

The role of interfaith dialogue in conflict management among the Orma and Pokomo communities living in Tana Delta District in the Coast Province of Kenya

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of interfaith dialogue in conflict management among the Orma (Muslims) and Pokomo (Christians) communities living in Tarasaa division of Tana Delta district in the Coast Province of Kenya. In Kenya about 80 % of the population are Christians while the remaining 20 % consists of Muslims, Hindus, Kayas and other smaller sects. The coast region with a population of approximately 3.5 million comprises of 80 % Muslims and 20 % of the remaining population is made up of Christians, Hindus, Kayas and others. The Ormas are mainly Muslims while the majority of pokomos are Christians leading to different cultures and life styles. The religious leaders involved in interfaith dialogue have a large following and their roles in conflict resolution in society are an important area of life that promotes harmonious co-existence among communities. Although the two communities endowed with adequate natural resources that can be exploited for the benefit of its people, the same can only be developed if there were fewer conflicts among these communities. The main objective of the study was to assess the role of interfaith dialogue in managing conflicts among the Orma and Pokomo communities. The study was also to establish how different religious communities promote peace and integrate community cohesion through interfaith dialogue. Descriptive research was used to report the roles and contributions of interfaith dialogue process in conflict resolution. Self-administered questionnaires, personal interviews and desk data were used as methods of data collection. The key findings of the study indicated that lack of land adjudication and droughts have contributed to regular tensions and clashes. It is important that these two communities are sensitized to develop ways of transforming conflicts so as to produce positive thinking to enhance development in the area. The study also provided further avenues on the role of interfaith dialogue as a tool of conflict management and how these two different communities can promote unity and co-exist peacefully in applying diversity of cultures.