

Peace Initiatives in Resource Based Conflicts in Post-Colonial Kenya: A Case of Lower Nyando River Basin of Kisumu County, Kenya

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Abstract: - There is growing literature focusing on resource extraction and unbalanced sharing of natural resources in the exploitation community and conflict especially in the developing countries. Whereas a lot of attention has been directed at grievances of conflicting parties in natural resource based conflicts, limited attention is being given to peace initiatives including the role of local peace committees and community led peace building networks. This paper provided an insight on the role of peace initiatives in resource based conflicts in post-colonial Kenya, with particular attention to lower Nyando River Basin of Kisumu County, Kenya. Specific objectives were to determine the magnitude of resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin, analyse the role of local peace committees in resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin and to establish the contribution of community led peace-building networks in resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin, Kenya. Conflict transformation theory which articulates transforming the causes of conflict as the right approach for resolving and curtailing emerging disputes was adopted to guide the study. Mixed method design involving quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis approaches was adopted. Target population comprised of (Ogenya=153; Kakola Ombaka=704; Jimo Middle=131, and West Kabodho=225) who were natural resource reliant in both Nyakach and Nyando Sub-counties with a sample size of 278 respondents obtained based on Gill et al's Table of Desired Accuracy with Confidence Level of 95%. The study also interviewed 4 elected community leaders from each sub location. Findings showed that the magnitude of resource based conflicts in the area was high ($M=3.91$; $SD=0.08$). The study also found that local peace committees were important peacebuilding initiatives ($M=4.17$; $SD=0.23$), while peacebuilding networks existing in the study area had contributed in resolving conflicts to a large extent ($M=4.01$; $SD=0.25$). It was concluded that unfounded apportioning of the wetland by the feuding communities has made the magnitude of conflict to be high in the study area. The study also concludes that local peacebuilding initiatives have helped in managing resource based conflict in the area due to their acceptability and incessant peace messaging.

Key Words: Community Peacebuilding Networks; Lower Nyando River Basin; Peace Initiatives; Local Peace Committees; Resource Based Conflicts.

I. Introduction

Conflict is a universal phenomenon of the human society that cannot be prevented completely. As Abee (2020) rightly asserts, conflict cannot be avoided in social life, but it can only be contained. Moreso, conflict is neither good nor bad (Paffenholz, 2014). It can occur at any given time and in any place, originating between two individuals or groups when there is a disagreement or difference in values, attitudes, needs or expectations (Wahanisa, Hidayat, Riyanto & Anggono, 2021). Essentially, conflict might ensue at the class level, local government level or even international level with an underlying interest or goal. Oyeni (2011) also add that conflict usually occurs primarily because of a clash of interests in the relationship between parties, groups or states, either because they are pursuing opposing or incompatible goals. On their part, Dimelu, Salifié and Igbokwe, (2016) opine that conflict emanates from the insatiable nature of human wants; and competitions for scarce resources are the foremost causes of communal or inter-group conflicts. Resource use conflicts or clashes, are becoming fiercer and increasingly widespread especially in the developing countries (Manu, Mary-Juliet, Fon, and Ajaga, 2014). According to Bond (2014), the discussion on the role of natural resources in conflict situations since 1990s has been dominated by a polemic debate over whether resource scarcity or abundance contributes to strife. Whereas causes of resource based conflicts have been widely discussed (Dimelu, Salifié and Igbokwe, 2016; Price, 2020), the contributions of peace initiatives for solving the conflicts have not shown consistent results.

The central objective of any conflict resolution agenda is simply to identify the main cause of a conflict and put a total end to it so that a sustainable peace can be achieved (Abee, 2020). In Africa, the process of applying conflict resolution methods to end a conflict involves mediation through an impartial third party. Ajayi and Buhari (2014) also add adjudication and arbitration to the methods of conflict resolution in traditional African societies. Moreso, Bukari (2013) add on alternative dispute resolution,

collaboration and conciliation to the conflict resolution and peacebuilding attempts in Africa. Essentially, conflict resolution seeks to provide a one-time closure to conflict through a joint-problem solving and human centred approach. Researchers (Paffenholz, 2014; Issifu, 2016; Chivasa, 2017; Connolly & Powers, 2018) have proposed a raft of peace initiatives such as local peace committees and community led peacebuilding networks for enhancing sustainable conflict resolution. However, the success of these peace initiatives in solving natural resource-based conflicts sustainably seems to lack adequate documentation.

Informal peace committees are groups formed by a collection of social groups at the grassroots' level formed either as precautionary or as response mechanisms to particular conflicts (Chivasa, 2017). On the other hand, Issifu (2016) contend that Local Peace Committees (LPC) is 'an inclusive forum operating at district, town or village in which stakeholders take a joint responsibility to build peace within their community. According to Giessmann (2016), LPC emerged after several decades of failed or at best limited peacebuilding achievements under the prevailing peacekeeping paradigm across the globe. Decisively, the application of negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, advocacy, joint problem solving, community conferencing among others are part of the African conflict resolution components used by the local peace committees to guarantee most of the positive conflict tenacities in countless war-prone states in Africa (Shoko & Naidu, 2018). Regardless of the enormous roles played by local peace committees, they are still not recognised, especially during international and local peace and development discourses. Similarly, the roles played by these committees in resolving natural resource-based conflicts needs to be documented.

One of the local networks for peace, according to Connolly and Powers (2018), community-led peacebuilding networks are civil society organizations which co-ordinate and finance capacity building initiatives and act as early warning agents for conflicts. A report that looked at examples of innovative peacebuilding at a local level in Egypt, Burundi, Mali, Zimbabwe, and Kenya by Ó Súilleabháin (2015) highlighted that peacebuilding networks aid in negotiating the problem of local ownership within each individual context and community hence continuous examination of community-level approaches is important for inclusion. Community-led peacebuilding networks enhancing bridging of local communities with national governments will improve the impact of community initiatives (Price, 2020). Peace Direct and Alliance for Peacebuilding (2019) concludes that peacebuilding networks are relevant in situations of long-term conflict and inadequate governance and where higher-level governance structures are often unable or unwilling to help resolve local disputes fairly. Such networks are preferred for their responsiveness due to their closeness to the ground and local knowledge, and of being untied to bureaucratic procedures. According to Karimi (2018), Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) working under the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) has created spaces for local women to engage and participate in peace and development processes. The long-standing trust and operational linkages between network organisations and local organisations makes them ideal connectors between local and international peacebuilding actors. However, it is critical to highlight how community peacebuilding networks have helped in conflict resolution especially where natural resource extractions have witnessed escalation of animosities between clans such as in the lower Nyando River Basin in Kenya.

Lower Nyando River Basin is a multi-use resource wetland that provides the surrounding community with a range of interrelated environmental functions and socio-economic benefits, which support a variety of livelihood strategies. According to Atieno, Mwangi and Ngetich (2014), the wetlands contributes directly to food security by providing products that people can utilize and/or sell to provide them with cash for purchasing food. The crop harvested from the wetland areas is always ready throughout the growing season when the supply of food from the upland fields and other regions is insufficient for many families and the "hungry season" is starting, hence the produce from the wetland areas plays a major role in supplementing their food security. Due to the ever increasing human population and effects of climatic change, pressure on the wetland has intensified as riparian communities from Nyakach and Nyando sub counties desperately look for moist and fertile lands for crop growing and exploitation of papyrus reed especially during dry season, leading to increased frequency of resource use conflicts in the area, particularly in Ogenya, Kakola Ombaka, Jimo Middle and West Kabodho areas (Nasongo, Zaal, Dietz and Okeyo-Owuor, 2015). The increased frequency of conflicts has further exacerbated the food insecurity situation in the region (Raburu, 2015).

Despite the occurrence of resource use conflicts within the Nyando Wetland, the effectiveness of local peace initiatives in the area is not well understood. The objective of this study was therefore to endeavour to provide a better understanding of wetland resource use conflicts and in particular their impacts on food production in the wetland areas. The study also identifies management issues and proposes a broad vision for the future that will help minimize conflicts and food insecurity in the area.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Nyando Wetlands, one of the major deltaic wetlands on the shores of Lake Victoria provides goods and services that are critical to sustaining community welfare and livelihoods. However, the continuously increasing population and climatic changes affect this area. In turn, this has exerted pressure on the wetland making the riparian communities from Nyakach and Nyando sub counties which occupy this area scramble for the exploitation of the natural resources especially during dry season, leading to increased frequency of resource use conflicts, particularly in Ogenya, Kakola Ombaka, Jimo Middle and West Kabodho areas. Whereas

causes of resource-based conflicts in the Lower Nyando River Basin have been well documented, the relevant peace initiatives that have been employed to resolve the conflicts tend to have received scanty documentation. This study was therefore set to explore the peace initiatives employed in resource based conflicts such as local peace committees and community-based peace building networks in the Lower Nyando River Basin.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore peace initiatives in resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin, Kenya.

1.3.1 Specific Objectives

Specific objectives were to:

- i. Determine the magnitude of resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin of Kenya.
- ii. Analyse the role of local peace committees in resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin of Kenya.
- iii. Establish the contribution of community led peace-building networks in resource based conflicts among communities in the Lower Nyando River Basin, Kenya.

II. Literature Review

The review of relevant studies is divided into three sections according to the study objectives. The first section presents the status of resource based conflicts, the second section presents the role of peace committees in resource based conflict, while section three presents the contribution of community led peacebuilding networks in resource based conflicts.

2.1 Resource Based Conflicts

Resource based conflicts are disagreements and disputes over access to, and control and use of, natural resources (Bond, 2014). These conflicts often emerge because people have different uses for resources such as forests, water, pastures and land, or want to manage them in different ways (Price, 2020). However, discussions over resource based conflicts tend to concentrate on causes of such conflicts without giving considerations to peace initiatives aimed at controlling such conflicts. Shahriar, Qian and Kea (2020) investigated the factors affecting the violations of human rights at the border-lands between Bangladesh and India. This study provided Bangladeshi perspectives on the issue of border killings and deaths. Findings showed that a section of India's Border Security Force (BSF) was the main violator of human rights at the border-lands between the two countries. Cross-border migrations, illicit economic activities, the Indian fence scheme, border disputes and the BSF's 'shoot-to-kill' policies were, among other factors, principal reasons for border killings. Ngin and Neef (2021) reviewed studies to gain understanding of land restitution in Cambodia by examining different types of land conflict, actors involved, and restitution processes. They found both complications and ambivalence of the actors involved, particularly concerning their roles and influences in resolution processes. Ibrahim, Abba and Bibi (2014) examined the nature of conflicts in Africa which implicitly or explicitly have their basis from either natural or human resources. They concluded that, incessant conflicts that are fueled and caused by resources may create vulnerability of national unity. It may antagonize others due to viewing them as resourceless, thereby causing resource based hostility, rivalry and antagonism. Muthama, Tompkins and Barry (2019) used case studies from Canada and Kenya to evaluate conflicts between indigenous land claims and registered title. In Canada, Williams Lake involving an Indigenous community with a long settlement history was used while Waitiki Farm, a post-colonial population established by local Indigenous and migrant groups were used. Findings showed that Williams Lake decision resulted in a First Nation's land claim being settled in the form of monetary compensation in a dedicated tribunal. The Waitiki Farm decision led to a negotiated settlement in which the owner was compensated financially, and the current residents who had occupied the land were awarded long-term leases.

2.2 Local Peace Committees and Resource Based Conflicts

Local peace committees are structures formed at the levels of a grass root, district, municipality, town or village with the aim of encouraging and facilitating inclusive peace making and peacebuilding processes within a local context (Odendaal, 2010). According to Issifu (2016), establishment of local peace committees help to institutionalise and legitimise traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. However, contribution of local peace committees as an initiative for peacebuilding in resource based conflicts has not been distinctly documented in literature. Sanchez (2018) analysed the effectiveness of peace committees in conflict resolution in Casamance, France. Findings showed that the establishment of peace committees, where groups of people were designated to prevent and manage disputes arising at the village level, was the most popular peace strategy in the post conflict region of the French Nation. In Zimbabwe, Chivasa (2017) explored the conditions informal peace committees can effectively help to contribute to peacebuilding at local community. One of the comparative advantages of informal peace committees revealed in

the study was that all social groups in the community had equal chances of being represented, thus helping to meet the needs and aspirations of the community at large. In Kenya, Bond (2014) analysed the natural resource conflicts in Laikipia County Kenya. The study showed that involvement of peace committees encouraged trust, communication, security, governance, marginalisation and violence.

2.3 Community led Peace-building Networks and Resource Based Conflicts

Community led associations including women groups, youth groups, and civil society organizations, among others, possess know-how gained in mediations for future interventions and response to acute conflict crises (Aeby, 2021). According to Muigua (2020), environmental peace making fundamentally utilizes cooperative efforts to manage environmental resources as a way to transform insecurities and create more peaceful relations between parties in dispute. The discussion on peacebuilding networks has however fallen short of focusing on their contribution on resolving resource based conflicts dependant on existing studies. In Sri Lanka, Connolly and Powers (2018) noted that Women for Peace and Good Governance (WPGG) works on women's issues, including the challenges women face participating in politics. Similarly, Sarvodaya Shanti Sena (Peace Brigade) connects youth from various ethnic groups and religions to engage in dialogue on peace, democracy, and good governance. Obi (2018) explored the functions of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in peacebuilding in Nigeria. Findings showed that civil society contributions to peacebuilding can be categorized into protection, monitoring and early warning, advocacy and public communication; socialization, social cohesion; intermediation and facilitation as well as service provision. Watitu (2014) sought to identify the factors influencing the role of Civil Society on peace building in Kenya. Findings suggested that the support of the media, CSOs' role in peacebuilding process was very profound

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Conflict Transformation Theory. Conflict transformation is transforming the systems, structures and relationships which encourage violence and injustice in the society (Lederach, 2012). According to Lederach (2012), conflict transformation must actively envision, include, respect, and promote the human and cultural resources from within the society. This involves a new approach where the members of the society are not seen as the problem, while outsiders are the solution, rather, understanding that the long-term goal of transformation is validating and building the members of the society (Abeeb, 2020). Conflict transformation is best described as a complex process of constructively changing relationships, attitudes, behaviors, interest and discourses in a violence prone environment. It also addresses the underlying structures, cultures and institutions that encourage violent political and social conflicts.

The term conflict transformation has been used in the works of several leading scholars (Galtung, Fischer & Fischer, 2013; Wallensteen, 2018) in peace and conflict studies. This has been elaborated most specifically in the works of Lederach (2012). It is a multi-dimensional, non-linear and unpredictable process involving many different actors in moving from latent and overt violence to structural and cultural peace (Abeeb, 2020). In resource based conflicts in Lower Nyando River Basin, several players extracting different resources such as papyrus reeds, fish, grass for housing construction, and croppers are involved. Transforming the causes of these conflicts provide a robust foundation for the explanation of processes involved in peacebuilding in the area. Local peace committees formed by people participating in resource extraction understand the causes of the conflict and are better placed to transform them. In addition, community led peacebuilding networks like CSOs possess diverse knowledge of the causes of resource based conflicts hence are able to transform them (causes) to create a peaceful coexistence. Conflict transformation theory was thus considered to be appropriate for the study.

II. Methodology

The methodology part presents the study area, research design, study population and sample size, data collection instruments as well as data analysis and presentation.

3.1 Study Area

The Lower Nyando River Basin located near the city of Kisumu on the shores of Lake Victoria in western Kenya forms a typical example of exploited wetlands that are very common in the Lake Victoria Basin and in other parts of central, eastern and southern Africa (Van Dam, Kipkemboi, Mazvimavi, Irvine., 2011). The Nyando Wetland is a swamp situated at the mouth of the Nyando River between Nyakach Bay and the Kano Plains (0°11' - 0°19'S/34°47'-34°57'E). The Nyando River is the major source of water of this wetland but additional waters come from the seasonal Asawo, Nyatini, Ombeyi and Awach-Kano River. Three ecological zones found in the wetland are permanent swamps, seasonal swamps and floodplains. The permanent swamp has hydric soils dominated by papyrus throughout the year. They are valuable ecosystems and are of significance particularly to the biota and water quality of the lake where they are situated. In the past, these wetlands supplied sand, clay, papyrus, fuel wood, herbs, and water. Wetlands were infused with a cultural significance and were also used for livestock grazing, hunting, fishing, rice cropping, and the provision of grass for thatching houses.

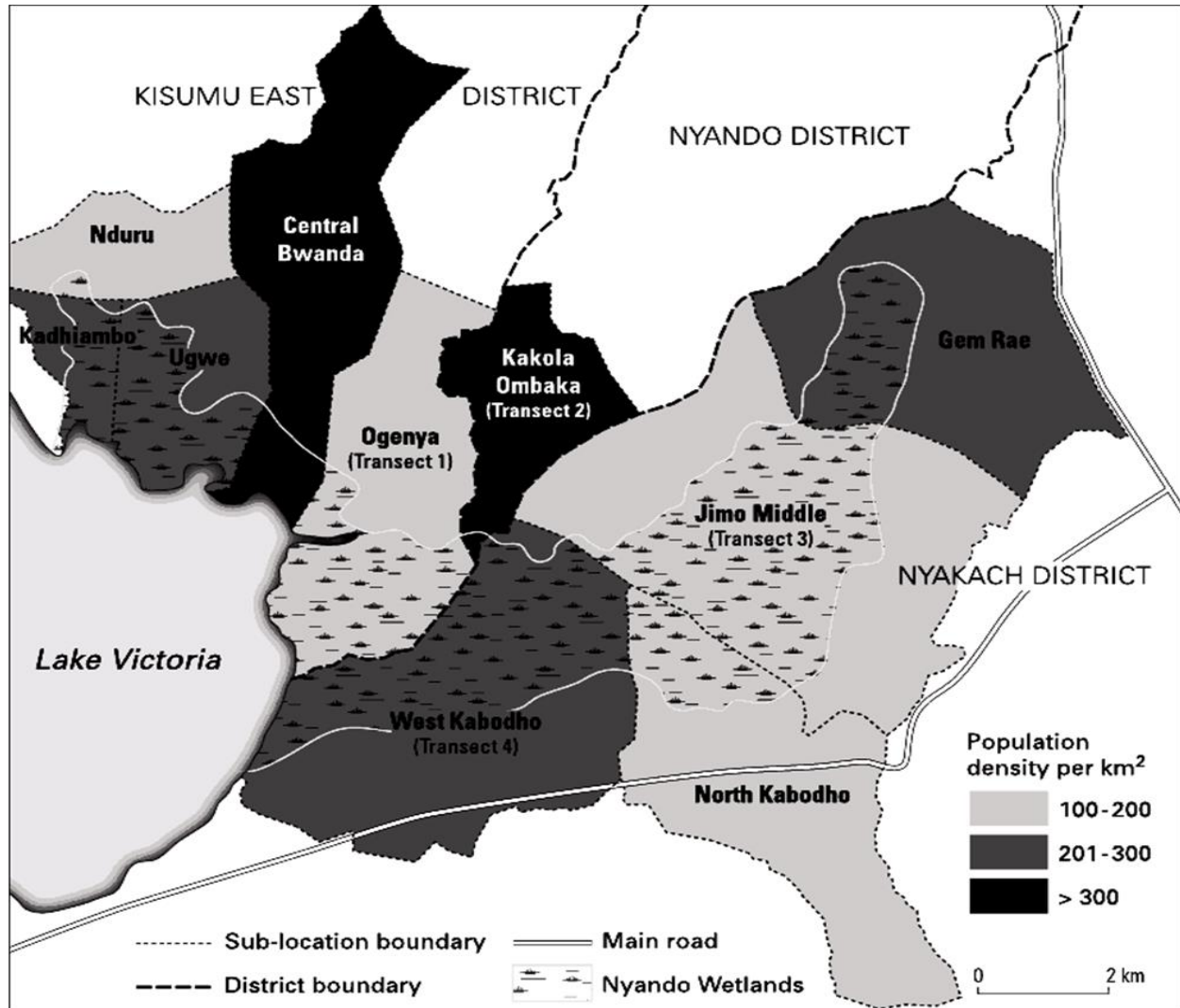


Figure 1. Map showing the study area.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted mixed-methods research approach. The research used both quantitative and qualitative approaches of data collection and data analysis (Poth & Munce, 2020). According to Dawadi, Shrestha and Giri (2021) mixed method uses complementarity approach where quantitative findings complements (or is complemented by) qualitative approach (Shorten & Smith, 2017). On their part, Creswell & Plano (2018) observed that this approach enables a study directly compared and contrasted quantitative statistical results with qualitative findings, thus gaining from the concept of concurrent triangulation to enrich the data.

3.3 Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The target population comprised the wetland resource dependent households. The population was therefore Ogenya (153), Kakola Ombaka (704), Jimo Middle (131), and West Kabodho as the accessible population. The sample size was based on Gill, Johnson and Clark’s (2010) Table of Desired Accuracy with Confidence Level of 95% (Taherdoost, 2017). The sample size was therefore 278 household heads derived from stratified sampling. According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Divakar (2021), this method is most suitable when the population consists of heterogeneous sub-population groups. The sub population groups are more homogenous as compared to the whole population. Sample is drawn from each group in appropriate proportion to represent the population. The sample distribution of SHG members was as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample Distribution of Household Heads

Divisions	Target Population	Sample Size	Percent
Ogenya	153	35	12.6
Kakola Ombaka	704	161	57.9
Middle Jimo	131	30	10.8
West Kabodho	225	52	18.7
TOTAL	1, 213	278	100.0

3.4 Data Collection Instruments

Questionnaire and interview schedule tools were used for data collection. The study used closed ended questionnaires to collect qualitative data from the respondents. Questionnaire was deemed suitable in this study since it solicited views of respondents on their views and experiences with peace initiatives in resource based conflicts in lower Nyando River Basin (Taherdoost, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were used in the study to collect data from elected leaders from the four sub locations. The interview schedule was appropriate for the study as it provided in-depth information and a detailed understanding of the issue under research.

3.5 Validity of Instruments

Instrument validity was measured by conducting content validity measurement. Content validity index (CVI) was used to measure the degree to which the instruments had appropriate items for measuring magnitude of resource based conflicts, role of local peace committees and community-led peacebuilding initiatives for resource reliant respondents (Dawadi et al, 2021). Four experts were asked to rate each scale item in terms of its relevance to the underlying constructs using a 4-point ordinal scale: 1=not relevant; 2=somewhat relevant; 3=quite relevant; 4=highly relevant. Then, for each item, the CVI was computed as the number of experts giving a rating of either 3 or 4 (thus dichotomizing the ordinal scale into relevant and not relevant), divided by the total number of experts. The instrument was rated as highly relevant by three out of four judges, giving a CVI of .80.

3.6 Reliability of Instruments

Split-half method was done during pilot study with randomly selected 27 respondents to test instrument reliability. Internal consistency of the instrument was determined via split-half reliability index using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1970, cited in Akhtar, 2016). This involved splitting the instrument questions into two halves of equal items then calculating the coefficients of each half (Taherdoost, 2016). The internal consistency (reliability) of the study generated an Alpha coefficient of 0.849 which was greater than the threshold 0.7 espoused by Creswell and Plano (2018)

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data collected was processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics: mean (M), and Standard Deviation (SD) with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool. Qualitative data obtained from interviews was analysed through Thematic Analysis. This entailed categorization of generated answers into outstanding themes and reported in narrative forms (Braun & Becker, 2013).

IV. Results and Discussions

4.1 Results

4.1.1 Magnitude of Resource Based Conflicts in Lower Nyando River Basin

The researcher was able to collect data from 270 (men=180; women=90) respondents who were participating in extraction of various resources from diverse areas in the wetland. The researcher was, however, unable to reach all the sampled respondents owing to their busy schedule and exploitation nature of their duties. The first part of the study instrument enquired about the level of resource based conflict in the study area. The respondents were presented with different forms of conflicts and were asked to rate the incidents of such conflicts as: 1= Very Low to 5= Very high. Table 2 presents the Mean (M) distribution of incidents of resource based conflict.

Table 2: Magnitude of Resource Based Conflicts

Magnitude of Resource Based Conflicts	N	M	SD
Destruction and theft of Fishing Gears	270	4.32	.123
Destruction and theft of drying Papyrus Reeds	270	4.76	.026
Destruction and theft of crops in the fields	270	3.65	.014
Obstruction or denial of grazing fields	270	2.41	0.147
Physical assault	270	4.42	0.238
Overall mean and std. Dev	270	3.91	.080

Table 2 illustrates that the sampled respondents were of the view that incidents of resource based conflicts in the area was high (M=3.91; SD=0.080). This implies the magnitude of resource based conflicts in the area was high. The standard deviation (SD=.080) is small implying that there was no big difference in the opinions of the respondents with regard to the magnitude of conflicts witnessed in the area. This might suggest that almost each of the persons participating in extraction of resources in the Lower Nyando River Basin has been affected by incidents of conflict. Based on the mean interpretation scale, the respondents indicated that there were high incidents (M=4.32; SD=0.123) of destruction and theft of fishing gears; destruction and theft of drying papyrus reed (M=4.76; SD=0.026); destruction and theft of crops in the fields (M=3.65; SD=0.014), and incidents of physical assault (M=4.42; SD=.0.238). However, the sampled respondents indicated that incidents whereby grazing of livestock is stopped or denied by a section of communities were low or few (M=2.41; SD=0.147).

In the interviews conducted with the elected leaders, the researcher gathered that members of the natural resource extractors have often demarcated the wetland such that one clan lays claim to certain parts of the area. Any person from outside such clan is seen as an intruder. An outstanding statement appeared as:

The two clans lay claim to different portions of the wetland. Nyakach people have their presumed area and Kano (Nyando) also have their portion. There is an assumed rule that both sides must stick to their portions. However, some of resource users often 'overlap' and carry out their exploitation activities on the other people's areas. As a punishment, any property (fishing gears, drying papyrus, or crops) belonging to the intruder is 'attached' or destroyed (KII 4).

It is emerging from the statement from KII 4 that although the wetland does not belong to any of the persons laying claim on it, the two clans believe that they own part of it. Therefore, 'trespass' on their part of the wetland attracts the wrath of the 'owner'. Given that the wetland does not have demarcated boundaries, it implies that cases of trespass and destruction or confiscations of gears and goods are rampant.

4.1.2 Role of Local Peace Committees and Resource Based Conflicts

The second part of the study instrument enquired about the importance of the role of local peace committees in resource based conflicts in the study area. The researcher ran a descriptive statistic from responses obtained by the study questionnaire to generate Mean scores as: 1-Very Low to 5=Very High. Table 3 presents the Mean (M) scores of the role of local peace committees in resource based conflict in the study area.

Table 3: Role of Local Peace Committees in Resource Based Conflicts

Role of Peace Committees	N	M	SD
Reconciliation role	270	4.32	0.14
Mediation role	270	3.98	0.21
Arbitration role	270	4.21	0.34
Overall mean and Std. Dev	270	4.17	0.23

Findings presented in Table 3 illustrate that the sampled respondents consider the role played by local peace committees as highly important (M=4.17; SD=0.23). This tend to imply that there is a general acceptance that local peace committees are important peacebuilding initiative in the area. The respondents specifically indicated that reconciliation role (M=4.32; SD=0.14), mediation

role (M=3.98; SD=0.21) and arbitration role (M=4.21; SD=0.34) played by the local peace committees have been important in peacebuilding in the area.

During interviews with elected ward leaders, it emerged that formation of peace committees comprising of representatives of self-help groups, boda (motorcycle) riders, village elders, and professionals have played important roles in minimising tensions arising from exploitation of resources in the lower Nyando River Basin. An outstanding theme arising from one of the interviews was:

By the nature of their compositions, local peace committees represent the face of every member of the two communities (Nyakach and Nyando). These committees play an important role in resolving conflicts by reconciling parties especially where incidents of theft have taken place. In most cases, the committee members, due to the fact that they live in the villages, have been used to recover stolen property like fishing gears or papyrus reeds (KII 2).

It can be deduced from the statement from KII 2 that local peace committee members tend to act as village security agents. They help in recovery of stolen property as well as helping to bridge differences emanating from the act of theft. This seems to be an important role since it reduces tensions between contesting parties in the two areas.

In another interview, the researcher deduced that most of the committees have helped in averting impending eruption of conflicts and full time physical confrontation. An outstanding statement captured by the researcher appeared as:

Locally constituted peace committees are relied upon in understanding thorny issues affecting peaceful coexistence among members of the community. By identifying such antagonising issues, committees are able to transform them so that they cease from causing conflicts (KII 1).

The statement attributed to KII 1 tends to suggest that local committees perform the role of intelligence: they are capable of gathering information related to factors that are likely to cause conflicts in the near future and are able to transform or change those factors so that they do not cause conflict. The local peace committees avert impending conflicts.

4.1.3 Contribution of community led peace-building networks in resource based conflicts

The final part of the study enquired about the contribution of community led peacebuilding networks in resource based conflicts in the study area. The researcher ran some descriptive statistics from responses obtained by the study questionnaire to generate Mean scores to illustrate the extent to which community led peacebuilding networks have contributed towards pacification of conflicts as: 1-Very Low to 5=Very High. Table 4 presents the Mean (M) scores of the role of local peace committees in resource based conflict in the study area.

Table 4: Contribution of community led peace-building networks in Resource Based Conflicts

Community-led Peacebuilding network services	N	M	SD
Offering protection to victims	270	3.84	0.23
Peace advocacy and public communication or campaigns	270	4.28	0.29
Linkages with Social protection services	270	3.91	0.24
Overall mean and Std. Dev	270	4.01	0.25

Table 4 illustrates that community led peacebuilding networks have highly contributed to resolution of resource based conflicts in the study area (M=4.01; SD=0.25). This implies that peacebuilding networks existing in the study area have contributed in resolving conflicts to a large extent. Specifically, activities associated with community-led networks such as protection of victims (M=3.84; SD=0.23), peace advocacy and public communication or campaigns (M=4.28; SD=0.29), and linkages with organizations offering social protection services (M=3.91; SD=0.24) have highly contributed towards managing conflicts in the area.

During interviews with elected ward leaders, the researcher gathered that CSOs working in the area have used various strategies such as advocacy and public campaigns on issues that antagonise members of the communities. This in turn has averted friction and animosity that were often pointers to physical confrontations and turmoil-causing activities like theft or destruction of fishing gears among others. An outstanding theme arising from one of the interviews was:

Community led peace networks have often offered public communication and campaigns articulating peace and coexistence. These organizations have deep knowledge concerning causes of conflicts in the area due to the fact they often offer protection to victims of such conflicts. The community-led peace networks therefore use their peace messaging to transform the causes of conflicts thus help in averting the same (KII 3).

The statement attributed to KII 3 illustrates that community-led networks are important in educating the local communities about issues which catalyse frictions between people who have been co-existing in the area. The education messages are based on identified factors which act as catalysts of conflicts. The organizations therefore seem to play an important role of transforming the issues causing conflicts to become issues causing coexistence.

4.2 Discussions

It has been established by the study that conflicts related to exploitation of natural resources in the Lower Nyando River Basin exist in large magnitude. Conflicts associated with theft of fishing gear, theft of papyrus reed, and destruction of vegetable farms have been witnessed in the study area in high proportions. This is attributed to unfounded claims of ownership by the feuding groups. This finding seems to concur with earlier studies done in the area. Nasongo et al (2015), in a study done in this area, found that desperation for moist and fertile lands for crop growing and exploitation of papyrus reeds especially during dry season have caused frequent resource use conflicts. Similar finding indicating destruction of crops in common resource fields was also reported in Nigeria by Dimelu et al (2016).

The study further established that peacebuilding initiated locally such as local peace committees and community-led peacebuilding networks in the area have highly contributed in controlling escalation of conflicts. The reconciliation, mediation and arbitration roles played by local peace committees have been appreciated as highly acceptable because the composition of the committees are persons known to each clan and understand the likely causes of the conflicts. This finding agrees with the tenets of conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 2012) which articulates that transforming the causes of a conflict such that they (causes) become pillars of coexistence is an appropriate step in conflict resolution. Earlier studies also concurred that local peace committees have comparative advantages since all social groups in the community are equally represented, thus helping to meet the needs and aspirations of the community at large. Similarly, community-led peace networks have been highlighted in this study to be appreciated for advocacy and campaigns in matters peace in the area. This effort is similar to early studies (Watitu, 2014; Obi, 2018) which showed that practices such as peace messaging (among others) done by CSOs have had significant impacts on conflict resolution.

V. Conclusions

The study concludes that incidents and magnitude of resource based conflicts in the Lower Nyando River Basin is high. This situation exists from the notion that communities in the area have demarcated portions of the wetlands to be theirs hence property of intruders are destroyed or confiscated. Existing peace initiatives such as local peace committees and community-led peace networks have highly tended to control resource based conflicts in the area. The study also concludes that local peace committees are accepted for the reason that they are formed by representatives of local social groups and they understand causes of resource based conflicts in the area well enough to aid transformation of the same. The study additionally concludes that community-led peace networks have been important in the area for their role in peace advocacy and communication.

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations were made:

- I. It would be appropriate to have various seminars to afford members and groups opportunity to learn peacebuilding skills and conflict resolution mechanisms.
- II. Periodic active interventions should be organized by the county government, local administration, NGOs, FBOs, CSOs, professional bodies and other peace networks to map and stem potential conflicts from erupting.
- III. There is need to train the resource based users in the lower Nyando River Basin on conservation, protection and exploitation of these resources.

5.2 Recommendations for Further Research

The researcher appreciates that this study was limited in terms of sample size, scope and time. It is therefore recommended that a study with a large sample size covering a vast area over a period of time be conducted in the Lake Victoria Basin, other parts of Kenya, Africa and the world. In addition, the study suggests that a research be conducted on the cattle rustling menace between Nyakach sub county and the neighbouring Kericho county.

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