

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**FROM A PERPETRATOR OF CONFLICT TO PEACEMAKER: THE
TRANSFORMATION OF SALOME MATAKWEI OF MT ELGON
(2006-2017)**

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C50/88206/2016

**RESEARCH PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN
ARMED CONFLICT AND PEACE STUDIES, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND
ARCHAEOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**

December 2021


DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

Signature.......... Date.....**7TH DECEMBER 2021**.....
ROSELUCY NJERI NJOGU

Supervisors' Approval

This research project has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University supervisor.

Signature.......... Date.....**December 7, 2021**.....
DR. KENNETH OMBONGI

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to my husband Sammy and children, Sharon, Derrick, Sasha, and Shameen. It is you who gave me the zeal to move on with this course. May this be a reminder that when we stand together nothing is unattainable?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First is to give thanks to almighty God for being with me throughout my academic life. Additionally, I am sincerely grateful to all the individuals who participated in this project paper and made it possible. Special to thanks my supervisor, Dr. Kenneth Ombongi for all his tireless support and guidance during the research proposal stage and the project writing process. Working with him was one of the most fulfilling experiences a graduate student can hope for. He continuously mentored, improved and cheered me. Times when I cried and felt like giving up, he encouraged me not to lose hope but keep on working hard. I feel deeply honored for your devotion of time, knowledge and wisdom in order to see me through all the exhilarating and difficult times that come with writing a research project.

I am grateful to many friends who gave me moral support and encouragement throughout my post- graduate studies; Christine Maisori, Lillian Kantai, Juliana, Volisi, Andreas, Isaiah, Kefa Odemba, Mr Masika and other extraordinary friends who had the right advice when I needed it. Salome Matakwei, thank you for accepting to be my case study and giving me the relevant information in order to deliver. Besides, I wish to show my appreciation to a number of people who enabled my research during the field stays. I would like to thank the numerous respondents, for their willingness to share their opinions and introducing me to numerous people during my fieldwork.

My greatest debts are to my family whose support never faded during this long period of research and writing, there are no adequate thanks. And to my husband and children, thank you for your encouragement for it meant a lot.

ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that citizens suffer the impact of conflict, women among the population are specifically affected most. In most cases, their bodies become the new theater of war as rape is employed as a tool of war. In some instances, women play ultimate responsibilities as the culprits of conflict through conveying information to fighters, cooking and hiding fighters as well as inciting men to fight. However, as customarily defined caregivers, they have the capacity to transform society into a desirable environment. Comparatively they play flagrant roles in begetting peace in post-conflict societies. This is similar to Salome Matakwei who represents women in Mt Elgon as a symbol of resilience in a patriarchal society for playing the role in the conflict of Mt Elgon as a culprit, a victim, and a peace maker.

Reference to Salome Matakwei in Mt Elgon between the period of 2006 and 2017, the study sought to scrutinize the transformation she underwent as perpetrator of the conflict to peace maker. Moreover, the study relied on the theory of dualistic conversion established by William James – the voluntary and contemplative conversion-type on one extreme, and the immediate, involuntary self-surrender conversion-type on the other – has a long tradition of association with the written accounts of Paul’s conversion; the outcome is a classification of his Damascus experience as a stark division “established in the twinkling of an eye” between the old life and the new.

To test the hypothesis, interviews were conducted and data used to examine the roles Salome Matakwei played before and throughout the conflict of Mt Elgon, the transformative daises she used in peace building to reintegrate herself in society as well as her impact in the region. Additionally, the purposive sampling method and the snowballing technique were used in the study to classify respondents who were interviewed using a question guide. The qualitative method was used to analyze the data collected. Content analysis was used to analyze secondary data.

Firstly, the study divulged that Salome Matakwei actually played vital roles in the conflict that led to her rejection in the society, a situation that pushed her to transform to peace building. Secondly, she was involved in peace building and utilized various transformative plinths ranging from being the women group leader, Ambassador of peace, preacher, ‘mother to the conflict’s orphans’, proprietor of peace initiative center, and peace educator to reintegrate herself into the society. Thirdly, her peace efforts in the region of Mt Elgon brought peace, unity among the widows in Mt Elgon and initiated self- reliable activities to the widows and Ex-SLDF members. Lastly, Salome Matakwei used peace building as a platform of reintegrating herself into society to repudiate the state of rejection and isolation by society.

From the study, it is palpable that the role of women in peace building is entangled with their transformative agenda, management of conflict and peace building settings in Africa. It is intended to reintegrate women, in this case Salome Matakwei, back into society after being rejected and secluded especially when they had a direct link with the main culprit in the conflict.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Peace building: is sustained cooperative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems using measures such as disarming, restoring order, destroying weapons, repatriating refugees, training security forces, monitoring elections, advancing the protection of human rights, reforming institutions, and promoting political participation

Conflict transformation: conflict transformation is an ongoing, continuous process by which destructive relationships are built in which conflict is durably settlement by non –violent

Armed conflict: A contested incompatibility which concerns government and/ or territory, where the use of armed force between two parties (of which at least one is the government of a state) results in at least 25 battle – related deaths.

Kalenjin: An ethnic group that comprises of nine culturally and linguistically related clan: Kipsigis, Nandi, Keiyo, Marakwet, Sabaot, Pokots, Tugen, Terik and Ogiek.

Sabaot: Branch of the Kalenjin ethnic group that comprises of sub clans: The Soy and Mosop.

Mosop: Name given to one of the Sabaot clan who were mainly hunters and lived in the moorlands/ highlands of Mt. Elgon/ also referred to as the Ndorobo.

Soy: Name given to people of the Sabaot community living in the lowland in the Mt. Elgon Region; also used to refer to the other members of the Sabaot, excluding the Ndorobo.

Okoa Maisha: Swahili for ‘Save a Life’. A military operation conducted by the Kenya Army in March 2008 to combat the SLDF insurgency in Mt. Elgon.

Oloibon: A spiritual leader whose counsel is revered and respected by the Sabaot of Mt. Elgon.
Physical violence: The intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, injury or harm.

Psychological violence: An action or set of actions that directly impair the victim’s psychological integrity or the condition of one’s mind. Rape: Unlawful sexual activity, usually sexual intercourse, carried out forcibly or under threat of injury and against the will of the victim.

Sexual violence: Any sexual act or attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.

Violence: The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or a group or a community, that xi either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.

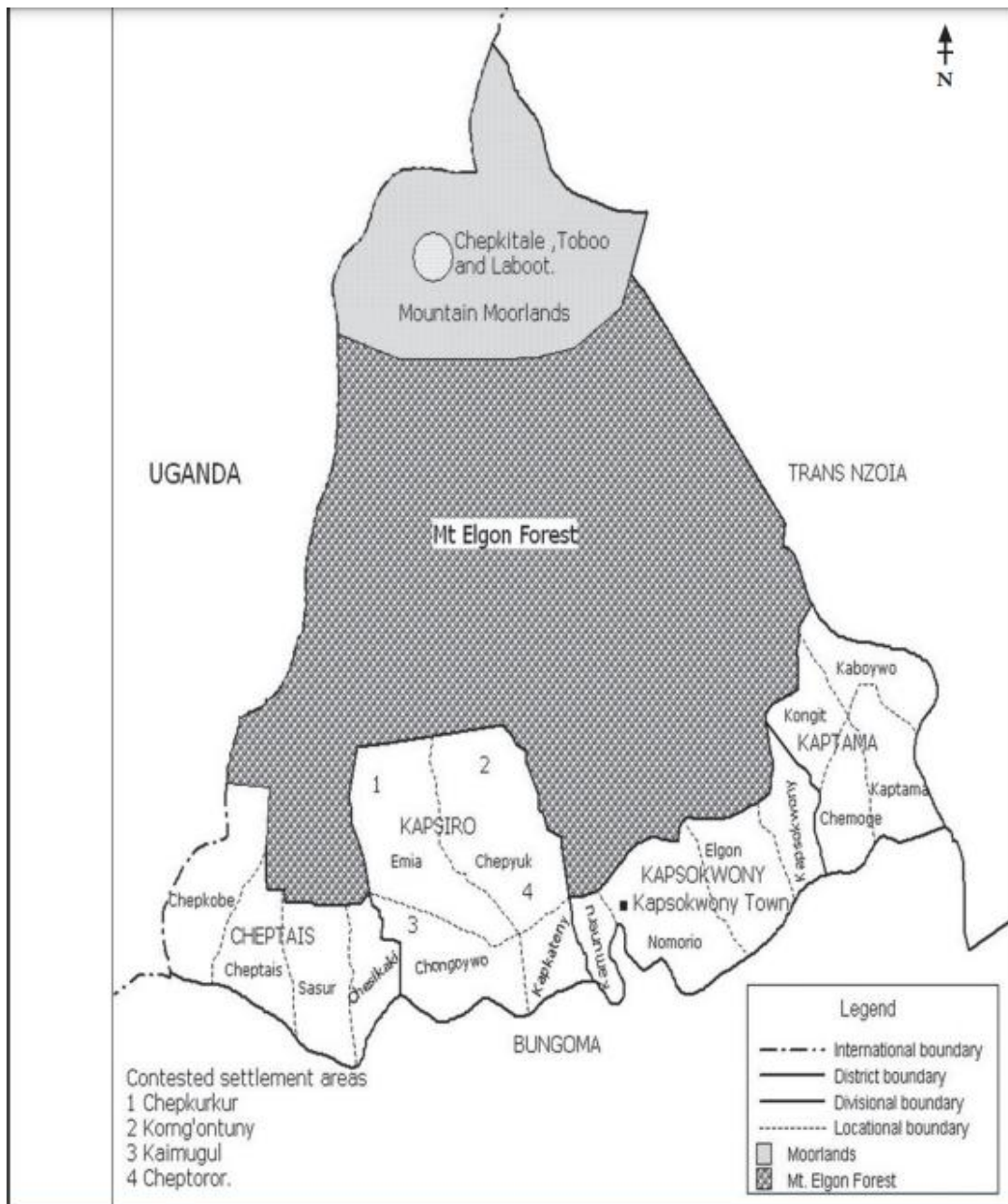
Torture: The intentional infliction of severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, upon a person in the custody or under the control of the accused.

Disarmament: This is an act of laying down arms especially the reduction or abolition of a nation's or groups military forces and armaments. It also includes the condition of being disarmed forcefully. Peace building the initial use of the term peace building is most often associated with a report by UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in 1992 titled An Agenda for Peace.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

SLDF	–	Sabaot Land Defense Force
KDF	-	Kenya Defense Force
GSU	-	General Service Unit
JPC	-	Justice and peace commission
WKHRCW	-	Western Kenyan Human Right Commission Watch
PTN	-	Peace Tree Network
APT	-	Amani People Theatre
MEPI	-	Mount Elgon Peace Initiative
FPFK	-	Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya
MYW	-	Maendeleo ya Wanawake
VUP	-	Vijana Umoja Pamoja ‘Youth together in unity’
RWPL	-	Rural Women Peace Link
KNHRC	-	Kenya National Human Right Commission
KRCS	-	Kenya Red Cross Society
FGM	-	Female Genital Mutilation
UNSCR	-	United Nation Security Council Resolution

MAP OF MT ELGON REGION WHERE KAPSIRO AND CHEPTAIS ARE LOCATED¹.



Source: Robert Rombarah Simiyu, *Militarization of resource conflicts: The case study of land-based conflict in Mt Elgon region of western Kenya*, Netherlands, institute for security studies, 2008. 10

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

This study converges on the transformation Salome Matakwei underwent from being a perpetrator to peace maker in Mt Elgon. Salome Matakwei was the wife of the late Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF) leader Wycliffe Matakwei. Salome's childhood and growing up in war zone environment especially from her paternal uncles over land dispute, prepared her for her future role as a perpetrator in the conflict of Mt Elgon that high lightened many mayhem. Mt Elgon is in Bungoma County in the western region of Kenya. It abuts Uganda on the western side and Trans-Nzoia County on the northern side. Cheptais, Kapsiro, Kapsokwony, and Kaptama are its location. Its administrative headquarter was in Kapsokwony and its main economic center was Cheptais. The Sabaot ethnic group was the majority with the Bukusu, Kikuyu, and Teso's being the minority. The Soy and the Mosop were its two clans. The two clans were agriculturalists who grew crops and kept domestic animals and hunters and gatherers respectively.

The two major problems that faced Mt Elgon since the pre-colonial era were land conflict and ethnic conflict that occurred in two forms. The first form was the inter-ethnic conflict between the Sabaot and Luhya that took a dimension of which ethnic group is superior to the other as well as who benefited at the expense of the other in terms of land resources. The other form was the inter-clan conflict between the two Sabaot clans of Mosop and Soy respectively which resorted to armed conflict.² As expounded by Medard et al.(2008) in their work, the Soy clan went ahead to form a militia group, the Sabaot Land Defence Force, to fight for what they thought was unjust to them during the allocation of land.³

These conflicts have spread to the neighboring country of Uganda who also sides with them (Robert Rombarah Simiyu, 2008). However, it can't be concluded that Mt. Elgon ethnic Conflicts are the only intra-state conflicts that have a spillover effect in Africa because since the end of the cold war, the African continent has been overwhelmed by civil wars and conflict. Economic, political and social factors made it hard to evade these conflicts. As a result of armed conflicts,

²Medard, Claire, "key issues in disentangling the Kenyan issue: eviction, autochthony and land privatization, "Nairobi, *Les cahier d'Afrique de l'Est*, No 37. (2008)81-98.

³ Robert Rombarah Simiyu, *Militarization of resource conflicts: The case study of land-based conflict in Mt Elgon region of western Kenya*, Netherlands, institute for security studies,2008.167

women and girls suffered sexual violence which intended to humiliate their families and community, (Megan Bastrick et al (2008).

Remarkably, in some occurrences, women reinforced conflict by inflaming men to fight, gave fighters food, transported war information from one place to another, served as spies, became combatants, helped fighter carry their weapons, and helped hide the warriors.⁴ Nevertheless, in most cases they stopped and resolved these conflicts, (Megan Bastrick et al (2008).

The sequel of the study will contribute to our knowledge of women in conflict and peace building outstandingly for those women, in this case, Salome Matakwei who participated in the conflict as well as in peace building in the same area. The study examines the various transformative podia she used to convert to peace building.

There are six chapters in this project paper. Chapter one has the introduction which expounds the objective and arrangement of this research. Chapter two discuss the historical background of the conflict in Mt Elgon. In this chapter, it is argued that women were not only victims but also perpetrators of the conflict. As victims, women suffered most in the hands of both the SLDF militia group and the military. As perpetrators, they offered their support to make the conflict successful. The third, fourth and fifth chapters responds the specific objectives of the study which covers the role of Salome Matakwei in the conflict of Mt Elgon, the transformative platforms such as an ambassador of peace, preacher, chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Chesikak ward, Cheptais rural peace link, women leader of Network for widows in Cheptais, leader Chebanan women group that she used in peace building to reintegrate herself in Mt Elgon region as well as her impact in Mt Elgon peace process. The sixth chapter will give the qualitative analysis in narrative form, conclusion, and recommendation.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

In the 2006 conflict of Mt Elgon, Salome Matakwei, the wife of the late SLDF militia group leader (Wycliffe Matakwei), helped the SLDF militia group achieve success in their mission. She also helped militia members hide and did not reveal whereabouts of her husband. The SLDF group had caused a lot of deaths, physical and psychological harm as well as destruction of property. The

⁴ Cora Ann Presley, kikuyu women in *Mau Mau Rebellion and social change in Kenya*, Boulder: West view press, (1992)p.69

society expected her to report the dealings of the SLDF to the relevant authority but she failed it. Her husband was gunned down in 2008. The society blamed and rejected her for all the destruction caused by her husband, the SLDF militia group and military personnel. With zeal, in order to be accepted back by her society, Salome Matakwei came out publicly and used different transformative podia as peace ambassador and agent of peace initiative Non-Government Organizations in Mt Elgon.

However, different scholars have portrayed women in conflict and peace building in different ways, either as perpetrators or peacemakers. For example, Sahla Aroussi, in her study on wartime sexual violence, portrays women as victims of sexual violence, and since they could not deal with their aggressors, they opted for peace in order to protect their children.⁵ Kikuyu women in Mau rebellion and social change in Kenya are pictured as perpetrators in war because they contributed as fighters, inciters of conflict, and offered supportive roles such as intelligence, delivered arms, ammunition, and medicine to the fighter, cooked and hide the fighters, (Cora Ann Presley, 1992). Another study by Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, their study on women waging peace, portray women as peace agents and emphasize the inclusion of women in Peace building to achieve sustainable peace.⁶ Similarly, another study by Lillian Mwangi on the involvement of women in managing conflict portrays women as transformative agents in conflict management. Therefore, in order to achieve effective peace, the inclusion of women in the peace process is very vital, (Lilian Nyambura, 2012).

It is important to note that the above-mentioned studies, in trying to expound on transformation women underwent as a perpetrator and victim in conflict to peace maker, how they deal with conflict and post-conflict situations and the impact of conflict on women, they failed to recognize women such as Salome Matakwei who played vital roles in conflict and peace building. Although women play important role in peace building to create a peaceful society, it is intended by some women like Salome Matakwei for expedient reasons rather than to create sustainable peace in the community. As such, the fundamental argument of this study is that the role of women in peace

⁵Sahla Aroussi, *Women, peace and security: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence*, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4) university of Antwerp, Belgium.p577

⁶Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, *Women Waging Peace*, foreign policy Article No 43, published by Washington Newsweek Interactive, LLC<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3183189>>a Accessed 9 June 2011.

building is intertwined with their transformative agenda presentation of conflict and peace building settings in Africa, which aims to achieve sustainable peace in society.

1.3 The Aim and Objective of the Study

The main goal of the study was to create an understanding of how women, in this case, Salome Matakwei transformed from being a perpetrator and a victim to a victor in Mt Elgon.

The specific objectives were:

1. To examine the role of Salome Matakwei as a perpetrator and victim of the conflict of Mt Elgon.
2. To assess the various transformative platforms used by Salome Matakwei as a peace maker in Mt Elgon that earned her acceptance in the society.
3. To examine the impact of Salome Matakwei's peace- making efforts in Mt Elgon

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What roles did Salome Matakwei play as a perpetrator in the conflict of Mt Elgon?
- ii. What transformative platforms did Salome Matakwei use as a peace maker to earn her acceptance in society?
- iii. How did Salome Matakwei's peace building efforts impact Mt Elgon region?

1.5 Justification

There is a scarcity of scholarly literature that concentrates on the transformations of women, particularly Salome Matakwei in Mt Elgon, from conflict to peace building in the same conflict. Her calling out to the government for help and some of her role in peace building are only covered on articles in local dailies and social media postings. Therefore, the goal of this research is to fill that gap by researching the various ways she used in peace building to reintegrate herself into the society that had rejected her. The outcome of the study will be useful for the academic understanding of the transformation that Salome Matakwei underwent from being a culprit, victim to a peacemaker. This research paper would add to the existing scholarly work about conflict and peace building in Mt Elgon hence providing a wider pool for academic reference on Salome Matakwei.

Since cases of women involvement in conflict and peace building are on the rise in Kenya, the same can't be limited to Mt Elgon. Women have contributed to peace building ranging from inter-clan conflict, ethnic conflict to post-election violence among other conflicts. Besides, there are those who participated in conflict during the liberation movements, for instance, the Kikuyu women in the Mau rebellion, prophetess Moraa in the freedom of the Abagusii, and Mekatili wa Menza in the Giriama resistance. According to Mary Getui, in her book on biography of prophetess Moraa, women are presented as the victim of oppressive patriarchal society and assert how women were negotiating for the space of acceptance in a male-dominated society. Prophetess Moraa used spiritual 'magic' to convince men to listen to her. However, Salome Matakwei in Mt Elgon is a very unique and intriguing case of a woman who transformed from being a culprit to a victim then to a victor in the same region. She is a representation of a symbol of resilience beyond contraventions in a male-dominated society.

When the SLDF group that was being led by Wycliffe caused chaos in Mt Elgon, the role of a woman in the conflict was overshadowed despite the fact that Salome Matakwei was at the forefront in ensuring the success of the Militia mission. It was until 2008 after the death of Wycliffe Matakwei that the society isolated and rejected her for all the harm that was caused by her husband and militia group. Salome Matakwei called out government to help her get acceptance from her community. She even apologized publicly on behalf of her husband for having caused harm on people. In 2012, Bungoma county commissioner, Mohammed Maalim, declared Salome Matakwei as the ambassador of peace in Mt Elgon.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Cheptais and Kapsiro in the Mt Elgon sub-county were the areas of study. Cheptais was its main economic Centre while Chepkyuk phase three land allocation took place in Kapsiro making the areas epicenters of the violence. The research time frame expanded from the year 2006 to 2017. The year 2006 is the year when phase three land allocation at Chepkyuk land settlement scheme began with the allocation of the land being revised to one hectare per family hence leading to the escalation of the conflict that saw many barbarisms committed by the Sabaot Land Defence Force militia group that was led by Salome Matakwei's husband, Wycliffe Matakwei. Just like in the year 2017, where people who participated in the conflict changed to become participants of peace

building, the same way Salome Matakwei officially started a process of peace building as a founder of a peace initiative group in the Mt Elgon region.

The researcher paid attention only in Salome's roles before and during the conflict of Mt Elgon and her contribution to the peace-making process in the same region that had rejected her.

The study was faced by a few challenges like the language barrier since the researcher was not conversant with local dialects. To cope with this problem the researcher looked for a research assistance who come from the study area that was conversant with the languages for the purpose of interpretation and translation even though the researcher also made frequent use of the Kiswahili language that is well understood in the area.

Insecurity was another challenge in the whole region of Mt Elgon since they feared the attacks from the existing members of the SLDF militia group. This made the locals fear to give information particularly the victims of the conflict refused to express what transpired and were still traumatized. Moreover, the locals thought that the researcher was intelligent officer gathering information to betray the people to the military. Therefore, the researcher liaised with the key informant and conducted oral interviews at the home compound with Ex- SLDF members. The area chief, Jackson Kamon, Salome Matakwei's brother-in-law, allowed the researcher to interview people in his camp. People who were bold enough gave the required information.

While the researcher proposed to do a focus group discussion on the insecurity for fear of being reported to the existing militia group, the people never gave appropriate information, and the focus group was interpreted as a gathering for receiving aid from various NGOs. In order to avoid suspicion, the researcher opted to use oral interview which was considered private and confidential while most informant insisted that their identity be kept private.

1.7 Literature Review

The following literature review discusses the major role of women in conflict and post-conflict peace building. Studies reviewed in this research took different dimensions in explaining the roles of women in conflict and peace building. Some studies portray women as victims and perpetrators in conflict while others depict women as peacemakers. However, there has been no literature on women who participated in the conflict as victims and perpetrators and after rejection they became the transformative agent of the same conflict. Therefore, the study using the reviewed literature on women in conflict and peace building seeks to examine and add knowledge on the transformation of women, in this case, Salome Matakwei, from being a perpetrator of conflict to peace building in Mt Elgon.

Sahla Aroussi in her work asserts that in contemporary conflict, women became victims of sexual assault. They were gang raped, stripped off their dignity and leaving a negative impact on their families. Since women could not deal with their aggressors and could find any justice, they preferred peace in order to protect their children and properties.⁷The article was relevant to this research as it gave a comparison of how women were victimized in the conflict of Mt Elgon. Women were raped by both the SLDF militia group and the military personnel. Additionally, the article is relevant in a way that it gives insights into how the victimization of Salome Matakwei led to her transformation to peace building.

Mary Getui, in her book on biography of Moraa, deals with cultural oppression as a barrier for Gusii women in the public sphere in the mid-19th century. Mary portrays women as victims of oppressive patriarchal society and asserts how women negotiated for the space of acceptance in a male-dominated society. Gusii women had no position in the society either married or not and they were regarded as the sojourn in their husband's and maternal homes respectively which implied that they were regarded more or less as "non-entities" (Mary N. Getui et al., 1994). For instance, they were voiceless with little social interaction with men and only allowed to sit separately and

⁷Sahla Aroussi, *Women, peace and security: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence*, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4) university of Antwerp, Belgium.p577

listened quietly to proceedings of their communal meetings”.⁸ Acceptance of this status quo and lack of courage to change became a major challenge to women's participation in prominent roles in society. She argues that women used spiritual customs to force men in society to listen to them. The scholar's argument is important for this research to examine the strategies used by Salome Matakwei to negotiate for acceptance in a society that had rejected her before.

Mildred A.J. Ndeda focuses on patriarchal oppression of women among the Kenyan Giriama community in the colonial era. She affirms that women possessed powerful voices for moderation in times of conflict. According to her, their oratorical power helped them persuade men to believe and agree with their views as well as emerge as leaders in the society that regarded men as leaders (Midred A.J.Ndeda, 1994). Her study sheds light for this study to examine Salome Matakwei's coping mechanism in Mt Elgon.

Joya Malalai in her work titled *raising my voice* asserts that in the 1980s, the only place for an Afghan woman was to be either in her house or the grave. Moreover, in most places, for a woman to walk in public, she was required to cover herself. If she was to walk in the streets, she was to be accompanied by her male relative, (Malalai Joya, 2009). She brings out how women survive in a cultural oppressive society and argues that for a woman to become a leader in such a society, all she needed was to live as a fugitive, changes her identity and work as an underground activist.⁹ Malalai's argument helps us to understand the cultural factors that hinder women from participating in peace building in a male-dominated society.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, (2009) was the first female president in Africa and Liberia. In addition to this, she received the Nobel peace prize for advocating women's rights in peace building in the year 2011. Ellen focuses on the cruelty of the patriarchy on Liberian women in the early 20th century that hinders women to pursue leadership roles at the highest level of power. Therefore, the discourse of protest against women's oppression, she highlights the resilience of women in male-dominated spaces and reasons that self-determination, hard work, and resilience were the only way that would

⁸Mary N. Getui, *Moraa Moka Ngiti: Defender Of Freedom Among Abagusii Of Western Kenya*, Nairobi, Kaswanga press, Article of Women in Kenyan History, Profile No 3,(1994):p.4

⁹Malalai Joya, *Raising my Voice: 'One of the bravest women in Afghanistan'*, Great Britain, clays limited, (2009)P.3

make a woman great.¹⁰ Her book invokes the question of how resilient women are in the peace process in a patriarchal society.

Relatedly, Wangari Mathai, environmental activist and the first woman from Africa to be given a Nobel Prize in 2004 because of how she contributed to sustainability of peace, asserts that for a woman to get involved in the peace making process she does not need to be in a position of power but needs to start doing something on the environment like planting and watering plants to make all the difference in the world.¹¹ Wangari argues that courage, tenacity, and humor in doing something small in activism can make a woman achieve. The gist of her work, therefore, shed light on my study to examine how women prevail in peace building given that they supported the conflict in the same region.

In the conflict, women have also been pictured as the culprits. For instance, Cora Ann Presley's (1992) study focuses on the role of women in the mid-20th century during the liberation movement in Kenya. Her article designs women as not only victims of war but also perpetrators. She highlights on women driven by the ideological ties on land took a secret oath that gave them courage and acted as fighters, fed and protected fighters became intelligent, delivered arms and ammunition and medicine to the fighter. Other women like Nyanjiru Muthoni were inciters of conflict. Moreover, their substantial contribution to rebellious success in return ended the transformation of women's role in Kenya, (Cora Ann Presley, 1992). This evoked questions to this study to examine how the roles of women in conflict could be transformed into peace building.

Comparably, Irene Staunt emphasizes how conflict transformed the role of women to become pillars of today's peace. She asserts that during the Zimbabwe liberation movement in the 1960s, the cultural gender role of Zimbabwean women as mother, wife, and victims of war were subverted as many women become fighters and active participants in guerrilla warfare, (Irene Staunton, 1990). They fed and gave protection to fighters risking their lives which they knew and were proud of. The writer argues that wars offered windows of opportunities for women because, during the war,

¹⁰Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *This Child Will Be Great*, Harper Collins publishers, United States of America. 2009.p7-8

¹¹Wangari Mathai, *Unbowed*, William Heinemann, Great Britain, Arrow Books 2008.p.291-293

women began to understand their rights and how to pursue them rising on a high platform. The study is relevant to this research paper because it raises concern of how the conflict of Mt Elgon transformed women to become pillars of today's peace.

In conclusion, Kershaw (1997) in her study on 'Mau from below' based on fieldwork from 1955-1957 and 1962. She presents women as not only mothers and wives in the society but also supporters of the conflict although their roles are not recognized. Kershaw argues that the heroic chiefs amongst them the 'few clever men' that were perceived to be the Mau leaders and freedom fighters were celebrated for the Kenyan independence forgetting the ordinary people among them, women whom the past is silent on yet they contributed a lot to the success of the war through their supportive roles. These roles included cooking for the fighter, conveying information, carrying and smuggling arms for the fighters among others. The fighters would not have made it without women's support.¹² The scholar's argument, therefore, gives parallel on resilient of women who controlled the patterns of conflict and knew all the network of the conflict making it successful and now the same women have transformed into controlling and determining the patterns of peace building in the same area.

A study on women in the peace process by Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa explains that women play vital roles in the peace process. According to the writers, the inclusion of women in Peace building was very vital in creating viable peace. They argue that because women were community pillars, made it impossible possible because they knew their communities well, (Swanee Hunt et al, (2011). For instance, they bridged divides even where leaders had failed in conflict resolution, they served as contacts between the warring parties, civilians, and NGOs, they acted as a link between police and public rapid response to end violence, searched for missing people, they brought together the members of the community and served as peace educators to their families and societies.¹³ Their work is important to this research paper especially when it comes to Salome Matakwei who is involved in the transformation process in Mt Elgon to reintegrate herself back into society.

¹² Greet Kershaw: *Mau Mau From Below*, Ohio university press (1997)p 253

¹³Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, *Women Waging Peace*, foreign policy Article No 43,published by Washington Newsweek Interactive, LLC<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3183189>>a Accessed 9 June 2011.

Lillian Nyambura Mwangi (2012), on the other hand, focuses on the role of women in conflict management. She asserts that although women were involved in peace making initiatives through disarmament efforts, and resolving disputes using the traditional means, their contribution to peace building remained unrecognized. She argues that, for the achievement of effective peace, gender sensitivity and inclusion of women in conflict management are vital. This is because women made the impossible possible.¹⁴ The study is relevant to my research to examine the meaning of transformation and what makes it possible especially in the case of Salome Matakwei who was using it as a way of reconciliation and reintegration into the society

Edith Mururi and Eric Mugambi assert that, in the early 19th century, gender discrimination hindered women from the national development and politics which pulled them behind in Kenyan society. Bestowing on them, education transformed women to participate in a male-dominated society. They argue that women empowerment was not only the way to break the bound of culture and traditions that dragged them behind, but also, the way that women could lay the foundation stone on which future women could stand on as women of substance and inspire others. This is because women of yesterday were the cornerstone of which the future is built.¹⁵ Their work paves way for this study to examine whether the same applies to Salome Matakwei's transformation to peace building in a male-dominated society.

The aforementioned scholarly work gives the various justifications of women as victims, the culprits, and peacemakers. Other scholars have brought out women as key players in achieving a peaceful environment. However, they have not extended to bring out women who played important roles in conflict and peace building in the same area for selfish gain than attaining sustainable peace. The current study will, therefore, fill in the gap by adding on how women shifted from conflict to peace building for various reasons.

¹⁴Lillian Nyambura Mwangi, *role of women in conflict management: case study of Tana River region of Kenya*. University of Nairobi (2012) p.24

¹⁵Edith Mururu and Erick Mugambi, *Julia Auma Ojiambo: Kenya women achievers series 6*, Nairobi, Women Education Researchers of Kenya, (1998)p.18

1.8 Theoretical Framework

The research paper is based on the theory of dualistic conversion established by William James – the voluntary and contemplative conversion-type on one extreme, and the immediate, involuntary self-surrender conversion-type on the other. The theory has a long tradition of association with the written accounts of Paul’s conversion; the outcome is a classification of his experience on his way to Damascus as a stark division “established in the twinkling of an eye between the old life and the new.” Thomas Aquinas, who seemingly anticipated the conversion types of James, reinforced Paul’s inclusion in this dualism. Aquinas differentiated between “imperfect preparation,” a gradual spiritual growth of a soul towards Christ, and “perfect preparation,” an immediate “infusion with grace.” Aquinas attributed the latter to Paul’s experience, since “he received grace suddenly.” The strict two-class conversion model incited questions concerning the development of faith among the Protestant reformers – namely, is authentic Christian conversion best represented by the documented experience of Paul? Several early influential reformers, discouraging the notion of conversion through preparation, answered yes. Ulrich Zwingli patently defended the position of sudden grace, which is “so sure and so strong that if God wills, all things are done the moment that he speaks his Word.” William Tyndale, too, argued in favor of Paul as the ideal model of spiritual recognition, where grace acts as a “lightning flash.” The leaders of the Reformation drove forward their cause with “the fire of Paul” as their *Donnerschlag* – the thunderclap of grace and the Gospel.

Saul had, before he became a Christian, attained as nearly perfect success in his effort to become righteous as under this method was possible. On this point we have his own testimony, given when he had become a Christian and had come to look back on his former life as a mistake and a failure. His persecution of Christians was in some sense conscientious. He was a man of profound moral earnestness pursuing a course of bitter persecution of the Christians under the stress of a sincere conviction of duty.

Despite his success in attaining the righteousness that is in the law, despite his consciousness in persecuting the Christians, Saul was not wholly at ease. The words of Jesus to him on the road to Damascus imply that Saul was at this time subject to certain influence tending to turn him from the course which he had chosen.

Similarly, Salome Matakwei was subject to the influence that she never wanted their land to end up with the enemy hence she ended up supporting her husband and the militia group that turned out to be the top culprit of the conflict that high lightened many atrocities. The society condemns her for evils done by the culprits she supported. Later she transforms and like Paul, she used pro-social activities like preaching and other activities to earn herself acceptance by society.

1.9 Research Hypothesis

The study tested two hypotheses:

- 1) Salome Matakwei's played vital roles as a perpetrator in the conflict of Mt Elgon that led to her rejection and isolation.
- 2) Salome Matakwei used various transformative platforms as a peace maker to reintegrate herself in Mt Elgon.
- 3) Salome Matakwei peace efforts impacted Mt Elgon region positively.

1.10 Methodology

Both secondary and primary sources were employed in this study. At the beginning of this research secondary sources have been dealt with to form the historical background on the transformation of women from conflict to peace building. The literature reviewed included books and scholarly articles such as *The Role of Kikuyu Women in Mau Rebellion* by Cora Ann Presley, biographies done on women that were relevant to my study, scholarly journals, and thesis/dissertations on women in conflict and peace building. Africana section at the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library (JKML) in the University of Nairobi has been a very helpful source of Books and thesis which were also supported by a detailed analysis of scholarly journal articles regarding women in conflict and peace building from online scholarly journals like Jstor. This helped advance the understanding of the role of women in the conflict of Mt Elgon since the post-colonial period when the government established the Chebyuk scheme of land and located it to Mosop up to 2006 when the conflict intensified. The researcher reviewed reports on Mt Elgon such as indigenous land claim in Kenya, a case study of Chebyuk in Mt Elgon District. All this information helps come up with chapter two that discuss the historical background of women, SLDF and the conflict in Mt Elgon.

Documented Primary sources were reviewed. This embraced articles from the two main local daily newspapers namely the standard and daily nation that had articles on Salome Matakwei and conflict of Mt Elgon, newspapers digital news sites, reports from various organizations that captured the atrocities caused by the SLDF to the locals especially the women as well as the Salome Matakwei peace initiatives activities between the year 2006 and 2017. Other sources include reports from the Human Rights Watch (HRW), Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), reports from Rural Women Peace Link Network (RWPL) Action Aid Kenya. These reports documented the role of women in conflict and peace building plus Salome Matakwei as victims and perpetrators of the conflict as well as their involvement in peace building. The data gathered was vital in answering the three research questions which include; what roles did Salome Matakwei play as a culprit of the conflict that led to her rejection? , what transformative platforms did she use as peace builder in Mt Elgon? And what effort did she make in peace process in Mt Elgon? In order to support the information gathered from published and documented sources, the researcher was granted a permit from the National Commission of Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which empowered her to carry out field research in the purposed area of study. The researcher carried oral interviews on the 7th and 12th of July 2019 and made a follow-up of the oral interviews on the 12th and 13th of September 2019. The researcher conducted several oral interviews with the key informant that is Salome Matakwei who is the case study to seek clarification and addition of information.

In the field, the researcher focused mainly on two locations of Mt Elgon which included Kapsiro and Cheptais for her fieldwork. Cheptais was the economic center and Kapsiro being the division where Chebyuk land is located was among the epicenter of the served as a sample for the entire Mt Elgon region. These two locations experienced and witnessed the mayhem of the SLDF militia group. It is within the same area that Salome Matakwei played her roles as a victim, culprit, and peacemaker. The researcher used both random and purposive sampling and managed to interview Salome Matakwei and 18 respondents on face to face. The researcher also interviewed Salome over the phone.

For the subject of study, more respondents from various backgrounds such as teachers, nurses, farmers, were engaged. The researcher interviewed Ex –SLDF members who gave information on

the atrocities they caused in the region and their transition to peace building under Salome Matakwei's peace initiative.

Identification of more respondents was made easier by Salome Matakwei. This helped get more people to interview. During research, a research assistant who could understand Lubukusu, Sabaot dialects and Ateso was engaged for interpretation and this made it easier to get more important information. After fieldwork, qualitative approach was used, particularly narrative analysis to compose this research paper.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN, SLDF AND CONFLICT IN MT ELGON

2.0 INTRODUCTION

To clearly define the role of women and Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) in Mt Elgon, this chapter assesses the historical background to the emergence of the conflict of Mt Elgon, contributory factors such as historical injustice, land scarcity, politics and political leaders and numerous responses by the government concerning the issues. More also it focuses on the failure of the government to compensate or resettle the Soy clan which generated a feeling of injustice and favouritism among those who remained landless especially the women who depended on land for livelihood.¹⁶It has also illuminated the victimization of the women by SLDF group and the Military personnel and argues that despite the fact that the consequences of the armed conflict were impacted on the civilians, women among the population bore the most. Lastly, it focuses on the role of women, particularly, Salome Matakwei in the realization of Sabaot Land Defence Force and her response to the atrocities caused by the SLDF group and the military personnel to the women in the large scheme that led to the transformation of women to peace building.

Women were the major victims of the civil wars and conflicts that ravaged the world, principally Africa, from the beginning of the 20th century. During such wars, among the non-combatant population women suffered most as they were raped, evacuated and murdered. For example, Florence Ayissis et al. (2006) affirms that in Liberia, women's bodies became the new battlefields as they were either raped or cut their arms.¹⁷However, several studies argue that in some cases women were victims of war while in other cases they were culprits. For instance, the study of Cora Ann (1992) clearly outlines how women supported conflict, incited men to fight, fed the fighters, conveyed war information from one place to another, played spy role, became combatants and also carried weapons for the fighter as well as helped hide the warriors.¹⁸Due to poor justice system women found it difficult to justify their experience in conflict as well as feared the cost of doing

¹⁶Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *militarization of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg1

¹⁷Florence Ayissis Anatole and Poulton, Robin Edward(Eds)Bound to Cooperate :conflict, peace and people of Sierra Leone,2ndEd,United Nation Institute for disarmament Research, Geneva United Nation(2006)p.15-17

¹⁸ Cora Ann Presley, Kikuyu women in *Mau Mau Rebellion and social change in Kenya*, Boulder: West view press,(1992)p.69

so.¹⁹ As time went by, in order to survive and save their children and property they opted for peace building.²⁰

In Mt Elgon, Soy women depended on land for their livelihood and cultural value. Therefore, they could not withstand losing it to Mosop. They mobilized their sons and husband to engage in a war in order to keep their land save. This led to the formation of Sabaot Land Defence Force group. Unfortunately, the SLDF group turned out to be notorious for their ruthlessness and violation of human rights which included rape, spreading HIV and STD, abduction, physical and psychological torture, physical assaults, and murder of people perceived to oppose their agenda. This led to a higher number of widows in the region, collection of illegal taxes, distraction of properties such as schools and ceased farming.²¹They rendered the whole community into suffering.

This led to Government intervention whereby military personnel were sent to save lives through an operation termed as ‘Operation Okoa Maisha’. However, the Kenya Defence Forces did not only flush out the SLDF group, but they caused more harm than good to the women of this community. They raped women, tortured them and even left many as windows. Due this suffering, women in Mt Elgon took that blame on Salome Matakwei for the sins of her husband, SLDF group and military force in Mt Elgon.

2.1 The Conflict of Mt Elgon

In 2006, skirmishes were experienced in Mt Elgon between the two sabaot sub clans over land. In Kenya, since the pre-colonial era, land-based conflicts were common particularly between the agriculturalist and the pastoralist due to inequity of land and limited livelihood, (Elvin Nyukuri, 2006). Likewise, in Mt Elgon, the conflict was due to historical injustice where agricultural land owned by the “sons of the soil” was taken by immigrant. The resolution of this conflict coincided with the general election, national politics motives and even state agencies which resulted to unresolved and pure intercommunity hatred years after they first began. ²²

¹⁹SahlaAroussi ,*Women, peace and security: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence*, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p577

²⁰ Ibid.pg 4-5

²¹Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *Militarization of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg56

²² Elvin Nyukuri, *Women ,land and resource conflict: Policy Intervention And Implementations in Kenya*, African Centre of technology studies, Nairobi ,Kenya (2006)p.13

The conflict of Mt Elgon can be traced back to the colonial policy of alienating African land that aimed to create land for white settler ‘farmers. During the pre-colonial days, the white settlers through the colonial land policy dispersed the Sabaot from their initial habitat that is now referred to as Trans-nzoia to the lowland and moorland of Mt Elgon. This dispersion led to limited interaction hence disparities in social adoptions and identities, (Gabriel Lynch, 2011). For instance, the Soy comprised of the Bok Kong, Bony mek and Sapine and inhabited the lowland of the mountain and became agriculturalist that did mixed farming whereas the Mosop who comprise of the Ogiek and Ndoromo inhabited the moorland and became hunters and gatherers.

2.1.1 Chebyuk Phase I

When the country gained independence, the new government conserved Chepkitale as the water catchment and instituted a game reserve for tourism to serve as an income generation project hence relocating the Mosop clan. The government under the legal notice No. 35 of 1968 established Chebyuk settlement scheme to settle the Mosop clan. In 1971, the government resettled the clan in Chebyuk which was a forest reserve, down the slopes of the mountain. This became the first resettlement of Mosop that took place from 1971 to 1974 and was referred to as Chebyuk settlement scheme phase I.

In 1974, an official allocation of the land had started since the land was de-gazetted. Since the Soy clan had settled in Chebyuk scheme phase I which was established for the Mosop, the government had formed committee to establish land ownership. The Soy had exchanged their labour with land as well as bought land from the Mosop, with no legal documents to prove their ownership. The Mosop had the legitimate documents. This led to the eviction of Soy’s who were considered illegitimate for not having the land documents. This led to the beginning of land warfare between the Mosop and Soy.

2.1.2 Chebyuk Phase II

In order to settle the Mosop who had missed land in Chebyuk phase I, in 1979, the government set resettlement land at Cheptoror and Kaimugul named Chebyuk scheme phase II. The allocation of land to the Mosop was done although not finalised on time prompting the repeat of Chebyuk phase I in Chepyuk phase II. The Mosop pursued labour from the Soy in exchange of their land. More

also, the Mosop rented and sold land to the Soy preferring to go back to Chepkitale. Ironically, the Soy ended up dominating the land that was created for the Mosop by the government. After the Mosop realized that they had no more land, they started demanding for it.²³

In response, the Soy threatened to dislocate the Mosop out of the scheme if they failed to give back their money. The government intervened to determine who was to get land. In 1989, the government conducted a re-evaluation of land process. In conclusion, the government cancelled the allocation stating that the Chepyuk phase II scheme was meant for the landless and not for the exchange of Chepkitale conservation. As a result to this, Bukusu, Soy and Mosop, who had settled in the area, were told to apply for land ownership. This led to high number of applications that amounted to the government issuing two hectares per family. This affected the Soy as they once again lost the land to Mosop.

Immediately, the eviction of the Unsuccessful applicants including the Soy who had bought land from the Mosop with no legal document took place. The Soy clan saw as if the government was favouring the Mosop community and this angered them. Additionally, they said the process of selection was affected by nepotism, corruption and non- involvement of community leaders. Therefore, the Soy petitioned the government through their politician, Fred Chesembe Kapondi, for resettlement of evictees but it was not successful, (Simiyu et al., 2008)

2.1.3 Chebyuk Phase III – “The Cursed Promised Land”

When the government responded to the petition by Fred Kapondi asking the government to resettle the evictees and other sabaot who remained landless after phase I and II land settlement scheme, Chebyuk settlement scheme phase III, ‘the promised land’, became cursed. President Moi, in 1993 issued directives to set aside land in Chepkurkur and Korung’otuny in order to settle the Soy who had been evicted in Chebyuk settlement phase II though they had illegally occupied the land. Although the government addressed to their plight, it took long time to speed up the land allocation process until 2006.²⁴ The land allocation was revised to one hectare per family and it was to be shared equally with the Mosop. This meant that the Soy who would again lose their land to the

²³Medard,claire,*indigenous land claims in Kenya: a case study of Chebyuk, Mt Elgon district in Alden, Chris and Anseeuw,ward(Eds),the changing politic of land in Africa*, domestic policies, crisis management and regional norms, human science research council press(2010)p.10

²⁴Simiyu, Robert Romborah,militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg17

Mosop and they were not willing to comply. The Soy was angered and could not withstand the Mosop take 'their' land.²⁵

The Soy clan also saw this as favouritism to the Mosop clan by the government as well as a punishment to them by John Serut, their area member of parliament, for overwhelming voting against the constitution in 2005 during the constitutional referendum campaign. The Mosop were pro-government and voted for the proposed constitution. This intensified political rivalry between the Soy and Mosop.

The Soy clan were compounded by a feeling of frustration when 'foreigners' took up the land that should have been a reserve for them. This remained a ticking time bomb that the government ought to have diffused. In 2006, the Soy leaders that had large hectares of land petitioned the government with no success. They funded the agitated Soy clan to mobilize and rally young men among them Salome Matakwei's husband, Wycliffe Kirui Matakwei and formed Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) as a cure to the problems bedevilling them.

According to some scholars, women participate in war because of their own agenda. Women in Mt Elgon, mostly from Soy, depended on land for their economic activity and they could not stand to lose their land hence participated in war. The injustices over their land led them to aid the war by inciting and encouraging their husbands and sons to fight for their land. This led to the formation of SLDF, a militia group, with a main aim of defending their land.

2.2 The Paradigm Shift of the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF)

Sabaot Land Defence Force was a militia group that comprised of young men predominantly from the Soy clan. The militia group was led by Wycliffe Kirui Matakwei, to defend 'their land' in Chebyuk settlement scheme phase III, eliminate their enemies and anyone who proved to be a threat to their mission. They vowed to engage in the powerful narrative of historical injustice that was embedded in the history of Sabaot land in 2006.²⁶ Their initial target was the Mosop who were allegedly favoured by the government during the allocation of the land in Mt Elgon as well as the government officials who the militia group perceived as corrupt.

²⁵Medard, Claire, *elected leaders, militias and prophets: violence in Mt Elgon(2006-2008)*, Mkuki Publishers, Dares salaam, (2009) pg339-361

²⁶Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *Militarization of Resource Conflicts: The Case of Land –Based Conflict in The Mount Elgon Region of Western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008) pg17

In contrast to protecting their land from the perceived land grabbers, the militia group shifted their paradigm from their objective of fighting for their own land.²⁷ They invaded Kapsiro division where Chepkyuk III was located, Kaptama where Wycliffe Matakwei hailed from and Cheptais their economic centre, therefore becoming notorious for their merciless activities and caused suffering to the whole community through violation of human rights which included sexual, physical and psychological assault. They killed their ‘enemies’ among them the Mosop, government officials and those who hindered their mission. In some occasions they wiped entire families.²⁸ The SLDF militia group employed various tactics and strategies which made it difficult for security personnel to prevail. They comprised of spiritual, political and military wings that performed special duties as follows: -

A) The spiritual wing

According to John Mbithi, Africans are notoriously religious and religion permeates into all the departments of life so that it is not easy or possible to isolate it.²⁹ Mbithi asserts that people of Africa had their own religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. In traditional African societies, spiritual leaders such as prophets played an important role during war. For instance, Kinjikitile Ngwale of the Maji Maji rebellion, was said to know sacred water that could repel the Germany bullet. Unfortunately they failed to overturn the Germans.³⁰ Similarly, the spiritual wing of the SLDF militia group, performed roles based on the cultural beliefs of the Sabaot community. They imposed their own spiritual leaders and prophets ‘Laibons’. These Laibons gave the combatants charms that would protect them from authorities. They administered oaths and spiritual guidance.³¹ The SLDF members believed that the oath taken by the combatants bonded them together and the charm gave them supernatural powers to protect them from bullets.

²⁷Ibid p.23

²⁸Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *Militarization of Resource Conflicts: The Case of Land –Based Conflict in The Mount Elgon Region Of Western Kenya*, Institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008) pg17

²⁹Mbithi, John S *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, (1969) p.1

³⁰Alys Breton ;*Majimaji uprising: African American history*, June 24,2009pg1

³¹Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, Institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg17

The spiritual wing violated the cultural and Christian values and teachings on sex education within the area which resulted to low spread of Christianity within the area.³²For instance, according to the Sabaot cultural belief, at the beginning of a conflict, animal intestines were used to foretell the future of a conflict. However, the SLDF killed expectant women and open up their womb to determine the future of the conflict. Hilarity of the matter was that the sex of the unborn baby would determine whether the conflict would continue or end. If the baby was a boy it meant that the war would continue.³³

Just like men the Sabaot women underwent circumcision as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood which mostly happened in the month of December. During circumcision ceremonies, taking of alcohol was a local custom. In contrast, the SLDF prohibited the taking of alcohol during the ceremony and based this neo-traditional religious practice with recruiting new combatants.³⁴ Many women and girls in the region were exposed to sexual abuse by the SLDF menace. They used rape as the new weapon of war where the women's body became the new battle field of war. Although rape was initially prohibited, the young SLDF raped women in order to force them to give information about their hiding husbands and sons who had refused to join the militia group.³⁵In addition to this, the SLDF members raped the Mosop women to give birth to their children and those who were carrying their husbands pregnancy, the SLDF would open their wombs and spear the foetus killing them instantly with the aim of not allowing an 'enemy' to live.³⁶

SLDF used rape as a silent killing machine to infect the Mosop women with HIV/AIDS and prohibited women from reporting to the police or seeking medical attention in order to spread the disease to the entire community. It saved those bullets, humiliation, submission and demoralizing the enemy. Violation of women meant violation of cultural identity of a community as a whole since women are believed to be the pillars and continuity of a community.³⁷

³²Ibid p.36

³³ Claire Medard, *Elected leaders, militias and prophets: violence in Mt Elgon (2006-2008)*p.358

³⁴ Ibid.p.358

³⁵Simiyu,Robert Romborah,militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land -based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, Institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg36

³⁶ Oral interview, Nancy Cherono, Cheptais 12th September 2019.

³⁷Turshen, Meredith &Twagiramariya, Clotilde (Ed), *what Women Do in Wartime: Gender & Conflict in Africa*, New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1998.

Women who had been raped suffered from STDs, unwanted pregnancies, reproductive disorders such as vagina fistula, low self-esteem trauma and lost meaning of life. Promptly after being raped, some ended up being divorced while others their husbands married again for they believed their wives were infected with HIV/AIDS .To cope with the situation, some women attempted suicide, procured abortion and others turned into prostitutes to make a living from the already damaged bodies.³⁸This led to high spread of HIV/AIDS within the area as majority of women had lost their husbands during the conflict prompting them to share the few men to satisfy their sexual needs.³⁹Many schools around Mt Elgon were church based and they faced destructions and others were even burnt. School children were forbidden from going to school whereas numerous girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy as a result of rape.

B) The Military wing

The military wing was led by Wycliffe Matakwei and was comprised of well-trained former army. Although Matakwei had no military trainings, he was driven by land ties to lead the SLDF militia group to fight for ‘their’ land. The SLDF in the military wing were obligated as Kenya police and Kenya Army making it difficult to distinguish them from the actual security personnel. To carries out their mission without suspicion, some wore military and police uniform and spoke Kiswahili while others were obligated as women as they wore women clothes so as to carry fire arms without suspicion. In addition to this, unlike most fighters who hide in the forest, the militia group lived within the community and operated from their homes. Most women and children belonged here and acted as spies because they were not conspicuous as the military personnel believed that the women and children were vulnerable civilians in need of their protection and could not contribute in the conflict. They worked in different cells that operated from different places such as markets, hospital and government offices.⁴⁰

Forcibly, the SLDF military wing recruited young men as soldiers and those who refused to join the militia group faced death, inhumane treatment and mutilation. The mutilation signature of the

³⁸Heri Ryanga, *women and conflict in Mt Elgon: Assessing Rape As A Weapon In Armed Conflict*, Thesis, University Of Nairobi-1991-2008(2013)P.41-47

³⁹Heri Ryanga, *women and conflict in Mt Elgon: assessing rape as a weapon in armed conflict*, thesis, University of Nairobi-1991-2008(2013)p.41-47

⁴⁰Ibid P.27

SLDF was to cut off the ears of the men who disobeyed and slashed off breast of women who hide their husbands and sons to prevent them from joining the militia group.⁴¹ According to the argument of Carl Von Clausewitz, just war, and the objective of a war is to compel the enemy to submit to ones will fit well.⁴² In this case, their enemies were not only the Mosop but also Soy who refused to join the militia group and anyone who hindered the objective of the SLDF militia group.⁴³

The Kenya police were overpowered by the military wing and most of them were killed and others left under the mercy of SLDF. The SLDF militia group took bhang and behaved like animals and there was no security at all making the place insecure for the community especially for women.⁴⁴

C) The political wing

With most of the politicians correlated to it, this wing was the one behind all the rebellion. The operations were funded by the Politicians and in the case where the militia group ran out of funds, it was this wing that looted, and extorted illegal tax from the community. For example, they illegally taxed Kenya shillings 1000/= per household which latter changed depending with the income. Civil servants would pay Kenya shillings 2000-5000/= monthly protective fee. The wing collected 90kg of maize for every acre harvested by a family. Women were forced to leave their harvest in the field/farm for the group.

During elections in 2007, politicians like Fred Kapondi were excluded by many for inciting the SLDF members to fight. Additionally, the politicians took advantage of the situation and promised the Soy clan title deeds once elected. This prompted the political wing to impose their own political leader, Fred Kapondi, to be voted unopposed against his opponent Serut who was pro-government. Therefore all people were coerced to vote for Kapondi as the Member of Parliament.⁴⁵ When Kibaki was announced the president against the ODM presidential candidate, there was the rise of conflict in Mt Elgon reflecting the post-election violence in rift valley with women experiencing

⁴¹Human Right watch, “All the men have gone”: War crimes in Kenya’s Mt.Elgon conflict(2008)p.15

⁴² Clausewitz, Carl von on war, London, Penguin books Ltd, 1968

⁴³Simiyu, Robert Romborah, militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, Institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg28

⁴⁴ Oral interview, matatu driver, Chwele, 12th September 2019

⁴⁵ Ibidp.28

the most outcome of the conflict. In response to this the government deployed the military personnel to curb the situation in Mt Elgon.

2.3 Double Tragedy for Women and Salome Matakwei

Upon the deployment of military personnel to carry out “Operation Okoa Maisha” translated as Operation Save Live, there was the rise of unlawful killings, and enforced disappearance arrest, detentions and torture of men as they flushed out SLDF. This led to the influx of widows and orphans within the area with most women becoming the breadwinners of their families.⁴⁶Initially the military was deployed to curb the issue of SLDF .Unfortunately, their use of force brought mistrust to the women and the community who suffered under the military hence making them have no confidence and faith in the state.⁴⁷This is because they were raped, physically assaulted and rendered widows with children to take care of by themselves. They could not report the tragedy or get a P3 form from police station.⁴⁸Therefore this became a double tragedy to the women in Mt Elgon.

In flushing out the SLDF group from the forest, the military used excessive force such as bombs in compelling them to leave their hideouts. They got support from locals who revealed to them the hideouts. In some cases, the military tortured people in order to mention the culprits. Women too were tortured so as to reveal the whereabouts of their husbands. In 2008, the military gunned down Wycliffe Matakwei together with other twelve fighters terming it as a positive effort of curbing the SLDF.⁴⁹ His wife Salome Matakwei was called by the security personnel to identify his body.

⁴⁶ Ibidp.26

⁴⁷Muliru Viona Muhalia ,*Arms Control And Conflict Management: The Case Of Kenya Defense Force In Mt Elgon Insurgency 2006-2008*.Desertation ,University Of Nairobi(2014)P.26

⁴⁸ Ibid.p.64

⁴⁹East African Standard ,17th May 2008 p. 12



Fig. 1. Salome Chepkemoi Ndiwa– identifying the body of his late husband Wycliffe Matakwei: KTN Documentary picture: “secrets of the mountain” Documentary , dated 04 November 2009

“That was the hardest thing for me to contemplate. I identified him by the marks on his head and the clothes he was wearing”. After his death, women of the Soy community took all the blame to Salome Matakwei for the sins of her husband, Military personnel and SLDF. This became a double tragedy to her.⁵⁰ Salome was regarded as an outcast, bad omen and responsible for dozen of deaths caused by the SLDF and military force for her silence and not informing the relevant government authority of the whereabouts of SLDF members.⁵¹

⁵⁰East African Standard ,17th May 2008 p. 12

⁵¹Ibid p.16

2.4 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed the emergence of the conflict of Mt Elgon, the formation of the SLDF and the roles of women in the conflict. It has revealed that the conflict of Mt Elgon was due to land mainly the colonial legacy of land dispossession, inequitable distribution of land by the government as well as failure of the government to compensate or resettle the Soy clan. It led to the agitation of the Soy community among them women who depended on land for their economic activity. Hence, the women aided to the formation of SLDF, a militia group whose main aim was to defend their land.⁵²

The chapter has also demonstrated that the activities of the SLDF defined the conflict of Mt Elgon. The militia group caused mayhems in the community especially to women who experienced the multi-faceted ranging from loss of relatives, displacement, physical and economic insecurity, sexual violence, detention, deprivation of livelihood and even death (Charlotte et al., 2004). Women suffered in the hands of both the SLDF and the government agents whom they initially thought they were their saviour hence becoming a double tragedy. Salome Matakwei also suffered the death of her husband. She bore all the blame of SLDF and military force and expulsion by the community for the role she played in the conflict of Mt Elgon, thus the term ‘double tragedy.’

⁵²SahlaAroussi, *women peace and security*: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p.590

CHAPTER THREE
‘A CHILD OF VIOLENCE’: SALOME MATAKWEI BEFORE AND DURING
CONFLICT

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the role and impact of Mt Elgon’s conflict on women with the case study of Salome Matakwei. The chapter begins with examining Salome Matakwei before and during conflict. This provides a background to the understanding of the role of women in the conflict of Mt Elgon. The roles vary from active roles to passive roles but in one way or another they are significant to the outcome of conflict. This chapter also brings out Salome’s life from childhood, growing in a war zone area that prepared her for the future role in Mt Elgon thus the infamy ‘child of violence’. The chapter ends with the impacts of the conflict on Salome Matakwei that were both negative and positive. This adds to our understanding on the impacts of conflict on women that is both negative and positive. For example, Salome Matakwei, negatively she suffered rejection from the society and positively she became a peace maker in the same region of Mt Elgon. The patriarchal society predetermined the role of women. Importantly, when it came to war players, women fell for stereotypical roles such as women were seen as victims, passive observers and bearers of burden of societies torn by conflict whereas men were regarded as aggressors and perpetrators of war par excellence. However, this is not the case with the contemporary conflicts due to the changing roles of women.

This chapter, in the midst of aiming at questioning the common belief and myth about the role of women in conflict through a gender lens, argues that women are victims and also culprits in conflict. The chapter further argues that women are impacted by conflict both negatively and positively. This gives a clear picture of Salome Matakwei as a perpetrator and peace maker which bespeaks the resilience of African women in the face of conflict, societal rejection, excessive masculinity and peace building.

3.1 “Mountain of Terror”: Salome Matakwei’s War Torn Environment

The major forces of conflict in Mt Elgon are mainly land and political disputes. The resulting instability since independence has taken forms of inter-ethnic and inter-clan clashes, pitting the Sabaot against the Luhya, on one hand, and the Sabaot clans of Soy against Mosop on the other hand. In 2006, the conflict between Soy and Mosop was a manifestation of pent-up tension that had spanned over decades. Their grievances over land were profound in the sense of injustice. This led to the formation of SLDF group in order to protect interests of the Soy against the Mosop and other communities whom they perceived as land grabbers.⁵³

The SLDF members had become notorious in Mt Elgon region. For instance, they used rape as a deliberate tool of war to terrorize the society. They used rape as a punishment to women who refused to convey the required information and hindered their husbands and sons from joining the SLDF, to bind women to cooperate with the mission of the militia group, as a silent killing machine to silent police informants as well as a way of saving their bullets by spreading HIV and AIDS to their ‘enemies’.

To salvage the situation, the government authorized the military intervention in order to sweep the militia group away in an operation corded *operation okoa maisha* (operation saves live) launched in February 2008. It is important to note that this was not the first time the government used the military force when the police were overcome by the situation. Between the year 1963 and 1967, in what the government called “shifta war” *Shifta* translated to bandit in Somalia.⁵⁴ It was a secessionist conflict in which the Northern Frontier District of Kenya attempted to secede from Kenya to Somalia. The violence in Kenya deteriorated into disorganized banditry that called for military ceasefire after the Arusha conference of October 23, 1967 that led to Kenya and Somali signing a ceasefire.⁵⁵

Before the military intervention in Mt Elgon the government had made several attempts to deal with SLDF by use of different government agencies. For instance in March 2007, the government through the provincial administration, held peace meeting with leaders from both Soy and Mosop clans but it did not yield as it was disrupted by fresh attacks. The attacks were by unknown raiders

⁵³ Elvin Nyukuri, *Women, land and resource conflict: Policy Intervention And Implementations in Kenya*, African Centre of technology studies, Nairobi, Kenya (2006)p.13

⁵⁴ Muturi Wa Njeri, *Kenya that was never Kenya: the shifta wars and the northern Kenya*

⁵⁵ Ibid

who attacked villages in Mt Elgon area leaving six people dead.⁵⁶ But before then, after the death of Chief Cleophas Sonit of Kapkateny location in his office and killing of the assistant chief named Shem Cherowo Chemuny together with his daughter and two of his guards by the SLDF militia group, the government had deployed six hundred security officers to Mt Elgon to clear up the deteriorating security situation.

Politicians like Fred Kapondi were arrested by police and arraigned in court for promoting war-like activities in the region of Mt Elgon. Kapondi denied the charges forcing the police to keep him in their custody.⁵⁷ Moreover, the police arrested ninety people who were charged with murder in the region. Consequently, the police were attacked by the SLDF group and in the month of June 2008, a brother to the area Member of Parliament was killed and a woman was killed. This prompted President Moi calling the government to grant amnesty to the SLDF militia group as President Mwai Kibaki seemed not to know on how to handle the SLDF members.⁵⁸

There was diplomacy in September 2007 that was intensified between the Sabaot clans to agree on ceasefire plan and stop the killing of innocent people. Unfortunately, the ceasefire lasted for a short period of time and fighting began again in the month of November that led to the killing of people including Edward Kale, the brother of MP John Serut on 12, November, 2007. The MP John Serut another brother, Jeremiah Serut and niece Milcah Serut were later killed. In the month of December, during the elections, Fred Kapondi was elected unopposed while still in police custody.⁵⁹

Initially the government had dismissed the conflict as an incitement by irresponsible leadership whereas the militia group members as thugs and criminals to be dealt with by the local chief. The local chief and administrative police imposed curfews which did not work. The government continued to view the situation as a security issue and deployed six hundred and fifty security personnel's such as anti-stock theft, Rapid Deployment unit and paramilitary General Service Unit in order to enforce law and order and arrest the militia group threatening peace within the region.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Boniface M. Ngulutu, *The Military in post conflict reconstruction :the case study of Kenya Defence Force in Mt Elgon conflict, 2005-2012* University of Nairobi .research project ,master's degree,(2013)pg34

⁵⁷ ibid

⁵⁸ The Daily Nation Reporter, "headliners Blocking the goal of the National Reconciliation", 21 may 2008

⁵⁹ Simiyu ,Robert Romborah: *militarization of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg26

⁶⁰ Simiyu ,Robert Romborah: *Militarisation of Resource Conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg26

Supplementary information had reached the government that Wycliffe Matakwei had 35,000 SLDF militia members even though in actual sense they were between 3,000-4,000 men who signaled fear to the government back in Nairobi.⁶¹The SLDF members employed various tactics and strategies for a long time. This made it difficult for the security personnel to gain the upper hand. The militia group continued to outsmart the security agents and terrorized the community causing more atrocities to the innocent civilians.⁶²This called upon for the military intervention in Mt Elgon.

When the military intervened in Mt Elgon region in 2008, Kenya was still governed using the old constitution which was silent on the military interventions to internal conflicts. The old constitution necessitated the Kenya Defense Force to protect and defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Kenya. In addition to this, the military could intervene on internal security matters when the police officers are overwhelmed by the situation and indeed the situation in Mt Elgon had overwhelmed the security personnel. The military was deployed in the region after the Kenyan parliament ratified their mission. The parliament being one of the three arms of government played important role in the deployment of the military in Mt Elgon. The military force was to observe their behavior during the operation and adhere to the Law of Armed conflict which is instrumental in the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

The community had hope that the military intervention would restore peace and pride of Mt Elgon. Sadly, the intervention became bedrock of terror within the mountain region as the military terrorized the region. They tortured people, detained people and raped for revenge especially when their colleague was killed by the militia group, they raped women in ways which earned Mount Elgon the infamy of being the “Mountain of terror”.⁶³

Salome Matakwei’s Early Days

In 1982, Salome Matakwei, the subject of this story, was born in this conflict-prone and politically polarized environment. This fairly insecure social setting would largely determine the trajectory

⁶¹Kwalia, B and Kapchanga,L, ”Knut wants Mt Elgon land row resolved”, in Daily nation ,4 march 2008.

⁶²Simiyu ,Robert Romborah:*militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg26

⁶³ Kenya National Commission on Human Right:*Mountain of Terror a report on the investigations of torture by military at mount Elgon*

of her life, struggles in her existence, changing roles and identity. It also prepared her to be at one point a liability to peace and stability as well as a peace builder, an image she has cut for herself in her recent years. Given the situation in Mount Elgon, Salome hardly knew any peace and stability from an early age in her social environment. She seemed to have courted disaster right from her marriage

3.2 ‘Daughter of the Mountain of Terror’



Fig. 1. Salome Chepkemboi Ndiwa—wife of the late Wycliffe Matakwei: Documentary picture: “The Making of a Militia” Documentary , dated 24 October 2008

Salome Chepkemboi Ndiwa, ‘the daughter of the mountain of terror’, was born in the small village of Saromet on the foothill of the mountainous terrain of Mt Elgon location, Kapsiro division, Bungoma County in the western region of Kenya. She was born in a family of nine children, after her elder sister. Ten days after the season of long rain, in the month of May, when farmers planted their farms, her mother delivered her at home in a traditional mud thatched house that had no tap

of water or electricity. According to her mother, during the birth, she was assisted by an old traditional midwife and neighboring women friends. At her birth, her father expected the baby to be a boy since their firstborn was a girl. Traditionally, the birth of a girl was greeted as an act of fate or a gift that can be used to produce food and perpetuate the human race whereas the birth of a boy was a “gift from God”.⁶⁴ Similarly, among the Sabaot community, birth of a baby boy was considered as a blessing. This was because gender roles were socially constructed as they mattered to the society especially during wartime when it was often looked through simple dichotomy lenses. For instance, while women were seen as victims, observers and child bearers, men were considered as aggressors and perpetrators of war. Sabaot community was among the most persistence of ethnic clashes in Kenya. The Sabaot engaged in a war with its neighboring Bukusu and Teso communities whom they viewed as aliens who were just after grabbing their land.⁶⁵ Therefore a father was only referred to as a man if he sired a son.

The birth of Salome gave her mother mixed reaction because on one side she had delivered a healthy normal baby girl but on the other side it meant that she had to try another chance to have a baby boy. This was probably because in many African societies, besides bride price being paid after one gave birth to a girl, the family lineage was carried on by boy child. When it came about preserving family name boy child was considered because a girl once married she took the name of her husband. In addition, girls were believed to get married even to their perceive enemies of their community. For this case, Salome retorted that most of the Sabaot girls preferred marrying the Bukusu men for the reason that their men were violent against women and preferred staying in the mountain than getting empowered through education.

Salome grew up in Saromet village, a village that sandwiched between Selebei and Kebei villages and well-known for its towering snow peak. Saromet was an epicenter of agricultural community that grew banana, beans, coffee, maize, onions, potatoes and peas making hunger virtually unknown. The community lived from soil and kept cattle. Moreover, they sold their farm products in bulk at Chwele market, the second largest open market for agricultural goods in Kenya after

⁶⁴ Thomas Sankara, *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*, Pathfinder Press, New York London(1999)p.37

⁶⁵ Hellen Brisley: *The Peoples Voice: A Dissection of Mt Elgon Land Allocation System*, Nairobi CCR publications, (2004)p.82

Karatina market and a very important outlet for agricultural produce from Mt Elgon. For less bulky products; they traded at Cheptais which is the economic Centre of Mt Elgon.⁶⁶

It was fairly an excruciating experience for Salome to grow up in a Kenyan countryside. Just like many girls with a peasantry background it was even worse when that experience was ‘midwifed’ by gendered role differentiation, which put Salome, like many young girls in rural Africa, at a disadvantage. Saromet village was undeveloped, lacked good road network and its sloping terrain made mobility a challenge. However, Salome made numerous trips to the market to buy and sell goods. According to her, walking from her village barefoot to the market was a tiresome journey due to the hilly landscape although the picturesque scenery along the road in Saromet encouraged her mind and made it a very enjoyable experience especially in the morning when Mt Elgon jutted into the sky.⁶⁷In my view, maybe it enabled her to master the geographical scope of the area that would enable her network well in her future task.

Saromet village is a typical patriarchal society like many African societies where the role of women was not only predetermined by the society but also undermined by gender stereotyping and cultural diversity that regarded women more or less as “non-entities” with no positions in the society.⁶⁸For example, the patriarchal system institutionalized families within the masculinity state silencing the women.⁶⁹Males being considered more superior to female’s male boys be given education while girls were exposed to early marriages. In this light, Salome went to school despite the gender discrimination acquiring skills of reading and writing both English and Kiswahili. These skills enabled her to work with ease in her future role of gathering information for the SLDF as the military communicated in Kiswahili as she stated in her education narrative.

⁶⁶Simiyu, Robert Romborah: *Militarization of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008) pg11

⁶⁷Lynch :*The Wars Of Who Belong Where: The Unstable Politics of Autochthony On Kenya’s Mt Elgon*,*Ethno Politics*vol.10(2011)p.391-400

⁶⁸Mary N. Getui ,*Moraa Moka Ngiti:Defender Of Freedom Among Abagusii Of Western Kenya* , Nairobi, Kaswanga press, Article of Women in Kenyan History, Profile No 3,(1994):p.4

⁶⁹Wangari Mathai, *Unbowed*, William Heinemann, Great Britain, arrow books 2008.p.291-293

EDUCATION

Education is important in overcoming the gender stereotype that oppressed girls from attaining education and bringing societal change⁷⁰. According to Edith and Eric, gender discrimination hindered women from national development and politics which dragged them behind in society. They argue that women empowerment was the only way to break the bound of culture and traditions that lugged them behind. Again it was the way that women could lay their foundation stone on which upcoming women could stand on as women of substance and motivate others. This is because women of yesterday were the cornerstone of which the future is built.⁷¹

Salome schooled at Kebe primary school up to class eight. Sadly, her father died in mysterious circumstance when she was in class three. He was found dead on his bed at the crack of dawn. Her father's death was the first one in her immediate family and Salome was too young to comprehend it. However, later on she came to understand death as a disruptive phase in life when a delegation of her paternal uncles gathered in their homestead to discuss how they could inherit their brother's land since Salome's father had died without having sired a boy. Probably this explains why her mother ended up having nine children, for her 'dead husband', the boys being the eighth and ninth born. Salome's father was a good loving man who left behind land and herd of cattle for his family. Without a father or a brother to protect them, Salome and her sister became the defenders of their property.

Salome's mother consequently took over the role of a parent singlehandedly caring for Salome and her siblings. Salome harbored a dream of joining high school and kept the dream by working hard and did well in her exams. She scored 64 (sixty-four) out of a possible 72(seventy-two) marks hence, secured admission at Goibei Girls High school. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints, Salome could not join that school but instead she joined Toroso secondary school, a mixed day secondary school. In 1999, she sat for her Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) and attained a mean grade of C plain.

Education, romantic love and religion apparently conquer clan cleavages. Salome and Wycliffe met at Toroso secondary school in 1999 and fell in love. Salome was in form four and Wycliffe

⁷⁰Jill Derby, *Why We Lead: Education Is Key To Overcoming Gender Stereotypes*, Article on gender-stereotypes George W.Bush presidential center(2019)p1

⁷¹Edith Mururu and Erick Mugambi, *Julia Auma Ojiambo*,: Kenya women achievers series 6, Nairobi, Women Education Researchers of Kenya,(1998)p.18

was in form two when they met. By the end of 1999, Wycliffe dropped out of school due to school fees.⁷²Salome Matakwei's husband was born in Kippii village of Cheptais Division. Later on, his family moved to Kaboriot village where they lived. Wycliffe was a staunch Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) and well behaved. Wycliffe like other Adventists sang Christian hymns for worship and liked reading and studying the bible stories especially the teachings on Moses and the children of Israel in Egypt.

On Fridays Salome schoolmates who were members of SDA, spent times practicing their singing especially for Saturday church events. They were strictly known to observe their Sabbath day. For instance, they did not do any activity or work until on Sunday which they regarded as a regular working day and first day of the week. Salome admired the SDA members particularly Wycliffe who was respected in the community for being a youth leader in their church.

Salome hailed from a Christian family. Her parents, Augustine Kiprotich and Fridah Chemaget were devoted Christians and wanted their children to lead a Christian way of life and abide by particular set of strict rules. They ensure all their children were baptized at the revival Pentecostal church that was situated in their village and followed the Christian values. Salome was an active member of Christian union and her character and preaching in school is what attracted Wycliffe to her.

On 2nd August 2000, Salome Chepkemboi Ndiwa, daughter of the Mosop clan, and Wycliffe Kirui Matakwei, son of the Soy clan, tied knot at Kepkruru Seventh Day Adventist church, and she became Salome Matakwei, despite the fact that they came from the antagonistic Sabaot clans of Mosop and Soy. They were blessed with five children. Salome narrated while laughing that her parents never opposed to the marriage. They were happy and wished her a happy marriage. Although Salome got married under the Sabaot customary and Christian law, her courtship with Wycliffe remained a mystery as she could not reminisce about it. Conversely, Salome acquired the Soy clan by the virtual of marrying Soy husband and giving birth to Soy children.⁷³

⁷²Oral interview ,Salome Matakwei,Kopsiro,12th September 2019

⁷³Oral interview, Salome, Kapsiro, 13th september2019.



Fig. 2. Late Wycliffe Kirui Matakwei – SLDF Militia Commander. Source: Documentary picture: “The Making of a Militia” Documentary , dated 24 October 2008

Notably, it is through marriage that women acquired the identity of clan as well as acquired clan land for livelihood survival, sentimental and cultural value.⁷⁴ According to Rasna in her work on *invisible clan* states that identity of the clan is passed down through male lineage and a woman who marries a man from another clan passes the clan identity to her children.⁷⁵ For Salome and her husband to support their family, they needed land for farming although they operated a supermarket at Huruma market in Kapsiro. Land was very vital for Salome Matakwei. This was evidence after she finished high school and got married, Salome and her sisters ploughed their fathers land and they were accused by their paternal uncles for trespass. This led them spent three days in police custody and began a land dispute court case against her uncles and she won the

⁷⁴Alao, Abiodun, *Natural Resources and conflict in Africa: the tragedy of endowment*, New York: University of Rochester press, (2007) p.356

⁷⁵Rasna Warah, *the invisible clan: is Somalia ready for women's revolution?* (2019)

matter which shed light for her future role to advocate for women rights. Salome and other women volunteered to support the SLDF members to fight as the only way to safe guard their land.⁷⁶

3.3 Salome in the Conflict of Mt Elgon

Prior to the pre-colonial period, women were perceived to be victims and not perpetrator of conflict.⁷⁷ Unlike men who were alleged to be defenders and warriors, women appeared vulnerable and they needed protection.⁷⁸ This perception is overridden by literature that demonstrates women are not only victims but also perpetrators in war (Cora Ann Presley, 1992). Their participation in the conflict, especially in the mid-20th century during the liberation movement in Kenya, was for different reasons and own agenda (Wolf and Steffan, 2007). For instance, according to Cora Ann Presley in her work on the role of Kikuyu women in Mau Mau rebellion, she highlights that women were motivated by the ideological ties on land; hence, they offered their significant contribution to rebellious success (Cora Ann Presley, 1992).

Significant figures from the population in Mt Elgon were women. The land was the core asset to the community for their livelihood, survival, and cultural value.⁷⁹For that reason, the eviction of individuals from the Chebyuk phase III scheme of land and settlement of Mosop was their major concern. Even though Salome was a Mosop, She believed that by virtual of marrying a Soy man, she belonged to Soy clan. Therefore, like most Soy women, she encouraged her husband to fight for their land. This led to the formation of SLDF militia group to protect their land from their ‘enemies.’ Salome’s husband became a leader of the group.

Soy clan viewed Wycliffe Matakwei as the ‘Moses’ that would lead them to reclaim their ‘promised land’. Moses portrayed the character of leadership and is best known from the story in the biblical book of Exodus and Quran as the law giver who met God face-to-face on Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments after leading his people, the Hebrews, out of bondage in Egypt and to the "promised land" of Canaan. As he addressed the gathering, Salome served them with tea .According to her, Wycliffe denoted from the book of Exodus which meant ‘departure’. The book of Exodus referred to the most important event in Israel’s history with Moses

⁷⁶ Oral interview Salome Matakwei and Mary,Kopsirwo,13th September 2019

⁷⁷SahlaAroussi ,*Women, peace and security: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence* ,international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p577

⁷⁸ibid

⁷⁹Simiyu,Robert Romborah,*militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg1

being the central human figure chosen by God to lead the Israelites from Egypt where they had been slaves to Canaan the Promised Land.⁸⁰ Salome narrated

“Wycliffe Matakwei liked preaching from the book of Exodus because he believed that he was the ‘Moses’ and would lead the Soy people to the ‘promised land’ despite the resistance of ‘pharaoh’. In this case, the Chebyuk scheme phase III was ‘the promised land’ whereas the ‘pharaoh’ was the people they perceived as their ‘enemies’. ‘These people included the Mosop and government officials. For me I saw Wycliffe as a real ‘Moses’ because he was a respected person and great leader whom I believed that he was able of protecting me from losing my land to the ‘enemies’ which was the livelihood of my family just like the Moses, in the Bible, protected daughters of a man known as Jethro, whom later became father-in-law, from the shepherd who drove them away from the well but Moses chased them off’.⁸¹

In Mt Elgon, women ardently participated in the conflict and accorded the SLDF all the support required to save their land. By virtue of being the wife to SLDF group leader, Salome Matakwei, automatically earned herself a spot as a women’s leader as many locals referred her as ‘bibi wa president’ which translates to ‘president’s wife’. Others referred her to as ‘first lady’. This accorded her power to coordinate other women in determining the model of the conflict. She gave instructions to her fellow women as directed by her husband. Notably, there were women who supported SLDF in their mission to safeguard their land and those against them. Similarly, Salome Matakwei supported the SLDF group but latter opposed their mission.

1) Salome Matakwei Supported SLDF

Women played important roles in conflict either voluntarily or through coercion. For instance, in Sierra Leone, women were bound to cooperate in war. According to Florence Ayissis, they were coerced by an enemy force mainly men of their society and even their husbands. Those who refused were punished by either being raped or their arms were cut (Simiyu, Robert Romborah, 2008). In other instances, women participated in conflict voluntarily. In the case of Mau Mau rebellion, women, just like men, took the oath that gave them courage to become fighters, they

⁸⁰ Bible society of Kenya, Good News Bible: Exodus chapter one, introduction, pg. 54.

⁸¹ Oral interview, Salome Matakwei Kopsirwo., 13th September 2019

become inciters of conflict and offered supportive roles such as, they became intelligence, delivered arms, ammunition and medicine to the fighter, cooked and hide the fighters .⁸²

Equally, in Mt Elgon, women mostly from the Soy community and others who could not withstand losing ‘their land’, in this case Salome Matakwei supported the SLDF and played various roles in the conflict. Salome Matakwei too got agitated and offered support to the militia group to fight for their land right. She participated in various ways to make the conflict successful.

A) Inciting Men

Women are very powerful in either starting or ending a conflict. They never opposed to justified wars that safeguarded their interests. Determined to protect their interest, they instigated men to go to war despite their roles in society being undermined by gender stereotyping and cultural diversity that considers them more or less as “non- entities” with no place in the society.⁸³ Women influence men to fight by pushing them using their feminine characteristics to convince men to protect their interests. For example, Mary Getui in her biography of Moraa underlines prophetess Moraa’s spiritual aspect metaphysics she used to convince men to listen to her.⁸⁴

Likely, women incited men in various ways as seers, administrators of the oath as well as through songs and ridicules. According to Cora, Kikuyu women praised men who joined the war without hesitation and at the same time ridiculed, nagged and abused those who are reluctant to join the war. For instance, Muthoni Nyanjiru incited men to storm the Central Police Station, Nairobi, in agitation for the release of Harry Thuku .This happened when a group of agitated women forcibly pushed towards the gate of the Police Station shouting that men were cowards. To emphasize their displeasure with the seeming inaction by the men, Mary Muthoni Nyanjiru lifted her dress over her head and told the men to take her dress and give her their trousers. The tactic of ‘*guturamirang’ania*’ or ‘*guturama*’ which translates to Kikuyu women showing their nakedness before men ,was viewed as a curse, the authority of men in the situation was no longer recognized and it symbolizes that women were powerful than men.⁸⁵

⁸² Greet Kershwa:*Mau Mau From Below*, Ohio university press(1997)p 253

⁸³Mary N. Getui,*Moraa MokaNgiti:Defender Of Freedom Among Abagusii Of Western Kenya* , Nairobi, Kaswanga press, Article of Women in Kenyan History, Profile No 3,(1994):p.4

⁸⁴Ibid p.4

⁸⁵ Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu women in Mau Mau Rebellion and social change in Kenya*, Boulder: West view press,(1992)p.69

Women in Somalia used poems to either propagate conflict or peace among bordering warring communities. They were considered to have power to bless and more also gave moral support to their husbands, sons and brothers, fathers especially those returning from war with songs and dances. Young women in particular sing to encourage the men.

Equally, in the case of Mt Elgon, women got agitated and could not withstand losing their land as they depended so much on land for their economic activities and livelihood. According to their culture, men are natural protectors of the community and so when women are in danger, they yelled and screamed for their men to respond. This, therefore, brought together their sons and husbands and encouraged them to fight and protect their land which led to the formation of SLDF. ⁸⁶Sabaot women were believed to have powers to bless and protect their sons from external harm of any kind. They blessed their men before going for war. Those who had *Leketio* (birth belt) wore them. The belt was considered a powerful charm such that warrior before going for war would inform their mothers to wear the belt. ⁸⁷Salome encouraged her husband to go to fight for their land right by making sure she praised him for every development. ⁸⁸

Salome Matakwei emphasized that according to the Sabaot community, it was a taboo for women to discuss or talk about land issues since they were equated to children. Therefore she would persuade the husband not to let the ‘enemies’ take their land’. Salome would continuously tell her husband:

“Kwani nyinyi ni wanaume wa wapi mnaacha shamba iende which translated to “what kind of men are you who would let go of their land. Where do you think we will live after losing the land?”

B) Intelligence

Intelligence information is a very fundamental to the operations of any group of fighters. Various scholars have cited that women play vital role in intelligence gathering to prevent the fighters from being accosted and defeated. Women succeed in this role because they are subject to less suspicion and had greater freedom of movement compared to the men. ⁸⁹For instance, Kathy Santilli (1977)

⁸⁶Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security studies, Netherlands,(2008)pg1

⁸⁷Oral interview, Mary, Kopsirwo, 12th September 2019.

⁸⁸ibid

⁸⁹ Kathy Santilli, *Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau Revolt: A Closer Look*. Ufahamu: A Journal of African studies ,no 8(1)University of California(1977)p.147-148

in her work on Kikuyu women during the Mau Mau revolt, states that Wamuyu Muciri participated as a spy and gathered information that was vital in planning and staging successful escape of certain Mau Mau prisoners from Nairobi Prison.

Courier services about government military strategies were a reliable source of information for fighters.⁹⁰ Leakage of information to the Mau Mau became a major cause of the defeat of various government strategies. In 1954, the colonial government became actively involved in setting up a counter intelligence network to avoid leakage of information to the enemy force. During the liberation movement, the Mau Mau leaders were particularly interested in women who had received some education no matter how elementary because they were very useful as couriers of information.⁹¹

Similarly, in Mt Elgon, intelligence was very crucial. The SLDF members preferred working with women among them Salome Matakwei, who understood and could communicate in Kiswahili. This was because the Kenya Army used Kiswahili as their language to communicate.⁹² The SLDF mostly operated from the forest and needed a good network that enable them get information. The women gathered information from different places such as market, hospital, church and women gatherings ‘*chamas*’. “Once I got information, I would use my ‘*simu ya rununu*’ which translates to mobile phone to communicate and notify my husband in his hiding places of any new development in addition to this, if any person who talked ill about the SLDF or refused to cooperate, I would inform him and at night, the person would be dealt with by the group members” said Salome Matakwei. The rules set were simple as follows, you talk about the SLDF then your mouth was cut off. The people listening to those talking ill about the militia group had their ears cut off.

Intelligence was very instrumental in informing the SLDF of impending police raid so as to avoid capture which would hamper their mission making the conflict successful.⁹³ The SLDF mission became victorious because they made sure that they had proper intelligence. The role of intelligence was done by loyal women who gave information without being conspicuous. Most of

⁹⁰Margaret Gachihi: *The Role of Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau*, thesis M A, university of Nairobi (1986)p. 53

⁹¹ Ibid.p.53

⁹² Oral interview –SLDF soulder, Kopsirwa, 13th September 2019

⁹³ Oral interview, Salome Matakwei, Cheptais, 12th July 2019.

these loyal women were wives and mothers of the militia group members. They informed their husbands and son to avoid being captured by the police and the security personnel. It is important to note that at first the police could not wipe out the SLDF for their inability to gather intelligence on the SLDF militia's operational strategies which made them being overpowered by the SLDF.⁹⁴Salome and other women, whom she was reluctant to mention, mislead the police by giving them wrong information on SLDF movement. Salome would tell the SLDF military officers that the militia members have gone to the west whereas they had gone to the east. She would inform the hiding militia group member on the movement of the military personnel.⁹⁵

C) Providing Food

During the Mau Mau war, food for warriors could only be prepared by the warrior's mother or any woman related to the warrior and for a married warrior it was prepared by his wife.⁹⁶ Simply put, not every woman was entrusted with this task for fear of poisoning. During this war, fighters preferred food stuff that was dry rather than easily perishable food unless it was to be delivered immediately. This included roasted green bananas, sweet potatoes and maize cooked together.⁹⁷Women played the vital role of delivering food at their frontier.

Equally, during the Mt Elgon violent conflict, women provided food for the militia group. According to Salome, specific women were handpicked and accorded the responsibility of food provision for the fighters, as not every woman was entrusted with this task for fear of possible poisoning of the fighters. They provided food for the SLDF in order to ensure they survived in the mission. Women were also forced to provide 90kg of maize per every hectare. Others were forced to leave their food products in the farm for SLDF to collect for food. Salome narrates her role in offering food to the SLDF.

“I would cook throughout the night and take food for them in their hiding places to sustain them during the conflict. When we tried to resist, they threatened to kill us. Therefore, it was either we cooked for them or risked being killed. Women were forced not to harvest our farm products or if you dared the SLDF would deal with you. In addition to this, we

⁹⁴ Oral interviewed-SLDF militia group member,Kapsoro,12thJuly 2019

⁹⁵Oral interview, Salome Matakwei, Cheptais, 12th July 2019.

⁹⁶Margaret Gachihi:*The Role Of Kikuyu Women In The Mau Mau* ,thesis M A, university of Nairobi (1986)p. 53

⁹⁷ Ibid p.53

cooked 'Githeri', mixture of maize and beans, and 'Mahalange', fermented dried flour which was used for making 'busaa', traditional but illicit brew".⁹⁸

Most of the SLDF were seventh day Adventist (SDA). The denomination prohibits use of drugs and alcohol. However, the SLDF violated the value of the church and took illicit brew and bhang.⁹⁹ Therefore Salome enjoyed cooking and brewing the 'Busaa'. She would cook a lot of food overnight and walk at night to feed the militia group in their hiding places.¹⁰⁰ It is imperative to note that the women whom were suspect of being able to poison the SLDF or being 'wachawi' that translated to witches they were reported to the SLDF who would kill them. Getting more information on one who was killed for being a suspect, became a challenge as the community is still suspicious of each other.

D) Carrying Arm

The history of violence in Mt Elgon has contributed to militarization of the area as local residents buy weapons either for self-defense or for carrying out operations of their own.¹⁰¹ The presence of arms introduced new warfare that influenced women to participate in conflict. Those roles varied from passive to active, but all in all, they contributed in sustaining conflict. During the Mau Mau liberation movement, women accepted guns and ammunition as payment from colonial forces for sexual favours then they transferred the weapons to the fighter in the forest. Women like Muthoni Wa Kirima participated as *itungatia* which means actual fighter and became the only woman to have attained the Mau Mau rank of field-Marshal.¹⁰²

The SLDF got the arms from the neighboring country of Uganda, due to the porous Kenya-Uganda boundary and family ties between groups on either side of the border.¹⁰³ To avoid suspicion, women helped in transporting the fire arms to the fighters. Women used different tactics in transporting arms. For instance, they sandwiched guns in the firewood to avoid suspicion and took them to the SLDF. According to the Sabaot culture, it was the role of women to fetch firewood to

⁹⁸ Oral interview (women and Salome) Kopsoro, 13th September, 2019

⁹⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰⁰ Oral interview, Kirui* (not actual name) cheptais, 13th September, 2019

¹⁰¹ Simiyu, Robert Romborah, militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008) pg53

¹⁰² Kathy Santilli, *Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau Revolt: A Closer Look*. Ufahamu: A Journal of African studies, no 8(1) University of California (1977) p.147-148

¹⁰³ Simiyu, Robert Romborah, militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008) pg53

be used for cooking. Women carried babies together with the firewood while others carried fire arms covered like babies causing one to think that they carried babies and this enabled them to pass the military. The military never inspected women and the children which eased transportation of arms.¹⁰⁴

“Leave alone to see a gun, I carried ‘bunduki na risasi’ guns and ammunition from neighboring country Uganda to the fighters in their caves. I pretended to carry firewood but in between I sandwiched guns. At time I rapped ammunition like a baby and because the police never suspected women, they would let me pass them without inspecting what I carried. I and other women sold our cattle and farm products so as to contribute money to purchase arms from Uganda”. Narrated Salome.

In Mt Elgon, women considered it their duty to smuggle the guns and carry them to the fighters as well as swindling money from the government.¹⁰⁵ Women raised funds for buying more arms to the SLDF. According to Salome Matakwei, her husband directed her to start a finance scheme in form of a community based organization (CBO) and named it Elgon Chebokoos Enterprises. The CBO aimed to borrow ten million Kenyan shillings from the Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Out of the ten million shillings, five million was to be used for purchasing arms while the other five million was for their daily subsistence. She opened a bank account in Eldoret town and was made the treasurer of the CBO unfortunately the plan was not successful.¹⁰⁶

E) Treating the Sick Fighters

During Mau war, women smuggled medicine and ventured into the forest camps to treat the sick fighters. On crucial occasions, a nurse aid at Kiambu hospital joined the network and smuggled medicine secretly for Mau Mau woman. The fighters came secretly at night to get medicines then return back to their camps.¹⁰⁷

Conversely, women, in Mt Elgon, treated the sick SLDF members either voluntarily or involuntarily. The women were coerced to clean the wounds of the injured SLDF as the SLDF couldn't go to hospital due to fear of being captured. This was made even more difficult since to get treatment of bullet wounds one needed to have a P3 form filled by the police. Anastasia* was

¹⁰⁴ Oral interviewed militia member, Cheptais, 12th September 2019

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*

¹⁰⁶ Oral interview ,Hannah, Salome Matakwei and Joanitta, Kopsiro, 13th September 2019

¹⁰⁷ Kathy Santilli, *Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau Revolt: A Closer Look*. Ufahamu: A Journal of African studies ,no 8(1) University of California (1977) p.147-148

a nurse at Cheptais District Hospital who volunteered to treat the sick SLDF because she supported their agenda and wanted to save her life. She took care of the injured fighter and where she wasn't able to assist them, she would secretly recommend another medic whom the gang members would approach or abduct.¹⁰⁸

The SLDF abducted women especially medics with the help of other women to attend to them. Those who volunteered to treat them were allowed to go back home without being harmed. For those who refused, they were forced to treat them and after that they were killed. It is important to note that, the SLDF members suffered from sexual transmitted infections and disease such as gonorrhoea and would notoriously, rewarded most of the medics with brutal rape.¹⁰⁹

F) Hiding Fighters

Women play a major role in ensuring safety for fighting in war. Arrangement of safe hiding places for the fighters becomes women's responsibility because of their superior organizational potential. As Ann Cora puts it in her work on the role of Kikuyu women during the Mau Mau rebellion, women were chosen to coordinate activities such as ferrying of supplies to the hiding places and arranging safe places for the fighters.¹¹⁰

The situation in Mt Elgon was not different from that of Mau Mau movement. Women helped to hide the militia group members in a bid to protect them from arrest by the military. When the military asked them about the where-about of the militia group, women would either cover up for them or give false information. Interestingly, women knew all the hiding places of the militia group and determined their entire movement pattern. For instance, they would inform them when to get out of their hiding places. Salome knew the entire network prompting the military force to initiate her manhunt in order to get Wycliffe Matakwei and the SLDF. Salome Matakwei knew all the hiding places of the SLDF including their hiding caves.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Oral interview, Anastacia, cheptais district hospita, 12th September 2019

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ Cora Ann Presley, *kikuyu women in Mau Mau Rebellion and social change in Kenya*, Boulder: West view press, (1992) p.131

¹¹¹ STANDARD



Fig. 1. Salome Matakwei at Kabionge cave- where there Wycliffe Matakwei and the SLDF group hide: KTN Documentary picture: “secrets of the mountain” Documentary , dated 04 November 2009

G) Sexual Role

Sexual roles and tactics were major ways in which women participated in conflict. Women used their sexual favors for various reasons. For instance, during the Mau Mau revolt, women used their sexuality to aid the forest fighter. The women leaders or commanders assigned them to various government officers. This is where they used their sexuality to obtain information and arms for the fighter in the forest.¹¹²Other women became bush wives and mistresses which earned them ranks of colonel and officially recognized as “warriors”. Wanjiru Wambogo was an example of a woman who received the rank of colonel not because of direct contributions to the struggle for independence but because of her position as mistress to Dedan Kimathi. Mistresses and bush women were very vital to satisfy the sexual desire of the fighters and to boost the morale of the fighters

Situation in Mt Elgon was not different. Some women accepted to become bush wives and mistresses of the SLDF for various reasons. First for survival, it was evidence that women accepted to serve as bush wives in order to spare their lives .Those who refuse were killed like wild animals as Penina*(not her real name) narrated her story with pain in her voice.

¹¹² Kathy Santilli, *Kikuyu Women in the Mau Mau Revolt: A Closer Look*.Ufahamu:A Journal of African studies ,no 8(1)University of California(1977)p.147-148

“We were too scared to be killed. The SLDF youth asked me to become his bush wife since am now married and initially I refused to date him or beheaded. I feared for my life so I accepted to become his bush wife rather than being killed”¹¹³.

Women, who supported the SLDF and those who were against the SLDF, both needed protection from either the militia group members or police and military. This is because they were left defenseless after their husbands escaped from SLDF recruitment. They slept with their “adui” (enemies) for survival. Women whose husbands had joined the militia group offered their sexual favors to the police to escape torture.

Secondly, some women offered free sexual satisfaction as well as revenge. This kind of women was particularly those who contracted HIV and AIDS during rape ordeal. Others were women who were rejected or divorced by their husbands after being raped by either their “enemies” or “savior”, that is the SLDF or military. Rachael* a bar maid at Chwele town narrates.

“The youth of SLDF group came to my house and told me that I was spreading rumours about them in the market they told me that they will teach me a lesson on how to shut my mouth. They gang raped me before my children and infected me with HIV. “My husband rejected me for fear I will spread the disease to him and he married another wife. I decided that I will not die alone therefore I slept with anyone after all the disease was spread to me too so I had to share it with others and get money out of the destroyed body” Although Salome Matakwei advised her to transform to other ways of earning money.¹¹⁴

Women also used sex as a duty to collect intelligence information especially from or for the Kenya Army. These women shared crucial pieces of information with the Kenya Army that led to the arrest and consequently defeat of SLDF by state military in 2008. Moses*, a community elder in Kapsiro, recounted that the military did a good work of saving the community from the SLDF. The female intelligence posed as barmaids, shopkeepers and hawkers so as to get information about the militia group members and how they operated. They also befriended men as their mistresses, slept with the SLDF top culprits, Wycliffe Matakwei, and promised to marry her.¹¹⁵ “When it comes to sex, men are fooled because that is how they revealed their secrets to the

¹¹³ Oral interview, Penina*(not real name) Kapsokwony 14th September 2019

¹¹⁴ Oral interview, Rachael *14th September 2019, chwele

¹¹⁵ Oral interview, Ex militia member, Cheptais, 12th September 2019

intelligence and that is how most of the SLDF were killed including Wycliffe Matakwei” said Moses.¹¹⁶

2) Salome Matakwei against SLDF

There were several categories of women in Mt Elgon during the conflict. The first category of women was that who initially supported the SLDF but later on turned against them as they tired of the atrocities caused by the SLDF. This was because the SLDF had done more harm than good to the society and now they needed peace and harmony back in Mt Elgon. These were the women who had hopes of getting back their land after the election of Fred Kapondi as the area Member of Parliament. In the 2007 general elections, the SLDF forced people to elect Fred Kapondi unopposed because he had promised to tackle the land issue as per the wish of those who had lost to the Mosop.¹¹⁷ Then there were women such as, Salome Matakwei who initially supported the SLDF but later on turned against them because she was now tired of cooking and transporting a lot of food overnight and was always on the run as she was being hunted by the military.

Besides, Salome, had witnessed most SLDF being killed and castrated by the military. Therefore, pleaded with her husband to quit SLDF and quit fighting for ‘justice’ to allow the newly elected Member of Parliament to pursue this cause. Moreover, she feared for her husband to be killed because he had become very vocal on local media and become hunted by the military but he insisted on fighting for their land.¹¹⁸ According to John* a former SLDF member, Salome further refused to support the militia group when she realized that her husband had a mistress whom he wanted to marry as his second wife.¹¹⁹ Salome refused to discuss this issue and instead stated that she surrendered herself to the military at Kapkota Military camp. Contrary to her statement on betraying her husband, when she was asked on about the whereabouts of her husband she revealed that he was hiding in the forest. Salome used her phone to convey her husband to surrender. While at the military camp, she assisted the military to identify the members of SLDF as well as revealing their hiding places.¹²⁰ Salome denied betraying her husband and retorted that “no woman would

¹¹⁶ Oral interview, Moses*, Kopsiro, 13th September 2019

¹¹⁷ Simiyu, Robert Romborah, *militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya*, institute for security, (2008) pg53

¹¹⁸ Oral interview, Salome, studies, Netherlands kopsirwa, 12th, September 2019

¹¹⁹ Oral interview, John, not real name, Ex militia member, Cheptais, 12th September 2019

¹²⁰ Tele interview, Salome, 15th October 2019

betray her husband in fact she claimed to have been shocked after being informed by the police of the death of her husband and called to identify his body.”

Second group of women were those who were against the SLDF group from the beginning and did not agree with the mission of the group. These women were against the force recruitment of their husbands and sons into SLDF militia group. ¹²¹However not all Soy men had the same objective as the SLDF members. The SLDF young men forced all Soy men to join the militia group and those who objected them were killed, most of these men decided to hide. Women hide their sons and husband not to participate in the conflict, to avoid being killed and or detained. They took food for them in their hiding places. They assisted the military to identify the members of SLDF as well as revealing their hiding places.¹²²

Salome Matakwei disclosed that her husband was hiding in the forest contrary to her previous denial. On 16 May 2008, Salome, husband was ambushed and killed in the forest of Mt Elgon where he was hiding. There were varied reactions to the news on the death of Wycliffe Matakwei. To the SLDF it was a great blow to the group and led to most of the SLDF members to surrender. Whereas, this news was considered a major achievement for the Kenya Defense Force although they were accused by the Kenya Human Right Commission (KHRC) for the insurgency tactics such as torture and rape they used in Mt Elgon.¹²³ Women, especially who were against the SLDF group and needed peace restored in the area, received the news of Wycliffe Matakwei with joy and hope that peace will be achieved. For Salome Matakwei this was the beginning of bearing the sins of her husband, SLDF member and KDF. ¹²⁴

3.4‘Fruits of my Husband and SLDF’: Impact of Conflict in Mt Elgon

While conflict wreaks suffering on everyone, women are particularly affected by it. In nut shell, women whether victims or culprits, suffer in a way that is only specific to them. In Mt Elgon case, as victims, women were raped, killed, displaced, physically and sexually assaulted and rendered widows with children to take care by themselves as they became breadwinners.¹²⁵

¹²¹Oral interview, John Kopsiro, 12th September 2019

¹²²Tele interview, Salome, 15th October 2019

¹²³ The reporter Nairobi Chronicle, *Kenya Government Celebrates Death of Rebel Commander*, Nairobi Chronicle, May 18, 2008

¹²⁴ Oral interview, Salome Matakwei. Kopsiro. 12th September 2019

¹²⁵ Simiyu, Robert Romborah, militarisation of resource conflicts: the case of land –based conflict in the mount Elgon region of western Kenya, Institute for security studies, Netherlands, (2008)pg28

They suffered many atrocities committed to them by the SLDF as discussed in the previous chapter. Women who were raped ended up being rejected by their husbands, because they believed that once raped by the SLDF, they contracted disease such as STD's and HIV and AIDS. Interestingly, women also rejected their husbands since most of SLDF members had contracted gonorrhoea for not using protection during rape.¹²⁶ Some women got unwanted pregnancies and chose to procure abortions while others chose to keep the children. Other women's husbands opted to marry other wives because they feared their raped wives had contracted HIV.¹²⁷ While other men left their wives out of guilt and shame for they felt as if they had failed their wives for not protecting them from the enemies.¹²⁸

Lastly, it is evident that the impact of war was also felt by perpetrators of war. For instance, after the Zimbabwe revolution, women who had returned from the forest from active participation in combat were rejected by the community for the roles they had played. Those who played roles as fighters and bush wives were rejected by the society.¹²⁹ In a similar fashion, after the death of Wycliffe Matakwei in 2008, Salome suffered rejection from her community for the sins of her husband. A case in point was that of Nakumincha who refused to associate with Salome or talk to since her husband was killed by the SLDF group. She narrated her pain that is deep rooted in her heart.

SLDF killed her husband after he refused to join the group. Before killing him, they tortured him, dragged him to Matakwei and beheaded him. After four days I found his body without a head. My husband was buried without a head and left me with eight children to take care of. It is because of her, Salome, husband that my children and I suffer. We hate her because she knew what the husband was doing and could not alert the authority, instead she kept quiet and always defended and covered for her husband.¹³⁰

Women like Salome faced rejection for their association with the SLDF by all women who were victims of either the SLDF's or military atrocities. Any woman found associating with Salome would face the same rejection. Women would not sell for Salome goods or assist her with essential

¹²⁶ Oral interview ,ex soldier,Kopsiro,12th September 2019

¹²⁷ ibid

¹²⁸ Oral interview ,Salome Matakwei,,Kopsiro,15th October 2019

¹²⁹ Irene Staunton, *Mother Of The Revolution: The War Experiences Of Thirty Zimbabwean Women* ,Zimbabwe, Baobab books(1990) p.xi

¹³⁰ Oral interview, Nakumincha ,Cheptais ,on making a militia,SLDF documentary ()

commodity such as salt.¹³¹ Salome not only faced rejection from the community but also from the local authority.

Most of the NGO and government agents would offer relief food to the post conflict community. Women would gather at the chief's camp to receive relief. Salome too would go for the relief food. As soon as Salome arrived at the chief's camp, women jeered and booed her as well as chased her away as they blame her for the death of their husbands and wanted her out of the community. This prompted her to call upon the government to aid her rescue. Interestingly, most of the times, the chief would omit her name deliberately from the list of widow from his locality that were to receive relief food.¹³²

The "children of the women" in Mt Elgon, the children whose mothers had a top connection with the culprits were not spared and faced rejection as well although the United Nation Declaration of the Rights of a Child protects them from any forms of discrimination¹³³. Salome Matakwei's children faced discrimination from the society. Woman refused Matakwei's children associating with their children. They could not allow their children play or talk to those they termed as "murderer's children". The other pupil in class also avoided sitting next to those children Salome stated that

People said that Matakwei's children bear the blood of a murderer and rapist which they could transmit to our children that bad blood although after the death of Matakwei peace was restored in Mt Elgon, Salome and her children were left to bear the brunt of his violent rule.¹³⁴

In school, Matakwei's children were not only humiliated by fellow pupil but also by teachers. Learning became difficult for them because any effort or good performance at school was unappreciated by their teachers. According to Salome, teachers would tell the class that "children of rapist can't know anything apart from raping and killing like their father" Consequently, the children hated their surname and wanted to drop it because the name Matakwei was being

¹³¹ Oral interview, Maargaret, Cheptais, 13th September 2019

¹³² Oral interview, salome.kopsirwa, 12th September 2019

¹³³ United Nation Declaration of Right of a Child: convention on the right of child, chapter six, , General Assembly resolution 44 of 25th November 1989

¹³⁴ Oral interview, salome.kopsirwa, 12th September 2019

associated to rapist, bad man who rendered other children's mother widow and their schoolmates, orphans.¹³⁵

Despite women playing important roles in conflict, their substantial contribution to rebellion success in return ended to the transformation of women's role in Kenya.¹³⁶ Women, especially those who controlled and determined all the configuration of the conflict of Mt Elgon, have transformed their roles from conflict to peace building and now are controlling and determining a "different war" in the same area.

3.5 Conclusion

In documentation, historical chronicles and modern international laws have identified women as victims of sexual humiliation.¹³⁷ Indeed the chapter has revealed that sex was not only used a weapon or tool of war to harm or revenge but was used for survival tactics, to satisfy the sexual needs as bush wives and used 'on duty'. Moreover, this chapter has shown that truly Salome was a victim of rejection by the society. However, women seen as only victims of war has somewhat changed, as the chapter has further revealed that Salome was not merely a victim in the conflict but also a culprit. She had crucial perspectives on her position as the wife of a militia group leader; she made choices and participated in various ways both active and passive. In one way or another she contributed in the conflict of Mt Elgon.

The United Nation resolution 1325 of 2020 has reinforced on the transformation of women from being culprits of war into being peace builders. A good example is Salome Matawei whose image was transformed from being a 'villain' to a 'saint'. In conclusion, the chapter has illustrated the concept of Salome Matakwei's double edged posture as culprit and peacemaker in the Mt Elgon.

¹³⁵ibid

¹³⁶ Cora Ann Presley, *kikuyu women in Mau Mau Rebellion and social change in Kenya*, Boulder: West view press,(1992)p.69

¹³⁷SahlaAroussi ,*Women, peace and security: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence*, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p577

CHAPTER FOUR

SALOME MATAKWEI'S ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING

4.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter asserts various ways in which Salome Matakwei was involved in peace building in Mt Elgon. Firstly, the chapter affirms the involvement of women in peace building as endorsed by the United Nation Security Council through its adoption of resolution 1325 of 2000. The resolution promotes active role for women in the preventive and reconciliation of conflict.¹³⁸ This gives a background to our understanding on the involvement of women in peace process. Secondly, the chapter examines Salome's various roles in peace building specially in Mt Elgon. Lastly, it examines the challenges she faced in peace building given her role as villain turned a saint within the peace process spectrum. This gives clarity on the challenges faced by women in peace building particularly in a situation where they were involved in armed conflict.

In this regard, the chapter aims at demystifying the perceptions that women are 'naturally peaceful' and agents of peace especially for Salome Matakwei who portray as a victim, culprit and victor in Mt Elgon. The chapter argues that although women played important roles in peace building, they participated for various reasons. Importantly, the chapter showcases how Salome Matakwei counters rejection through peace building, thus, became what may be considered the 'saint of the mountain'. She gives an ideal concept of African woman as a symbol of strength, humility and resilience in various conflict and peace building platforms and seeks to avail all opportunities proffered to her in peace building.

4.1 Involvement of Women in Peace Building

The involvement of women in peace building is as old as their experience of violence. During the civil wars and conflict, women are known to support conflict in various ways such as agitators of violence, active combatant and as supportive wives and mothers who encouraged men to go to the battlefield. However, in the aftermath of violence, women from the fractured society participated in peace process to effectively realize a peaceful sustainable society. Over the decades, women were, nonetheless, disregarded in peace building platform despite making half of the population.

¹³⁸Elisabeth Porter, why women's contribution to peace building matters, international studies review No.10, university of south Australia (2008)p 632

Their contribution to the peace building agenda remained underestimated due to the intrinsic patriarchal system, gender and cultural stereotyping that rendered them marginalized.¹³⁹

The said marginalization of women within the society had severe human right effects, affecting the ability of the societies to heal holistically and attain long term stability. This prompted to United Nation Security Council to pass a number of resolutions aimed at promoting the role of women in peace and security agenda. These legal frameworks aimed at increasing awareness on the impact of conflict on women. Specifically, they called for greater participation of women in transforming conflict affected societies. Resultantly, the importance of women engagement in peace process has been recognized through numerous international institutions resolutions.

4.1.1 Legal Frame Work of Women and Peacebuilding

With reference to Larson' work on Action for Equality, Development and Peace, United Nation's fourth world conference on women in Beijing, China became water shed point for thrusting women to the front position for peace activities. The conference provided women with a podium for peace building. New ideas were generated and they articulated for the involvement of women in conflict resolution and inclusion of gender perspective that would be fit to deal with gender based conflicts. Importantly, the conference led to the signing of resolution United Nation Security Council (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000.

In October 2000, the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) through UNSCR 1325 officially recognized the relationship between women, peace and security as pertain to leadership, empowerment and decision making. The Resolution recognized that civilian among them women and children as the most affected by conflict which subtle peace and security. Therefore, UNSCR 1325 promised protection to women and guaranteed their equal participation in peace processes. It resulted to inclusion of gender perceptions in peace building, peacekeeping mission and ensured protection of women in armed conflict.

The 1325 UN Resolution, echoed for the UN department of peacekeeping operations objective to improve gender equality in peacekeeping mission. It further expanded the role of women in UN

¹³⁹Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa, *Women Waging Peace*, foreign policy Article No 43, published by Washington Newsweek Interactive, LLC<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3183189>>a Accessed 9 June 2011.

field-based operation, provided training guidelines to all member states on the importance of women and ended impunity with regard to sexual violence on women. Financially, technically and logistically it supported gender sensitization to peace building and conflict resolution.

At world summit in 2005, leaders reaffirmed the fundamental role of women in averting conflict and peace building. The leaders unanimously agreed to implement the UNSC resolution 1325. This led to creation of peace building commission to enhance the inter-linkage across development, peace, security and human rights. The commission's mandate ensured resources to advancing gender equality which opened doors to new opportunities for women in peace building.¹⁴⁰International and regional institutions supported equal participation of women in public spheres. For instance, it was agreed upon by UN Committee that to eliminate discrimination against female gender democracy has to be practiced through engaging women in public activities like their male counterparts.¹⁴¹

In the African context, the protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples rights (ACHPH) emphasized the rights of women in Africa and came into force in 2005. As the United Nation Committee of 1997 founded it is a significant tool for peace builders because it provided for right to peace and participation of women in the promotion and maintenance of peace. The procedure needed every relevant party to be involved in ensuring that women are engaged in every activity concerning peace building. As outlined by Christine Chinkin et al. (2011) in their work, The International Legal Framework, Kenya is a signatory to international conventions designed to protect the rights of women and their participation in peace building.

4.1.2 Salome Matakwei and Peacebuilding in Mt Elgon

A decade after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1325 of 2000, the role of women in peace building has remained invisible yet women participated in post conflict peace building.¹⁴²This is because their role has been undermined by the gender stereo-typing and cultural diversity. However, despite the gender and cultural oppression, women used specific aspects to

¹⁴⁰ Jennifer F Klot, women and peace building :independent expert paper commissioned by UNIFEM and UN peace building support office (2002)p1

¹⁴¹ United Nation Committee on the Elimination Of All Form of Discrimination Against Women, General recommendation No 23 ,16th session,(1997) p.15

¹⁴²Sahla Aroussi, *women peace and security*: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p.590

overcome the obstacles that hindered them from peace building. For example, their position of women in the society as wives and mothers is very critical in peace building and made them a great entry point to peace building.¹⁴³

Equally, gender mainstreaming and inclusion of women at the informal grassroots level has been of benefit to formal peace process. According to Damilola in her work on the role of women in peace building and conflict resolutions highlights women played active role towards sustainable peace when included in prevention and response strategies. All in all, women have played a vital role in creating sustainable peace for various reasons. The reasons for this include the fact that women constituted half of every community, in most cultures, they are the central caretakers of family, when oppressed or excluded from peace building, everyone in the society is affected and the task of peace building requires partnership of both men and women.¹⁴⁴

In Mt Elgon, the entire population including women and children suffered the impact of conflict in an increasingly and disproportionate manner. Hundreds of people were killed, displaced and properties destroyed. In dealing with the dysfunctional consequences of the conflict, various peace efforts were initiated in the region. They included various government sectors, NGOs and private initiatives. Among them were the Kenya Red Cross, Justice and peace commission (JPC) PACT Kenya, USAID, the Western Kenyan Human Right Commission Watch (WKHRCW) Peace Tree Network (PTN) Amani People Theatre (APT), Mount Elgon Peace Initiative (MEPI) the Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya (FPFK), Mount Elgon Residence Association (MERA), Maendeleo ya Wanawake (MYW), Vijana Umoja Pamoja 'Youth together in unity'(VUP) (RWPL) and the Sabaot Council of Elders among others. Similarly, women were not left behind in the peace efforts in the region of Mt Elgon. They mainly focused on trauma healing, social, and economic, leadership empowerment and reconciliation among their other hidden agenda.¹⁴⁵

Although the involvement of women in peace building in Mt Elgon was based on personal ambitions, women had not taken credit yet they tried to stand out as noble people with impeccable

¹⁴³ Monica Juma Kathina ,*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace: Peace building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya*: interim report, united nations development program me, New York,,(2000)p.39-43

¹⁴⁴DamilolaTaiyeAgbalajobi,the role of women in peace building and conflict resolution ; the case study of Burundi, Article 9,college of management science, Nigeria(2006)p.12

¹⁴⁵ Oral interview, Benson mustuni,Kopsiro,12th September 2019

credentials.¹⁴⁶ For instance, Selline Korir, founder of Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL), dream was to become an ambassador for the voiceless at her tender age. She assisted women and children from all walks of life making their plight known to the world. When conflict broke in Mt Elgon, the government declared the area a closed zone as well as banned any organization from entering the district. But, Selline Korir organized multi sect oral fora on security for women and children in the area. This brought together all service providers from the Ministry of Health and relief providers to remedy the situation.

Selline made it her mission to reduce the suffering in the region by rallying local leaders who aided the wounded and homeless. She organized mistreated women into a social force-helping to restore their dignity as she facilitated talks between women from warring factions and transported media professionals to cover the situation of women and children. In these sessions, women stood out as not only selfless women but also as people with impeccable credentials through their relentless and irresistible efforts. They tried to restore peace amicably between the two conflicting clans of Sabaot.

While advocating for peace in the region, women faced challenges as they exposed themselves to risks of being direct victims of conflicts as well as faced other forms of retribution. Selline regards the part she played as a “service to humanity”. Indeed, Selline, contributed greatly to the peace process through her network that reached out to widows from the region among them Salome Matakwei.

Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) and Salome Matakwei

Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) is a network of grassroots women organizations in rural areas affected by armed conflicts in Western Kenya. RWPL played an important role in peace building in Mt Elgon especially on trauma healing to the widows and victims of rape. The organization had over six hundred (600) registered widows in the region among them was Salome Matakwei. It was at this forum as narrated by Salome that she asked for forgiveness for the atrocities committed by her husband and SLDF group for the purpose of being accepted back.

¹⁴⁶ ibid

“I decided to seek for forgiveness on Matakwei’s behalf so that the society would accept me and my children back since the society had rejected me and blamed me for their situation as widows. The women always told me that if it were not for my husband they wouldn’t be widows”.¹⁴⁷

Rural women peace link (RWPL) supported the creation of a network known as Cheptais rural peace link with Salome Matakwei as the chairlady of the group. This formation aimed at integrating the widows of Ex-SLDF militia group members Cheptais and Kapsiro into the society through various ways. First, this network provided a platform for the registered women to share experiences as well as access information sequentially making them change agents in communities that are affected by either ethnic conflicts or gender-based violence. Second, the forum initiated economic empowerment to support these widows through income generating activities to become self-reliant. Lastly, women used this group as a platform to instill positive messages to their sons dissuading them from manipulation by politicians. The RWPL affirmed that these women helped bring peace through dialogue as they moved from door-to-door propagating peace in the region, although this initiative turned unsustainable due to lack of financial support.¹⁴⁸

Action Aid Kenya and Salome Matakwei

Action Aid Kenya based in Eldoret came to promote peace in Mt Elgon, through trauma healing and promotion of women in leadership and economic empowerment. This Non –governmental organization (NGO) supported peace process in Mt Elgon by sponsoring experiential exchange visits amongst different communities so that women from MT Elgon would learn from other communities on how to live in harmony even in the midst of scarcity of resources.¹⁴⁹ Such visits included to Nakuru, Garissa, Siaya and Migori. The visit revealed the ability of women in those areas, who owned small pieces of land or lived in arid areas compared to the women from Mt Elgon who possessed fertile lands to live peaceably with each other.

¹⁴⁷ ibid

¹⁴⁸ Kennedy Mkutu, Gerard Wandera, Vincent Opondo and Obondo Kajumbe, Crime and violence prevention training: wale and Bungoma county crime and violence surveys, collaborative project between United States International University and Kenya School of Government(2011) p .9

¹⁴⁹ Jane

Moreover, these visits provided an opportunity for women to learn new farming techniques of horticulture in Hidaya in Garissa. Since women in Mt Elgon depended on agriculture, the new farming techniques aimed at boosting their farm produce, in turn, increasing their income to sustain their livelihoods. Lastly, the trip showcased cultural similarities particularly between the communities in Garissa and Mt Elgon. Both communities grapple with challenges which included Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early and forced child marriages and increased school dropout rate among girl child. These phenomena arise due to possible parental neglect or ability to provide for basic essential such as such as sanitary towels among others, for their children.

The Action Aid Programme benefited women among them Salome who learnt to promote the right to education of girl-child. According to Salome being an activist and chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake offered her a chance to get sensitized on girl's and women's rights hence enabling her to educate women and girls to resist some of the harmful practices such as Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation (FGM), forced marriage, GBV, early pregnancies, and land disinheritance to the widows in the region.¹⁵⁰

The practice of FGM is part of the culture of the Sabaot and related ethnic groups living in Mt Elgon. Proponents of this practice argue that it, improves hygiene, sexual fidelity, and dignity. The locals in Kapsiro still conduct FGM secretly deep in the forest .Towards this, Salome and other women in Maendeleo ya Wanawake provides alternative to FGM as well as conduct trainings and rescue the girls from FGM and early marriages as well as report the culprits of FGM to the relevant institution.¹⁵¹

The Action Aid Kenya also promoted psycho social counseling among widow and women in general. Through training and support for survivors of rape ordeals, a focus on young girls who bore children through incidences of rape mainly by 'Janjaweed', faced rejection from the community for fear of delivering 'Janjaweed babies' and thus required counseling and reintegration back into learning institutions.

¹⁵⁰ Oral interview ,Salome Matakwei,kopsirwo,12th September 20219

¹⁵¹ ibid

According to Salome being a widow of ‘Janjaweed’ was traumatizing since they were made to carry the wrongs of their husbands and the labeling of their children as the ‘Janjaweed’ children.

“For her it was opposite, the community excluded her as their own for the sins of the SLDF and because she wanted to be associated with, Sabaot she requested them to forgive her and accept her back as their own. I hated being a Sabaot because they raped me and killed my husband before me and my children.” Selina*(not real name) stated.¹⁵²

In response to the stigmatization the widows of SLDF faced in the society, Action formed two networks for the widows with Salome as the leader/chairperson of both the network which includes Chesikak widow’s network formed in 2012 that provided a forum for women to start an income generating activity like poultry keeping and small-scale farming. Membership to the group provided a forum for the widow to share their challenges, interact with other members of the community and sustain their livelihood.

Similarly, in 2013, The Action Aid Kenya formed Cheptais widow’s network to accommodate all widows in Cheptais division. Salome Matakwei was made the chairperson as a way of integrating her and other SLDF widows to the community as well as empowering them into leadership positions. The information provided to the women on leadership and promotion of cultural values in Mt Elgon gave women voice to speak in a male dominated society leading to women contesting for political position in the area among them Jane Chebet who was elected as the member of county assembly, Cheptais ward of Mt Elgon.

The Government and Salome Matakwei in Mt Elgon

The Government of Kenya involvement in peace building process in Mt Elgon included though military intervention for peacekeeping purpose as well as providing humanitarian assistance, offering security, clearing mines, reintegrating the IDPs back to the society, reconstructing

¹⁵² Oral interview, Selina*(not real name)Kopsiro,12th September2019

infrastructures such as schools and roads and disarming the SLDF youth.¹⁵³In maintaining peace and security in the area, the military set up Kapkota Military Base to provide expert security operations that would curb any militia rudiments such as reorganizing, training or using Mt Elgon forest for militia activities and regrouping to plan for another conflict.¹⁵⁴

The County Government of Bungoma through the then County Commissioner Mohamed Maalim, made Salome Matakwei an ambassador of peace, in 2012, In 2015, the same County Government supported widows and the vulnerable members in the society especially women from Cheptais, Chepyuk and Chesikak ward, the epicenters of conflict, by donating seeds and fertilizer as a way of empowering women economically.

Although most of the peace initiatives concentrated on women, other initiatives paid attention to the youth such as Peace Tree Network (PTN).this is because the youth unleashed more violence due to land as the major contentious issue in the region.¹⁵⁵ The youth played important roles in the system of warlordism (A system where people exercised military, economic and political control of the region illegally). They are regarded as impoverished and marginalized by economic realities making them amenable hence, easy to be manipulated.¹⁵⁶To achieve peace and reconciliation in Mt Elgon, PTN, contributed to the consolidation of the democratic process in the region through a more informed and responsible engagement of the youth.¹⁵⁷

Peace Tree Network (PTN)

Peace Tree Network (PTN) is one of the NGO's among others that got involved in peace process in Mt Elgon region aimed at achieving peaceful coexistence and reconciliation. Based in Eldoret,

¹⁵³ Boniface M.Ngulutu,*the military in post conflict reconstruction: the case study of Kenya Defense Force in Mt Elgon Conflict,2005-2012*, research paper project, Master's degree, University of Nairobi,(2013)p.51-97

¹⁵⁴Oral interview. Salome Matakwei,Kopsirwo,13th September2019

¹⁵⁵ Boniface M.Ngulutu,*the military in post conflict reconstruction: the case study of Kenya Defense Force in Mt Elgon Conflict,2005-2012*, research paper project, Master's degree, University of Nairobi,(2013)p.51

¹⁵⁶Simiyu 60

¹⁵⁷ Boniface M.Ngulutu,*the military in post conflict reconstruction: the case study of Kenya Defense Force in Mt Elgon Conflict,2005-2012*, research paper project, Master's degree, University of Nairobi,(2013)p.52

PTN was established in 2000 to foster solidarity and promotion of peace in Kenya. Based on its mission to develop and maintain collaborative relationship among peace actors in order to promote peace in the region, PTN targeted the youth in Kapsokwony, Kaptama, Kapsiro and Cheptais regions of Mt Elgon which were the epicenters of the conflict.¹⁵⁸

PTN facilitated trainings to the Ex-SLDF militia group members with skills to start income generating activities. For instance, the youth started to buy and sell grains and ploughed the profit back into the business. They also did table banking through monthly contribution and used the money for lending out to member to earn profit. The youths were encouraged to embrace a democratic culture and avoid being used by politicians to instigate conflict that only benefited the politicians and not the society. The youth rehabilitated by the PTN got re-integrated back in the community.

PTN partnered with youth leaders, local organizations like Turning the Tides (TTT), Friends Church Peace Team (FCPT) and local administration in advocating for human rights and identifying activities that would bring conflicting parties together. At least one thousand (1000) trainers of trainers who got trained on peace building and conflict transformation in Mt Elgon, reached out to their peers advocating for peaceful coexistence and development in the community. PTN also partnered with the security agents and organized football matches between the conflicting youth from both Soy and Mosop communities. These matches were meant to amend the broken relationship and bring youth together. In their quest for peace in Mt Elgon, PTN faced challenges as some of the local community members became hostile to the local administrators and refused to share information that would lead to peaceful resolution of the conflict. Moreover their efforts to include the youth in the National Reform Process with the aim of resolving the long stranding land issue and improving the livelihood of the community seemed to fail as conflict escalated.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸Matha Okumu, Peace Tree Network (PTN) Civic Awareness and Engagement: Peace caravan organized by Kapsokwony Youth, Nairobi, Kenya.(2011)p.

¹⁵⁹Otieno,Cetal, valley of conflicts: analysis of conflict ,threats and opportunities for peace in Rift valley and Mt Elgon regions of Kenya, safe world and peace –Net for DFID,2009 p

4.2 ‘Saint of the Mountain’-The Role of Salome Matakwei in Peacebuilding

The position of women in the society as wives and mothers was very critical in peace building. It made them a great entry point to peace building.¹⁶⁰Salome Matakwei as the wife of the late militia group leader and perpetrator in the conflict knew the entire network and determined the patterns of the conflict in Mt Elgon. She used the same position to determine and control a different ‘battle’ of peace building earning her infamy ‘saint of the mountain’. The roles include;

4.2.1 Salome as an Activist and Advocates of Peace

Women play a key role in peace building as activist of peace and advocates for the end of violence. They were first ones to speak against war and made efforts to prevent escalation. Scholars note the women take part as panelists, mediators and senior adviser in peace building platforms. For instance, during the post conflict violence in Kenya, the presence of Graca Machel, as a member of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism team, was cited to have promoted considerations of women’s concern during the dialogue process.¹⁶¹Some women waged conflict using nonviolence means such as pursuing human rights and democracy while others use their roles as mothers.

In Mt Elgon peace process, Salome Matakwei used her position as the chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO), to facilitate her integration and that of other SLDF widows to the community. Additionally, she advocated for women’s right and inclusion of women in community development. Women organizations, for instance Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO) in collaboration with other local community-based organizations (CBOs) such as Kenya female Advisory organization sensitized women and girls on their rights. Specifically on gender-based violence (GBV) for example, FGM banned by the government yet it was still conducted secretly in Kapsiro division. Other forms of gender-based violence campaigned against by these organizations included forced marriages, land disinheritance especially targeted at widows. As the chairlady, Salome, managed to bring together women especially widows in Mt Elgon together and assisted in rescuing the victims.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Monica Juma Kathina, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace: Peace building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya*: interim report, united nations development program me, New York,,(2000)p.39-43

¹⁶¹ BBC Interview with Graca Machel, South Africa, February ,2010

¹⁶²Kennedy Mkutu, Gerard Wandera, Vincent Opondo and Obondo Kajumbe: *Crime and violence prevention training: Kwale and Bungoma county crime and violence surveys*: collaborative project between United States International University and Kenya School of Government(2011) p.9

4.2.2 Salome's Role as Mother

Women regularly appreciate their identity of a mother that transcends international borders and tribal enclaves to achieve stability of the community. This is mostly because they know the community well hence, are able to predict acceptance of peace initiative. Additionally, women participate in socialization and development process and contribute to building capacities of their communities and nation at large. This is made possible because of the values they bring to the process of peace building.¹⁶³ According to Salome Matakwei, she transformed from inciting men to go for war to advising her children and youth on peace. Salome advised her children not to be like their father but instead work hard academically to make the name Matakwei be associated with success. Salome Matakwei utilized her position as the wife of the 'commander' to advice the SLDF members to quit the militia group to avoid being killed by the military officers. She managed to prevent conflict from restarting in the year 2017 during the announcement of presidential election.

4.2.3 Salome as Peace Keepers and Relief Aid Workers

1) Salome's Role As Peacekeepers

Traditionally, women are the first ones to speak against war and try to prevent it from escalating. They use their role of motherhood and other non-violent strategies to achieve their objectives. Pokot women in Kenya, for example understood the impact of conflict on them which leaves most of them as widow as well as being forced out and in other case disinherited of their family lands. These women believed that wearing *Leketio* (birth belt) which they considered a powerful charm could protect their sons from external harm of any kind. In fact, before going for warriors would inform their mothers to wear the belt. Those women who opposed their sons from going to war refused to wear their *Leketio* yet, their sons could not force them to wear.¹⁶⁴

In Mt Elgon, Salome Matakwei used her position as an ambassador of peace in the region and led women in talking about peace and forgiveness. As a way of confirming to the community that she has transformed, she ensured that she attended the entire chief's 'baraza' and sensitized the community on peace and the available channel for humanitarian aid channeled through the office of the area chief. In 2012, Salome started moving door to door talking to the youth and former

¹⁶³Damilola Taiye Agbalajobi, *The Role Of Women In Peace Building And Conflict Resolution ; The Case Study of Burundi*, Article 9, college of management science, Nigeria(2006)p.12

¹⁶⁴

SLDF militia group member to maintain peace. She advised the youth never to compete with the government instead to empower themselves through education and self-employment to earn them money to buy themselves land.¹⁶⁵ Salome attended most of the government peace initiative forums in the region and was always given a chance to talk to the community about keeping peace in the area.

The government recognized her as a peace promoter and in 2015 she was awarded a title as peace Ambassador in Mt Elgon by the then Bugoma county commissioner Mohammed Maalim. This title, that portrayed her as a peaceful person earned her ease acceptability in the society as well as benefiting from the government aid to the women in the region.

2) Salome As Relief Aid Workers

The most reflected upon agendas in peace building are relief and development policies. It is believed that enduring poverty and inequality served to undermine peace efforts by breeding further discontent and anger. Relief may be viewed in two terms. First, during peace building, there is a need for immediate humanitarian assistance. This is necessary to alleviate the human suffering that accompanies war and violence. The widows of Mt Elgon formed a women group, irrespective which side their husbands fought, as an empowerment tool to overcome their misfortunes and develop survival tactics since they could not rely on aid from the NGOs and could not allow suffering to lead them to grave.

“It has been survival for the fittest since we lost our breadwinners but we could not allow the suffering to lead us to the grave. That is why we formed this association as our empowerment tool because life is a struggle but through determination, we managed to invest in small-scale enterprises that have changed our lives for better”. Retorted Salome Matakwei.¹⁶⁶

The group named as Chabanan women group which translated to *needy widows means “misery”*, served the widows who had been neglected in society. The group was formed by more than five hundred (500) widows and supported nearly 2,000 orphans. Salome Matakwei was made the group leader. As the chairperson, Salome helped to comfort fellow women afflicted by her husband, militia and security forces. The group later renamed to *Berur widows* which meant the *blessed*

¹⁶⁵ John*(not real name) ex militia group member, cheptais, 12th September 2017

¹⁶⁶ Daily nation: Hopes for widows spring from group they formed amid misery, Tuesday 30 march 2010

widows because the group had been able to bring back a sense of belonging and wellbeing to its members. The group latter transformed to Network for widows in Cheptais that accommodated widows from both Cheptais and Kapsiro.¹⁶⁷ Salome narrated that

“The group started with twenty widows but now it’s comprised of more than five hundred widows from different clans and community. They wanted to stop depending on relief aid and depend on themselves. They started a small-scale enterprise that changed their lives for better by contributing maize to those who didn’t have, they started table banking also known as ‘merry-go-round’ with each now contributing 1000/- (one thousand Kenya shilling) per month. Initially, the women contributed 50, fifty, shillings each towards the purchase of households items for members who lost their belongings during the conflict. The group lends loans to its members. The group lends its members three times their contribution with two members being guarantors and pay back the money with an interest of 10% through the group, they have engaged in income generating activities such as keeping livestock and poultry. The group has enabled most widows in the area able to feed and educate their children.”¹⁶⁸

Lastly, relief aid is viewed as a short development aspect. The long term strategies involve in the promotion of economic growth and development. Violent and war oftentimes halt development by destroying infrastructure and institutions such as schools, health facilities, roads and communication systems. In addition to this, wars leave a huge deficit of human resource in terms of farmers and various workers who are compelled to flee from their countries of nationalities. For peace building to be successful it was very essential to engage the local community in developmental strategies and in coming up with the solutions to the problems facing the society. The *Chebanan* women group, through their sheep project, managed to pay school fees for their children and sponsor at least four children in secondary school. To achieve this, they have imposed strict guidelines and penalties for flouting them to ensure none of them falls back into economic hardship.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ The standard Wednesday newspaper, *Matakwei’s widow: I have been to hell and back*, interview with standard at Kiptii village, Mt Elgon, march, 11, 2016 pg.12

¹⁶⁸ Oral interview, Salome matakwei, kopsirwo, 12th September 2017

¹⁶⁹ Daily nation: Hopes for widows spring from group they formed amid misery, Tuesday 30 march 2010

After conflict, most women take over the role of men in the society hence, participating in the rebuilding of the economic institutions of post-war state. Therefore, restoration of their livelihood was paramount. They contributed to economic stability and growth raising incentives that led to an expansion in agricultural and informal sectors such as small-scale businesses and farming, (Mark F. Chingono, 1992). It is in this light that Salome Matakwei started her peace initiative group in 2017. This group accommodated both women and men.

“The organization teaches the community on the values and practices of peace and peaceful co-existence.” Mama Chepkemboi said. Women realized that all experienced suffering and the conscious of sharing pain made them understand each other. This enabled them to re-humanize those who were previously viewed as enemies and forgive them as a step to social transformation. Salome Matakwei peace initiative group discourage its members from backbiting and blaming each other. In its place, women use the group to empower themselves. Chepkemboi explained that

Salome being the chairperson ensures that the members including her benefit from the group that comprised one hundred and fifty members as well as boosting their economic situation. They have a table banking ‘merry-go-round’ they lend money to hire land for planting agricultural products for their consumption and income, paying school fees for their children, buying motorcycles for members. Members repay the money at a subsidized interest of 10%.during time to plough land; Salome leads the member in offering free labour to assist each other plough their land on time. Most of the men in the group take loans to purchase motorbikes. Salome runs a retail shop and posho mill in her home.¹⁷⁰

4.3 Challenges Faced by Salome Matakwei in Peace Building

The key informant and respondents indicated that women were faced with transportation and financial challenges that hampered their effectiveness in the area. To overcome the challenge, they suggested that stakeholders of peace building, the government and NGOs, should support these women financially. Salome pointed towards starting a prayer Centre for women, widows and youth in Mt Elgon in the next five years to come if she gets donor fund. Besides her vision, she intends to build Salome Matakwei peace Centre in Mt Elgon which would serve as a Centre of excellence for women and girls to uphold peace in the region and beyond as well as a champion for the rights of women in public space.

¹⁷⁰ Oral interview, Chepkemboi, kopsirwo, 12th September 2017

During the oral interview, Salome indicated that she faced resistance from men especially the SLDF members who view her as a government informer. More also she pointed out that moving from door to door convincing the SLDF member to quit the group is the most dangerous thing. She suggested that the solution would be for the government to offer security. She also indicated that “We face many challenges as widows of the SLDF people do not welcome us to their homes. They openly criticize us that we preach peace yet our husbands were the ‘Janjaweed’. It’s so traumatizing since we were made to carry the sins of our husbands. They even chased away our children and openly call them ‘Janjaweed’ children”.

Salome encountered resistance from men in the society who claims that she had started a money making project. This was verified when I boarded a motor bike from Chwele to Matakwei’s home and the motorcyclist thought that we were NGO which had gone to offer a donation to Salome Matakwei. Salome further explained that most people think that she has been paid by donors to preach peace to the community.

Salome confesses that moving forward with the network has not been easy due to division among widows whose husbands were killed by the SLDF members and the military. However, they have sought to articulate in one tone of voice for their needs to be met. In nutshell, there is still mistrust among the women in the group.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter has exemplified the various ways in which Salome Matakwei was involved in peace building which represented the strength of a woman and a symbol of humility and resilience beyond contraventions. It has further unveiled all the opportunities in peace building that she used ranging from being the women group leader, Ambassador of peace, preacher, ‘mother to the orphans’, proprietor of peace initiative Centre and peace educator to reintegrate herself in the society and benefit both monetary and from the aid given to women in the region by the government and NGO’s.

The chapter has also divulged that Salome Matakwei, although, abled to reintegrate herself in the society and fought a different battle of peace building, she faced challenges in peace building. This is because the community thought that she was working for the NGOs for money as well as an agent of the government in Mt Elgon. Therefore the chapter has answered the puzzle that women are not naturally peaceful and their involvement in peace building is for self-interest and not for the society.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPACT OF SALOME MATAKWEI'S PEACE BUILDING EFFORTS IN MT ELGON

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The chapter examines various impacts of Salome Matakwei's peacemaking efforts in Mt Elgon. To begin with, the chapter affirms her involvement in reconciliation process to seek for forgiveness and acceptance in the society that had isolated and rejected her for her role as a perpetrator in the conflict. This give a background to our understanding on her impact in Mt Elgon. This gives a clear picture on whether she was forgiven and accepted back by the society.

The chapter aims at clarifying that women in this case Salome Matakwei contributed her efforts towards bringing peace in the society. The chapter argue that although Salome Matakwei involvement in peace building was for selfish gain, she promoted post conflict reconciliation and prevented a relapse of conflict. She represent a symbol of strength of a woman in a patriarchal society.

5.1 Salome's Involvement in Reconciliation Process

"It is a bad habit to allowing men who plan for wars to plan for peace".¹⁷¹ In times of conflict women were considered to have the most influential voices for moderation. This was because while most men came to the negotiation table from war, women come straight from family care, civil activism and took a deep breath. Correspondingly, the international negotiators and policymakers included peace promoters who were women, not just warriors, at the negotiating table.

Whereas Peace building as a social and structural process aims at promoting sustainable peace at all levels within a given community (Dalak 2002), women worked to address the root of violence as well as to transform the relationship and the society from conflict to their contribution as peace makers at the grass root level is very crucial. This is because at the grass roots, women undertake their various gender roles as to ensure the survival of their families and society, prevent conflict especially in communities where violence can easily escalate, to promote individual values of tolerating each other and bringing peace in the society. This is possible through influencing once

¹⁷¹Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War And Peace: The Independent Experts Assessment On The Impact Of Armed Conflict On Women And Women's Role In Peace Building*(2002) p9

behavior and attitude. For instance the use of non-violence dispute resolution mechanism such as mediation, community building through the restorative justice that provides restoration of relationship between victims and offenders of the conflict.

For instance, in Kenya, during the height of conflicts, women have been seen to initiate dialogues for reconciliations. For instance, after the post-election violence, Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL) initiated people for reconciliation. Teckla Lerupe, renowned athlete uses sports in fostering peace in the rift valley region between the Pokot and Turkana. The late Nobel Prize, Wangari Mathai, and used environmental conservation as a prerequisite to a sustainable and peaceful world. In Mt Elgon, numerous non-governmental organizations were active in pursuing reconciliation and restoration of peace in the area. Eldo-link organization based in Eldoret advocated for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is a process of reinstating a broken relationship. Additionally, it brings together people who have a history of conflict into a harmonious relationship and develops the capacity of warring parties to live together. Reconciliations effort under current peace building initiatives was carried out through various means. This includes the use of high profile truth commissions that documented the crime of various conflicts and assigned responsibilities for them, governmental apologies, local peace commissions and grass roots workshops. Similarly, the use of traditional reconciliation efforts was used to bring back the internally displaced persons.

During Reconciliation, Perpetrators and victims were involved in the process of truth telling, apology and forgiveness. It was not just a process of addressing problems in government or weakness in the judicial system but also a process that incorporated political, cultural, psychological and spiritual strategies. Salome Matakwei played a vital role in reconciling with society. She advocated for the use of mediation or justice system in resolving a dispute. During her interview with the standard newspaper, Salome stated that “Wycliffe Matakwei began the struggle driven by good ideals but used wrong means to seek for justice. If he had chosen mediation or court process, I believe there would not have been any bloodshed”.¹⁷²The process encompassed of forgiveness, the use of peace education and trauma support for communities to deter future abuses.¹⁷³

¹⁷² The standard Wednesday newspaper, *Matakwei's widow: I have been to hell and back*, interview with standard at Kiptii village, Mt Elgon, march, 11, 2016 pg. 12

¹⁷³ Francis, Diana, *People and Power: conflict Transformation in Action*, Pluto press, London, (2002) p. 280.

A) 'Different Voice'-Truth Telling and Apology

“As they say, no one can look into the heart of the other, and purify or perfect her or himself”.¹⁷⁴ Saying sorry was the beginning of justice, change of atmosphere, recovering a sense of dignity and respect, forgiveness and healing process.¹⁷⁵ Salome apologized for the atrocities caused by her late husband, the SLDF and the military. She asked for forgiveness from her community. Salome reported that:

“People hated me and viewed me as the killer of their husbands, children and kin. I carried the burden of blame on behalf of my late husband yet I was not the one who killed, raped, taxed or took part in the fight. I told them the truth that mine was only to cook for the SLDF. I find it unfair because everyone here supported the SLDF in one way or another ranging from cooking food carrying arms and paying tax to purchase the weapon. Nevertheless, I accepted the blame and responsibility on behalf of my late husband for the atrocities and death of hundreds of people by the SLDF and security personnel, I decided to seek for forgiveness and apologies on behalf of Matakwei for the sake of *Amani* which translates to peace and for the society to accept me back. Later on, I held face-to-face conversation with most widows and victims of SLDF. I asked for forgiveness and argued the women and entire society to accept me back and let's unite so that we can create peace in the region to avoid reoccurrence of the mayhem and prevent other women from suffering the same”.¹⁷⁶

B) Forgiveness

Forgiveness was very imperative because it involved hampering negative thoughts, feeling, and behaviors. It substitutes them with positive responses to an interpersonal offence.¹⁷⁷ According to Zechmeister and Romero (2002) study on victim and offender account on interpersonal conflict, forgiveness whether told from a victim or offender it indicates that the incident ended with no negative or long term consequences. They have further stated that withholding forgiveness from an offender served as a measure of protection from future victimization, freedom to continue

¹⁷⁴ibid

¹⁷⁵Rita Manchanda: *Women Agency in Peace building :Gender Relations in Post Conflict Reconstruction, Economic & Political* ,Published by weekly Report,vol 40,No 44/45(2005)pg4737-4745

¹⁷⁶ Oral interview, Salome Matakwei, Kopsiwo, 12th september 2017

¹⁷⁷ Catherine Romero. *Writing wrongs: An Intervention to promote forgiveness and health in early and late adulthood*, Loyola university ,Chicago(2004)p.5

reaping benefits by staying in a victimized role, allows the victim to stand firm in their convictions that the offender was wrong, may prevent further conflict and confrontation with the offender. And reduces stress through acknowledgement and acceptance of their anger.¹⁷⁸

After the death of her husband, Salome quitted SDA church immediately reason being, most of the SLDF members were staunch SDA and she no longer wanted to be associated with them. Moreover, it was just to evade being doubted by her community that had forgiven her. The truth of the matter is that for one to become a preacher in SDA church, one has to go through a theological college and be a long time good regular reputation person. Therefore, Salome found it easy to preach at Calvary Information Ministry Church in Cheptais where she preached about peace and forgiveness with ease. In my view, it was easy for her to preach at Calvary Information Church than SDA church because theology was not a requirement for being a preacher. Salome preached to most of the youths to quit SLDF and “seek for salvation because it was only in Christ where one can get peace” said Kirui* one of the reformed SLDF member in Salome peace initiative group.

Government also played a major role in forgiving. For instance, in 2012, the former Bugoma district commissioner convened a peace initiative meeting where people rejected the presence of Salome Matakwei. The government took them through peaceful coexistence and forgiveness and asked the community to forgive her and not blame her for the sins of her husband.¹⁷⁹

C) Salome As A Peace Educators

When it comes to dimensions of human progress, peace education and civilization go hand in hand. Women were major educators of children at home and continued to be so as they grew up. According to UN secretary Kofi Annan, for generations, women have served as peace educator both in their families and in their societies. Women were instrumental in building bridges rather than walls even in situations where leaders were unable making what seemed impossible to become possible.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, “the idea of women as peace makers is not political correction run amok” This is because today’s main aim is not simply the absence of war but a creation of sustainable peace that fosters fundamental societal changes.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ibid

¹⁷⁹Tele-interview, Salome Matakwei, 23rd June 2020

¹⁸⁰Sahla Aroussi, *wom en peace and security*: addressing accountability for war time sexual violence, international feminist journal of politics vol.13(4)university of Antwerp,Belgium.p.590

¹⁸¹ Ibid

In Mt Elgon, women participated in educating the youth to quit the militia group and advised them to save their lives by not fighting with the government. Salome Matakwei and women of her peace initiative Centre educated the community on bad politics and discouraged the youth from being used by the politicians who are greed for power and not the people's interests to cause chaos in the area. In addition to this, women conducted seminars for the former militia group members discouraging them from violence and asking them to seek dialogue. Salome said that:

“I educated the community on the implication of conflicts and urge the youth on the need of going back to school, have a career, buy their lands instead of following up on land issues such as inheritance which has also become an emerging issue in Mt Elgon. Many youths went back to school and other have become “boda boda” which translate to motorbike riders. I encourage my children to study hard in school so that they can pass their exams. Education as changing agent is the only way that would makes people embrace the name Matakwei and associate it with bright children of Matakwei and not children of murderer” This encouraged my children and those of other ex-SLDF militia group accept to go back to school without fear of being discriminated. ¹⁸²

D) Salome As Trauma Healer

Organizations and individual have provided psycho-social counseling to women experiencing traumatic sexual violence, and the widowed. Organizations such as Eldo-link also referred to rural women peace network offered counseling to the women and youth. Calvary Information church, Cheptais, preached on peace and conducted group counseling to the youth. is in this church that gave Salome a platform to preach, educate the community and conduct seminars for the youth. Salome narrated that she was able to bring together all the ‘janja weed’ widows and counseled them. This has made them participate in the society with no fear.

3) Salome As Vigilant

Women working collaboratively with provincial administration, educated the youth on the consequences of owning illegal firearms. Security of the vulnerable segment of a population is vital. Therefore, security entails ending violence, protecting those affected by war and ensuring human right. Promotion of security involved lying down of weapons, demobilization of their solders and reconstructs their lives in a peaceful approach. In Mt Elgon, the government institution was viewed

¹⁸² Oral interview, Salome Matakwei, Kopsiro, 12th September, 2017

with suspicion and feared by the members of SLDF, Salome moves door to door telling the youth to surrender their arms to the women initiative group so that they could take them to Kapkota military camp. She proudly stated that her effort to maintain peace in the area yield fruits in 2017 as no case of violence was reported after the election. This is because initially, violence and election went hand in hand.¹⁸³Incidentally, when asked if she was an agent of the government, Salome responded that she is a peacemaker and said that

“I urge women to be vigilant of what is happening in their immediate family surrounding and the community at large. Women should take stock of how family finances are being used by their husbands because most men use it to finance conflict. I advise women to watch out on their husbands and sons on where they eat from, where they had gone to, what they had gone to do and what time they arrive at home from work. I caution women to be careful when their husbands give them money yet they have not worked for. This is to avoid being given money by politicians to fuel violence in the area. Salome Matakwei peace initiative group also helps in reporting early signs of conflict to the relevant authorities and she was at the forefront of preventing conflict from escalating during the 2017 presidential election dispute.

5.2 Conclusion

The chapter demonstrated the impacts of Salome’s peacemaking efforts in Mt Elgon which presented the strength of a woman in a patriarchal society. The chapter has revealed that although Salome involvement in peace building was aimed at reintegrating herself in the society, she also impacted the society. Her efforts helped in bringing together all widows in Cheptais, preventing conflict from restarting by reporting to the authority, initiating groups that enable the widows self- sustain themselves without relying on the NGOs and government. In addition, with the help of the government and NGOs, Salome was able to restore relationship between the culprits and victims of the conflict. Therefore the chapter has affirmed that Salome peace efforts indeed impacted the society by bringing peace although an imposed peace by the government as well as earned her acceptance in the community.

¹⁸³Oral interview, John*(not real name) ex militia group member, cheptais, 12th September 2017

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 CONCLUSION

There are many recent studies on women in conflict and peace building picturing women as victim, perpetrators and peacemakers. This study was consistent with the same trend, given that it aimed to argue the extant understanding of the transformation that Salome Matakwei underwent from being a perpetrator of conflict to peace maker in Mt Elgon between the period 2006 and 2017. It has demonstrated that the underlying peace building was intended by Salome Matakwei to reintegrate back to the society that had rejected her for having connections with the uppermost felon of the conflict. The project paper was guided by three main objectives; to examine the role of Salome Matakwei before and during the conflict, to assess the transformative platforms she used as a peace maker to reintegrate herself in Mt Elgon and the impacts of her peace building efforts in Mt Elgon.

The research used the lens of William James on dual conversion perspective as its conceptual argument. This conceptual framework highlights Paul's Damascus experience that is a classification of his experience from old life as Saul to new life as Paul. Additionally, it integrates the old life of Salome as a perpetrator and her new life as a peace builder to make her accepted back to the society. The research found out that Salome Matakwei was ready to work with NGOs and the Government as a way of getting back to her society. She rose with the help of the government and NGOs who nominated her as a woman representative in all peace initiatives ranging from the local to the national level. The NGOs and the county government used her position for two folds. Firstly, as a way of reintegrating her in society and lastly, to influence the background in stopping and preventing further escalation of the conflict in the region.

Based on the analysis, the study came up with three findings which revealed that the role of women in peace building is intertwined with the setting of transformative agenda presentation of conflict and peace building in Africa. One of the key findings of the study was that Salome Matakwei played various vital roles in the conflict of Mt Elgon. Her transformation progression as a perpetrator was as an outcome of the land allocation process that prompted her to offer her supportive role, apparently to fight for their land right. Therefore, presented roles in cooking for the fighters, incited and mobilized men to fight for their land, she fed the fighters in their hiding places, she hid the warriors and conveyed war information from one place to another as she misled

the authority by giving them false information, she played spy role, and helped to purchase and carry weapons for the fighter from the neighboring country. Her supportive roles were important in helping the SLDF group achieve its mission that caused many atrocities to the community with women bearing the most brunt.

Another finding of this study was that Salome Matakwei's transformation development to a victim of the conflict was as a result of her husband's death. The community rejected and isolated her for the atrocities committed by the SLDF members, military personnel, her husband and her roles in controlling the network of the conflict. To earn her acceptance to the society; the research revealed that Salome Matakwei shifted patterns to determine and control 'a new battle' of peace building. Moreover, she got involved in the peace building process in the area well as used various pro-social activities or rather, various transformative platforms as an ambassador of peace, preacher, chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake ,Chesikak ward, Cheptais rural peace link, women leader of Network for widows in Cheptais, leader Chebanan women group.

The research also find out that Salome Matakwei's efforts in peace building were made easy by the government and various NGO's who used her as an agent to promote peace in the region by reporting any plans of restarting conflict to the relevant authority. The Government and the NGO's advised the community to forgive each other and accept Salome back in the society. Although her influence was mostly advisory, Salome played imperative in persuading the Ex-SLDF member to quit the militia group. She was able bring together all the widows in the region to work together, she initiated an income generating activities to sustain the livelihood of the widows in Mt Elgon, She promoted tolerance within the community and a reported those conducting FGM to the relevant authority.

The research revealed that indeed Salome Matakwei played various important roles as transformative agents in the post conflict peace process in Mt Elgon. However, the roles she played in peace building were not only for creating a sustainable peaceful society but also for expedient use, as a platform of reintegrating herself in the society to repudiate the state of rejection and isolation by society especially for being the wife of Wycliffe Matakwei the main culprit in the conflict and to benefit from the aid offered to widows by the government and various NGOs.

The findings, therefore, contradicted the role of women in peace building that is purposed to create a long-term sustainable peace. This justified the study's argument that the role of women in peace

building is intertwined with their transformative agenda presentation of conflict and peace building setting in Africa. It is intended by women like Salome Matakwei to reintegrate herself in the society to counter her rejection particularly for having direct relations with the main culprit in the conflict.

During data collection, several practices and social barrier were encountered. Even though culture is a powerful tool of promoting peaceful inter-communal relations, it is also the most visible hindrance to peace building. This is because the researchers bear out women in the region of Mt Elgon had hampered to progress due to the negative culture and practices in the society. For instance, their Sabot cultures prohibited them from sharing information or interact with a person who might probe them from giving any information touching their family, land and cultures of their locals. Women don't advice but listen to men whether right or wrong.

There was limited space for self-expression from women, little exposure and interaction. Women were preserved and unwilling to provide information for fear of attacks from existing SLDF members and more traumas. The locals felt that the outsiders gathered the information for doing business or rather earning money which they equated to laughing at their trouble without providing a durable solution. The aspect of fear came out clearly in Kapsiro and Cheptais. The research found the need for gender and culture sensitization and security in peace building in the area.

To advance the literature on post-conflict peace building, the researcher analyzed the various platforms used by Salome Matakwei in Mt Elgon to contribute to peace in the area, I propose that more research needs to be done on the coping of children after the conflict of Mt Elgon this is because I was able to prove that the children especially those of the 'Janja weed' mothers and wives were actively involved as culprits such as played supportive roles in the conflict among them conveying information to the SLDF and fighters. As outlined in her Oral Interviews, Salome Matakwei stated that the children were victims in the conflict in terms of rape, Sodomy and child soldiers, victims of harmful practices such as early marriages, forced marriages, FGM, teen pregnancies, rejection and isolation as well as being labeled the "Janja weed children". Another more detailed study should be conducted and dedicated to majorly investigate the aftermath of Salome Matakwei. This is because the Government imposed peace and her acceptance in the region. Therefore, weather she was accepted by the society or not her acceptance remains a fallacy.

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