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**Effectiveness of Peace-Building Strategies used in the Management of Electoral Conflict in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Kenya has experienced many circles of electoral conflicts before and during every electoral period since 1992 general election. Trans Nzoia County formerly Trans Nzoia District has never been left behind when it comes to electoral conflicts. Since 1992 Trans Nzoia County experienced electoral conflict and violence during electoral period. Electoral conflicts of 2007/2008 general election was the most notable one in terms of violence, deaths and human population displacements. Therefore, understanding the effectiveness of peace building strategies used in the management of electoral conflicts in Trans Nzoia County, Kenya is key to resolution of the phenomenon. The study was anchored on Peace-building Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory. The study employed descriptive research design. The following respondents were sampled to participate in the study: 100 household heads, 70 village elders, 33 religious leaders, 12 chiefs, 8 MCAs, 5 Deputy County Commissioners, one County Commissioner, 5 NGO/CBO members and 5 Sub County Police Commanders. The primary methods of data collection were questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observation. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic narrations, and findings were presented using narrations and descriptions. The study show that the main peace building strategies employed in Trans Nzoia County to manage electoral conflict includes: Dialogue and mediation, sensitization programs; use of grassroots peace advocacy and peace messaging mechanisms, training and institution building activities, use of attitude transformation programmes and adoption of early warning/response system. The study concluded that the most effective peace-building strategy to manage electoral conflicts within Trans Nzoia County is dialogue and mediation. The study recommends that programmes aimed at improving citizen trust in public institutions should be enhanced especially through civic education and public participation.*

**Key Words:** Electoral Conflict, Nature, Peace-building, Peace strategies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Prevalence of election-related conflicts can be devastating; however, experience has shown that they can be prevented (Alihodžić, 2012). Peace building strategies for averting electoral conflict such as early warning and prevention are crucial towards ensuring there is no bloodshed and loss of property. Peace building strategies for electoral conflict refer to the establishment of sustainable electoral-related conflict interventions through capacity building and peace advocacy across political players and ethnic groups as well as across racial boundaries (Tschirgi, 2015). Peace building approaches can include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation and post-conflict reconciliation.

The aftermath of the 2007 post-election conflict in Trans-Nzoia County led to the forcible displacement of more than 34000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from their homes. Trans-Nzoia County was among the most affected counties during the 2007-2008 election conflict with Noigam and Endebess in Trans-Nzoia East being the hardest hit (13755 & 6867 respectively) (Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, 2008). In some areas such as Chebyuk, the electoral conflict between the Sabaot community and Bukusu was fueled in part by the existing land issues. Specifically in areas such as Kimabole and Cheptais at least 11 people were killed with four others killed within Endebess and Salama areas (Namunyu, 2019). Endebess area (near Chepkitala) hosted over 8081 Internally Displaced Persons in a camp while places such as Lwahaha area hosted more 313 IDPs. Given the diverse ethnic groupings that reside in trans-Nzoia County, there is need for establishment of long-term peace building strategies to mitigate electoral related conflict in future.

The highly contested elections of 2017 also saw a lot of tension especially in areas such as Endebes in Trans Nzoia County where chaos erupted and police tortured and injured civilians (KNHCR, 2017). The 2017

electioneering period was relatively calm unlike the 2007/2008 elections. However, the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic competition for both resources and political representation fueled by the contested elections between NASA and Jubilee Parties escalated the contest for 2017 elections between the communities' risked renewal of local unrest and conflict.

In Trans Nzoia during the time leading to August, 2022 election, tension between different ethnic groups had developed. The movement of people was restricted and voices of people were suppressed. Those other tribes that used to lease farms in Saboti, Kwanza, and Endebess constituencies could not move in to harvest their produce. The situation became worse with delay in announcement of presidential vote. Vigilantes became common from the political divide and use of informers along tribal lines was known fact. In Saboti constituency, people from outside the Saboti and Sebei tribes moved out of the area following hate speech that was spreading in the sub county. Those who had planted maize, potatoes and onions lost them to the locals. Those who had leased farms suffered untold suffering. In Cherangany and Endebes the trend was the same, luos and other people from outside Bukusu and Kalenjin left the area for fear of retaliation. The politicians were in forefront for spreading the hate speech. The issue of son of the soil and daughter of the soil rent the air. The long-standing ancestral land issue was reignited and few farms were invaded by so called squatters. The atmosphere became tense and violence became inevitably. Despite various peace building strategies being put in place to manage the electoral conflicts, Trans-Nzoia County still experiences a number of electoral conflicts (Okello, 2023).

### 1.1 Objective of the Study

The objective of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of peace-building strategies used in the management of electoral conflict in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design. Both probability and non-probability sampling procedures were employed. Non-probability comprises purposeful sampling, while probability encapsulates simple random sampling. The number of households in Trans Nzoia County is 223808 (KNBS, 2019). To attain a valid and reliable sample size, the researcher used Slovin's  $[n=N/(1+N_e^2)]$  formula which is as follows

Where;

n=sample size

N= Total number of households in Trans Nzoia County (223808 as per 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census)

e= margin of error (10% will be used for this study)

Hence,  $n= \{223808 / (1+223808 \times 0.1^2)\} = 99.9553388 \approx 100$  household heads will be selected.

The household heads sample size was thus 100. Simple random sampling method was used to arrive at sample size of 70 village elders from a target population of 234 and 33 religious leaders from a target population of 110. The household heads, village elders, religious leaders, chiefs, MCAs, Deputy County



Commissioners, County Commissioners, members of NGOs/CBOs and Sub County Commanders were sampled from the respective populations and areas to afford equal participation opportunities in the study. In this case, proportionate simple random sampling, convenience, and purposive techniques were used. In this method, 10%, or even 30% of the particular groups were sampled, and the sample sizes were determined (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). The sample size of the study population was (100) for household heads, (70) village elders, (33) religious leaders, (5) Deputy County Commissioners, (8) MCAs, (1) County Commissioner, (5) members of NGOs/CBOs and (5) Sub County Commanders, bringing the total sample size to two hundred and three (203). The primary methods of data collection were interviews, focused group discussions, and observation. Qualitative data was analyzed using thematic narrations, and findings were presented using narrations and descriptions

### **III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **3.1 The Effectiveness of Peace-building Strategies used in the Management of Electoral Conflict in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya**

The study sought to establish the effectiveness of peace-building strategies used in management of electoral conflicts in in Trans Nzoia County. The results are discussed in this section.

##### **3.1.1 Use of Grassroots Peace Advocacy/Peace Messaging to Electoral Conflict**

On the use of grassroot peace advocacy and peace messaging methods as peace-building strategy to prevent electoral conflict, 145 (62.3%) of the respondents strongly agreed that it leads to conflicts during elections followed by 70(30%) who agreed that it causes. In contrast 2(0.9%), 13(5.6%) and 3(1.3%) were not sure, disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively.

##### **3.1.2 Training and Institutional Building Activities, and Electoral Conflict**

The study findings revealed that out of 203 sample size of respondents selected for the study, 120(51.5%) participants strongly agreed that training and capacity building institutions involved in electoral process will assist in preventing electoral conflict. Another 20(8.6%) agreed that it do cause electoral conflict. In contrast, 33(14.2%), 40(17.2%), and 20(8.6%) were not sure, disagreed and strongly disagreed consecutively.

##### **3.1.3 Adoption of Early Warning System and Electoral Conflict**

The respondents in the study also gave their perceptions as to whether application of early warning system can assist to prevent electoral conflict. 46(19.7%) strongly agreed that when employed it has capacity to prevent electoral conflict, 56(24%) agreed that it prevents, 43(18.5%) were not sure, 40(17.2%) disagreed while 48(10.6%) strongly disagreed.

##### **3.1.4 Use of Dialogue and Mediation and Electoral Conflict**

Respondents had the highest preference on the use of dialogue and mediation to among other peace-building strategies with 164(70.3%) of them strongly supporting, 43(18.5%) agreeing while 6(2.6%) were not sure. 12 (5.2 %) and 8(3.4%) disagreed and strongly disagreed.

### **3.1.5 Use of Attitude Transformation Programs and Electoral Conflict**

Most respondents had negative perceptions on the use of attitude transformation programs to prevent electoral conflict. Out of 203 sampled participants for the study, 77(33%) disagreed on the use of the programmes, 50(21.5%) were not use on how these programmes could impact on electoral conflict while 9(3.9%) strongly disagreed. On the other hand 46(19.7%) strongly agreed that it assists in preventing electoral conflict while 51(21.9%) agreed that it assists.

### **3.1.6 Use of Sensitization Programmes and Electoral Conflict**

Sensitization programmes on the negative effect of electoral conflicts on the lives of citizens can assist to prevent potential offenders from participating in them. Most respondents 153(65.7%) strongly agreed that these programmes have capacity to prevent electoral conflicts, 65(27.9%) agreed to the finding. However, 14(6%) and 1(0.4%) disagreed and strongly disagreed.

One respondent during FGD noted that;

Peace building should encompass post-conflict initiatives to rebuild societies and forestall a return to violence and conflict situations.

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## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **4.1 Conclusions**

On the strategies employed to curb electoral conflict in Trans Nzoia County the study revealed that dialogue and mediation was the more effective strategy employed, followed by sensitization programs, use of grassroots peace advocacy and peace messaging mechanisms, training and institution building activities, use of attitude transformation programmes and adoption of early warning/response system . On the perception of respondents on the best management approach to electoral conflict, adoption of relevant policy and strategies was more preferred strategy, adoption of early warning and response strategies, collaboration between security forces and political actors, adoption of peace advocacy and campaign by NGOs and SCOs, adoption of local dispute resolution mechanisms, and confidence building among the political stakeholders. Based on the key findings, the study concluded that the most effective peace-building strategy to curb electoral conflict in Trans Nzoia County was application of dialogue and mediation mechanism among conflicting sides.

### **4.2 Recommendations**

The study recommends that the Government of Kenya to develop a framework to guide peace-building activities and then strengthen them through training and facilitation.

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