

WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING IN PASTORAL CONFLICTS:

**A CASE STUDY OF POKOT WOMEN IN SIGOR REGION OF WEST POKOT
COUNTY, 1984-2000.**

BY

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my original work and has not been presented for award of degree in any other University.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my late beloved father, **Mr. FRANCIS MACKLAP TULEL**, for nurturing me and instilling the highest values in my life; you taught me that beyond the sky is the limit and that I could achieve anything in my life with GOD.

My son, William Penga't, you have been the greatest motivation and memory in this process.

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List of Abbreviations

IHL- International Humanitarian Law

IHR- International Human Rights

NCCCK- National Council for Churches of Kenya

NGO- Non Governmental Organization

UNDP- United Nations Development Programme

SARDEP- Semi Arid Rural Development Programme

SNV- Netherlands Development Organization

DPC-District Peace Committee

KPR-Kenya Police Reservist

MP-Member of Parliament

SALW-Small Arms and Light Weapons

TPWF-Turkana Pokot Women Fellowship

Definition of terms

Conflict Management

This refers to actions undertaken with the main objective to prevent the vertical (intensification of violence) or horizontal (territorial spread) escalation of existing violent conflicts.

Conflict Early Warning

Early warning is the act of alerting a competent authority about the threat of new (or renewed) conflict sufficiently in advance for preventive action to be attempted.

Conflict Prevention

Measures taken to avert the escalation of conflict into violence.

Conflict Resolution

This is a more comprehensive term than conflict management, which implies that the deeper-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved. This implies that the behaviour is no longer violent, attitudes are no longer hostile, and the structure of the conflict has been changed.

Peace-building

This is the implementation of measures to consolidate peaceful relations and create an environment which deters the emergence or escalation of tensions which may lead to conflict.

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the role of the Pokot women of Sigor region in peace building. The study began by examining the history of the Pokot people in relationship with the conflict that was experienced in the Sigor region from 1984 to 2000. This study sought to, among other things, provide the background understanding of the conflict and, more importantly, the roles that women played in conflict management and peace building. The study took place in Sigor region of Pokot Central District in West Pokot County. This is a region that experiences frequent conflicts between the Pokot community and her neighbours, particularly the Turkana community.

The study analyzed the conflict and peacemaking processes from 1984 to 2000. The study started by discussing the causes of armed conflicts among the Pokot people during this period of investigation. It then focused on the roles that women played in addressing or ameliorating the effects of the conflicts. In investigating the role played by the Pokot women of Sigor region in peace building, the research sought to achieve three objectives i.e. investigate women's participation in conflict in Sigor, examine the impact of conflict on Pokot women in Sigor and to examine women participation in peace making and peace building processes. To achieve these objectives the research was guided by three hypotheses which included a notion that Women's active participation in conflict affected their involvement in peace building, that Women were the most affected by conflict in Sigor region, and finally that

Women's participation in peace building among the Pokot community will lead to sustained peace between Pokot and her neighbours.

. To satisfactorily achieve the above, the research was guided by the feminist political theory whose arguments describe a polyphonic chorus of female voices. The study concluded by examining the impact of conflict on the social, economic and political factors of the Sigor region, in general, and women, in particular.

Amongst the key findings, the study revealed that the nature of warfare has dramatically changed due to the development of increasingly sophisticated weapons technology. The study found out that women in conflict prone- areas in West Pokot County, such as Sigor,

were often mobilized during armed conflict because their support, labour and services were needed in the whole cycle of warfare enterprise. The research revealed that, apart from taking part in conflict, women and girls also faced insecurity due to persistent conflict, hence influencing them to take active roles in peace building. The research proved that increased meaningful women participation in peace talks, mediations and other negotiation processes, including during the peace negotiations and planning processes, often led to lasting peace in the pastoral Pokot community. The research highlighted the importance of women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations because the groundwork for peace and security structures was put in place. The research also proved that women were very important in influencing men in society and can help sustain the peace process.

This study was based on Jean Elshtains' feminist political theory whose arguments provide or describes a polyphonic chorus of female voices. The research has shown that armed conflict negatively affects women and men and results in gender-specific disadvantages. The study revealed that the impacts of armed conflict on gender relations are significant. Forced displacement and gender-based violence are two examples of impacts that are not inevitable outcomes of armed conflict, but rather are deliberate strategies of war.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

In order to understand conflict in Sigor region of West Pokot County, a clear picture of the cultural, socio-economic and historic background of its inhabitants is very important. Sigor is located in the current West Pokot County, 510 kilometres North West of Nairobi. It is in the South-Eastern part of the West Pokot County. The area can be accessed through the tarmac road connecting Kitale to Lodwar.¹

The climatic conditions in Sigor vary considerably due to the altitude differences. Rainfall data along the escarpment are not available, but one can assume that precipitation increases with the altitude. Average rainfall registered in Sigor at the foothill of the escarpment is about 750-800 mm/year, while on the upper part of the escarpment it might reach 1,500 mm a year. The long rains occur between March and August with a period of relatively low rainfall in June and the short rains in November. The inhabitants of the area are mainly ethnic Pokot, who may be subdivided into sedentary farmers and the nomadic herds' people.²

The West Pokot pastoral community lives in one of Kenya's remote and socially and economically under- developed region. Livestock keeping is their main livelihood in the resource scare Sigor region just as in the other parts of the county, especially the lowlands. As such, the survival of the people in Sigor depends mainly on the availability of natural resources, namely land, pasture, water and vegetation. Competition for these resources has led to fighting between the Pokot and their neighbours.³ The fighting has further been complicated by the proximity of the Pokot region to the war-torn neighbouring countries, namely Uganda and remotely South Sudan. The wars in these countries make the region prone to proliferation of weapons into Pokot and Turkana counties. Equally, commercialization of cattle raiding has turned the traditional cattle

¹ GOK, Ministry of Planning and National Development, *West Pokot District Development Plan 2002-2008*, Nairobi: Government Printer 2002.

² Rambaldi Giacomo, "Wei Wei Integrated Development Project Paper", Year 1992

³ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya: A Focus on the Internally Displaced Conflict Victims in Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2003, p. 2-3.

raids into a modern sort of warfare involving use of dangerous and sophisticated weapons. In addition, conflicts in the region have taken a political dimension with influential politicians funding the conflict to flush out those who do not support them in their political ambitions.⁴

The remoteness of the region makes the situation even further complicated. The rugged terrain, underdeveloped infrastructure and pastoralists' migratory nature has made it hard for the security forces to contain the situation. Although the government has tried to intervene there has not been much success in bringing lasting peace.⁵ The inability of these efforts to contain and resolve the conflicts mean that there is a failure to identify a conflict-resolution framework that can possibly fit in the traditional socio-political and cultural dynamics of the people of West Pokot County. Such a framework will have to be rooted in customary principles of war and peace as embedded in traditions and social structure of the Pokot. Such a structure should take into consideration not only the distributive issues that are amenable to negotiation and acceptable solutions, but also the subjective and emotionally loaded issues such as group status, identity and gender roles, such as those played by women in indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms.⁶ This research appraised the place of Pokot women in local mediation and peace building. Pokot women are part of the community members who might have been involved in the conflict and dispute resolution process and yet their agency has raised less scholarly attention.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

What makes human is the ability to incorporate in societal activities and history all members of society, women included. The Pokot women are an important component of the traditional society. The importance of Pokot women is understood by the fact that men could not be members of the council of elders if they were not married. Equally, the

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Isabella Masinde, Mohamud Adan and Ruto Pkalya, *Indigenous Democracy Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2004, pp. 2-7.

⁶ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya: A Focus on the Internally Displaced Conflict Victims in Northern Kenya*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2003, P. 2-3.

manner in which a Pokot member of society is buried after death depended on the marital status of the deceased. If Pokot women are central to the people's lives, it is unlikely that their roles stopped at the above mentioned activity. Pokot women also played other equally important roles. Take the area of health, for example. Women are the best medicine persons in Pokot community and others act as seers (*kapoloktin*), which are equally important roles in peace efforts. By 1995 the people of Pokot had already the first women chief.

Furthermore, marriage among the pastoral communities, determined cattle raiding patterns and yet literature on peace building is biased against them. Just a glance through the literature and current debates in the field of conflict management in West Pokot will suffice to show that the field of conflict management, like the discipline of peace building in pastoral communities, remained by and large silent about gender or women roles. Studies in other parts of the world, including Africa have shown that women seem to have played active roles in peace efforts in society. For instance, in Liberia, during and after the war, women organized for peace mobilization at grass root level of society.⁷ In Asian war-torn countries, women supported peace at all levels in the late 1990s.⁸ In Mozambique apart from being soldiers, women defend the course of peace in most societies.⁹

How comes then that the Pokot women are regarded as “not very visible” in peace efforts? It should be noted that scholars on conflict among the Pokot, as it is with other third world countries, have suffered from male biases which emanates from the male dominant character of the African societies and economies on which the women of the third world depend. The foregoing raises some major questions, such as what are the major causes of exclusion of Pokot women in the forefront of conflict and peace issues. What is the role of women in the peace building among the Pokot? These and other questions form the basis of this study.

⁷ E. Rhen and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace*, New York; Unifem, 2002, p. 77.

⁸ N. A. Sanam R. ., Manchanda and S. Karmali, *Women Violent Conflict and Peace Building: Global Perspective*, London: International Alert, 1999, p.11.

⁹ A. Leao. “Aluta Continua: Children and Youth in Mozambique’s Struggles” in McIntyre Angela, *Invisible War in Africa*, Pretoria: Lesedi Litho Printers, 2004, pp. 41-43.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

The study aimed at achieving three objectives, namely to;

- (a) Investigate women's participation in conflict in Sigor.
- (b) Examine the impact of conflict on Pokot women in Sigor.
- (c) Examine women participation in peace making and peace building processes.

1.4 Justification of the study

Women's position in peace building among the Pokot community has not been primary analytical concern of most peace and conflict scholars. There is less appreciation of the women as mediators to all peace building efforts in conflict prone societies. There is need to put focus on this by way of such studies as this one. Some scholars like Kathina Juma seem to suggest that the practice of conflict resolution and peace building just incorporates practices common among the female, such as compassion and empathy. But the extent to which this is true has not been demonstrated by empirical studies. This study on Pokot women is an effort to fill this gap. Along those lines, peace building practice stresses the stereotypical female attributes, such as their roles as child bearers and their ability to sustain life. Yet the increasing silence on their roles in peace building leaves a lot to be discussed. This, in turn, justifies the need for this research with questions which go back to the old feminist debate around questions of war and peace and women's involvement in them.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The study concentrates on women in peace building among the West Pokot people living in Sigor region of West Pokot County. This area is an epicentre of conflicts between the Turkana and Pokot people. Furthermore, most of peace efforts between the two communities were mostly done on the border of these two communities. Pokot is one of the pastoralist communities living in the Karamoja cluster as classified by Intergovernmental Authority of Development (IGAD), the communities within this cluster include Pokot and Turkana in Kenya, the Jie, Dodoth, Tepeth, Matheniko and

Pokot in Uganda, the Toposa and Nyangatom in South Sudan and the Nyangatom and Dassanech in Ethiopia. These communities experience a lot of cross border conflict in the four counties. Sigor region is inhabited by the Pokot however it does not border an international boundary yet it has been an epicentre of conflict. The period of study is 1984 to 2000. In 1984, the collaborative effort of Kenyan and Uganda armies launched a brutal military operation christened “Operation Nyundo”, i.e. Operation Hammer, to disarm the Pokot people. The operation lasted for three months where, among other brutal measures, the army used helicopter gunships that left many civilians, including women and children, dead and property destroyed.¹⁰ The operation acted as a catalyst that influenced Pokot people to be actively involved in peace making. Their efforts saw a peace truce in 1984 between the Masol Pokot and the Turkana brokered. This agreement allowed the Pokot to use Kulal salt lick and grazing fields on the Turkana side of the common border. This was an important land mark in the history of peace building among the Pokot community. Although the truce was very important, later on conflict erupted again between the two communities and became worse in 1990s when modern warfare intensified after unprecedented proliferation of small arms in the region. In July, 2000 the Pokot and the Turkana reached another truce on the use of the Masol and Lebatin plains. This truce remained in force, surviving the killing of a Turkana woman by a Sekerr Pokot.¹¹

1.6 Literature Review

Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, observe that women can prevent inter-ethnic conflicts in a number of ways. Among the Pokot, there is a belief that a woman can protect her son from external harm of any kind by wearing a birth belt called *leketio*. The belt is believed to support pregnancy and life. It is a powerful charm that protects children from harm. Before warriors set out for a raid, each of them informs his mother to wear the belt while he is out for the raids.¹² Can women refuse to wear the belts prompting the warrior to abandon the raiding mission? What cultural attachment does the

¹⁰ Joseph Akoule, “Rural women peace links” Reflective conference 2005. Women Peace and Security, Conference of 6th-9th Dec 2005 Operationalisation of UN Security Resolution 1325 at Grassroots level.

¹¹ NCKK, SARDEP and SNV, *Pacifying the Valley: An Analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict*, Nairobi: NCKK, 2001

¹² Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, “*Indigenous Democracy*”. 39

belt have? Pkalya, Adan and Masinde did not address these issues in relation to women power to stop war or mediate or inform peace building instances.

In another study by Pkalya, Adan, and Masinde call for the need to strengthen the existing indigenous mechanisms of conflict management. Doing so is the best way of solving pastoral conflicts, such as those in Pokot County. Such capacity building interventions would include training, formation of linkages and networks and exchange of visits to learn from successful case studies.¹³ Although this is a noble idea, the authors did not mention whether women were part of these institutions and mechanisms.

Abdi Umar argues that in the pre-colonial times, there were clear rituals used to guide the conduct of warfare. Councils of elders had full control over war and peace. Total war was avoided, and conflict resolution mechanisms were used to keep neighbours at peace.¹⁴ The options of peacemaking were kept alive even during war, partly through lively communication with rival clan elders. One way of such communication was through exchange of livestock and wives. Women at this level were virtues of peace, what this study focused on.

The International Alert Group in their journal observed that women were involved in psychosocial programmes of healing, reconciliation and therapy for victims and combatants in any conflict society.¹⁵ Such roles were important in reconstructing any war-torn society. However, how did these roles lead to peace building? Although the work acknowledged that a comprehensive programme of cross-regional experience should be developed. And that such development should include documentation of women's peace building efforts, cross-regional training and workshops. The suggestions of the writers are what this study aims at revealing.

¹³ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan, & Isabella Masinde, "*Conflict in Northern Kenya*". 66

¹⁴ Abdi Umar, "Resource Utilization, Conflict and Insecurity in pastoral Areas of Kenya", a paper for the USAID Organized Seminar on Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa, held at the Methodist Guest House, Nairobi, 27 - 29 March 1997 Kenya Pastoral Forum, 1997, p. 22

¹⁵ International Alert, *Women, Violent Conflict and Peace Building: Global Perspective*. London: International Alert, 1999, p11.

Mary Anne Fitzgerald argues that traditionally women were non-partisan medics on battlefields and mediators behind the lines.¹⁶ The women were valuable mediators in disputes even in patrilineal societies. The Pokot society is patrilineal and yet not much has been documented about their women if they played such roles. This leaves a big gap in scholarship which needs to be filled

Elizabeth Ferris argues that, since the beginnings of recorded history, women have been working for peace and picking up the pieces from the wars started by men.¹⁷ The author brings out a very interesting view that one characteristic of the contemporary women's peace movement is its tending connections between domestic violence and war, economic oppression and militarism, women rights and environmental concerns.¹⁸ Available secondary data seems to show that the Pokot women don't fit into such narrative and this is what this study is also build around.

Masuda Sultan argued that Afghan women demonstrated their participation in meaningful promotion of peace through their contribution to post-conflict reconstruction and governance.¹⁹ Women helped counter the tendency towards political extremism and fostering recognition for ethnic minority rights. Afghan women provided a moderating force against extremists. Individual women were vocal in challenging the power of the warlords and local commanders. They were at the forefront of calls for disarmament of private militias. They organized protests and signed petitions for peace.²⁰ The experiences of Afghan women will enrich and guide this research on Pokot women in peace building.

According to Amneh Badran women in Israel and Palestine provided counselling services to the traumatized and advocated for partnership between the two warring groups on a just peace and security for both sides on an equal basis. Through the Jerusalem Link, a joint women's venture for peace aimed at institutionalizing and continuing the process of

¹⁶ Mary Anne Fitzgerald, *Throwing the Stick Forward: The Impact of War on Southern Sudanese Women*, Nairobi: UNIFEM, 2002, p.19.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Ferris *Women, War and Peace*, Uppsala: Life and peace institute, 2004, p. 25.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Masuda Sultan, "From Rhetoric to Reality: Afghan Women on the Agenda for Peace", in *Afghan Women on the Agenda for Peace*, Kabul: Publication of Women Waging Peace Policy Commission, 2005, pp- 10-16

²⁰ Ibid. "

political dialogue towards a just peace.²¹ Amneh talks of the just peace concept, does this concept exist among the Pokot of Kenya?

Steve Smith is of the view that there is an overall absence of women and feminists not only in international conflict management, but also in peace building. That the silence on gender in conflict management seems less striking, but still particularly ironic in the face of feminism's longstanding association with pacifism.²² Smith held that both the empirical and theoretical body of evidence on women/gender and conflict concentrated very much on the emergency situation, but with little reference to their roles in peace-building process. This gap is so glaring among the Pokot which this study will attempt to fill.

According to Sanam Naraghi Anderlin women in Somalia do emerge as actors in peace building, but this factor is not developed or addressed in terms of programming. In Sierra Leone, similar references are made to women on numerous occasions. The study indicates that inclusion of women in peace building can benefit the entire society. There is acknowledgement that women issues are not seen in the context of the impact of peace building or conflict on men.²³ In effect, women dimensions are noted, which enriches this study on Pokot women in peace building.

Laura McGrew, Kate Frieson, Sambath Chan held that women in Cambodia joined Buddhist leaders to galvanize a mass peace movement. For months, thousands of women joined peace walks across the country, calling for elections without bloodshed. This peace movement made a significant difference in Cambodia and probably reduced the amount of violence. Yearly peace walks, called Dhammayietras or walking meditations,

²¹ Amneh Badran, "Recovering from Violent Conflict: Gender and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Palestine", in *Clash or Consensus? Gender & Human Security in a Globalized World*, Jerusalem, Jerusalem Centre for Women, <http://www.badranpaperwomenandpostconflict.pdf>-adobe Reader

²² Steve Smith, "Silences are the loudest voices," www.brad.ac.uk/acad/peace/publications/papers/psp2_cr.pdf accessed on 2/11/2008

²³ Sanam N. A., "Mainstreaming Gender in Conflict Analysis: Issues and Recommendations", in *Social Development Papers Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction*, Papers No. 33/ February, 2006

were organized since 1993.²⁴ The peace walks in Cambodia look similar to what is known as peace caravans in Kenya, but did the Pokot women take part in any of these?

Tamra Pearson d'Estree and Eileen F. Babbitt observed that women fared well in unofficial diplomatic efforts generally, and interactive problem-solving which include improved intergroup attitudes, improved communication patterns, and useful relationships. That certain skills make such forms of peacemaking more likely and that these skills include excellent interaction or communication skills, the ability to facilitate interaction, the ability to explore and understand other perspectives, the ability to approach problems jointly, and the ability to foster relationship development.²⁵ How did Pokot women fare in the possession of these skills?

Monica Kathina Juma argues that as the conflict intensified in Wajir County, three incidents provided the opportunity which women seized to build peace. One day, at a wedding, a woman reminded the others of the need to disperse early because of their safety. This sparked off a discussion during which the idea of trying to stop the violence was born. Women agreed that they could do something. Before anything happened, a day time raid in a residential area caused some children to run away to safety. While none was injured, it took hours for parents to find them. This incident became the defining moment for women to seek peace. Five women who worked in government departments met to discuss ways of confronting the conflict.²⁶ Before they found a strategy to deal with the threat hanging in the air, a fight broke out between women in a market. This added to the panic in Wajir as the market, an arena viewed as immune to violence, was now characterised by frequent fights and quarrels. Nevertheless, it also provided an opportunity for entry. The five women decided to approach the market women to address

²⁴ Laura McGrew, Kate Frieson and Sambath Chan, "Good Governance from the Ground Up: Women's Roles in Post-Conflict Cambodia", in *Women Waging Peace Policy Commission*, Cambodia: Hunt Alternatives Fund, 2004

²⁵ Tamra Pearson d'Estree and Eileen F. Babbitt, Women and the Art of Peacemaking: Data from Israeli-Palestinian Interactive Problem Solving Workshops, in *the Political Psychology*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Mar., 1998), pp. 185-209 Published by: International Society of Political Psychology Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3792121> Accessed: 28/10/2009 08:26

²⁶ Monica Kathina Juma, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace Peace Building in Communities Fractured by Conflict in Kenya: An interim Report on Management and Government Program*, New York: UNDP, 2000

the violence and find ways of dealing with it. For most women, the idea of searching for peace provided a ray of hope to the economy. After initial discussions, a committee of ten women, headed by an elderly woman leader, was chosen to monitor the situation in the market on a daily basis. Soon, violence in the marketplace abated. Success in stopping violence at the market encouraged the women to pursue peace in the wider community.²⁷ These revolutionized women participation in Kenya, it led to the institutionalization of district peace committees by the government. Wajir County became the role model with women as the champions; this is what this study is set to look at: did Pokot women have such engagements? Or even after the institutionalization of the DPC to what extent have the Pokot women in Sigor been involved.

1.7 Theoretical framework

This study will be based on Jean Elshtains' feminist political theory whose arguments provide or describes a polyphonic chorus of female voices.²⁸ The theory as is most feminist approaches share a belief that gender matters are very important in understanding war. They also share a concern with changing masculinism in both scholarship and political military practice, where masculinism is defined as an ideology justifying male domination. The theory sees women as a disadvantaged class, unjustly dominated and exploited by men. The proponents of the theory argue that women worldwide are half the population and a third of the paid labour force, meaning they can equally do what men have done.²⁹

Liberal feminists argue that women equal men in ability, and that the gendering of war and peace building reflects male discrimination against women. Women have the right to participate in all social and political roles (including peace building roles) without facing discrimination. The exclusion of women from peace building roles is unfair to women and prevents half the population from making its best contribution to the society. Liberal

²⁷ *Ibid*

²⁸ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa*, London: Cambridge University Press, 2001

²⁹ *Ibid*

feminists do not believe women's inclusion would fundamentally change the societal system, nor a given community's policy, nor peace building itself. Liberal feminism does not treat peace building very differently from other aspects of social life in which men dominate the high paying, advantaged roles. Peace building as a role holds potential for future survival of the society and leadership positions.³⁰

Although the liberal feminist theory fits this study, it must be noted that it has not gone without criticism. The critics question both women's peace movements and linkages among gender, ecology, and social oppressions. Goldstein argues that women in the societal roles can change the society making it reflect feminine values. Women become peaceful and adopt a strict male-female dualism that reinforces patriarchy, and for supposedly validating caretaking while obscuring the role of caretakers in supporting war and warriors.³¹ Elshtain finds women complicit in the construction of gendered war identities.³² Although with such criticism, the theory fits the study by raising women to equally participatory in societal roles such as peace building.

1.8 Hypotheses

- (a) Women's active participation in conflict affected their involvement in peace building
- (b) Women are the most affected by conflict in Sigor region
- (c) Women's participation in peacebuilding among the Pokot community will lead to sustained peace between Pokot and her neighbours.

1.9 Study Methodology

This study used both secondary and primary methods of data collection qualitatively. The study utilized available written data in published books, journals and magazines about women in conflict management with a focus on the participation and role of women amongst the Pokot community in conflict management and peace building. The material was collected from, the national archives, Africa peace forum library, the Nairobi university library. The secondary data was complimented by in-depth oral interviews by

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

respondents. Although recruiting respondents to be interviewed was challenging, for a variety of reasons, including the often delicate nature of working with vulnerable populations, namely women, lack of information and fear, I had done a work plan for each site that outlined how and strategies for recruiting participants. When developing a respondent recruitment strategy, I consulted people who had worked with Pokot women for many years. Particularly, World Vision, a Christina based organization that has worked in West Pokot County for more than four decades, was very useful in advising and helping reach respondents in Sigor. The respondents that were introduced to me by World Vision were able to offer ideas about how to gain access to the population, how best to approach people, and possible obstacles in the area. After establishing contacts with respondents introduced to me, I snowballed through chain referral sampling. In this method, participants or informants with whom I had already contacted made use of their social networks to refer me to other respondents who could potentially participate in the study.³³

In-depth interviews are one of the most common qualitative methods. In-depth interview was very effective in giving a human face to research problems. Additionally, conducting and participating in interviews was a rewarding experience. The in-depth interview is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant's perspective on the research topic. During in-depth interviews, I posed questions in a neutral manner, listening attentively to participants' responses, and asking follow up questions and probes based on those responses. In-depth interviews are useful for learning about the perspectives of individuals, as opposed to, for example, group norms of a community.³⁴ In-depth interview is an effective qualitative method for getting people to talk about their personal feelings, opinions, and experiences. It also gave an opportunity for the research to gain insight into how people interpret and understand the conflict.

The target groups during the in-depth interviews were elders, women, youths, teachers, NGO workers and government officers deployed in the region. Since I come from Sigor

³³ J. Johnson, *Selecting Ethnographic Informants*, Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990.

³⁴ K. M. DeWalt , B. R. DeWalt and C. B. Wayland, "Participant observation", In Bernard HR (ed). *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology*, Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 1998.

Region, I also knew some women and elders who were instrumental in peace making in the region. The knowledge that they gave was a good starting point because these people gave me information of other people with relevant information that were interviewed.

Apart from opinion leaders, such as women and elders, I also targeted the victims of the conflict themselves and those that have been either directly, or indirectly, affected by conflict in Sigor division. To obtain targeted information, I used a structured interview schedule or questioner, which guided me and my research assistants while collecting data. There were six types of schedules for the six types of respondent's namely, victims of conflict, government officials, NGO people working in Sigor, Women, elders and the youth. I recorded the information by use of note taking.

In terms of data analysis, the study mainly relied on interpretative method of qualitative data analysis. All the recorded information was transcribed because some was written in Pokot language and described them to give the data meaning during thesis writing.

CHAPTER TWO

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE POKOT AND THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the Pokot people's history. The chapter examines the origin of the Pokot people, the social arrangement which includes the position of both men and women and the Pokot people's economic activities. The history of these people is significant in understanding the conflict in Sigor and the subsequent role of women in peace building. The chapter also examines the relationship between the Pokot and their neighbours in different times of their history. This chapter gives an understanding of conflict and the position of Pokot women. This will lead to a better understanding of the Sigor conflict and the role that women played in it as argued by the proponents of the liberal feminist theorists.

2.2 The Pokot People

The Pokot were previously called Suk or Suku in the literature and by outsiders during colonial times. Other spellings include Pakot and even Pökoot.³⁵ The Pokot who live in Uganda have been referred to as Upe or Karapokot, because of their proximity to and shared customs with the Karamojong. A single Pokot individual is called Pochon. The Pokot were once part of a larger Nandi speaking people in the Nile Valley region. However, they have evidently lived in Eastern Africa for centuries as a much smaller population. Armed with spears and bows with poisonous arrows, they have long fought over cattle with their powerful neighbours, the Turkana, the Karamojong, the Maasai and others. As the more powerful Turkana expanded, the Pokot communities retreated further south to the Cherengani and adjacent volcanic hills, plateaus and plains in Northwestern Kenya, where they began to supplement their diet by farming. To outsiders, they retained

³⁵ David Patterson, *The Pokot of Western Kenya 1910-1963: The Response of A Conservative People to Colonial Rule*, Syracuse University Program of Eastern African Studies, Occasional Paper no. 53. : Syracuse University, 1969

a ferocious reputation, and Swahili traders in the 1860s reportedly refused to enter Pokot lands because of fear of the Pokot as a war like people.³⁶

Joseph Thomson, in 1884, after an encounter with the Pokot wrote that the Pokot were strong-boned, ugly-looking fellows who went absolutely naked. He described them as very warlike, and generally quite a match for the Maasai, in whose country they frequently made raids for livestock.³⁷ The Pokot are an indigenous, cattle-loving people who live in northwestern Kenya and the Uganda border region. Some are primarily farmers, and others only keep cattle, sheep and goats, but many Pokot do both, as they move from one environment to another. Often, members of the same family will farm cooler, wetter highlands and seek pasture for their herds on the hot, dry plains, where cattle diseases may be less prevalent.³⁸

As alluded to above, the Pokot people occupy West Pokot, Baringo, Laikipia and Trans Nzoia Counties in Kenya as well as Nakapiripirit District of North Eastern Uganda. Historically their origin is obscure, but it is believed that their ancestors lived at one time in the territory to the north of their present habitat.³⁹ It is also thought that their ancestors together with the larger Kalenjin ancestors migrated into Kenya through Mt. Elgon region. At Mt. Elgon they are believed to have split into different Kalenjin groups, and migrated as distinct groups to their current home. The origin of the Pokot people is said to be a place called 'Misri', somewhere in the north of Mt. Elgon although they cannot locate the place on the world map. The Pokot, therefore, do not have clear information on their exact origin.⁴⁰ From the Mt. Elgon region, the Pokot subsequently settled in Baringo, Trans Nzoia and West Pokot counties.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Elizabeth Myyerhoff, "The Socio-Economic and Ritual Roles of Pokot Women", PhD Dissertation, Cambridge: Lucy Cavendish college, 1981

³⁸ Mirzeler Mustafa and Crawford Young, "Pastoral Politics in Northern Kenya's Pokot People", *National Geographic* 161(1), 2003, pp. 120-140

³⁹ A.T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to British Rule 1890-1906*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972, pp. 1-4.

⁴⁰ Oral interview, David Domongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

The settlement of the Pokot people in their current abodes determined their economic activities; hence the Pokot people can be divided into nomads and agriculturalists. The nomads are said to be bold cattle raiders, who moved from region to region in search of pasture and water for their animals. These movements and raids exposed the Pokot people to frequent conflict with their neighbours. The agriculturalists, on the other hand, lived a settled life. According to oral tradition, from Mt. Elgon the Pokot first lived on the Murasagar Hills, now in Turkana country from where they moved to their current home.⁴¹ It is believed that the Pokot adopted the pastoral life while at Murasagar region from their neighbours, the Samburu people.⁴²

Pokot expansion into their current abode began at the end of the nineteenth century, as a result of natural and health disasters. First, during the 1890s, rinderpest caused widespread losses of animals throughout the eastern and southern African plains. Karamojong and Turkana herds were especially decimated. This was followed by a disease of small stock, a locust infestation and a drought. Smallpox swept through East Africa beginning in 1899. It is said that Kenyan pastoralists on the plains were diminished in numbers and stock. However, those Pokot who lived on the mountains managed to survive in greater numbers, and many began to migrate to the plains.⁴³

The migration brought them into contact with the new colonial government. For instance, in 1907, British soldiers quashed Maasai raids on the Pokot. Then, between 1913 and 1918, the Kenya government sponsored punitive attacks against the then powerful Turkana, seizing their cattle and weapons. Pokot warriors were glad to assist with this effort after which, some Pokot families began to move westward to the land neighbouring the Turkana. However, before long, the Turkana were attacking again, and the affected Pokot tried to move to their traditional southern pastures, only to be denied access by the white settlers. When some continued further to the west, across the border into Uganda, the land appeared vacant, because the Karamojong, already suffering from an outbreak of

⁴¹ KNA/DC/BAR/3/2. Political Records.

⁴² Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

⁴³ James P. Barber, *Imperial Frontier: A Study of Relations between the British and the Pastoral Tribes of North East Uganda*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968.

East Coast Fever, had moved their cattle temporarily to other pastures. Pokot settlements in those areas remained a source of contention with the Karamojong for many years.⁴⁴

The history of the Pokot and government relations has not always been easy. Although the first government station was set up in 1903 in Baringo District, the colonial presence was almost non-existent throughout the remote, inhospitable Pokot countryside, and those officials who were assigned to the few government out posts rarely stayed long. Taxes were imposed around 1910, and headmen and chiefs were appointed to collect them and to provide forced labour for roads and projects. During the 1930s, efforts were made to introduce agricultural tools and techniques, with little success. The seizure of traditional Pokot land for white settlement greatly restricted grazing land for herders. The Kenya government later declared that arid pastures were being overgrazed and mandated annual quotas of cattle sales for each area.⁴⁵

Early colonial officials were frustrated by Pokot resistance to government sponsored development. Semi-nomadic, communal people, whose lives revolved around finding pasture for their cattle, were, of course, not interested in permanent settlement and land ownership to the exclusion of their neighbours. The imposition of chiefs conflicted with Pokot egalitarian values.⁴⁶ Children were not sent to school because they were needed for the more important tasks of herding stock and obtaining more cattle through marriage. As other parts of Kenya adopted the modern ways of life, gaining new schools, hospitals, roads, and, finally, independence, the Pokot were left behind and marginalized. They lived in distant, impoverished areas, resisted cultural change, engaged in raiding and violence, and were considered backward. They became an embarrassment to the colonial

⁴⁴ Barton Juxton. "Notes on the Suk Tribe of Kenya Colony", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 51, 1921, pp. 82-99.

⁴⁵ Ton Dietz, "Pastoralists in Dire Straits: Survival Strategies and External Interventions in a Semi-Arid Region at the Kenya/Uganda Border: Western Pokot, 1900-1986". *Netherlands Geographical Studies* 49, Amsterdam: Koninklijk Nederlands Aardrijkskundig Genootschap; Instituut voor Sociale Geografie, University of Amsterdam, 1987.

⁴⁶ A. J. Dochert. "The Karamojong and the Suk", *Uganda Journal* 220, 1957, pp. 76-89.

power. From 1913 to 1964, the Pokot were isolated as a closed district, and investment in the area was minimal.⁴⁷

After Kenya's independence in 1963, there were improvement projects in some areas. During the 1980s, churches were encouraged by the government to build more schools, and private and foreign investments provided additional limited services. Government efforts to confiscate weapons and to control raiding resulted in brief periods of peace and vulnerability to attack, followed by rearmament. Development, however, remained far behind the rest of the country.⁴⁸ Since 1980s, droughts, violence, epidemics, and restriction of land for pasture caused widespread poverty. By 2000, the most appreciated modernity among the Pokot was discouraging traditional spears that have been replaced by the new power of the AK47.⁴⁹ The AK47 has modernized warfare in the Pokot areas and strengthened the male position in society.

The male among the Pokot were grouped along three levels; the lowest are boys (*karachna*), then the full grown men (*mren*) and finally is the old men (*poi*). Full grown men (*mren*) and old men (*poi*) further are separated by circumcision ages. These age sets are eight (*Kaplelach, Nyong'i, Chumo, Korongoro, Maina, Sowo Kipkoimet and murkutwo* and cyclic, with unique totemistic beliefs.⁵⁰ For instances, those who belong to the *Maina* age set did not kill the zebras and quarrelled with those who killed it without obtaining their permission. Again, those in *chumo* age set did not kill or eat the giraffe, but denied others permission to kill the giraffe. The *Sowo* age set was believed to have been circumcised when there was much food and honey therefore disallowed the killing of bees when honey was being taken.⁵¹

⁴⁷David Eaton, 2008a "The Business of Peace: Raiding and Peace Work along the Kenya-Uganda Border, Parts I and II". *African Affairs* 107, 2008, pp. 89-110, 243-259.

⁴⁸ Michael Bollig, "Pokot Social Organization Structures, Networks and Ideology", In *Sprachen Und Sprachzergebnisse in Afrilw*, edited by T. Geider and R. Kastenholz, Cologne, Germany: Rudiger Koppe, 1994, pp. 63-86.

⁴⁹ Michael Bollig, "Moral Economy and Self-Interest: Kinship, Friendship, and Exchange among the Pokot (N. W. Kenya)", In *Kinship, Networks, and Exchange*, edited by T. Schweizer and D. White, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.137-57.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Oral interview, Elijah Chilo, Muino Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

The *Sowo* age-set were believed to have the sole right to kill the impala (*Chemel*). *Sowo* were followed by the *Korongoro*, and then the *Kaplelach* age sets. The age set, monopolized the killing and eating of monkeys. The second last age set was the *Nyongi* group. It was believed that the second batch of candidates in the age set were said to have refused to take the name because they were circumcised in the year when the Pokot were in a hunger crisis. The age set totem was the zebra, but this was passed on to the *Maina* age set, leaving them with no identity. *Nyongi* age set prohibited the killing of the *Dik-diks*.⁵² The seniors of these age sets were called *Chenokopir*, the next senior *Kamasiap* and the juniors were called *Kapkesor*.⁵³

The Pokot circumcision ceremonies were quite elaborate. The youth who were to enter into manhood made their request to the preceding age set which acted as a go-between for the youths and old men who in turn gave their decision as to whether the time was appropriate. The elders typically refused this request in time of famine. This was because the ceremony needed a lot of food and livestock which was always unavailable during famine. If accepted, the youths in previous age set brought honey and bullocks to the old men for a feast. On the day of circumcision, all candidates were collected in the large hut (*Menjo*). An elder then stood by the roof pole with the circumcision knife (*Rotwo*) and threatened the assembled youths all night. By about four in the morning, candidates were taken to the river, where they were shaved, bathed and thoroughly cleaned. They then returned to the hut (*Menjo*) where they found the morans, or warriors, guarding the doors.⁵⁴

The morans would then threaten to attack the candidates who would force their way into the hut. Inside the hut the circumcision operation on the candidates was carried out. During the circumcision, the candidates were expected to demonstrate courage and not allowed to show any sign of fear or cowardice. The candidates would then remain in seclusion where they were not allowed to meet with women and under close supervision

⁵² Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

⁵³ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

⁵⁴ Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

of the morans until when they healed. The candidates would then join an age set and become the morans who had a responsibility of protecting the entire community and the land of the Pokot people.⁵⁵ It is believed that the morans played the protective role even during the period of migration when the former Pokot land or home was affected by drought and famine leading to the rise of the Laibon who encouraged them to move to their current country.

According to the Pokot oral traditions, the land which they first occupied was prone to drought and famine, hence the need to move to a better place. Among them a prophet or *Laibon*, emerged who told them that if the people moved eastwards, they would get good land flowing with honey and rich in fruits and wild game. He, therefore, persuaded a section of the Pokot to leave the area where they had practised agriculture and to follow him on the long trek into unknown country, although he died on the way. Hence he never took the people to the land where he intended to. Informants insist that this occurred only four generations ago, so it must have occurred when *Nyongi* generation set had been circumcised.⁵⁶

The Laibon, named Arimet, left with his followers for Kapenguria, Seker Hill, Sigor and Weiwei in Lomut area. All these areas are currently in West Pokot County. The Pokot people believe that the Laibon died before reaching where he was taking his people and his son of the *Nyongi* age-set took over his father's leadership and prophetic duties.⁵⁷ He led the people to the place where his father had intended to lead them on Tiaty Hill, now in Baringo County. Here they found land rich in fruits, wild game and honey, finally settling down to hunting and gathering lifestyle. Later, they diversified their economy by cultivating tobacco, and eventually they became nomadic pastoralists when they acquired livestock from the Maasai. They nicknamed the Maasai '*Lopiyok*' because they were rich in livestock and well armed. The Pokot, not fearing the strength of the Maasai, drove the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Oral interview, Selina Ngurasia, Muino Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

⁵⁷ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

Maasai away under the leadership of their prophet and occupied the land which they still occupy today.⁵⁸

The relations with the *Lopiyok* did not remain hostile following the wars which saw the Pokot acquire both land and livestock. Realizing that the Pokot were a force that had changed the balance of power in the region and after having fought the Samburu with heavy losses on both sides, the *Lopiyok* initiated a peace treaty with the Pokot. This treaty took the form of a blood brotherhood rite by which the two societies pledged to co-exist with each other as brothers. During the ritual, two men, each representing one of the two societies, sucked the blood from an incision made on the other's right arm. This meant that symbolically the two societies had become one through the exchange of blood. It therefore became taboo for either society to attack the other. Since then, there have not been large-scale wars fought between the Pokot of Baringo District and the Maasai.⁵⁹

The peace treaty with the *Lopiyok* did not mean that the Pokot were to enjoy peace and dominance; they still had enemies such as the Elgeyo and the Turkana. The hostilities with the Elgeyo date back to the time when the Pokot were migrating from Kapenguria to Tiaty Hill. During the migration the Elgeyo used to ambush and kill the Pokot by shooting them with arrows, especially while they were crossing rivers. In 1926, however, there was need for the two communities to strike a peaceful treaty in order to end the hostilities. A solemn oath, *Muma*, was administered to representatives of the two ethnic groups and since then, there have been amiable relations between the Pokot and the Elgeyo people.⁶⁰

On the Turkana front, the hostility between the Pokot and the Turkana remained for a long period. The two communities never trusted each other even during the period of peace. The Pokot believe that at one incident a Pokot family visited the Turkana neighbour where the family was meant to stay overnight. Although the family was received well, the Turkana host waited until at night when they attacked their Pokot

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabela Masinde, "*Indigenous, Democracy*" p. 40.

⁶⁰ Oral interview, Elijah Chilo, Muino Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

visitors after the Turkana host family raised an alarm, and the Pokot family was murdered in cold blood, an event that worsened the already hostile relationship.⁶¹

The Pokot considered the killing to have been a heinous crime against their society. First, because, according to the Pokot culture, a man has no right to kill a person he has fed with his own food. Secondly, it is cowardly to kill a person who was asleep, one who cannot defend himself or respond to aggression appropriately. Thirdly, they killed a microcosm of society, a whole nuclear family which was considered the foundation or the pillar of the Pokot society. Since then, the Pokot and Turkana have never been at peace with one another for long without recurrence of conflict, although there have been many peace meetings that were organized.⁶²

The peace meetings always ended with oath taking as an attempt to cement and restore peace. Oath taking was very common among the Pokot in pre-colonial times and it is still practised today. It was a strategy for establishing truth and guilt and discouraging dishonest attitude and wicked or evil actions in the society. Oath taking was done at a sacred place in the name of God and the community, in the shrine of the village deity or that of a distant powerful and impartial deity. People preparing for oath taking were often advised not to eat poison out of shame and to search their conscience. This meant that they should accept their guilt if they committed the offence, instead of keeping mute and dying in the bid to avoid shame.⁶³

Other methods that were used when the conflict has broken out included non-violent conflicts using moral, emotional and mystic force in collective decision. Here, truth and collective interests were placed above individual interests. There was also negotiation through third party mediation, conciliation and arbitration. This was carried out by selected elders either men or women. The mediators made thorough investigation of the matter to ensure that truth was clearly established. Blame was placed on the guilty and

⁶¹ Oral interview, David Domongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

⁶² Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

⁶³ E. O. Anyacho, *Traditional Methods of Social Control*, Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 2011, p. 24

apology or compensation extracted from him. Punishment or retribution was not the key goal, instead, reconciliation and restoration of social harmony were considered to be paramount in the Pokot society.⁶⁴

Although there were many oaths administered to representatives of the Pokot and the Turkana, these two communities never honoured them. Some of these oaths were organized and initiated by both the government and the communities, but to no avail. In 1974, for instance, the government initiated peace treaty at Kapedo involving the burial of the carcass of a bull together with weapons from both sides which failed to work since the Turkana raided the home of the local Pokot chief only three days after the oath had been administered. From this point the Pokot did not, therefore, trust the Turkana, hence they claimed that it was the Turkana who usually did not keep their part of the bargain after an oath has been administered in order to keep the peace.⁶⁵

Although the Pokot engaged in frequent conflicts with the Turkana, they lived in peaceful coexistence with the Samburu, the Tugen, and the Ilchamus. The peaceful coexistence was made possible by the peace treaties that were reached between the Pokot and these communities in the form of oaths. This peace was later interfered with by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that changed the conflict in Pokot land in terms of warfare. The proliferation of such sophisticated weapons, smuggled across the Uganda and Ethiopian boundaries and eventually sold in the whole region including Turkana, West Pokot, Marsabit, and other districts the raiders could easily terrorise to their opponents. They raided their neighbours for cattle across clan and ethnic boundaries without regard for traditional war ethics and earlier peace treaties.⁶⁶ The warriors from these communities engaged in indiscriminate killing of women and children, raped women and made off with livestock.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid

⁶⁵ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

⁶⁶ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabela Masinde, "*Indigenous, Democracy* p. 40.

⁶⁷ Ibid

Traditional raiding parties were usually under instructions to minimize loss of human life especially children and women. Men who raised both hands over their heads holding green grass, which was considered as the source of life of a pastoralist, were also spared during conflict. The change in warfare, combined with transportation problems due to lack of adequate road network and the rugged terrain in Pokotland, made the security forces and the local administrators find it extremely difficult to protect innocent citizens in the area from raids.⁶⁸ For instance, if a raid occurred it sometimes took several days of walking over wild, rough terrain before the stolen livestock were recovered, a factor which made it almost impossible to track down and apprehend the culprits who were used to the environment and usually escaped justice.⁶⁹ The above section discusses life in the Pokot society with little reference to a woman. So where is the Pokot woman in her society?

2.3 Life in the Pokot Society: Where is the Woman?

The Pokot society is patriarchal and polygamous. In the Pokot areas, a man and his wives share the same compound, building a separate house for each wife. There may be other families, extended relatives or friends living in the same or nearby homesteads, and the women and children help each other tend the animals and the gardens. Extensive social and economic networks bond family members, clans and cattle associates. There are no traditional chiefs, but male elders assume social power and control the family's assets, the herds. Councils of elders regularly meet to mediate conflicts, oversee rituals and make policy. Egalitarian values encourage generosity and the distribution of wealth.⁷⁰

The profound commitment of pastoralists to their herds has been socially and economically necessary. A family's assets are in the form of livestock. Numbers are more important than animal size and milk production, since rituals, bride wealth and bartering involve prescribed numbers of livestock. Cattle are symbols of wealth, blessings and the

⁶⁸ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

⁶⁹ Ibid.,

⁷⁰ Michael Bollig, "Moral Economy and Self-Interest: Kinship, Friendship, and Exchange among the Pokot (N. W. Kenya)", *In Kinship, Networks, and Exchange*, edited by T. Schweizer and D. White, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.137-57.

male identity. Raiding has been commonplace, as warriors are expected to replenish declining herds or to take vengeance on those who have raided them.⁷¹ Life in the Pokot community is centered on the male factor but then where is the woman?

The woman among the Pokot is any female who has been circumcised. The circumcision was never done until when the girl's father gave consent, then a ceremony was organized. Since long ago, the Pokot circumcised both men and women. Circumcision is the means by which a girl becomes a woman. Girls are usually circumcised within a few years of puberty, but there is no rule. Even older women may be circumcised together with the girls. This is considered good and proper.⁷² All little girls yearn for the year when they feel they can approach their fathers to ask for circumcision. After the sixth month or so, when the rains begin, they plead, "How long must we wait? We want to be circumcised!" But a girl may not be circumcised without her father's permission, and he will wait until he can amass enough milk and honey for a respectable ceremony.⁷³

If the father did not give consent, the girl's mother would plead with her father on her behalf. If she manages to convince the father of the girl, the girl had to undergo the test of fire. The father placed the burning coals on her nails. She is not expected to flinch. Only when a girl can withstand this pain with dignity is she ready for the knife. As soon as all their fathers had consented, the girls began collecting the things they would need for the circumcision ceremony, namely the skin capes called *kalajis*, a trumpet horn, and various decorations. The girl would join other girls who would be initiated from the area to build the circumcision hut on one side of a homestead about a mile away from their father's homestead. The door of their hut faced away from their father's home so that they would be able to enter and leave as quickly and inconspicuously as possible without being seen during the three month's period of seclusion.

⁷¹ Oral interview, Chief Gabriel Sarmai, Kopro Location, Sigor, 13/10/2010.

⁷² Francis P. Conant, . "The External Coherence of Pokot Ritual Behavior". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B*, 251(772), 1966, pp. 505-519.

⁷³ J. Brasnett, "The Karasuk Problem", *Uganda Journal* 22(2), 1958, pp. 112-122.

Girls' circumcision consists of six rituals of which two are before the circumcision itself, and three celebrations following it. On the night before the first affair, all of the initiates gather together and sing the traditional circumcision songs. They will be sung again and again during the months to come. Most of these songs are reserved only for circumcision rites, and are not sung freely every day. The songs are said to be made up by *Sameiwur*, the original mother, who, some claim, lived during the time *Tororot* was creating the world.⁷⁴ Men don't know most of the women's circumcision songs since, only the women sing them.

On the day of circumcision, the initiates escort the circumciser to their homestead. Then they go to bathe in the river and to find a stone or stones to sit upon during the rite. Finally, they approach the corral resolutely, throw off their clothes, and stand at the gate, boldly awaiting their turns. When each initiate hears the women rejoicing over the girl ahead of her, she walks into the corral bravely. If she carries one of the stones, she puts it down confidently in the middle of the corral then sits upon it silently, with her legs outstretched and her head high. Her father stands over her with his spear unsheathed, and the circumciser takes her instrument, which is similar to a horn, and begins to cut.⁷⁵

If a girl withstands the surgery with honour, her father will feel great joy. He will sheath his spear and proudly walk away, knowing that everyone saw that his daughter was brave. However, if a girl disgraces her father by showing obvious fear, he will raise his spear as if to kill her, and others will have to hold him back and take his spear away. He will have experienced great shame, and it will be widely advertised that his daughter did poorly and that she is lacking in spirit. When the girls sing each day in the house of circumcision during their period of seclusion, she will be silent. How could she sing when she ashamed her father? She cannot be allowed, once again, to disgrace her father's ears! "Shut up, stupid!" the other girls will order her. "How dare you sing! You have

⁷⁴ Robert B. Edgerton, , and Francis P. Conant, Kilapat "The 'Shaming Party' among the Pokot of East Africa", in *Southwest Journal of Anthropology* 20(4), 1964, pp. 404-418.

⁷⁵ Michael Bolling and Matthias Osterle, 2007 "We Turned our Enemies into Baboons: Warfare, Ritual and Pastoral Identity among the Pokot of Northern Kenya". In *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence*, edited by A. Rao, M. Boffig and M. Bock, New York: Berghahn Books, 2007, pp. 23-51.

dishonoured your father and brought shame to your whole homestead. Let us sing so that our fathers will rejoice over us!” Her father will not wear bells on his legs like all the other parents. And from that day forward, she will be known as *Cheptugh*, which means cast off. It is quite probable that she will be the last of her circumcision group to be married, because no one will readily want her.⁷⁶

After the circumcision, the brave girls are now mature women and are ready for marriage to any man who wishes to offer his walking stick, saying, “Take this and I will give you such a number of cows.”⁷⁷ She may accept, or she may refuse by folding her arms. At any rate, she must not speak, even if he asks her questions. The mothers give their daughters special sticks, which the *chemerin* (initiates) place in the doorway of the circumcision house. This is to warn strangers visiting the homestead that the house is off-limits. It is extremely bad luck for any adult to enter a house of circumcision during the ensuing weeks. Even if you enter by mistake, the mothers will seize you and keep whipping you, until you agree to kill an ox for absolution.

The young men who enter the circumcision hut must bring gifts of iron beads (*teroi*) to their girlfriends. Sometimes young men proposition *chemerin* ahead of time, and the girls who agree say, “Bring some *teroi* when you hear they are taking out the *susinion*.” All girls will want to give men who have brought many *teroi* a place to lie under their skin blankets. One who brings nothing will find no place to rest. In fact, the *chemerin* now turn aggressive in their pursuit of the iron beads: they go about zealously seizing young men, stripping them of their beads, spears and shoes, and running with their bounty into the circumcision hut to await their ransom *teroi*.

During the next one or two months, the girls continue to walk about and may even attend dances at night, especially when there is no moon, disguised by the white clay on their faces and legs. They are irrepressible: they continue to rob youths of their beads and gear in exchange for *teroi*, and if they find a young man with no *teroi*, they may keep his

⁷⁶ Francis P Conant, “The External Coherence of Pokot Ritual Behavior”. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B*, 251(772), 1966, pp. 505-519.

⁷⁷ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010

possessions! Yet even a man of great strength would never dare to hit a chemerion, for she has powers of witchcraft. If she judges a person to be bad, she can strike him with her *sindit*. He will become sick and will have to suffer, until he begs another *chemerion* to cure him with her *sindit*. Although the *chemerion* actions are cultural, they play a significant role in influencing the young men to look for presents or cattle that they might have promised for marriage.

Women among the Pokot people are, therefore, a very important component of society. The woman's strong ties with the Pokot community start at a time when she marries and particularly when expecting her first child. The first child is significant because she is given a circling of the belt. The belt is highly respected by every member of the Pokot society. Warriors are not supposed to see it or cross it. If they crossed it or their mothers refused to tie it then the warrior would not go raiding. The belt is, therefore, used by the Pokot women as an instrument for imposing peace.⁷⁸ The belt is a promise and a mandate, an assurance of a safe, easy delivery and a reminder of how a mother should act to promote her child's welfare and peace in the entire Pokot community. By tying her stomach with a cowhide belt after giving birth, a Pokot woman also ties, and thereby supports and strengthens, the child who slept there. If the mother does not tie the belt, the Pokot believe that the child will die.⁷⁹ The link between mother and child in this patrilineal society is important, in keeping, perhaps, with their different agnatic affiliations, but also with their reciprocal and contingent responsibilities.

2.4 The Pokot People's Economic Life

The history of the Pokot people cannot be complete without looking at their social-economic life. The Pokot people's economic life was strongly influenced by the harsh environment in which they lived. The harsh environment was characterized by limited pasture, water and sharply limited development possibilities.⁸⁰ The mountainous nature and common landslides in much of the Pokot country hampers road building and development of infrastructure. During heavy rains, the roads become seasonably

⁷⁸ John L Comaroff, (ed.), *The Meaning of Marriage Payments*, London: Academic Press, 1980.

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Jan Kamenju, Mwachofi Singo and Francis Wairagu, *Terrorized Citizens: Profiling Small arms and Insecurity in the North Rift of Kenya*, Nairobi: SRIC, 2003, pp. 47-50.

impassable quagmires and often wash out bridges. Thus, the habitat in the Pokot country sharply limited both economic possibilities and contact with more advanced areas to the south. The habitat also largely restricted outside influence not only to the Pokot, but also to their conservative neighbours, such as the Karamojong and Turkana where cattle hold central economic position.⁸¹

Cattle are exploited by the Pokot extensively for milk, blood, meat and hides. Beef-eating is the high point of rituals and attendance at ceremonies is often proportional to the expected availability of meat. Dead animals, unless they die of diseases transmissible to humans, are utilized for meat and for hides. The Pokot also keep large numbers of sheep and goats, but these animals have no extra economic importance.⁸²

Stock raids played a role in the Pokot pastoral economic life, especially raids on the Karamajong, Turkana and the Marakwet. Successful raids enabled the young warrior to establish their manhood and to acquire cattle for bride price payments.⁸³ The agricultural Pokot are grouped into sprawling villages made up of fifty or more homesteads which may be anywhere from a few yards to a mile apart. Each homestead contains a hut for the husband and one for each of the wives and her children. Two or three adjacent villages comprise a federation. Both villages and federations have councils of elders who attempted to mediate disputes and allocate irrigation water. The federation controls water supplies to the villages, while the villages which were organized on clan basis divided water among the homesteads and finally the husbands distributed it to the gardens of each wife.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, *The Karamoja Conflict: Origins, Impact and Solutions*, London: Fountain Publishers Ltd, 2003, p. 32.

⁸² CEWARN, *Report of the Kenya-Ethiopia Cross-border meeting held on 2nd -4th Nov.2009*, Nairobi: CEWARN, 2009, pp. 43-44.

⁸³ Jan Kamenju, Mwachofi Singo and Francis Wairagu, "Terrorized Citizens" pp. 47-50.

⁸⁴ Ibrahim Farah, "Human Security and Livelihood of Pastoral Communities in the Horn of Africa," in Makumi Mwangi, *Human Security: Setting the Agenda for the Horn of Africa*, Nairobi: Africa Peace Forum, 2008, pp. 181-200.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has described the history of the Pokot people. The chapter describes the origin of the Pokot people, reviewing their social and economic life in relation to the conflict that affected the entire Pokot country and in particular the Pokot of Sigor. The chapter also brought in the aspect of the British colonial administration. The colonial administration was important to the study because it was some of the structures they put in place that informed conflict among the Pokot people. The chapter was therefore mainly a historical background leading to an understanding of the role of Sigor women in peace building. Its main aim was to shed light on the history of the community living in the region. The chapter sought to describe the origin and social life of the Pokot people who live in the Sigor region.

This chapter has demonstrated that Pokot mothers are supernaturally potent and symbolically rich. Capable of supporting and destroying persons and relationships, they gather unto themselves ideas about the bonds that constrain and empower men and women in their dealings with one another and with the supernatural. By encoding agnatic ancestry, they acknowledge and attempt to negate a basic dilemma of Pokot social life, the possibility that the intimates upon whom one relies may dissemble and act treacherously, thereby weakening or destroying a clan's heirs and outside supporters. By embodying maternal support, they emphasize that alliance building between Pokot clans begins, rather than ends, with marriage prostations. When she uses her belt to assist or harm the clan of her spouse or lover, she acts on behalf of herself and her people. The study of mothers' belts serves to illuminate variations in the politics of alliance and peace building among the Pokot people.

CHAPTER THREE

CAUSES OF CONFLICT AMONG THE POKOT AND BETWEEN THEM AND THEIR NEIGHBOURS, 1984-2000

3.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at the causes, dynamics and nature of conflict and the manner in which these conflicts are restrained in pastoral communities with special reference to the Pokot community in Sigor region of West Pokot County. The chapter weaves in women in conflict resolution process by providing a detailed story of the circumstances in which they were involved. In analyzing the factors contributing to conflict the chapter elucidates, historically, the differences of perception and significance in resolving pastoral conflicts and differences between the male and female members of the Pokot society. Although women in any society are an important component, no explorations have been relegated to them in the studies of peace building among the Pokot community. This chapter observes that although scholars have investigated the problem of pastoral conflict, there are lacunae in our knowledge of the complexity of women roles in resolving the conflicts.

3.2 Nature of Pastoral Conflict

The North Rift region of Kenya is home to several pastoral groups, namely the Turkana, Pokot, Marakwet and Samburu. The region has been a battle ground for violent conflicts. The problem of ethnic conflicts and violent raids in the past decades is mainly blamed on the increase in populations, ecological stress and a dwindling resource base, and the resulting competing claims over scarce natural resources. Though the precarious ecological and economic position of pastoralists is a fact, the claim that natural resource scarcity induces conflicts has to be tested empirically. Evidence from analysis of inter-ethnic conflicts shows that the validity of this claim is questionable. One interesting question is, for instance, to ask to what extent the Pokot and the Turkana pastoral peoples fight over or for natural resources they either do not have or have in short supply.

Pastoral communities are set apart from other populations by certain common characteristics. First and by definition, pastoralists derive a substantial share of their livelihoods from livestock and share communal range land resources. The range lands are in turn influenced by erratic rainfall that considerably varies between and within years. The rainfall patterns also have direct implications both for livestock mobility and the land to livestock ratio or the carrying capacity, or grazing pressures on the range lands.⁸⁵ Second, in the arid pastoral areas the production potential of livestock and the rangeland resources are low due to rainfall patterns. Since livestock significantly contribute to the pastoral production, herd size affects pastoral human welfare and, therefore, livestock wealth accumulation is a desirable goal.⁸⁶ Livestock accumulation, therefore, is a major cause of incidents of pastoral conflicts during drought periods.

The pastoralists' areas are harsh and difficult environments prone to high risks. The per capita livestock wealth of pastoral households has continued to decline over the years. As a result, pastoralists today rank high in terms of poverty levels and score poorly when assessed on other social welfare indicators, such as education levels, maternal health and nutritional status, especially among children less than five years.⁸⁷ The pastoralists also frequently face basic food security problems, inter-ethnic conflicts that often are attributed to competition for access to scarce key natural resources and ecological stress.⁸⁸ In combination, these features of the pastoralists provide the background and the context within which pastoral conflicts have to be analysed. There is a substantial literature focusing on violent conflicts between pastoral communities. A good deal of this literature attempts to explain, to varying degrees, the causes and the underlying motives of inter-ethnic conflicts between pastoralists, and even between herders and farmers. The main

⁸⁵ John Lamphear. "Brothers in Arms: Military Aspects of East Africa Age-class systems in historical perspective." In *Conflict, Age and Power in Northeast Africa: Age Systems in Transition*, ed. Esei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse, London: James Currey, 1998, p.79-97.

⁸⁶ Esei Kurimoto and Simon Simonse, *Identities on the Move: Clanship and Pastoralism in Northern Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, p. 41-54

⁸⁷Serge Tornay, "Generation set systems on the threshold of the third millennium: an anthropological perspective," In *Conflict Age and Power*, ed. Kurimoto and Simonse, 1994, p.98-120

⁸⁸ AFRICANEWS, "Illicit firearms proliferation and the implications for security and peace in the Sudan, Kenya, and Uganda border region: report of the research carried out on the Sudan side of the common border" in *AFRICANEWS* 68, November 2001.

tenets of conflicts among pastoralists are usually seen to be adverse events and ecological stress.⁸⁹

Severe droughts and outbreaks of animal diseases regularly occur in the dry land pastoral areas. These adverse factors cause considerable livestock wealth differentiations between households and between different ethnic groups. The need to accumulate herds after periods of differentiated animal losses due to droughts usually becomes a strong motivation of inter-ethnic raids and violent pastoral conflicts. This is a sensible observation which is convincing and logically consistent.⁹⁰ This way of reasoning would mean that periods after droughts would show an increase in inter-ethnic raids, because many livestock deaths during droughts would lead to a greater incentive to restock through raiding others. The key argument is built on the common belief that herd accumulation, for whatever cause and reasons, is one of the most important driving forces of pastoral conflicts.⁹¹ Raiding is argued to constitute a mechanism for climbing out of livestock poverty and for gaining a culturally endorsed social status. For instance, the Pokot and Turkana region's increased frequency and intensity of droughts in the past decades and associated heavy losses of livestock has increased the number of inter-ethnic conflicts and incidents of human killing between the two communities.⁹²

The pastoral system is based on a flexible property rights regime and on herd mobility that optimises production by rearing diverse livestock species and exploiting the varied patchiness of rangelands. In that system herd mobility transcends national borders. The creation of legally protected areas and national boundaries tends to disadvantage the pastoral strategic and opportunistic use of rangeland resources. The reduction of herd mobility due to restrictive policies results in rangeland degradation, which in turn leads to

⁸⁹ KNA:PC/NFD1/1/2, 'Report by Captain Kittermaster, R.D. officer in charge NFD 5 July, 1919 ref.434/10/19, also, 'The Kenya colony and protectorate (Boundaries) Order in Council 1921' ref. SR & O.1921/1134 (REV. XI).

⁹⁰ Mburu Nene, "Firearms and political power: The military decline of the Turkana of Kenya 1900-2000," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 10, no.2, 2001, pp. 148-162.

⁹¹ Hendrickson Dylan, et al. "Livestock Raiding Among the Pastoral Turkana of Kenya: Redistribution, Predation and Links to Famine," *IDS Bulletin*. 27, no. 3, 1996, pp. 17-30,

⁹² Almagor Uri, *Pastoral Partners Affinity and Bond Partnership among the Dassanech of Southwest Ethiopia*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1978.

increased livestock deaths while human populations are growing. A low per capita wealth of pastoral households naturally puts human needs obtained from livestock, and other social and cultural obligations fulfilled by animals, at a critical point in the pastoral life and raises doubts about the survivability of pastoralism. Thus, geopolitics clearly have become a factor in environmental conflicts and a cause of environmental insecurity across border lands as political powers define territories and physical boundaries that hinder herd mobility.⁹³

Among other issues, the trend in incidences of pastoral conflicts among the Pokot and the Turkana has yet to be understood and a better analysis of the underlying causes of the problem is needed. Ethnic frictions and conflicts are non-trivial issues in the Pokot-Turkana areas. Incidences of pastoral conflicts are common, but attributable to a number of factors besides scarcity of natural resources and their reasons need to be disaggregated. The next section gives an analysis of causes of pastoral conflict in the north-western Kenya with special reference to the Pokot and the Turkana.

3.3 Causes of Conflict among the Pokot

The Pokot community uses a number of phrases to describe and understand the concept conflict. In Pokot language, *Poriot* refers to the actual fight/combat whereas *siala*, *kwindan*, *porsyo* denotes quarrels, war and general disagreements. Conflict to the community means disagreement between different groups of people. It can be between a man and his wife or wives, disputes between parents and children or children amongst themselves, especially concerning inheritance issues, competition over pasture, grazing land and water resources and cattle rustling or raids.⁹⁴

At the extended family level, the Pokot have the nucleus family, in-laws and other relatives. All matters that transcend the nucleus family are discussed at the extended family. At this level, Kokwo is the highest institution of conflict management and socio-political organization. Kokwo is made up of respected, wise old men who are

⁹³ Gerald Blake, *Imperial Boundary Making: The diary of Captain Kelly and the Sudan-Uganda Boundary Commission of 1913*, Oxford: British Academy, 1997, p.99.

⁹⁴ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, “*Indigenous Democracy*”

knowledgeable in community affairs and history.⁹⁵ The elders are also good orators and eloquent public speakers who are able to use proverbs and wisdom phrases to convince the meeting or the conflicting parties to a truce. Every village is represented in the council of elders. Senior elderly women contribute to proceedings in a Kokwo while seated. Women participate in such meetings as documentalists so as to provide reference in future meetings. They can advise the council on what to do and what not to do citing prior occurrence or cultural beliefs. Before a verdict is made, women are asked to voice their views and opinions.⁹⁶

3.3 Political factors

Although the traditional African communities had their traditional forms of government, the introduction of the western type of government modelled along the European structure affected the way of life in the traditional African structure.⁹⁷ The African institutions that ensured survival and security were destroyed by shifting the role of maintaining security to the new colonial government. Any slight weakness of the new type of government therefore would result into insecurity or sometimes conflict between communities.⁹⁸ This is one of the greatest weaknesses associated with the colonial type of government. This weakness is responsible for the conflict experienced in the Pokot country. The poor governance presence in Pokot north or total lack of government presence in some areas propagated injustices which went unpunished.⁹⁹ If administered, it was on traditional basis which in most cases failed to inflict fear to the criminals. Local leaders from the Pokot north region capitalized on the gap to incite their communities against their neighbours, thereby resulting into frequent conflicts.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Serge Tornay, "Generation set systems on the threshold of the third millennium: an anthropological perspective," In *Conflict Age & Power*, ed. Kurimoto and Simonse, London: James Currey, 1994, p.98-120

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Anne Kisaka Nangulu, *Food Security and Coping Mechanisms in Kenya's Marginal Areas: The Case of West Pokot*, PhD Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2001, pp. 34-40.

⁹⁸ Ibid

⁹⁹ Turton., ., p.15

¹⁰⁰ Titus Maero, "Clashes: Scared Pokots on the Run", in *The East African Standard*, Thursday, March 15, 2001, p. 10.

For instance, in the advent of multiparty democratic elections in 1991, the politicians caused ethnic animosity between the Pokot and some of their neighbours who were in the opposite camp. Politicians incited their people against their neighbours namely the Marakwet and the Luhya who were in the opposition, when the Pokot were in the ruling party, KANU. Due to political incitement, ethnic tensions and polarizations led to consequent clashes between the Pokot, Turkana, Luhya and the Marakwet. The end result was negative ethnicity which remained a key indicator of conflict between the Pokot and their neighbours. The conflicts were further enhanced by use of nepotism and cronyism to conduct government business, including implementing development strategies based on ethnic and political affiliations contrary to the stipulations in the Constitution of Kenya.¹⁰¹

Any sort of economic development was largely influenced by manipulation of ethnic identity and grievances as a tool of mobilizing communities. In the Pokot region such development was equally tied to grievances over raiding, use of pasture, land or water sources. Communities suspected of intending to vote for a different political party or exploiting members of the ethnic community were violently expelled from certain parts of Pokot land. Politicians usually spew out ethnic sentiments in the name of protecting their communities' rights, while the government of the day complied.¹⁰²

Although the government has the constitutional mandate to provide security to all her people, the Kenya government sometimes participated in curbing raiding and banditry in Pokot land and the entire pastoral region. The immediate consequence was increased and spiraling insecurity in the region. To a large extent, inadequate resources, inappropriate tools and poor infrastructure were a barrier to any intervention by the security personnel. And even if they intervened, they applied poor strategies as a sign of lack of clear instructions.¹⁰³ This in turn eroded the communities' confidence in the ability of the government to do anything meaningful to restore peace.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Michael Ochieng Odhiambo, *The Karamoja Conflict: Origins, Impact and Solutions*, London: Fountain Publishers Ltd, 2003, p. 32.

¹⁰² NCKK, SARDEP and SNV, *Pacifying the Valley: An Analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict*, Nairobi: NCKK, 2001, p. 3.

¹⁰³ Monica Kathina Juma, "Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace" p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

The failure of government to restore meaningful peace made the Pokot to feel that the rule of law was being applied selectively. Indeed, few arrests were made from the other communities and offenders were rarely prosecuted as the Pokot were seen as lone culprits. The fact that in most cases the raiders planned and prepared elaborately for the raids by conducting pre-raid cleansing ceremonies, mobilized themselves, attacked and took away stolen animals without a security counter-offensive operation, was depictive of a complacent government or a reluctant intelligence system when dealing with non-Pokot aggressors.¹⁰⁵ Equally, the failure of the security forces to control the illegal sale of guns and bullets aggravated the conflict. In some cases, guns and bullets were moved over long distances, such as Uganda, where the community has her kins making it hard for security agencies spotting them. Bullets were sometimes sold in market places by women as if they were selling milk. Throughout such transactions, the government pretended not to know, so long as it was not the Pokot in the trade.¹⁰⁶ It was, therefore, the failure of successive governments to provide protection that exacerbated the conflict over resources which is discussed under economic factors.

3.4 Economic Factors

The more frequent and often violent conflicts in Pokot land were due to unpredictable economic conditions characterized by hunger, which necessitated migration to look for pasture and water. Periodic droughts equally pushed the Pokot people into more confined areas, forcing them to compete for decreasing amounts of pasture and water for their animals which are their source of economic livelihood.¹⁰⁷ Thus, scarce natural resources, worsening environmental conditions and increased populations resulted in stiffer competition for land, pasture and water. This situation precipitated conflicts over access and use of water in the Pokot areas, frequently degenerating to bloody clashes within and among the neighbouring pastoralists and communities. These conflicts were aggravated by a number of salient economic factors leading to increased banditry and making

¹⁰⁵ Jan Kamenju, Mwachofi Singo and Francis Wairagu, *“Terrorized Citizens”* p. 53.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

¹⁰⁷ Kennedy Mktutu, *Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms: The Kenya-Uganda border Region*, London: Safer world, pp. 5-9.

commercial raids of livestock more viable.¹⁰⁸ This is clearly outlined in the chronology of events below by Kratli and Swift;¹⁰⁹

April 10, 1997

Seven people were killed and four others injured in a raid on Manyattas in Turkana District. The Pokot raiders drove away 400 animals from Kainuk and Laya in Katilu and Turkwel divisions.

May 30, 1997

At least 50 Pokots on the run from security operation in West Pokot District are killed by Karamojong cattle-rustlers near the Amdat Trading Centre in Uganda. Amdat Police Commandant Patrick Yatich says a security team from Kenya visited Uganda to collect the 50 bodies. During the raid, 24 people were injured by the raiders equipped with guns, arrows and spears. At least 32 children killed in the raid, had their throats slit.

September 18, 1997

At least 31 people are killed when armed raiders believed to be Pokot and Tepeth from Uganda, attack a Turkana *manyatta* in the Lorengipi and Lokiriama areas of Turkana District. Nine of the dead are said to be raiders. Police allegedly arrested three raiders. Police sources say the raiders drove animals towards Alale Division, West Pokot. But as Turkana herdsmen from Lorengipi rushed to assist reinforce their kinsmen, the attackers raided the *manyatta* left behind, which had nobody to guard it. In the raid, the attackers killed five women, eight children and seriously injure eight women and two men. The children are reportedly aged between one and a half and three years. At least seven of the raiders are killed, two of them in uniforms used by Kenya police reservists.

September 25, 1997

Seven people (five Karamojong from Uganda and two Kenyans) are killed when security personnel clash with cattle rustlers in West Pokot District. District Commissioner John Abduba says several people are injured and animals taken away, though later recovered. There was a heavy exchange of fire in the pre-dawn raid. At 10 am, the raiders were overpowered by a contingent of police reservists.

March 5-8, 1998

At least 100 people are killed and scores wounded when armed cattle rustlers attack *manyattas* in Turkana District. Police confirm the killing and say security would be beefed up. A detachment of Army, General Service Unit personnel and police is dispatched to the area by two helicopters to track down the bandits. There is no indication of who were behind the massacre and whether or not police nabbed any of the perpetrators.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ S. Kratli and Jeremy Swift, *Understanding and Managing Pastoral Conflict in Kenya: A Literature Review*, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK.1999, pp. 44-49

April 12, 1998

Armed security personnel are sent to the border of Turkana and West Pokot districts, as reports indicate a build up of tensions following a spate of cattle raids. During a raid the previous Saturday, 7,000 animals were stolen but Turkana District Commissioner Reuben Rotich says the animals were recovered. West Pokot District Commissioner John Abduba tells elders at Kiwawa area in Alale Division to return the animals and start peace talks with Turkana elders to end the menace.

April 17, 1998

Four civilians die in crossfire when bandits invade a police camp in West Pokot and steal firearms. This brings to six the number of people killed in the raid on Kapenguria Administration Police camp at Lelan, Lelan Division, West Pokot. Two Administration Policemen were killed, three others injured, in the conflict. Civilians killed were trapped in exchange of fire between the bandits and police.

May 7, 1998

The Government announces that the Army is to be deployed in trouble spots throughout Kenya, with orders to disarm anyone holding illegal weapons. Troops will work alongside police to end violence in areas hit by cattle rustling and ethnic clashes. Chief of the General Staff Daudi Tonje received this order directly from President Moi in his role as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces. The operation to seize all illegal guns will focus beyond Trans Nzoia, West Pokot and Marakwet Districts to include other areas rocked by unrest triggered by rustling. President Moi makes the announcement at the Armed Forces Training College, Stock thefts in Marakwet, Samburu, Turkana and West Pokot had triggered violence that has claimed dozens of lives and displaced thousands of families. Opposition politicians and the clergy roundly accused the Government of either laxity in its response or of condoning the violence. Cabinet Minister Francis Lotodo has been cited as being involved in the raids.

March 13, 1999

Pokot resolve to lead an invasion on Marakwet unless 500 head of cattle allegedly stolen in a raid the previous month is returned. Marakwet District Commissioner Abdinasir Dabit Aden responds by convening a meeting drawing members of both the antagonistic communities at the Keiyo Valley border in order to cool down tempers. "We were told that more than 500 head of cattle stolen on February 26 and hidden at Komolgon Forest before being driven off to Lelan Forest, where the Army spotted them, but I do not know whether this is true," said a Pokot herdsman. Mr Aden's meeting was also convened to establish whether or not the allegations were true.

The above chronology of raids and raid related incidents in Pokot and Turkana pastoral areas of Kenya since 1996 represent the sorry state that characterizes the region. The chronology provides information about dates and precise locations of the incidents, number, kind of people, and ethnic groups involved on each sides, human casualties

(dead, wounded, displaced, abducted), identity of the victims (men, women and children amongst the herders, administration, police, soldiers), animals stolen, slaughtered or simply killed, 'cause' of the incident if known, follow up (pursuing of raiders, negotiations, recouping and returning of the stolen livestock. Kratli's narrative shows the intensity of conflict in Pokot-land and Turkana.

From the above chronology it can be deduced that most of the casualties are women and children. Despite the preventive and mitigative measures by the communities and respective governments, security situation in the area continued to raise alarm.

During the long dry seasons, the northern Pokot herdsmen forced their way into territories of neighbouring communities such as the Luhya on Trans-Nzoia side, Marakwet, Turkana and the Ugandan Karamojong. These encroachment on land that belonged to other communities like the Turkana, Marakwet and Karamojong led to violently armed conflict between the Pokot and the named affected communities.¹¹⁰ Traditionally, the Pokot community raided their neighbours and sedentary communities for livestock, mainly to replenish their herds depleted by severe droughts, disease, raiding or other calamities. Raids were also orchestrated to expand grazing lands, raise bride price and to a lesser extent to demonstrate heroism among warriors.¹¹¹ With the shift from traditional warfare to modern warfare, the inter-communal rustling degenerated into a militarized activity with no precedence in the history of the cattle rustling. The extent and viciousness of the clashes puzzled the affected communities as it manifested itself in devastating acts of human slaughter, rape, burning of pasture and settlement structures, abductions, forced marriages and utmost revenge.¹¹²

The method of warfare used indicated that the raids were motivated by hatred, political instigations, commercialization of cattle raiding, general crime, and availability of firearms. Plans and execution of such raids were done with flagrant disregard for pastoralist norms of war and respect for human dignity. The frequency of such conflicts

¹¹⁰ Kennedy Mkutu, *Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms: The Kenya-Uganda border Region*, London: Safer world, pp. 5-9.

¹¹¹ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabela Masinde, "*Indigenous Democracy*" p. 39.

¹¹² Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan, Isabella Masinde, "*Conflict in Northern Kenya*" pp. 5-16.

exposed the weak in society to a lot of suffering.¹¹³ They overwhelmed the security operations, eroded traditional conflict management mechanisms and adversely impacted on pastoral mobility and economic livelihood, namely livestock, which they placed high value on. This produced a culture of raiding and warfare as a source of wealth.¹¹⁴ Cattle keeping among the Pokot people is their way of life. Both oral and written historical records of the Pokot community confirmed that cattle are part of their history.¹¹⁵

As animals took a centre stage in the life of the Pokot, conflict equally intensified with communities practising agriculture.¹¹⁶ The agricultural environment was green while pastoral regions remained bare. The pastoralists, therefore, encroached on such land with the aim of grazing their animals. This caused conflict between the pastoral Pokot community and the agricultural neighbours, namely the Luhya, Marakwets and even the West Pokot agricultural Pokots.¹¹⁷ Encroachment by the pastoral Pokot raised the question of land ownership. Land ownership remained an emotive issue among many pastoral communities in Kenya. It was a central theme of politics over resources.¹¹⁸ The centrality of land to Kenyan pastoral communities led to occurrence of land related clashes. Closely related to land conflicts are boundary disputes.¹¹⁹ The creation of many administrative units, such as locations and sub locations in politically hived districts, such as Pokot north, ignited border conflicts as ethnic groups, clans and families fight over districts, location or sub- location borders, which were taken to define each community's potential resource use as in grazing areas among the pastoralists or fertile land among the sedentary communities.¹²⁰

Some conflicts among the Pokot revolved around the private use of land for agricultural purposes. The acquisition of land from the Pokot by white settlers meant the

¹¹³ Francis Conant, "The External Coherence of Pokot Ritual Behavior". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, Series B*, 251(772), 1966, pp. 505-519.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Oral interview, David Domongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

¹¹⁶ Oral interview, Richard Kalemunyang', Weiwei Location, Sigor, 15/10/2010

¹¹⁷ Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

¹¹⁸ NCCCK, SARDEP and SNV, *Pacifying the Valley: An Analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict*, Nairobi: NCCCK, 2001, pp. 10-17.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

displacement of some members of the communities from their ancestral land. Upon independence, the lands in question either remained in the hands of the settlers or was acquired by other communities through purchase. The most pronounced of this scenario is the land which had been occupied by the Pokot and which now forms Trans- Nzoia County in the Western Rift. In this case, the community was pushed into marginal areas which have not adequately catered for their pastoral needs. The Pokot claim that the British government paid compensation to the Kenyatta Government for onward transmission to the community.¹²¹

The Pokot have frequently agitated for compensation or resettlement. On occasion, they have threatened to re-enact the land clashes of the 1990s so as to reclaim land that historically belongs to them. Trans-Nzoia County is one of the most fertile agricultural areas, which produces more than half of the country's maize needs. The farmers are non-Pokot who acquired title to their lands and who have lived there since independence. To restore the land to the Pokot people would mean the dislocation of hundreds of thousands of the communities who now inhabit the area.¹²²

Individual ownership of such land was favoured by agriculturalist because fencing denied pastoralists access to grazing even when there are no crops on the farms. The attempts by the pastoral Pokots to graze their cattle across other communities' land was misinterpreted.¹²³ The sedentarisation of the land into agricultural schemes affected grazing land. The lack of clarity over land ownership and adjudication laid the basis for conflict. The land question, coupled with grievances of loss of lives and property, provided ready fuel for political incitement and ethnic manipulation by politicians and other local leaders who would relate the question of land to social economic marginalization, particularly in areas affected by harsh environmental factors.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Kenya Land Alliance, *The national land Policy in Kenya: Addressing Historical Injustices*, Nakuru: Kenya Land Alliance, 2004

¹²² Ibid

¹²³ Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

¹²⁴ NCKK, SARDEP and SNV, "*Pacifying the Valley*" pp. 10-17.

This exposed the young people in Pokot region to idleness, associated with poverty, unemployment, very low school enrolment and lack of social and economic occupational activities in the arid pastoral zones.¹²⁵ Most of the youths who formed the army of cattle rustlers, famously known as the *ngorokos*, were a frustrated and poor lot who were driven out of school by poverty and cultural demands. These youth had no source of livelihood at all. They, therefore, resorted to frequent raids as the only means through which they could acquire wealth and survive.¹²⁶ The readily available deadly weapons from war torn countries enabled the raiders to terrorize their neighbours. The Pokot felt marginalized and neglected in development. They saw their neighbours develop while their part was neglected. For instance, there are many schools in Trans-Nzoia while it is not the case in most of Pokot territories sometime to a distance of over 100 km.¹²⁷

3.5 Security Factors

Several developments surrounding cattle rustling turned the Sigor region into an insecure territory.¹²⁸ Such developments included introduction and use of guns. The gun, a more sophisticated and destructive weapon than the traditional spears, bows and arrows, raised security concerns.¹²⁹ The killing of unarmed men, women and children became the order of the day. In effect the entry of the gun into the Pokot land wrought untold havoc since its use left many casualties, most of them innocent children, women and the elderly. The guns were acquired from the war torn countries.¹³⁰

The security situation in the entire northern Kenya deteriorated from 1970s and 1980s when communities in the region acquired guns in large quantity from the Karamojong of Uganda. As the situation worsened, the government established Home Guards, popularly known as Kenya Police Reservist (KPR), who were given guns to protect their community from the Karamojong and Turkana raiders. The KPR had no strict

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

¹²⁷ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

¹²⁸ Kennedy Mkutu, *Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms: The Kenya-Uganda border Region*, London: Safer world, p. 17.

¹²⁹ Oral interview, Daniel Lowus, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

¹³⁰ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

rules governing the storage and usage of the guns, therefore, causing insecurity in the region.¹³¹ Closely related with insecurity is the rise of banditry activities on the Kitale-Lodwar highway. Banditry was largely characterized by armed criminal gangs who waylaid the travelers, including livestock in transit, and relieving the victims of their possessions.¹³² This made it mandatory for security escort on all vehicles plying this road and other roads in the region.¹³³

The closeness to the international Kenya-Uganda border also exacerbated insecurity. In these parts of the country, communities lived and interacted very closely with their neighbours across international borders.¹³⁴ Conflicts thus tended to transcend the national borders which involved indiscriminate use of small arms.¹³⁵ In areas inhabited by the Pokot and other pastoralists, their mobility generated international border questions of encroachment and expansionist trends. These borders were introduced by the British colonial government without considerations of the local people.¹³⁶

Several decades of regional instability has adversely affected the entire Eastern African region in terms of security. The civil war and related problems in Southern Sudan since 1955, the many years of civil war and internal rebellions in Uganda, mainly by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) first led by Alice Lakwena in the late 1980s and later by Joseph Kony, nearly two decades of civil war in Ethiopia and the collapse of the central government in Somalia in 1991 contributed to increased proliferation of small arms and light weapons, therefore, worsening the security.¹³⁷

¹³¹ Kennedy Mkutu, "Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms". 119-182.

¹³² Vincent Bartoo and William Faria, "Coke closes shop in Pokot", in *East African Standard*, Thursday, March 22, 2001, p. 10

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Kennedy Mkutu, "Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms:", pp. 119-182.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ali Chemisto Satya, *Conflicts in Uganda: The Cattle Raiding Phenomenon in Kapchorwa District*, European Peace University, Centre for Peace Studies, MA. Thesis, Austria, 2004, pp. 42-54.

3.6 Cultural Leadership factors

The pastoral communities in particular the Pokot, Turkana and the Marakwet placed a high premium on their *laibons*. These were traditional leaders who were greatly respected and whose word was almost final. The *laibon* institution was very powerful and feared, hence everybody respected its decision including the decision to go raiding.¹³⁸ Due to the power and respect vested in the institution the *laibons* assumed a powerful role in promoting the raids by way of blessing the raiders who regularly consulted them. Such blessings were believed to increase the raiders' power and urge for war to an extent that other elders became unable to check these powers or even control the youthful raiders. The *laibons* seemed to have a penchant for raids as their main source of livelihood because after a successful raid they were rewarded with some of the raided cattle.¹³⁹

Cattle rustling would be organized on a seasonal basis and mainly associated with rites of passage into adulthood for the young men. Such rites of passage included circumcision, where boys took part in raids to demonstrate that they were now men, and ready for marriage.¹⁴⁰ Traditional values, such as dowry/bride wealth and '*sapana*', are identified as factors that encouraged the youths to participate in cattle rustling. Among the Pokot,, bride wealth is as high as 20–60 cows and 20–60 goats for one to get a wife. This figure is not uniform because it is pegged on the beauty, character and education level of the girl. Again among the Pokot, three quarters of the dowry is paid at once. This factor alone is responsible for the high turnout of raids conducted by Pokot men.¹⁴¹ Most Pokot young men could not manage to raise such livestock, hence they resorted to raise them through raiding expeditions.¹⁴² Noticing that they needed husbands, women played important roles in precipitating raiding by praising raiders who brought in the largest number of cattle while deriding those who failed. This was particularly common among the Turkana and

¹³⁸ NCCCK, SARDEP and SNV, *Pacifying the Valley: An Analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict*, Nairobi: NCCCK, 2001, pp. 10-17.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Mkutu, "Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms", p. 17.

¹⁴¹ G. J. Cheserek, "Resource use conflicts between pastoral and agro-pastoral communities in Kenya: A Case study of Pokot and Marakwet", PhD thesis, Moi University, Eldoret, 2007.

¹⁴² Monica Kathina Juma, "*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*," p. 55.

Pokot. The celebration of raiding placed pressure on the raiders to go out and attack so that they could gain recognition as heroes.¹⁴³

Apart from marriage, *sapana* is another rite of passage that leads to conflict between the Pokot and their neighbours. *Sapana* is a Pokot male traditional rite of passage to elderhood. It encourages cattle raiding. During *sapana* ceremony, the man spears his favourite bull and serves meat to his friends and other elders, after which he is officially introduced to the elderhood club and is allowed to participate in community matters as an elder. Traditionally, those who have not served *sapana* meal have no say in community matters. Thus *sapana* encouraged the young adults to acquire bulls by whatever means so that they, too, could be respected in society.¹⁴⁴

3.7 Environmental

Although there were visible aspects that caused conflict among the Pokot, such as raiding and banditry, there were other underlying factors that caused conflict. Environmental insecurity in Pokot land brought about by the history of drought cycles, diminishing water sources, unreliable rainfall and shrinking pastureland increased the competition for limited natural resources that formed the mainstay of the pastoral communities. The harsh environment aggravated the insecurity situation in the Pokot region.¹⁴⁵

The semi-arid and arid regions of Pokot land experienced consistent and sometimes persistent droughts and floods during rains, if they occurred. The harsh and difficult conditions that resulted from droughts frustrated efforts at restocking and provided very few, if any, livelihood alternatives in the drought afflicted areas of Pokot. The affected communities, the Pokot included, resorted to cattle raids as a way of restocking. Similarly, intense competition for limited pasture and watering points, during these periods of persistent droughts, culminated in violent confrontations as communities struggled to control these scarce resources for their own use.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Jan Kimenju, Singo, M., and Wairagu, F., "*Terrorized Citizens*": 2003.

¹⁴⁵ NCCCK, SARDEP and SNV, "*Pacifying the Valley*" pp. 10-17.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

3.8 Conclusion

The conflict among the Pokot people is as old as their history. In their traditional days before Africa was colonized by the European powers, the Pokot used traditional weapons and the main causes of conflict were strictly cultural. With the coming of the Europeans, the conflict was complicated by the flow of modern arms into the Pokot country. The situation was even made worse by conflicts in troubled neighbouring countries. These countries supplied the Pokot people with very modern weapons even more deadly than what the security personnel on the ground had, making the situation hard for the ill equipped officers to handle.

The conflict was also caused by various unpredictable factors, ranging from environmental, security, revenge, and resource considerations. These factors affected the entire Pokot community women included. Since the government and the traditional systems that ensured security of women had been interfered with, women were also forced to take up roles in the conflict just as men did as argued by the liberal feminist theorists. The roles that women played are the main subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF POKOT WOMEN IN CONFLICT: CASE OF SIGOR

4.1 Introduction

“I felt it was my duty to take revenge for my father and my uncle and also for those people who were killed when the war began.” A female combatant from Georgia said.¹⁴⁷

Almost similar sentiments were echoed Agnes Chemkan who had this to say;

Now, we only have three cows, compared with over 250 cows, 6 bulls and over 100 sheep previously. Before there were many cows, goats and sheep on our land, but now there are no more they were taken by our neighbours. We now have to buy milk, whereas previously we sold it, as well as made cheeses and animal products for sale to nearby villages. We also made carpets, but now only my eldest daughter has this skill probably to be lost as she is displaced because of conflict. Now we no longer have enough for ourselves. I dream of a return to a nomadic way of life, but the dream can only be realized when our cattle is returned by our men. I am wondering how to get a man with enough cattle to marry me so that I can keep my dream.¹⁴⁸

Women are actively involved in many armed conflicts around the world and have played a part in wars throughout history. Since the Second World War period, women have assumed a much greater role in conflict either by joining the armed forces more frequently, voluntarily and involuntarily, performing both support and combatant roles. For example, in many wars of liberation or guerrilla type warfare women played a vital role in the armed struggle or in support roles. In Nicaragua, women made up an estimated 30 percent of the Sandinista army and held positions as commanders, even of full battalions.¹⁴⁹ In El Salvador, 25% of the soldiers of the Faribundi (sic) Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) were women.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ ICRC *People on War* project: *The People on War Report: ICRC Worldwide Consultation on the Rules of War*, ICRC, Geneva, 1999 (available on request from the ICRC, Geneva, Website www.onwar.org).

¹⁴⁸ Oral interview, Agnes Chemkan, family was forcibly displaced from their home during the conflict between the Pokot and the Turkana, 16/10/2010.

¹⁴⁹ B. Byrne, *Gender, Conflict and Development*, BRIDGE briefings on Development and Gender, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands, 1996, p. 18

¹⁵⁰ NIIA, *Women and armed conflicts: Study for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 1999, p. 19.

On occasion, the role of female “suicide bombers” has underscored the extent to which women are prepared to take action in conflicts. Ironically, much of their success in hitting targets has been attributed to the fact that as women they can often get closer to their targets possibly because of the perception that they are less likely to carry out such attacks. It should not be assumed that women are always part of the civilian population, playing caring and nurturing roles. Widely reported cases in Rwanda also showed that women were accomplices to and participants in horrific acts committed in the genocide.¹⁵¹ Women also actively support their menfolk in military operations not always by taking up arms, but by providing them with the moral and physical support needed to wage war, and in some cases inciting them to violence. I believe that those civilians and fighters belong to one family group, once the civilians are going with the fighters doing things such as cooking, treating them, and any other necessary thing. This chapter, therefore, gives me a basis on which to look into how women participated in conflict, or otherwise. It provides an opportunity to say something about Pokot women in conflict.

4.2 Pokot Women in Conflict: a Brief History

Although conflict between the Pokot and her neighbours is as old as their history, women’s active roles date to 1940s and worsened in 1979 after the end of the reign of Idd Amin in Uganda. Pokot women participation in conflict goes back to 1940s. This is when Lukas Pkiech of Mwina Location in West Suk was converted into Dini ya Msambwa. He mobilized people to join the sect among them a Pokot woman, Chemosop, who became a leader of Dini ya Msambwa Pokot wing.¹⁵² Dini ya Msambwa advocated for eternal life, freedom from European control, reversion from the primitive customs, immunity from gunfire, immunity from capture and increased fertility for old men and no sterility in women. The doctrine attracted women who become more active and joined the fight against Europeans. For instance, during the Koloa affray of 1950 women were part of the

¹⁵¹ Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands With the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, Croydon: Arrow Books, 2003

¹⁵² Benjamin Kipkorir E., “The Kollowa Afray: Kenya 1950, Nairobi: University of Nairobi,

conflict. It is believed that women played a crucial part in the conflict that led to Koloa massacre.¹⁵³

The ousting of Idd Amin from power exacerbated flow of small arms and light weapons into the North Rift, leading to women being preoccupied with the perceived threat from the neighbouring communities who did not just raid for livestock, but left many people killed and others injured. Women, therefore, began to engage in such action as trading in weapons and inciting their children against their neighbours who were perceived as enemies through use of propaganda.¹⁵⁴ By the middle of 1980s, they were inspired by the leadership of Francis Lotodo who committed himself to a strategy of armed raids to Pokot neighbours and calling for removal of non-Pokot people from what was seen as their territories. The raids provoked military and police intervention which led to persecution, arrest and killing of members of the Pokot community.¹⁵⁵ The conflict claimed lives of women and leading to the arrest, imprisonment and death of dozens of their husbands and children and yet early writings on pastoral conflict in Pokot land make little mention of actual women, in contrast to the prominent symbolic position of women as mothers and markers of Pokot national and cultural lifestyle. They are key reflections of tradition.¹⁵⁶ In this regard, Pokot's gendered conflicts were similar to those of many other pastoral communities.

In pastoral communities, the gender hierarchy helped to ensure that the Pokot society remained a predominantly male society. At the same time, however, the significant introduction of guns to the North Rift spurred women to actively be involved in conflict. The gun was a light weapon which could easily be used by even the weak gender. Similarly, changes in the economic lifestyle and in particular the entry of increasing numbers of women into the labour market, opened up new spaces for young women's

¹⁵³ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Affray at Kollowa, Baringo*, Nairobi: The Government Printer, May 1950

¹⁵⁴ Monica .J Kathina, *"Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace"2000*

¹⁵⁵ Isabella Masinde, Mohamud Adan and Ruto Pkalya, *"Indigenous Democracy, 2004,*

¹⁵⁶ Joseph Akoule, "Rural women peace links" Reflective conference 2005. Women Peace and Security, Conference of 6th-9t Dec 2005 Operationalisation of UN Security Resolution 1325 at Grassroots level.

cultural, social and political activity.¹⁵⁷ This also saw a steady number of women entering into economic activities and some becoming armed participants in the conflict.¹⁵⁸

Following increased women participation in public spaces, it helped attract more young women to be part of activities that formally seemed to be a men affair. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was a gradual, but notable, rise in the percentage of female recruits who participated in arms smuggling and collaboration with warrior military activity.¹⁵⁹ The change enabled women to participate directly in conflict activities. Some engaged in armed robberies, kidnappings and shootings. The levels of women's and men's participation in conflict were crucially shaped by the different options available to them. Young women's access to arms and activities outside the family home opened and widened their options.¹⁶⁰

Initially, girls were largely loyal to the community and the state taught a strict code of sexual and social morals that discouraged the girls from mixed socializing, offering few of the subversive ideas available to young men. Even with the campaigns against discrimination of girls in education and other economic fields, young women who worked outside their homes typically did so in traditionally 'feminine' professions and not in the very beneficial areas. Likewise, women's access to education was very limited, thus limiting their presence in formal economic areas apart from the livestock that was critical to their survival. When the livestock were threatened by raiders, the women decided to pick up arms and defend their only livelihood.¹⁶¹

Women who entered armed conflict among the Pokot since the 1980s came into contact with the conflict either via friends and family members or through mixed cultural activities particularly after initiation. The repression meted out against the activities of women cultural events, teaching by other women in private homes, and travelling to

¹⁵⁷ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003

¹⁵⁸ Oral interview, Josephine Lokirangole, Kopro Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid

¹⁶⁰ Joseph Akoule, "Rural women peace links" Reflective conference 2005. Women Peace and Security, Conference of 6th-9th Dec 2005 Operationalisation of UN Security Resolution 1325 at Grassroots level.

¹⁶¹ NCKK, SARDEP and SNV, *Pacifying the Valley* 2001

illegal arms markets across Uganda had the inevitable effect of radicalizing a generation of young women. While a small number became armed, the majority remained in the cultural front, or was active as collaborators rather than members of the warrior fronts. Given the overall gender roles among the Pokot, focus on cultural practices allowed for a certain degree of a militarizing society.¹⁶² Thus women's roles in Pokot conflict were conditioned by the tension between an armed conflict in which militarism was defined in narrowly masculinist terms, on the one hand, and the gradual penetration of modern weapons in the Pokot society, on the other. Through the late 1970s and 1980s women's presence in areas of conflict gradually increased. During the military campaigns against the Pokot, women were not spared. This apparent paradox can be explained by the dissatisfaction of many Pokot women who opted to pick up arms and fight.¹⁶³

4.3 From Innocent Victims to Dangerous Participants

It can be observed that women were actively involved in conflict as part of a much more complex Pokot conflict. One thing, the discrimination and violence meted against women offered considerable strategic advantages to individual female to take part in the conflict. An example of the inextricable link between representation and reality can be cited here. Female activists were sometimes absolved or not screened by security personnel guarding border points because they were perceived as innocent and could not take part in masculine chores. The police officers even made them girl friends or wives yet little did they know that this was a tactic to get information on security positions so as to allow their male kin manoeuvre. Moreover, as in the examples of women in other armed movements, such as the Moudjahadites of the Algerian war recorded by Franz Fanon, activists, both women and men, used popular stereotypes to avoid raising suspicion.¹⁶⁴ Some female activists stressed that women were less likely than men to be detected by police, because a woman acted either alone or with a man. This provided cover for preparations, armed actions and escapes.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² Ibid

¹⁶³ Ibid

¹⁶⁴ Francis Fanon, *Studies in a Dying Colonialism*, London: Earthscan Publications, 1989.

¹⁶⁵ Monica .J Kathina, *Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace* 2000

Ideally, the basic social and economic unit among the Pokot is a *manyata*, a dwelling household comprising a man, his wife and their children with livestock. It can be a homestead or various homesteads living together in a given place at a given time. Every Pokot home has animals which are attached to it. Although formally the ownership of the livestock is vested in the man as the head of his household, in practice the question of ownership is far more complex and can best be understood by first considering the position of a woman. In addition livestock, which is often important as bride price, plays a key role in conflict among the Pokot. These animals form the core of the productive capital of the new household, but will remain the exclusive domain of the woman.¹⁶⁶ Although the Pokot male exercises all managerial and exploitative tasks in the pastoral economy, all is centred to catering for his wife and children. When viewed as a whole, the participation of women in production does influence conflict. More significantly, woman's roles in the domestic economy has meant an effective voice in the decision making processes in livestock raiding and conflict between the Pokot and their neighbours.¹⁶⁷ Though the bulk of such decisions are carried out by the men, women also exercise a good deal of control over the cattle obtained through the raids.

Equally, women reward the brave warriors by decorating them with products of their own handicrafts as jewellery. Similarly and at the birth of the first son, the man receives respect in Pokot society and the livestock is conceptually apportioned. The wife with a son gets a bigger share. At this level, the woman's control over the livestock is seen as important as she assumes the role of the custodian of her son's future anticipatory inheritance. She is to make sure that the son becomes responsible and courageous enough to add to the livestock by raiding. The importance of this role is seen if the flock remains below an optimum level meaning that the son will remain in his bachelorhood.¹⁶⁸ This is largely borne by the man's mother. The mother is blamed when he is a failure.

The social organization of the Pokot embraces two types of mutually reinforcing relationships, namely kinship ties and labour relations. The former is expressed by the

¹⁶⁶ Oral interview, Josephine Lokirangole, Kopro Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

¹⁶⁷ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *Conflict in Northern Kenya*, 2003

¹⁶⁸ Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

principle of agnatic descent and the latter, more relevant to the aims of the role of women in conflict through contractual ties between the livestock and social status. Since women are part of the larger society, they are involved in the organization of pastoral production since it is they who influence decisions on the need for raiding through their mockery of men who fear going to raid and praising brave warriors. This argument is clearly seen through the quotation below from a focus group discussion with members of Simotwo Women Group that was held in Sigor;

We, the Pokot women gathered here today have a role of strengthening our society by advising on issues that affect us. We are part of the Pokot community of pastoralist people. We pledge that we will continue to live in a way that is economically sustainable and protect our children and common resources for generations to come. We will continue to network and share our best practices with our men to build ourselves and our community no matter what comes. We experience firsthand the leading edge of conflict and its associated problems, and we have much to share with our men. We will work with men to build strong economy within our families and our communities.¹⁶⁹

Women, therefore, participate in the organization of not only the family, but also of raiding for livestock. Although normally an entire raid is done by men, women are always at the centre of decision which can be understood in terms of mutual kinship obligation. On a higher level of organization, a combination of shared interests and an almost pathological fear of animal loss or malnutrition have turned Pokot women into strong supporters of their warriors. Decisions which affect the whole Pokot clan are reached in a loosely organized assembly consisting of most of the adult males present. To the observer, this constitutes the sole decision-making body and the men themselves are quick to confirm it.¹⁷⁰ Interestingly enough, the elderly females are represented and give their view on any matter.

If one is not completely dazzled by the formal features of the so-called “male-dominated” society, one will soon realize that in practice the reality is somewhat different, sometimes even radically since the decisions are influenced by women. For men to stand

¹⁶⁹ Focus Group discussion with members of Simotwo Women Group on 22/06/2012

¹⁷⁰ Joseph Akoule, “Rural women peace links” 2005

accountable of any achievement among the Pokot, the position of women must be considered. One goes raiding to get animals for marriage and it is women who sing praises for successful men. Therefore, courage shown by men through raiding is of great social, economic and political significance. Practically all of the above factors are either directly, or indirectly, related to the productive capital, that is, the livestock and other aspects of the household economy in which women have traditionally exercised great control by virtue of their roles. Irrespective of the formal rules of decision-making, or the external political constraints, it is ultimately the women who must support a decision.¹⁷¹

If premature discussions are initiated by men, they almost invariably lose focus and produce no consequential results. It is during such discussions that women come up with discussions, give loud and clear expression to their views. All this presupposes an intricate network of communication whereby women share, and sometimes manipulate information to effect a certain outcome. Sources of information may include their own men, itinerant peddlers, religious mendicants and charm writers and visiting kinsmen. Typically, the daily trip to the communal well or spring provides an opportunity to exchange with women from the neighbouring villages not only the latest gossip but frequently vital information regarding, for instance, such a planned raid and event as an upcoming marriage alliance between some clans or families. These alliances are very important in perpetuating or stopping conflict.¹⁷²

A significant point concerning women in pastoral Pokot society, which has been sadly neglected by scholars of women in conflict, is how the differential power and authority commensurate with social rank. While the dimensions of rank and status for the men are, as a rule, accorded meticulous treatment, women seem to enjoy only some nebulous attributes of rank by implication. The next point that merits special attention, therefore, is the women's power and authority as an aspect of social rank. The main objective here will be to identify a sub-structure, or put differently, the strategies whereby married

¹⁷¹ Bubenzer B. Olaf , Ralf Vogelsang and Hans Peter Wotzka (ed) *Aridity Change and Conflict in Africa Proceedings of an International ACACIA Conference* held at Konigswinter, Koln Heinrich- Barth Institute October 1-3, 2003 Germany 2007

¹⁷² NCKK, SARDEP and SNV *Pacifying the Valley: An analysis on the Kerio Valley Conflict* Nairobi: NCKK 2001

women exercise power, influence decisions, join factions and form coalitions to achieve certain social ends. Obviously this aspect of women's status in Pokot society must also be considered in the context of the formal leadership structure.¹⁷³

I shall begin with two general statements. First, the fact that Pokot women do not, normally, succeed to office, does not mean that they form an un-differentiated segment of the society. Second, there is a close correlation or agreement between a man's power and authority on all levels of the tribal organization and those of his wife or wives.¹⁷⁴ However, this study observes that, although the arrow of power does not always lead to the Pokot women, it may be a two way relationship, implying mutual dependency, or it may well lead to the man, that is to say, the wife or more frequently the mother is the source from which the Pokot man derives his power.¹⁷⁵

In the Pokot society a respected member leadership is neither formal nor hereditary, but is based principally on three mutually inter-related factors namely kinship ties, personal attributes, and external sources of power. Such a respected leader in Pokot community serves a variety of functions, such as being a consensus maker, mediator in disputes, coordinator of community action, spokesman and channel of communication between various groups among the Pokot. Importantly the headman's wife wields a proportionate amount of power and influence over not only other women, but also among the youth. A mediator and consensus maker in her own right she is generally accorded considerable respect and deference. She is regularly consulted by other members of the society on a variety of matters which might include conflict, and for her ability to influence the headman. With respect to these functions, she may properly be viewed as a female counterpart of the Pokot headman.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷³ Monica J. Kathina, *“Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace”*: 2000

¹⁷⁴ Oral interview, Josephine Lokirangole, Kopro Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010.

¹⁷⁵ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, *“Conflict in Northern Kenya, 2003*

¹⁷⁶ Rose Otieno, “Women's contribution to promoting Peace and reconciliation in Uganda”, in *Networking with a view to Promoting Peace: Towards Sustainable Peace- Civil Society Dialogue Forum for the Horn of Africa, Nairobi, 10-13 December, 2000*, Nairobi: 2001, pp 227-234.

Throughout Pokot history, some of the Pokot women were actively involved in the pastoral armed conflicts. During the pastoral conflict, women primarily support the warriors who are engaged in conflict. Some women take part in direct participation in the fighting particularly when the men have gone out and the raid occurs. Pokot women have assumed a much greater role in defending their homes.¹⁷⁷ On occasion, the role of female attackers has underscored the extent to which women are prepared to take action in conflicts. For many reasons, women are the preferred choice when it comes to infiltration and strike missions. First, women are less suspected. Second, in the conservative societies such as the Pokot, there is hesitation to body search a woman. Third, women can carry light weapons beneath their clothes and appear pregnant.¹⁷⁸

Women may also play a high priced role by ridiculing men who refuse to fight or go for raids for their lack of courage or masculinity. They also ridicule the men who go to school as cowards who have no value or respect for the Pokot culture as seen in the quotation below by Mary Mariach that;

Women pastoralists also see schooling as a problem because sending their children to school often means forgoing the home and family based learning those children need to become productive and successful pastoralist producers. Is it inevitable, Mary Mariach asked, that schooling equals to educating out of pastoralism, rather than educating into it?¹⁷⁹

It is common for a Pokot woman to ridicule a lazy son as indicated by the following quote by Josephine Chepokawow;

A woman may say to her son: I have exhausted myself giving birth to you and bringing you up, thinking you will take care of me, but now, you want to be fed at home like a girl and you can't go far away to find cows for me.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Monica J. Kathina, *“Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace 2000*

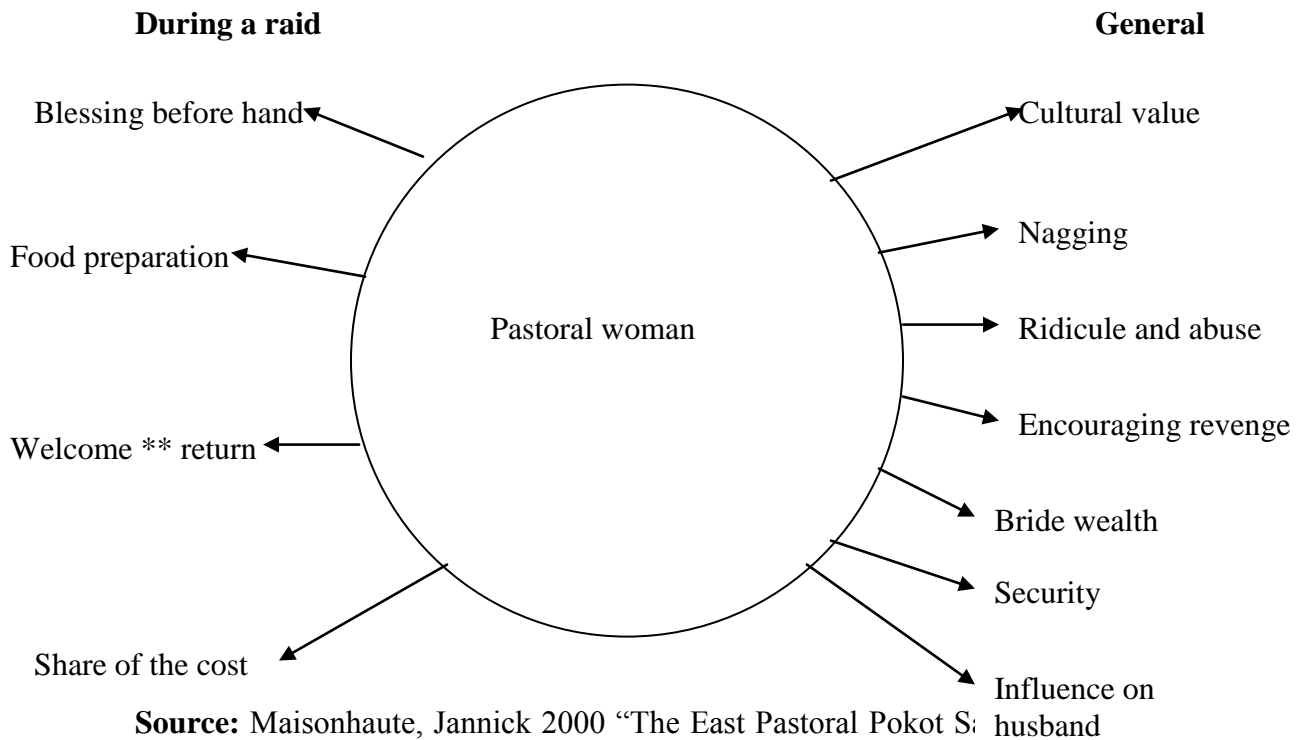
¹⁷⁸ Joseph Akoule, “Rural women peace links” Reflective conference 2005.

¹⁷⁹ Oral interview, Mary Mariach, Sigor, 24/06/2012

¹⁸⁰ Oral interview, Josphin Chepokawow, Sigor, 28/06/2012

Women were accomplices to and participants in horrific acts committed by their men. Pokot women played active roles in supporting the men. During preparations for raids, women would prepare meals/snacks that the men may need during their long trips. They also offer moral and physical support. Other than the above, Pokot women also incite their men and ridicule those are not brave enough. Women act as cooks as well as treating the wounded, and any other necessary support duties. This does not mean that cooks are less responsible than warriors for they both complement each other.¹⁸¹ Similarly, women may shelter, hide, protect or feed combatants from either side and/or may also act as couriers and spies carrying warrior information, because they support the cause being fought for or because they are forced to participate in this way as shown in the diagram below;

Women’s roles in promoting conflict



Source: Maisonhaute, Jannick 2000 “The East Pastoral Pokot Society and Religion: *Les cahiers de l’IFRA 18*, Nairobi: French Institute of African Studies, 2000, pp. 1-47.

¹⁸¹ Isabella Masinde, Mohamud Adan and Ruto Pkalya, *Indigenous Democracy Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms: Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet*, Nairobi: ITDG, 2004,

4.4 Conclusion

In conflict situations in the Pokot region, women played critical roles during and after conflict, as combatants, survivors, and heads of household, community leaders and peacebuilders. This chapter is devoted to increased attention of women in conflict situations. The chapter reveals that although women were actively involved in conflict, in many instances women's diverse concerns and contributions still remain marginalized. Women equally played cover up roles. This study about Pokot women underlines the extent to which gendered stereotypes surpassed ideological boundaries. It also demonstrates the shift by the 1980s away from the idea of women as unwitting participants to that of women as cold-hearted killers, from innocent victims of men, to active participants who were potentially more dangerous than their male kinsmen. In contrast to some African writers, who portray women as the unknowing girl friends of male warrior, this study reveals that Pokot women were often used as identity cover for male warriors. The true image of the Pokot female is as deceitful and dangerous. It retained intact the idea of the Pokot, conflict secretly reversing the woman's position within the community gender binary from an innocent, lovely and peaceful woman to a supporter of conflict.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Isabella Masinde, Mohamud Adan and Ruto Pkalya, "*Indigenous Democracy*", 2004,

CHAPTER FIVE

POKOT WOMEN AND PEACE-BUILDING

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the place of the Pokot women in peace building particularly women's agency in peace endeavours. The chapter situates women in conflict and indigenous conflict resolution, and their participation in social institutions and ceremonies among the Pokot ethnic group. Situating women in conflict gives clear pictures of a woman in a conflict situation away from the normal belief that women are just victims. It explores the system of conflict resolution in the Pokot community, and women's representation in the system as noted by Josphin Chepokawow, Sigor region, West Pokot County that,

Just as women have taken up roles of supporting armed conflict, Pokot women have also been at the forefront of activities for peace. Pokot women who do not want their husbands, sons, fathers and brothers to take part in conflict protested and refused to tie the Leketio. Since men can not touch it they cannot force you to tie.



Pokot woman wearing Leketio; the birth belt.

As will be observed, women are important in the formation of social capital through marriage and blood relations between different communities. Some of the important

elements of the socio-cultural settings of the Pokot community that force women to take part in peace building are examined. This includes positive aspects of marriage practices in the formation of social capital which strengthens friendship and unity instead of enmity.

5.1 Why Pokot Women were at the Forefront in Peace building

There are clear facts as to why Pokot women in Sigor were at the forefront of peace building. Because women are half of every community and the tasks of peace building are so great, women and men must be partners in the process of peace building. Women are the central caretakers of families in many cultures, everyone suffers when women are oppressed, victimized, and excluded from peace building. Their centrality to communal life makes their inclusion in peace building essential. Women have the capacity for both violence and peace and yet they are excluded from public decision-making, leadership, and educational opportunities in many communities around the world. It is important to create special programs to empower women to use their gifts in the tasks of building peace. Because women and men have different experiences of violence and peace, women must be allowed and encouraged to bring their unique insights and gifts to the process of peace building.

Because sexism, racism, classism, ethnic and religious discrimination originate from the same set of beliefs that some people are inherently better than others, women's empowerment was seen as inherent to the process of building peace. Like other social structures that set up some people as superior to others, the sexist belief that women's lives are less valuable than men's lives, which then leads to violence against women. When women engage in peace building, they often challenge these sexist beliefs along with other structures that are discriminatory. And also because the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325 created a mandate to include women in peace building and because women have proved all over the world that they are successful peace builders, more women need to be encouraged to become involved in peace building processes because they are the most affected as noted by Pauline Domonyang that;

We women live with permanent worry. We don't know if we will live to see the next day. We can't gather wild fruits- before you can even hit the tree to knock them down, you fear someone will hear you. If we are captured we are harassed or attacked. We lose our children – even if we survive ourselves, we are never the same. When a child dies, part of your self has gone. We lose livestock, our means of survival so poverty kills us slowly.¹⁸³

Pokot women and men have different access to resources, power and decision making before, during and after conflicts. The experience of women and of men in conflict situations is significantly different. While entire communities suffer the consequences of conflict, women and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and their sex. Women are thus caught in a vicious paradox. While they are the main civilian victims of conflicts, they are often powerless to defend themselves. They are excluded from the negotiations during the resolution process And they are confined to a marginal role in the conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts. The general exclusion of women from decision making positions prior to, during and following conflicts reinforces their victimisation.¹⁸⁴ The exclusion of Pokot women in conflict situations exposed them to suffering as their rights and that of their children were violated. For instance, in 1928 and 1929 the Turkana attacked the Pokot killing 58 Pokot men, women and children. In 1933 the Karamojong staged another raid over the Pokot which according to the colonial records the loss incurred amounted to some \$20,895.¹⁸⁵ The conflicts persisted into 1939. According to Frangipani in his memoire, the Pokot, Turkana, Donyiro and Merille raids are complicated. For instance, in July 16th, 1939, the Turkana joined the Karamojong in raiding the Pokot in the Kacheliba area. This was the biggest and most destructive raid, and the stock stolen during it was divided up between the Turkana and Karamojong raiders.¹⁸⁶ Such attacks inflicted much pain to the Pokot woman as stated by Pauline Domonyang that;

There has been violence all our lives. People see violence they grow up with it, and they know it. They repeat it. There is no food,

¹⁸³ Oral interview, Pauline Domonyang, Sigor, 25/06/2012

¹⁸⁴ G. W.B Huntingford, "Pokot Masculinity: The Role of Rituals in Forming Men", PhD Dissertation. Reykjavik: Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Iceland, 2006.

¹⁸⁵ KNA/ KNA/DC/LOK/6/4

¹⁸⁶ Ibid

no work, no education, but there is pressure from the family. And there is nothing to stop violence, there is impunity.¹⁸⁷

Conflict affects men and women differently. It has a wide range of economical, social, and psychological effects which are influenced by gender.¹⁸⁸ Conflict in Sigor has its own economic impact particularly on women. Loss of livestock through raids has a significant economic impact on pastoral households.¹⁸⁹ They make households to lose everything in terms of economy, homes and sometimes male power which is derived from livestock. Loss of male power makes the men frustrated. To replace their frustrations, they ended up being violent to their wives. Sensing that they were victims of both raiders and their husbands, women were forced to take action that could end such cruel treatment by initiating peace talks as noted by Joyce Lonyanga, a school girl, that;

People are drunk and fighting. Everything is different at home. My father hits my mother and drunken people destroy property that were are left with nothing. My father is frustrated. My father used to beat my mother and all of us. He has no job and the family's needs are enormous. The only way for him to express his frustration is by shouting and hitting us.¹⁹⁰

AS alluded to above and over a long period of time, the Pokot women developed a feeling that they should contribute in bringing such practices to an end. Pokot women chose peace despite the benefits accruing from conflict because even though they may get the raided animals, they lived in permanent fear. They are not sure of seeing the next day because of counter or revenge attacks. They could not access bushes for fruit and firewood gathering. They fear being captured because they end up being harassed and sometimes lose their children who may be killed by raiders.¹⁹¹ They may also be abducted or in worst case scenario raped if they come across warriors from a rival community who are either on a mission or planning to mount a raid in their vicinities.

¹⁸⁷ Oral interview, Pauline Domonyang, Sigor, 25/06/2012

¹⁸⁸ Michael Bollig, and Matthias Osterle, 2007 "We Turned our Enemies into Baboons: Warfare, Ritual and Pastoral Identity among the Pokot of Northern Kenya". In *The Practice of War: Production, Reproduction and Communication of Armed Violence*, edited by A. Rao, M. Boffig and M. Bock, New York: Berghahn Books, 2007, pp. 23-51.

¹⁸⁹ Michael Bollig, "Moral Economy and Self-Interest: Kinship, Friendship, and Exchange among the Pokot (N. W. Kenya)", In *Kinship, Networks, and Exchange*, edited by T. Schweizer and D. White, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.137-57.

¹⁹⁰ Oral interview, Joyce Lonyanga, a school girl from Sigor, on 25/06/2012

¹⁹¹ Ibid

Cattle raiding affects the milk supply for which women are responsible. Fear of raids and conflicts also restricts pastoral movements to less fertile areas, which has an impact on stock productivity. This fear of insecurity has a negative impact on the whole community's development efforts, especially with regard to basic services like schools, health facilities and water resource development. Trade in commodities, such as milk, eggs, and other petty trade, is largely carried out by women in Sigor.¹⁹² A 35 year old woman in Sigor who has been engaged in trading in her lifetime was a victim of theft. Her children were totally dependent on this trading. Because of conflict, she has no alternative to continuing with the trading. She noted that;

No hope in life for my children. Schools are closed. Parents don't have the money to send their children to school. Children have nothing to do, they learn nothing. For the time being there are many violent attacks that may happen at any time, some of our children may die even in school or even at home, which means no safety for anyone at any time. If there is no work, there is no money for children to go to school. Many people took up violence because there was nothing else¹⁹³

Some women in Sigor are also engaged in making and selling charcoal as a useful income supplement, but because of insecurities their movement is restricted. Moreover, widows have a high economic burden when they have lost their partners, as well as the socio-psychological impact. Peninah Lomerwaru, a widow had this to say;

My husband was killed and both my grandmother and my 4 year old brother got injured. They did not get health assistance. After my husband was killed my son took responsibility. He is a labourer and earns very little every day for a large family. I also work with him.¹⁹⁴

When there is insecurity, women lose their trade opportunities. This makes the women desperate for peace. As women do not participate and are not directly involved in conflicts related to raiding, they are not armed and are not able to defend themselves

¹⁹² Oral interview, Pauline Domonyang, Sigor, 25/06/2012

¹⁹³ Oral interview, Mary Mariach, Sigor, 24/06/2012

¹⁹⁴ Oral interview, Peninah Lomerwaru, Sigor, 22/06/2010

when they are attacked by their enemies. They suffer more in terms of death and injury than other community members.¹⁹⁵

Women also lose their husbands, sons or other family members due to conflict. Loss of a husband usually means that the woman either has to leave the pastoral sector or be inherited by her husband's brother or close relatives. No Pokot woman feels comfortable with being inherited, therefore, most of them will opt to campaign for peace so that they do not risk losing their husbands.¹⁹⁶

Because of security problems, women's movements are restricted, and that has both economic and social consequences on their lives. Their limited movement within their community and their neighbouring ethnic groups affects women social lives. Sometimes women are unable to visit their relatives in the enemy clan.¹⁹⁷ Due to intermarriage between the Turkana and the Pokot, women from both sides have relatives living in these communities. Pokot women also form relationships when they trade with neighbouring women from the Turkana ethnic group. The relations are badly affected during conflict.

The lives of Pokot women in contexts of armed conflict adjusted dramatically in response to changes in their households and their community as well as a direct response to fighting and violence. Women are victims of conflict, but also engage actively in social, political and economic activities during episodes of violent conflict. For instance, gender inequalities were exacerbated during post-conflict reconstruction in the Pokot area of Sigor. Both women and men suffer war abuses and traumas, disruptions and loss of resources which would have assisted in educating their children. The impact of these losses is experienced in different ways and women are often disproportionately affected.

Although Kenya is a signatory to international conventions designed to protect the human rights of women, it persistently failed to enforce those international conventions. Among the Pokot, gender equality did not exist. This left women exposed to all sorts of

¹⁹⁵ G. W. B Huntingford, "Pokot Masculinity: The Role of Rituals in Forming Men", PhD Dissertation. Reykjavik: Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Iceland, 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Oral interview, Peninah Lomerwaru, Sigor, 22/06/2010

¹⁹⁷ Oral interview, Josephine Lokirangole, Kopro Location, Sigor, 14/10/2010

violations, including sexual violations. Although women and men experience violence differently during and after conflict, in their capacities as both victims and perpetrators, sexual violence is largely inflicted on women. Women are raped during armed conflicts in a form of violence designed to shatter male power. Yet even when there has been documentation of women's experiences as victims of abuse on the battlefield, men continue to use sex as a tool of submerging women. Men who engaged in such violence are mostly described as masculine heroes.¹⁹⁸

In most pastoral communities women do not discuss sex issues in public. For the Pokot case, the refusal to identify women as victims of sexual violence during armed conflict was rationalised in terms of social relations. During this study women recounted their fear that they and their daughters would be raped. This made families to attempt to flee their homes. Mothers smeared dirt and mud on their daughters' faces to render them unattractive. Rape was the greatest fear to most women interviewed.

Although Kenya is a signatory to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) which recognises and prosecutes sexual and gender violence as war crimes and crimes against humanity, most of the Pokot women have no idea of the statute. According to the statute, these criminal offences include rape, sexual slavery (including trafficking of women), enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, enforced sterilization, other forms of grave sexual violence, and persecution on account of gender.¹⁹⁹ After incidences of sexual violence, women are often rejected by family or community. Despite pity for the trauma the Pokot women have suffered, society marks the victims as damaged goods.²⁰⁰ Pokot women also have particular health care needs as a result of these violations. For example, they require additional nutritional and health support if they are pregnant or lactating. Food scarcity and inequalities in food distribution are exacerbated during periods of

¹⁹⁸ C. Moser and F. Clark, (eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors? Gender, Armed Conflict and Political Violence*, London: Zed Books , 2001, p. 3

¹⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch, 2002, '*International Justice for Women: The ICC Marks a New Era*', *Human Rights Watch Backgrounder*, 1 July 2002, www.hrw.org/campaigns/icc/icc-women.htm, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²⁰⁰ O. Bennett, J. Bexley, and K. Warnock, 1995, 'Introduction', in O. Bennett, J. Bexley and K. Warnock (eds), *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict*, London: Panos Publications , 1995, p. 9

armed conflict, rendering women and girls more susceptible to malnutrition.²⁰¹ The increase in the rate of HIV infection in conflict zones is also a worrying trend. Women face an increased risk, and therefore need special psychological, health and social support.

HIV infection is increasing in conflict and post-conflict areas of Sigor. As conflicts rage in this area they make HIV infection very high.²⁰² Disruption and displacement caused by conflict in Pokot areas led to changes in sexual behaviour, an increase in the rate of sexual abuse (e.g. by warriors and security agencies namely the police and armed forces), and to decreased access to blood screening facilities. In addition to this sorry state of affairs, workers in the aid giving organizations, such as NGOs, sometimes demanded sexual favours in exchange for food, which led to an increase in the number of women's sexual partners.²⁰³ In this area, HIV infection is often considered to be primarily a medical issue that is not a priority in conflict. Its pervasive links to unstable social, economic and political circumstances are overlooked.²⁰⁴ Given the degree of stigma that persists for those infected with HIV, both women and men are not likely to talk openly about their concerns. Consequently, there is an even greater need to reach out to those affected. This is particularly the case with women, who are typically unable to access medical services.

Assistance providers, be they governmental, non-governmental or multilateral, have been slow to tackle the escalation of women's human rights abuses, particularly during and after armed conflict. Decision-makers sometimes discourage or even prevent the development of gender-sensitive initiatives. One reason gendered initiatives lack support is the divide in thinking between technical and social support. Technical support refers to assistance with immediate needs, such as providing water, health facilities or educational

²⁰¹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2002, *Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*, www.undp.org/erd/ref/gendermanualfinal.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²⁰² Judy Benjamin A, 2001, *Conflict, Post-conflict, and HIV/AIDS – the Gender Connections: Women, War and HIV/AIDS: West Africa and the Great Lakes*, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Presented at the World Bank, International Women's Day, March
www.worldbank.org/html/prmge/womensmonth/benjamin.doc (accessed 12 August 2003)

²⁰³ Ibid

²⁰⁴ A. Smith, 2002, *HIV/AIDS and Emergencies: Analysis and Recommendations for Practice*, London: Overseas Development Institute, www.odihpn.org/pdfbin/networkpaper038.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003)

services to the children. Social support, by contrast, refers to assistance with longer-term issues that are harder to tackle, with fewer quantifiable results, and are therefore considered to be lower priority, such as schooling, training and social service provision. Both types of support, however, bring into question social, cultural and religious practices. But during periods of conflict, it is considered inappropriate to address gender relations. The result is that the effect of technical interventions, such as large-scale sanitation projects, on the dynamics between men and women, is not raised.²⁰⁵

Regardless of the geographical, economic, political or social context, armed conflict in Sigor makes it more difficult to access food, health, education and other basic goods and services due to forced migration. Forced displacement is the clearest violation of human, economic, political and social rights and of the failure to comply with international humanitarian laws.²⁰⁶ People have been uprooted from their homelands in some parts of Sigor and even after conflicts ended in some parts they still felt insecure to go back. Whatever the cause, displacement is a source of human rights violations. It results in distinct types of disadvantage for both women and men.²⁰⁷ Displacement does not necessarily mean that people leave or are forcibly removed to destinations that are far from their homes during and after armed conflict. Armed conflict in Sigor in 1980s and 1990s saw large numbers of people internally displaced, or still living within the borders of their country during the period this study was being carried out.

During the conflict in Sigor, the community had limited options to protect its people who had been displaced within their territories. The legal status of IDPs continues to be a serious concern. Displacement is often viewed as a temporary or transitory phenomenon. However, experience in Sigor it is actually a prolonged process. Many generations have been displaced as a result of armed conflict, with a significant number of those affected having being displaced more than once and for significant periods of time.²⁰⁸ Displacement disproportionately disadvantages women because it results in reduced

²⁰⁵ S. Williams, 'Conflicts of Interest: Gender in Oxfam's Emergency Response', in C. Cockburn and D. Zarkov (eds), *The Postwar Moment: Militaries, Masculinities and International Peacekeeping*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2002

²⁰⁶ Moser and Clark(eds), *Victims, Perpetrators or Actors?* , p. 32

²⁰⁷ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

²⁰⁸ Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

access to resources to cope with household responsibility and increased physical and emotional violence.²⁰⁹ Displacement also implies social exclusion and poverty conditions that are themselves likely to prolong conflict.

To most pastoral communities who sometimes fight for supremacy, forced displacement is frequently used as a strategy of war that targets gender relations through family breakdown and social destabilisation. Displacement often leads to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities for both women and men. Demographic change due to conflict has led to more women becoming heads of households.²¹⁰ This has contributed to changes in the division of labour that have created new opportunities for women, but in some respects further marginalised their place in society. Displacement does not affect all women the same way. Women from Pokot groups constitute an increasing number of war fatalities and casualties. Furthermore, the added responsibilities women have in productive, reproductive and community work are often transferred to younger girls and boys within the family. In particular, younger girls have to assume more responsibilities such as caring for children, the elderly and the sick, along with managing burdensome domestic work. This shift of responsibility impacts on the welfare and future of female household members.²¹¹

Despite experiences of vulnerability and trauma during the process of displacement, some women benefit from displacement. For instance, the Pokot women were given priority for training and development on health and education specifically by World Vision in conjunction with other NGOs, such as NCKK, SNV and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC). They were also educated on income generating activities to assist them rebuild their lives. The skills that the Pokot women gained enabled them to assume new roles within their households. This involved becoming the main bread winners particularly those who had lost their men during the conflict. Some although had not lost

²⁰⁹ A. El Jack, 'Gender Perspectives on the Management of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Sudan', in V. Farr and K. Gebre-Wold (eds), *Gender Perspectives on Small Arms and Light Weapons: Regional and International Concerns*, Brief 24, Bonn: Bonn International Center for Conversion, 2002.

²¹⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2002, *Gender Approaches in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*, www.undp.org/erd/ref/gendermanualfinal.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²¹¹ Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

their men, they had problems finding employment after removal from their homes and communities. This shift in responsibilities represented a move away from stereotypically masculine and feminine roles that had been the normal way of life among the Pokot. Men, however may react to these changes with depression, alcoholism and an escalation of violence against women in public and private.²¹²

The violence that occurred in Pokotland exposed the women to physical and sexual violations. Violence particularly against women continues to be a well-documented feature of armed conflict. For instance Gender Based Violence played on gender norms and gender exclusions to break the Pokot women down both physically and psychologically. Although it is most often women who are targets of GBV, both women and men became victims and subject to rape, increased exposure to HIV infection, as well as other sexually transmitted infections. Damage to physical and psychological health, disruption of lives, loss of self-confidence and self-esteem remained a common phenomenon among the Pokot. Conflict worsens existing patterns of sexual violence against women in two main ways. Firstly, incidences of everyday violence, particularly domestic violence increases as communities break down during and after conflicts.²¹³ Secondly, everyday violence escalates in the context of masculine and militarised conflict situations.

Conflict breeds distinct types of power relations and imbalances. In the context of conflict, for instance, violence against women is more than the exercise of power over women. By raping women, who represent the purity and culture of the Pokot people, the attackers are also symbolically raping the Pokot people. Some types of GBV are experienced almost entirely by women and girls during and after conflict, such as forced prostitution and sex work which increases in trafficking for sexual or other types of slavery and forced pregnancy. This is because when women lose their livestock to

²¹²M. de Alwis, and J. Hyndman, *Capacity Building in Conflict Zones: A Feminist Analysis of Humanitarian Assistance in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: International Center for Ethnic Studies, 2002.

²¹³ United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 2002, Report of the Learning Oriented Assessment of Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment Strategies in Rwanda, New York: UNIFEM www.unifem.org/governance/Final_Rwanda_Report_En.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003)

raiders, they are left with no other alternative apart from selling their bodies for a living.²¹⁴

Also, the impact of GBV has distinct consequences for women and girls including sexual mutilation, sterility, chronic reproductive/gynecological health problems and marginalisation from family and community due to stigma associated with sexual abuse.²¹⁵ In conflict zones, sexual violence has become a weapon of ‘ethnic cleansing’, as seen in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, where rape was used by Serbian police and paramilitary forces to punish women belonging to the Kosovo Liberation Army.²¹⁶ Given that rape had been used in Bosnia, it became a causal factor in conflict-related displacement in Pokot areas although little is documented. Although men are most often the perpetrators of rape and violence in armed conflict and women the victims, men themselves may also be subject to physical and sexual abuse particularly if their wives and daughters are raped in their presence.

NGO workshop reports on pastoral communities confirm the difficulty of quantifying the extent of raping of wives before their husbands because victims are reluctant to speak out.²¹⁷ Dolan argues that the level of stigma attached (to rape of wives and daughters before their male protector) is even higher than that associated with female rape in their absence, and undermining men’s sense of masculinity becomes a key channel for men to exercise power over other men by raping their wives and daughters before them.²¹⁸ In this sense, rape or violent sexual abuse as demonstrations of masculinity or power are potentially weapons that victimised both Pokot women and men in conflict zones. Men are also the indirect targets of violence against women. The rape of women has long been

²¹⁴ Ali Chemisto Satya, *Conflicts in Uganda: The Cattle Raiding Phenomenon in Kapchorwa District*, European Peace University, Centre for Peace Studies, MA. Thesis, Austria, 2004, pp. 42-54.

²¹⁵ UN Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA), 2003, Gender mainstreaming action plan, disarmament.un.org/gender/gmap.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²¹⁶ Human Rights Watch, 2002, ‘International Justice for Women: The ICC Marks a New Era’, Human Rights Watch Backgrounder, 1 July 2002, www.hrw.org/campaigns/icc/icc-women.htm, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²¹⁷ C. .Dolan, ‘Collapsing Masculinities and Weak States: A Case Study of Northern Uganda’, in F. Cleaver (ed), *Masculinities Matter! Men, Gender and Development*, London: Zed Books, 2002

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, p.75.

considered a public act of aggression, where raping and ‘dishonouring’ women is a way of ‘violating and demoralising men.’²¹⁹

Women are perceived to be the preservers of family honour, and often symbolise a community’s racial purity and culture. The abuse and torture of female members of a man’s family in front of him is used to convey the message that he has failed in his role as protector.²²⁰ It represents an attack on the entire community and at the same time it violates women’s human rights. Although men are likely to be the aggressors, this study cannot make assumptions about the behaviour of men as a group because some men do not benefit, and may indirectly suffer, from acts of sexual violence carried out against female family members.²²¹ This is not, however, to minimize the greater suffering that women directly experience as a consequence of sexual abuse, but rather to illustrate that GBV disrupts and destabilizes gender relations in often irrevocably damaging ways that negatively impact everyone.

Equally, rape imprisons a woman permanently. It is a weapon of war shrouded in silence by pastoral women of Pokot. Women who were raped during the conflict tell their close friends. You hardly hear them coming out in public to talk about all those things that happened to them. They would rather suffer in silence until they can get over it. They try to live with it or live with the idea that it didn’t happen to them alone. If hundreds of other girls can live with it, you can also live with it and, gradually, it vanishes away, but most of the raping was done in the open. A particular warrior might be attracted to a person’s daughter, and right in front of family members it will be done openly. So that

²¹⁹ O. Bennett, J. Bexley, and K. Warnock, 1995, ‘Introduction’, in O. Bennett, J. Bexley and K. Warnock (eds), *Arms to Fight, Arms to Protect: Women Speak Out About Conflict*, London: Panos Publications, 1995, p. 8 see also, Boghosian, H., 2002, ‘The Destruction of Dissent: First Amendments Rights in the Post-September 11th Period’, Resist Newsletter, www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Dissent/Destruction_Dissent.html, (accessed 12 August 2003)

²²⁰ United Nations (UN), 2002, *Women, Peace and Security*, Geneva: United Nations www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/public/eWPS.pdf, (accessed 12 August 2003) see also United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, ods-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement, (accessed 23 June 2003)

²²¹ R. Jacobson, S. Jacobs, and J. Marchbank, ‘Introduction: States of Conflict’, in S. Jacobs, R. Jacobson and J. Marchbank (eds), *States of Conflict: Gender, Violence and Resistance*, London: Zed Books, 2000, pp. 2-3

was how many girls got to know that their friends were raped. Pauline Kaliakamur, spoke with anger that;

They are not human. They worship guns. They don't have sisters and brothers, they only have a gun, but we hope they will change. We will continue to encourage them to embrace peace and for sure they will change. If they can't listen to their mothers, who else will they listen to? As women of Pokot we will fight for peace.²²²

5.2 Women can be a Force for Peace: Pokot Women in Peace building

Violence against women is one of the most lamentable characteristics of modern conflict. For instance, Pokot women and girls suffer the impact of conflict in an increasingly and disproportionate manner. They are seldom either the initiators or the prosecutors of conflicts. They have become specifically targeted as a way to humiliate the adversary and break the morale and resistance of whole societies. But while the Pokot women are often the first victims of armed conflict, they are now becoming recognized as a key to preventing, managing or resolving the conflict. They are becoming a powerful force for peace, reconciliation and bringing war-torn societies back to a healthy situation. As Pauline Kaliakamursaid; "I believe that a change can occur. Conflict with our neighbours can be stopped."²²³ Similar sentiments were echoed by members of Arrur Women Group of Sigor who had this to say;

We are women from different parts of Sigor. We won't tell you our names because it could be dangerous for us. We all have one thing in common. Our lives have been affected by armed conflict between our community and our neighbours. That is why, even though we come from different places, we speak with one voice. We have not given up all hope yet. We still want to see our children grow in a peaceful society. We want to help build peace in our societies and make this world a better place. We still have big dreams²²⁴

Wars are no excuse for violating the rights of women. They have all rights as the rest members of the society. When there is armed conflict, women want safe spaces and

²²² Oral interview, Pauline Kaliakamur, Sigor, 28/2012

²²³ Oral interview, Pauline Kaliakamur, Sigor, 28/2012

²²⁴ Focus group discussion with Arrur Women Group, 24/06/2012

conflict free zones where they can continue their daily duties un-interfered. They want to quickly rebuild their lives that have been destroyed and to build new ones where there are no wars. They want an environment where their children can go to school without fear. Women want hospitals or health clinics to be built or established in all communities. They want medicines and medical staff to be available at these hospitals and clinics.

The services must be friendly to them and free of cost. They want all people to have equal access to a full range of health information and services. They want jobs for their children and relevant training for those who are old enough to work so that they can find safe jobs for themselves and be useful to their communities. The women want a society free from any marginalization. They want food for themselves and their children. More importantly, women want to participate in efforts of peace building with hope of reaching out to the warriors who engage in raiding. The section below outlines how women participated in peace building.

5.3 Pokot Women building Peace through the Government

The conflicts that plagued the Pokot territory of Kenya were sometimes seen as having a political motive. Among the Pokot and Turkana members of parliament, there were tendencies to politicize boundary disputes and cattle rustling as one way of winning support from the respective communities, for example, by honourable Ewoton and the late honourable Lotodo. Emanating from this point of view, the search for peace needed to be conceived within the arena of high politics. The pressure on the government mounted from lobby groups, within and outside the country, urging the government of Kenya to take up its mandate and protect the civilians in the pastoral regions. The government responded by forming the District Peace Committees whose membership included women. Since women were the main victims, they joined lobby groups through NGOs, such as the NCKK and World Vision, which played a very important role in peace building. Through such bodies women joined campaigns for peace in the Pokot region.²²⁵

²²⁵ Oral interviews, Selina Ngurasia, Muino Location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

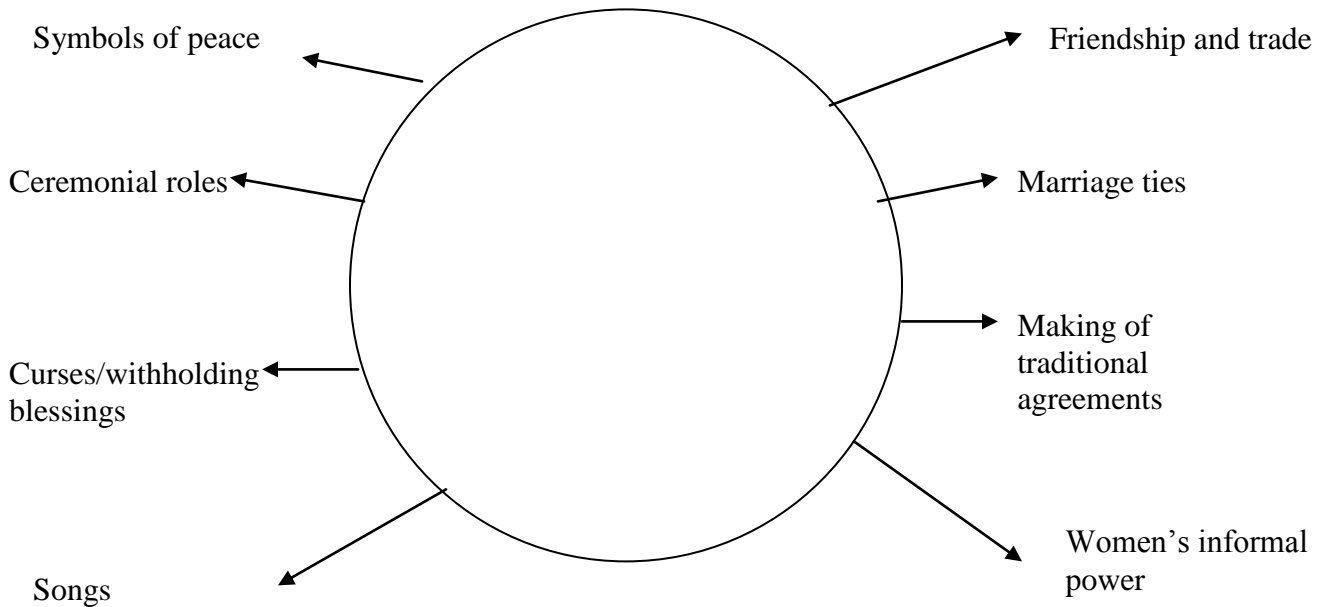
For instance, in addressing conflict, women like Tecla Lorupe, a former marathon race champion from Sigor region, started the Tecla Lorupe Foundation through which she launched the Peace Race, which is now in the Kenyan and Ugandan Athletic Federation calendar. The race takes place in July each year attracting participation of more than 3,000 people for across borders of Uganda, Kenya and Sudan. The race created an opportunity for the young people to discuss peace and conflict, make contacts and friendship, interact and appreciate each other and showcase sports as an alternative livelihood. The event is essentially educative, an avenue to build trust and fun to the participants. It brings together leaders ranging from the ministers to leaders from villages to address participants and communities on issues of conflict and peace, education, girl child rights, pastoral development and concerns on disarmament.²²⁶

The race gives the communities, their leaders and government agents the opportunity to come together to think, reflect and talk peace. The communities' perpetual conflict needs both short term and long-term intervention to address the immediate challenges to peace building while gradually reducing the generational build-up of negative perceptions and the traditions of enmity that has grown and sustained for many years. Categories for this race are 10 km for young men and women and 2km for dignitaries and other guests. Winners in warrior race are rewarded with cash prizes. All participants who complete the race receives a cotton sheet or Maasai Shuka which is used as symbol of Kenyan identity and patriotism.²²⁷ The enthusiasm towards the peace race among the participating pastoral communities continue to increase, enhance partnerships and collaboration among peace actors who have turned peace building into truly everybody's business as summarized by the diagram below;

²²⁶Eunice Hasango Kaumbi, *The Moroto Peace Race Report: the 22nd*, Tecla Lorupe Peace Race in the Seventh Edition of the July, 03, 2010 tecla@teglapeacefoundation.org / www.teglapeacefoundation.org

²²⁷Jannick Maisonhaute, 2000 "The East Pastoral Pokot Sapana Ceremony". *Rites ET Religion: Les cahiers de l'IFRA 18*, Nairobi: French Institute for Research in Africa, 2000, pp. 1-47.

Women's roles in peace building



Source: Maisonhaute, Jannick 2000 "The East Pastoral Pokot Sapana Ceremony". *Rites ET Religion: Les cahiers de l' IFRA 18*, Nairobi: French Institute for Research in Africa, 2000, pp. 1-47.

The peace races create opportunities for interaction, reduce synergies and tension and rebuild social relations among communities and inducing attitude change. They also provide a platform for girl child rights advocacy as well as inspiring athletic talents.²²⁸ Through the forum, Lorupe appeals to the Heads of States of Kenya, Uganda and Southern Sudan, peace actors and communities during the race to address the question of poor infrastructure, inadequate schools and absence of colleges in the pastoral areas that undermine access to education by pastoralists. She appeals to the governments to establish more schools and colleges in the pastoral areas to help them move closer to reduce development gap between them and other communities. Tecla Lorupe while launching the peace race among the pastoral communities at the border with Uganda and Sudan noted that to disarm the minds, one needs schools and colleges. She argued that, that was the sure way of ending or addressing conflicts among pastoralists especially

²²⁸ Ibid

within Karamoja Region and that the schools ensure disarming the minds and the hearts of the people.²²⁹

Lorupe's race symbolically calls on governments to initiate irrigation schemes for pastoral communities as a mean of reducing rising poverty by enhancing food security and providing alternative livelihoods to pastoralism which has been the main factor of conflict. Pastoralism is a viable economy, but has suffered because of conflict and because infrastructure to enhance its value for local and national development is not in place. She appeals to the government of Kenya to establish a meat processing and tanning industry to promote livestock trade. Livestock economy is one of the largest earners in some countries. Botswana, for instance, earns about kshs 70 billion per year from livestock.²³⁰ This, according to her, will create jobs for the communities and give them income for funding education for their children as well as reduce illiteracy and economic dependence on livestock and by default reduce cattle rustling conflict. Pursue other dimensions of excellence. To the communities, she told them that pastoralists have only been known for fighting each other and yet pastoralists have potential to excel in sports, education, business and above all peace which she encouraged them to pursue rather than pursuing cattle raids.²³¹ Lorupe further noted that; water is the single most important factor in addressing pastoralist problem ”.

Lorupe uses the race forum to remind the pastoral legislators that the burden of developing their communities heavily rests on them. She challenges the Members of Parliament from Kenya, Uganda and southern Sudan to facilitate faster development for the communities in the region. She advises the communities to be supportive and patient to enable their leaders focus on the development of the communities. Lorupe also encourages girls to go to school and appeals to their parents to allow their daughters to go to school and benefit from education and to stop forcing girls to undergo Female Genital

²²⁹ Quote by Tegla Loroupe, during the 22nd, Tecla Lorupe Peace Race in the Seventh Edition of the *Moroto Peace Race Report*, July, 03, 2010

²³⁰ The Institute of Economic Affairs, “Economic Imperatives in the Context of Political Transition”, *The POINT, Bulletin of the Institute of Economic Affairs*, Issue No. 43: January 2001

²³¹ Ibid

Mutilation, since this outdated act undermines the rights of the girl child and denies them opportunities for better life and education, because after the passage of rite they are married off to older men. This does not allow the girl to choose peace because she remains a slave to outdated culture.²³²Lorupe's efforts have brought calm in the region. Since launching of the race, there has been relative peace among pastoral communities in the Karamoja Region (Uganda) and North Rift(Kenya) as a result of the Joint Disarmament Operation, which was peaceful and voluntaril. Tegla Lorupe Peace Foundation efforts in the pastoral regions in Kenya and Uganda have been recognized and valued by organizations that have now become strong supporters of its initiative as shown in the photographs below taken in 2010;

Photos on the Tecla Lorupe Peace Marathon

²³² Eunice Hasango Kaumbi, *The Moroto Peace Race Report: the 22nd*, Tecla Lorupe Peace Race in the Seventh Edition of the July, 03, 2010 teгла@teglapeacefoundation.org / www.teglapeacefoundation.org

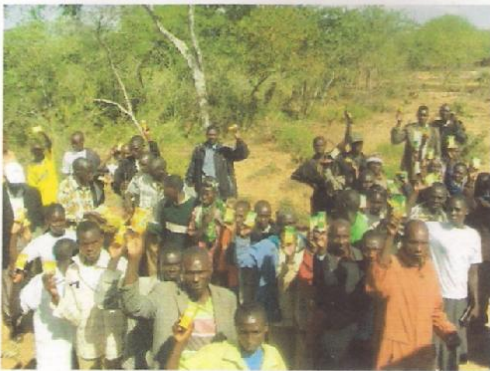
PICTORIAL PAGES



Reformed warriors and clusters chairmen from the Karamojang cluster during the race.



Hon. Peter Lokeris (Uganda) and Hon. Samwel Poghiso (Kenya) joins other participants in the race.



Some of the warriors enjoying the different flavours of the Afia Juices



University Bus provided by Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology to carry some of the participants from Kenya to and from Moroto



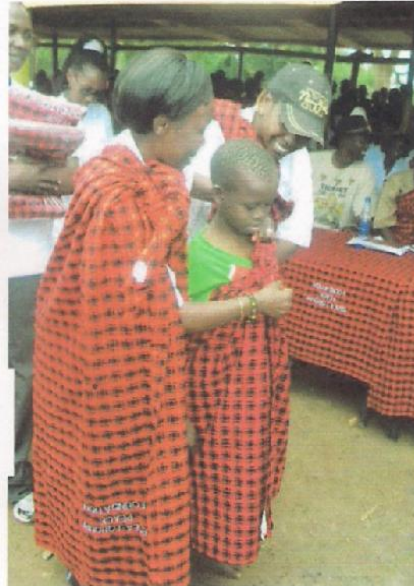
Amb. Dr. Tegla Lorupe addresses participants during the event.



Members of Parliament from Uganda and Kenya



Hon. Samuel Poghisiso, Minister for Information and Communication (Kenya) addresses participants and other guest before the flagging off of the men's warrior



Jacinta Juma (Above right) of Institute of Security Studies give a cash prize to the youngest boy in the 10km men race as Amb. Loroupe looks on.



The Road to Peace is long and Hard

The MMUST University bus stuck in sand on the way to Moroto

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The Pokot women frequently called upon the government and the president to intervene and stop the conflict that has killed and displaced many people in the Pokot region. Such calls by women prompted the president to visit the conflict zones where his tour became a reference point for peace building activities. As a result, more government administrators went to affected areas.²³³

5.4 Pokot Women and Informal Grassroots Peace Building Initiatives

While it is often asserted that women experience conflict differently from men and face greater burdens during the recovery process, there has been limited systematic research into this question on the case of the Pokot women owing to a paucity of data. Available literature on the consequences of armed conflict on Pokot women suggests that their lives and livelihoods underwent significant adjustments. There are numerous accounts of Pokot women taking up new economic roles, acting as peacemakers and providing essential economic and social support to the reconstruction of their community. However, much more needs to be known about the nature and magnitude of the benefits of including women more fully in economic recovery and peace building processes.

Local peace-building activities in Pokot-land emerged out of despair and exasperation among women. Frequent fights interfered with women peace, something that they needed most in order to trade. To avoid loss of life and economic livelihood, women opted for reconciliation. Peace and reconciliation were part of rehabilitation of the communities which had for long been affected by conflict. Although the departure of foreign actors, such as ITDG, OAU/IBAR who contacted reconciliatory processes along the Kenya and Uganda Pokots and Turkana meeting and Matheniko of Loputuk,²³⁴ created a vacuum, it did leave local actors, among them women, with the space to reassert their role and engage in a wide range of activities related to returning, rehabilitation and

²³³ Oral interviews, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

²³⁴ Darlington Akabwai, *The Paired Group Meeting between Pokot and Turkana, Matheniko and Pokot of Uganda in attendance at Lokichar Reformed Church*, Community-based Animal Health and Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics (PACE) Organization of African Unity/Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (OAU/IBAR)

reconstruction.²³⁵ The first daunting task for women was to convince the elders of the importance of putting an end to the conflict so that the displaced people could return to their homes.

To enable the return of the displaced people, rehabilitation and reconstruction, Sigor women formed some groups, such as Kasetiang women Group, Chomnyong women Group, Mosol Women Group Simotwo Women group and Arrur women Group, through which they raised funds to finance economic activities as a way to restore the livelihood. They initiated projects like brick-making, honey farming and poultry projects. They also came up with women committees through which they approached the administration for further funding from the Constituency Development Fund kitty. The projects acted as a meeting point that opened a window for the women to engage in advocacy and a recruitment drive to bring other women on board. They visited other women within the pastoral region and sought their support in alternative economic way apart from cattle raids. Soon the group grew as more volunteers were drawn from a cross-section of the community. For efficiency, women decided to begin by targeting members of their own families and clans to explain the need to support an initiative towards peace.²³⁶

The women groups began to talk to their clan members, convincing them of the need to end the conflict. After some consultations, the elderly Pokot women managed to organize meetings with the elders. Most of the Pokot men were prejudiced against what the women could achieve. They thought this was a waste of time. Nevertheless, some peace loving elders tipped the balance in the favour of the women. They spoke about the need for peace, argued that men were responsible for the conflict and challenged elders to get involved and stop conflicts. While some of the elders were known warlords, all expressed a desire for peace. The Pokot women then used these elders as their entry point in their dealing with men on peace issues. This development was a significant breakthrough in a

²³⁵ Monica. J. Kathina, "*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*" pp. 21-35.

²³⁶ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

patrilineal Pokot society that privileged the opinion of men and the elderly, over women and the young.²³⁷

Women and concerned men then started mobilizing elders from the various clans. After a series of meetings between clan elders, Members of Parliament from the region and NGOs organized regular meetings of elders. At such gatherings, the Peace Committees were formed which comprised of women members. More significantly, there was creation of investigative teams drawn from all clans to monitor the conflict in the region. Owing to their composition, the Pokot public trusted these teams to discover the truth about crimes and to make fair judgments that could ensure justice. Members of the Council for Peace then started going out to communal points like the market, water wells and border regions calling for calm and manage the pastoral conflicts. Wanting to be associated with peace, some elders took the peace campaign seriously and sometimes had to expose themselves to great danger by engaging the youth and warning them against raiding their neighbours.²³⁸

In some incidents, the women urged elders to intervene and return the raided animals. In response the elders organised peace talks with the communities which had been raided to avert a counter raid which may have worsened the situation. The elders picked representatives from each clan to form a committee to aid the return of raided animals. The elders negotiated with the elders from neighbouring communities where animals had been taken after discovering the place where the animals were and confronted the raiders and finally returned the animals to the owners. Effectively, women had lit the candle of peace and passed it on to the men. On 7th January 2005, suspected Pokot raiders from Baringo district struck Nachola village in Turkana and drove away over 300 herds of Cattle. However, all the 300 Turkana cattle were recovered and returned to their owners after peaceful negotiations.²³⁹ Men continued to deal with conflicts, in the public domain and the issue of inter-clan wars.²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Monica. J. Kathina, “*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*” pp. 21-35.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Practical Action, 2006

²⁴⁰ Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

5.5 Women and Youth in Peace Building

After incorporating the elders in their peace efforts the women then expanded their operational base to the youths. Male youths were key in perpetrating the conflict while girls were mostly victims of abuses. The women organized meetings with the youth and discussed their role in the conflicts and its impact on their lives. A classic example is the Turkana Pokot Women Fellowship which is an interdenominational Christian Organization covering Turkana Pokot East District. It was formed as an umbrella assembly for all churches existing in Turkana and Pokot. TPWF has a vision of one united church in the sense that they all identify themselves as one people belonging to the same God. To the women of Pokot and Turkana, a healthy Church also means people of God who are physically, spiritually, emotionally, economically and psychologically viable.²⁴¹ They seek to forget doctrinal differences at the expense of the unity and peace.

It is for this reason that Pokot and Turkana East Women fellowship is involved in matters of peace. It is their responsibility to mediate for peace with the congregation. Churches have also been encouraged by the forum to set aside one Sunday every month to preach peace and pray for peace. Everything that is going to be done on this particular Sunday should be geared towards peace building. Songs, dramas, skits, prayers and testimonies were related to peace building. The members of the fellowship invited pastors from Baringo East (Pokot East Pastors Fellowship) for prayers and dialogue at Kapedo aimed at forging for peace. TPPF mobilized interdenominational Women Convention drawing participants from Turkana East District and Baringo East. TPPF acknowledged women's role as peace makers. Fifty women attended the conference from Turkana and Pokot Community in 2006. The women in this forum were expected to forge forward for peace in the Bible's guide.²⁴²

²⁴¹ Oral interview, Jackson Ewat Ekadeli, Peace Facilitator, World Vision Lokori Turkana East District, 12/10/2010

²⁴² Ibid

Out of the meetings, decisions were made to pursue peace by helping in stopping the violence and encouraging the youth to engage in development projects to rebuild the economic base of the communities.²⁴³ To achieve sustainable peace, youth groups under the banner of Youth for Peace Groups were organized. The task of these groups was to talk to youths still in the bush and convince them to surrender their guns and cease the violence. Beyond convincing their peers, the youth had a great impact in changing the attitudes of the elder community members. The elders felt that, if their children were urging for peace, how can they not follow their examples? The youth argued convincingly that people had wronged each other, and that conflicting pastoral communities had suffered a lot. They expressed sympathy with the victims and appealed for peace, calm, and patience, calling on people to talk to each other in order to end the conflict.²⁴⁴

To address the problem of idleness among the youth, the women advocating for peace called for the revitalization of the youth polytechnics in the pastoral region. They believed that the youth polytechnics could offer training to the idle youth and enable them to engage in wealth generating activities which would keep them busy and discourage them from conflict. Young people would begin to seek training and engage in income-generating activities, such as construction and the manufacture of whitewash. The rehabilitation of the Youth Polytechnic would give the youth hope of a better economic future. Here they could obtain the skills and training necessary for leading productive lives.²⁴⁵

5.6 Women and Reformed warriors

The conflict in the Pokot territory had been greatly influenced by the cattle rustlers who organized frequent raids to their neighbouring communities. Women used the elders to access and convince the young men (warriors), who were among the combatants, to change from their conflict life into peaceful people. The women used a strategic process

²⁴³ Kennedy Mkutu, "Pastoral Conflict and Small Arms, pp. 119-182.

²⁴⁴ Monica J. Kathina, "*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*": pp. 21-35.

²⁴⁵ Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

involving a synergetic series of actions targeted at addressing the sources of conflict and supporting the structures and capacities for peace which usually included a variety of institutional and socioeconomic measures, at the local level aimed at institutionalising justice and building positive peace. The women used the following important methods to achieve their goals. They listened to the grievances of the youth. Whether they agreed or disagreed, they listened with an open mind and empathized with their feelings. They didn't try to talk them out of their fears, but they were positive to the youth. The women also let the youth know that they were safe and that they will do everything in their power to protect them.²⁴⁶ The objective was to transform their way of life and bring them into the peace-building fold. This warriors' role in the conflicts had been enhanced by the influx of guns following the persistent conflicts in the neighbouring countries, such as the Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Somalia. One strategy involved women contacting the spouses of militia members and urged them to help convert their husbands to peace building. Some notorious rustlers were converts through the advice by their wives.²⁴⁷

Because most of the youth involved in cattle raids related activities in order to earn a livelihood, the women urged the government to develop a strategy which would advance credit in small amount to reformed warriors. The government and NGOs were encouraged to give loans to the youths to the tune of Kshs 2,000 (USD 45) to start small business. The loans were given by the government through banks, such as Equity and National Bank, to enable groups such as Alurr Youth group to run bee keeping projects. After repaying the first micro-credit loan, the second loan could be doubled to Kshs 4,000 and then Kshs 6,000. While these amounts seemed small, the loans did help people with earning a decent living.²⁴⁸

5.7 Religion: a Tool for Peace Building

To prepare the ground for reconciliation, meetings and workshops were organized for religious leaders, both Christian and traditional religious groups. The Christian church

²⁴⁶ Ibid

²⁴⁷ *Women their Hopes for a Peaceful Future*, Women for Women International, 2006, p. 10.

²⁴⁸ Oral interview, Margaret Euwon, Pokoyu location, Sigor, 12/10/2010.

women in Pokot North and the women peace wagon accommodated people from varied fields. By using traditional and administrative channels, the women peace movements broke the cycle of violence and began nurturing peace. The message of peace was carried from village to village, urging the different groups, including chiefs, elders, police and women, to work together.²⁴⁹

Through religious efforts, women initiated peace at grass root level through the choir and other sectors of the community. However, the question of where to hold the emerging initiatives that had so far operated in an ad-hoc basis arose. This concern was based on the realization that the relative peace achieved needed consolidation and had to be grounded, if it were to be sustainable. Regular consultations were held to deliberate whether the peace initiatives should sit within or outside government structures. During these consultations, the notion of inclusiveness arose that was to become the answer to the question of whether governmental or non-governmental ownership of peace was the answer.²⁵⁰

The search to institutionalize peace culminated in conferences attended by all sectors of the Pokot community and their neighbours. The main participants were elders, youth, women, religious leaders, businessmen and politicians. Invited to attend the conference were also administrators of the district, civil servants, the police and the military. At the end of such conferences, participants came up with a peace declaration that set out the principles to guide the communities in their search of sustainable peace. The most significant development out of these meetings was the creation of the Districts Peace and Development Committees in order to legitimize peace efforts and weave them into the administration of the affected districts.²⁵¹ Thus, these committees became an integral part of the decision-making processes at the district levels because of their location at the highest level of security and decision making of the district. Within the framework of the

²⁴⁹ *Women their Hopes for a Peaceful Future*, Women for Women International, 2006, p. 10.

²⁵⁰ Monica J. Kathina, “*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace* pp. 21-35.

²⁵¹ Oral interview, Akorikwang Atodongole, Masol Location, 12/10/2010.

DDC, peace workers sought a balance between the Pokot traditional system of conflict resolution and Kenyan constitutional law.²⁵²

Traditionally women could prevent inter-ethnic conflicts in a number of ways. Among the Pokot, there is a belief that a woman can protect her son from external harm of any kind by wearing a birth belt called *leketio*. *Leketio* is a belt, which supports pregnancy hence life. The belt is studded with cowry shells. *Leketio* is considered as a powerful charm that protects children from harm. Before warriors set out for a raid, each of them informs his mother so that she can wear the belt while he is away. To prevent conflicts, women refused to wear the belts, prompting the warrior to abandon the mission.²⁵³

Women could also lay their belts in front of warriors who were about to go for a raid. Crossing a *leketio* was considered a curse. For instance, when fighting was raging, a woman removed her *leketio* and laid it between the fighting men. The fight ceased immediately. The concepts of using pregnancy belt to halt or prevent conflicts assisted achieve some relative peace among the Pokot people and their neighbouring pastoral communalities.²⁵⁴

5.8 Women and Education for Peace Campaigns

Women through NGOs organized education campaigns targeting the various groups, particularly government officials within the framework of the DDC. Each workshop identified the next target group depending on whom the participant viewed as requiring exposure to civic education. Chiefs and sub-chiefs with leadership training were among the beneficiaries of these workshops. Their training focused particularly on need for peace and development. These helped them appreciate the impact of conflict on the civilians and the need to deal with the persistent conflict in the pastoral regions. Other groups of civil servants who were exposed to the civic and peace education included the police, military personnel and administrative officers, particularly the District Officers.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Oral interview, David Momongura, Porkoyu Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

²⁵³ Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabella Masinde, “*Indigenous Democracy*”, p.39.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Monica J. Kathina, “*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace*” pp. 21-35.

With the help of the Administration Police wing of Peace Corps the women in collaboration with peace committees organized peace caravans which exported peace to other conflict -ridden districts of West Pokot, The larger Baringo district, Marakwet, Turkana and even across the international border to Karamojong people on Ugandan side. Besides, owing to the social clan structure, communities in Pokot land have relations in these districts and beyond the borders of Kenya. For peace to be sustainable in larger Pokot region, therefore, required peaceful coexistence with communities in neighbouring districts. This reality became a basis for nurturing an inter-district understanding and peaceful coexistence.²⁵⁶

No single factor can account for some success of women and the entire peace movement in the Pokot land. A combination of factors contributed to the creation of some sustainable peace that has since been replicated in outlying districts. The idea of working for peace in Pokot occurred at the right moment. The society had been nearly destroyed after continuously experiencing conflict and wanton destruction. Secondly the absence of outside actors and initial reluctance of the government provided the Pokot women a space within which they defined their problems and sought local solutions. This opportunity made the nurturing of peace an organic process. Starting from issues that affected daily lives such as conflicts in the marketplace, women embraced bigger problems. This way of defining problems created opportunities for participation by all sectors of the community.²⁵⁷

From women, involvement extended to the elders, youths and the administration, which reinforced and legitimized the peace processes. By being so comprehensive, the peace processes benefited from the participation of the entire community. Prejudices were broken down as women and youths took up the mantle of peace.²⁵⁸ Besides, the peace movement was nurtured within the principle of inclusiveness. Realization that sustainable peace depended on engaging the whole spectrum of the society was crucial for peace.

²⁵⁶ Oral interview, Kokaatodiki Lomaria, Seker Location, Sigor, 11/10/2010.

²⁵⁷ Monica J. Kathina, “*Unveiling Women as Pillars of Peace* pp. 21-35.

²⁵⁸ NCKK, “*Pacifying the Valley*, p.19.

Critical also was the ability to involve rather than condemn criminals such as warlords, combatants and the ex-militia. Having the potential to bring war, these people had an immense capacity to bring about peace and to protect it.²⁵⁹ This was well elaborated by a Pokot woman in the fable below;

There was a conflict between two individuals on the issue of the possession of a calf. This conflict happened after the two cows gave birth on the same day and at the same place. During the night a hyena came and ate of one of the calves. The next day the two cows were struggling to “own” the remaining calf. When the “men” owners of the two cows came and saw what had happened, both of them laid claim to the remaining calf. This created conflict between the two men. Both men then appealed to the modern court to resolve their conflict. The court asked them whether they had eye witnesses or not. They replied that they had no eye witnesses since the calf disappeared at night . Faced with these obtaining circumstances, the court couldn’t make a decision, so it referred the matter to the traditional elders’ court for resolution. During its first sitting under a tree, the elders asked for more to resolve the matter. They advised that they should wait until the dry rivers become full for them to resume the case. Traditionally among the Pokot people, conflicts are mostly resolved during the rainy season near rivers when animals have become relatively fat. Based on their request, the case was postponed. When the rivers were full with flowing water, the elders’ court resumed their judicial procedures. They ordered a man to carry the calf and cross the river. While the calf was “crying”while protesting for being separated with the “mother”, the cow which was the real mother immediately tried to jump into the river in order to save the life of its “baby”. The second cow which was not the mother stayed on the bank of the river. The elders’ court then identified the calf as belonging to the one that tried to get into the river. They promptly relayed their verdict to the resident magistrate in Kapenguria. The formal court admired the elders method of conflict resolution and accepted their decision..²⁶⁰ - ,

5.8 Conclusion

The peace efforts by the Pokot women have borne some fruit. Beginning with one critical group of women, and spreading to the elders, youths and the government, the region experienced some relative peace for some time and in particular after the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government took over power in Kenya in 2003 and declared

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Oral interview, Agnes Chekeruk, Sigor, 28/06/2012

that women were set to play bigger roles in Kenya's development than they were hitherto doing. As such and in the process, livestock related raids, conflict and banditry reduced drastically. In addition and keeping with promises men and youth had with women, they started to surrender illicit guns voluntarily to the local administration (Chiefs and Assistant Chiefs).

By 1997, more than one thousand guns had been surrendered and handed over to the police. Not all guns were turned in yet, but progress had been made towards disarmament of the entire North Rift region. Schools and businesses were reopened and flourishing in some once deserted trading centres, such as Kolowa, Tot, Katilu and Kanyarkwat. Development agencies also returned back. Notably, the full participation of the community (both men and women) as argued by the liberal feminist theorists was crucial. Also, significantly were the comprehensive mechanisms and structures the National rainbow coalition (NARC) government put in place, from the district down to the local level, for dealing with intra- and inter- community tensions, including peacefully managing those tensions and or conflict. Perhaps the most significant developments that led to the relative peace not only in Sigor, but the entire North Rift region of Kenya, was the efforts expended by women, despite their disadvantaged positions in a highly patriarchal society, to conflict prevention, management and peace building including, low scale communal post conflict reconstruction. .

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Armed conflict negatively affects women and men and results in gender-specific disadvantages, particularly for women, who are not always recognised by the mainstream, gender-blind understandings of conflict and reconstruction. Gender inequality reflects power imbalances in social structures that exist in pre-conflict periods and are exacerbated by armed conflict and its aftermath. The acceptance of gender stereotypes is one of the main reasons that such gender blindness persists.

Stereotypical interpretations shape and are shaped by social, political, economic, cultural and religious contexts. Armed conflict encourages expectations that men will fight and women will support them on the home front. The popular perception is that men are soldiers or aggressors and women are wives, mothers, nurses, social workers and sex-workers. It is true that it is primarily men, who are engaged in conflict or in battle, but women make up the majority of the society. They undergo casualties and suffer in their role as care givers, due to a breakdown of social structures. This is the story that the Pokot women have to live with and yet this had not been revealed. However, the study revealed that Pokot women were also combatants, and sometimes men were also victims. These realities had consequences for gender relations, which often went unnoticed among the Pokot.

The study revealed that the impact of armed conflict on gender relations are significant. Forced displacement and gender-based violence are two examples of impacts that are not inevitable outcomes of armed conflict, but rather are deliberate strategies of war that destabilize families and communities. Physical and sexual violence, particularly towards women and children, occur with greater regularity during and after armed conflict. Women experience rape and forced pregnancy, forced sex work and sexual slavery, often at the hands of raiders and sometimes the security personnel that are sent to stop the conflict. Although men are the primary perpetrators of violence towards women and

children, it is important to note that women are not just subject of victimisation and violence, they equally take active part.

Armed conflict exacerbates inequalities in gender relations that existed in the pre-conflict period. This study explores the role of women in armed conflict. It highlights the roles played by women in armed conflict and peace building practices. The study reveals the diverse realities of women and men, who may simultaneously play the roles of activists and parents, soldiers and victims. Recognising and addressing this diversity is vital to establishing more sustainable, peace building programmes. Women experience significant disadvantage in the course of armed conflict, but it does not necessarily follow that men are always the perpetrators and therefore the winners, and women the losers. This study shows that both women and men experience armed conflict in distinct ways that in turn may alter their participation.

This study was inspired by the inequality that women experience during and after armed conflict in all societies. A key focus of this study is to explore the role of Pokot women in Sigor in peace building but first had to show their roles in armed conflict. This was aimed at giving gender relations in terms of how conflict affected was concern. The study started by discussing the causes of armed conflicts among the Pokot people. The study revealed that the causes of armed conflict in Sigor or large Pokot country are often linked with attempts to control economic resources. In the pastoral regions as the Pokot country, for example, cattle raiding has caused and intensified the impoverishment of women and men forcing them to adapt to new roles.

The study revealed that the entire members of Pokot community have been targeted and killed, displaced and/or marginalised in the name of cattle raids by neighbouring communities. The control of resources, like the exercise of power, is gendered. Those who do not have power or resources groups that are disproportionately, though by no means exclusively, made up of women do not usually start wars. Unresolved struggles over resources, combined with the severe impact of harsh environment, impoverishment and increased militarisation in zones of conflict, serve to prolong existing armed

conflicts. Moreover, conflict tends to cause and/or perpetuate inequalities between ethnic groups and discrimination against marginalised groups of women and men, thereby paving the way for the outbreak of future conflicts.

In these conflicts, the study revealed that the nature of warfare has dramatically changed due to the development of increasingly sophisticated weapons technology. At the same time with such increased technology, lighter weapons are made available which require less training therefore making them easier for use by women. The research revealed that women in conflict prone Pokot were mobilised in armed conflict because their support, labour and services were needed. At the same time, the construction of women as 'mothers' and 'guardians of the culture' within the Pokot national interests have been often constrained. They opted to be active in conflict and post-conflict reconstruction processes.

While investigating the role played by the Pokot women of Sigor in peace building, the research aimed at achieving three objectives of examining the sources of conflict among the Pokot people, the role played by women in this conflict and peace building processes and finally the role of women on peace-making processes among the Pokot community. To achieve these objectives, the research was guided by three hypotheses which included a notion that resources were the main source of conflict among the Pokot people. In this conflict women played some roles and finally that woman efforts in peace building impacted on peace making processes.

To satisfactorily achieve the above, the research was guided by the liberal feminist theory which insisted that women equal men in all societal activities, including war and peace making processes. In its mission the research found out that indeed woman played important roles in the conflict and peace making among the Pokot. Pokot women and girls were associated with fighting. The women kept the society running by maintaining the social networks in terms of access to shelter, land, property, food, labour exchange, family and child support, and more sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The research reveals that apart from taking part in conflict women and girls also faced insecurity due to persistent conflict, hence influencing them to take active roles in peace building. Yet, there was little known from the Pokot community on the position of women in this conflict. The research further revealed that in order for there to be real reconciliation, there was a need for forums and other woman friendly spaces in which those who violated rights come forward, acknowledges that they committed violations, renounce those violations and seek reconciliation and peace with the community. If these violations were not addressed, it was likely there will be no justice and thus no real peace. In-fact, in the absence of justice mechanisms and processes of recognizing women by sensitization of civilian populations to accept women in the Pastoral region may actually increase tensions among these populations.

The research proved that increased meaningful women participation in peace talks, mediations and other negotiation processes, including during the peace negotiations and planning processes, would ensure lasting peace in the pastoral Pokot community. The research highlighted the importance of women's meaningful participation in peace negotiations because the groundwork for peace and security structures is put in place. The research also proved that women were very important in influencing men in society and can help sustain the peace process.

For women leaders involved in meaningful participation in peace negotiations marks a pivotal step in setting post-conflict community and reconstruction agendas that take women's and girls' needs and priorities into account. This research clearly illustrated that when women are discriminated in peace negotiators and women representatives are not present at the peace talks, women's issues, concerns and priorities were usually also absent at the peace table, hence the goals of peace were never achieved.

Apart from women position in peace the research also analyzed the history of the Pokot people in relation to the conflict that persisted in Sigor region. The research described the history of the Pokot people, their origin and reviewed their social and economic life in relation to the conflict that affected the entire Pokot country and in particular the Pokot of Sigor. The research also brought in the aspect of the British colonial administration. The

colonial administration was important to the study because it was some of the structures they put in place that inform the conflict among the Pokot people.

Although the colonial administration was partly blamed for the conflict that affected the Pokot country, the research proved that conflict among the Pokot people is as old as their history. In their traditional days before Africa was colonized by the European powers, the Pokot engaged in inter-ethnic wars where they used traditional weapons and the main causes of conflict were strictly cultural. The research found out that, with the coming of the Europeans, the conflict was complicated by the flow of modern arms into the Pokot country. The situation was even made worse by conflicts in troubled neighbouring countries which ensured efficient supply of modern weapons in Sigor region.

The research also proved that the conflict was also caused by various unpredictable factors, ranging from environmental, security, revenge, and resource considerations. These factors affected the entire Pokot community, women included. Since the government and the traditional systems that ensured security of women had been interfered with, women were also forced to take up roles in the conflict.

The research further indicated that conflict caused suffering of the people of Sigor, men and women. The conflict in Sigor imposed heavy social and economic costs to the people. It also imposed costs on neighbouring communities. The resources which would have been used for development were diverted either to military operations or assisting the displaced people. The history of the conflict was disappointing. The impact and trauma of death of family members extend far beyond the attack itself. Women survivors faced emotional torment, psychological damage, physical injuries, disease, social ostracism and many other consequences that can devastate their lives. The research, therefore achieved the main objectives and proved the hypotheses right.

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