

NGO'S EFFECTIVENESS IN PEACEBUILDING INITIATIVES IN MANDERA SOUTH SUB COUNTY

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to establish NGO's effectiveness in peace-building initiatives in Mandera South Sub County. This study was based in Mandera South Sub County-Mandera County as it is in one of the conflict prone areas, the area has a number NGOs addressing conflict in the area. The research was anchored on three theoretical frameworks namely: To gain a greater grasp of the topic, conflict theories and social capital theory. The study adopted a descriptive research design and the target population included the local administration, NGO officials, community beneficiaries and human rights specialists sampled via purposive sampling technique. The data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The research instruments were pretested to ascertain validity and reliability in Isiolo County. The researcher employed the use of Cronbach's Alpha coefficients to test for where a constant of 0.75 and above was taken as an indication of good reliability for the instrument. The study revealed that the NGO operating environment has a substantial impact on peacebuilding in Mandera South Sub County. Key factors affecting NGOs include porous borders, the geographical remoteness of the area, the trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in neighboring countries, and the presence of organized ethnic militias. Donor policies should be reformed to streamline funding guidelines, allowing greater flexibility for context-specific interventions and reducing bureaucratic burdens on NGOs. To control the proliferation of small arms, the government should strengthen border controls, enforce stricter firearm regulations, and work closely with regional bodies to combat cross-border arms trafficking. Additionally, enhancing the operating environment for NGOs requires improved security and stronger political support, achieved through multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government, communities, and international partners. The study comprehended longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of NGO-led peace education and sports initiatives on community cohesion.

Keywords: NGO's, Effectiveness, Peacebuilding, Initiatives, Mandera

INTRODUCTION

The goal of peace-building in many violent conflict areas entails bolstering the legitimacy of democratic state institutions as well as their ability or efficacy to carry out their mandates. Thus, peace building is viewed as an all-encompassing idea that includes, produces, approaches, and phases required to change conflict into more enduring peace partnerships. Peace is viewed as a dynamic social construct rather than just a period of time or circumstance (Galtung, 1996).

According to Anderson (2022), peace building is a process that addresses the underlying causes and consequences of conflict through institution building, reconciliation, economic transformation, and political reform in order to prevent the return of violence and establish lasting peace. Peacebuilding offers conflict-affected nations the opportunity to establish new legal, social, and political institutions that can spur prosperity. As peace building and conflict resolution entails fostering a culture of peace, land reform, pasture, and water sharing schemes can make a significant inducement for communities to embrace each other again for peace. Addressing the underlying causes of conflict is more important than immediately addressing post-conflict obligations and repairing war-torn societies. Addressing the causes of present hostility and developing domestic conflict resolution capabilities are the only goals of peace building, which generally aims to identify and support buildings that will tend to harden and strengthen peace in order to prevent a relapse into conflict.

Statement of the Problem

Mandera County, located in northern Kenya, continues to experience persistent peace and security challenges arising from inter-communal conflicts, violent extremism, historical marginalization, and porous international borders. These dynamics have significantly undermined social cohesion, safety, and sustainable development in the region. Within this context, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as key actors in efforts to promote peace and security, particularly in conflict-affected areas such as Mandera County.

Driven by the objective of fostering peace, security, and sustainable development, NGOs engage in a wide range of interventions including conflict mediation, community dialogue and reconciliation, education and awareness creation, livelihood support, and advocacy for human rights and social justice (Kiptoo et al., 2020). Despite their substantial presence and active involvement in Mandera County, there remains limited empirical evidence that clearly documents and analyzes the specific contributions of NGOs to peace-building, as well as the effectiveness of their interventions. Moreover, NGOs operating in Mandera County face numerous challenges that potentially constrain their peacebuilding efforts. Consequently, the lack of comprehensive and context-specific empirical research on the influence of NGO activities on peacebuilding in Mandera County presents a significant knowledge gap. This study therefore sought to address this gap by examining the influence of non-governmental organizations' activities on peacebuilding in Mandera South Sub-County.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODS

Donor Funding Policy in Peacebuilding Initiatives plays a critical role in shaping the direction and sustainability of peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected regions. Donor funding refers to financial support provided by governments, international organizations, foundations, and other entities to help implement peacebuilding initiatives. The funding is usually aimed at preventing conflict, resolving disputes, promoting reconciliation, and fostering long-term peace (Maleh et al., 2021).

Donor funding provides the financial resources needed to implement peacebuilding initiatives. These initiatives may focus on conflict resolution, reconciliation, disarmament, human rights promotion, and community empowerment. Without external funding, many local peacebuilding programs would struggle to operate or expand, particularly in fragile or conflict-affected areas. Programs like UNDP's Post-Conflict Recovery Projects often rely on donor funds to support infrastructure development, reintegrate former combatants, and promote economic recovery, all of which are essential components of peacebuilding (Kantowitz et al, 2021).

Donor-funded peacebuilding projects often target social cohesion through community dialogue, trust-building initiatives, and social integration programs. These programs aim to mend the social fabric of communities divided by ethnicity, religion, or political affiliation. The funds enable NGOs and local actors to create spaces for reconciliation, provide trauma healing services, and engage in conflict prevention efforts (Coalter, 2021).

One of the primary challenges of donor funding is the potential misalignment between donor priorities and the actual needs of the local population. Donors often set funding conditions based on their political or economic agendas, which may not always coincide with the peacebuilding goals of local communities. For example, donors may prioritize governance or human rights reforms over socio-economic issues that are more pressing in the local context. In Afghanistan, donor funds focused heavily on democratic reforms and security sector reforms while local populations prioritized basic needs such as education and healthcare, leading to frustrations with the lack of alignment in donor-funded projects (Kwuelum, 2024). In the south, INGOs have also been perceived as advancing liberal peace ideals and have been mistaken for civil society by certain donors and the public, which has limited the room and opportunities for local peacebuilding networks and groups to thrive.

The presence of multiple donors, each with their own agenda and funding mechanisms, can lead to fragmentation in peacebuilding efforts. Without proper coordination, donor-funded projects may duplicate efforts, waste resources, or even create competition among peacebuilding organizations. This can undermine the overall effectiveness of peacebuilding initiatives. In countries like Somalia and South Sudan, a large number of donor-funded initiatives have created duplication of efforts, making it difficult to achieve cohesive and comprehensive peacebuilding outcomes (Bliesemann et al., 2021)

Locals and their communities should support NGOs that improve policy. This will improve NGOs' ability to resolve conflicts and promote peace. NGOs should be acknowledged by the government for their crucial role in resolving disputes and promoting peace. A number of factors, such as program sustainability, compatibility with local requirements, and the application of prerequisites, affect the success of donor assistance. For peacebuilding to be effective, donors must adopt more context-sensitive, locally owned, and long-term strategies that ensure their funding contributes to the creation of lasting peace (Kwuelum, (2024).

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey with the adoption both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Mandera South Sub-County is where the research was carried out. the sample size will be determined using a cluster sampling approach. Eighty NGO officials, community people, and local administrators were selected from different clusters in the Mandera Sub County's Elwak North Ward, Elwak South Ward, Wargadud Ward, Shimbir Fatuma Ward, and Kutulo Ward for the study. Key informants in the subcounty will be consulted in order to identify the NGO's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires was used to collect data. Data was analysed using SPSS and ethical considerations were considered.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Ways of Enhancing Effectiveness in Peacebuilding Initiatives. The study sought to explore ways in which NGO's can enhance effectiveness in their peacebuilding initiatives in Mandera South Sub County.

Extent to which operating environment affect peace building

The research examined the degree to which the NGO operating environment influences peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Mandera South Sub-County, with results analyzed in Table 1.

Table 1*Extent to which NGO operating environment affect peace building*

Extent	Frequency	Percent
Extreme extent	26	36.1
Great extent	31	43.1
Moderate extent	15	20.8
Total	72	100.0

From the research findings, the majority of respondents indicated that the NGO operating environment affects peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Mandera South Sub County to a significant degree. Specifically, 43.1% of respondents stated it affects peacebuilding to a great extent, 36.1% indicated an extreme extent, while 20.8% reported a moderate extent. This implies that the operational context of NGOs, including political, social, economic, and security factors, plays a crucial role in determining the success of peacebuilding initiatives in the region. These findings align with Brinkerhoff (2015), who emphasizes that the operating environment significantly influences NGOs' capacity to deliver effective peacebuilding interventions, particularly in fragile and conflict-prone areas. In contexts such as Mandera, characterized by recurrent cross-border conflicts and insecurity, NGOs often face logistical constraints, resource limitations, and political interference, all of which hinder program implementation (Papa et al., 2024). Similarly, Nyamohangah, (2023) notes that in conflict-affected regions, NGOs operate in environments shaped by instability, clan rivalries, and limited state presence, which complicate peacebuilding efforts. Security threats and restricted humanitarian access not only impede NGO mobility but also limit community participation in peacebuilding programs.

Effects of small arms proliferation on NGO in peace building exercise

The study investigated the level of respondent agreement on factors influencing the proliferation of small arms and light weapons within the NGO operating environment for peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Mandera South Sub-County, with results analyzed in Table 2.

Table 2*Effects of small arms proliferation on NGO in peace building exercise*

Statements	SA	S	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation
Porous border stress	40.3	37.5	16.7	5.6	0	4.05	0.718
Geographical location of the area	36.1	45.8	9.7	8.3	0	4.13	0.89
Trade of SALW in the neighboring country	40.3	54.2	5.6	0	0	4.10	0.801
Presence of organized pockets or ethnic militias	45.8	30.6	8.3	15.3	0	4.29	0.741

From the research findings, the study established that several factors linked to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) significantly affect NGO operations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Mandera South Sub County. The findings revealed that porous borders (mean = 4.05), geographical location of the area (mean = 4.13), trade of SALW in neighboring countries (mean = 4.10), and the presence of organized ethnic militias (mean = 4.29) were all rated highly, indicating respondents' strong agreement that these factors impede peacebuilding initiatives. These findings are consistent with Tartir & Florquin et al. (2020), who assert that porous borders and illicit trade routes in the Horn of Africa facilitate the easy movement of small arms, fueling inter-communal violence and undermining NGO-led peace efforts. Mandera's location along the Kenya-Somalia-Ethiopia border exposes it to regional arms trafficking networks, making the area highly susceptible to armed conflict and insecurity (Wepundi, 2018).

The study further aligns with Mkutu (2019), who highlights that the geographical remoteness of border counties like Mandera complicates state security presence, thereby allowing organized ethnic militias and clan-based armed groups to thrive. Such conditions pose operational risks for NGOs, limiting their mobility, outreach, and the safety of their personnel during peacebuilding interventions. Moreover, the findings support United Nations Development Programme (Nyamohangah, 2023) reports indicating that the illicit trade of SALW across neighboring Somalia exacerbates conflict in northern Kenya. This cross-border arms flow sustains local militias, escalates disputes over resources, and perpetuates cycles of violence that peacebuilding actors struggle to contain. Additionally, the presence of organized ethnic militias (mean = 4.29) was noted as the most significant factor, corroborating Bobie, (2025), who argue that militia activity not only undermines trust-building but also intimidates communities and NGOs attempting to implement reconciliation programs. Such insecurity discourages community participation in peace dialogues and disrupts NGO programming. Respondents noted that inadequate and corrupt border policing between Kenya and its neighbors has enabled a massive influx of small arms into the country. Individuals have thus obtained weapons for overt criminal activities. Poorly policed porous borders provide easy access points for arms traffickers and bandits.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the NGO operating environment has a substantial impact on peacebuilding in Mandera South Sub County. Key factors affecting NGOs include porous borders, the geographical remoteness of the area, the trade of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in neighboring countries, and the presence of organized ethnic militias. Donor policies should be reformed to streamline funding guidelines, allowing greater flexibility for context-specific interventions and reducing bureaucratic burdens on NGOs. To control the proliferation of small arms, the government should strengthen border controls, enforce stricter firearm regulations, and work closely with regional bodies to combat cross-border arms trafficking. Additionally, enhancing the operating environment for NGOs requires improved security and stronger political support, achieved through multi-stakeholder collaboration involving government, communities, and international partners. The study is comprehending Longitudinal studies assessing the long-term impact of NGO-led peace education and sports initiatives on community cohesion.

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