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The Role of Women in Inter-Ethnic Peace Building in South Nyanza, Kenya, 1850-2008

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Abstract:

Women have played an important role in inter-ethnic peace-building in the Greater South Nyanza region of Kenya since the onset of colonialism. Despite the various strategies that have been employed by women to promote sustainable inter-ethnic peace in the region and the numerous challenges they have met, no academic study has been done on the subject. This study examined the social, economic and political methods and factors surrounding women's role in inter-ethnic peace-building in the Greater South Nyanza region in the period 1850 A.D to 2008 A.D. The study was guided by cultural libertarianism theory. This approach views women as capable agents of change in societies. It also recognizes sources of women's oppression that interfere with their active participation in societal activities. The study was predominantly qualitative, relying on both primary and secondary sources. The former included materials from the Kenya National Archives such as monthly and annual reports from NGOs, parliamentary commissions and the provincial administration. Other documentary sources included books, journals, magazines and newspapers. Additional data was collected through oral interviews in the study area. To ensure that only knowledgeable informants are consulted, the study employed purposive sampling technique. Different interview schedules were used for different categories of informants since they gave varied types of information concerning the study topic. The oral data was tape recorded, transcribed and later translated into English and then corroborated with evidence from written sources and archival material. The study found out that women in South Nyanza participated in inter ethnic peace building through operational and structural means amidst various challenges. The findings of this study will aid policy-makers in strengthening the role of women in inter-ethnic peace-building so as to enhance harmonious coexistence and sustainable peace in the region.

Keywords: Gender balance, gender equality, gender mainstreaming

Gender balance: Equitable representation of women and men in all areas. Promoting gender balance requires explicit support of women's participation particularly in decision-making.

Gender equality: Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they were born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are given equal consideration.

Gender mainstreaming: The process of systematically incorporating gender perspectives into areas of work and assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes. It is a strategy for making women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

1. Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Background to the Study

This chapter covers the introduction part of this study. It forms the basis of this study by focusing on the background of the study area with specific emphasis on the factors that informed this study. It is divided into different sections which include: the background to the study, the statement of the problem, objectives, research premises, justification of the study, scope and limitation of the study and lastly the definition of terms.

This study is concerned with the analysis of the role of women in inter-ethnic peace building in South Nyanza between 1850 and 2008. Special attention is accorded to the role of Luo women peace-building initiatives and challenges. The pre-colonial period provides a critical background for an analysis of the process of change and continuity that took place in the area during the colonial and post-colonial period. Most case studies of Nyanza's colonial history have emphasized one aspect, the economic history. The present study of South Nyanza goes beyond this limitation and focuses on the effects of gender, generational and political structure on women's participation in peace building in the area during the period under review.

South Nyanza is one of the regions in Kenya, where women participation in inter-ethnic peace-building has met various challenges over the years. Women have suffered most effects in violent ethnic conflicts such as marginalization, lack of adequate resources to take care of their children during conflict and post-conflict periods, physical injuries and even death. Yet, women have always struggled to design appropriate techniques and strategies to enable them participate actively in societal development. Women have adopted various methods to promote peace in South Nyanza since A.D 1850 and the impact of their participation been significant.

During the pre-colonial period, the role of women in ethnic conflict management in the region was relatively insignificant. Even though the political culture of 'tribalism' and 'tribal clashes' was hardly known and practicedⁱ, patriarchy was a common phenomenon among the communities living in the region. This greatly hindered participation of women in the peace building process, as they were viewed by their male counterparts as voiceless human beings who were there to be 'seen and not heard'ⁱⁱ. As a result of the well entrenched patriarchal structures among the communities that inhabited South Nyanza, notably the Luo, Gusii, Luo-Abasuba and the Abakuria, the story of women's participation in inter-ethnic peace building in the region became one of a constant struggle. They took an active role in peace-building initiatives through positive childcare, taking the position of a domestic worker and children's companion.ⁱⁱⁱ

According to B.A. Ogot^{iv}, the migration and settlement of the Luo community in South Nyanza by A.D 1760 brought them into conflict with the neighboring communities. The Luo settlers arrived in Central Nyanza between 1490 and 1600, a claim that is further substantiated by the sacred spear which was found by W.E Owen in Alego. He estimated the spear was between 350 and 400 years old, which suggested that Alego must have been founded between 1534 and 1584.^v Along the same vein, Southhall posits that the migration and settlement into South Nyanza which took place between 1730 and 1760^{vi} ushered in a period of serious inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. However, women displayed their multiple capacities that went beyond the domestic assignment.

During the 1895-1914 period, most of Western Kenya came under colonial rule.^{vii} This involved the conquest and establishment of colonial administration in the region. South Nyanza, during the colonial period formed part of South Kavirondo District (originally called Ugaya District). In the context used here, the area refers to the geopolitical region that embraces the following districts: Rachuonyo North, Rachuonyo South, Uriri, Awendo, Kuria East, Kuria West, Homa Bay, Rongo, Migori and Suba districts. The region is predominantly occupied by the Nilotic Luo. Basically, the colonial period ushered in an era of conflict and accommodation in the region.^{viii} The situation in this region, thus resembled what Mafeje described by colonially invaded areas.^{ix} He argues that under the colonial system of administration, linguistic groups in the region were categorized as tribes and the differences between them emphasized. Thus, stronger and more rigid ethnic relations became the order of the day. This new order became the origin of inter ethnic conflicts in Kamagambo West, Ruga and Olontare areas of South Nyanza.

In the 1940s and 1950s, South Nyanza experienced a series of inter - ethnic conflicts between the dominant Luo households and their neighbors in Ruga, Sare - Kamagambo and Koderobara areas. This was mainly due to border issues and cattle rustling. The main economic activities in which the Luo households in South Nyanza were engaged were agricultural production, cattle keeping, fishing and trading. In addition, such households were also involved in subsidiary economic activities such as hunting, gathering and handicrafts. Agricultural production was the primary economic activity among the Luo of South Nyanza upto the late 1950s. In the distant past, their primary economic activity was cattle keeping. Trade was however also an important component of the economy of the Luo households in South Nyanza. They were involved in both internal and external trade with the neighboring communities as well as with the Arabs and Swahili traders from the East African coast. Therefore, these conflicts revolved around the issues of land and cattle raids. In addition, the Arabs and Swahili slave traders from the coast frequently raided the households in South Nyanza.

At independence, the government's plan in the *Sessional Paper Number 10* of 1965 was geared towards translating political independence into economic and social realities, with no special mention of women. The attitude of neglect by the government continued to engulf women peace organizations in the region, amidst financial constraints and government interference. In spite of the efforts made in 1967 to revive and reactivate the groups, it was apparent that little success had been achieved. In fact, there were only 10 women's self-help groups in the whole of Nyanza.^x The first brand of Kenyan leaders ascended to governmental structures which had been intended to preserve the colonial administrative legacy. These leaders were armed with the Western Constitution and ill-trained manpower to soldier on and make provisions for the enlarged nation-state, now encompassing diverse ethnic groups with variegated interests.

In the contemporary South Nyanza, women's participation in peace building is hardly mentioned, what Ignatieff describes as an incitement of 'toxic testosterone'.^{xi} The challenges of multi-partyism and post election violence since 1991 is still a major challenge to the women peace-builders in South Nyanza. The 1992 and 1997 general elections led to inter-ethnic conflicts in Sondu, Riosiri, Sakwa, Nyamarambe, Getunje and Koderobara regions of South Nyanza. The situation even became worse after the 2007 General Elections. For instance, in Ogwedhi, a one-hour drive from Migori Town, there were 17 people killed and many houses were destroyed. Hesitantly the market, which Luo and Masai shared, was re-starting, thanks to the staff of R.I.S.E. which has decided to start an initiative to achieve more conflict resolution. There is contact with a number Masai and Luo women to come together and discuss plans. Thus, in an attempt to understand the issues surrounding the role of women in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza region, this study will be very useful.

1.1.2. Statement of the Problem

Women have actively participated in inter-ethnic peace-building in the Greater South Nyanza in different ways. They have employed various strategies to help mitigate the challenges they face in peace-building in the region. However, the existing literature on inter-ethnic conflicts have tended to overlook this fact and no academic study has been done to analyze it. There is a dearth of information about the subject in this region, hence the concern.

1.1.3. Objectives of the Study

This study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To trace the history of women's participation in inter-ethnic peace-building in the greater South Nyanza.
2. To identify and analyze the factors influencing women's participation in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza.
3. To examine the various strategies women have employed to help promote peace in the region.

1.1.4. Research Premises

The study was guided by the following premises:

1. That, women have always played a key role in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza since the pre-colonial times.
2. Various factors that have influenced women's participation in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza.
3. Those women have always designed various strategies, help promote peace in the region.

1.1.5. Justification of the Study

Although there exists a significant quantity of literature on inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya, none touches on the role of women in peace building in South Nyanza. Most of the works are majorly general studies focusing on pastoral communities. Furthermore, the available studies hardly mention women. But a few that do, emphasize one aspect, women as helpless victims of inter-ethnic conflicts. The present study of South Nyanza goes beyond this limitation and focuses on how gender, generational and political structures affect women peace-building efforts in the area during the period under review. This study narrows down the scope to South Nyanza's Luo women peace-building initiatives because of the changing patterns in their role as peace builders in this region.

The findings of this study on South Nyanza women peace-building initiatives is essential in contributing new knowledge to the field of gender and peace history and therefore bridge the existing historical gap. The study is also useful to peace building agencies, in ameliorating inter-ethnic conflicts, hence promoting sustainable peace and development.

1.1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

One of the critical aspects of Kenya's history on peace building during the pre-colonial and colonial era was the role of women in peace building and post-conflict transformation. This study focused on the role of women in inter-ethnic peace-building. It was carried out in the Greater South Nyanza District. The district, formerly known as Ugaya, has since been sub-divided into seven districts namely; Rachuonyo North, Rachuonyo South, Homa-Bay, Rongo, Awendo, Uriri, Migori, Suba, Kuria East and Kuria West. The study focused on the Greater South Nyanza since the inter-ethnic conflicts began long before these districts were created.

2. Chapter Two

2.1. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1.1. Literature Review

This chapter reviewed the existing literature in relation to this study in order to find a perspective on the most recent research findings related to this topic. Currently there is no work in print that deals exhaustively with the role of women in peace - building in the greater South Nyanza. The literature review of this study revolved around the following issues: ethnicity, inter - ethnic conflicts, causes, consequences, nature, magnitude and manifestations of conflicts, women peace building strategies and other related variables which affect stability and sustainable development.

Ethnicity in this context is viewed as an inclusive concept that defines groupings on the basis of indicators such as color, appearance, language, race, religion, common ancestry, height complexity, body structure, level of education and the like. It is an inscriptive phenomenon largely based on the myth of common ancestry, belief systems, physical settlements, group affiliations and relationships. It is a common phenomenon in plural societies like Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Somalia, Ethiopia and South Africa, to mention but a few.^{xiii} Over the last three decades, many scholars have dealt with the above issues from different perspectives. However, there has never been a consensus on the definition, causes, effects of conflicts and conflict management strategies. Indeed, the concept of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts as used in modern studies are so elusive and often defies definition. The author contends that when trying to grapple with the issues of ethnicity and inter - ethnic peace building, will be entering a theoretical mine-field, whose literature can hardly be exhausted in such a limited study, in terms of review.

Discourses on women, war and peace advance two schools of thoughts: essentialism and constructivism. Inger Skjelsbaek and Dan Smith's Gender, Peace and Conflict argue that when dealing with areas of gender roles, the two opposing views provide a starting point.^{xiii} The field of war, peace-making and conflict resolution from a gendered perspective requires us to think of core individual and social identities irrespective of behavioral stereotypes and generalizations about people by nationality, social class, ethnicity or

gender.^{xiv} Smith in 'The Problem of Essentialism' in *Gender, Peace and Conflict* argues that essentialists base their argument on the notion that some objects possess static characteristics and that the behaviors and values of men and women are different by nature.^{xv} Cynthia Enoe's work, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* explains these changes from the point of view of men's socialization in the military. She argues that men are persuaded to participate in conflict generally, as well as in the militarization of ethnic nationalism through the assertion that their manhood, that is the masculine ideal, can only be validated through military participation.^{xvi} Thus, the notion of militarized men or rather, masculinity, is termed positive while the feminine is understood as negative. This is reflected in traditional theories regarding gender and conflicts. Gender roles are dichotomized: men, viewed as soldiers or warriors, exercised power over women not only during wars and during conflicts but also in other times. Women, seen as civilians, contrary to men, were to stay at home.^{xvii} This explains why men feminize the enemy and commit rape against women symbolically, and too often literally. They use gender psychologically to symbolize domination in order to assume a masculine and dominant position during conflicts.^{xviii} This denies women agency in matters of war, peacemaking and conflict resolution.

Myra Marx and Aili Mari did another important study on women's movements, *Global Feminism: Traditional Women's Activism, Organizing and Human Rights*.^{xix} Drawing from post-colonial and traditional feminist scholarship, the authors vividly analyze the connections between feminism and globalization, national women's movements, transitional politics, as well as activism in the twenty-first century. The authors, for example, unlike Rupp's *Worlds of Women*, shed light on African women's movements, particularly in the chapter by Melinda Adams, 'Regional Women's Activism: African Women's Network and the African Union',^{xx} and Jacqui Alexander et. al., *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*.^{xxi}

Swanee Hunt and Cristina Posa,^{xxii} writing on the role of women in peace building in India and Pakistan, portray women as capable agents of change in the society. In their work, *While Men Make War, Women Wage Peace*, women have played an important part in bridging the seemingly insurmountable differences between the two countries by organizing huge rallies to unite the citizens from both countries. Women have served as mediators to calm tensions between the various ethnic groups in both countries. In rebel-controlled areas of Pakistan, women have worked closely with humanitarian organizations to prevent food from being diverted from those who need it most. As if that is not enough, women from the provinces demonstrated against the abuses of land rights by applying peaceful but determined strategies. In the process, they have not only been physically assaulted, but also arrested, demonized and isolated by the government. Still, they have been relentless in their protest. This work is important in the study of South Nyanza as it sheds some light on some strategies used by women in bringing peace in the society.

In the twentieth century, the growth of this field of women's history had a different context in Africa as compared to Europe and the United States. Mainstream African history grew in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The newly independent African states were pre-occupied with nationalistic historical writing and did not recognize the role of women as significant in historical inquiry despite their varied contributions throughout the continent. However, there were pioneer studies that restored African women to history, including Ester Boserup's *Women's Role in Economic Development*,^{xxiii} and Iris Berger and Frances White's *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*.^{xxiv}

The growth of peace history in the mid-twentieth century has generated ample literature on African women. The existing literature provides examples of how women have been influential in peacemaking and conflict resolution, especially after the regaining of independence. A notable example is Codou Bop's article in *The Aftermath: Women in Post Conflict Transformation*.^{xxv} The authors in this collection provide a classic understanding of women's roles in post conflict reconstruction and their experiences in South Africa, Eritrea and Niger. Other studies address the role of women in settling disputes in the context of traditional African society. A good example of this is Rose Acholonu, 'Igbo Women and the Tradition of Peace: The Dynamics of Change and Continuity,' in *Conflict Resolution and Peace Education in Africa and in Ife Amadiume, in Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Society*. Amadiume argues that based on age seniority, patrilineage daughters had great power, especially in matters of peacemaking.^{xxvi}

Stephanie,^{xxvii} writing on the African traditional communities, portrays women as struggling passive victims of inter-ethnic conflicts, which always bear undesirable consequences on them, such as rape, stress and fear, leading to the deterioration of their mental and physical health. She notes that women always strive to come together to prevent violence that indiscriminately impacts their constituencies and communities, with very little success. Despite their relatively low degree of participation and commitment in inter-ethnic conflicts, women continue to engage in conflict prevention activities.

Undeterred by repression and intimidation by authoritarian regimes and warring parties, women's groups are highly organized and use deliberate strategies to promote peace and democracy at local, national, and international levels. Even though this work is more general and anthropological in nature, it provides a basis for analyzing the determination and resilience of women in inter-ethnic peace-building.

Becker^{xxviii}, writing on the Owambo of Northern Namibia, shows that women have played strategic roles in the spiritual healing of the wounds of conflicts. The rituals were intended to purify and cleanse the war returnees of blood-guilt so that the blood of the person killed could be conciliated. The killer had to be purified with magic rites, otherwise his desire to kill would spread to other people and disturb the communal peace. Becker's work revealed how women were increasingly active in operational prevention - short-term, targeted mechanisms to contain or reverse escalation during a crisis - particularly in early warning and response efforts. This work, though based in Northern Namibia, is essential in analyzing the role of women in peace-building in the Greater South Nyanza as it provides a framework for our analysis.

Ngongo-Mbede's^{xxix} work on the Cameroonian communities reveals that, among the Bamileke, the Magne, or mothers of twins, were considered to be blessed by God and bestowed the mission of peace. The arrival of a Magne in a place of conflict had the immediate effect of stopping the hostile acts. She divided the 'tree of peace' into two and offered a piece to each of the protagonists as a token of

reconciliation. Also, among the Guidar, the Mazake (old women) played the role of keeping watch over the community. They were on the alert and reacted immediately at the least sign of a destructive conflict. Ngongo-Mbede's work underscores the fact that women were active participants in the peace-building process. She adds that women could be invited to masculine forums to soften stances considered severe or which could lead to a revolt. Although this work focuses on African women in Cameroon, it forms a major basis for analyzing the specific roles of women in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza.

Ntahobari and Ndayiziga's^{xxx} work have portrayed the women of Burundi as effective peace-builders through positive childcare. The children, especially when very young, remained with their mothers and had to adhere to strict rules on how to dress, speak, eat, sit and even walk. They lived in the home of their birth and watched their parents and elders under their mothers' supervision. The mothers administered punishments so that from an early age, children came to acquire an appetite for those human qualities immensely valuable to the society. Mothers also prepared their daughters properly for marriage, so that once wives, they too would become a factor for stability and peace in their husbands' families. Thus, this work is essential to our study as it provides a framework for understanding the role of women in peace-building through positive childcare.

In her study of women's peace-building skills in Morogoro region of Tanzania, Lihamba^{xxxii} explores how women have coped with violent conflict and how they have contended with the task of building peace. Her work reveals that Tanzanian women have always played a critical role in maintaining equilibrium in their society, by bringing up their children as responsible members of the society. As such, women have always been active promoters of harmony by stressing the importance of such values as honesty, uprightness and the necessity for compromise. Our study of South Nyanza concurs with this argument and goes ahead to analyze the specific methods used by women to build peace within the family set-up.

In Kenya, the understanding of women, war and peace has to begin with the understanding of Kenyan history. One of the authors who have mentioned women role in conflict resolution in Kenya is Greet Kershaw's in her work, *Mau Mau from Below*.^{xxxiii} The author provides a classic understanding of the experiences of squatters (Kikuyu). She addresses the social and economic causes of the Mau Mau war and discusses women and their ideological ties to land.^{xxxiii} Kershaw, however, does not portray the importance of women in the Mau Mau rebellion. This nuanced work on women and the Mau Mau rebellion acknowledges that women played a role during the Mau Mau rebellion, but other than this, Kershaw gives no details of women's specific actions. Although this work mentions some aspects of Kenyan women's history, still there is need for more studies focusing on women, for example, on the specific roles women played in peacemaking and conflict resolution over time.

In his work on ethnic conflicts in Kenya, Nyukuri^{xxxiv} observes that peace-building efforts in most parts of the country face serious challenges due to the fact that communities continue to, consciously or unconsciously, rely on ethnicity to perpetuate their dominance and hegemony in an atmosphere characterized by scarce resources, fear and prejudice. This work provides important facts on the causes and consequences of ethnic conflicts in Kenya. Nevertheless, it fails to mention any strategies put in place by women to promote peace and sustainable development.

Stichter and Kanogo, writing on migrant wage labor in Kenya, have argued that the establishment of colonial rule in Kenyan rural areas brought to an end, some pre-colonial activities, such as wars and stock raiding that subsequently rendered women and young men free to engage in new colonial opportunities like migrant wage labor, cash crop production and trade.^{xxxv} These studies are concerned with how colonial labor and agrarian demands transformed pre-colonial economies of Kenyan societies, and how Africans responded creatively to the new colonial opportunities and constraints. The core issue tackled by these studies is the crucial role the colonial state played in promoting the penetration of capitalism and the growth of capitalist social relations of production. The studies underscore the fundamental role the colonial state played as a direct agent of imperialism. These studies point out that through the appropriation of African land, oppressive taxation, forced labor and the creation of marketing and financial institutions, which were biased against Africans, African women were marginalized by the colonial economy. Kanogo and Stichter acknowledge that women played a role during the Mau Mau rebellion, but other than this, they give no details of women's specific actions.

Hay,^{xxxvi} in her study on the participation of Kavirondo District in the Second World War, 1939-1945, notes that the people of Kavirondo District, which South Nyanza forms part of, were required, as during World War I, to contribute foodstuffs, cattle, money, labor and above all, their own men, in the service of the European war. The crucial point she highlights is that when it became apparent to the local population that conditions of the military service were far better than they had been in 1914, a number of people volunteered to serve in the military. As a result, by 1943, the administration discontinued forced military recruitment in the district, as enough men came out to participate in the war. One of the critical effects of the war, as Hay points out, is that increased crop production took place, particularly of maize and sorghum, to feed the troops in the Middle East. The volume of maize exported from Nyanza increased from 246, 767 bags of 200 lbs in 1937 to 640, 550 bags in 1945. Butterman also supports this observations.^{xxxvii} Evidence from this study also shows that in South Nyanza, as elsewhere in the Province, there was increased agricultural production during the war.

S. Brown^{xxxviii}, writing on ethnic conflicts in Rift Valley Province of Kenya, argues that the land question has been the main cause of inter-ethnic conflicts in the province. He further analyzes the contribution of various NGOs in peace-building. The work only focuses on the 1992 and 1997 ethnic clashes in the province. Although this work is based in the Rift Valley, it provides a reliable basis upon which the contribution of women in peace-building organizations in South Nyanza may be analyzed. Brown's argument has been supported by G. Amara^{xxxix}, who observes that during the 1992 Rift Valley land clashes, women played a key role in negotiating for peace. He demonstrates how women used the church, workshops, conferences and their nature as mothers to promote peace. This work is important in the study of peace-building in South Nyanza as it highlights the various ways in which women participated in peace-building. Nevertheless, the work does not show the history of women participation in peace-building, but only focuses on the 1992 ethnic clashes.

According to a study by H. Ochwada^{xi}, traditionally, the Luo women only performed tasks such as baby-care, pottery, meal preparation and collection of fruits and vegetables. The men on the other hand built huts, smelted iron, hunted animals and went to war whenever they could not solve conflicts amicably. To him, the task of peace-building was men's affair. This proposed study disagrees with Ochwada's observation and intends to show how the pre-colonial women actively participated in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza.

In the Kenyan context, not only have women been absent from the histories of decision-making, but also the existing work is insufficient both in scope and ethnographically. The voices of less privileged and illiterate women, in particular, have not been captured well, and this calls for historical inquiry. This thesis attempts to do so by using oral history interviews, supported by the work of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and political scientists to explore a specific example of Kenyan women's agency in peace-making and conflict resolution in South Nyanza.

2.1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the cultural libertarianism perspective. This theory is a form of classical liberalism that is concerned about the constraints on individual freedom from government and traditionalist familial, religious and community structures seen as necessary for ordered liberty to thrive.^{xii} According to Presley^{xiii}, Johnson and Long^{xiiii}, these structures reflect the patriarchal nature of society and are oppressive of women. Thus, cultural libertarian feminism recognizes sources of women's oppression that interfere with their active participation in societal activities.

The theory proved to be very useful in examining the factors behind women's participation in inter-ethnic peace-building in South Nyanza. It also helped in investigating gender neutrality and women participation in decision-making, with regard to peace-making and women's inclusion in the various peace-building and security committees. Even though the political culture of 'tribalism' and 'tribal clashes' was hardly known and practiced, patriarchy was a common phenomenon among the communities living in the region. This greatly hindered participation of women in the peace building process, as they were viewed by their male counterparts as voiceless human beings who were there to be 'seen and not heard'. As a result of the well entrenched patriarchal structures among the communities that inhabited South Nyanza, notably the Luo, Gusii, Luo-Abasuba and the Abakuria, the story of women's participation in inter-ethnic peace building in the region became one of a constant struggle. They took an active role in peace-building initiatives through positive childcare, taking the position of a domestic worker and children's companion. In addition, the perspective was also useful in examining the extent to which the government has failed in supporting women's peace initiatives.

This theory was very instrumental in illustrating the process of change in women's peace-building initiatives in South Nyanza, as a result of the introduction of colonialism. During the 1895-1914 period, most of Western Kenya came under colonial rule. This involved the conquest and establishment of colonial administration in the region. South Nyanza, during the colonial period formed part of South Kavirondo District (originally called Ugaya District). In the context used here, the area refers to the geopolitical region that embraces the following districts: Rachuonyo North, Rachuonyo South, Uriri, Awendo, Kuria East, Kuria West, Homa Bay, Rongo, Migori and Suba districts. The region is predominantly occupied by the Nilotic Luo. Basically, the colonial period ushered in an era of conflict and accommodation in the region. The situation in this region, thus resembled what Mafeje described of colonially invaded areas. He argues that under the colonial system of administration, linguistic groups in the region were categorized as tribes and the differences between them emphasized. Thus, stronger and more rigid ethnic relations became the order of the day. This new order became the origin of inter-ethnic conflicts in Kamagambo West, Ruga and Olontare areas of South Nyanza.

However, this theory has its own inherent weaknesses. Some critics have argued that the theory must call for voluntary adherence to traditional morality because that morality is necessary for the reproduction of citizens capable of independence and self-restraint.^{xliv} Among the Luo, it was very difficult for women to command absolute freedom from their male counterparts, a factor that impeded their peace-building efforts.

3. Chapter Three

3.1. Research Methodology

3.1.1. Research Design

This thesis utilized various sources such as archival information, anthropological data, travellers' records, missionary reports and oral traditions as primary sources. During my field research at the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi from January 2011 to February 2011, I scanned the records on South Nyanza District and Nyanza Province covering the colonial period. I also revisited the archives for more data collection in March 2011. These contained detailed records on inter-ethnic conflicts in the region and the contribution of the colonial administration in the peace-building process. The colonial administrators, European travellers and missionaries recorded some information on the gender roles among the Luo of South Nyanza and its contribution in the peace-building process. I analyzed the response of the African colonial chiefs in relation to the role of women in inter-ethnic peace building.

This study also employed oral traditions as a source. Oral tradition is an essential means of reconstructing the past. It is quite distinct from other historical sources since it consists of information existing in the human memory. It is in memory most of the time, and only now and then are those parts recalled when the needs of the moment arise. As Vansina points out, this information forms a vast pool; one that encompasses the whole of inherited culture, for culture is what is in the mind.

Oral traditions are varied. Vansina^{xlv} divides African oral traditions into five categories. First, there are learning formulas, rituals, slogans and titles. Next, are lists of place names and personal names. Then come official and private poetry-historical, religious or

personal. Last, are legal and other commentaries. Not all these categories of oral tradition can be found in all African societies. Official poetry and historical stories, for instance, arise only with a relatively high degree of political organization. But most societies preserve a considerable range of oral evidence. In South Nyanza, as elsewhere a clear distinction can be drawn between personal oral histories, eyewitness accounts, which are relatively easy to evaluate, and oral traditions-which are handed down by word of mouth to later generations. This study of South Nyanza utilized the two during field oral interviews.

The interviews were conducted based on prepared interview schedules, which were compiled after archival and library research, on the role of Luo women in inter-ethnic peace building during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial era, but leaving room for asking informal questions. The interviews were done in *Dholuo*, the mostly spoken language in the study area which most informants were comfortable with. They were tape recorded and later transcribed into English. On an average, two to three respondents were interviewed per day.

Interviewees were identified based on the following criteria:

1. Those who served in the churches and church peace committees during the colonial and post-colonial period such as pastors, bishops, church elders, deacons, deaconesses and youth leaders.
2. Those who worked as colonial administrators, for instance, chiefs, and headmen. These were agents of the colonial government at local levels and were therefore responsible for implementing government policies in their respective areas of jurisdictions and were also influential in promoting change in gender roles in South Nyanza. Chiefs were also responsible for tax collection and entrenchment of the already existing patriarchal structures that hindered smooth contribution of women in peace building in the region. These officials were very useful in providing valuable information on the process of change that occurred in South Nyanza during the mentioned periods.
3. Those who were involved in the formation and management of community-based organizations dealing with peace building and general development of the community.
4. Those who worked closely with the Christian missionaries, for instance converts. They provided useful information on the role Christian missionaries played as agents of change in the areas where they established a presence. Pastors and some Christian converts also played a crucial role as agents of change as was directed by the Christian missionaries.
5. Those who engaged in any kind of inter-ethnic peace-building in the region such as shopkeepers, teachers, cattle traders, activists, lawyers, librarians and tailors. They provided important information on women peace building efforts in the region.

There were limitations encountered during oral interviews. For instance, there were distortions and variations of information in personal recollections, posing many of the an attempt to analyze political change at local level, stems from the diversity of historical experience. For instance, while some informants acknowledged the positive contribution of women in promoting peaceful coexistence between the Luo and their neighbours in the region, most male informants felt that women were just meant to serve their husbands' domestic needs, and nothing else. This made me to seek for more balanced and objective opinions from comparative assessment.

The other limitation encountered while collecting data from oral evidence was that interviewees were not able to provide specific dates when an event occurred. This forced me to estimate the dates the events could have taken place. The fact that I come from the area also had its own limitations. Local people who carry out research in the areas where they come from are sometimes perceived by interviewees to be spies for the government. I experienced such instances and had to assure them that I was not an agent of the government. This assurance mostly permitted them to open up for the interview.

Other sources also utilized to write this thesis included books, journals and theses. These documentary sources were mainly scanned during library research at the various public and private libraries in Kisumu, Nakuru and Kisii. This research relied heavily on primary sources for purposes of originality. The internet was also used to provide current information on the topic under study.

3.1.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected was largely qualitative in nature. After data collection, all the main ideas were entered into Microsoft Word Processor files. The files were assigned unique identities and kept in different folders which were classified chronologically in line with the research objectives. The transcription of data was done simultaneously with data collection when the memory was still fresh. Once all data have been collected and recorded, a process of data reduction followed. This process involved recording of the selected important data into a new set of files and folders. A thorough revision of recorded data to ascertain that all the necessary facts were available was then done. Once these links had been established, conclusions were made concerning the work to be written.

The data was then interpreted according to the objectives set. Relationships between the themes were sought before conclusions were drawn. Where necessary, quotations from the respondents were used to back up the research findings. After conclusions had been made for all the objectives, the verification of facts followed in readiness for the thesis write-up.

4. Chapter Four

4.1. Pre-Colonial South Nyanza, 1850 To 1902

4.1.1. Introduction

The first section of this chapter outlines the migration and settlement of the Luo in South Nyanza and briefly outlines the geographical setting of the area. The bulk of the chapter examines the pre-colonial organization of South Nyanza, namely, social, economic and political. The chapter examines both internal and external dynamics that impacted on the role of women in peace-building in the

region. This chapter demonstrates how women were marginalized and denied the opportunity to freely participate in community affairs by their male counterparts. The chapter also seeks to analyze how internal and external dynamics impacted on the gender, generational and political structures of the households in South Nyanza during pre-colonial times. The chapter therefore provides a base line for the rest of the chapters because it offers a background in the understanding of the process of change that occurred when the area was colonized and incorporated into the colonial economy.

4.1.2. The peopling of South Nyanza

The people of South Nyanza are a section of the Luo, a River-Lake Nilotic speaking people who originated from the Bahr-el-Ghazel region, in the present republic of Sudan. The River-Lake Nilotic speakers, the Luo, in the course of their migration southwards, appear initially to have migrated into the areas that more or less resembled the hot or flat lands of the Sudan from where they originated.^{xlvi}

Unlike the East African Bantu speakers whose economy was agriculturally oriented, and who therefore occupied high grounds with adequate rainfall where they practiced hoe agriculture, the River-Lake Nilotic speakers showed preference for short grass-land or savannah woodland areas suitable for a mixed economy of seed culture and livestock keeping.^{xlvii}

According to Ogot, the Luo arrived in Nyanza Province between 1490 and 1600 A.D. The pre-Luo settlers of the province were Bantu, the highland Nilotic and plains Nilotic speakers. The encounter between the Luo and early occupants of Nyanza led to conflicts, especially between the Luo and the Abagusii. Some of the early occupants of South Nyanza were assimilated by the Luo, while others migrated to the areas they currently occupy.^{xlviii} The Luo who settled in South Nyanza had crossed Winam Gulf from Uyoma probably between A.D. 1730 and A.D. 1760. The Luo occupation of South Nyanza did not take place all at once; it occurred over a period of time.^{xlix} They occupied South Nyanza from diverse places and arrived at different times. The pre-Luo settlers of South Nyanza were Bantu and plains Nilotic speakers. Many were forced to migrate to distant parts; the Luo assimilated those who opted to remain. Later, other Bantu groups who migrated from Buganda, the Abasuba, settled on Rusinga and Mfangano islands, while some settled on the mainland. The interaction between them and the Luo led to inter ethnic conflicts. However, they were later assimilated by the Luo and they are today Luoised.

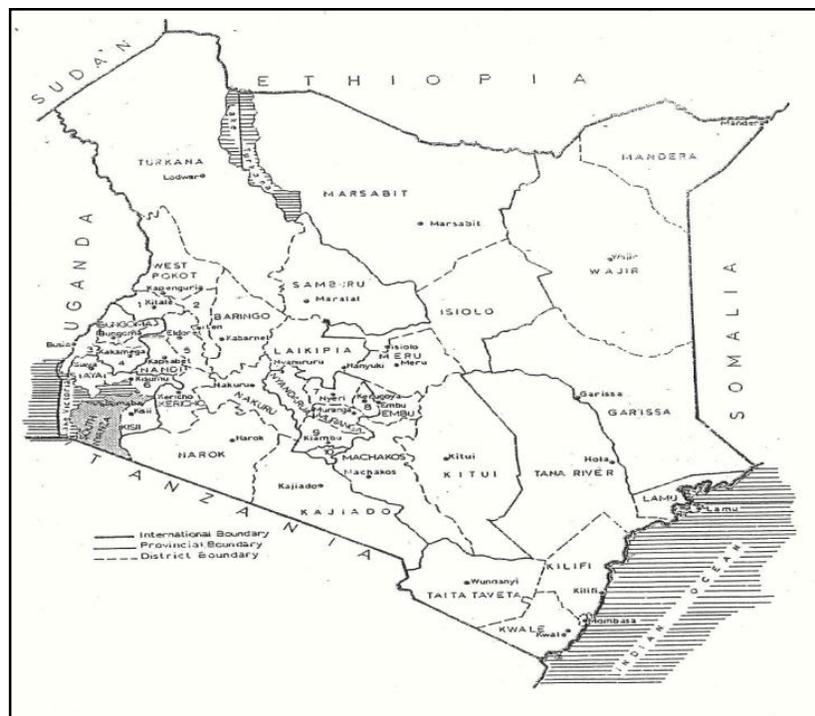


Figure 1: A map of Kenya showing the study area, South Nyanza
Source: S. Ojode, Egerton University Cartographer, 2012

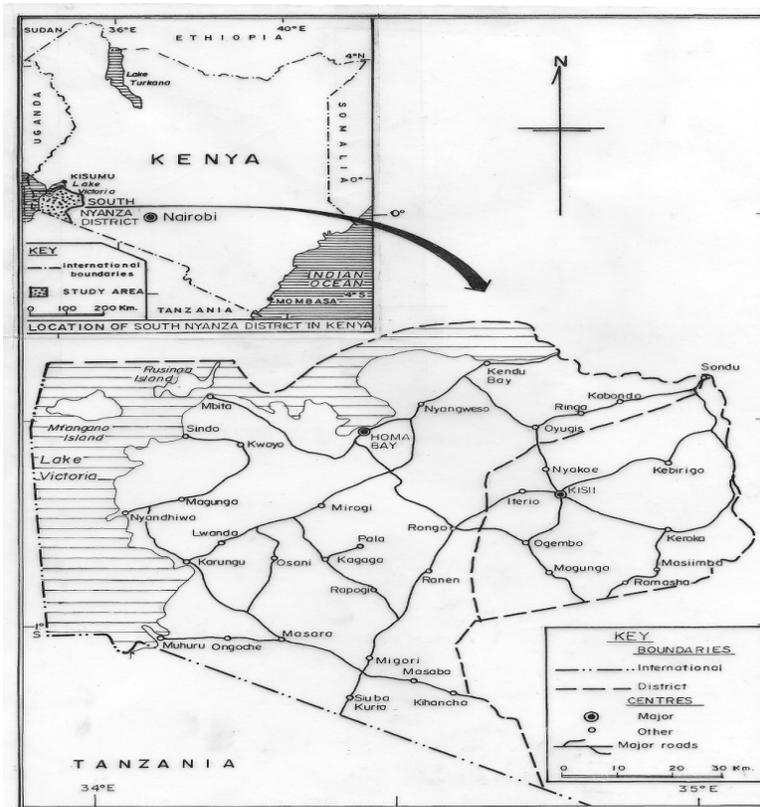


Figure 2: A map of the study area, South Nyanza: General
 Source: S. Ojode, Egerton University Cartographer, 2012

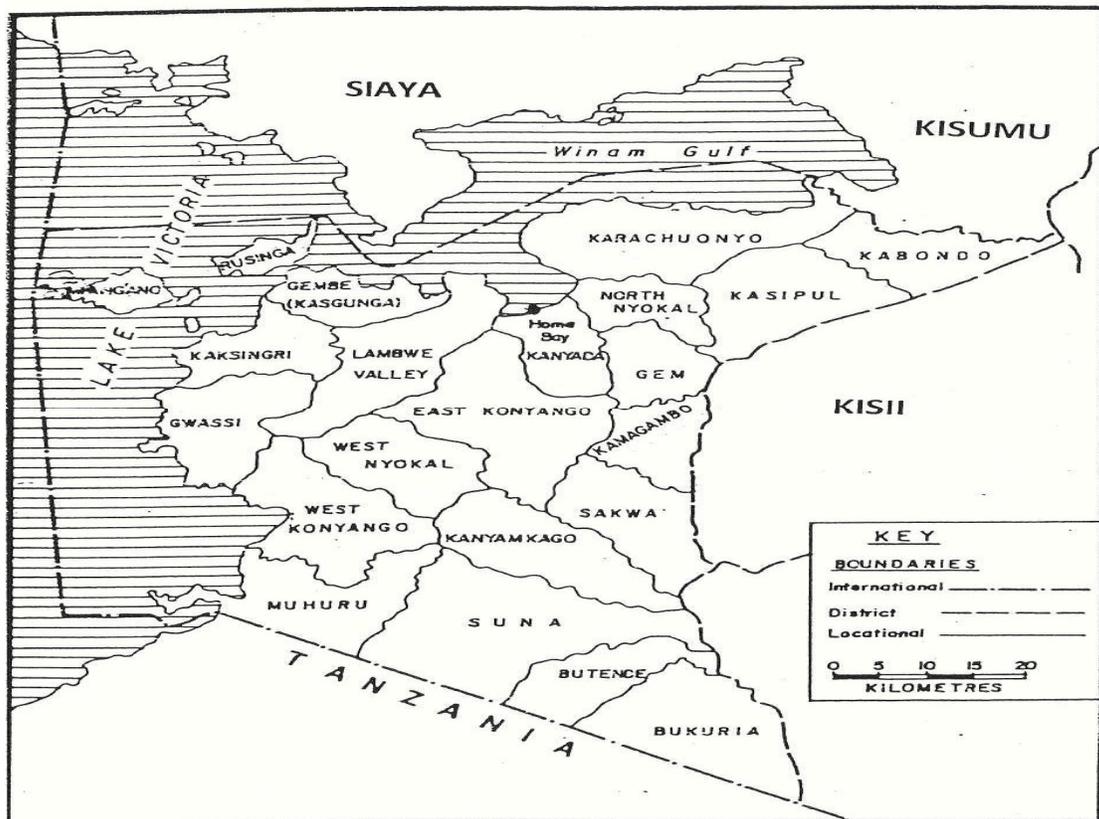


Figure 3: A map of the study area, South Nyanza: Administrative Locations
 Source: S. Ojode, Egerton University Cartographer, 2012

The foregoing section has examined the settlement of South Nyanza and the ecology of the area. With this geographical background, the chapter now proceeds to examine the main subject matter of the chapter, Luo women in the pre-colonial South Nyanza.

4.2. The Position of Luo Women in Pre-colonial South Nyanza

In pre-colonial South Nyanza, the daily lives of the households, to which Luo women belonged, were organized in three basic spheres: social, economic and political. Our analysis of the role of women in peace building will therefore focus on these three components. First, this chapter examines social organization.

4.2.1. Social Organization

In pre-colonial South Nyanza, the household was the primary unit of social organization. It was made up of a wife and her children, who constituted the basic unit of production, with the occasional assistance of the husband. The household formed part of the larger homestead that consisted of several households, depending on the number of wives a man had.¹ The wife, according to tradition, was the legal owner of the house (*wuon ot*), although the husband undertook the actual building and purchase of the building material. But the homestead belonged to the husband and he was referred to as the owner of the homestead (*wuon dala*).¹¹ Each wife was allocated a parcel or parcels of land by her husband or her 'grandfather' (her husband's father) to cultivate. She was also allocated some livestock, which was attached to her in theory, but which in reality belonged to her husband. All the livestock in the homestead belonged to *wuon dala*; no one could dispose of one without his consent.

In pre-colonial South Nyanza, the homestead (*dala*) was headed by a married man, who was known as *wuon dala*. But in cases where the husband (*wuon dala*) died, then a close kinsman (*jater*) was supposed to inherit the widow, even though the homestead still belonged to the deceased including the children he produced with the widow. The homestead could consist of one house belonging to the wife if the man was monogamous. But if the man was polygamous then it consisted of houses equivalent to the total number of wives in the homestead. The construction of houses in the homestead was carried out according to a specific pattern reflecting the seniority of wives. In the homestead, there were also houses for single or married boys (*simba*). Their houses were likewise built in a pattern showing their seniority according to the order of birth and their mothers' seniority.

As Butterman observes, the relations between households revealed the inherent tension between patterns of cooperation and competition in social organization. This point is also expressed in works such as those of Southall and Ocholla-Ayayo, who observed that the word for co-wife which in Dholuo (a Luo language) is *nyieke*, could be translated into English as "jealousy".¹¹¹ As one respondent noted: "competition between or among households within the homestead became common during the allocation of resources belonging to a homestead. Such resources included land, livestock and bride wealth."¹¹¹¹

The next unit of segmentation after *anyuola* and *jokakwaro* was *dhoot* (sing), *dhoudi* (pl.), a major segment. In pre-colonial South Nyanza and Luo more generally, this major segment was usually named after a wife of an ancestral male. Much as the *anyuola* and *jokakwaro* normally occupied same territorial area, so did the *dhoot*, and the area they occupied was referred to as *gweng*. After *dhoot*, the next unit of segmentation was the maximal lineage. This segment was generally characterized by competition between or amongst various components. For instance, if one segment had over expanded and possessed a large population, then such a segment could break away from the other major segments and establish an independent maximal lineage. Southall has observed:

No lineages were regarded by the Luo as really permanent; it was only in relation to a particular transitory situation that they may for convenience be taken as agiven...The whole series was reflective and impermanent because, as it moved forward in time, was always tending to add new units to itself at one end as old ones dropped off at the other.¹¹¹¹¹

As Southall has noted, the maximal lineage was the largest social unit of cooperation on matters relating to hunting and raiding. One interviewee recalled that the maximal lineages were separated from each other by *thim*.¹¹¹¹¹¹ The *thim* was a no man's land, forested and inhabited by wild animals. As Evans-Pritchard observed, such stretches of country were found between tribe and tribe (for example, between maximal lineages) but not between segments of a tribe (lineage), even if the segments were different clans, for instance between Alego and Gem but not between the *Joseje*, the *Jokakan*, and the *Jokaruoth*, within the Alego tribe. The *thim* was sometimes extensive, as broad as ten miles.¹¹¹¹¹¹¹ The *thim*, which was sometimes called *bungu*, or *lek* (pastureland) was the focus of competition between the maximal lineages that bordered it, since the area was rich in wild game, readily available for the hunt as well as an area suitable for grazing livestock.

Hunts were often indistinguishable from raids. If a maximal lineage went out full force in a hunting expedition, any livestock encountered that belonged to a rival maximal lineage was regarded as game.

Constant wars and raids characterized pre-colonial South Nyanza. These wars and raids forced many families and individuals to leave their lineages and seek refuge in other lineages where they settled as *jodak* (tenants).¹¹¹¹¹¹¹¹ As Hay observed, the status of *jodak*, (pl. *jodak*), carried with it rights of usufruct but not of disposal. *Jodak* (clients) could always be asked by the host to vacate the land they had been allocated and to return to where they had come from. They were always perceived as "second class" citizens in the lineage that hosted them. But as Southall has pointed out, the status and obligations of *jodak* varied under different circumstances. For instance, within the Karachuonyo maximal lineage, clients (*jodak*) such as Katolo, Agoro, Muksero and Kasibong were recognized as tenants without apparent obligations. Yet, as Butterman correctly noted, historical evidence from both Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago suggests that tenants were the first to be exploited. This is equally supported by Ayot who noted that during the nineteenth century, among the Abasuba of Rusinga Island, tenants were not permitted to raise their traditional roof spike and their cows and poultry were not allowed to breed with those of the host.¹¹¹¹¹¹¹¹¹ As some respondents noted, it was advantageous to have tenants in a lineage, since in most lineages exogamous marriage was practiced. Having tenants therefore meant that intermarriage could take place within the lineage. Given the prevailing insecurity in most parts of South Nyanza, as indeed in Luoland more widely during pre-colonial period,

it was dangerous for one to travel far into enemies' lineages for marriage purposes. It was therefore safer for a person to get married within the lineage to avoid exposing himself to dangers by going to other lineages.^{lix}

It was this intermarriage that contributed to sustainable peace between the Luo and *jodak*. With women at the center of this social practice, their role in peace building became apparent in mediation and wealth creation. It was the host Luo community which benefitted more from this kind of intermarriage, especially, when it came to payment of bride wealth. For instance, tenants often were not paid full bride wealth for their daughters but they did so to the host lineage. Obviously, they were in no position from which to bargain. The rationale behind this exploitation was that tenants were allocated land by the hosts. Similarly, there were advantages of having *misumba* (a bachelor or a 'slave') within a lineage. Just like a tenant, a *misumba* had no rights within the host lineage. They were equally subjected to the exploitation of their labor by their hosts. For instance, a *musumba* could be called upon by his master to perform any form of labor, including that which was regarded as a woman's work. As Butterman observed, a *misumba* could be forced to be married to an "unsaleable" woman of the village. She provides an example in Karachuonyo in which one segment of tenants, the Wagwe, trace their descent from a *misumba* and a Karachuonyo woman, Gwe, whose name is derived from an intestinal disorder, in which one belches an odorous smell.

Archdeacon Owen, who worked as a missionary among the Luo during the early decades of colonial rule, captured the status of a woman in pre-colonial Luoand when he noted:

The position of women among the Luo was that of great influence, in spite of many things that show that they were not regarded as the equal of men. While they were having nothing in their creation stories which gives the male such pre-eminence as is given in the Hebrew account of creation in the second chapter of Genesis, yet even in their stories it is the male which is created first. The origin of the female is surrounded in mystery; none have any clear account of her origin. But it is significant that the name by which the first woman is known to many of the Luo is Aloo. *Loo* or *Lowo* is the stem meaning earth or soil, and there are undoubtedly some connections in their minds between the fruitful soil and woman. Although her origin is surrounded in mystery, she is made to carry the responsibility for the fact that the sons of men have got to work. According to the Luo creation story, the first man to be created was one called Podho. To him the creator (called Nyasaye) gave a magic hoe, which worked by itself, requiring no arm to wield it. With the hoe Nyasaye gave Podho a command that he was never to attempt to do any work with it himself. If he could disobey this command then the hoe would lose its virtue and cease to work unaided. This happened before the advent of Aloo (sometimes called *Mihaha*). When eventually Podho was given Aloo, he gave the hoe over to her care, telling her at the same time the command, which Nyasaye had laid down. For a time all went well. When they wanted any digging to be done all they had to do was to take the hoe out to the site, show it what they wanted it to dig and leave it to do the work. In the evening it was brought again. But one-day curiosity was too much for Aloo. She felt that she must feel what it was like to turn up a few sods. She picked up the hoe and with it turned up a little soil. Then becoming suddenly afraid she dropped the hoe and went home; but did not tell her husband, Podho. However, she was unable to hide what she had done, for in the evening when they went to bring in the hoe, it laid where she had dropped it, and had done no work. Then the voice of *Nyasaye* said that, as they were now so clever that they know how to dig for them. So to this day woman is blamed as the one through whose wrong doing the curse of work came to men.^{lix}

As Archdeacon Owen correctly observed, the above tradition came into existence reflecting the common tendency of many creation stories to put the blame on the woman, and was possibly invented to keep women in subjection.

In pre-colonial South Nyanza, women faced a number of constraints. For instance, within the patrilineage women obtained rights only through belonging either to fathers or husbands, who had control of their labor powers. The other constraint that was faced by junior women was that seniority among women was a mitigating factor to the subordinate position of women. A case in point was that older women had control over the younger women in the homestead. The senior wife in a homestead played the role of a manager of a homestead on behalf of her husband. Older women were in most cases consulted by men on serious matters dealing with waging war or making peace.^{lxi} The social practice of seniority being critical in the relations among women also applied to men. The principle of seniority also accounted for a basically redistributive pattern among men.^{lxii} As a class, elders (men) appropriated the surplus labor of junior men and ensured that women were locked out of leadership positions as much as possible. Women and junior men cleared agricultural land for the elders who controlled the distribution of the product, or juniors raided cattle from the rival lineages, which were allocated by elders. Historically, this marginalization by the elders may have been common in South Nyanza and Luoland more generally, but it is significant to point out that there were limits to exploitation, at least within expanding migratory lineages. Relations between elders and women had rather to be redistributive since an elder who violently assaulted his wife might find himself without a wife, since the woman would, in protest might migrate to another lineage or go back to her matrimonial home altogether.

4.2.2. Economic Organization

The economy of households in South Nyanza and the Luo more generally during the pre-colonial era was basically a mixed economy consisting of livestock keeping, crop production, trade and fishing. The people of South Nyanza were at the same time involved in secondary economic pursuits such as hunting, gathering, iron manufacture and handicrafts. Access to the means of production was gained through membership in the social unit. The distribution of resources was marked by exploitation patterns and the way in which the relations of production were reproduced.^{lxiii}

In order to understand the position of women in the pre-colonial economy of South Nyanza, it is necessary to start with a consideration of the land tenure system among households in the area. This is because in South Nyanza, as was the case in most pre-colonial African societies, a great deal of value was attached to land.^{lxiv} In South Nyanza, as was the case in Luoland more generally, land was owned by the extended family, *joka-kwaro*, which was composed of grandfather, his wife or wives, his son (s) together with their wives and children.^{lxv} Land, according to Luo customary law, belonged to the community. The family simply held it in trust for

the community. This was because whenever a section was under attack, the whole community, including women, was expected to defend the land, and not to leave that trust to an individual family. As Odinga^{lxvi} observed, the Luo regarded land as their “mother”, and it belonged to the community. He noted that within the ethnic group, clan or sub-clan, the individual laid claim to a *shamba* (a parcel of land for cultivation), or several, depending on his diligence, but as soon as he left for elsewhere, the land reverted to the community and could be allocated to the nearest neighbor or given to a new comer joining the community.^{lxvii}

As Hay rightly observes, land rights allocation was through transmission from father to son. A father, according to Luo customary law, was to apportion parcels of his own land to his sons once they married and had established their own households. But upon the death of the father, the remaining sons who had not been allocated land would obtain land that their mothers used to cultivate. The allocation was to be done by the eldest son in the homestead who acted as the head of the family. But if the sons were still young, the land could be held in trust for them by their uncles, and not their mothers.^{lxviii} It was the responsibility of the extended family to ensure that nobody was destitute. Since land was a key factor of production, every member of the family and society in general enjoyed access to land. The reality on the ground however was that there was no equitable distribution of land. The more influential one was in the society, as for instance in the case of chiefs, clan elders, diviners, grand fathers, and many other related influential people, the more access they had to land.

The shift in economy from pastoralism to crop production as a primary economic activity in South Nyanza had a variety of impacts on the women of South Nyanza. The immediate effect was that women whose labor was previously under-utilized became actively involved in crop production and other sectors of community development.

However, women appear to have undertaken more agricultural work than men. Hopley writing in the late 1890s indicated that women worked for longer hours when he noted,

The principal occupations of the Kavirondo (the Luo) are cultivation, cattle rearing and trading. The cultivation is mainly in the hands of women, but is not, however, that undignified for men to engage in agricultural activity.^{lxix}

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in the pre-colonial South Nyanza, women had multiple roles to play. They participated in decision making and contributed towards peaceful resolution of conflicts not only among the Luo clans but also with other neighboring communities. It was noted that pre-colonial men in South Nyanza were polygamous. The large number of wives they had promoted the growth of reproduction which was crucial in food production defense. The more people in a family, the more they were utilized in agricultural production and community defense. For instance, in South Nyanza, it was common to find women intervening in cases where a strong chief imposed his political control over the neighboring weaker communities. This was mainly because such chiefs would interrupt trading activities with the aforementioned communities. In some cases however, these weaker clans became subjects and integrated into the chieftdom, the chief of the dominant clan could easily exploit their labor. But, by the mid nineteenth century, a drastic shift occurred in South Nyanza and the Luo women more generally became more empowered to challenge the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures. It was noted that the shift was prompted by the coming of western education and Christianity to the region.

5. Chapter Five

5.1. Luo Women in Colonial South Nyanza, 1903 To 1963

5.1.1. Introduction

This chapter attempts to show how the imposition of British colonial rule on the people of South Nyanza influenced the participation of women in inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. The colonial government introduced political and economic policies which not only led to escalation of conflicts in the region but also changed women’s role in peace-building a great deal. For instance, the colonial government introduced taxation that households in South Nyanza were to pay either through cash crop production, the sale of livestock, or wage labor. As a result of this, most of the communities in the region forcefully attempted to extend their geographical boundaries so as to acquire as many heads of cattle as possible. As a matter of fact, cattle rustling became one of the major causes of inter-ethnic conflicts in South Nyanza from 1903.

The British colonial administration of South Nyanza effectively commenced in January 1903, when a parcel of Union Jacks was dispatched from Provincial headquarters, Kisumu, to the Karungu area to be raised in all villages in the vicinity to show that South Nyanza was under the British colonial administration. Karungu was then made the district headquarters. An acting District Commissioner, Boughton Knight, was posted to Karungu in August 1903, as the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo.^{lxx} The colonial administration established the Karungu station in order to check on German encroachment on South Nyanza.^{lxxi} The Germans had already colonized Tanganyika (now the republic of Tanzania), which shared borders with South Nyanza, an area that the British had not brought under their political control.

In June 1908, a conflict broke out between the Luo and Maasai at Olontare/Kamagambo border over cattle rustling. Most respondents from the region alleged that, colonial taxation policy exerted a lot of pressure on *JoLuo*, prompting them to attack the Maasai at Olontare Location for more cattle.^{lxxii} For more than a decade, the Luo and Maasai had coexisted peacefully in this region, save for minor disputes over grazing land and cattle rustling. This conflict lasted for three months and it was reported that those who bore the greatest impact of the war were women and children. Women from the Luo community mobilized themselves to deter any further escalation of this conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence through both operational and structural activities. They came together to prevent this violence that had began to indiscriminately impact negatively on their activities.

Despite the relatively little commitment and support from their male counterparts, women continued to engage in conflict prevention activities. Undeterred by repression and intimidation by their authoritarian husbands and warring parties, Luo women continued to organize sports and games with their Maasai counterparts. According to *Mama Domtila Andeto*,^{lxxiii} they (women) were ready to pay the price for going against the wishes of their husbands for the sake of peace. They became increasingly active in operational prevention—short-term, targeted mechanisms to contain or reverse escalation during a crisis—and particularly in early warning and response efforts. Some women deliberately denied their husbands conjugal rights in a deliberate attempt to keep the latter off the battlefields. Even though most husbands never took this action kindly, women managed to make their point and as a matter of fact, most Luo men managed to abstain from violent confrontation with the Maasai warriors.

The response to colonial rule by communities in South Nyanza had a considerable impact on the participation of women in inter-ethnic peace building in the region. Documentary evidence on response to colonial establishment in South Nyanza points to a mixed reaction by the Luo community. Nevertheless, the British conquest of South Nyanza could be described as being a non-peaceful undertaking. This section below therefore turns to analyze the reaction of the people of South Nyanza to the British colonization and its impact on women's participation in peace-building in the region.

5.1.2. Resistance against British Colonization

The British colonization of South Nyanza encountered some significant resistance from the local population. Lonsdale pointed out that, as time went on and the British punitive expeditions multiplied in other locations of Luoland, particularly in Uyoma, Sakwa and Seme, the Luo of South Nyanza drew appropriate conclusions from the fate of their kinsmen and made their peace without ever having occasioned war.^{lxxiv} The people of South Nyanza may well have drawn the same conclusion a decade earlier, between 1884 and 1898, during the German colonization of Tanzania.^{lxxv} As the South Kavirondo District Annual Report for 1909 remarked, "it was not possible to mention a clan within a day's march of the Anglo-German border that was not punished forcibly by the government of German East Africa".^{lxxvi} Although Ochieng' claims that the Karungu people in South Nyanza resisted the British occupation, there is no colonial administrative record corroborating this.^{lxxvii} Luo women particularly invested in ensuring armed conflict does not occur because they feared shouldering a huge burden of responsibility caused by violent conflicts such as rebuilding infrastructure, restoring and developing traditions, laws, and customs, and repairing relationships.

5.1.3. Co-operation

In South Nyanza, most communities opted to co-operate with the British colonial government, and not to stage a futile armed resistance against the better-armed conquerors. Women had gathered distinct knowledge of the situation on the ground and were in key positions to not only promote peace but to actually discourage men from taking up arms to fight colonial administrators. They were at the frontlines of negotiating and maintaining peace agreements and through their work, they expanded the definition of "security." Luo Women became much more active in structural prevention, advancing longer-term solutions to reduce the potential for violence, such as human rights, justice, good governance, development, and human security. At great personal risk, women took steps daily to provide early warning of impending colonial activities and negotiated with armed factions not to engage in conflicts. Most respondents concurred that Luo women used deliberate strategies to promote peace, health, education and safeguard the welfare of the most vulnerable in society.

It is imperative to note that among *jobilo* were women, who were so respected in the Luo society. These women used their position in the society to discourage people from engaging in war with the colonial administrators. A famous Luo musician, the late D.O Misiani recalled how the efforts of Isabella Nyar Asego helped to create a lasting peace between the Luo, Abagusii and the Abasuba.

Janawi ma dhako Isabela ma nyar Asego kiti otamo ji ng'eyo

Isabela nego to chiero, gino nene Ruoth ochano chon (Isabella, a female diviner, people cannot comprehend your character. You can kill and bring back life, something God had planned long time ago.)

According to *Jaduong'* (elder) Elly Ng'uru, a retired teacher and librarian, the contribution of Isabella Nyar Asego in inter-ethnic peace building in South Nyanza requires more than just a mention. To him, as early as 1904, Isabella was able to keep the Luo men from engaging into violent conflict with their neighbors Abagusii in the Rongo region. Through her *gagi* (incarnations), she managed to foresee any impending dangers that would result from Luo-Abagusii confrontation and consequently warn the Luo men against taking up arms to fight their neighbors. By the time colonial administrators got to South Nyanza, hardly did any Luo man manage to go against the advice of Isabella, let alone the colonial chiefs.^{lxxviii}

A 1910 memorandum from the Secretary to the Administration to the Provincial and District Commissioners, stressed the importance of soliciting the wishes of the people before recommendations were made to the governor for the selection and appointment of chiefs and headmen. The memorandum emphasized that administrative officers should never lose sight of the fact that if men – and not women- were artificially raised above their fellows, or forced upon the people they were expected to govern, they generally proved unsatisfactory, and in the course of time would have to be deposed, causing the native authority to be entirely undermined.^{lxxix} According to this memorandum, it was only men who were thought to be capable of running the affairs of the colonial government. Consequently, by 1910, out of the 34 chiefs appointed in all the locations of South Nyanza, none was a woman. So then, the 'era' of women marginalization continued unabated.

s/no	Location	Chief or Headman
1	Karungu	Ochola
2	Gwasi and Utegi	Mbaria
3	Kaksingri and Ongoi	Ogwata
4	Rusinga and Mfangan	Keriga
5	Kabondo	Obudtho
6	Karachuonyo	Orinda
7	Mumbo	Oyugi
8	Kajuoch	Mado
9	Konyango	Omiti
10	Kagan	Opala
11	Kochia	Annaio
12	Gem	Ager
13	Kamagambo	Njoje
14	Sakwa	Ongoro
15	Kabuoch	Oguta
16	Kanyamwa	Gor
17	Kanyada	Omuni
18	Kamreri	Lango
19	Kasigunga	Odida
20	Maronda	Osoa
21	Usaki	Osodo
22	Kanyidoto	Ofuko
23	Kawabuai	Ojoi
24	Kadem	Owuonda
25	Muhuru	Machira
26	Kanyamkago	Ongudi
27	Suna	Chacha
28	Suna (Wasimbiti)	Girago
29	Utende	Nyangoko
30	Ukiria	Mwita,Marua,Chacha, Matiko
31	Nabassi	Chacha Nyansuko
32	Oregi	Mnoko
33	Masai	Toroni
34	Wanjari	Oyugi

Table 1: Locations and their respective chiefs in South Nyanza as at 1910^{xxx}

5.1.4. Luo Women and World War I (1914 to 1918)

The period under review, 1914 to 1930 was a critical one in the history peace building in South Nyanza. It was marked by deliberate attempts to integrate South Nyanza into colonial capitalism. As noted in the previous chapter, by 1914, the economy of South Nyanza had been partially integrated into colonial capitalism. The period under consideration was marked by world events that influenced the process of peace building in South Nyanza in many ways. The events included the First World War, Second World War and the depressions of the 1920s and 30s. A number of internal factors in South Nyanza also influenced the process of change during this period. They included the outbreak of drought and famine which put a lot of pressure on the few agricultural resources available in the region, leading to inter-ethnic conflicts. Although South Nyanza lacked adequate pre-colonial statistics on inter-ethnic conflicts, it is a safe assumption that women became actively involved in peace building than men.

When the German forces were defeated at the “Battle of Kisii”, by combined British and African detachments on 12th September 1914 and driven out of the district, the British colonial administration reoccupied the headquarters.^{lxxxii} In retaliation for the looting spree, the colonial administration punished the people of South Nyanza (the Luo and Abagusii). In the same month of September 1914, the administration imposed a fine on the people of over 19,000 head of cattle, valued at 65,000 pounds.^{lxxxiii} The war created more opportunities for women to participate in peace building in the region. This was because it generated high demand for labor from South Nyanza, a field that was dominated by men. The table below shows the figures of men from South Nyanza in relation to other districts in the province, who were engaged in labor activities including in the military.

Quarter	North Kavirondo	Kisumu	South Kavirondo	Lumbwa	Nandi	Total
April-June 1914	894	2,942	654	-	99	4,589
July-Sept. 1914	2,636	6,044	1,015	80	140	9,915
Oct.-Dec. 1914	3,118	10,553	1,440	539	125	15,775
Jan-March 1915	2,697	4,047	4,266	696	96	11,802
Total	9,345	23,586	7,375	1,315	460	42,081

Table 2: Labour / conscription from South Kavirondo and other Districts in Nyanza Province, 1914 - 1915

Source: KNA, Nyanza Province, East Africa Protectorate, PC/NZA, 1915, p. 41

The above figures did not include the following:

1. Ngabotok convoy (Turkana patrol) North Kavirondo about	4,000
2. Military Transport, telegraph construction] South Kavirondo about	2,000
3. Kendu pier and local defence Kendu] South Kavirondo about	1,000
4. Kisumu defences and bush clearing] Kisumu about	2,000
5. Kisumu – Mumias Road...	
6. Lumbwa – Kericho – Sotik Road...	
Total	About 11,000

Source: KNA, Nyanza Province, East Africa Protectorate, PC/NZA, 1915, p. 41

The colonial state employed increasingly forceful means to recruit men for the Carrier Corps since few men came forward voluntarily.^{lxxxiii} The District Commissioner, South Kavirondo, W. F. G. Campbell, described the method of recruitment in the Annual Report for 1914-15: "lately in order to fill labor requirements, force had to be applied, i.e. the young men have been rounded up during the night".^{lxxxiv} The 1914 South Kavirondo

District Annual Report acknowledged that about 4,000 men had been sent out of the district in that year to work on contracts that ranged from 3 to 6 months.^{lxxxv} They worked all over the country, employed by the Public Works Department, harbor, railway, European settlers, irrigation work in the Maasai Reserve and on the railway extension to Magadi.

During the war, thousands of men from South Nyanza and Nyanza more generally were recruited into the Carrier Corps and the civil sector. As this study shows, by 1915, the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo, Mr. Hemmant, admitted that the people of South Nyanza were engaging in migrant wage labor on a considerably larger scale than before:

I imagine this district – as indeed most others – has never contributed to the labor market so handsomely as has been done this year.^{lxxxvi}

He further noted that the expansion in labor engagement in 1915 put a lot of pressure on the households in South Nyanza, a factor that forced women to take up leadership positions that were previously held by their husbands. They had to bear the brunt of meeting tax obligations and ensuring peaceful coexistence with their neighbors. The Nyanza Province Annual Report for 1915 admitted that the demands on the province for labor during the year had been exceptionally heavy for carriers for the military.^{lxxxvii} As Odinga remarked in his autobiography, 'during the war, Nyanza was milked dry for carriers, thousands of who never returned to their homes but died of disease in service, though they wore no soldiers' uniforms'.^{lxxxviii}

Berman and Lonsdale noted that the introduction of massive forced conscription of Luo men into the Military Carrier Corps created a threat that drove more men to work on settler farms in order to avoid military service.^{lxxxix} Table 4: 1 shows the figures of conscription from South Kavirondo and other districts in the province that were registered for both civil and military work. The figures included all men registered for work both in the province and at other centers in the Protectorate, and included 21,925 drafted for military requirements. Male recruits from the province were grouped into two categories: registered and unregistered. A large number of unregistered emigrants from South Nyanza and the province generally went to work on the European settled areas in the province and on the Uasin Gishu plateau. The 1916 Nyanza Province Annual Report acknowledged that the European farmers received enough labor and did not request more from the labor agents.^{xc} Table 3 below shows registered manpower in the province during 1916.

(a) Carrier Corps	=	23,573
(b) Government Department	=	4,091
(c) Private	=	8,735
Total	=	36,399

Table 3: Registered recruits in Nyanza Province during 1916

Source: KNA, Nyanza Province, East Africa Protectorate, PC/NZA, 1916, 31-3-1916, p.11.

The above figures did not include men who were employed locally by the Public Works Department, and 4,000 men used for transport to Kacheliba in Turkana were not included in the registered figures.^{xcv} As illustrated in Table 3, more people served in the military than other sectors combined. Tignor noted that in the last two years of the war, British military forces in East Africa had required large numbers of Africans for their military campaigns and that the administration had devoted all its energies to recruiting able-bodied men for the Carrier Corps.^{xcvii} In South Nyanza and Nyanza generally, the average duration of service for registered laborers in 1916 was six months. This excluded the Carrier Corps for which men were registered for a period defined as “the duration of the war”.^{xcviii} By contrast, Tignor found, the Kikuyu employees did not engage in long-term contracts of six months. They preferred to sign 30-day agreements with the railway, the Public Works Department and settlers, although they were often willing to renew the contracts once or twice more. Tignor noted that the Kikuyu returned to their homesteads more regularly than labor recruited from Nyanza Province.^{xcix} The South Kavirondo District Annual Report for 1917 noted that labor recruitment from the district during the year had been confined almost entirely to the Carrier Corps and government work in the district. Table 5.4 shows labor recruitment within and without the district from 1913 to 1917.

Year	Inside	Outside	Total
1912-1913	535	1,987	2,522
1913-1914	401	4,029	4,430
1914-1915	4,412	9,560	13,972
1915-1916	963	6,929	7,692
1916-1917	1,210	10,006	11,216

Table 4: Labour registered for work outside and inside the district

1912-1913	-
1913-1914	-
1914-1915	Rs. 6/86 per man
1915-1916	Rs. 5/70 per man
1916-1917	Rs. 5/25 per man

Table 5: Average Monthly Wages Paid

	Months	Days
1912-1913	-	-
1913-1914	-	-
1914-1915	5	18 per man
1915-1916	5	18 per man
1916-1917	3	17 per man

Table 6: Average Period of Service

Source: KNA, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, DC/KSI/1/2, 1913-1923 Annual Report, 31-3-1917, p. 235.

From Table 4, it can be observed that from 1914 when the war broke out, there was an increase of labor engagement by households in South Nyanza, particularly outside the district. Before the war, 1913, 1,987 laborers engaged themselves outside the district. By the time war broke out in 1914, the number soared to 4,029, and by 1917, the number of laborers outside the district had grown to 10,006. In addition, more unregistered laborers were also working elsewhere in the province.^{xcv} This pointed to a mass exodus of the Luo men from South Nyanza, leaving women behind to take care of everything. This exodus made the district so vulnerable to attacks from the neighboring Kisii and Maasai communities. In this case, women were forced to prepare for the worst. Evidence based on Table 4: 3 indicates that during 1914 to 1915, the average monthly wage was Rs. 6/86 per month, but it decreased during 1915/1916 and 1916-1917 period.^{xcvi}

Collier and Lal noted deplorable working conditions during the war period across Kenya. They pointed out that wages if paid at all were extremely low; and actually fell between 1910 and 1920.^{xcvii} This parallels the situation in the South African mining industry, as described among others and by Bundy.^{xcviii} This only meant that while the Luo men remained away from home, they hardly managed to remit some money back home for the support of their families. Women for sure, felt the weight of this absence and the security situation became more precarious.

The engagement of the people of South Nyanza in migrant wage labor impacted on women's lives in various ways. For instance, the absence of able-bodied men in the villages who departed on migrant wage labor meant that the bulk of agricultural work was now left to women and junior men. One informant recalled that since a large number of men were engaged in migrant labor, women bore more agricultural work than before.^{xcix} However, women did not just sit back amidst all the aforementioned challenges. In order to avert conflicts arising from cattle raids due to pressure over taxation, most Luo women insisted that men who did not engage in migrant wage labor become involved more in agricultural production, working together with their wives. This practice of men working on farms with their wives became more common than during the pre-colonial era. This was because the women of South Nyanza realized

that they could raise tax money from their agricultural proceeds in order to stop their husbands from raiding their neighboring communities for livestock.^c

5.1.5. Luo Women during the Second World War, 1939 to 1945

When the Second World War broke out in 1939, the people of South Nyanza and Nyanza at large were once again called upon to take part. The households in South Nyanza responded positively. Recruitment for military purposes was carried out in South Nyanza from May until the outbreak of the war, when it became apparent that over recruitment had occurred. A total of 300 pioneers and numerous police arrived at the recruitment office at the district headquarters at Kisii.^{ci}

It is important to note that by 1939, the lifestyle of most Luo women revealed a sense of progress and ability in dealing with inter-ethnic conflicts in South Nyanza. It is no doubt that they were under control of community affairs, including decisions to wage war or negotiate peace. They no longer portrayed themselves as helpless victims of inter-ethnic violence as it was in the initial years of colonial rule. This was mainly because of two reasons; first, the realization that they could make a positive change in the community and secondly, economic empowerment enhanced by increased agricultural production. For instance, during the initial years of colonial rule, clothes were mainly associated with those who were part of the colonial administration or engaged in migrant wage labor. But by the 1930s, clothes were a general fashion among the people of South Nyanza and the province more generally. The introduction of cotton as a cash crop in South Nyanza enhanced the process of the acquisition of clothes by many women in South Nyanza. Women who were engaged in cotton production did so not only to meet tax requirements but also to buy manufactured products such as dresses, which were becoming *de rigueur* for the inhabitants of South Nyanza during the 1930s.^{cii}

5.1.6. Luo Women and Boundary Disputes in South Nyanza (1950 - 1962)

Colonial labor laws and demand of more livestock from South Nyanza posed a serious challenge to peaceful coexistence among the communities in the region. As mentioned earlier, these demands caused a lot of pressure on the Luo as well as their neighboring communities. Most Luo men by this time were engaged in the provision of labor services to the colonial administration, leaving their wives to bear the brunt of heavy taxation and family upkeep. The few men left behind, including the World War ex-soldiers had to ensure that they fulfill their colonial obligations. With a colonial demand of 11,411 heads of cattle on South Nyanza alone, the region was headed towards a disaster. In order to avert this crisis, stock theft became a commonplace in the region. Reports of cattle raids and revenge attacks became more frequent between the Luo and their neighbors, Kisii, Maasai and Abakuria.^{ciii}

The colonial administration then felt it wise to establish location peace councils to support the native chiefs and the police in peace keeping. By 1949, there were councils for Kabwai, Kanyadoto, Gwassi, Karungu, Kadem and Sakwa. What was striking in these councils was the successful exclusion of women. Men took it upon themselves to run all the affairs of the district without regard to women. According to senior chief Sherry of West Kamagak Location, violence could not easily stop since women were denied the opportunity to directly participate in administration.^{civ} Furthermore, one magistrate could not attend to all judicial matters of the region since he only visited the district fortnightly. The District Officers continued to undertake the bulk of court work, which became extremely taxing due to the increase in criminal activities at Kamagambo, Kehancha and Sondu.

In 1950, there were reports of tribal clashes between the Luo and Masai at Oyani area in Migori. It was alleged that the violence erupted after a disagreement between the said communities over land and boundary issues. With the successful settlement of the Maragoli at Oyani in 1944 and the introduction of tobacco growing in the area, the size of land available for cultivation reduced considerably. There was therefore a dire need by the Luo to extend their geographical boundaries to accommodate the new economic adjustments and settlements. The Maasai on the other hand needed their land, and even more, to satisfy their nomadic way of life. They therefore resisted any attempts by their Luo neighbors to push the boundaries indiscriminately.

The same year, the Kisii and Luo were entangled in a border tussle at the Trans-Mara common border. The then District Commissioner Mr. A.H.H. Brown admitted that the border conflicts required a concerted effort from both the colonial government and the local communities alike.^{cvi} Even though the district was fairly isolated from the political movements which were strong elsewhere in the colony, the increased friction between the Luo and Kisii was a major concern to the colonial administration. The Kikuyu and Maragoli in Kisii and Oyani respectively are also said to have caused a certain amount of trouble. Border affairs continued to influence major activities of the district. The colonial administration reacted by forming border peace committees between Kisii/Masai, Kisii/Kipsigis, Luo/Kisii and Luo/Abakuria to help contain the problem.

In the face of these inter-ethnic unrests, the Luo women became so preoccupied with underground dealings, geared towards bringing back a state of normalcy within the region. Since the dawn of time, peace, according to the Luo, was not merely the absence of war.^{cvi} Peace was equated with 'freshness', health, well being, harmony, calm and tranquility. The absence of such qualities was seen as the sign of conflicts, which could be either latent or overt. It was that harmony and freshness which provided farmers with good crops, fishermen with abundant catches and hunters with game. When there was enough food for everyone, peace would reign in homes and families, clans and tribes. As nobody had any reason to be envious of anybody else, neighboring communities could live in peace, visit one another during the off-seasons and attend weddings and funerals.

From early childhood, women exposed each child to a variety of songs, stories, proverbs and sayings directed by the mother or the aunt and conveyed at the fireplace or after the evening meals, which aimed at reducing conflict. The songs, stories, proverbs and sayings contained simple but clear messages and moral teachings. Indeed some of the respondents went ahead to suggest that Luo mothers in such stories and songs tried to project to the children what they expected of them as sons and daughters in family and community relationships. They also focused on the importance of people living and mutuality, of consideration for others. Certain

teachings given to children during this were meant to emphasize the fact that to avoid war can sometimes be an act of good leadership. In addition, some stories also underscored the negative aspects of conflict and hostilities.^{cvi}

Another important mechanism advanced by the Luo women to help avert the escalating conflicts during this period was through social capital transmission. To these women, traditional values such as patience, tolerance, honesty, respect for elders, communality and mutuality, compassion, regard for due discretion, gentleness, modesty, self-control, moderation, flexibility, and open-mindedness were indispensable, if a lasting peace was to be achieved in South Nyanza. Tolerance, respect, consideration for neighbours and inviolability, respect for human rights and equality were some of the most cherished principles the Luo women held in high esteem. During conflicts women, children, the elderly and the sick had a certain degree of immunity. The Luo women took advantage of the situation to impart more knowledge to the children on positive values. They therefore played a dominant role in the transmission, propagation and consolidation of the critical values that generated peace and harmony in South Nyanza. There was a feeling of deterioration of positive values and of the growing lack of restraint, intolerance and violence in the region, mainly due to Western influence. That being the case, most Luo women claimed, at independence, that it had become a matter of urgency to rehabilitate the culture of Luo and restore its prestige so that it could contribute towards making a balanced and cohesive society.^{cvi}

5.1.7. Conclusion

The introduction of colonialism in South Nyanza brought a number of changes in the district, some of which fuelled inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. Colonial heavy demand for cattle put a lot of pressure on the people of South Nyanza, making them raid their neighbors for more cattle to meet colonial demands. Border conflicts became so common that women peace actors were not able to effectively control the situation. However, Luo women managed design strategies to help mitigate the negative effects of these conflicts. They concentrated more on positive childcare, social capital transmission and later structural prevention through formal women's organizations. This was however not enough, especially in a region where a lot of economic restructuring was anticipated soon after independence. No wonder, cross border conflicts in South Nyanza escalated soon after independence, upto the 1980s.

6. Chapter Six

6.1. Women and Peace-Building in the Post-Colonial South Nyanza 1963-2008

6.1.1. Introduction

This chapter examines both internal and external dynamics that impacted on women's participation in inter-ethnic peace building in post-colonial South Nyanza. During the early years of independence, South Nyanza experienced a considerable number of inter-ethnic conflicts, most of which were resource-based. The re-introduction of multiparty democracy in the Post Cold War Kenya also had its share of challenges in South Nyanza. This chapter demonstrates that despite all the changes that occurred in South Nyanza due to political and economic reasons, Luo women continued to put in place strategies of promoting inter-ethnic peace in the region. The chapter also seeks to analyze how these changes impacted on the gender, generational and political structures of the households in South Nyanza during post-colonial times. The chapter therefore provides a basis for understanding ethno-political conflicts in South Nyanza.

6.1.2. The Luo/Maasai Border Conflicts (1961-1989)

From the 1960s through to the 1980s, the relationship between the Luo and their Maasai neighbors was not harmonious either. There were still reports of violent confrontation between the two rival groups. The main cause of these conflicts was stock theft, land issues and revenge attacks. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the initial conflicts between the Luo and Maasai especially at Oyani and Angaga were not conclusively and satisfactorily solved.

On the night of 15th September 1961, a group of people, believed to be Maasai, raided a *boma* (homestead) in area "A" belonging to a widow, identified as Aomo Maende and stole 14 heads of cattle. The raiders struck at around 8.00 pm, armed with all sorts of weapons; arrows, sticks, clubs, spears and pangas. When the woman went out to see what was going on in her compound, they attacked and seriously injured her before making away with the aforementioned heads of cattle, leaving behind two sticks and two arrow heads. As the woman was rushed to a nearby health centre, a small group of four men accompanied by one police officer attached to Nyamahiya Police Post pursued the assailants with no success. When the group returned to the village having recovered no cattle from the raiders, the villagers were so infuriated that they asked the local chief to grant them permission to 'teach the Maasai a lesson'. However, the chief vehemently refused to allow his people to enter into any war with their neighbors. He instead promised to get in touch with Chief Delmia of the Maasai and reach for a peaceful settlement of the stalemate. This diplomatic move failed to bear any fruit since Chief Delmia was unable to trace the raiders and recover the stolen cattle. The previous day, some three youths under the leadership of Kimaiywa Ole Masere attacked a Luo woman and a man in Maasai country on their way to Nyamaiyia Market and this made the Luo even more bitter with their neighbours. What transpired after this unsuccessful diplomatic effort is not quite clear, but most respondents from Angaga concur that the two incidents led to violent confrontation between the two communities, a conflict that did not cease upto 1986.

Mwaura Samora^{cix} posits that the growth of feminist movement in South Nyanza gained great momentum in 1967. At first, women were more concerned with inequalities in laws, culture and their role in the society. Samora proceeds to argue that Luo women became even more vibrant from the 1980s, demanding for a bigger and equal role in the society. The quest for women's rights gained momentum not only in the region but also in Kenya at large. Among the agendas that women were pushing for was their participation

in leadership and governance. This wave laid the foundation for the formation of women organizations such as the Federation of Women Lawyers, Coalition on Violence Against Women, East African Women's League and Education Centre for Women in Democracy which have been so instrumental in enhancing women's participation in the affairs of the society. For instance, the number of women Members of Parliament in Kenya rose from three in 1992 to 23 in 2007.^{cx}

By January 1967, several border committees - comprising both men and women - were also up and running. For instance, on 7th January 1967, the Nyangusu Border Committee was able to address some major peace concerns in the area. However, border attacks continued to be reported despite several strategies that had been put in place to promote peace in the region. At Angaga, the situation was not different. The Maasai (Nandi who had moved into Maasai country) continued to sneak into Luoland and stole livestock. By 1967, more than 200 livestock had been reported missing. This posed a serious challenge to peace building efforts in the area. Nowonder, a copy of a letter written by Chief Johnson Odundo from Kuja Chiefs Camp, Sakwa Location indicated that these conflicts were on and off upto late 1980s. This was mainly due to an increase in incidences of stock theft along the Luo/Maasai border.^{cxii}

The decision to execute revenge attacks on the Maasai was vehemently opposed by most Luo women who felt it wise to pursue peace, so that economic activities could go on uninterrupted. By this time for instance, trade had started flourishing between the Luo and Maasai along the common border markets such as Olontare, Angaga and Ogwedhi. Intermarriages between the two communities were a commonplace. Despite the notable decline in cattle rustling in the region, most respondents claimed that a violent confrontation was inevitable. According to Rose Auma, one of the clan elders in Olontare, the Luo women tried to discourage their husbands to seek peace for the benefit of their wives and children, who had suffered a great deal in the early 1966. She noted,

We (Luo women) were totally against this war. Our men were so bitter that the Maasai people were bragging to have beaten us, and they vowed to challenge the Maasai authority in this region. We met as women and agreed not to feed our violent husbands and most of us earned beatings for failing to cooperate- but we never lost hope. It was quite interesting to see that our men yielded to pressure and returned home.^{cxiii}

This study also revealed that the elderly Luo women were respected by all, and played a key role in crisis management and conflict resolution. Thus, when the region was under a threat of violent inter-ethnic confrontation, an appeal would usually be made to them to calm the tension and reconcile the combatants. Such an appeal for mediation was usually made to women who enjoyed the consideration and respect of all who knew them.^{cxiiii} They would go to meet the opposing clans with their babies on their backs, to avoid any possible attack. When words proved fruitless, the women would threaten to expose their nakedness or to go down on their knees. In either case, the gesture signified a curse for those who bore the responsibility for such grave acts. Because of the respect that the enemy soldiers had for the women, they would usually put down their weapons before the fateful acts were accomplished.^{cxv} To manage the Luo/Maasai conflicts, these had well-organized regulatory machinery in which they generally played a major part. Under this system a woman was recognized as having an advisory role, behind the scenes, mainly where her husband was concerned, and as playing an active part in strengthening solidarity and social harmony generally. Within this structure, women played the more unobtrusive yet leading substantial role, both in their families and within their own circle.

6.1.3. Responding to Conflict and Restoring Peace (1990 - 2007)

During this period, attempts by Luo women to restore peace in South Nyanza took two distinct paths. One consisted of formal peace negotiations conducted by political leaders and sometimes mediated by external parties. The second path contained an array of grass-roots initiatives. These attempts culminated in three types of peace building which could be classified as the formal (government), semiformal (individuals in government positions) and informal (grass roots). It is important to understand that the conflicts that plagued Kenya in the 1990s were mostly seen in political terms. Leaders in government, particularly KANU stalwarts, including the President, blamed the clashes on multiparty politics. At another level, clashes were seen as an attempt to ensure the survival of the state.

As individuals and in partnership with other members of the community, Luo women managed to build local capacity for early warning programmes aimed at promoting peace in South Nyanza. Since the 1988 General elections which were perceived by many to be heavily rigged by the ruling party KANU, Luo women immediately mobilized to prepare for any violent confrontation that could have been anticipated. With regard to operational prevention in particular, women sensitized the local residents to recognize early warning signs of conflict and publicly monitored the political and socio-economic life of the region. As armed conflict threatened to erupt, Luo women took early action through fact finding and reporting, direct intervention and mediation, and diffusion of escalating tensions at the local level. They combined both traditional and modern methods of conflict prevention to ensure violence does not occur. They intervened through intense lobbying to pressure their neighboring communities not to be dragged into the multi-party debate at the time.

Nevertheless, Luo women continued to work for peace and picking up the pieces from the wars started by men. Among the strategies most Luo women found productive in promoting peace was intermarriage and family education. The old practice of marrying the daughters of one village to sons of the next was a war-avoidance strategy. No mother was asked what her ideology was or what she did; neither would she be asked what her children were doing. They defended ideologies and lives.^{cxvi} During the study, it emerged that intermarriage between the Luo and Kisii, Kuria, Maragoli and Maasai did take place. Some of the respondents were of the view that this was one of the ways men and women used to restore harmony. But further probing and investigation revealed that inter-tribal marriages existed long before the clashes began and they did not stop the clashes from occurring. But still, most Luo women who were involved in inter-tribal marriages said their engagement was purely based on love and the quest for peaceful co-existence. Most respondents concurred that the 1995 UN conferences did make a remarkable impact on peace-building activities in South Nyanza.

In 1997 General Elections, Luo women in the South Nyanza were so keen to stop any violent inter-ethnic confrontation that could emanate from the electoral process, from getting out of hand. With the help of *JoBeijing* at the grassroots level, they held village peace exhibitions where they exchanged views on the symbols of peace and analyzed security situations in the areas they visited during the clashes and after. According to some key informants, during the village peace exhibitions, people came along with peace symbols from different communities because it was believed that what might seem normal to one community may mean a totally different thing to another community.

During the peace exhibition women sang traditional peace songs, brought milk, gourds, spears, arrows, grass, babies, green leaves and explained how important they are used during war. For example, the Kalenjin women during conflicts carried milk in a gourd as a sign that they are in search of peace. As for the Luo women, during the clashes between them and the Kalenjin, they participated in the reconciliation which was arranged with the rituals to solemnize the occasion. A makeshift obstacle consisting of tree branches would then be created along the border and the warriors would place their spears over it. A dog would then be slain and cut in half and its blood sprinkled along the border. The mothers would exchange babies with the enemy and suckle them. The warriors would also exchange spears with their opponents. The elders then offered prayers and a profound curse were pronounced to cause havoc to either side if the peace was violated.^{cxvi} In addition, all these women from different communities carried along with them what they considered to be of use in terms of food, especially vegetables, and taught other women how to cook them. This was aimed at helping women from other communities learn to embrace other people's culture thereby dispelling animosity among them.^{cxvii}

6.2. Luo Women Peace-Builders and the Post Election Violence (2007 - 2008)

6.2.1. Introduction

South Nyanza had been generally peaceful before the 2007 electoral period, although the ODM nominations were characterized by widespread violence. In 2005, the national referendum caused some division among Kenyan communities but South Nyanza was able to speak almost in unison. The "Luo Nyanza", as the region was popularly known, was inhabited predominantly by the Luo and other Bantu speaking tribes including the Kisii, Kuria, Abasuba and a few Maragoli living side by side since the pre-colonial period. *Nyanza* (a large mass of water), a name derived from the Sukuma, a Bantu-speaking tribe living on the Tanzanian side provided economic opportunities to her inhabitants for decades. These communities belonged in the *No* (orange) camp and managed to vote against the draft constitution in 2005 except the Kisii who belonged to the *Yes* (banana) camp.

According to a former Nyanza Provincial Police Officer Grace Kaindi, as early as August 2007, reports of ethnic tension the mainly between Luo residents, who "unanimously" supported ODM, and non Luo residents, who were perceived to be sympathetic to PNU, had began filtering in to the authorities. They were sparked by an incident in Karatina in Central Province where the ODM presidential candidate Raila Odinga and his entourage had been unceremoniously thrown out of the Karatina Tourist Lodge (an establishment owned and run by an in-law of President Mwai Kibaki), an incident that was widely reported in the media. In response, intelligence sources indicated that tension was building up in Rangwe, Siaya and Migori where ODM supporters vowed that politicians affiliated to NARC-K (PNU was yet to be formed) or any other party aligned to incumbent President Mwai Kibaki would face hostilities if they dared campaign in the ODM strongholds of Luo Nyanza.

6.2.2. Response by Luo Women Peace-builders

Local women peace-building activities emerged out of despair and exasperation with conflict. Peace building posed particular challenges for most Luo women actors. It required specific skills and institutional support, both of which were scarce at the local and national levels. Through intense interaction and working together, Luo women initiated peace actions and the process of transforming conflict began. They became increasingly active in operational prevention - short-term, targeted mechanisms to contain or reverse escalation during a crisis - and particularly in early warning and response efforts. Most Luo women peace - builders who held leadership positions in their respective religious organizations had distinct knowledge of the situation on the ground and they were in key positions to not only gather information and design scenarios but to actually implement responses.

This study could not easily establish whether the inter-ethnic violence that rocked most parts of South Nyanza was spontaneous or pre-planned. One thing that this study was able to prove beyond any reasonable doubt was that violence occurred in the region and Luo women played a major role. During the 2007 election campaigns, tension was already high in the region, with most youths threatening to evict non-ODM supporters from the region. Being peace-lovers, most Luo women initiated prayer sessions in their respective churches, with a view to promoting a smooth peaceful transition. According to most respondents, women church leaders were at the frontlines of negotiating and maintaining peace through their work, hence expanding the definition of "security."

On 30th December 2007 for instance, some Luo youth had planned to attack non-ODM supporters in Rongo town, especially the Kisii and Kikuyu tribesmen. One woman allied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, only identified as Mama Mike -for security purposes-gathered the members of the Women Ministry and pleaded with them to do all within their power to stop the impending bloodshed. The women resolved that they would not only form prayer bands for peace but also secretly alert non-Luos of the imminent danger, so they could vacate the town early enough or make the necessary security arrangements. Being a market day at Riosiri Market, which borders the Luo and Kisii ethnic communities, the few Luo women who were brave enough to attend to their market demands managed to spread the message secretly to the would-be victims.^{cxviii} That night, most Kikuyu people managed to escape from the wrath of the attackers and camped at the nearby Kamagambo Police Station. When the attackers struck, they only managed to loot and burn some of the belongings of the victims. As one respondent recalled,

They struck like thunder at my shop by ten in the night when they felt we were already asleep. I only smelled petrol fumes which they had sprinkled all over the house to help it burn faster and when I peeped through the window, some young men had already surrounded my house. Fortunately, I had already transferred my wife and two daughters to the police station for safety. I had just come back to see if I could collect some money and my essential belongings...but it was too late...I had to bribe my way to safety even though my shop...what I had saved for over twenty years went up in flames...were it not for the two Luo women who had tipped us off the impending attack, we would have been no more, in fact very dead by now. Very dead!^{cxix}

This was just but one of the many cases in which the Luo women became actively involved in issuing early warning signals as well as participating in the actual mediation process. Early warning involved information collection and analysis using indicators of potential conflict, mapping of key actors and stakeholders. The Luo women widely recognized that women are among the primary victims of inter-ethnic conflict. Being the backbone of the Luo community, they therefore endeavoured to bear the major burden of reconstruction and reconciliation efforts, hence becoming the strongest voices for peace, nonviolence, and the promotion of human rights in unstable South Nyanza. They became much more active in both operational and structural prevention, advancing longer-term solutions to reduce the potential for violence, such as human rights, justice, good governance, development, and human security. They particularly invested in ensuring armed conflict does not recur because it was them who would shoulder a huge burden of responsibility in the communities.

When the crisis ended with the signing of the National Accord on 28th January 2008, women continued to conduct a broad spectrum of activities to prevent a return to violence and to continue the path to democracy and peace in the area. According to the chairperson of MYWO Rachuonyo District, these women's groups were so active in rural areas, working with political, traditional, religious, and civil society leaders to resolve inter-ethnic disputes.^{cxix} Organizations such as the MYWO offered training in human rights and women's empowerment in the conflict-affected areas and create a standing network for dialogue, negotiations, and conflict resolution. Women's groups reached out to male youth, in particular - those who most often initiated violent action - to provide them with alternatives. They encouraged and helped young people to report their grievances to elders for mediation, peacefully protest, write letters to the authorities, and seek audiences with other key parties.^{cxix}

7. Chapter Seven

7.1. Summary Conclusion and Recommendation

The aim of the study was to analyze the role of women in peace-building in South Nyanza between 1850 and 2008. The study commenced in 1850 as a baseline to examine the the position of the Luo women in the pre-colonial inter-ethnic conflicts in South Nyanza. This analysis was to provide a background to understanding the history of women participation in inter-ethnic conflict, strategies that were put in place by the Luo women to promote peaceful coexistence in the region and the various challenges Luo women peace-builders faced in the process. As the study demonstrates, the history of women's participation in conflict resolution during the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods was a dynamic one.

This study established that South Nyanza is one of the regions in Kenya where women participation in inter-ethnic peace-building met various challenges over the years. Women suffered most effects in violent ethnic conflicts such as marginalization, lack of adequate resources to take care of their children during conflict and post-conflict periods, physical injuries and even death. Yet, women always struggled to design appropriate techniques and strategies to enable them participate actively in societal development. They adopted various methods to promote peace in South Nyanza since A.D 1850 and the impact of their participation was realized.

This study established that Luo women greatly participated in decision making and contributed towards peaceful resolution of conflicts not only among the Luo clans but also with other neighboring communities. It was noted that pre-colonial men in South Nyanza were polygamous. The large number of wives they had promoted the growth of reproduction which was crucial in food production defense. The more people in a family, the more they were utilized in agricultural production and community defense. For instance, in South Nyanza, it was common to find women intervening in cases where a strong chief imposed his political control over the neighboring weaker communities. This was mainly because such chiefs would interrupt trading activities with the aforementioned communities. In some cases however, these weaker clans became subjects and integrated into the chiefdom, the chief of the dominant clan could easily exploit their labor. But, by the mid nineteenth century, a drastic shift occurred in South Nyanza and the Luo women more generally became more empowered to challenge the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures. It was noted that the shift was prompted by the coming of western education and Christianity to the region.

Basically, the colonial period ushered in an era of conflict and accommodation in the region. The situation in this region thus resembled what Mafeje described of colonially invaded areas. He argues that under the colonial system of administration, linguistic groups in the region were categorized as tribes and the differences between them emphasized. Thus, stronger and more rigid ethnic relations became the order of the day. This new order became the origin of inter ethnic conflicts in Kamagambo West, Ruga and Olontare areas of South Nyanza. In 1940s and 1950s, South Nyanza experienced a series of inter - ethnic conflicts between the dominant Luo households and their neighbors in Ruga, Sare - Kamagambo and Koderobara areas. This was mainly due to border issues and cattle rustling. The main economic activities in which the Luo households in South Nyanza were engaged were agricultural production, cattle keeping, fishing and trading.

The introduction of colonialism in South Nyanza brought a number of changes in the district, some of which fuelled inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. Colonial heavy demand for cattle put a lot of pressure on the people of South Nyanza, making them raid their neighbors for more cattle to meet colonial demands. Border conflicts became so common that women peace actors were not able to effectively control the situation. However, Luo women managed design strategies to help mitigate the negative effects of these

conflicts. They concentrated more on positive childcare, social capital transmission and later structural prevention through formal women's organizations. This was however not enough, especially in a region where a lot of economic restructuring was anticipated soon after independence. No wonder, cross border conflicts in South Nyanza escalated soon after independence, upto the 1980s. From the findings of this study, it emerged that women are a highly differentiated group of social actors, who possess valuable resources and capacities. While they are forced by conditions into certain positions and roles, they are capable of changing their circumstances to ensure peace prevails in their societies. They create room for manouvre in conflict situations and utilize the windows of opportunity offered by conflicts to improve their position. For instance, various conflicts offer women new opportunities for political participation, exposure to women's rights, the chance to establish women groups, skills training and organizational capacity building. However, more research needs to be done on the efficacy of Luo women peace initiatives in South Nyanza and the changing roles of male

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