The role of youth in Mt.Elgon conflict: the case of Sabaot's land defence force 1993-2011

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Abstract:

Mount. Elgon District has been inflicted by serious conflict for a long time. The main cause of Mt. Elgon conflict centers on land though other causes like cattle rustling and power struggle among clan members inhabiting this region also play a significant role. Land in this district is a source of inter-ethnic tension. It is particularly portentous in the Chepyuk area where conflict arises over access to arable land. The government efforts to settle the land issue through formation of settlement schemes was marred by massive irregularities especially political interference and corruption of government officials and land officials causing many bona fide members to miss land allocation. This perceived problem led to the formation of Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF) in which the youth got actively involved. In short, this study examined the role played by the youth and how their lives and those of other inhabitants were generally affected by this conflict. The study also aims at generating strategies on how to involve the youth in creating sustainable peace building. The specific objectives included examining causes of conflict in Mount Elgon area; Youth involvement in the conflict and lastly to explore ways in which they could be involved in peace making and peace building in Mt. Elgon region. My research was based on the social conflict theory. Social conflict theory is a Marxist-based social theory which argues that individuals and groups within society have differing amounts of material and non-material resources and that the more powerful groups use their power in order to exploit groups with less power. The finding determined that the issue of land is the major cause of this conflict. It also determined that for sustained peace to be maintained in Mt. Elgon region, the youth who forms the majority should be involved in the process of peace making and peace building. More research is needed to find ways of fully engaging the youth in Peace making processes. All groups involved in peace making in Mount Elgon should fully involve the youth. Key Words: Youth, conflict, peace making, peace building and sustainable peace.