

The Role of the Church in Facilitating Reconciliation Between Warring Communities: A Case Study of Pokot and Turkana Communities in Northern Kenya

David Kibet Chirchir

He holds a Master of Theology and a Bachelor of Theology from Africa International University.

Email: davidchirchir@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study focused on the Christian church's critical role in facilitating a sustainable peace process between the warring communities of Pokot and Turkana, which have witnessed protracted inter-ethnic conflicts that have led to the loss of lives and property. Various organisations have attempted to resolve this recurring problem; however, their efforts have not yielded fruit. The study investigates how a sustainable reconciliation can be achieved and proposes the Christian church as an entity that can appropriately facilitate sustainable reconciliation between warring communities. Four specific objectives guided this study: First, it explored the underlying cause of conflict; second, examining why other attempted conflict resolution has not been able to offer sustainable conflict resolution; third, it discussed biblical mandates for the church as an agent of sustainable reconciliation; and fourth, explore how the church can be equipped to offer sustainable reconciliation. The study adopted a qualitative design in collecting the data, and the Pastoral cycle methodology was used to analyse the data. The study revealed that the sinful nature of humankind is the primary root cause of the repeated conflict. Also, the failed approaches have focused on only responding to symptoms of conflict hence offering temporary reconciliation. The Christian church has a divine role and mandate to be the agent of sustainable reconciliation and should be equipped to fulfil this role.

Key Words: Church, Reconciliation, Warring Communities, Conflict Resolution, Pokot, Turkana



Introduction

Pokot and Turkana are communities that neighbour each other since time immemorial. As the saying goes, you can choose a friend, but you cannot choose a neighbour. The two pastoralist communities in Northwestern Kenya share many things in common. However, they have been unable to coexist in harmony because of repeated conflicts due to cattle rustling/raids and scrambling for pasture. As a result, many innocent lives and property have been lost. According to the *Center for Human Rights and Policy Studies: Conflict Assessment Report Danida Peace, Security and Stability (PSS) Programme-Kenya 2016-2020*,

Conflicts in West Pokot are largely driven by competition over control of and access to natural resources, particularly water and pasture. Deep-seated cultural practices, land disputes, political competition, and lack of jobs and income among the youth also contribute to conflict. Thirty-eight percent of respondents in the household survey also attribute the conflict to natural resources with ethnic hatred closely following.¹

This has prompted several responses that have unfortunately been unsustainable. Standard Digital newspaper, dated 22nd Jan 2012, reported that,

Over the last two decades, areas near and along the common borders of Turkana, West Pokot, and Baringo counties have experienced escalating incidences of insecurity related to cattle rustling and boundary disputes. Almost every month, tens of lives are lost, and hundreds of livestock are stolen by bandits who operate with impunity. This has led to communities living in fear. Businesses have almost come to a halt, as entire communities are rendered destitute. Most of the residents now depend on relief food. Despite this, the government security machinery, both in Nairobi and the affected areas, has failed to provide a lasting solution to the chronic problem.²

The government, non-governmental organisations and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms have always attempted to resolve the conflicts to no avail. The initiatives provide a temporary solution, thus calling for a sustainable and lasting solution that provides harmonious coexistence between Pokot and Turkana communities. This study identified the Christian church as the most suitable and dependable agent of reconciliation for the warring communities. The Christian church possesses unique divine qualities of being the trustworthy agent of love, peacemaking, and reconciliation.

¹Center for Human Rights and Policy Studies: Conflict Assessment Report Danida Peace, *Security and Stability (PSS) Programme-Kenya 2016-2020*.

² Josphat Nanok "Stem insecurity in Turkana, West Pokot and Baringo," *The Standard Media* (Standard 22nd January 2012). <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000050478/stem-insecurity-in-turkana-west-pokot-and-baringo>.



Corbett and Fikkert identified the broken fourfold relationships occasioned by the fall of humankind as broken relationships with God, self, others and the rest of creation.³ The conflicts experienced in society today are linked to an original broken relationship in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, the repeated hostilities experienced between the Pokot and Turkana and other communities should be viewed as a manifestation of humankind's fallen nature in the Garden of Eden. This fallenness is evident worldwide, but the church has stood out as a light.

In Rwanda, the Lutheran Church saw the need to participate in the reconciliation process after the 1994 genocide actively. Rabes said, "Twenty-five years ago, Rwanda saw its darkest days as friends, neighbours, and family members rose against one another in a genocide that has left lasting effects upon the nation. The physical and emotional scars in this Christian country serve as reminders of the need for hope, forgiveness, and reconciliation"⁴ Definitely, this step undertaken by the church yielded a lasting reconciliation in the Rwandan society. A similar intervention is needed for the church in the Pokot and Turkana communities to champion reconciliation. This research sought to explore how the Christian church in Pokot and Turkana can be equipped to be an effective agent of facilitating sustainable reconciliation. This research aimed to produce a contextualised continuous reconciliation process based on biblical principles that will guarantee a reliable conflict resolution between the warring communities of Pokot and Turkana.

The Problem Statement

Pokot and Turkana communities have not been living in harmony due to protracted tribal conflict. These repeated tribal conflicts have led to massive loss of lives and property while hindering developments in these regions. The hostility between these two communities has been attributed to cattle rustling, banditry, and scrambling for pasture and boundary disputes. Government and non-governmental organisations have tried to initiate reconciliation negotiation, but it lasts for a while; the negotiation agreement is broken, and the communities revert to conflicts. There has been an urgent need for a neutral mediator that can offer sustainable reconciliation. Following a deeper look at the situation, the study identified the

³ Corbett, S. A. *When Helping Hurts How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting The Poor And Yourself*. (LaSalle Boulevard: Moody Publishers, 2009), 14.

⁴ Rabe M. "Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Rwanda" *The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Office of International Mission* August 2019). <https://international.lcms.org/forgiveness-and-reconciliation-in-Rwanda>.



Christian church as the most suitable agent for sustainable reconciliation. However, the Christian church within these two communities has not been able to come out strongly and take active participation in the reconciliation process. Instead, the church within these communities has remained insensitive to this need to facilitate reconciliation. One of the reasons that may hinder the Christian church in this region from undertaking this duty of reconciliation is a lack of awareness and teachings. Therefore, there is a greater need to equip the Christian church to be at the forefront as a mediator of peace between Pokot and Turkana communities because the church has the divine mandate to facilitate sustainable reconciliation.

The Christian church within this region has continued to underutilise its potential to be a dependable agent of reconciliation. It must be reminded and equipped to effectively discharge this noble ministry of reconciliation. This research sought to explore many ways the church can accept its role as an agent of reconciliation in society. The church can implement the reconciliation process because Jesus Christ is the role model for reconciliation. He is the prince of peace. Jesus demonstrated reconciliation when He reconciled Jews and Samaritans who were hostile to each other. Jesus, in his teaching on the mountain, instructed, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt 5:9). Apostle Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that they are called to reconcile the world through the preaching of the gospel (2 Cor 5: 18-20).

This research sought to address the following research questions:

1. What is the root cause of reoccurring conflicts between the Pokot and Turkana Communities?
2. Why haven't the attempted efforts of reconciliation yielded sustainable reconciliation within the warring communities of Pokot and Turkana communities?
3. Why is the Christian church considered to be the most suitable agent of sustainable reconciliation within the warring communities of Pokot and Turkana communities?
4. How can the Christian church be empowered to undertake the ministry of reconciliation as one of its central mandates?



Review Literature

The Biblical Mandate

In Genesis 1, God creates human beings in his image and likeness. This imago Dei concept bears some implications,

Every single human being, no matter how much the image of God is marred by sin or illness, or weakness, or age, or any other disability, still has the status of being in God's image and therefore must be treated with the dignity and respect that is due to God's image-bearer. This has profound implications for our conduct toward others. It means that people of every race deserve equal dignity and rights.⁵

God intended for humankind to live in harmony with him and fellow human beings. But human beings have violated this truth by hating, fighting and killing fellow humanity. Genesis 3 records the fall of humanity, the genesis of brokenness, including broken relationships. Therefore, the root cause of conflicts experienced today traces back to the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Paul said, "When Adam sinned, sin entered the world, Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned" (Rom 5:12). This reminds us that fights, quarrels, hate, hostility, etc., are manifestations of sinful nature in humankind. Believers in Christ have a role to be ambassadors of reconciliation among warring communities.

The church has the biblical mandate to execute this task of being an agent of reconciliation (1 Cor 5:18). Paul says believers have the message of reconciliation. Hale comments on this verse, "Let us not remain silent! We, too, are God's Ambassadors we are God's spokesman, His representatives on earth... To be the ambassador of a great King is a great honor and responsibility"⁶ Therefore, this study engaged with church leaders from the Pokot and Turkana regions to produce a homegrown solution.

In his work, *The Role of the Church in Promoting Reconciliation In the 2008-2013 Post-Election Violence in Kenya*, Wafula discussed how the church is supposed to engage effectively in reconciliation. He remarks, "Considering this, the church has a critical call to appreciate and use her divine mission of fostering reconciliation in society."⁷ The author urges the church to utilise the divine mandate of reconciliation bestowed on them.

⁵ Wayne Grudem. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan, 1994), 450.

⁶ Hale T. *The Applied New Testament Commentary*. (Colorado Springs: Global Mission, 1996), 67.

⁷ Wafula Nyongesa M. *The Role of the Church in Promoting Reconciliation: In 2008-2013 Post-Election Violence in Kenya*-MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 2012.



Unfortunately, due to unawareness, most Christian churches in the region have not utilised this mandate. Therefore, this study provides an avenue for teaching Christian churches to live out their identity.

Role of the Church

The emphasis of this research was to awaken the Christian church to realise that it should be an agent of reconciliation in society because it has a unique approach. Shenk, David, in his book *Justice, Reconciliation and Peace*, argues that the church must share the gospel of reconciliation, “The transcultural nature of the church has placed the African Church in a unique and significant position... the church continues to bear a major responsibility in helping to oil the inter-ethnic experience required of modern nationhood.”⁸

The Late Bishop Cornelius Korir participated in reconciliation in this region and wrote a book on *Amani Mashinani (Peace at the Grassroots) Experiences of Community Peacebuilding in the North Rift Region of Kenya*. He argues that the church should be involved in peacemaking, especially at the grassroots. He also mentions that the community in conflict has confidence in the church to be a peace broker among them. He states, “I asked our Justice and Peace Commission to go ask the Pokot and Marakwet elders what they would want the church to do for them. We were surprised to find the answer from both sides was the same: ‘We want you to help us talk to each other.’”⁹ Society is yearning for a neutral mediator, of which the church readily qualifies. Therefore, the Christian church must uphold the quality of being neutral because partiality brings about mistrust.

Causes of conflicts

Many scholars have studied the prolonged nature of the conflict between Pokot and Turkana. McCabe, Terence has documented a book on *Cattle Brings Us To Our Enemies*. The work looks into the causes of conflict between Pokot and Turkana. He states, “It is cattle that destroy people, for more people have died for the sake of a cow than for any other cause” he further adds that “Hostilities between the southern Turkana and the Pokot rapidly escalated then, especially after a raid in 1967 on the town of Kaputir which 33 women and children

⁸D. D. Shenk, *Justice, Reconciliation and Peace* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983), 107.

⁹Korir, C. *Amani Mashinani (Peace at the Grassroots) Experiences of Community Peace Building in the North Rift of Kenya* (Catholic Dioceses of Eldoret, 2009), 9.



were mutilated and killed.”¹⁰ McCabe’s argument places cattle at the centre as the cause of conflict between the Pokot and Turkana communities.

Tulel, Irene C., has published some works that promote women as peacebuilders, *Women and Peacebuilding in Pastoral Conflicts: A Case Study of Pokot Women in Sigor Region of West Pokot County, 1984-2000*. She conducted an extensive study on the participation of women in peacebuilding, whereby she argues that women are the most dependable agents of peacemakers in the conflict between Pokot and Turkana. Regarding the causes of conflict, she points out that “The conflicts were also caused by various unpredictable factors, ranging from environmental, security, revenge, and resource considerations.”¹¹ These factors categorised by Tulel as environmental include things like the drought that cause scarcity of water and pasture, security which entails bandit attacks, revenge whereby the attacked community retaliate and natural resource whereby communities along the border scramble for natural resources prompting them to fight.

Other Reconciliation Mechanism

This study also reviewed material that deals with reconciliation mechanisms. A cultural mechanism is the active reconciliation mechanism. Every community has a culture which dictates how people live and relate. It has a mechanism for how they manage conflicts. For example, in his article, Mezard, Berhane Yonas, *Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Northern Ethiopia: Assessing Rural Alamata Woreda, Tigray Regional State, Ethiopia*, analysed the vital process of resolving conflicts in the local community. The author defines the Mezard as “an Indigenous or informal way or method of conflict resolution practiced around the rural Alamata Woreda in the southern part of Tigray religion.”¹² Yonas argues that the traditional methods of indigenous tribunals have proved effective in maintaining peace and stability. “The last decade has seen an increasing resort in Africa to indigenous mechanisms of justice, peace, and reconciliation. For example, in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somaliland, Northern Uganda, and several other countries, indigenous mechanisms have gained in appeal as alternatives or supplements approaches to conflict resolution that is

¹⁰Terrence J. McCabe. *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies* (Grand Rapids: University of Michigan 2004), 80.

¹¹Irene C. Tulel, *Women and Peacebuilding in Pastoral Conflicts: A Case Study Of Pokot Women in Sigor Region of West Pokot County, 1984-2000*. (MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 2005).

¹²Yonas Berhane. *Mezard, Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Northern Ethiopia Assessing Rural Alamata Woreda, Tigray Regional State*. Ethiopia Hamburg, Anchor Academic, 2014.



Western designed.”¹³ The reconciliation mechanism mentioned deals with more internal conflicts. The gap that arises is how cross-cultural reconciliation mechanisms can be achieved. This study presented Christ-centered reconciliation, the universal mechanism that can transcend all cultures.

Isabella Masinde, Mohamud Adan, and Ruto Pkalya, in their book *Indigenous Democracy: Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet*, have exhaustively discussed the indigenous methods of conflict resolution within the four communities. The four communities are neighbours and practice pastoralism; they often fight due to cattle rustling/raids and fight for pasture. Each tribe has its way of conflict resolution mechanism through the elders. The book mentions that Pokot and Marakwet have ‘Kwokwo.’ The Samburu tribe has Nabo, the Turkana ‘tree of men.’¹⁴ These are specific forums in every community where issues are handled. The authors explain that,

In response to the cattle rustling menace that has ravaged the vast and rugged region, the communities under study have evolved and institutionalised an elaborate system and mechanisms of resolving conflicts, whether in the community or inter-community. The elders in the three communities form a dominant component of the customary mechanisms of conflict management. The elders command authority that makes them effective in maintaining peaceful relationships and a community way of life.¹⁵

Theology and Reconciliation

As this study advocates, the Christian church is the main actor in reconciliation; its principles have a theological foundation. The concept of reconciliation can best be explained from a theological perspective Colin Gunton in his book, *Theology of Reconciliation*, discussed reconciliation from a theological perspective whereby he says reconciliation is a concept drawn from the economy of salvation and is designed to characterise one of its numerous and complementary aspects. Translated into terms of personal relations, this involves the Son of God coming into our place and bearing that which we have brought upon ourselves.¹⁶ Theology explains who God is and Him being the initiator of reconciliation.

¹³ Ibid., 21.

¹⁴Ruto Pkalya, Mohamud Adan and Isabela Masinde, “*Indigenous Democracy Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet*” (Nairobi: ITDG-EA: 2004), v-vi.

¹⁵Ibid., v-vi.

¹⁶Coline Gunton. *Theology of Reconciliation* (New York: A&T Clark, 2003), 167-168.



Therefore, the study of theology concerning ethnic reconciliation provides a clear understanding and solid model whereby the Christian church can learn and execute the ministry of reconciliation. The ministry of reconciliation centres on God and how He reconciled humankind to himself, resulting in humanity reconciling to fellow human beings in a relationship distorted by sin.

Wijisen, Frans, in his book *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa*, discusses religion, conflict, and reconciliation. He remarks,

Christians tend to look at reconciliation from a biblical, normative perspective. First is reconciliation with God, creating harmony by healing the conflicts that separate people from God. The second is reconciliation with the self, minimising internal conflict. The third dimension involves reconciliation with one's neighbor and the wider community. The fourth is reconciliation with nature... Reconciliation with the neighbor is a prerequisite for reconciliation with God, not the other way round.¹⁷

The fourfold dimension of reconciliation paints a picture of a theological approach to reconciliation. Human reconciliation with God will affect all other reconciliations. Vertical reconciliation will lead to horizontal reconciliation.

Methodology

The research design that this study used was a qualitative research method. This method enabled this study to engage with the community in the field, making it easy to interpret and contextualise the research findings. As explained by McCombes in his article *How to Write a Research Methodology*, explains, “In a qualitative ethnography, you might aim to produce contextual real-world knowledge about the behaviors, social structures, and shared beliefs of a specific group of people. As this methodology is less controlled and more interpretive, you needed to reflect on your position as a researcher, taking into account how your participation and perception might have influenced the results.”¹⁸ The selected respondents for this research were clergy, elders, and church members

¹⁷ Wijisen, Frans. “*Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa. Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations.*” Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007, 136.

¹⁸ MacCombas, Shona. *How to Write a Research Methodology*, 2019.
[//www.scribbr.com/dissertation/methodology](http://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/methodology). (Accessed 11th September 2020).



Sample Group

The sample is described as “a subset of the population, selected for study in some prescribed manner.”¹⁹ The sample for this study involved five church denominations and one community elder from each ethnic group within the border region of Pokot and Turkana communities. The sample group included five pastors, ten elders, 15 congregants, and two elders from each ethnic group, drawn from the five churches in the Kasei, Kainuk, and Kapenguria divisions along the border region of Pokot and Turkana.

The researcher used non- non-random approach and selected Pastors/bishops, church elders, and congregants from the five selected church denominations: African Inland Church, Bible Faith Church of Kenya, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Africa Gospel Church, and Roman Catholic Church.

Sample Size and Procedure

According to Lavrakas, Paul J., a survey’s sample size refers to “the number of units that were chosen from which data were gathered.”²⁰ The sampling size was from the five selected churches with 5 Pastors (1 Pastor per church), ten elders (2 elders per church), 10 congregants (2 per church) who were specifically chosen to be interviewed in this study.

The sample was tabulated as follows.

Categories	Sample per church	Total Sample Size
Pastor/Bishop	1	5
Elders	2	10
Congregants/ members	3	15
Community elder	1 from each community	2
Total		32

Sampling Procedure

In conducting this study, the researcher used purposive sampling techniques; according to Enki Village, “purposive sampling is when a researcher chooses specific people within the population to use for a particular study or research project.”²¹ Rai and Thapa also explain that

¹⁹University of Alberta stat 151, note flong, 1960, 44.

²⁰Paul J. Lavrakas. Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods. (Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, 2008)

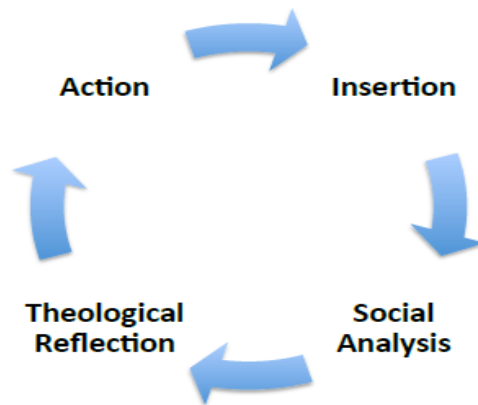
²¹<https://www.enkivillage.org/purposive-sampling.html>



Purposive sampling “represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. Also known as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g., people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied.”²²

Data Analysis Techniques

Data collected were subjected to Pastoral Cycle Analysis Techniques. The four-step process was developed by Peter Henriot and Joseph Holland and offered a framework for helping people apply their faith to social issues; “The process begins with insertion—our experience with an issue/injustice moves to social analysis and theological reflection on the issue/injustice and culminates in action—working for social change and serving those in need.”²³ Refer to the diagram below.



The researcher applied the four steps technique to develop a reconciliation process relevant to the communities facing conflict. In the first step- Insertion, the researcher gained experience of the situation of conflicts by visiting and conducting interviews; in the second step –social Analysis, the researcher explored the nature, the possible cause(s) and effects of conflicts—the third step- Theological Reflection. The researcher explored the issue of conflict resolution from a Christian faith perspective (How does the Scripture handle the issue of inter-tribal conflicts?) And finally, in the fourth step, which involves action, the researcher came out with

²²Rai, N., & Thapa, B. *A Study on Purposive Sampling Method in Research*. (Kathmandu: Kathmandu School of Law, 2015), 9-10.

²³ Joseph Holland and Peter Henriot. *Social Analysis—Linking Faith and Justice*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 1980.



practical actions that can be taken to make the church an active agent of sustainable reconciliation.

Results and Findings

The findings were analysed and discussed under the following subtopics as guided by the study's objectives: The reality of conflicts, the cause (s) of conflict, other reconciliation mechanisms, and the role and mandate of the church in reconciliation and equipping and empowering the church.

The Reality of Conflicts

The researcher conducted this study because of the devastating effects of repeated conflict between the Pokot and Turkana communities. The protracted conflicts have left a lot of pain for people living along the border regions. Therefore the researcher sought to know the extent and effect of conflict in the region. The respondents interviewed narrated the effects of the conflict in the region ranging from loss of life, property loss, underdevelopment, lack of education, famines, increased widows/ widowers, and orphans. The affected people along the border areas need sustainable peace. Therefore, the Christian church is called upon to be sensitive and respond to the plight of the people undergoing conflicts because it is better positioned to facilitate a sustainable reconciliation.

Cause of Conflict

Further, the study sought to establish the cause of repeated conflicts. The findings gathered highlighted several causes. The first cause is cattle rustling, a traditional practice of stealing from each other for cultural practices like marriage dowry and commercial purposes. Second is the scramble for pastures, whereby their cattle, goats and camel encroach on one another's territory, thus causing conflict. Third is environmental factors; the region experiences extended drought that causes the communities to compete for essential commodities like water, and, in the process, fights erupt. Fourth is boundary disputes; the researcher found out that the mentioned causes are usual challenges, but the problem is how to react to the situation. Therefore, there was a need to relook at the underlying cause of conflict to develop a lasting solution for the inter-ethnic conflict. In the process of relooking at the root cause of conflicts, the researcher approached this study from a biblical perspective, whereby it established that the root cause or the underlying cause of conflict is related to the sinful nature



of humankind (Gen 3) that has affected the human heart thus negatively impacting on relationships.

This study established that the current conflicts experienced between the communities are provoked by the underlying sin in humankind. James 4:1 states, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” Adeyemo comments on this verse and identifies one source of conflict “the pleasures that they desire and allow to dictate their behavior. Their conflicts are rooted in the envy of their own hearts and their behavior is self-centered. They think only of themselves.”²⁴ The self-centeredness and evil desires in the hearts of men lead them to conflicts. Therefore, the researcher believes the Christian church is better positioned to understand this concept. Cook, David remarks,

Many people call themselves peacemakers such as presidents, kings, prime ministers. They talk about peace; they make peace treaties, but there is no peace in the world. There is no peace because of man’s sin. Worldly peacemakers try to make peace by covering sin, by trying to arrange with evil men. But the true spiritual peacemaker tries to remove the injustice, pain, and sin in the world. They help men find peace with God. This is true peace.²⁵

Indeed, true peace will be realised when the root cause of conflict is identified and addressed. Therefore, the Christian church has a message that profoundly addresses the root cause of conflict. Through its members, it can respond to the problem of conflict between Pokot and Turkana by understanding that conflicts are provoked by underlying sin in humankind’s heart. Knowing this will help facilitate a sustainable reconciliation by transforming individual lives and communities.

Other Reconciliation Mechanisms

The second question is why past attempts to broker peace have been unfruitful and unsustainable. The study revealed that 85% of the respondents stated that various entities attempting to facilitate reconciliation do not address the root causes of conflict. In response to this question, 10% of the respondents felt that some reconciliation players are overwhelmed by biases. At the same time, 5% of the respondents indicated that overcrowding by payers of reconciliation cause overlapping and unnecessary competition.

Therefore, this study recommended that the Christian church be the most appropriate body to facilitate sustainable reconciliation. The Christian church can identify the root cause

²⁴ Tokumboh Adeyemo, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*; (Nairobi: Word Alive, Zondervan, 2006), 1514.

²⁵David Cook. *The Applied New Testament Commentary* (Colorado Springs: Global Mission 1996), 150.



of conflict and work toward building an all-rounded shalom. Furthermore, Christian Church has a quality of being neutral.

Church Mandate and Role of the Church in Reconciliation

The third question was whether leaders within conflict-prone areas understand they can facilitate sustainable inter-ethnic reconciliation. The findings revealed that 25% of Christian churches in the conflict-prone region have attempted to respond to conflict, while 55% do not have teachings that enable them to respond to conflict, and 20% have not prioritised conflict resolution exercises in their churches and communities. Therefore, it is necessary to equip Christian churches within the region to understand their role and mandate as an agent of sustainable reconciliation. The researcher demonstrated emphatically the biblical proof that the church has what it takes to be the most suitable agent of reconciliation.

Christians are called to be salt and light to society (Matt 5:13-14). By implication, “If Christians are called to be salt and light, then it follows that the world into which they are sent needs these qualities.”²⁶ Paul reminds the Corinthian Church that they have been given a ministry of reconciliation (1 Cor 5:18) because the gospel message reconciles people to God; it necessitates personal and interpersonal reconciliation. The Psalmist writes, “Seek peace and pursue it (Ps 34:14). Jesus points out that one of the greatest commandments is “You love your neighbour as you love yourself.” Cook comments that “How do we make peace? We make peace by loving our neighbor as ourselves. Love is the main weapon of the peacemaker. Paul wrote: if your enemy is hungry, feed him (Rom 12:20).”²⁷ This study recommends that awareness and teaching be rolled out in Christian churches within and along the border regions affected by ethnic conflicts.

Equipping and Empowering the Church

The researcher sought from church leaders about equipping and empowering the church in reconciliation ministry. The findings reveal that 70% of clergy interviewed understand reconciliation but from other independent organisations. Only 10% of clergy and leaders have tried to equip their churches. While the rest, 20%, do not practice and have not attempted to equip their churches. Therefore, the study reveals that churches in the region are not empowered and equipped because the clergy and leaders have not taken the initiative to equip

²⁶ Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*, (Nairobi: Word Alive, Zondervan, 2006), 1120.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 1120.



them. Therefore there is a need to encourage clergy that the churches they are leading have tremendous potential to be reconciliatory organs in society.

Furthermore, there is a need to educate and train pastors, church elders, and church members on theological-based reconciliation. Jesus Christ spends time training and equipping his disciples for ministry. For any effective ministry, there must be training and discipleship. Also, the church can have believers who serve a specific ministry of conflict reconciliation. Christian church believers who have the talent to minister cross-culturally can be trained and allowed to reach out to communities that are hostile to each other. Equipping and empowering the church for inter-ethnic reconciliation can be done through organised workshops, church conferences, and bible studies.

Conclusion

This study looked at the critical role the Christian church can play in facilitating sustainable reconciliation between the warring communities of Pokot and Turkana. The two communities have continued to experience repeated inter-ethnic conflict despite intervention by various bodies. This study identified the Christian Church as uniquely and advantageous positioned to be an agent of reconciliation because of its ability to single out the root cause of conflict and address it. The root cause of conflict, according to Genesis 3, is sin. God created humanity to live in harmony with Him and fellow humankind, but the effects of the fall of humanity distorted the relationships. Other bodies attempting to broker peace have not succeeded in instituting a sustainable peace because of failure to identify the sinful nature in humankind as the root or underlying cause of conflicts, which is critical in coming up with sustainable reconciliation.

The study further demonstrated that the Christian church has what it takes to be an agent of sustainable reconciliation because it has a divine role and mandate is anchored in the Bible. The study sought the views of the church leaders and members within border regions. It noted that the Christian churches within conflict-prone regions had not been actively involved in this ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, this study recommends that there is a need to sensitise and empower Christian churches along the border region of Pokot and Turkana to take up this ministry of reconciliation actively. Finally, the study recommends a



study on how various church denominations in these regions can cooperate and work towards a common goal to address emerging societal issues.

Bibliography

- Adeyemo, Tokumboh, ed. *Africa Bible Commentary*. Nairobi: Word Alive, Zondervan, 2006.
- Berhane, Yonas. *Mezard, Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanism in Northern Ethiopia Assessing Rural Alamata Woreda, Tigray Regional State*. Ethiopia Hamburg, Anchor Academic, 2014.
- Coline Gunton. *Theology of Reconciliation*. New York: A&T Clark, 2003.
- Corbett, S. *When Helping Hurts How To Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting The Poor and Yourself*. LaSalle Boulevard: Moody Publishers, 2009.
- Githigaro, J. M., *Faith-Based Peacebuilding: A Case Study of the National Council of Churches of Kenya*. Peace and Conflict Studies. Vol 19 No 1 Article 4 . 5-1-2012
- Grudem, Wyne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 1994.
- Gunton Coline. *Theology of Reconciliation*. New York: A&T Clark, 2003.
- Hale, T. *The Applied New Testament Commentary*. Colorado Springs, Global Mission, 1996
- Korir, Cornelius. *Amani Mashinani (Peace at the Grassroots) Experiences of Community Peace Building in the North Rift of Kenya*. Catholic Dioceses of Eldoret, 2009.
- Letting, Joan. “Cornelius Korir To be Remembered for His Mediation Role,” *The Standard*, 30th Oct 2017, accessed 25/10/21 <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2001258831/bishop-cornelius-korir-to-be-remembered-for-his-mediation-role>
- Maxwell, John C. “Leadership is influence: Nothing more, nothing less.” In *2005 Catalyst Conference, Atlanta, Georgia*. 2005.
- McCabe, Terrence J. *Cattle Bring Us to Our Enemies* (Grand Rapids: University of Michigan 2004.
- Merwe, Hugo van der, 2003. *The Role of the Church in Promoting Reconciliation in Post-TRC South Africa. Religion and Reconciliation in South Africa, Africa*, Templeton Foundation: Philadelphia Retrieved from <http://www.csvr.org.za/index.htm>.
- Nanok, Josphat. “Stem insecurity in Turkana, West Pokot and Baringo,” *The Standard Media* (Standard 22nd January 2012). <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000050478/stem-insecurity-in-turkana-west-pokot-and-baringo>.
- Nzwili, Fredric. “North Rift, Kenya: Changing a Volatile Region.” *World Council of Churches*. <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/north-rift-kenya-changing-a-volatile-region>



Pkalya, Ruto, Mohamud Adan and Isabela Masinde, “*Indigenous Democracy Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms, Pokot, Turkana, Samburu and Marakwet,*” Nairobi: ITDG-EA: 2004.

Shenk, D. D.. *Justice, Reconciliation and Peace*. Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983.

Tulel, Irene C. *Women and Peacebuilding in Pastoral Conflicts: A Case Study Of Pokot Women in Sigor Region of West Pokot County, 1984-2000*. MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 2005.

Tutu, Desmond, *The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*. (Level 13, 201 Elizabeth Street Sydney, NSW 2000: HarperCollins Publishers (Australia) 2014

<http://www.harpercollins.com>.

Wafula, Nyongesa M. 2012. *The Role of the Church in Promoting Reconciliation: In 2008 2013 Post-Election Violence in Kenya-* MA thesis, University of Nairobi, 2012.

Wijzen, Frans. *Seeds of Conflict in a Haven of Peace: From Religious Studies to Interreligious Studies in Africa. Studies in World Christianity and Interreligious Relations*. Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007.

