districts were created, each district claimed that such facilities belonged to them. The worst was that the districts were created almost on the lines of the sub-ethnicities. This scenario fueled conflict between the two affected communities. Like in other parts in Kenya, struggle for government resources may have instigated conflict over public utilities between the Tharaka and Tigania especially when one community felt that a public utility developed using public funds was associated with one community. Such feeling propagate injustice, corruption, ethnic politics, which perpetuate rivalry over jobs, land, business opportunities, public utilities and other resources (Wamwere, 2008). These lead to social and economic marginalization of communities, economic disparities, rise in poverty levels and inequitable distribution of resources and services.

When either of the communities felt that they were losing part of the territory which had a public institution of interest to them, such persons felt the need to fight for their territorial right. Indeed the border arrangements imposed upon the warring communities' ownership or loss of some public utilities against their will. This created resentment which is likely to nourish future conflict and instability.

Respondents were asked to indicate in their own opinion in the open ended section of the questionnaire the perceived causes of the conflict between the two communities. Eighty two (82) respondents identified land ownership as the main cause, 80 felt it was because of

boundary dispute, 50 said it was influenced by political leaders, while 2 of the respondents said that it was caused by lack of security. Another major cause cited was marginalization and poverty which was identified by 57 respondents.

These findings confirm the earlier presented causes of the conflict in the area. Further, the above presented causes of the Tigania- Tharake conflict were supported by opinion leaders who were interviewed especially members of the provincial administration. They observed that the Tigania and Tharaka conflict was caused and perpetuated by other factors like; growing insecurity, manifested in the proliferation of illegal small arms and light weapons, contest over resources, lost economic and social development opportunities, destruction of life and property, deaths and displacement of huge numbers of population, enhanced negative perception by outsiders, of the region as inhospitable and insecure and weakening of traditional institutions for conflict resolution.

The above analysis clearly shows that there exists a conflict between the Tigania and Tharaka communities. Border disputes are a major factor causing conflict in Tigania and Tharaka regions as no clear boundaries exist between the newly created districts. Where boundaries have been fixed, they have not been accepted as they cut across the community's vital resources bringing perceptions that "our resources are being encroached". Land adjudication and demarcation process that has dragged on for many years in Tigania –Tharaka has been a source of conflict as people claim to own lands that they are not occupying while others occupy land that they do not own. Issues related to land are major to understanding the root causes and dynamics of conflict over time in Kenya. Since the colonial days, formal institutions for land administration were superimposed on traditional structures without a clear delineation of responsibilities and competencies, implying that they

Table 7: Opinion on conflict resolution between the Tigania - Tharaka communities

| Opinion | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Involvement of members of the communities and churches | 79 | 90.80 |
| Involvement of the government | 59 | 67.82 |
| Involvement of the community elders | 72 | 82.76 |

lacked both outreach and social legitimacy (Yamano and Deininger, 2005). Land ownership has been an emotive issue in Kenya's socio-economic set up, and has been a central theme of politics in the country. This explains clearly why the two sub-ethnicities of the Ameru community keep on fighting over land.

Access to and control of resources like water, pasture, land, grazing areas has played a crucial role in the occurrence of violence among Tigania and Tharaka communities. This was further expressed by the key informants who were interviewed. They argued that struggle to control grazing land and water sources was a major cause of the conflict in the area. Where for instance land in a certain area bore the name of one sub-ethnic group, the other group was almost prohibited to use it for grazing. Same was the case with water points. This explains the argument that conflict between neighbouring communities do not only fight for identity and self determination, but for a combination of cultural, political, economic and symbolic issues (Galtung, 1996). The economic factors in this case have a lot of weight. The economic factors of resources especially pasture and water is not unique to the Tharaka-Tigania conflict in Kenya in that conflict among pastoral communities in the North Rift and North Eastern province are partly related to struggle for water and pasture (Government of Kenya, 2006).

Implementation of Government policy of Arid and Semi-Arid areas is also a factor that causes conflict in the region. The residents of Tigania -Tharaka areas feel marginalized by the government in the distribution of the national resources. This came out from the interviews conducted among the key informants. They argued that, since the colonial times, the areas have remained poor and lack basic amenities like water, adequate schools, and basic infrastructure like tarmac roads and electricity. One respondent clearly said, for the more than forty years that Kenya has been independent, not a single meter of tarmac road exists in Tharaka. This makes the residents of these areas bitter and hostile due to the perceived marginalization. Conflict where bad governance is a major root cause in Kenya is eminent due to politics of exclusion. Development in Kenya was determined by 'who is who' in the political leadership and the political party the leader subscribes to. Those who were perceived to be opposition sympathizers and or elected leaders on opposition political party tickets to parliament had their areas neglected (Wamwere, 2008).

Though the ethnic groups in this conflict did not appear to be in opposition, they fall in the semi- arid areas of the country which have been grossly neglected in terms of development by the independent Kenya political regimes.

Effects of the conflict among the communities

Respondents were requested to identify the major effects of the conflict among the affected persons in the open ended section of the questionnaire. The findings were as presented in table 7 above.

All the respondents said that there was loss of property and displacement (100%) due to the conflict. During the conflict, houses were burnt crops destroyed and cattle raided. This affected the running of social and economic activities (97.70%) of the individuals because there will always be that fear of development. 22.99% of the respondents said that the conflict caused deaths of relatives and friends as many of them were either killed or hurt in the conflict. Also 57.47% of the respondents reported that they were hurt or injured in the conflict.

The researchers thus established that, the Tigania Tharaka conflict had a great impact on the community. The conflict has lasted for too long destabilizing the economic activities of the residents reducing them into a poor community. All the interviewed respondents said that their crops and property had been destroyed in the conflict creating fear and hopelessness not knowing when the next fighting erupts. Other residents were forced to run away from the conflict area and are now internally displaced persons living in camps with little or nothing to look forward to. The above presented effects of conflict in the Tharaka- Tigania conflict are reminiscent of any other violent conflict in society. The effects on the running of social and economic activities of farming, pastoralism, trade and social activities like pupils failing to attend school among others was the case because of insecurity caused by the warring groups.

Loss of property and displacement was also experienced. Indeed armed conflicts lead to displacement of persons; internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Seitz, 2004). IDPs are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not

Table 8: Suggestions on conflict resolution between the Tigania – Tharaka communities

| Suggestion | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Have a definite boundary | 83 | 95.40 |
| Land demarcation | 77 | 88.51 |
| Ensure security in the area | 51 | 58.62 |
| Provide food for those in the refugee camps | 40 | 45.98 |
| Resettlement of refugees | 39 | 44.83 |
| Land development | 56 | 64.37 |

crossed an internationally recognized State border (UNESCO, 2006). In 2004 globally, 25 million people were displaced many within their own country (Justino, 2008). To many households in conflict areas, these direct effects of violence result in considerable reductions in their total income and consumption due to the loss of livelihoods and decrease in household productivity caused by death of key household workers, destruction among others (Justino, 2008; Bouta *et al.*, 2005). Such outcomes of violence are often enough to push previously vulnerable households into extreme poverty, which affects individual and household welfare. This is usually the case because households tend to replace adult workers with children if they have not become fighters as well. Displaced children experience large reductions in educational and health attainments (Justino, 2008; Seitz, 2004). Displaced populations often struggle to find work. They are less likely to work in the post conflict period and exhibit lower productivity levels than those that stayed behind (Justino, 2008).

Death of persons in a conflict and injury are experienced in a violent conflict in that the warring parties try to intimidate, pacify and waken their opponents. These are strategies in war. Deaths in violent conflict have recorded high casualties. For instance, in Kenya's post election violence more than 1300 persons were reported to have died (Waki, Report 2008). Wamwere (2008) notes that in the Rwandan genocide, over one million people were killed; more than 2 Million were killed in Sudan; over 2 million in Nigeria in the Biafra war; over 400,000 in Burundi; over 150, 000 in Liberia; over one million in Angola; more than 2.5 million in DRC and more than 50,000 in Sierra Leone. Though the exact number of those who died in this conflict was not reported, it suffices to acknowledge the findings of this study that persons lost their lives.

Galtung (2000) warns that the effect of violent conflict should not be seen in terms of the costs, casualties, displaced persons and material loss. Invisible effects like low violence thresholds, traumas, myths of trauma may be important in the long run. He advises consequences like bereavement, hatred, and addiction to revenge and victory should be explored as part of any prognosis exercise and be used to deter violence. In the light of this argument it is imperative the finer details of the effects of

the Tharaka-Tigania conflict be established so that those who are and will be involved in conflict management and conflict transformation get informed the best way to lead and guide the communities to realize lasting peace.

Intervention mechanisms

The study also sought to establish the mechanisms which could be used to resolve the conflict between the Tigania and the Tharaka. The suggestions were made in the open ended question in the questionnaire. All the respondents were of the opinion that Tigania and Tharaka conflict could be resolved. Some of them 67.82% were of the opinion that the government should be involved and play a big role in the conflict resolution between the Tigania and Tharaka communities. A slightly higher number 82.76% said community leaders could help to resolve the conflict while 90.8% said involving members of the communities themselves and the church could help in the conflict resolution. Involving community members and churches was the most highly supported approach to the conflict resolution. This would help the stakeholders to own the resolution process. Again this showed a good entry point in the region for peace building process to be able to proactively participate in peace building initiatives as involvement of all stakeholders is important in conflict resolution.

The study thus, revealed that various intervention mechanisms have been put in place to resolve the conflict. The provincial administration has been engaged in many barazas in effort to resolve the conflict. However, government participation should go beyond the barazas held to address peace and address the root causes of the violent conflict in relation to distribution of resources, poverty reduction and development. Parts of the reasons why the two communities fight are to do with reduced ability to meet social needs, distribution of wealth and resources and governance. If the above issues are addressed effectively by the government in collaboration with the communities great strides will be achieved in hatching a lasting solution to the conflict. This can be realized if sustainable development is embraced because as Matemba (2008) argues, if sustainable development is achieved, it can contribute to dissipation if

not elimination of several of the primary causes of conflict.

Involvement of the The Njuri Ncheke boundary arbitration committee as community leadership in the conflict resolution is crucial. It recognizes the importance of indigenous institutions in conflict resolution. Such institutions are crucial and their ideas can be used to augment government initiatives to create lasting peace in the community. Issues of the border disputes and land use could benefit the guidance of indigenous knowledge.

The respondents were requested to suggest the issues to address to resolve the conflict. The suggestions were as presented in Table 8 above.

The respondents suggested that in order to resolve the conflict between Tigania and Tharaka communities they should; have a defined boundary (95.40%), land demarcation (88.51%), put up security personnel (58.62%), resettlement of refugees (44.83%), provide food for those in refugee camps (45.98%). Land development (64.37%) was also suggested to be a solution to conflict resolution. This would help to alleviate poverty and increase food security which may minimize conflicts. The above suggestions allude to the fact that the community members are aware of their needs and priorities. Compared to causes of the conflict presented above, the border dispute was articulated as the major cause to the conflict related to this was the issues of land distribution use and development. The suggestions that these issues be addressed as priority suggestions the need for the government to take a proactive step to engage the communities and ensure the issues bringing about conflict are addressed once and for all.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that there exists a conflict between the Tigania and Tharaka communities. The leading cause of conflict is competition for limited natural resources such as pasture, water and land. The regions occupied by the Tigania and Tharaka communities receive limited amounts of rainfall and this limits the availability of pasture and farm products. This leads to movements in search of scarce resources elsewhere bringing the communities in an inevitable conflict as the rules of entry and sharing among the communities are not observed.

The study has shown that Tigania and Tharaka border land is a complex site in which conflicts occur frequently. The recent creation of new administrative districts in the greater Meru region has created an environment for eruption of fresh disputes. The fact that communities are left for long periods to pursue border disputes without the government intervening to declare firmly where demarcations are politicizes the whole process.

Governance was found to be another major contribu-

tor of conflicts in this region. The communities claimed that since independence, the districts have been marginalized because they lack adequate basic social amenities like hospitals, schools. For instance, the districts have poor infrastructure without a single meter of tarmac road, an indication of marginalization.

The conflict between the Tharaka and Tigania had major effects which included deaths, displacement, loss of property and injuries.

On current intervention mechanisms, the Government has formed the Njuri Ncheke border arbitration committee mandated with the role of establishing the real boundaries in the larger Meru region but in particular show the clear boundary between Tigania and Tharaka districts.

The Catholic Church through the Catholic Peace and Justice Commission (CJPC) has been at the forefront in seeking and advocating for peace among these communities.

Conflict resolution and transformation mechanisms to the conflict should not only be concerned with structures of managing the conflict itself, but also with post conflict peace structures in order to build lasting solutions

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need to build a peace making process at the grass root level in Tharaka and Tigania communities in order to aid the local actors in their awareness of how their existence, knowledge and actions can improve their role in conflict resolution.

Since historical days, traditional institutions were important in creating peace, security, law and order. The primary role of such traditional authorities can still be explored in the regulation of access to shared resources such as grazing land and water. The role of clan elders for instance needs to be strengthened as they lead groups in making decisions on basis of consensus a factor which both subordinates the interests of the rich and the marginalized.

The indigenous institutions operating in the Meru community need to be recognized and strengthened instead of being ignored as they can be consulted on their view concerning land, conservation, conflict resolution which was their basis of existence.

There is need for more interaction between the greater Meru communities on their shared values, customs and attitudes which would in turn provide a foundation for the social norms by which people live. Through internalizing and sharing values with their fellow community members and by handing them down to future generations and therefore reconstruct themselves on the basis of a their cultural image.

The created new districts need to reconsider their names. Instead of emphasizing naming the districts on

ethnic sub-tribes of the Meru there is need to think of District names that reflect a united rather than a divided Meru.

Declaration of adjudication sections on adjudicated areas need to be speeded up and timely issuance of title deeds done to streamline ownership of land.

The government, Non-Governmental Organizations and Human rights groups need to consider offering civic education to Ameru community on peaceful co-existence and the need to shun conflict.

There is need to offer functional skills to the youth who are unemployed in these area who are always used to fight wars that they know little about.

There is need to resettle the internally displaced people in the area affected by the conflict to safer areas where they can reconstruct their lives.

There is need to improve road and transport infrastructures in the Tigania – Tharaka District along with improving the social amenities in this area.

It was also recommended that there is need to explore new economic ventures in the area. For instance, prospects for irrigation along the river sections can be explored and instituted to improve the lives of the affected persons.

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