

# Intra-Clan Conflicts and Household Livelihoods in Kopsiro Division, Bungoma County, Kenya

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to discuss intra-clan conflicts and how they influence livelihood opportunities among the Saboot people in Mt. Elgon District Kenya. The paper is a summary of a study carried out by the authors in Kopsiro Division of Mt. Elgon District among 351 respondents. The findings indicated that land and land-related issues were the main causes of conflicts. The findings also showed that the effects of intra-clan conflicts have compromised the livelihood opportunities of the people of both Mosop and Soy Clans in Kopsiro Division. Various stakeholders including the government, NGOs, religious groups and elders were found to play vital roles in mitigating the conflicts. In conclusion, the intra-clan conflicts have made live more difficult and left households in more social and economic challenges than before.*

**Keywords:** Intra-Clan Conflicts, Household Livelihoods, Kopsiro, Kenya

## 1. Background

For many years, Kenya has been assumed to be an island of peace. Since its independence in early 1960, Kenya is one of the countries in the horn of Africa that has generally enjoyed peace and tranquility as a society, while its neighbouring countries like Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Somalia, and Southern Sudan continue to languish in persistent conflicts. However, since the much-talked-about post-election violence that occurred between 2007 and 2008, this peaceful landscape has become volatile. Kenyans have been witnessing persistent violent conflicts between and within communities, clans, tribes and ethnic groups. Some of the hardest hit regions include the wider Rift Valley, Coast, Eastern, Northern and parts of the Western regions of Kenya.

Conflicts within and between groups and nations is currently one of the major global crises that threaten human survival (Coser, 2007). After the World War II and with the creation of the League of Nations that was then upgraded to United Nations, the assumption by the nations of the world was that countries would not witness another face of conflicts among and within nations. However, conflicts have persisted in various manifestations. Further, intra-clan conflict is an inevitable feature in plural societies. These conflicts may appear as a dispute on important social, political, economic cultural, religious, territorial, or lingual issues (Javaid and Hashmi, 2010). Conflicts are associated with violence, weakening of state institutions, a parallel economy, and periodic life-threatening situations for some population groups. A review of livelihoods approaches identified a need to better understand the problems faced by populations in conflicts, and the constraints they face in maintaining their livelihoods, and finding ways to support livelihoods (Schafer, 2002).

Some intra conflicts are associated with a continuous risk to lives, for example, those in Democratic Republic Congo and Angola (Le Billon and Bakker, 2002). In Somalia, between the early and late 1990s, political violence, food insecurity and diseases gave way to a situation characterized by depleted household asset bases, lack of social services and poor terms of trade (Le Sage and Majid, 2002).

This paper is based on the premise that conflict is not just a sociological problem, but also an unfavorable condition for community development in the society. Consequently, places that experience armed conflicts tend to be destabilized in terms of their level of development to an extent that they become poorer than when there was no conflict.

Similarly, analysis indicates that the magnitude and incidences of conflicts in the society is skewed and manifests in various parts of the world differently. Africa with about 11% of the world population represents the greatest burden of conflicts. The United Nations Security Council for instance, observed that it spends not less than 75% of its time and money on conflicts and performing humanitarian duties in Africa than other parts of the world (Ashgate, 2008).

In Kenya, there has been various incidences of inter and intra-clan conflicts especially along the North-Eastern, Rift valley and Coastal regions of the country, which also host majority of the pastoralist communities in Kenya (KNHCR, 2012). These are also regions that lie along the polarized international borders through which small arms and light weapons from the warring neighboring nations like Somali, Ethiopia and Sudan find themselves in the hands of the pastoralist residents (Kimenju, 2004). Because of the cattle raids, inter and intra-clan conflicts over the use and access to resources and cross-border attacks, the gun is one of the

favorite weapon in these areas. Tana Delta killings that left over 200 people dead in 2012 and several villages brought to ashes through inter-ethnic feuds is a typical case of violent conflicts in Kenya (KNHCR, 2012). Currently, the country is still puzzled by the several killings and destructions of property in Lamu County.

The conflict currently playing out in Mount Elgon District can be traced back to the colonial policy of alienating African land to create room for white settler farms. In the case of the Sabaot community, their ancestral grazing land on the extensive plains of what is now Trans-Nzoia District was taken away from them in the early 1930s without compensation (Simiyu, 2008).

Mount Elgon has a long history of conflict and inter-tribal warfare, manifested mainly as cattle rustling (involving the Sabaot and their Sebei cousins from Uganda, the Pokot, the Karamojong, etc). Indeed, accounts indicate that warfare has historically been imbedded in the landscape and cultural structure of the Sabaot community and that the territorial military organization was just as important an integrating factor of the community as were other sociological features like the tribal age-sets and the clans (Weatherby, 1962). The Mount Elgon clashes have overtime conformed to a general pattern of ethnic cleansing, or ethnic clashes that occurred throughout the country, in areas such as Molo, Olenguruone, Burnt Forest and Likoni.

The Sabaot of Mt Elgon also wanted to reclaim their land from migrants by evicting them. Many non-Sabaot, in particular Bukusu, had moved into the area in search of fertile agricultural land, which they purchased from the Sabaot, while others came from the neighboring Trans-Nzoia District and purchased land there or settled illegally along forest fringes (Simiyu, 2008). The first clashes between the Bukusu and the Sabaot occurred in November 1991. By early 1993 Sabaot warriors, helped by their Sebei cousins hired from across the border in Uganda, had carried out several attacks against Bukusu, including torching their houses, taking over their land, killing over 24 people and injuring many more, and displacing over 2 000 people (Human Rights Watch, 1993). In areas where the Bukusu dominated they reciprocated with revenge attacks against the Sabaot. By mid-1995, 6 500 families comprising an estimated 40 000 members had been displaced (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 1996).

The history of violence has contributed to militarization of the area as local residents buy weapons either for self-defense or for carrying out operations of their own. This has been facilitated by a proliferation of Small Arms and Light weapons (SALWs) along the Kenya-Uganda border following many years of instability and war in Uganda. Such weapons were generally in circulation and because of the porous Kenya-Uganda border find their way into the Mount Elgon region. The implication of this was that any conflict situation in the area potentially escalated because both combatants and the tools of combat were readily available. In a strict sense, the proliferation of SALWs is both a cause and effect of the conflict.

Tensions between the two Sabaot clans have revolved around claims that one clan is favored by the government in land allocation, with both clans accusing the other of this. In the mid-1960s the government for the first time established the idea of a resettlement land for the Mosop. The reasons for this were multifold: first, to protect the Mosop from the recurrent attacks by groups living in Uganda, and secondly, to absorb the Mosop better into government services, and thirdly, the Mosop had earlier inhabited a water catchment that the government wanted to preserve and protect. In particular, the Mosop were not happy with government decision to include the Soy in Chepyuk settlement scheme, which the Mosop consider as compensation for their more expansive Chepkitale land and as such have exclusive rights to it. Yet the minority status of the Mosop and their general marginalization means that decisions related to land allocation were often made by Soy leaders (Western Kenya Human Rights Watch, 2004). The government allocated land to both groups in the ratio of 3:2 for the Mosop and Soy respectively in phase one and two. However, in phase three, the ratio was 2:1. The Soy being the majority in population demanded a bigger share that the government did not honor. This is how the animosity and aggression between the two groups began (Mwasserah, 2008).

The peak of the animosity was between 2005 and 2008 when violent conflict erupted between the Mosop and Soy groups over allegations of unfair land allocation, which had earlier resulted in the formation of the Soy, dominated Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF). The SLDF was accused of killing more than 600 people and committing a variety of atrocities including torture, rape, theft and destruction of property (Makori, 2008). The SLDF's behaviour drew attention from the government that led to the military operation called 'Okoa Maisha' that led to the vaporization of the SLDF in 2008.

Proponents of the positive conflicts theory including (Coser and Dahrendorf, 2003) postulated that conflicts can have both negative and positive effects on the society. They argued that although conflict is an inevitable phenomenon in human interaction, the negative elements of conflicts are not morally and socially approved because of their implications on the parties concerned. As a social issue, conflicts in Kopsiro Division seem to have negatively affected development in the area. In terms of the settlement patterns, marriage patterns, occupation and the livelihoods of the residents. It is within this background, that the authors sought to examine the extent to which a persistent intra-clan conflicts among the Mosop and Soy clans influence livelihoods opportunities of the residents in the Division.

## 2. Methodology

The study adopted an exploratory design, which generated both qualitative and quantitative data. The target population of the study was all households in Kopsiro Division who had lived in the study area for at least five years. With the household heads as the main units of analysis, the author used Krejcie and Morgan's (1970: 23) sampling table to choose 351 household heads that participated in the study. Purposive sampling was used to select the key informants, while simple random sampling was employed to select

household heads from which information was collected using an interview schedule. A semi-structured interview, in-depth interview, focus group discussions, and observation were the main methods of data collection employed. Data was analyzed by qualitative procedures including summary narrations and descriptions of the findings, and descriptive statistics to summarize quantitative data.

### 3. Results

#### *Causes of Intra-clan Conflicts on Household Social Economic Status*

The first objective of the study was to establish causes of intra-clan conflicts in Kopsiro Division. During data collection, all the 351 respondents said that they had experienced conflicts.

After all the respondents saying that they had experienced conflicts in their area, the researcher was interested in finding out what were the specific causes of the same conflicts? The respondents were asked in an open ended question to name as many as possible causes as they could remember. Out of the 351 respondents, those who mentioned land as the main cause were 326(92%), politics were 262(74.6%), and boundary disputes 267 (76.1%) and land distribution were 302 (86%). This is summarized in the table below.

#### Causes of Intra-clan Conflicts

Cause of conflicts	Frequency (n=351)	Percent
Land	326	35.9
Politics	262	31.6
Boundary disputes	267	23.1
Distribution of land	302	5.4

Results in the above table show that land was mentioned the most, followed by distribution of land, boundary disputes and eventually politics. Our analysis has clustered the responses into two main themes, land-related issues and politics as the main causes of conflicts in the study area. The theme of land has several explanations as to why it was mentioned the most. It was found that during the 1<sup>st</sup> resettlement of the Mosop Phase I, the exercise was faced with many challenges. These included poor preparation, lack of title deeds as evidence of ownership and corruption that resulted in dissatisfaction among the Mosop and envy from the Soy. The same problem remained unsolved in phase II and III. In addition, the long duration of those resettlement phases led to new problems mainly that the residents on the ground could not continue farming on the land because of the dispute and thus, had to seek other means to survive including business. This has been a major source of anger and discomfort especially among the residents who have been rendered jobless with no other stable sources of livelihood. According to a key informant, "...*hii vita ilianza na mambo ya mashamba*"(16<sup>th</sup> April, 2104)

Meaning, these conflicts started with land issues. Land issues included boundary allocation and distribution of title deeds to the new owners. Originally, the Mossop occupied a water catchment area, which the government wanted to

preserve and protect thus, the reason for moving them to the settlement scheme in Chepyuk. During the allocation of allotment letters in the latest resettlement, some people who had originally settled on the land missed out on the government list of the new land owners. This then prompted violent reaction from the aggrieved group. From that initial incidence, the recurrent conflicts have been a reflection of the 'original unfair distribution of land' that was instigated by the government of the time. Boundaries that emerged were also disputed and the whole process of land distribution appeared to favour one group at the expense of the other. Land was therefore, at the core – especially as a resource that the two clans have been fighting over.

Politics and politicians were also blamed as major causes of the conflicts. In fact, one of the discussants in key informants asserted that

"...*wanasiyasa watatumaliza. Wakati wa Ndizi na Na Chugwa ndio hii vita ilianza. Wenye hawakupiga yes walibaguliwa na wanasiyasa wakati wa kupewa shamba. Ndio ukaona baadaye mwaka wa 2007 mapema Matakwei na wengine wakaenda mustuni kama kundi haramu kudai haki.* (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

The informant asserts here that politicians will finish the community. During the Banana and Orange campaigns for the new constitution, those who voted for Banana were discriminated upon by the local politicians who were for the Orange. The politicians reacted by now allocating land to only those that voted for the Orange. This is how youths led by Mr. Matakwei and Jason Kipsangeiywo (*Laibon*) went into the forest to fight for their rights as a terror group. Accordingly, politicians played two main roles: first, they funded youths that caused the violent conflicts and secondly, they openly discriminated upon those that did not walk their way. During interview sessions, one of the informants said that

"...*walikuwa wanapeana pesa kwanzia shilingi mia hadi mia tano kwa vijana ili wawashabikie.*"(26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that politicians gave between one and five hundred shillings to the youths so that the youths would support them. The authors were also interested in knowing who the aggressor was during the violent conflicts. It emerged from the findings that up to the time of the study, there was still tension between the two Sabao clans. For the Soy clan, they blamed the Mosop, while the Mosop claimed that it was the Soy that aggressed against them. Thus, biased responses from the respondents and key informants were evident. During data collection, this was evident in their settlement patterns Phase one and two majority were Mosop while Phase three is divided equally. The researcher observed that most of the residents of Kopsiro Division were still displaced and did not have stable abode. What happened was that since 2008 when the government of Kenya had the military operation in the area, most of those residents that were displaced during that period have not been fully resettled. They therefore, reside in market centers in concentrated settlements mainly of people from the same clan.



When asked why? One of the key informants said that, “...hapa tunakaa kama ndege. Wakati wowote kitu kinaweza tokea. Momi chomiet. Makeshingos pikap Mossop ak Soy wanakaa peke yao.”(26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that they stay like birds of the air. Anytime anything [insecure] can happen because the area is not safe. People don't trust each other and that is why the Mosop and Soy clan members displaced live in their respective groups and location without mixing freely.

When further asked to rank the specific causes of the recurrent conflicts, various despondences were recorded. Tension due to feeling of insecurity was ranked first, followed by unequal distribution of land resources, then land ownership and use, then political influence, boundary disputes, availability of arms, and poor governance.

Although the land and political issues have been discussed earlier, poor governance has not. Respondents asserted that the government through the local administration has not

been fair to the two clans. Instead, they have been biased whenever they intervened and only involved in crisis management when the situation is out of hand. The government was also blamed for mismanaging the initial land allocation that has created the recurrent conflicts over time. In fact, one of the discussants observed that

“...ni serikali tu ndio itamaliza vita ikitaka. “(26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning, it is only the government that can end the conflicts if it wishes. Thus, question the role of the government as we shall see in the subsequent section on the role of stakeholders. When further asked to rank the causes of conflicts, the following results were recorded.

#### 4. Ranking Causes of Conflicts

Cause of Conflicts (n=351)	Minimum (Strongly Disagree)	Maximum (Strongly Agree)	Mean	Rank
General insecurity	1	5	4.3	1
Unequal distribution of land resources	1	5	4.2	2
Land ownership and use	1	5	4	3
Influence from politicians	1	5	3.9	4
Boundary disputes	1	5	3.8	5
Availability of arms	1	5	3.7	6
Poor governance			3.2	7

By interpretation of the findings in the above table, the nearer the mean mark is closer to maximum (5) then it implies affirmative response. The *vice-versa* is true. According to the table, the general insecurity situation is the highest threat to peace. This was also confirmed during visits in many parts of the Division where, the authors had to be escorted by some community leaders for security purposes. Similarly, the presence of military trucks was also eminent in patrolling the area. Insecurity was mainly exacerbated by unclear procedures of land allocation, land use and ownership, boundary disputes, influence from politicians and poor governance.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that land and politics dominate the underlying causes of conflicts in the study area. However, it is also clear that lack of proper management of the conflict has also made the conflict incidences to persist. In the following section, we present the consequences of intra-clan conflicts on households in Kopsiro Division.

#### 5. Effects of Intra-clan Conflicts in Kopsiro Division

The second objective of the study was to examine the effects of intra-clan conflicts on the household's socio-economic status in Kopsiro Division. Normally, conflict has been viewed with a lot of negative connotations with regards to its consequences to those people and geographical spaces involved. The study of intra-clan conflicts among the Sabaot community was not divorced from such findings. In fact, the

whole study was premised on the assumption that the current undesirable living conditions in Kopsiro Division were largely effects of the recurrent conflicts that have been experienced in the area. Therefore, during data collection, respondents and key informants were tasked to identify, specify and explain the main effects of conflicts in the study area, where various findings were recorded.

From the economic point of view, various effects were mentioned. However, these can be summarized into loss of lives, property and sources of livelihood. In terms of loss of life, most of the respondents mentioned that they lost their close relatives in the violent conflicts between the two clans. Accordingly, members from either clan were brutally hacked to death, while others lost body parts like limbs and ears, rendering them lame for life. During key informant interviews, one of the informants narrated that “...mwaka wa elfu mbili na nane tulipoteza walimu wawili hapa Chepkurkur. Kwa jumla tulipoteza zaidi ya watu elfu kumi” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that in Chepkurkur, they lost two teachers and in total over 10,000 people were reported dead in 2008. During data collection, all the respondents that were widowed/widow said that they lost their spouses in the conflicts. Loss of life was also evident by the existing social institutions in the study area. For instance, we have the Christian Relief Fund (CRF)'s project for orphans under Masaek Hope and Light Ministries in Chepyuk Location confirm. This is a children support centre and school hosting 182 orphans sponsored by CRF. These orphans were mainly victims of conflicts. The

centre has a school that operates classes from standard one to eight. However, they also sponsor 27 orphans and 12 partial orphans, needy and neglected children to pursue their secondary education in other schools.

Loss of property was another major economic impact of the conflicts to the households. All the households heads interviewed recorded that they lost property during conflicts. Most of the houses were torched; valuables looted and burnt, shopping centers were destroyed, as cows and donkeys were stolen. The household was actually at the centre of the loss from human life to material property. A lady informant tearfully narrated her story,

“...hawa watu walinichomea, wakaiba na kupora kila kitu. Niko tu hivi vile unaniona. Nilibaki tu na nguo zenye nilikua nimevaa. Nilipoteza kijana yangu pia” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that those people burnt, stole and looted everything. She was only left with the clothes she was wearing. The conflict also claimed one of her children. She further asserted that

“Woli tugul po Kipsigion, Kubra ak Kebee kikikebel tugul Kote keteje aiyin bich” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that this entire place in Kipsigion, Kubra and Kebee was burnt and was just recently constructed. Food insecurity was another economical effect of the conflicts. During and after the conflicts, nobody was allowed to plough their farms because it was a taboo. One of the community elders said that:

“...kengwar kugo patai” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that when one digs, he/she will be scratching Oloibon's back that was not culturally acceptable. Doing so would attract a bad omen for the community. There was also no mechanical farming involving the use of tractors and other farm equipments. The consequences of these were enormous. First, there was hunger for three (3) years (2007-2009) and several children died out of hunger. According to one of the respondents, this is the period when people ate weeds known as *chepkukuyu*. The only agro-business and retail businesses that residents engaged in involved selling of basic commodities as most shops were destroyed. Barter trade was still being practiced even at the time of the study because of poor roads networks making farm produced to be sold or even exchanged cheaply with other goods needed at the household level. Markets like Kapkateny and Chwele that depend on farm products from Mt. Elgon District were affected by lack of food resources.

Another economic effect on the household was the aspect of displacement of residents. One of the most common characteristic of the intra-clan conflicts in Kopsiro Division was displacement of members in households. Many household members went missing and some have never been re-united with their household members. During the study, about 6 years since the last violent conflict in the area, most of the household heads informed the researcher that most people were displaced and are now living with relatives, while others have been forced to rent houses at the shopping centre. Due to cultural reasons earlier mentioned, the displaced are not living separately within camps for internally displaced persons, but are integrated in households within

their neighbourhood. This has further led to new living habits of renting houses and dependency syndrome especially for the victims who rely of the hosts. This partly confirms why most households had many members.

In terms of livelihood options, most households lost their sources of livelihood including farming. Thus, people are currently forced to engage in odd jobs like sex for cash and other criminal activities like stealing. During a focused group discussion in Chepkurkur, a discussant shared that

“...tipik chichang' chimengech ndene tinye lekok kuyu matinye walimenye ako matinye ishet, neyo chemuchembunok.” kuunyo, kotap somanet nyebo chepkurkur kunyor lekok monduwok tiptim ak mut kenyit nyo kibokuako ak kenyini kuyo kyokose kiborstoy am soet ab yomet” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that most young girls are already mothers because they have no abode, no jobs and they have to be promiscuous in order to make ends meet. She further asserted that in Chepkurkur Primary school, over twenty five (25) girls were pregnant at the same period as it was aired in the national media stations. Another informant complained of increase in cases of theft. He said that

“...tuko na kap omar ambao ni familia inayojulikana na uhalifu kwa sasa...” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that *We have Omar's Family who are known for criminal activities at the moment*. In overall, levels of poverty in the area are high – people have less income, are food insecure, eat less preferred foods, are displaced, are more dependent, do not farm, and have generally lost sources of livelihood.

Socially, there have been several effects of the conflicts on the household. First of all, separation and divorces in the families that form the household. The conflict situation made social life precarious to an extent that most of the households experienced breakages in marriages due to sexual promiscuity, separation of family members, displacement of households, and loss of sources of livelihood. For instance, in one of the interview sessions, the respondents explained that in one of the incidences, women were moved from Mt. Elgon to neighbouring districts including Bungoma, Kimilili, Kamkuywa, Mayanja, Eldoret and Kitale. While there, the women were sexually assaulted as others became promiscuous and the end results were children born out of wedlock that led to separation with their husbands.

The conflicts also provided a fertile ground for a variety of sexual abuses. Men and women together with the youths have become sexually promiscuous and some have become prostitutes to make ends meet. According to a headmaster at Chepkurkur Primary School, in 2013, 15 girls dropped out of school due to pregnancy and by March 2014, 8 girls had also dropped. He also observed that most girls in the area were now going to Kimilili and Chwele to work as barmaids and commercial sex workers. Within the family, most of the men were also forcefully castrated by the militia group members of the Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF) and the operation Okoa maisha (The Kenya Army). According to one of the victims interviewed

“...tulichukuliwa wanaume wote kwa kijiji na watu wa Matakwei pia na tukafungua kamba kwa sehemu zetu nyeti na kuvurutwa na kuteswa” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that all men in his village were taken by the SLDF men and tortured by tying their private parts with ropes and pulling them. Most men are now impotent, which also has affected their reproductive and productive roles at the household level.

There was also the general violation of rights experienced at the household level. When SLDF was active, they used to selectively target some household members mainly men. They would forcefully pick them into the forest to go and fight. They would kill them. They would cut their body parts especially ears and arms as part of punishment. Therefore, killing, torture, mutilation and sexual violence characterized most of the household members during conflict and after conflict period. According to one of the informants, even the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) reported that a part from the SLDF, the General Service Unit (GSU) and the police also tortured, unlawfully detained, killed, and sexually assaulted the residents during the 2008 security operation that was called Operation Okoa Maisha.

Socially, the conflicts also led to displacement of over 66,000 households. This grossly interrupted with the households' daily-life operations. Education of children was interrupted as children were displaced while their schools were burnt down e.g.: including Chepkurkur, Kaboriot, Kaptoom and Korng'otuny Primary schools. Households' socialization process was also interfered with by the displacement. This was especially because members of the family were separated while in other cases, merged with the rest of the displaced members of the society where discipline, order, authority and values were replaced by the drive to survive and making ends meet in a harsh social environment that made parental control almost impossible. This is why sexual pervasion and criminal acts are on the rise. During the interview a discussant observed that

“...nidhamu ya watoto imeenda chini sana.Siku hizi wasichana sasa ndio wanatafuta wanaume na mavazi yao pia yamebadilika.(26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that the discipline and morals have gone down to an extent that it is girls now seducing men, while the girls are now dressed in trousers that they did not before. Because of displacement of families, social roles were also interfered with. Women have become household heads and sole breadwinners. This also happened for children that were orphaned and displaced during the conflicts. That is why almost 40% of the household heads interviewed were female. This number was quite high compared to what is ideally expected in a normal life experience in the same society where only a few women would be household heads.

Members of the Mosop and Soy clans have also continued to express mistrust and fear for each other because of the conflicts. This has resulted into a social tension between the two clans. During visits in the study area, the researcher observed that the settlement patterns take the clan criteria where there is little mixing because people do not trust

members of the other clan this evidenced in phase three where majority who have settled there are from the soy. Even in the market places, the types of roles played in business enterprises were also restricted for example in areas dominated by the soy the Mosop do not own any businesses and *visé versa*.

In general, the households were the melting pots during the conflicts. This is where the action was taking place in terms of the target of the conflicts and impact of the same. In fact, the living arrangements, the social life and economic activities that people engaged in at the household level is a reflection of how they were affected by the incidences of conflicts in the study area. For instance, because of displacement, people have concentrated their settlement at market centres, while engaging in business and transport activities to earn a living.

When discussing conflicts, the authors went to the field with an open mind to capture both the positive and negative effects of conflicts on the households. The above discussion has been biased towards the negative effects of conflicts. However, the study also recorded various positive results. One of them was the aspect of capacity building. The conflicts attract a lot on national and international attention. Many non-governmental organizations including the Red Cross, Christian Reformed Relief, Women Link, NCKK, ICM ACT Kenya, and FPFK (Free Pentecostal Fellowship of Kenya) have engaged in massive civic education for the residents. As a result, various seminars and workshops have been organized on conflict management and resolution, and attitude change especially targeting the young people. This included among other activities, taking youths to Rwanda to learn from the genocide scenes. According to one Red Cross official, in as much as the area seems to be having some underlying social tensions, it was these kinds of capacity building initiatives have reduced the chances of such tensions escalating into full-blown violence.

In terms of infrastructure, the authors observed that schools that had been burnt down during the conflicts were made of temporary structures. However, when rebuilding the school, they have been replaced by permanent structures and most people now prefer boarding schools for their children as was observed at Cheptikit Academy. Roads like Masaek – Kipsigon and Kopsiro – Chepyuk were constructed by army and have now improved it by putting murrum.

Similarly, houses being built are made of iron sheets as opposed to pre-conflict period. There was also a water tank build by ACT Kenya for the whole community, which has solved water challenges that used to affect the residents. Also, those people that ran away from the conflicts have come back but with new ideas for development e.g. building of Village Polytechnic is now on the pipe line, high altitude training centre for the athletes and water springs. All these are positive effects of the conflicts. However, the way the benefits came about should be critically examined: the society must not lose life for it to get water, schools, and permanent roads, among other benefits. The Table below summarizes some of the effects highlighted by the respondents.

## 6. Ranking Effects of Conflicts on the Household

Causes of Conflicts (n=351)	Minimum (Strongly Disagree)	Maximum (Strongly Agree)	Mean	Rank
Reduced household income	1	5	4.2	1
Lost family land	1	5	3.9	2
Slept hungry/ate less preferred food				
Investors have left the area	1	5	3.8	3
Displacement of families/people	1	5	3.7	4
Life is more difficult	1	5	3.6	5
Loss of job opportunities	1	5	3.6	6
There is balanced development	1	5	2.9	7
between Moson and Soy people	1	5	2	8

The interpretation of the findings in the table above is that the nearer the mean mark is closer to the maximum (5), the more affirmative response is and *vice-versa*. The ranking shown above did not rich ten, but they scored up to eight most pressing effect of conflict on the household. Loss of household income was therefore, the most common effect. This was largely because most households lost their family land, ate less preferred food or even slept hungry, and many were displaced. What these mean is that most families were generally destabilized and experienced general loss of their sources of livelihood. The supremacy of household's level of income over other effects cannot be underscored. Income as already indicated is a major indicator of a household's socio-demographic status in the society. When income is enhanced, the living conditions of the household is hypothetically assumed to improve, but when it is deprived, the households would generally degenerate in many other aspects like food security where they would not be able to consume enough or even preferred foods since if they cannot produce it on their own farm, they may not also access [buy] it from the market since they lack the cash.

Findings in the table also show a generally deprived community as a result of conflicts. Households have lost land, are taking less preferred foods or even going hungry. Investors have left the area as more people are displaced and life made more difficult. At the end of it all, there is no balanced development among households from both communities.

One key finding from the field was that in spite of the fact that most of the families were displaced by conflicts in the study area, there were no camps for internally displaced persons. According to one of the key informants at Chepyuk Phase III, the Sabaot culture does not allow their members to live in dehumanizing conditions. One of the informants explained that,

“...mila na tamaduni yetu hairuhusu watu kuishi kwa hema. Kwa wale ambao wamefurushwa kwao, ni jukumu la wasabaot wenzao kuwapa makazi ya muda mpaka watakapojisitiri” (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that their customs and traditions do not allow their members to live in tents. In fact, for those displaced, it is the obligation of the fellow Sabaot members or relatives to accommodate them until the situation is sorted out. This was a response that he gave when asked by the researcher to

explain why people were not living in camps if they were truly displaced.

What this meant was that people of the same clan were accommodated by their kinsmen and women and allowed to share the same residential space as an extended family. This gave rise to a kind of informal settlement within market centres for security purposes and also to avoid exposing their member to the dehumanizing life in the tents. Thus, the Sabaot culture provided a fertile ground for members to cope with some of the effects of the intra-clan conflicts in the study area. This is partly one of the benefits that the authors accrued by staying in the community for one month because the key informants would reveal more information over time. In the next section, we explain the specific role of the stakeholders in the whole context of conflicts, conflict resolution and management in the study area.

## 7. The Role of Stakeholders in Mitigating Intra-clan Conflicts in Kopsiro Division

The third objective of the study was to analyze the role of stakeholders in mitigating conflicts in the study area. During data collection, the researcher found that there were several stakeholders that had played vital roles in mitigation of conflicts. These stakeholders operated either as a group or individual entities in implementation of their action plans. Out of the 351 respondents interviewed, 245(69.8%) mentioned the government as a stakeholder, 224(63.8%) the civil society/NGOs, 190 (54.1%) elders, 169(48.1%) community members, while all the 351(100%) mentioned the district officer (D.O) and church leaders. These results are summarized in the table below.

### Stakeholders Involved in Resolving Conflicts

Stakeholder	Frequency (n=351)	Percent
Government	245	69.8
Civil society/NGOs	224	63.8
Elders	190	54.1
Community member	169	48.1
Total	351	100

Analysis of the findings in the above table indicates that the government was recognized by over 69% of the respondents as having played a key role in conflict resolution in the study area. This was manifested in various ways. First and



foremost, the government has the social and political responsibility to provide security for its citizens against aggression. Thus, this was a major expectation of the people of Kopsiro. According to respondents, the then government took the responsibility by declaring war against the Sabaot Land Defense Force and further declared Mt. Elgon District a security operation zone in 2008. This was an operation called *Okoa maisha* meaning save life. The military operation led to the eventual killing of the leader of SLDF and destruction of the whole group activities in the area. This is what culminated in the end of the last major violent conflicts experienced in the area.

The government also set up police posts including the one in Kapkateny, Kipsigon, and many other administration police (AP) camps like the ones in Chepchabai, Toiwondet, Chepyuk, Kapsambu, Kubra and Chebich AP camps. There is also a Military post at Panaan tega that has helped to heighten security through regular surveillance and intelligence activities.

In 2013, when the Jubilee government took power, they promised to settle most of the Kenyans that have been internally displaced out of the various causes. However, this did not work for the study area because the government was targeting people in IDP camps yet in the study area the culture does not encourage people living in camps. Meaning that the government may need to use other criteria in order to settle the many displaced residents in the area.

Most of the respondents also mentioned in their responses that the government was still expected to do more. The land allocation and boundary disputes, which were then politicized, remain unresolved. During visits to the study area, it was consistently mentioned by the respondents that none of them has got a title deed for the land on which they live, while other have letters of allotment yet they have no land on ground. During the previous government efforts to allocate the land, the respondents observed that there were no prior consultations with the locals and thus, was marred with a lot of complaints over corruption and political influence. For instance, the final list of residents prepared by the government did not tally with the list that the locals had prepared and expected to be given land. Therefore, it still calls for the government's mandate to amicably solve the land crisis in order to end the recurrent discontent among the various clans living in Kopsiro Division.

Two hundred and twenty four or 63% of the respondents mentioned civil societies/NGOs as having played a major role in management of the previous incidences of conflict. During data collection and visits to the four locations, the researcher encountered various social and economic activities that were ongoing, which were being funded by the civil societies. For instance, in Kopsiro centre, the International Christian Mission (ICM) has sponsored a theological college called African

Theological Seminary, which is offering open air prayers in the region during conflicts. They also held pulpit exchange programs for pastors from various churches that had earlier been separated by conflicts. They also preached peace throughout the area. There was also Mt. Elgon Pastors

forum, NCKK, and Catholic Peace and Justice Commission that Helped By conducting exchange pulpit programs for both clans.

The ICM through the African Theological Seminary also supported conflict victims in various ways. They helped rebuild their houses; each was given a cow; the elderly were given farm inputs and the organization leased land for them; 30 women were supported through farming on their behalf and each was further given a sheep; they also employed the local youths to be peace ambassadors; and currently, they sponsor over 200 orphans in their education at primary and secondary levels. Currently there are training pastors from various churches.

The Red Cross is another NGO whose activities were recognized by the respondents during data collection. According to the respondents, it is the Red Cross that has mainly been in charge of relief food and medical aid during conflict situations. One of the key informants also appreciated that: "...ni watu wa Red Cross ndio waliniokoa mimi na watoto wangu. Walitupea chakula, dawa na neti ya mbu." (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that it is the Red Cross people that saved her and her children. They gave her foodstuff, medication and a mosquito net. The researcher also found that Red Cross is offering medical assistance to Kopsiro Health Centre, the only health facility in Kopsiro Division. Christian Reformed Church gave 16 iron sheets to 200 households for reconstruction of their burnt houses.

Elders from the various clans in Kopsiro Division were also mentioned by 54% of the respondents that they have always played an important role during conflict situations. According to one of the administrators interviewed, elders play a big role in dispute resolution and particularly, in dialoguing and negotiation processes between parties. One of the respondents observed that "...hawa wazee ndio walisaidia kuongelesha watu wa ukoo mbalimbali ndio vita ikatulua. Lakini pia kuna wakati hawa wazee huwa wanatumiwa kuanzisha vita kwa kuwashauri na kuwabariki vijana wa ukoo zao." (26<sup>th</sup> April, 2014)

Meaning that the elders are the ones that talk to people of various clans so as to cool down the fight. But in some cases, the same elders are the ones that incite their youths and bless them to go to war with their rival clans. Therefore, the findings indicate that the elders may play two major roles: the one of conflict resolution as well as conflict ignition.

Community members were also identified by over 48% of the respondents as having played major role in conflict situations. During conflicts, it is the community members that engage each other in the violence that ensues. However, they are also the victims of the same violence. In Kopsiro Division, community members engaged in various activities during and after the conflicts. First and foremost, the respondents explained that community members were involved in reconciliation and provision of humanitarian aid to victims of the conflict that had erupted. Most of the



respondents provided shelter, water, food, and counseling to the victims. They also worked with elders to negotiate and reconcile the warring sides. Most important of them all, they are the ones hosting all the people that were internally displaced during the conflicts.

The District Officer (DO) and church leaders were the most mentioned as having played a key role during the conflicts. The DO being the main government figure on ground, he was highly remembered because, being the chairman of the security in the Division, he was seen all over the area moving up and down with police officers asking residents to stay in-door, to cease fire and to cooperate with the government agencies in providing information. The DO was thus, a symbol of the government's presence on the ground.

For the church leaders, they were so instrumental in provision of humanitarian support including tents, medication, counseling of victims and reunion of families, building of schools and sponsoring of orphaned children to pursue education. Generally, many Christian religious denominations have continued to play a major role in reconstructing life especially for those that were directly affected by the violence. For instance, the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) initiated programs on peace and rights that has been vital in bringing about reconciliation, harmony and healing among the people that were affected. The church leaders facilitated meetings that were held with elders from all the Sabaot clans. One of these meetings was held in Mabanga and officiated by the former Vice President Hon. Kalonzo Musyoka. The climax was a peace rally held at Kaptama area. In that rally, people were asked to forgive each other, ex-SLDF members were also forgiven and reunited with the community they had tortured, the ex-SLDF were also asked to form self-help group in each location and given Ksh.75,000 to start life, and about 600 of the ex-SLDF were taken through rehabilitation programs.

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that various stakeholders at various levels played important roles in conflict resolution. One observation that the researcher made was the general need for the stakeholders to continue networking with each other since most of the conflict situations cannot be addressed by a single strategy. In conclusion to the chapter, it is clear that land and land-related issues that have been politically polarized have been the main causes of the recurrent conflicts that have affected the social and economic status of households in Kopsiro Division, while the government is the main stakeholder with the authority and mandate to address the land issues.

## 8. Conclusions

In attempt to understand the inter-clan conflicts and household livelihoods in Kopsiro division, collective action theory was used. According to the theory, historical information and present day society reveal occasional, intermitted or incessant, spontaneous and fluid actions by different groups. For example, there have been riots, mass demonstrations and pressure for social change. This was a typical example of what the researcher found out in the study area. That, members of the two clans act in solidarity. For instance, for the Mosop blame the Soy and the *visa*

*versa*, as the aggressors in the persistent conflicts. They also demonstrated solidarity in their settlement patterns and the way they accommodate those displaced by conflicts. As such, the proposition of the theory in this paper is that collective action originates from mal-distribution of resources. Hence, collective actions is relatively fluid, unstructured, unpredictable and sometimes violent. This was also observed in the Kopsiro Division particularly in addressing the first objective of the study, where land and land-related issues were the main causes of the conflicts. However, we argue that given the mitigation effort that the researcher highlighted, not all the members of the two clans were acting in solidarity with their clansmen/women. For instances, religious organizations brought together pastors and elders from both clans to preach peace and reconciliation for the two clans. Therefore, the act of being neutral actors was vital in mitigating violence and managing post-conflict situation.

Basing on the findings in objective one, we conclude that the persistent conflicts in Kopsiro Division are triggered mainly by factors from within the clans – particularly land-related issues, and partly, by factors beyond control of those clans, especially when the whole land issues is politicized and sides are taken. In regard to the second objective, we conclude that the intra-clan conflicts among the Sabaot people have had both positive and negative implications on the households in the study area. However, in terms of household's socio-economic development status, the conflicts have compromised the household's livelihood opportunities for majority of the residents. The authors basing on the findings of the third objective conclude that conflicts cannot be resolved by one major stakeholder. It is a team and all-inclusive process that involves the participation of various actors. However, given its mandate, the government must lead the talk and action for the rest to be successful in their efforts especially in the case of Kopsiro Division.

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