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**Effectiveness of Rural Self-Help Initiatives on Peace Building
Activities in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya**



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Effectiveness of Rural Self-Help Initiatives on Peace Building Activities in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of rural self-help strategies on peace building activities in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya.

Methodology: The study used a descriptive research design. The target population was 150 respondents engaged in rural self-help initiatives in Turkana North Sub-County. The sample size was 108 selected using quota sampling. The data was collected using questionnaires and interview guides. Data collected from the field was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequency and percentages to analyze the measure of central tendency for each of the study variables and also the measure of diversion for each variable.

Findings: The study established that Rural self-help initiatives strategies ($\beta=0.708$; $p=0.000$) significantly effective in enhancing peace building activities in Turkana north sub-county. The study concluded that Rural Self-Help Strategies are very effective in enhancing the peace building in Turkana North Sub-County.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice: The study recommends that county government of Turkana through Rural self-help initiatives should engage the local community in decision-making processes. There also a need for county government of Turkana to ensure that the rural self-help initiatives implemented provide training and capacity-building programs. This would equip community members with the skills needed to take part in peacebuilding initiatives

Keywords: *Rural Self-Help Initiatives, Social Cohesion, Social Inclusivity, Peace Building Activities*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Rural self-help initiatives can play a significant role in peace building by addressing root causes of conflict and fostering sustainable development. Self-help projects empower rural communities by involving them directly in the development process (Anand, *et al.*, 2020). This fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, leading to increased social cohesion and resilience against conflict. Further, self-help projects focusing on income generation, such as agriculture cooperatives or craft collectives, can alleviate poverty and create economic stability in rural areas, reducing the likelihood of conflict (Gemünden, Lehner & Kock, 2018). Self-help initiatives often bring together people from different backgrounds, including those who may have been on opposing sides of past conflicts. Working together towards a common goal promotes social integration and reconciliation, breaking down barriers and fostering understanding among community members (Tyagi, 2020).

Globally, majority of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and well-known corporations and institutions advocate for the adoption of self-help initiatives as a strategy to assist communities across various states in managing livelihood shocks and pressures. This method aims to improve food security, mitigate challenges, and bolster social capital. For individuals with limited resilience to cope with unforeseen circumstances, SHPs offer an alternative by promoting regular savings, typically in groups of approximately 15–20 people (Tearfund, 2015; Kindernothilfe, 2021). In Indonesia, establishing community-driven approaches to address common needs has proven to be an effective framework for handling negotiations and resolving disputes at the local level (Jost, Ferdous & Spicer, 2014). Existing literature widely agrees that participatory processes must be inclusive, encompassing marginalized groups such as the poor, women, youth, minorities, the elderly, the disabled, the landless, and displaced individuals (Panda, Abhiyan & Force, 2016; Randel, German & Ewing, 2017).

In Africa, numerous communities found themselves entrenched in extreme poverty as a result of the widespread atrocities that resulted in the loss of lives in Rwanda (Kindernothilfe, 2021). Rwanda adopted a strategy of using self-help groups for engaging the vulnerable communities and provide social, economic, and political empowerment. Additionally, self-help groups such as CPR, Mosaic and RWARRI in Rwanda have been enhancing peacebuilding strategies by incorporating conflict resolution mechanisms inherent in post-conflict environments (Bratberg, 2013). In Africa, self-help groups also showcase enhanced inclusivity, addressing the impact of climatic disasters on marginalized groups like women, as evidenced by the Janagal self-help group in Somaliland (O'Sullivan, 2019). Ndlovu and Mutela (2013) also assert that the engagement of women in self-help group projects contributes to their political and socio-economic empowerment in Africa. In Tanzania, self-help initiatives have served as a platform for coordinating individuals, forming networks, and establishing rural organizations where members actively engage and enhance each other's capabilities (Umeodum, Magayane & Nonga, 2019).

In Kenya, there are self-help initiatives that have played crucial roles in peacebuilding (Nyakundi, 2022). The peace connector projects have been initiated in various areas of the Rift Valley, engaging local peace committees in the distribution of relief seeds and fertilizers. These resources, funded by the US Agency for International Development and provided by Catholic Relief Services, aimed to replace the agricultural supplies destroyed during the post-election violence of 2007 to 2008 (Korir, 2009). These initiatives were created with the aim of enhancing the positive effects of peace building. This was done by carefully selecting and raising awareness among vendors from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Additionally, the construction of the road projects was intended to advance peace building by connecting the two communities, facilitating unrestricted interactions, movements, and communications (Wairuri, 2015).

1.1 Problem Statement

The role of rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding emerges as a critical yet underexplored aspect. It is a platitude that peacebuilding should consist efforts and activities that help any community engulfed in a conflict. These efforts need to assist in recovering from conflicts and establishing a stable civil society, non-cohesive governmental structures and therefore promote peace and stability (Castro, 2018). Community participation in peacebuilding projects ensures equitable distribution of resources that benefits the weak groups of people to access the services. The progress of peacebuilding processes remains restricted without proactively involving local communities. This involvement includes empowerment, enhancing local capabilities, shaping the agenda, participating in decision-making, and strategic planning (Juma, 2020). The efficiency of rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding have been hindered by various challenges including limited financial resources which prevent the initiation or completion of projects aimed at promoting peace and development in rural areas (Gichohi, 2016).

Despite the increasing emphasis on community-driven development initiatives, there is lack of empirical evidence on the outcomes of these projects. Some of the existing studies like Juma (2020) did not specifically focus on rural self-help groups projects. In addition, Nyathi (2017) could not be generalized to cover the situation in Kenya. This implies that there is research gap that urgently needs to be filled for examining the ability of rural self- help projects in addressing the root causes of conflict and contribute to lasting peace. Hence, this study sought to bridge this gap by assessing the role of rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding in Turkana North Sub-County.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The efficiency of rural self-help strategies on peacebuilding globally has been recognized as a valuable approach to addressing conflicts and fostering sustainable peace (Chivasa, 2017). Rural self-help initiatives have the potential to enhance a community's conflict resolution methods, representing a significant stride in the direction of fostering peace. These projects have the

potential to involve various stakeholders, including marginalized individuals, in the development process (Moyo-Nyoni & Kiyala, 2022). This inclusive approach addresses governance issues, ensuring the protection of rights, fostering spontaneous participation in leadership, and contributing to peace-building efforts. Consequently, the acknowledgment of the marginalized population's input in discussions becomes integral to the overall success of peace-building initiatives through rural self-help initiatives for the benefit of the local community. For instance, Elsawi (2011) argues that there were initiatives in South Sudan that supported the establishment of women's empowerment groups, fostering their involvement in community peacebuilding and reconciliation. Comparable efforts have also been carried out in Somalia, such as the Jagan self-help group, aiming to enhance women's engagement in building social capital and addressing environmental disasters (O'Sullivan, 2019).

In various contexts, peacekeeping missions facilitate the involvement of the local community in self-help initiatives by organizing awareness forums that educate residents on the principles of peacebuilding. In the Central African Republic, the peacebuilding efforts entailed community engagement through dialogue forums, assisting them in establishing mechanisms for reconciliation within projects (Haider, 2019). These forums allowed the active participation of women in various reconciliatory processes, including negotiation and mediation. Due to the considerable success achieved in peacebuilding initiatives through local projects, regional collaborations expanded to include support from organizations such as the African Union. This support aimed at strengthening women-led Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) through workshops, aligning with the objectives outlined in the Khartoum agreement (African Union, 2020). The research done by Machingo (2018) focused on rural self-help initiatives in Mwenezi district, Masvingo Province. The study established that rural self-help initiatives play a crucial role in enhancing the lives of individuals by promoting their active involvement and inclusiveness. These projects create employment opportunities, empowering people and diverting them from engaging in harmful activities. Most local peace-building projects, particularly those focusing on youth involvement, seek to reduce the risk of violence by offering incentives, expanding prospects, and addressing community needs simultaneously.

Providing incentives for community empowerment after a conflict can have dual effects on project success. On one hand, these incentives can assist communities in developing resilience to social challenges, enabling them to better cope with difficulties. On the other hand, there is a risk of creating dependency on external donors. The rural self-help initiatives aimed to promote peace-building by empowering communities, reducing segregation, providing equal access to resources, and enhancing the well-being of marginalized populations. Unfortunately, the effort fell short in addressing conflicts in Sudan. These instances highlight the challenge of determining the opportune moment for implementing local empowerment in a post-conflict environment, as interventions may either successfully foster unity or exacerbate tensions (Sayed, Badroodien, Omar, Balie & Nakidien, 2017).

Most self-help projects such as Restore Africa Kenya and youth empowerment project in rural Kenya prioritize gender sensitivity to advance the cause of gender equality, recognizing that these projects may not inherently include all marginalized groups (Ringera, 2014; Mbai, 2017). As mentioned earlier, there are situations in which women, despite being provided with opportunities to engage in discussions, might not express their thoughts on societal issues because of fear of backlash and power dynamics (Githaiga, 2017; Juma, 2020). These groups also aim to empower women in fostering peace within their local communities through initiatives such as reconciliation, conflict resolution, entrepreneurship, environmental conservation, and more. Typically, self-help initiatives in conflict-stricken counties like Samburu and Turkana revolve around self-help groups dedicated to diverse projects aimed at building social capital for sustainability and reducing conflicts (Njuguna, 2015). The success of these projects varies across sectors, with agricultural interventions often leading the way (Niyitunga, 2023).

2.2 Conceptual Framework

Robinson (2006) asserts that a conceptual framework establishes a connection between independent and dependent variables. The provided conceptual framework illustrates the interrelationships among independent, dependent, and intervening variables. Each variable has been operationalized into various indicators. The independent variable effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding, is signified by level of organization of Rural self-help initiatives in peace buildings, performance of Rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding and role of Rural self-help initiatives in peace building, all of which in the content of this study, are indicators of effective Rural self-help initiatives in peace buildings. The dependent variable of the study is demarcated by depth of social cohesion, rate of social inclusivity and gender equality awareness as the pivotal element of peace building.

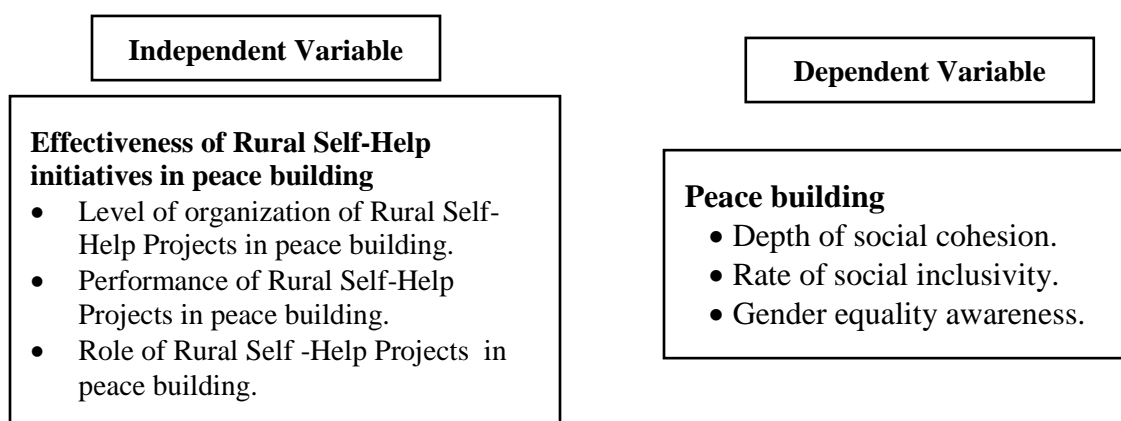


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

2.3 Research Gaps

Some of the existing studies like Juma (2020) who focused on institutional factors influencing implementation of peace building projects in Turkana County did not specifically focus on rural self-help groups projects. In addition, a study by Nyathi (2017) on reducing conflicts within rural women's self-help groups was done in Zimbabwe and could not be generalized to cover the situation in Kenya. This implies that there is research gap that urgently needs to be filled for examining the ability of rural self- help projects in addressing the root causes of conflict and contribute to lasting peace. The existing studies have failed to establish the role and extent to which self-projects have contributed towards peacebuilding. Hence, this study sought to bridge this gap by assessing the extent to which rural self-help projects have contributed to peacebuilding in Turkana North Sub-County.

3.0 MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study used a descriptive research design. The design used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The target population included 35 chairpersons of self-help groups since there were 35 groups targeted, 30 leaders from religious organizations, 25 senior security officers, the district county commissioner, 10 ward administrators, and 50 regional administrators including assistant county commissioners, chiefs, and sub-chiefs. The sample size was 108 participants selected through quota sampling to minimize errors in the sampling process. Primary data was collected using questionnaires and Key Informants Interviews (KIIs). Data collected from the field was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves the use of frequency and percentages to analyze the measure of central tendency for each of the study variables and also the measure of diversion for each variable. Regression model data was analyzed using statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25. The findings from the analysis were illustrated according to each objective, encompassing both descriptive and inferential analyses presented through tables and interactive visuals.

4.0 FINDINGS

This highlights the findings and discussions for the analysis of the data obtained in regard to assessing effectiveness of rural self-help strategies on peace building activities in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The participants were requested to state their level of agreement with statements on the effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives strategies for peace building based on 5-point Likert scale where 1 is disagrees strongly (SD), 2 is disagrees (D), 3 is uncertain (U), 4 is agrees (A) and 5 is agrees strongly (SA). The findings are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Statements on Effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives Strategies

	SD %	D %	U %	A %	SA %	Mea n	Std. Dev.
Rural self-help initiatives strategies have minimized conflicts in the society	0.0	5.6	7.9	65.2	21.3	4.023	0.723
Rural self-help initiatives have succeeded in impacting people's behavior to transformational social development	2.2	4.5	12.4	70.8	10.1	3.820	0.762
Rural self-help initiatives are satisfactory in addressing community societal needs	18.0	68.5	9.0	3.4	1.1	2.011	0.715
There has been active participation of community members in peacebuilding	10.1	73.0	11.2	2.2	3.4	2.157	0.767
There are sustainable income-generating activities contributing to communal stability.	12.4	77.5	6.7	2.2	1.1	2.023	0.621
The number of people languishing in poverty have significantly decreased	10.1	77.5	10.1	1.1	1.1	2.056	0.591
Rural self-help initiatives have improved access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.	0.0	2.2	5.6	75.3	16.9	4.067	0.560
Rural self-help initiatives have ensured more women are taking part in peacebuilding	0.0	2.2	15.7	69.7	12.4	3.921	0.607
Rural self-help initiatives strategies culminate in equal development and non-marginalization	1.1	12.4	71.9	12.4	2.2	3.023	0.621
Management at self-help projects actively involve and engage community members in peace-building activities	0.0	5.6	12.4	68.5	13.5	3.899	0.692
There is a noticeable improvement in community relations and cooperation due to the strategies implemented by self-help projects.	0.0	4.5	13.5	73.0	9.0	3.865	0.625
The projects have successfully created opportunities for skill-building and economic development in the community.	0.0	0.0	3.4	77.5	19.1	4.157	0.450
Rural self-help initiatives encourage people reconciliation amidst disputes	0.0	3.4	7.9	69.7	19.1	4.045	0.638

As per the results, the participants agreed that the projects have successfully created opportunities for skill-building and economic development in the community as shown by 77.5% and a mean of 4.157 and that Rural self-help initiatives have improved access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water as shown by 75.3% and a mean of 4.067. Further, the participants agreed that Rural self-help initiatives encourage people reconciliation amidst disputes

(69.7%, Mean=4.045) and that Rural self-help initiatives strategies have minimized conflicts in the society (65.2%, Mean=4.023). This implies that Rural self-help initiatives have successfully created opportunities for skill-building and economic development in the community, have improved access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water.

In addition, the participants agreed that Rural self-help initiatives have ensured more women are taking part in peacebuilding (69.7%, Mean=3.921) and that management at self-help projects actively involve and engage community members in peace-building activities (68.5%, Mean=3.899). The participants also agreed that there is a noticeable improvement in community relations and cooperation due to the strategies implemented by self-help projects (73%, Mean=3.865) and that Rural self-help initiatives have succeeded in impacting people's behavior to transformational social development (70.8%, Mean=3.820). The findings imply that rural self-help initiatives have ensured more women are taking part in peacebuilding, enhanced community relations and cooperation and succeeded in impacting people's behavior to transformational social development.

However, the participants were undecided that Rural self-help initiatives strategies culminate in equal development and non-marginalization as shown by 71.9% and a mean of 3.023. The participants disagreed that the number of people languishing in poverty have significantly decreased (77.5%, Mean=2.056) and that there are sustainable income-generating activities contributing to communal stability (77.5%, Mean=2.023). In addition, the participants disagreed that there has been active participation of community members in peacebuilding as shown by 73% and a mean of 2.157 and that Rural self-help initiatives are satisfactory in addressing community societal needs as shown by 68.5% and a mean of 2.011. The results imply that Rural self-help initiatives have not been able to reduce the number of people languishing in poverty and have not addressed the community societal needs.

From the interviews, the interviewees said that some of the strategies employed by Rural self-help initiatives enhance peacebuilding have been effective. The interviewees said that Rural self-help initiatives have been effective in minimizing conflicts in the society, in improving access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water and have ensured more women are taking part in peacebuilding. The interviewees also said that Rural self-help initiatives have successfully created opportunities for skill-building and economic development in the community. However, the interviewees said that some Rural self-help initiatives have not been effective in some instance as the domestic violence is still a huge concern in Turkana North Sub-County. This is why it's important for changes to be done in rural self-help groups for them to be effective in peacebuilding. In support, one of the interviewees said:

I would suggest implementing certain changes to enhance the effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives in peace building, particularly at the local level. These changes would involve

setting clear priorities and implementing robust and tangible human development strategies to support the neutral population (Source: Interviewee 6).

The findings correlate with O’Sullivan (2019) who argued that the efficiency of rural self-help strategies on peacebuilding globally has been recognized as a valuable approach to addressing conflicts and fostering sustainable peace. As per the United Nation’s report, the aim of sustainable development is to focus the engaged community undergoing processes aimed at achieving inclusivity and equity within society. Machingo (2018) established that Rural self-help initiatives play a crucial role in enhancing the lives of individuals by promoting their active involvement and inclusiveness as these projects create employment opportunities, empowering people and diverting them from engaging in harmful activities. The findings also concur with Elsayi (2011) who argues that there were initiatives in South Sudan that supported the establishment of women’s empowerment groups, fostering their involvement in community peacebuilding and reconciliation. Comparable efforts have also been carried out in Somalia, such as the Jagan self-help group, aiming to enhance women’s engagement in building social capital and addressing environmental disasters.

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Simple regression analysis was conducted to establish the effectiveness of rural self-help strategies on peace building activities in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya. The findings are shown in Table 2, Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	.790 ^a	.624	.620	.102

As per the findings in Table 2, the R-square was 0.624 which implies that 62.4% of the variations in peace building in Turkana North Sub-County, Kenya are explained by effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives strategies.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.495	1	1.495	144.356	.000 ^b
	Residual	.901	87	0.010		
	Total	2.397	88			

As per the results in Table 3, the p-value was 0.000 and the F-computed was 144.356. The F-computed (144.356) was greater than F-critical (3.9506) and p-value was less than 0.05. This implies that the regression model was significant.

Table 4: Regression Coefficients

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t
1	(Constant)	.718	.224		3.206
	Effectiveness of Rural self-help Strategies	.708	.061	.593	11.607
					.002

a. Dependent Variable: Peace building

Based on the regression coefficients, the equation was

$$Y = 0.718 + 0.708 X_2$$

Where:

Y = Peace building in Turkana North Sub-County

X_2 = Effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives Strategies

The study revealed that a unit change in effectiveness of Rural self-help initiatives strategies would lead to 0.708 significant changes in peace building in Turkana north sub-county. The findings correlate with O'Sullivan (2019) who argued that the efficiency of rural self-help strategies on peacebuilding globally has been recognized as a valuable approach to addressing conflicts and fostering sustainable peace. The findings concur with Elsawi (2011) who argues that there were initiatives in South Sudan that supported the establishment of women's empowerment groups, fostering their involvement in community peacebuilding and reconciliation.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

The study concluded that strategies used by Rural self-help initiatives in peacebuilding have been effective to some extent. This could be attributed to the fact that Rural self-help initiatives have successfully created opportunities for skill-building and economic development in the community, have improved access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and clean water and encouraged people reconciliation amidst disputes. In addition, Rural self-help initiatives have ensured more women are taking part in peacebuilding, enhanced community relations and cooperation and succeeded in impacting people's behavior to transformational social development.

5.2 Recommendations

The study recommends that county government of Turkana through Rural self-help initiatives should engage the local community in decision-making processes. This would foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members for the success of peace-building initiatives. There also a need for county government of Turkana to ensure that the Rural self-help initiatives implemented provide training and capacity-building programs. This would equip community members with the skills needed to take part in peacebuilding initiatives.

The study recommends that county government of Turkana should foster active community involvement in the development and implementation of rural self-help project strategies. This would ensure that the local population has a voice in decision-making processes related to peace-building initiatives. This can be done by establishing community forums where residents can express their concerns, share ideas, and collaborate on initiatives that promote peace.

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