

**THE ROLE OF ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES
(AACC) IN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:
A CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN**

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

Sign..... Date.....

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R52/67912/2013

This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as University Supervisor.

Sign date

Dr. Martin Ouma

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my grandmother Mariamu Wambui Gaturo who passed on during the time I was doing the research.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I thank the Almighty God for giving me strength, peace of mind and wisdom. I acknowledge and appreciate the wisdom, guidance I received from my supervisor Dr. Martin Ouma who guided me through the whole research process and took a his time to study and critique my document, so as to ensure that it meets the recommended academic standards. I also acknowledge the support of my family- my wife Mercy and the children, Grace and Samuel - for being there for me and encouraging me in the whole process. May God richly bless and keep them. I acknowledge the research assistants led by William Ramogi who assisted in the data collection and organized the respondents. I also acknowledge the General Secretary and the staff of AACC who willingly provided information and the materials I needed to complete the research. Lastly, I acknowledge my respondents, the church leaders in Juba, South Sudan. I appreciate the information they willingly gave me to ensure that the study was a success. I sincerely thank them pray for God's blessings upon all of them.

ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at finding out the role of AACC in Conflict management in South Sudan. The country drifted back into conflict in December 2013 when there was fallout between President Salva Kiir and his deputy Riel Machar. Peace deals have been made and broken because they do not address the root causes of conflict which are largely identity-based. Such conflict requires transformation which religious organisations have good resources to deal with. The study was based on the following objectives: First, to analyze the impact of conflict to the churches South Sudan; Second, to evaluate the peace building strategies of the AACC in South Sudan conflict; and finally to examine the key challenges and opportunities facing AACC in its intervention in Sudan conflicts. The study was based on the theoretical framework of “conflict transformation.” The researcher placed AACC at a vantage point to bring this transformation. The literature review confirmed the importance of religious organisations in conflict management. It however, revealed the most highlighted incidence of AACC involvement in conflict management in Sudan was in 1972 when it facilitated the signing of the peace agreement. The research used mixed approach to research utilising both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires were used to collect data from church leaders in Juba, South Sudan. AACC reports and the discussions with the AACC secretariat also provided useful data to this research. The study found out that, the impact of AACC in influencing churches to participate in the conflict has decreased since the peace agreement of 1972. Though challenges to churches' participation in the peace process exist, the research identified myriad of opportunities that AACC can harness to improve churches' participation in the peace process. The study recommends that for AACC to remain relevant in conflict management in South Sudan, it must ensure that churches in this country remain united in purpose. Secondly, it must seek ways to enshrine the Christian principles of peace, forgiveness and reconciliation in the conflict management in order to bring about conflict transformation and ensure long lasting peace. Finally, the study recommends further study on (a) the reasons for AACC decline in influencing conflict management process in South Sudan and (b) ways of furthering collaboration between religious organizations and other international actors in conflict management.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AACC	–	All Africa Conference of churches
AU	–	African Union
ESE	-	Ecumenical Special Envoy
IGAD	–	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
NSCC	–	New Sudan Council of Churches
POCSS	-	Presbyterian Church of South Sudan
SCC	–	Sudan Council of Churches
SEF	–	Sudan Ecumenical Forum
SS	-	South Sudan
SSCC	–	South Sudan Conference of churches
UN	–	United Nations
WCC	–	World Council of churches

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This research study analysed the role played by religious organisations in the management of civil conflicts in Africa, with the focus on the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) and its role in the South Sudan conflict. The study focused primarily on south Sudanese conflict because the conflict has been highly internationalized and has had religious influences especially prior to its independence in 2011. The study assesses the impact of AACC in the conflict – either directly or through member churches- and tries to identify some of the challenges AACC faces in its efforts to intervene in the international conflicts.

This chapter gives the background to the study, the statement of the research problem, research objectives, and the justification of the study. It then presents the literature review on the AACC, the South Sudan conflict, the relationship between religion and conflict, resurgence of religion in international conflicts the role of religion in both propagation and management of international conflict, and the role of interreligious dialogue in international conflict management. The chapter also identifies the literature gap, the conceptual framework, the research design and finally the chapters outline.

1.1 Background of the Study

The end of the Cold War brought with it hope and optimism about better days of peace and a hope for more co-operative model of international relations. The world has however witnessed “narrow and exclusivist identities, based on either ethnicity or

religion, become powerful weapons in the struggle for survival in the 'new world order'.¹ Issues of identity have been presented as the cause of so many recent wars, though strategic interests and economic factors are the main motivations.² The post-September 11 world is seized with the dangers of religious extremism and conflict between religious communities. However, little study has been done in the area of the connection between religion and conflict. In fact this ambivalent relationship between religion and conflict has only recently been acknowledged. The ongoing conflict has heightened the awareness of the potential power of religion to fuel conflict.³

Religion is a strong force both in conflict escalation and de-escalation. It touches upon the deepest levels of identity. It can mobilize people for war, but also for lasting peace.⁴ When communal identities, particularly religious identities, are key causal factors in violent conflict, traditional diplomacy may be of little value in seeking peace or conflict management.⁵ The contribution of religious institutions in the management of conflict has largely been ignored historically both in practice and scholarship. This is largely because international conflict resolution theorists have largely adopted the position that organized religion is primarily, if not essentially, an instigator of violence and therefore have tended to exclude religion as a force for peace building.

¹ Francis Diana. *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. (London: Pluto Books, 2002), 3

² See Abu-Nimer Mohamed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model Interreligious Peace Building." *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 685

³ Shore Megan. *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 1.

⁴ LoWilla Emmanuel "Intrafaith and Interfaith Dialogue in Southern Sudan." In Smock David R. (Ed) *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 28.

⁵ Smock David R. *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 1

Recently, however, scholars such as Scott Appleby, Marc Gopin, Douglas Johnston and Cynthia Sampson have suggested that religion can contribute constructively to a theory of conflict resolution and the practice of diplomacy.⁶ Douglas Johnston has identified conditions in several conflict situations that lend themselves to faith-based intervention. These include: where religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or both parts to the conflict; where religious leaders on both sides of the dispute can be mobilized to facilitate peace; and where protracted struggles between two major religious traditions transcend national borders.⁷ With the resurgence of religion in the international affairs and conflict, and with widespread globalization, many international conflicts today would fit this description hence the increased need to involve religious organizations such as AACC in conflict management.

Religion has an impact on the conflict causes, dynamic, and resolution. Religious values, like other cultural values, can motivate people to fight or to reconcile. Similarly, religious rituals like other cultural rituals can be powerful tools in transforming animosity to cooperation.⁸ Religious resources that are useful in the management of conflict and in peace making include religious ideas, religious practices, social organization, and religious or spiritual experiences. Further, religious values of empathy and compassion can be tapped for effective religious peacemaking.⁹ These are valuable recourses for

⁶ See Shore Megan. *Religion and Conflict Resolution: Christianity and South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009),1.

⁷ Smock David R. *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 2

⁸ Abu-Nimer Mohamed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model of Interreligious Peace Building." *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 686

⁹ Smock 2006: 3

transformation needed to bring an end to cycles of conflict. Unfortunately, traditional diplomacy has been particularly remiss in its neglect of the religious approach to peacemaking.¹⁰

The world has also witnessed mediation and peacemaking efforts by religious leaders and institutions. For example, the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the AACC, mediated the short-lived 1972 peace agreement in Sudan and the engagement of the community of churches in the struggle against apartheid and the peaceful transition in South Africa.¹¹ There has also been notable interest by religious organizations in working for peace, establishing medical clinics, social welfare agencies and schools, as well as providing humanitarian assistance amidst war, famine and natural disasters. Religious peacemaking is becoming much more common, and is growing at an increasing pace hence the need for more study in this area.

Another avenue for religious contribution to international conflict management is through interfaith dialogue which can help to reduce ignorance about others' religious beliefs and traditions. This can greatly transform peoples' opinions and prevent the growth of extreme religious fundamentalism which motivates terrorism. Terrorism is ideally ideological. Ideological wars are as a result of misunderstandings and wrong description of others who do not fit in a certain ideology. Such misunderstandings and extremism can be reduced if international ecumenical organisations can engage each other in open

¹⁰ Smock David R. *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War.* (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 4

¹¹ Ibid

dialogue. When (religious) leaders interact with each other, their followers can learn how to interact creatively and non-violently as well.¹²

There have been several attempts to bring the south Sudan conflict to an end. Peace agreements have been signed and violated. Efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to seek peaceful resolution by attempting to ensure an inclusive process have not been successful. On three occasions it has convinced the warring parties to agree to end hostilities, but the violence on the ground continues.¹³ The management of this conflict requires more than signing of peace deals. It requires a transformation of perceptions, changes of attitudes and cultural transformation. This requires a multi dimensional approach in which religious organisations can play an active role. This study seeks to understand the role and impact of AACC in the South Sudan peace process.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Globally, there is observable increased shift of international conflicts from conventional war to “new wars” that are increasingly ideological and religious in nature. These “new wars” are based on the platform of values and identity. They are perpetuated more by beliefs and convictions rather than politics and economics. Realist’s approach of use of power has not succeeded in making the world safer. The nature of international conflicts has changed. There has been increase in the frequency of intra-state wars which are

¹² LoWilla Emmanuel “Intrafaith and Interfaith Dialogue in Southern Sudan.” In Smock David R. (Ed) *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 26

¹³ Oxfam International. “From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan’s Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015”. *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 6

triggered by identity rather than traditional national interests. Transnational terrorism is also on the rise.

A 'new security environment' has emerged with new security aspects which include genocide, ecological and natural resource wars, as well as territorial disputes and genocidal violence. The new security environment has new rules, new actors, new threats that have reshaped and continue to reshape the contemporary security landscape.¹⁴ Many current wars are related to religious identity. Scholarship notes that, conflicts with religious components can pose a particular challenge for peace making processes. Unless we understand the ways in which religion can be transformed in armed conflicts, we will not be able to design processes to facilitate such transformations.¹⁵ Considering the subject of conflict prevention and resolution in a religious context will help to bring out, the cultural nuances relating to human rights and widen understanding of the underlying issues in Conflict.

Due to lack of this emphasis, Western observers, for example, have trouble accepting the Islamic approach to human rights with its differentiated treatment of women and non-Muslims.¹⁶ Religion is a very important factor to all aspects of human existence. In 2010, the world was estimated to be 33.39% Christian, 22.74% Muslim, 13.8% Hindu, 6.77% Buddhist, 0.35% Sikh, 0.22% Jewish, 0.11% Baha'i, 10.95% other religions, 9.66% non-

¹⁴ Butler Michael J. *International Conflict Management*. (London: Routledge, 2009), 42.

¹⁵ Svensson Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolutions in Civil Wars*. (Washington: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 25.

¹⁶ Johnston Douglas M. "Religion and Conflict Resolution." In 67 *Notre Dame Law Review*. 1287 (1992: 53-61), 59.

religious, 2.01% atheists.¹⁷ Despite the importance of the religious factor, there is not much literature on the potential of involvement of religious organizations in conflict management and how international community can make use, and partner with the religious organizations.

Most previous discussions focused on questions why religious conflicts start, escalate and become intractably stalemate. Little attention has been paid to this question of how conflicts can de-escalate, once religion has been brought into the dynamics of the armed conflicts.¹⁸ There is little systematic research on the impact of religious faith on the course of conflicts, and on adequate strategies for dealing peacefully with conflicts which includes a religious dimension¹⁹ The conflict in South Sudan is rooted in the unresolved tensions of two decades of civil war in what was Sudan. It is a reflection of underlying tensions and mistrust among South Sudanese leaders and ethnic groups that dates back to Sudan's civil war (1983-2005), and before.²⁰ Such tensions and mistrust cannot be resolved without appeal to personal value system which, requires inclusion of the religious community in search of lasting peace. An ecumenical institution such as AACC would help to amplify the effect of the religious bodies in conflict management, both locally and internationally hence its importance in this study. This study seeks to evaluate the question: How AACC has effectively played its role in the management of South Sudan conflict?

¹⁷ The World FactBook. www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xx.html. accessed

¹⁸ Svensson Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolutions in Civil Wars*. (Washington: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 14

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Blanchard L Ploch. "The Crisis in South Sudan." *Congressional Research Service*, (CRS, January 2014), 2

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of All Africa Conference of Churches in the management of the South Sudan Conflict.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- a) To analyze the impact of conflict to the churches in South Sudan.
- b) To evaluate the peacemaking strategies of the All Africa Conference of Churches in South Sudan Conflict.
- c) To examine the key challenges and opportunities facing All Africa Conference of Churches in its intervention in Sudan conflicts.

1.4 Specific Research Questions

- a) In what ways has conflict in South Sudan affected churches in South Sudan?
- b) What has been the role of AACC in the efforts of conflict resolution in South Sudan?
- c) What are the experiences and challenges of All Africa Conference of Churches in its effort to intervene in South Sudan Conflict?

1.5 Literature Review

1.5.1 Introduction

Since antiquity, religion has been a factor in both intra-national and international conflicts. It has impact on the conflict causes, dynamic, and resolution as well as influencing escalation and de-escalation of conflicts.²¹ Religious values can motivate people to fight or to reconcile. Similarly, religious rituals (like other cultural rituals) can be powerful tools in transforming animosity to cooperation.²² Since the end of the Cold War, most conflicts are driven from clashes of communal identity, based on race, ethnicity, or religious affiliation. In this section, the paper analyses importance of religious factor in international conflict and how religion influences conflict management. It also examines literature on AACC in the management of South Sudan conflict.

1.5.2 All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)

AACC is an ecumenical fellowship that represents more than 120 million African Christians in 174 national churches and regional Christian councils.²³ It was formed in 1963. At the time African countries were seeking autonomy. African church like any other institution was affected by socio-political geography of the time. The social and economic structure of Africa the African continent derived its form from the arrangements and agreements between European powers at the Berlin conference 1884-

²¹ See Thomas Scott M. "How Shall We Then Live? Rethinking Religion, Politics and Communities in an Age of Global Terrorism" In Berma Klein Goldwijk (Ed). *Religion, International relations and Development Cooperation*. (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic publishers, 2007), 6.

²² Abu-Nimer Mohamed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model of Interreligious Peace Building." *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 685

²³ WCC. *All Africa Conference of Churches*. WCC. www.oikoumene.org/en/member-churches/africa/aacc

5.²⁴ The Christian churches were seeking for a vehicle to unite them having caught up in the civil strife that had torn apart many countries in tropical Africa . The decision to create a regional organization was taken at a widely representative meeting at Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1958. The head office of the AACC is in Nairobi, Kenya; there is a regional office in Lomé, Togo.

The work of the Provisional and Continuation Committees appointed following the Ibadan Conference, led to the birth of the AACC at its first assembly on 20 April, 1963 in Kampala, Uganda. The theme of the Kampala assembly was Freedom and Unity in Christ. The delegates addressed the colonial situation in the spirit of nationalism. The message of Kampala to the churches in Africa was, “why must we continue in divisions, which crucify the Lord until he returns?”.²⁵ The newly created AACC sought to identify with the aspirations of the peoples of the continent and exhorted the churches to participate in the building of the African nation. AACC continued to accompany the churches in their engagement in the decolonization and nation-building processes. It also played a significant role in the dismantling of apartheid in Southern Africa.

AACC walks has stood with the churches in addressing relevant issues that confront the continent. Some of the issues in its agenda include; social and economic justice, health and wholeness (HIV/AIDS) as well as issues of governance, ethics and morality. Through its Peace and advocacy arm AACC has a vision of fostering a culture of tolerance and harmonious life between individuals, communities and nations on the basis of the

²⁴ Efiog Utuk. *Visions of Authenticity: The Assemblies of All Africa Conference of Churches 1963-1992*. (Nairobi: AACC, 1997), 13

²⁵ Ibid

conviction that peace is not only a right and a gift from God but a prerequisite for development.²⁶ Its aim is to achieve a conflict free Africa, to make peace a reality and to rid the continent of wars, civil conflicts, human rights violations, humanitarian disasters and violent conflicts, and to prevent genocide with the aim of ending all wars in Africa by 2020.²⁷ AACC seeks to achieve this through high level ecumenical diplomacy.

AACC also seeks to create awareness among churches about their responsibility and involvement in ensuring, there is good and accountable governance and democratic transition, so as to prevent conflict. It also seeks to be involved through intervention in specific burning situations and has special focus to Sudan and South Sudan.²⁸ This research was motivated by the scantiness of literature on the involvement of AACC in the South Sudan Conflict. The most cited involvement is in 1972 when AACC in collaboration with the WCC helped to mediate a peace agreement in Sudan that restored peace from 1972 forming the basis for a relatively peaceful 10 year period before another phase of civil war continued in 1983.²⁹ The involvement of AACC in the South Sudan conflict has not been consistent.

After the 1972 Addis Ababa peace agreement, both WCC and AACC were criticized by churches and the people of Sudan for abandoning them. They perceived the two ecumenical organizations as not being involved even in basic monitoring and in the

²⁶ AACC. *The Post Jubilee Assembly Programmatic Thrusts 2014-2018*.(Nairobi:AACC), 14

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ WCC and AACC. *Ecumenical Journey with the churches and the people of Sudan*. Nairobi: Noel Creative Media, 2009 (iv)

implementation of the agreement.³⁰ AACC's presence in Sudan however, continued through SCC and the NSCC, through which the churches of Sudan succeeded in making their contribution to the achievement of peace, justice and human rights in Southern Sudan and Sudan Generally.³¹ It has been argued that increasingly, the churches generated tremendous social capital and the people trusted them more than they trusted the Sudan government or any other organization.³² Churches have actively participated in the fields of civic education, reconciliation, forgiveness and healing. Further, the churches have been involved in the mediation process.

The office of the Ecumenical Special Envoy (ESE) to Sudan was established by AACC and the Sudan Ecumenical Forum (SEF) in 2013. Sudan Ecumenical forum is an ecumenical instrument of both the catholic and protestant churches. ESE was aimed at the follow ups on the achievements around the mediation process and the comprehensive review of the governance organs, instruments and systems of SCC.³³ AACC is the legal holder of the office of the ecumenical envoy and it also coordinates and serves as the lead agency on behalf of the wider ecumenical community.³⁴ In times of Unity challenges, ESE stepped in to assist Sudanese church leaders in addressing these challenges, through the process of healing and reconciliation, both high level advocacy and capacity building for the churches to engage meaningfully in resolving these challenges.³⁵

³⁰ *ibid* 4

³² Rev Dr Samuel Kobia. *The Ecumenical Journey with Sudan*. WCC and AACC (eds). *Ecumenical Journey with the churches and the people of Sudan*. Nairobi: Noel Creative Media, 2009 (1-15), 6

³³ Samuel Kobia: *ESE. Midyear Report*. (2013), 1.

³⁴ Kobia Samuea: *From Referendum to independence: a report on ecumenical diplomacy for Sudan*. January to July 2011.

³⁵ Samuel Kobia: *ESE. Midyear Report*. (2013), 1.

AACC continues to create awareness on the need to observe good governance. At independence, AACC forewarned the South Sudanese leadership of the risk the country faces of sliding back into conflict. The following is an extract of the letter to the president:

"While you have realized self determination, a lot remains to be done to achieve economic and social anticipation, nation building requires sacrifice of the individual and group, self interest and the concerted effort of all Sudanese. There are many false starts undertaken by a majority of African countries at the time of their independence. Many mistakes were made with gravious political, social and economic implications. The republic of South Sudan should be in position to learn from such mistakes, in order not to repeat them. We at AACC will accompany the Sudanese churches as their partners in discerning the way forward, in the search of the South Sudan the Sudanese want; in discerning the soul of the nation and the fundamental values that constitute the foundation of the society."³⁶

Further, AACC continued with advocacy programs aimed at trying to bring political reconciliation through, a process that looked into the possibility of a regional intervention in the event of political instability in South Sudan. Through ESE, it embarked on mission to hold briefing meeting with regional political leaders who included Yoweri Museveni in April 2013, Uhuru Kenyatta in June 2013 and Erastus Mwencha the Vice Chair AU commission.³⁷

1.5.3 South Sudan Conflict

Republic South Sudan located in the eastern Africa and neighbours the Republics of Sudan, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia. South Sudan became independent from Sudan on 9th July, 2011 and its capital is at Juba. The population of South Sudan is diverse, with the main tribes being the Dinka

³⁶ Karamaga Andre (AACC General Secretary) in a letter to President Kiir dated 9th July 2011.

³⁷ Samuel Kobia: ESE. Midyear Report. (2013), 3.

and the Lou Nuer as well as many other smaller tribes. The communities and political entities in South Sudan have never been united. The country's diverse population dispersed over a large territory, coupled with poor communications has made it difficult to develop a truly common identity, except in opposition to the North during the country's struggle for independence.

The current crisis in South Sudan is rooted in the unresolved tensions of two decades of civil war in what was Sudan. It is a reflection of underlying tensions and mistrust among South Sudanese leaders and ethnic groups that dates back to Sudan's civil war (1983-2005), and before.³⁸ Despite the common goal of independence, the South Sudanese opposition was never well unified. Most SPLM leaders put aside their differences in the latter years of the independence struggle, to face the common challenge but simmering ethnic tensions and bitter interpersonal rivalries remained, growing under the strains of establishing governing institutions.³⁹ The peace process that led to signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) did little to resolve local conflicts, tackling the proliferation of arms, or providing basic services for all of South Sudan's people. As a result, some groups felt they lacked a stake in the 'peace' or independence that had been won.⁴⁰

Against this background, Salva Kiir a Dinka became the president and Riek Machar a Nuer became the Vice President but the relations between them never became stable.

³⁸ Blanchard L Ploch. "The Crisis in South Sudan." *Congressional Research Service*, (CRS, January 2014), 2

³⁹Ibid

⁴⁰ "From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan's Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015". *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 6

President Kiir's July 2013 announcement of a major cabinet reshuffle, in which Vice President Machar and several other key officials were removed from office, formalized a major fissure in the ruling party.⁴¹ The SPLM and its army (SPLA), quickly split resulting in the formation of the SPLA in Opposition.⁴² On 15th December 2013 South Sudan, descended into civil war that pitched forces loyal to President Salva Kiir against those loyal to former Vice President Riek Machar. Both sides sought to gain and hold ground in order to maximize their negotiating position prior to any ceasefire agreement and were willing to continue fighting for a long time to achieve these.⁴³ The violence has led to an "appalling levels of brutality against civilians, including deliberate killings inside churches and hospitals."⁴⁴

Though most of the fighting was politically instigated, there were ethnic drivers to the escalating violence. Dinka and Nuer ethnic identities were deliberately politicized. The conflict was also exacerbated by the proliferation of arms and the lack of development in the country.⁴⁵ Efforts by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to seek peaceful resolution by attempting to ensure an inclusive process, were often not successful. "On three occasions (IGAD) has convinced the warring parties to agree to end

⁴¹ Blanchard L Ploch. *The Crisis in South Sudan*. CRS Report. Congressional Research Service, (CRS, January 2014), 3

⁴² "South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name." *Africa Report No. 217*. (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 10 April 2014)

⁴³ Oxfam International. "From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan's Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015". *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 3

⁴⁴ Oxfam International. "South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name." *Africa Report No. 217*. (Brussels: International Crisis Group, (10 April 2014)

⁴⁵ Oxfam International. "From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan's Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015." *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 2

hostilities, but the violence on the ground continues.”⁴⁶ One such agreement was signed on 23 January 2014 under strong regional and Western pressure, with the parties agreeing to a cessation of hostilities and for “every effort” to release the detainees were signed.⁴⁷ Neither the government nor the SPLM/A in Opposition complied with the cessation of hostilities, and “the monitoring and verification mission is not yet operational.”⁴⁸

The violence had serious effects to the people of South Sudan. Many women and girls were abducted, raped, and killed. Schools were closed as a result of the conflict, leaving children with little opportunity to learn.⁴⁹ Further, the country was plunged into the world’s worst food crisis.⁵⁰ By October 2014, 1.7 million people had already fled their homes with about 450,000 having sought safety in other countries.⁵¹ There were also high levels of malnourishment and death of children. It is the view of this researcher that such context, calls for multidimensional approach to the peace process. As the parties engage in the mediation process religious players, should emphasise transformation of values and perceptions of both the political leaders and the general populace.

1.5.4 The Resurgence of Religion in International Conflicts

Despite the efforts to push religion out of politics since Westphalia, the contemporary world is witnessing a trend in which religion is increasingly occupying more and more

⁴⁶ Oxfam International. “From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan’s Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015”. *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 6

⁴⁷ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁸South Sudan: A Civil War by Any Other Name. Africa Report No. 217. (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 10 April 2014)

⁴⁹ Oxfam International. “From Crisis to Catastrophe: South Sudan’s Man-Made Crisis – and How the World must Act now to Prevent Catastrophe In 2015”. *Joint Agency Briefing Note*, (6 October 2014), 12

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

critical space in political and public life. It has become one of the important factors in conflicts in almost every corner of the globe. Increasingly, religious fundamentalism and religious difference have emerged as crucial factors in international conflict, national security, and foreign policy.⁵² Though religion in most times is not the cause of conflict, it has been used by parties in conflict to advance their political agenda and “war-justifying aspects of sacred texts emphasized rather than peaceful teachings.”⁵³ Resurgence of religion has begun to take hold in virtually every part of the globe with religion being used as a tool to influence political systems.

With religion having a pivotal role in shaping the world today, it is no longer possible to disregard it from the analysis of international relations and armed conflicts.⁵⁴ Elizabeth Hurd however, does not agree with the term ‘resurgence’. According to her, religion has never been pushed out but the secularist division between religion and politics is socially and historically constructed. This “explains why students of international relations have been unable to properly recognize the power of religion in world politics.”⁵⁵ In her opinion,

Religion is not on its way back into international relations but, it never really departed. It is the real world events that have forced religion back into consciousness of international relations, theorists making it impossible to maintain that religion is irrelevant to international outcomes.⁵⁶

⁵² Hurd Elizabeth Shakman. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. (Princeton: Princeton University, 2008), 17.

⁵³ Abu-Nimer Mohamed. “Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model of Interreligious Peace Building.” *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 686

⁵⁴ Svensson Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolutions in Civil Wars*. (Washington: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 14

⁵⁵ Hurd Elizabeth Shakman. *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations*. (Princeton: Princeton University, 2008), 18

⁵⁶ Ibid

Globally, extremists are increasingly using religion to justify violence. The recent developments in the context of the “Arab Spring” witnessed a number of groups and parties ascend into dominant positions in the name of religion.⁵⁷ Because of the importance part played by religion in the international arena, it has been hard to impose America’s vision of secular democracy around the world. Some obvious forms of this challenge are visible in the spectrum that includes Al-Qaeda, the Hindutva movement in India, the Pakistan Awami Tehreek, the Turkish Justice and development Party, and the evangelical Christian Movement in the United States.⁵⁸ Consequently, the age of religious warfare is with us still, as potent as it has always been, throughout history⁵⁹

1.5.5 Religion in Complication of Conflict

Religions are credible means of conveying meaning and truth. The world has witnessed many conflicts that have been perpetrated in the name of religion in places such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Nigeria, and Central Africa Republic. Scholars agree that, religious conflicts differ from other wars and are more complex than disputes over territory and political or economic dominance.⁶⁰ They are difficult to resolve due to the non-bargainable nature of the motivations behind them making it hard for parties to reach compromises. When conflicts are couched in religious terms, they become transformed in

⁵⁷ Commission of Churches in International Affairs. *The Churches in International Affairs: Reports 2010-2013*. (Geneva: WCC, 2014), 7

⁵⁸ Ibid

⁵⁹ Catherwood Christopher. *Making war in the Name of God: Why Religion is at the Centre of Today’s Conflicts*. (New York: Citadel Press, 2008), 217

⁶⁰ Broadhead Phillip & Keown Damien (Eds). *Can faiths make peace? Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflicts*. (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 2

value conflicts. Value conflicts have a tendency to become mutually conclusive or zero-sum issues.⁶¹

Religion however, for the most part, has been seen as a complicating factor rather than an underlying cause of conflict. However in most cases, armed conflicts are never one-dimensional - political, economic, military and wider cultural issues are part of the complex nature of armed conflicts, together with religious disputes.⁶² Even when courses are not religious in nature, parties would appeal to religion to gain legitimacy of their course. This necessitates the need to appeal to religious oriented conflict managers to be more involved in the peace processes. In doing this, different aspects of conflict management especially those dealing with personal and social values would be addressed.

1.5.6 The Role of Religion in the Management of Conflict

The fact that religion is at the heart of most conflicts makes it imperative to use religious tools in the management of conflicts. It has been argued that under the right circumstances religious or spiritual factors can effectively contribute to the prevention, amelioration, or resolution of conflict.⁶³ Religion can bring social, moral, and spiritual resources to the peace building process, hence creating a sense of engagement and a commitment both to peace and to transforming a relationship of a missing dimension

⁶¹ Reychler Luc. Religion and Conflict. In *The International Journal of Peace Studies*. Vol 2. No. 1. (1997). Accessed 3rd March 2015. http://www.gmu.edu/programs/icar/ijps/vol2_1/Reyschler.htm

⁶² Svensson Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolutions in Civil Wars*. (Washington: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 105

⁶³ Johnston Douglas M. "Religion and Conflict Resolution." *67 Notre Dame Law Review*. 1287 (1992): 53

from the mechanical and instrumental conflict resolution models.⁶⁴ Framing the intervention within a religious context and deriving the tools from a religious narrative, makes it possible for interveners to gain access and increase their potential impact on the parties.

Conflict managers need to put into consideration that religion influences the cultural behaviours and perceptions of individuals and groups, and also helps to construct both the individual's and the group's value system and world-view.⁶⁵ Thomas observes that, while peacekeeping forces, new constitutions, and development assistance are important in the short term, long-term peace-building efforts should include an on-going dialogue between communities, and a dialogue within their cultural and religious traditions on what are the core values and goals of these traditions. This is the only way of promoting global security and stability over the long haul.⁶⁶

Religious input in the management of international conflict is necessary because every religion has its own peaceful potential that can be tapped in order to contribute to compassion, non violence, understanding, democracy and peace.⁶⁷ Just as religion is a factor in marinating conflict, spiritual dimension will be required if the cycle of revenge that typically accompanies ethnic hostilities and other conflicts is ever to be broken.

⁶⁴ Abu-Nimer Mohamed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model of Interreligious Peace Building." *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 686

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Thomas Scott M. "How Shall We Then Live? Rethinking Religion, Politics and Communities in an Age of Global Terrorism" In Berma Klein Goldwijk (Ed). *Religion, International relations and Development Cooperation*. (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic publishers, 2007), 68

⁶⁷ Svensson Isak. *Ending Holy Wars: Religion and Conflict Resolutions in Civil Wars*. (Washington: University of Queensland Press, 2012), 22

Without some element of forgiveness and reconciliation, the pattern of responding in kind will continue unabated.⁶⁸

David Smock lists some of the attributes that religious leaders and institutions can offer in promoting peace and reconciliation. They include: credibility as a trusted institution; a respected set of values; moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments; unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to re-humanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict; a capability to mobilize community, nation, and international support for a peace process; an ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement; and a sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise debilitating, obstacles.⁶⁹

Religion is therefore a powerful and ambivalent cultural force that can shape the human imagination and reproduce itself in modern social system.⁷⁰ It is only the religions themselves that can transform the value system of their followers. This makes it imperative for the international community to tap into the resources of religious organizations like AACC, in the management of international conflict. Not only can AACC participate in the mediation process, it can also mobilise its constituent member churches and organisation to enrich the processes by bringing in the tools that would lead

⁶⁸ Johnston Douglas M. "Religion and Conflict Resolution." *67 Notre Dame Law Review*. 1287 (1992): 60

⁶⁹ Smock David R. (Ed) *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 2

⁷⁰ Herbert Davin. "Islam and Reconciliation: traditions, contexts and Contemporary practices" in Broadhead Phillip & Keown Damien (Eds). *Can faiths make peace? Holy Wars and the Resolution of Religious Conflicts*. (London: IB Tauris, 2007), 26.

to conflict transformation. This would ensure that the peace obtained last beyond the signing of documents.

1.5.7 The Role of Interreligious Dialogue in International Conflict Management

There are important points of convergence in the teaching of different religions. For example, each incorporates significant elements of universalism as well as some variation of the golden rule.⁷¹ These are important touchstones upon which one can build in enhancing interfaith dialogue and developing an effective framework for the prevention and resolution of violence.⁷² The objective of interreligious peace building through dialogue is to change the participants' world-view, particularly attitudes and behaviours towards the 'other'. Interreligious dialogue leads to transformation. Through the interreligious dialogue, the openness to the religious other as also a child of God, and a commitment to recognizing that we are all travellers on a common quest, will replace exclusive truth claims.⁷³ This will eventually lead to more understanding and tolerance with the effect of reducing religious motivated conflicts.

Diversity does not always breed chaos. Instead it can be a source of harmony as diverse factors act in harmony to amplify the positive attitudes. When the religious resources are tapped through positive engagements, competition and conflict maybe transformed into peace and tranquility. It has been observed that strengthening and maintaining ethnic and

⁷¹ Commission of Churches in International Affairs. *International Affairs at the Tenth Assembly: Statements, Minutes and Resolutions*. (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 7

⁷² Johnston Douglas M. "Religion and Conflict Resolution." *67 Notre Dame Law Review*. 1287 (1992): 59.

⁷³ Bennett Clinton. *In Search of Solutions: The Problem of Religion and Conflict*. (London: Equinox, 2008), 237.

religious diversity, as Paul Collier argues, can actually make states and societies safer rather than more dangerous.⁷⁴ All Africa Conference of churches, being ecumenical in nature, is well placed to spearhead interreligious dialogue in the continent and to encourage member churches on the importance of interreligious dialogue in peace building.

1.5.8 Summary of the Gaps Established by the Literature Review

Review of literature shows that effective conflict management approaches, must involve religious resources in the management of civil conflicts especially due to the identified role of religion both in the escalation and de-escalation of conflicts. The contribution that religion can make to peacemaking as the flip side of religious conflict is only beginning to be explored and explicated.⁷⁵ While this fact is widely appreciated, there is little literature on how the religious institutions can cooperate and partner with governmental and intergovernmental organizations in the management of international conflicts. Motivated by secularization efforts since the Westphalia, most available literature has focused on the negative influence of religion in conflict management.

AACC is an important continental ecumenical organisation and very central in influencing policies and activities of churches and affiliate institution with regard to their involvement in the management of conflicts in Africa. Very little literature however, exists on its involvement in the South Sudan Conflict. This research seeks bridge this

⁷⁴ Thomas Scott M. "How Shall We Then Live? Rethinking Religion, Politics and Communities in an Age of Global Terrorism" In Berma Klein Goldwijk (Ed). *Religion, International relations and Development Cooperation*. (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic publishers, 2007), 67

⁷⁵ Smock David R. *Religious contribution to Peace making: When religion brings Peace not War*. (Washington DC: USIP, 2006), 1

literature gap by assessing, how AACC has been involved in the South Sudan conflict especially, how it has influenced the churches to take an active role in bringing about the right transformation to this conflict. The study also seeks, to provide more literature on the cooperation and partnership between AACC and the international bodies such, as the IGAD and how much local churches are aware of such cooperation.

1.6 Justification of the Study

This study seeks to contribute to literature on conflict management by providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between interventions and conflicts. It seeks to evaluate the effectiveness of the international ecumenical institutions the management of conflicts with specific focus to AACC. The research will add to the body of literature on management the multilateral approaches to conflict management. The study intends to bring out the tools of conflict management, inherent in international ecumenical religious organizations that can enrich the process of managing conflicts. Majority of African citizens have some affiliations to religion and some allegiance to religious organisations. These organisations have potential to affect social values that are at the core of most conflicts.

Currently, very little has been written on the role of AACC in the management of conflicts in Africa. This study seeks to bridge this literature gap by shedding more light on the work of AACC in south Sudan. This is despite its numerical strength and following across Africa. AACC has 173 members in 40 African countries. The membership comprises Churches, National Christian Councils, Theological and Lay

Training Institutions, and other Christian organisations.⁷⁶ This study therefore provides valuable lessons for similar religious organizations that intend to participate in the conflict management and opens up new areas of study on deeper collaboration between religious organizations and other international actors in conflict management.

At policy level, the study will be useful to internationalised value based conflicts in Africa and other parts of the world. Values based conflicts cannot be fully managed by military action. It requires a multilateral approach where religious organisations can play a very significant role. This study is intended to help the policy makers, peace practitioners and conflict managers at the international levels, to come up with policies and strategies that appreciate the importance of religion in the management of conflict and incorporate the contribution of religious organizations in this process. The study will contribute to the enrichment of scholarship literature on the management of international conflict especially the role that AACC can play in the management of modern conflicts.

While appreciating that modern international conflicts are increasingly identity and value based, this study emphasises the need for theories and approaches that appreciate more the role of religious organizations. Such theories and approaches must utilize religious resources and influence in order to ensure long term solutions to most of modern day conflicts. This study is also aimed at providing practical tools for the Christian churches represented by AACC, to participate in the propagation of peace and promotion of peaceful coexistence at local and international levels. It is also aimed at raising awareness of churches and other religious organizations of the resources they have for conflict

⁷⁶ Source: AACC website.

management, and of their potential at conflict transformation which will ensure more peaceful societies.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

This research is based on the concept of conflict transformation which emphasizes peace as embedded in justice, the building of right relationships and social structures through a radical respect for human rights, and non-violence as way of life.⁷⁷ Conflict transformation denotes processes aimed at making relationships more just, meeting the needs of all and allowing for the full participation and dignity of all. It also focuses on the processes through which conflict management may be addressing conflict without violence, mitigating and overcoming hurt and hatred, making coexistence possible, and developing a 'constructive conflict culture' so that new and ongoing conflicts do not become destructive, but are able to contribute to the well-being of a society.⁷⁸ In this perspective, conflicts do not always produce negative effects but provide opportunity for growth and increases our understanding of ourselves and others. The aim conflict transformation is to bring constructive change out of the energy created by conflict.⁷⁹

This conceptual model identifies the root causes of social conflict as identity and relationship. Conflict management must then go beyond finding a quick solution to the problem at hand, and seek to address what is happening in human relationships at a

⁷⁷ Lederach, John Paul. "Conflict Transformation." In *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: October 2003. Accessed 3rd March 2015. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation>.

⁷⁸ Francis Diana. *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. (London: Pluto Books, 2002), 7

⁷⁹ Lederach, John Paul. "Conflict Transformation." In *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: October 2003. Accessed 3rd March 2015. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation>.

deeper level. It must create a platform to address the content, the context, and the structure of the relationship, hence allowing parties to begin to find creative responses and solutions. The aim is to generate creative platforms that can simultaneously address surface issues and change underlying social structures and relationship patterns.⁸⁰ Parties in both sides of the conflict are transformed as deeper, longer-term relational and systemic patterns that make violent, destructive expressions of conflict degenerate.

Management of conflict process allows spaces where people feel safe enough to be deeply honest with themselves and others about their fears, hopes, hurts and responsibilities. It becomes an ongoing learning process about self and other. It is attentive to people's perceptions of how identity is linked to power and the definition of the systems and structures that organize and govern their relationships. It involves the substitution of power with for power over, and the assumption of responsibility by ordinary people, individually and collectively, for the things that affect their own lives and those of others.⁸¹ The model is needed to deal the current international conflicts – such as terrorism - that are wrapped in religious coating. Zartman observes that, Terror is a weapon of the weak, designed to redress the asymmetry of both justice and power in which they see themselves. The perpetrators (seek) to get attention using demonstrative violence so that the world will notice their plight.⁸² Such kind of conflicts cannot be won militarily.

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Francis Diana. *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. (London: Pluto Books, 2002), 7

⁸² Zartman I William. *Negotiation and Conflict Management*. London: Routeledge, 2008.245

Galtung's view is that, conventional justification of approaches to conflict management, are often skewed. To the USA and the West, 11 September 2001 attack was an event that heralded a new era. It served to release a massive war against terrorism which the West saw as Evil propagated by Osama bin Laden. The remedy was obvious: to identify, locate and crush evil through American anti-terrorism. In this war, the goal of the American was to establish free trade without borders, through a globalised world, making it possible to meet any demand with a supply everywhere. Freedom means being able to buy and sell whatever, wherever and whenever one wants. For the Muslim, the goal is respect for religion, seeing trade as a deeply human relation far beyond supply meeting demand and products being exchanged for money.⁸³ War against terror requires that the West and the "terrorists" be transformed. This transformation cannot be brought about by guns and military weaponry.

Transformation of conflict calls for serious consideration of the role of non-military, non-governmental actors who can work for justice non-violently. These actors can act as peace constituencies in situations of war or open political conflict, and become peace-builders in societies where violence, hatred, mistrust and antagonism have become the norm and where inter-communal relationships and structures are fractured or exclude certain groups and the rule of law and democratic processes have broken down.⁸⁴ This transformation calls for increased involvement religious organizations because religion has power in influence values, norms and identities that are at the centre of many

⁸³ Galtung Johan. *Transcend and Transform: Introduction to Conflict Work*. (London: Pluto Press, 2004), 134

⁸⁴ Francis Diana. *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. (London: Pluto Books, 2002), 9

conflicts. The researcher sees great opportunity in the potential in including and partnering with the AACC in the management of conflicts.

Different actors need to come together to help transform conflict situations in South Sudan. Currently ethnicity is entrenched and state institutions are highly militarized. In fact South Sudan is a country where opposition has an army. The theory of conflict transformation provides theoretical framework for churches to participate in transforming social perspectives and hard line positions. In South Sudan, there are very deep grievances that may not just be resolved with signing of the peace agreements. Lasting peace calls for transformation both of the players and of the conflict itself. The Church can play a leading role in this transformation. Conflict transformation conceptual framework helped to place the church AACC as important player in Conflict management.

Management of conflict according to this model must then go beyond finding a quick solution to the problem at hand, and seek to address what is happening in human relationships at a deeper level. Religious bodies are better placed to bring about this social structures and relationship patterns.⁸⁵ They can influence parties in the conflict to be transformed by helping create deeper, longer-term relational and systemic patterns that make violent, destructive expressions of conflict degenerate. This gives the basis on which the study assesses the impact brought about by AACC in the management of South Sudan Conflict.

⁸⁵ Lederach, John Paul. "Conflict Transformation." In *Beyond Intractability*. Eds. Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess. Conflict Information Consortium, University of Colorado, Boulder. Posted: October 2003. Accessed 3rd March 2015. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/transformation>.

1.8 Research Methodology

1.8.1 Research Design

This research took a mixed approach employing both quantitative and qualitative methods and utilizing both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected mainly through sending questionnaires to the leaders of the South Sudan Churches that are in the membership of AACC. The research underlines the importance of religious organization in conflict transformation, while at the same time appreciating multi-track approach to conflict management. The study focused on AACC role in the management of Sudan conflict and how this body, has influenced churches at local level. AACC being an ecumenical African organisation is best placed to intervene in conflicts affecting many countries in the African continent. The data for this research was mainly collected from the leaders of the churches in South Sudan. South Sudan was chosen for this study first for being one of the African countries with longest duration of instability and has the most current conflict.

1.8.2 Sampling Design

Purposeful sampling design was used in this research.. Sample sizes depend on the resources and time available, as well as the study's objectives. Purposive sample sizes are often determined on the basis of theoretical saturation. In this research, the population was predetermined as church leaders in South Sudan. Due to the vastness of the country, security situation and the resources available, the research was concentrated in Juba the

capital city. The rationale was that most churches have their headquarters in Juba and the church leaders are usually situated there.

1.8.3 Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

The researcher gathered the information of the study from both the primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through Questionnaires which were issued to the church leaders of the churches in South Sudan. There was also in-depth face to face interview of some leaders of AACC. Structured or conventional questionnaires were used in this research. They comprised of specific questions that were asked of everyone participating in the research study with the assumption that the questions asked are sufficiently comprehensive to get all the information desired and worded well enough for all to understand, and that the meaning of each question is identical for each person. This decreased biases by reducing flexibility and spontaneity while maximizing efficiency.⁸⁶

Secondary data was collected from books, journals, newspaper reports, and AACC reports, as well as reports by other organizations working in the South Sudan. These resources were accessed both from physical and online formats. In this research, thematic data analysis approach was employed. Thematic analyses focus on identifying and describing implicit and explicit ideas or themes within the data. Codes were then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis. Local research assistants were used to administer the

⁸⁶ Postmus Judy L. "Qualitative Interviewing". In *Qualitative Research in Social Work*, eds. Fortune Anne E, et al, (New York: Columbia University, 2013), 448.

questionnaire. They helped to bridge the geographical and social distances, reduce the cost of research and minimize suspicion given that South Sudan is still in conflict.

1.9 Ethical Concerns

In this research, confidentiality, privacy and anonymity of the respondents were observed. The participants were not forced to participate in the exercise but the participation was on voluntary basis. The participants were not required to write their names for anonymity and they were assured high degree of confidentiality for the information which was given. Further, the researcher provided a clear account of the study to allow the intended participants to be aware of what was required of them. In addition, all the materials from secondary sources were adequately referenced. Finally, Personal information that would negatively affect the respondent of identify them in any way were not included in the final report.

1.10 Limitations of the Study

Although necessary precautions were taken to ensure that the findings of this research are as reliable as possible, the following factors may have affected the research outcomes.

1.10.1 Distance

The research was conducted in Juba South Sudan. There raised the challenge of distance between the researcher and the respondent both geographically and culturally. To minimize the distance, the researcher engaged the services of the research assistants or field workers who are residents of Juba. According to Johann Mouton, “field workers

who share as many characteristics of the sample as possible ought to be given preference. (They) help to bridge the distance between the researcher and the participants.”⁸⁷

1.10.2 Context

This research was conducted while the conflict in South Sudan was going on. There was possibility of respondents being suspicious that the questionnaire maybe the enemy’s ploy to gather intelligence. This fear may have affected the quality of the responses. Though the use of local field workers may have minimized this effect the feeling that any information can be used by the opponents mat hamper collection of objective data. .

1.10.3 Cost

Due to lack of sponsorship the researcher was unable to personally administer the questionnaires and employed the services of research assistants which in itself had cost implications. Further, the researcher was not personally presence to clarify the questions for better understanding and to study other factors that could be of importance to the research.

1.11 Chapter Outline

Chapter one gives the introduction and background to the study. It assesses the related literature, states the research objectives, justification of the study and the research methodology. The second chapter which was based on the first objective focused on the impact of the conflict to the churches in South Sudan and how much church leadership connects the conflict with the ministry of the church. The third chapter focuses on the

⁸⁷ Mouton Johann. *Basic concepts in the methodology of social sciences*. Pretoria: HSRC Publishers (1998), 95.

peace building strategies of the AACC in South Sudan's most recent conflict and the understanding of the local churches about this role. Chapter four is based on the third objective and studies the challenges and opportunities for AACC in the management of conflict in South Sudan. Chapter five presents the summary, conclusions and the recommendations of the research.

CHAPTER TWO

IMPACT OF CONFLICT TO THE CHURCHES IN SOUTH SUDAN

2.0 Introduction

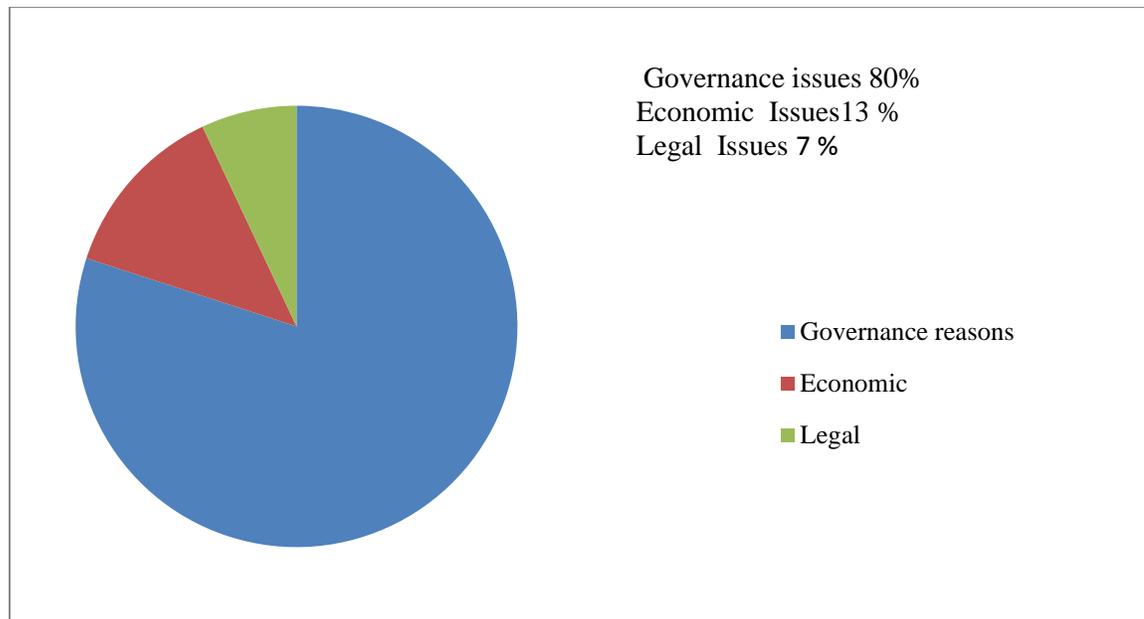
This chapter assesses the churches understanding on the causes of conflict in south Sudan. The effect of the conflict to the churches in south Sudan are then studied in order to create awareness to the churches that they cannot remain indifferent and be effective in their mission. For the church to effectively respond to the conflict it is important for her to actually see herself is a as being affected by the said conflict. This understanding will elicit the urgency for the church to be involved in the management of civil conflicts. It is also important for the church to be aware of the causes of conflict in the South Sudan in order to formulate the right intervention strategies. The researcher considers AACC as the umbrella body of the churches in Africa. When the churches in a country are entangled in the conflict, AACC would be better placed to help the church maintain its stature by recalling it to consciousness. AACC has the capacity to solicit the necessary human and material resources needed for intervention even of the local conflict.

2.1 Churches' Understanding on the Causes of Conflict in South Sudan

The researcher sought the understanding of church leaders on the root causes of the conflict in South Sudan. Respondents, were church leaders of the churches and members of AACC, were required to give their opinion on the root causes of conflict in the country. The purpose was to find out whether the churches, represented by the leadership understand the dynamics of the conflict especially factors that have made the conflict intractable. Intractable conflicts occur over deep-rooted issues such as identity and

human needs and are more difficult to resolve. Responses obtained were classified into three categories: leadership/ governance, economic, and legal causes. These responses are summarised in the chart below.

Figure 2.1: Causes of Conflict in South Sudan



Source: Field Data, 2015

2.1.1 Lack of Good Governance/Leadership

Figure 2.1 shows that a whopping 80% of the respondent's attributed the conflict in South Sudan to lack of good governance. They observed that, political leaders have not provided the correct leadership to the young nation. According to a number of them, the signing of the CPA did not bring to an end the power struggles within SPLM. Governance structures remained weak hence the leadership struggles within the new South Sudan government led to the eruption of the leadership crisis in December 2013. There is feeling that South Sudan leadership is marred by tribalism and nepotism. One of

the respondents posed, “with 64 tribes in South Sudan, how do you deal with diversity?” This position is supported by a report on South Sudan conflict by the Sudd Institute that states, after the conflict erupted it quickly took an ethnic dimension along historical cracks and rivalry between the Dinka and the Nuer nationalities.⁸⁸

Respondents indicated that, leaders assumed power to protect their own interests rather than those of the nation. They said that the government in south Sudan is loaded with greed, lack of accountability among leaders, corruption, sectarianism and lack of democracy. It was observed that South Sudan lacks mechanisms for restraining individual powers due to lack of a strong opposition party. This has led to power contest within the ruling party, SPLM. Consequently, 24% of the respondents indicated that power struggles are at the root causes of conflict in South Sudan. Other governance issues that were mentioned include lack of institutional capacity, lack of leadership skills among the leaders and lack of equality.

2.1.2 Economic Factors

Figure 2.1 shows that about 13% of the respondents attributed the current crisis in South Sudan to economic reasons. Issues under this category included wealth sharing. Respondents argued that the national resources especially oil have not been adequately and equitably distributed. Corruption, tribalism and nepotism tend to reward few people who are loyal to the GOSS through land grabbing and job opportunities. Some regions feel marginalised and this adds to discontentment among the citizens. Skewed promotions

⁸⁸ The Sudd Institute. “South Sudan’s Crisis: Its Drivers, Key Players, and Post-conflict Prospects.” *Special Report*. Juba: The Sudd Institute. August 3, 2014. 5

both in the civil service and military were also mentioned. The research also established that South Sudanese ethnic communities have frequently engaged each other in cattle rustling, a practice that has been quite entrenched in the cultures. Generally the country lacks a proper system of allocation of resources.

2.1.3 Legal Reasons

A few of the respondents (7%) attributed legal factors to the conflict. The country has not developed adequate laws to deal with the challenge of tribalism and other social ills. Failure to implement the law and disrespect to the rule of law were mentioned. There are restrictions on freedom of expression and on civil society as well as detentions without trial. Press freedom is also curtailed. Respondents observed that the country has a weak judicial system that cannot ensure justice to South Sudanese. Consequently, many South Sudanese will therefore opt to fight for their rights because they have little confidence in their legal systems. The responses clearly show that church leadership is aware of the causes of the conflict and dynamics that ensure that the conflict is protracted.

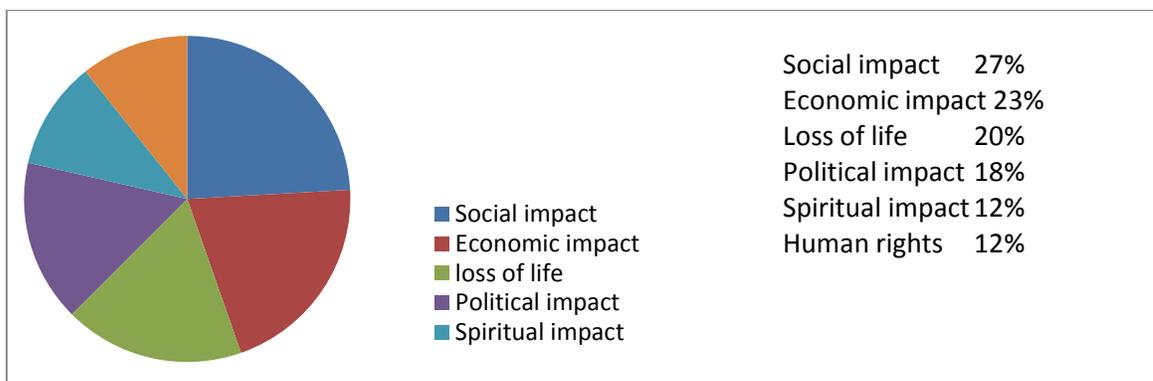
Evidently the big percentage (80%), think that, if the country leadership changes in terms of their governance mechanisms, become more patriotic and observe equity, the tendency to return to war would be reduced. The biggest factor fanning the conflict seems to be a combination of corruption, nepotism and tribalism. These are factors that require not only good legislation but also a 'change of heart'. A strong value education is required in order to bring about transformation of attitudes, values and perceptions from being 'conflictual' to being cooperative. This is a role which AACC can effectively play in partnership with

the churches and civil society. AACC can also play a stronger advocacy role to ensure rule of law and observance of human rights in South Sudan.

2.2 Impact of the Conflict to the Churches in South Sudan

The research sought to find out churches' understanding on the impact of the conflict to the churches. The Question asked was, "What are some of the effects of the conflict to the churches in South Sudan?" This research underscores the importance of the AACC to understand how it is affected by the conflict in order to develop the right strategies and policies to deal with it. The churches cannot be relevant to the South Sudan conflict unless they are able to address the mundane issues that are affecting the lives of their members. The urgency of AACC's response is enhanced by the fact that the conflict has directly affected the churches as shown by the respondents of this research. This research classified the responses into six thematic areas: political impact, loss of life, Social impact, spiritual impact, human rights and economic impact. The table below summarises the impact of conflict to the churches as per the responses received.

Figure 2.2: Impact of Conflict to the Churches in South Sudan



Source: Field data, 2015.

2.2.1 Social Impact of Conflict to the Church

Figure 2.2 indicates that 27% of the respondents observed that the major effect of the conflict to the churches were social. They mentioned the displacement of church members leading to weakening of the church and reducing its capacity to carry out her mission effectively. Many families have been separated, with children and elderly sometimes left alone and vulnerable. They usually seek for assistance in the church thereby straining the church further. Respondents indicated that the conflict has led to disintegration of families and loss of young people, to serve in the church as many are involved in the fighting. Disease and food scarcity also contribute to weakening of the church as well as the resultant humanitarian crisis. This is supported by New York Times which recorded that by June 2015, the fighting had displaced more than 100,000 people and blocked aid deliveries to 650,000. The country had 555,000 refugees and 1.5 million internally displaced persons (IDP).⁸⁹

2.2.2 Economic Impact of Conflict to the Church

The conflict has affected the churches economically. This was indicated by 23% of the respondents. They stated that churches have suffered tremendously due to destruction of its buildings and properties in the conflict. Individually owned property and agricultural products have also been destroyed leading to poor church membership. There is loss of investment opportunities for both the churches and individuals church members due to the insecurity. The conflict has destroyed infrastructure which would otherwise facilitate economic development. The conflict has therefore, prevented church members from

⁸⁹ Rick Gladstone *South Sudan: U.N. Dismayed By Decline*. New York Times. June 2, 2015.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/03/world/africa/south-sudan-un-dismayed-by-decline.html? r=0>

accumulating necessary resources leading to their reduced ability to support the church mission and development. Unemployment levels are very high further weakening the economic capacity of the church members. Consequently as one respondent indicated, “A lot of poor people expect the church to help them when the church itself needs external support.”

2.2.3 Loss of Life

One obvious consequence of any war is the loss of life. 20% of the respondents indicated that this has had serious impact on the churches. They indicated that in the course on conflict, church leaders have been rounded up and killed. Others just disappear without trace. In addition, churches have lost a lot of their members due to the conflict. This has brought a lot of strain to the churches as they lose vital component- human resource. Disappearance of church leaders reduce the churches capacity to carry out her mission by reducing the personnel and creating fear in those that remain that speaking boldly against evils committed by the fighting parties can be risky.

2.2.4 Political Effects

The church is supposed to be the conscience of society. It has a prophetic role to point out the evils in society and to shout against political leaders who abuse their positions and fail to deliver service to the people. Due to the conflict, figure 2.2 shows that 18% of the respondents were of the opinion that the church has been absorbed in country’s politics and that it is also divided on tribal lines. Instead of providing leadership the church is itself perpetuating the same evils it is supposed to check. Church leaders, it was observed

have taken tribal positions with some indiscriminately supporting political position of their tribes men. This has reduced the ability of the church to act together in bringing in the mediation, reconciliation and national healing.

2.2.5 Impact on Human Rights

Figure 2.2 shows that 12% of the respondents observed that, the effects of the conflict to the church were of Human rights nature. Freedoms of the churches as well as their members were curtailed. They lacked basic rights such as shelter, security, right to access education, health and right to provision of security. Churches and their members encountered intimidation by government officials and rebel leaders and suffered from curtailed freedom of speech which is vital in the effectiveness of the church in her mission. There was therefore danger of physical injury of the church members. Young boys were forced into the army while women and girls are exposed to sexual abuse and gender-based violence.

2.2.6 Spiritual Effects

The church has a spiritual duty towards its members and society at large. Primarily, the church has a role to evangelise and bring about socio-spiritual transformation. Figure 2.2 shows that due to conflict, 12% of the respondents observed that the church is seriously disabled in this mandate. The church services could not be held in some areas due to the risk of attack. Like the other citizens, spiritual leaders have also fled the hotspots hence quoting one response, “The message of peace is not preached in some areas.” Another

response read, “The spiritual and moral authority of church leaders was curtailed, church was distracted from her mission, and there was increased hopelessness and frustrations.”

2.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter concludes that: the church leaders attribute the conflict to poor governance that is marred by power struggles, tribalism, nepotism and corruption. These have led to inequitable distribution of nation’s resources, wealth and opportunities. Secondly, the study reveals that the churches are fully aware that they cannot be effective in their mission and ministry unless peace is restored. The church is seriously affected due to displacement of its members and leaders, poverty and the loss of its members and leaders. These factors negatively impact on churches potential to bring change in society. More importantly, the church had been absorbed in the national politics and had itself become divided along political and tribal lines.

Further, this research observes that the church in SS cannot be effective by its own effort. The church is already aware that it has been weakened and divided by the conflict. For the church in SS to be effective in the process of peace building, AACC must play an important role in ensuring the unity of the church, in soliciting resources to enable local church carry out peace building activities, in advocacy to ensure rule of law and observance of human rights in South Sudan. AACC need also to actively participate in mediation because the local church may not have adequate capacity to assist in bringing the warring parties together.

CHAPTER THREE
PEACEMAKING STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY THE AACC IN SOUTH
SUDAN CONFLICT

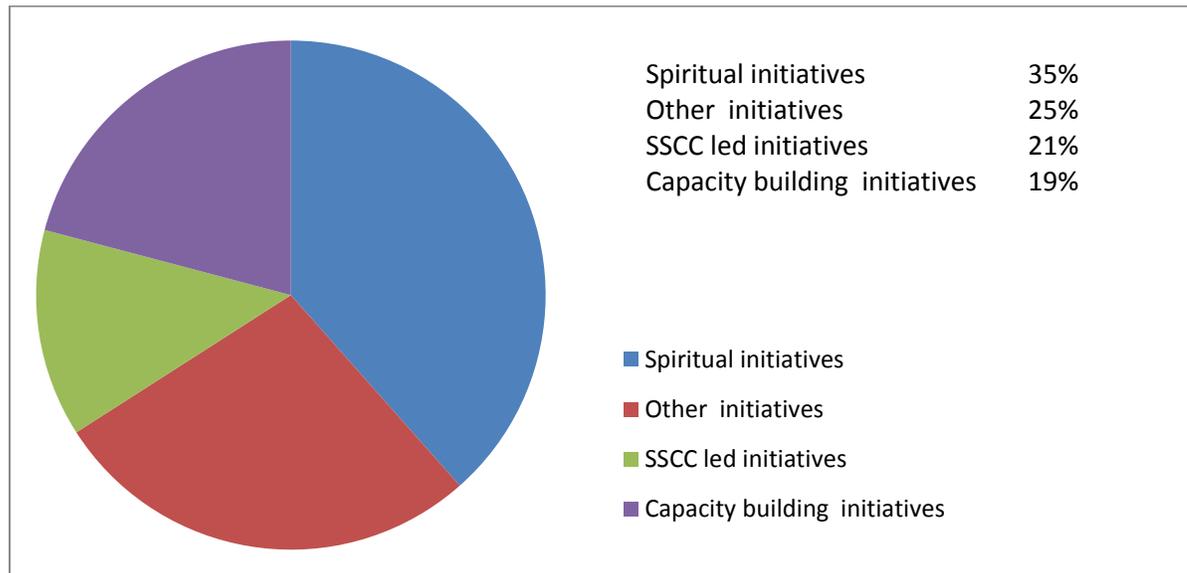
3.0 Introduction

This chapter sought to study the churches' understanding of the roles played by AACC directly and indirectly in the management of South Sudan conflict. The chapter analysed the understanding of the church leaders on the peace building initiatives by the AACC itself, initiatives through partnership with others players as well as initiative in collaboration with Intergovernmental Agency on development (IGAD). IGAD was considered in this research as a very important player because it has been leading the peace talks in South Sudan on behalf of the international community. The understanding of AACC role by the churches is a clear indicator on the impact AACC in South Sudan, given that it is an umbrella body of all the churches and church organisations in the continent.

3.1 Awareness of AACC Peace Building Initiatives through SSCC and the Churches

The research sought to find out awareness of church leaders of the peace building activities carried out indirectly through member churches on the ground. AACC is expected to give guidance support and encouragement but churches at local level can have greater impact being close to the people and also enjoying wide network across the country. The respondents listed the activities they are aware of which were classified in four thematic areas namely: Spiritual initiatives, SSCC Led initiatives, capacity building initiatives and other initiatives. Figure 3.1 below summarises these responses.

Figure 3.1: AACC Peace Building Initiatives through SSCC and the Churches



Source: Field Data, 2015.

3.1.1 SSCC Led Initiatives

According to figure 3.1 above, 21% of the respondents indicated that peace initiatives on the ground SSCCC and other AACC member churches participated included the Murle peace initiative, grassroots peace initiative, People to people peace process, and the Equatorial region peace program. SSCC has also led a faith based delegation that participated as observers to the IGAD - led mediation process in Addis Ababa. Respondents also mentioned the Nuer peace program run by the Presbyterian church of South Sudan (PCOSS), as well as the visit by the church leader to Rwanda to bench mark and learn how the church there helped resolve the conflict as some of the initiative that AACC has carried out through SSCC.

3.1.2 Capacity Building Initiatives

The observation that AACC conducts peace building initiatives through the local church council SSCC was done by 19% of the respondents according to figure 3.1. This thematic area included activities like Peace seminars and peace conferences, training of peace mobilizers, Youth peace initiatives, women and youth peace initiatives and the provision of Neutral forum to build bridges. Respondents also indicated that, through SSCC there have been trainings of the clergy and bishops on conflict resolution. The research observes that capacity building of the whole populace though very important accounted for only 19% of the responses. If there is going to be long lasting peace in South Sudan, there is need for individual and communal change of mindset. The society needs to be transformed. Capacity building is a strong tool for the AACC and the churches to hasten this transformation.

3.1.3 Spiritual Initiatives

The highest number of responses, 35% indicates that most of the initiatives by the AACC member churches were spiritual in nature. The respondents were aware of activities like joint prayer and fasting, national prayer day, and the preaching on unity and forgiveness. They also mentioned programs of awareness creation among Christians on the role of the church in peace building, Counselling of political leaders and chaplaincy duties to the national leadership. Evidently most church leaders saw the role of the AACC and the churches in the peace building process as being greatly enriched by spiritual and moral resources that are at the centre of the Christian teachings.

Some of the Christian principles that are vital to peace building include love, forgiveness, reconciliation, empathy and equality. It seems the spiritual initiatives were most impactful as most church leaders remembered and indicated them in their responses. The researcher is in agreement that this is the biggest resource at the disposal of the churches in bringing about transformation to the people of South Sudan. This position is supported by Matthews Giba who states that, spiritual values create the possibility of providing a common ground upon which disputing parties may be motivated to settle their dispute through mediation.⁹⁰

3.1.4 Other Initiatives

The research classified the initiatives that did not fit in the above three areas as other initiatives. As figure 3.1 shows, these initiatives mentioned by 21% of the respondents included participation in the National committee on healing, peace and reconciliation programs, the People to people peace building initiative, advocacy and lobbying by church leaders, writing of Pastoral letters and statements, and the initiative to pursue of home grown solutions to the conflict. The participation through in advocacy for peace as evidenced by the following captions from a statement by religious leaders in South Sudan:

We are saddened by the delay and the lack of progress in the peace talks in Addis Ababa, and we are horrified by the ongoing armed mobilization by the conflicting parties in and outside the country. We envision a country where justice, liberty and prosperity for all shall truly reign; a country where people will live long and children will not die young and senselessly. ‘The lesson from history is that

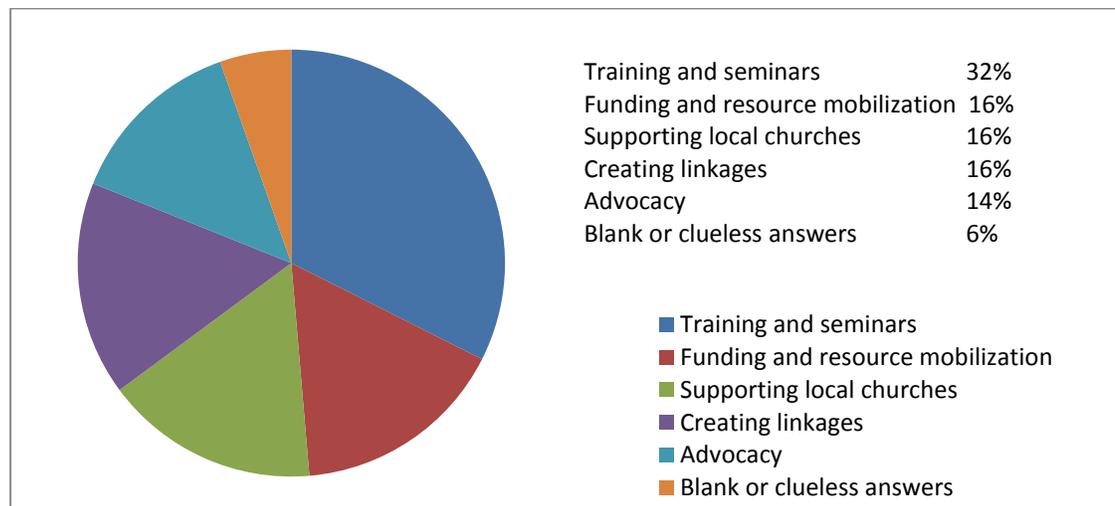
⁹⁰ Giba F. Matthews. *Religious Dimensions of Mediation*. Fordham Urban Law Journal. Volume 27, Issue 5 1999 Article 21 (1696-1710), 1706.

the longer we wait to resolve issues, the more complicated they will become, and the suffering of people will continue.⁹¹

3.2 AACC Led Initiatives in Peace Building through Partnerships

In this section, the respondents were asked to state their awareness of the peace initiatives done by AACC in partnerships with other players in the SS peace process. As figure 3.2 below shows, about 6% of the respondents indicated that they did not have any idea of the initiatives. Other responses were classified in five thematic areas namely, Training and seminars, funding and resource mobilization, supporting local churches, creating linkages, and advocacy. It was evident in the responses that the church leaders were less confident in responding to questions in this section than when responding to the initiatives done by the churches themselves. The figure below summarised the responses in this section.

Figure 3.2: AACC Led Initiatives in Peace Building through Partnerships



Source: Field Data, 2015.

⁹¹ South Sudan's church leaders call for peace. In Premier Christianity, June 2014. <http://www.premierchristianity.com/Past-Issues/2014/June-2014> accessed 18th March, 2015.

3.2.1 Training and Seminars

According to figure 3.2 above, 32% of the respondents were aware of the participation of AACC in partnership with other players through peace trainings and seminars. Here, they mentioned that AACC has hosted church led peace conferences, participated in the training of the youth and women on the peace process, as well as training of church leaders in SS. Respondents also mentioned that AACC had hosted the task force meeting on peace at its head quarter in Nairobi. Most of the church leaders remembered trainings and seminars as the major role that AACC has facilitated probably due to the impact it had on them. This is an area with large potential as it empowers church leaders to be peace facilitators and guide the society to embrace the culture of peace.

3.2.2 Advocacy

As figure 3.2 shows, 14% of the responses indicated that church leaders see AACC in partnership with other players as playing advocacy role. They acknowledged the role of AACC in lobbying regional and international support for the SS peace process. They recognised the role of AACC advocating for observance of human rights by both the GOSS and the rebels, as well as speaking to the leadership against failure to commit themselves to the signed peace agreements. AACC has encouraged the church leaders in South Sudan to have a critical relationship with the political leadership of the country in order to strengthen the peace initiatives. This is a critical role that AACC can play given its international influence. The organisation is in a position to amplify the voice of the local churches and church organisations thereby strengthening their participation in the SS peace process.

3.2.3 Funding And Resource Mobilization

As indicated in figure 3.2, 1% of the respondents saw the role of AACC as partnering with other players for funding and resource mobilisation. This is important given that as indicated in the previous chapter, the conflict has robbed the churches the ability to raise resources to support their peace programs. Respondents indicated here that AACC was helping to fund the peace initiatives, assisted in raising funds to support the displaced and war victims. They also acknowledged that AACC hosted and facilitated the ecumenical Special envoy enabling his full participation in the peace process.

3.2.4 Supporting the Local Churches

AACC in partnership with other players has a role of supporting the local churches. This was indicated by 16% of the responses as figure 3.2 indicates. Respondents indicated that this support includes encouraging churches to be involved in the peace process, writing pastoral letters of encouragement, solidarity visits of AACC leadership to South Sudan and exchange visits where the church leaders visit other places to experience how churches in other countries have participated in the peace initiatives. It is evident as the respondents indicated that the most effective way that AACC can have meaningful impact in south Sudan is through the local church network. Although participation in the mediation process is important, long lasting peace can only be brought if there is transformation across the country. This transformation is what AACC must aggressively address.

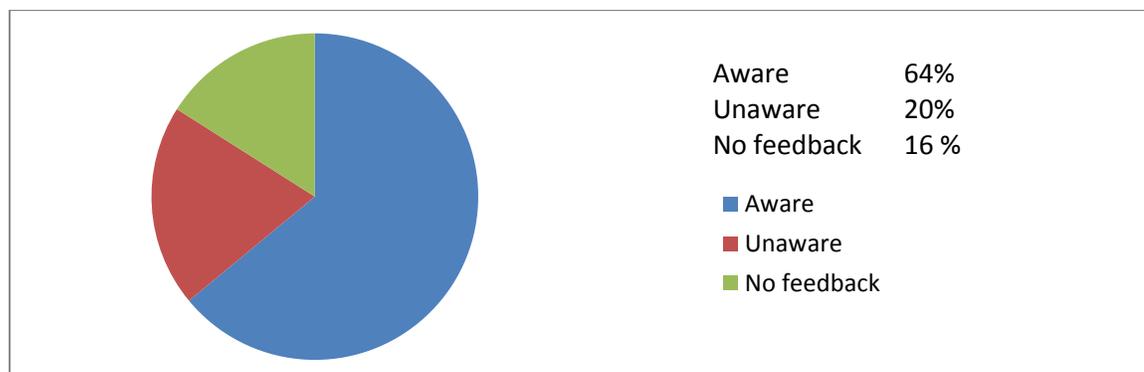
3.2.5 Creating Linkages

Finally 16% of the respondents indicated that the role of AACC as that of widening the number of players in the peace process and linking their efforts to create synergy. In the regard, respondents observed the AACC had facilitated the meeting of the SSCC with IGAD enabled collaboration of the two. To this effect, they observed the general secretary of AACC had accompanied the delegation of SSCC to Addis Ababa severally during the IGAD – led mediation process in Addis Ababa. In addition respondents noted that AACC has facilitates meetings between church leadership and the United Nations on the issues regarding the peace process. This role is important as it widens the impact of the church in influencing the direction of the peace process there by making church more relevant and increasing its leverage.

3.3 Churches Awareness of Collaboration between AACC and IGAD

When the respondents were asked about their awareness of the collaboration between AACC and IGAD, the responses were as shown in figure 3.3 below:

Figure 3.3: Church Awareness of AACC Collaboration with IGAD



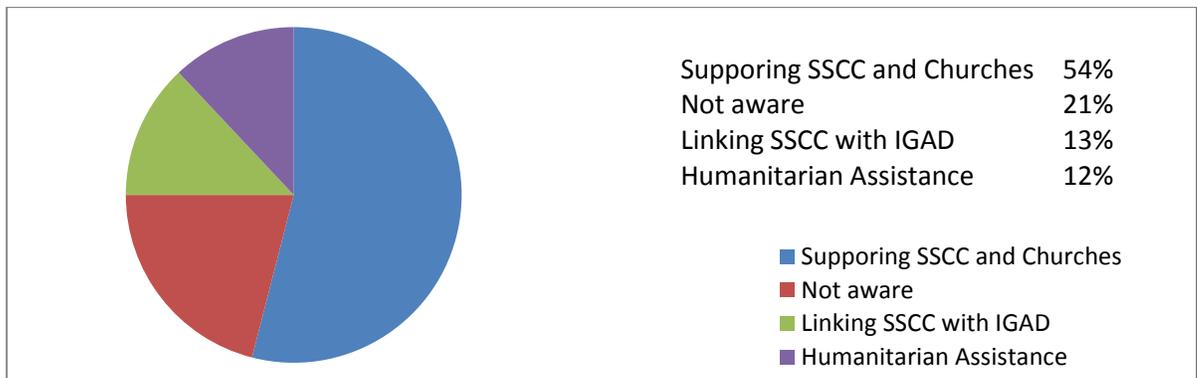
Source: Field Data, 2015.

Figure 3.3 above indicates that when the respondents were asked about their knowledge about the collaboration between AACC and IGAD, 16% of the respondents either gave a blank feedback; while 20% said they were not aware of such collaboration. The remaining 64% implied that such collaboration exists mainly through SSCC and by the participation at the mediation meetings in Addis Ababa. Evidently, the church seems not aware of the direct involvement of AACC in the mediation process. This is surprising given that in 1972, AACC led a mediation process that led to signing of a peace agreement and a decade of peace on the former Sudan. Apparently, AACC has either not made the churches aware of its participation or has not been participating in the SS mediation process.

3.4 Churches Awareness of AACC Direct Initiatives in SS Conflict

As figure 3.4 below indicates, when the respondents were asked about their awareness of AACC direct initiatives in south Sudan, 21% said they were not aware. The figure summarises the proportion of the responses.

Figure 3.4: Churches Awareness of AACC Direct Initiatives in the SS Conflict



Source: Field Data, 2015

As figure 3.4 indicates, 54% of the respondents saw the direct role of AACC as that of supporting the local council of churches SSCC and the churches in their peace building initiatives. They indicated that AACC does this by sending church leaders from South Sudan on advocacy missions, encouraging unity in the church, financing the peace building activities of the churches, and strengthening the church's intervention efforts. Some of the tasks by AACC that were mentioned include: hosting of the SSCC taskforce meeting in January 2014 in Nairobi, AACC General Secretary accompanying SSCC delegation to Addis Ababa peace talks, AACC hosting liaison office in Addis Ababa which facilitated the SSCC delegation in making appointment with AU and IGAD Envoys; and that the AACC sponsored Ecumenical Special Envoy accompanying two heads of churches to Addis Ababa to witness the signing of the 9th May 2014 agreement. As the figure above shows, 13% of the respondents saw AACC's role as that of linking SSCC with IGAD while 12% linked AACC with humanitarian Assistance. The humanitarian initiatives mentioned by respondents included offering scholarships to children and serving all southern Sudanese without discrimination. Many however identify the role of the subsidiary SSCC. In certain instances the AACC involvement has not involved the local church leadership. One respondent indicated:

The ecumenical envoy got involved directly with the government of RSS dialogue programme in July 2014 without approval by the churches under SSCC umbrella. This was resented and has now ceased because it was partial.

The research thus established that a high number of church leaders do not know AACC's direct involvement in the peace process. It is possible the question was not well understood or that AACC has not branded its activities well to be identified with its activities.

3.5 Chapter Findings

The chapter finds out that, most of the peace building participation that churches are aware of is through the SSCC. The fact that too many respondents did not know AACC's direct involvement in the peace process indicates the possibility that the question was not well understood. Further responses received however show consistence hence the question was not ambiguous. It is evident that the activities of AACC are not very overt to the church leaders in this country, or that AACC is not very actively involved in the peace process in that country, or that AACC has not branded its activities well to be identified with its activities. Secondly, most church leaders see AACC role as that of strengthening the participation of the local churches in the peace process.

Though AACC records indicate continued presence in the peace process through the Ecumenical special envoy, it appears that generally the church in South Sudan is not very aware of the presence of the AACC in the process. However, it appears that AACC's most effective way to have meaningful impact in south Sudan is through the local church network. Although participation in the mediation process is important, long lasting peace can only be brought if there is transformation across the country. This transformation is what AACC must aggressively address.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AACC

4.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses mainly on the challenges and opportunities available to AACC in managing the conflict that has engulfed the republic of south Sudan. For the AACC to fully participate in the peace process the players need to understand the challenges that hinder their participation in order to devise ways to overcome these challenges. This chapter evaluates the challenges impede participation of AACC and the churches in the peace process in South Sudan. The study finds out that though AACC have several impediments there exists many opportunities. The main aim of the research is to find out whether local church leaders are aware off the presence of AACC in making use of the available opportunities in order to maximise their impact in the transformation of conflict.

4.1 Challenges to the Collaboration with IGAD

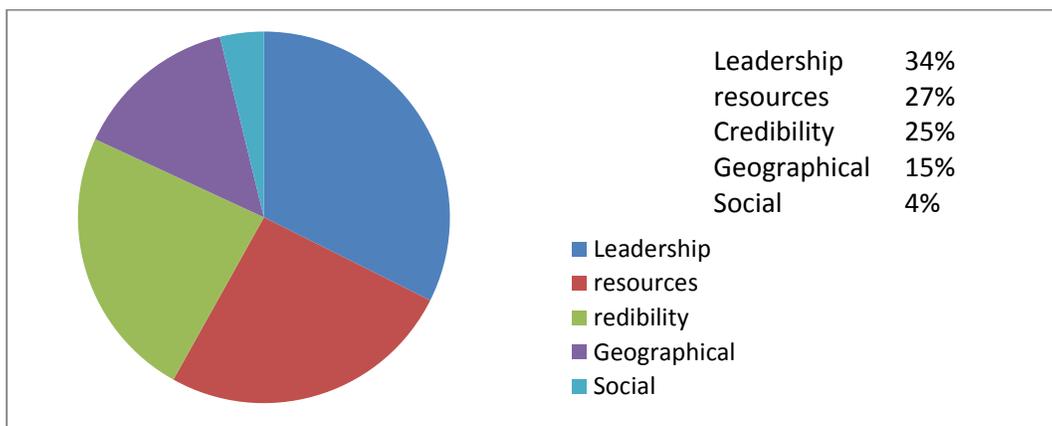
Respondents were asked to state what they understand as the challenges to effective collaboration between AACC and IGAD. The purpose of this question was to assess churches' awareness of AACC and to find out how much AACC is involved in the peace process that was being led by IGAD. Interestingly, 33% of the responses were either lest blank or had a "no idea" answer. 24% of the respondents indicated that the main challenge to this collaboration is mainly financial constraints by the AACC member churches limiting movement and effective participation in the peace process. Another 29% of the respondents indicated that the church is often undermined by other parties who see it as not having influence in this process.

Politicians and other players sometimes argue that the church should peruse spiritual agenda but not political one. Some parties according to responses do not trust the church and would even seek to exclude the church organisations from participating in the peace process. Others felt that church lacks capacity to offer any meaningful contribution to the conflict. Other respondents added that most of the church leaders are not trained in the mediation and peace issues. It appears that the church through AACC has not made its impact felt in the peace process. The unique qualities of the church that are necessary in the transformation of conflict seem not to be known by IGAD hence they have effectively utilised the church in peace building process.

4.2 Other Challenges for AACC in South Sudan

The researcher also sought to find out the other challenges experienced by AACC and the church in South Sudan in its endeavour to get involved in the south Sudan conflict. Basically most of the involvement of AACC happens through the SSCC and the churches. Any challenges facing the South Sudan Churches will directly impact on AACC work. The responses are summarised in the table below:

Figure 4.1: Challenges Facing AACC Intervention in South Sudan Conflict



Source: Field Data, 2015.

4.2.1 Leadership and Coordination Challenges

As figure 4.1 shows, 34% of the responses indicated that the main challenges are due to poor leadership and coordination. They pointed out that the church leaders lack proper training and skills by on conflict management. Further, the churches in south Sudan are not well coordinated due to disunity hence the lack of synergy and reduced impact. This is especially so to the churches outside SSCC membership. Respondents also pointed that churches have also become part of the problem. There are divisions within the church that mirror national divisions consequently tribal and sectarian cleavages have prevented effectiveness of church involvement in the peace process. AACC has a great opportunity to improve the participation of the church in the peace process through empowerment of church leaders and uniting the churches.

4.2.2 Resource Challenges

As shown in figure 4.1, 27% of the respondents mentioned lack of resources as a challenge preventing AACC and the churches from involvement in the peace process are. Churches lack sufficient funding for peace building activities and also lack the necessary equipments to carry out the work. This they observed is worsened by many decades of conflict that have left churches poor and dependent on foreign assistance. Church members have also been impoverished by conflict. There are therefore insufficient resources to empower churches to participate in the peace process. This researcher deduces that this challenge can also impact on effectiveness of AACC in the peace process as it becomes more expensive without sharing the cost sharing with the the local churches.

4.2.3 Geographic Challenges

Responses in this thematic category accounted to 15%. They included insecurity in the country which makes the church's work difficult and the magnitude of the conflict as being too complicated for the church. Under this category also are responses that indicated that poor infrastructure impedes movement and communication by peace builders especially when coupled with long distances that must be travelled. Illiteracy also plays a part in slowing down the effectiveness of the churches in disseminating the peace message. All these factors make it harder for the AACC to effectively roll out peace building programs across the country. Such an endeavour would be very expensive because the cost must factor how to overcome these challenges.

4.2.4 Credibility Challenges

As figure 4.1 shows, of the respondents who participated in this research, 25% indicated that the challenges facing AACC and the churches in their effort to intervene in South Sudan are political in nature. There is lack of the political will to listen to the church because many politicians do not trust the church as a neutral player. This position is supported by the AACC special envoy to Sudan Rev. Samuel Kobia who in his report indicated that, "SCC is not being listened to by the government; it has become difficult for church leaders to gain access to government leaders."⁹² Other respondents indicated that the church has lost its credibility hence has very little influence in the peace process. In mediation it is very important for mediators to have the trust of the parties and if this

⁹² Rev Dr Samuel Kobia. The Ecumenical Journey with Sudan. WCC and AACC (eds). Ecumenical Journey with the churches and the people of Sudan. Nairobi: Noel Creative Media, 2009 (1-15), 13

is not seen in AACC, few players would be willing to include it in the peace building process.

4.2.5 Social Capacity Challenges

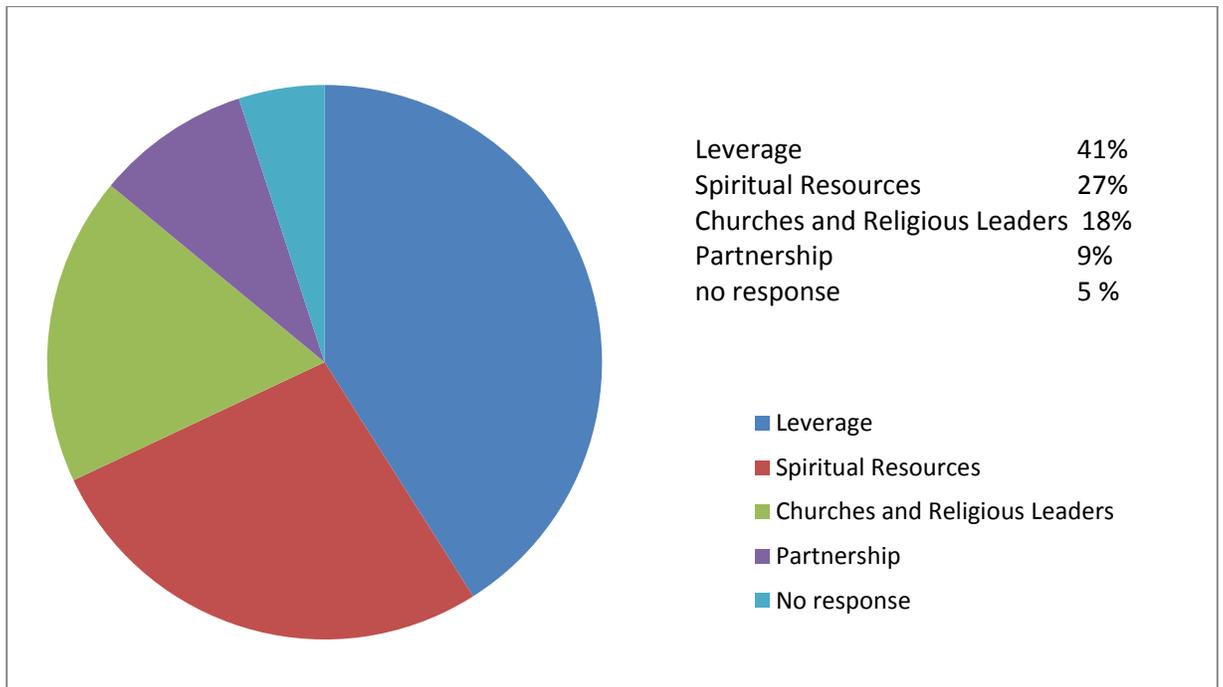
As shown in figure 4.1, among the respondents who participated in this research, 4% of the respondents saw social challenges as the main impediments to the church's involvement in the peace process. They indicated that churches lack skilled human resource due to rural urban migration and that some members of society have turned to addiction to soothe their pain. Illiteracy limits the effectiveness of transmission peace messages across the country as explained in one of the responses:

Communication of peace messages limited by media coverage – many people are illiterate. They speak local languages while the radio uses English and Juba Arabic that are good for people in urban settings. People in rural areas prefer oral communication.

4.3 Opportunities for the AACC to Bring Peace

Respondents were asked to state their understanding of the opportunities available for the AACC to bring peace in South Sudan. Their responses were placed in four thematic areas namely: Leverage; Spiritual Resources; Churches and religious Leaders; as well as Partnership. 5% of the respondents did not respond to this question most likely because they are not conversant with the activities and operations of AACC. The table below summarises the responses to the question on the opportunities that exist for the AACC and the churches' intervention in South Sudan conflict.

Figure 4.2: Opportunities Available to AACC to Strengthen its Involvement in the SS Conflict



Source: Field Data, 2015.

As the figure 4.2 above shows, 18% of the respondents were for the opinion that the *churches and religious leaders* are themselves a unique opportunity that provides a special platform to spread the messages of peace. The presence of churches that are spread all across South Sudan is a big resource that can be harnessed. Further the church leaders who can be peace ambassadors across the country. AACC can use the churches to roll out peace initiatives especially programs aimed at conflict transformation with the church leaders being the drivers of the initiative. Bercovitch and Kadayifci support the importance of religious leaders and observe that:

Religious leaders and faith-based actors are often having moral and spiritual legitimacy to influence the opinions of people. They are highly respected and their opinions are generally held in high regard within their communities. They are better equipped to reach out to the people, mobilize them, to re-humanize the

“enemy” by using religious values such as justice for all, forgiveness, harmony, human dignity, and ultimately to motivate them to work towards peace.⁹³

Further,

Faith-based interventions have certain characteristics which create unique opportunities. These include explicit emphasis on spirituality and/or religious identity, use of religious texts, use of religious values and vocabulary, utilization of religious or spiritual rituals during the process and involvement of faith-based actors as third-parties.⁹⁴

The second opportunity for the churches according to figure 4.2 is the churches *leverage*.

About 41% of the respondents observed that, the church in South Sudan is respected and the people are willing to listen to it. The church is seen as an institution with certain moral authority to give guidance especially to the general population of South Sudan. The church has a prophetic role due to the trust it gained in the war period. Religious leaders can be seen especially by ordinary citizens, as being more just, trustworthy, and with moral and spiritual integrity. This is a great opportunity that AACC and the churches in South Sudan can utilise to influence peace and reconciliation in the nation. Ashworth and Ryan support this position and observe that:

During 22 years of civil war in South Sudan, the church was the only institution that remained on the ground with the people. There was no functioning government, no civil society, no United Nations, no secular NGOs, and even the authority of the local chiefs was eroded by the young “comrades” with guns. But wherever there were people, the church was there, providing many of the services that one would normally expect from a government: health care, education, emergency relief, food, shelter, and even security and protection. People of all religions looked to the church for leadership. The church therefore gained a remarkable degree of credibility and moral authority, which places it in a unique position in the new nation of South Sudan. It is widely expected, including by

⁹³ Bercovitch Jacob & Kadayifci-Orellana S. Ayse. Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution. *International Negotiation* 14 (2009) 175–204, 203

⁹⁴ Bercovitch Jacob & Kadayifci-Orellana S. Ayse. Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution. *International Negotiation* 14 (2009) 175–204, 185.

representatives of the new government in Juba that the church will continue to have a prominent public role, particularly in peace and reconciliation.⁹⁵

A further 27% of the respondents who participated in this research, held the opinion that the unique opportunity available to the AACC and the church is the availability of unique *spiritual resources*. They indicated that the AACC can utilise the churches to propagate the unity of all parties through reconciliation message of the church. Biblical principles of love, unity, and forgiveness are a great resource for the churches. Ability of the South Sudanese church to remain united may provide a unique opportunity to influence the unity of the nation. Respondents saw great opportunity in churches holding joint prayers and outreach programs. This position is supported by the former Ecumenical Special envoy to Sudan Samuel Kobia, who observed that, “Trauma, feelings of bitterness, hatred, bitterness and pain which cannot be ignored or wished away. Churches are best placed to deal with spiritual and social needs of this kind and nation building has much to do with spiritual and social emancipation.⁹⁶ This researcher sees churches as being particularly well placed to continue with the peace building process even after the peace agreements are signed. This position is supported by Bercovitch and Kadayifci who observe that,

Holistic and comprehensive approach to mediation draws upon religious and spiritual resources such as prayers, meditation, religious rituals, vocabulary, values and myths. Faith-based actors focus on religious values such as forgiveness, holding on to truth, personal accountability, love, patience, justice, compassion and mercy, among others. During the process of mediation, faith-

⁹⁵ Ashworth John, Ryan Maura. One Nation from Every Tribe, Tongue and People: The Church and Strategic Peace-building in South Sudan. In *Journal of Catholic Social Thought*. Volume 10, Issue 1, (Winter 2013, 47-63.) 47

⁹⁶ Rev Dr Samuel Kobia. *The Ecumenical Journey with Sudan*. WCC and AACC (eds). Ecumenical Journey with the churches and the people of Sudan. Nairobi: Noel Creative Media, 2009 (1-15), 15

based actors invoke religious myths and stories to emphasize the importance of justice, peace and reconciliation.⁹⁷

Finally as figure 4.2 indicates, 9% of the respondents saw AACC opportunities in the *partnerships* with other international organisations both in the mediation process and in provision of humanitarian assistance. Given its leverage and its large membership, AACC has more ground to work with other international organisations than local churches alone. It also has a great opportunity to partner the media was also seen as a big opportunity to roll out peace education especially in the languages people can understand. One respondent indicated the need to make use the existing private and FM radios including UN Miraya FM.

4.4 Conclusion

This research observes the main challenge facing the AACC in its involvement in the south Sudan conflict is the inability of the faith based actors to make the necessary impact in the peace process. This is caused by lack of human and financial resources, lack of unity among the churches and diminished legitimacy due to the church based actors being influenced by the secular context such that the churches become divided along the tribal lines just as the nation. AACC as a continental ecumenical organisation is very well placed to solicit for resources, sponsor clergy empowerment programs, seek to unite the churches in Sudan so that they can initiate peace programs and lead from the front in bringing the nation together. To achieve this goal, AACC must strengthen its partnerships with other faith-based and other players in the south Sudan peace process.

⁹⁷ Bercovitch Jacob & Kadayifci-Orellana S. Ayse. Religion and Mediation: The Role of Faith-Based Actors in International Conflict Resolution. *International Negotiation* 14 (2009) 175–204, 192.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Chapter Overview

This chapter summarises the findings, makes the recommendation and identifies key areas for further research. The research has identified the ambiguity in regards to growing involvement of religious organisation in the management of conflict across the world but the influence of the AACC in facilitating the churches of South Sudan to fully participate in the peace process seem to be waning.

5.1 Summary

Based on the first objective of this study which was to evaluate the role of AACC in the management of international conflict, chapter one has revealed that, church and other religious organizations have not played very major role in the management of the conflict in south Sudan despite being at the grass roots and commanding a big following. AACC being a very fundamental ecumenical organization in influencing then management of conflicts in Africa from a religious perspective greatly influenced the management of conflict especially earlier on in the history of Sudan. This influence is not as strong in the current crisis in South Sudan.

The second objective of this study was to analyze the impact of conflict to the churches in south Sudan. Chapter Two first analyzed the church's understanding of the causes of conflict in South Sudan and the effect of the conflict to the church. Governance and poor leadership were identified as the main cause of conflict in south Sudan by 80 % of the

respondents. Power struggle within the ruling party led to the fallout between the president Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar in December 2013 igniting a serious conflict. The research has attributed this power struggle to tribalism and nepotism, greed, selfishness, corruption and lack of leadership skills.

Based on the third objective, Chapter Two further analysed the impact of conflict to the church in south Sudan. Among the challenges hindering AACC effectiveness is the fact that church in South Sudan is adversely affected by the conflict. Churches loose members due to death, there is destruction of church building and personal property as well as displacement of church members. Further, the church has been divided along tribal and political lines. This has hindered its impact both in her mission of propagating the gospel and as an instrument of peace, healing and reconciliation. Consequently, the church is distracted from her mission of propagation of the gospel, cultivating human dignity, and advocating for peaceful co-existence among the diverse populace. This also affects the ability of the church to point out to the ills in society, advocacy for good governance and participation in the peace process.

In chapter three the study focused on the second objective by assessed church leaders' awareness of the strategies employed by the AACC in the peace process. AACC has maintained its presence in South Sudan through the Ecumenical Special Envoy. Though many respondents were aware of some of specific cases of the AACC involvement in the peace process, quite a big number of church leaders are generally ignorant. The church in Sudan generally does not identify directly with AACC in the peace process. Since 1972

when AACC spearheaded a very successful mediation process, it has not made any other major impact in the young state. The research found that spiritual resources remain the most effective peacemaking strategies.

Based on the third objective, chapter four focused on the challenges and opportunities available for AACC's involvement in South Sudan Conflict. AACC should continue encouraging churches to seek moral and spiritual transformation as a means of ensuring lasting peace. This can be achieved by continued capacity building of the church leaders and creating awareness of the role of the church in the transformation process. The research has established that there are lots of opportunities for the AACC to strengthen its participation in the peace process and bring a transformative impact to South Sudan both before and after signing of the peace agreement. In the conflict situation, Religion can bring social, moral, and spiritual resources to the peace building process hence creating a sense of engagement and a commitment both to peace and to transforming a relationship of a missing dimension from the mechanical and instrumental conflict resolution models.⁹⁸

Chapter four sought to identify challenges and opportunities available for AACC in the management of conflict in South Sudan pursuant to the last objective of the study-To examine the key challenges and opportunities facing AACC in its intervention in south Sudanese conflicts. The study has established that the main challenge facing the AACC in its management of the South Sudan conflict is the inability of the churches to make the

⁹⁸ Abu-Nimer Mohamed. "Conflict Resolution, Culture and Religion: Towards a Training Model of Interreligious Peace Building." *Journal of Peace Research*. vol. 38, no. 6 (2001): 685-704. 686

necessary impact in the peace process. This is caused by: Lack of human and financial resources, lack of unity among the players especially the churches and diminished legitimacy due to the church based actors being influenced by the secular context such that the churches become divided along the tribal lines just as the nation.

However, there are many opportunities for the AACC to make impact, these opportunities are largely not utilised. One such opportunity is the presence of the churches that are spread across the country that can become centres for peace building. Further, this research appreciates the wide leverage enjoyed by the citizens as well as the rich spiritual resources found in the Christian teachings. Being a continental ecumenical body, AACC has the potential to attract partnerships from within and outside the continent with the aim of bringing the required influence in the peace building process. In spite of these opportunities, the churches on the ground do not seem to be aware of the role of AACC in the management of conflict in Southern Sudan.

5.2 Conclusion

The study has revealed that the church and religious organisations have not played a very major role in the management of the conflict despite being at the grass root and commanding a big following. This may be due to the inability of the church to strategically position itself in the crisis management due to internal and external factors. Integration produce synergy implying that if the African church acts together through AACC, it is possible to have amplified effect and have more impact in the management of the South Sudan conflict as well as other conflicts in Africa.

5.3 Recommendations

AACC as an African overarching ecumenical institution should give guidance and necessary to the South Sudanese churches on their role in the national peace process. It should endeavour to keep the church united and also solicit human and material support to strengthen the church to continue with the peace building activities despite the challenges caused by the conflict. Because local church leaders can easily be sucked into tribal cocoons, AACC should closely walk with them to ensure that non partisan human resources are seconded to participate with the South Sudanese in the mediation process.

Secondly, the root causes of the conflict are basically values based. These include selfishness, greed, tribalism and corruption. These are vices that cannot be eliminated by signing of the peace deal. AACC should partner with local churches and other organisations to advocate for civic education change of legal system and respect of the rule of law. They should also push for civic education and more importantly use the spiritual resources to influence value based transformation. In addition, AACC should ensure continuous nation-wide empowerment program where citizens take a leading role in advocating peace. The spiritual resources of peace, love, forgiveness are the strongest resource for peace building and conflict transformation that churches should harness. Religious rituals should continually be used as a means of transforming animosity to cooperation. People must be empowered to appreciate diversity and to seek to reap the benefits brought about by such diversity.

AACC has a mandate of ensuring unity of the churches in Sudan. In the context of ethnically divided nation, it should help the church leaders to stand out and operate above the divisiveness in order to bring meaningful impact in the peace process. Without such unity, the church loses the moral authority and fails to have credibility. Additionally AACC need to enhance its involvement in the peace process by enhancing its presence through the local churches and the national councils of churches. There is need for programs aimed at harnessing church unity from grass root with the aim of building synergy. AACC should propel the peace programs at the grass root and advocate for a political leadership in South Sudan to give priority to the peace of the nation rather than pursuing personal interests.

Finally, AACC should seek to roll out programs that can help in the transformation of national value system. There should be deliberate efforts to change peoples' perspectives from a culture of conflict to a culture of peace. South Sudan needs to be transformed from a nation that rides on competition to a country that values unity and cooperation. There is need to develop and inculcate national value system based on love, peace, reconciliation and national healing. This is a role that AACC should prioritise.

5.4 Future Readings

The most remembered peace engagement in Sudan is the 1972 peace agreement. There is need for more study on the reasons for the diminishing impact of AACC in the Sudan peace process. Though the study established that though there is some participation of AACC at the mediation, many church leaders are not aware of its participation. There is

need for more study on how AACC act together with local churches and church organisations to influence peace process from grass root. Further, there is need for further study on how to develop deeper collaboration between AACC and other religious organizations with international actors in conflict management.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am a student pursuing a Master of Arts in International Conflict Management and I am carrying out a study on the role of *The Role of All Africa Conference of Churches in International Conflict: the Case of South Sudan.*

The questionnaire below is for gathering information with the aim of establishing the impact of the world council of churches by itself or through member churches to the management of conflicts in different regions in the world, with specific emphasis to South Sudan. The study will also seek to establish challenges faced by the world AACC in its efforts to intervene in such conflicts. South Sudan has been identified for case study due to the currency of its conflict and the fact that it has some history of religious conflict while the majority of its current population is Christian.

I wish to assure you that your responses will be treated with strict **confidentiality** and that the information provided shall not be put to any other use outside the objective of the study.

Yours Faithfully,

John G. Gatu,

MA Student

Institute of diplomacy and International Studies.

Questionnaire: (For Church Leaders in South Sudan)

1. What is the name of your church/ organization?

.....

2. Is your church/ organization a member of the All Africa Conference of Churches?

(Yes No)

3. South Sudan has not experienced complete peace since the referendum. What in your opinion are the underlying issues in this conflict?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. What are some of the effects of the conflict to the churches in South Sudan?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

5. Mention some peacemaking strategies that have been employed by South Sudanese churches in the current conflict in south Sudan?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

6. In which ways has AACC has encouraged or motivated churches to participate in peace building activities?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

7. How has the AACC been directly involved in the management of the conflict in South Sudan?

.....

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.....

8. Are you aware of collaboration between AACC (or the church) and IGAD in the effort to resolve South Sudan conflict? Elaborate.

.....

.....

.....

.....

9. List some challenges that face such collaboration?

.....

.....

.....
.....
.....

10. What are other challenges faced by the church and church organizations in their effort to intervene in Conflict in Southern Sudan?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

11. What opportunities exist that *the church* can grab and bring difference in the conflictual situation in the South Sudan?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your time!

Please Email the completed questionnaire to jgatu2001@yahoo.com or send by post to:

Rev John Gaturo Gatu, PCEA Loresho Parish, P.O. Box 23500- 00625 Nairobi, Kenya.