

Influence of Inter-Communal Conflicts on Human Security in Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State in South Sudan

William Oyet Omoro¹ | Panuel Mwaeke² | Israel Nyadera³

¹Department of Peace Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Kenya.

²Department of Peace Security and Social Studies Egerton University, Kenya.

³Department of Peace Security and Social Studies, Egerton University, Kenya.

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Abstract:

This study established the influence of Inter-Communal Conflicts on Human Security in Torit County. Specifically, the study established the nature of Inter-communal conflicts and their influence on economic interactions, analyzed the emerging dimensions of human insecurity interventions to inter-communal conflict, and examined how effective the emerging dimensions of human insecurity interventions are in addressing to inter-communal conflict in Torit County. The study was anchored on Conflict Transformation Theory and Problem-Solving Theory. survey research design was utilized and a random sampling procedure was employed to select a sample of 200 from a target population of 400 security personnel in the study area. The methods of data collection were questionnaire and key informant interviews. Descriptive statistics and content analysis were the methods of data analysis. The study established that political incitement (31%) is the major cause of inter-communal conflicts, the major economic effect of the inter-communal conflicts is migration (33%), the common measure that has been utilized to avert inter-communal conflicts in the study area is holding of community meetings (36%), that majority interventions to inter-communal conflicts have not been effective (54%) because of political interference (33%). The study concluded that the major cause of inter-communal conflicts is political incitement because politicians utilize the poverty situation to incite the members of the community to fight in order to retain their political seats or for other benefits. The study also concluded that the common measure that has been utilized to avert inter-communal conflicts in the study area is the holding of community meetings where elders from communities meet to discuss and solve a conflict involving communities to curb confrontation or losses associated with conflicts. In addition, the study concluded that despite the measures put in place to address the perennial inter-communal conflicts still the problem persists because of political interference. The study recommended that there is a need for severe penalties for politicians inciting community members to engage in inter-communal conflicts. Also, the government should subject community elders to intense training on conflict resolution methods and techniques to help them have knowledge on how best to address inter-communal conflicts.

Keywords: Inter-Communal Conflicts, Human Security, Emerging Dimensions.

Introduction:

The effect of conflict on security is one of the emerging global problems that many nation states are grappling with in the contemporary international system (Muhammad-Bande, 2015). This is because by their very nature, many societies are intrinsically conflicting and unavoidably underpinned by differences in resource endowments which shape human behavior in the quest for both socio-economic and political interest. According to Muhammad-Bande (2015) conflicts have globally taken frightening dimensions and now constitute both latent and manifest threats to the national security of many countries, hence, weakening the socio-economic, political development and national cohesion.

Oludare et al. (2015) aver that these conflicts (whether inter or intra states) have continued to escalate in virtually almost all geo-political zones, especially in the third world. Whereas most studies focused on both inter and intra state conflicts, this present study will focus on the unabated scourge of communal conflicts in contemporary South Sudan, and their apparent enormous threats to human security, hence the rationale for this study. Communal conflict according to Azuonwu (2002) is a conflict that occurs between two or more communities. Oboh and Hyande (2006) described communal conflict as conflict involving two or more communities engaging themselves in disagreement or act of violence over issues such as claims of land ownership, religion and political differences leading to loss of lives and destruction of properties.

Human security presupposes the protection of human population from all forms of socio-existential threats and vulnerabilities (Okoli, 2014; Okoli & Ayokhai, 2016 cited in Okoli, 2016). Communal conflict has led to dire socio-economic and humanitarian consequences, including loss of livelihoods, population displacement, loss of life and property, and decline in rural productivity and agricultural output. Loss of livelihoods in turn exposes the affected population to material hardships, exemplified in hunger, disease and

malnutrition. Besides, population displacement involves the abrupt dislodgment of rural population from their natural abode-the place of optimal productivity. The implication here is that the displaced populations are exposed to stiffer socio-economic ordeals leading to a lot of pain and suffering. Such has been the phenomenon in conflict-stricken areas of Syria, Afghanistan, South East Asian Nations (ASEAN, African countries such as Nigeria, Congo and Mali amongst others (Ajayi & Akintoye, 2004).

The Republic of South Sudan have not been spared either; the country faces devastating security challenges associated with the war and arms conflicts with Sudan. Internally, poor infrastructure and general underdevelopment, misuse of natural resources and inter communal conflicts in the Greater upper Nile region are part and parcel of the security breakdown. Arms communal conflicts have occasionally erupted depending on the local and regional power matrixes with the result that many people are killed and many more internally displaced (Dagne, 2011). That notwithstanding, there has never been a systematic inquiry that has documented the nature and magnitude of the implication of these conflicts, more so in the Torit County.

As Mulu (2008) portended, unabated communal conflicts result to; killings or forced conscription that may imply insufficient labour for productive work deliberately disrupting trade and economic activity thereby reducing investment by the government, aid agencies and domestic and foreign entrepreneurs. Besides, this may also lead to reduced possibilities for recovery by frightening away foreign investment, reorientation of resources from socio-economic development to the military, further promoting the arms trade sales as the means to support armies of the warring communities thus diverting the resources that would have been used in a gainful means.

Matthew et al. (2009) observed that complex and violent conflict have the potential to destroy national political systems, killing current and future leaders, sowing bitterness and division

between communities, destroying or altering traditional political institutions, and changing power relations and national political institutions (Matthew et al., 2009). They further aver that in civil wars, the distribution of power or assets depends on who is harmed or spared; this distribution is often along ethnic or regional lines. Besides, Huho (2012) argues that Conflict worsens political inequalities, for example, when the powerful are enriched by stealing assets or when poverty affects a group's ability to exercise human rights. Democratic institutions are compromised when war suppresses press freedoms and civil rights thereby divert scarce international resources into relief, peacekeeping, and reconstruction (Huho, 2012). This study assumes that the situation is not all that different in Torit County.

Historically, Torit holds great significance in South Sudan's history of rebellion against the government of Sudan by then. The Torit Mutiny, which is said to have sparked the First Sudanese Civil War, occurred in Torit 15, August 1955, later known as Anyanya war. Since the 1990s, tensions between cattle keepers and farmers have also plagued the area. Community defense groups in Torit, such as the Monyomiji among the Otuh, have played an ambivalent role in the protecting their communities from conflict. Whilst the Monyemiji have cooperated with the local Government and in some cases deterred both negative government and opposition forces to improve security in their villages, they have also been key players in cattle raids and revenge killings including road robbery.

The outbreak of the civil war in December 2013 and subsequent insecurity in Torit County led to widespread displacement, with significant increases in displacement trends observed in 2014 throughout till 2017. These incidents were both a result of Inter-communal clashes, as well as clashes between government and opposition factions in the area. Those who were able to flee to other parts of the county, neighboring counties, or even across international borders. High poverty rates and insecurity along major roads prevented many IDPs

from being able to flee out of the county. Killing along the Highways of Torit County was very rampant more than any other part of South Sudan. Some criminal acts were committed by Inter-Communal motivated by Monyomijii and other rebel groups allied to different parties in South Sudan.

Local governance reforms are part of donor-sponsored liberal peacebuilding projects which have state-building as one of their core elements. After the end of the civil war with Sudan (1983–2005), South Sudan undertook a process of institution-building and policy-making supported by international donors to create a decentralized system based on local 'communities' and their 'traditional authorities'. Traditional customary rights to Inter-communal resources including Land have been legalized to reduce rural people's economic vulnerability and satisfy one of the major grievances that led to war. In fact, the Inter-communal reform encouraged the overlapping between the spheres of local state administration and the ethnic community ruled by traditional authorities (Sara, 2015). To date this has appeared to strengthen ethnic affiliation as a means to access resources and enrich government officers' repertoires for claiming control over the territory on behalf of the 'community', thereby increasing competition in a context marked by the militarization of ethnic identity.

This study is therefore to explore whether Inter-communal conflict is a threat to human security in Torit County of Eastern Equatoria State, South Sudan given the communities shared the same state capital and are involved in the government employment, and greener pastures jobs with NGOs. Inter-communal conflict has been rampant among communities of the State and South Sudan at large.

Problem Analysis:

While South Sudan struggles to make progress towards fully implementing the peace agreement signed in September 2018, securing the natural resource base for the future development of the country, and prevent further conflict is yet another

huge challenge that faces the new country. The Inter-communal conflict has been rampant among communities of South Sudan; the conflict among the communities of Jongole, Dinka Bor verse the Murle, the fighting among the Tonj communities, killing over 122 government soldiers, the fighting in Bur Payam, Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State and South Sudan at large for example, Inter-communal conflict between Bari and Mundari, Lolubo and Acholi, Pari and Lotuho, Lango and Toposa to mention but a few. The study will find out the root causes of Inter-communal conflict, ways to handle Inter-communal conflict so as to co-exist in harmony and how the Inter-communal conflict is a threat to human security in Torit County of Eastern Equatoria State. The Inter-communal conflict that became protracted and deeply-rooted reflect institutional failure and the refusal of those in the position of authority to act at the right time due to greed, poverty, and lack of inclusive arrangement in governance. The study sought to investigate; the root causes, ways to handle Inter-communal conflict and Inter-communal conflict as a threat to human security in Torit County.

Methodology:

The study used survey research design which by its nature is best suited for studies that aim at finding out the prevalence of a phenomenon, situation, attitude or problem by taking a cross section of the population at one time (Kumar, 2011). The design also gives room for use of interview and other data collection methods. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches was adopted to investigate the effect of Inter-Communal Conflicts on Human Security in Torit County. The quantitative approach helped to generate statistical data from that was easy to systematically aggregate. The qualitative approach helped in gaining in-depth understanding of the phenomena under study especially by generating data that will not be easily translatable into numbers such as opinions, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions (Mugenda, 2008). The study comprised of 200 respondents and 14 Key Informants who were purposefully selected to

inform the study based on their knowledge and experience of security issues in South Sudan. Interview method was used to collect data from the K.Is (Silverman, 2001).

Results and Discussions:

Response Rate:

A total of 198 out of 200 total respondents were interviewed translating to a responses rate of 99%. This response rate was considered sufficient in providing reliable information on how inter-communal conflicts has affected human security in Torit County, Eastern Equatoria State. The high rate of response recorded in this study agrees with Peytchev (2013) argument that the best means of obtaining impartial estimates is to realize a higher rate of response. Nevertheless, the high response rate also resonates with Fosnacht et al. (2017) who asserted that even reasonably low rate of response gave reliable institution-level estimates, although with superior sampling error and less capability to discover statistically significant differences in a study they conducted.

Causes of Inter-communal Conflicts and their Influence on Economic Interactions in Torit:

County

According to this study, major causes of inter communal conflicts in Torit County included; fighting over resources, cattle rustling, and political incitement. As argued by McMichael (2015) politicians ride on the poverty situation to bribe the community members to incite others to fight political opponents in order to retain their political seats. Major economic effect of inter-communal conflicts established in this study in Torit County migration (33%) were house hold migrations that caused communities to flee leaving behind their resources; livestock, crops and other property. Such migration led to loss of resources that otherwise would support livelihoods of families that migrate to safe places. There were however other economic effects of inter-communal conflicts in the study area among them; destruction of property (30%), relocation of businesses (11%), reduced government revenue (9%), fear to engage

in income generation activities. Such migration has negatively influenced trade and resulted to losses occasioned by leaving behind livestock and crops both in the field and in houses in the study area.

Emerging Dimensions of Human Insecurity Interventions to Inter-Communal Conflict in:

The Study Area:

According to this study, main measures that were utilized to avert inter-communal conflicts in the study area included holding of community meetings (36%). However, other measures used to curb inter-communal conflicts in Torit County included local media sensitization (8%), establishment of police and military camps (33%) and initiation of inter-communal livelihoods projects among other measures. But, the most notable measure is community meetings (36%). The finding lend support to finding by Olaoba (2000) who argued that community leaders in Africa are fundamental in adjudication of cases to foster peace in society.

In the community meetings, Community elders, met to discuss the cause of a conflict between communities with the goal of addressing it. By analyzing the cause, they come up with amicable situations to those challenges hence averting ongoing or potential conflicts. The elders in some situations were accompanied by government representatives from the county or national government to resolve inter-communal conflicts, a positive gesture that even the government was concerned and additionally valued the role of elders in inter-communal conflicts resolution in Torit County.

Effectiveness of Interventions to Inter communal Conflicts in Torit County:

Majority of the respondents (54%) reported that the interventions to inter-communal conflicts have not been effective. Accordingly, even though the government, community leadership and the stakeholders in development have put in place measures to address the perennial inter-communal conflicts in Torit County, the problem still persists.

The study investigated why majority of respondents viewed inter-communal conflicts intervention as ineffective. As argued by Mohammed and Beyene (2016) political interference (33%) was the main cause that stifled inter-communal conflicts intervention in the study area. The study established that politicians themselves were the many impediments for peaceful co-existence of communities in Torit County. For political expediency and political self-preservation politicians incite members of the community to continue with inter-communal conflicts even after formulating measures to foster peace. This negatively influenced the realization of peace among the communities in the study area. Other reasons that affected effectiveness of the interventions included lack of stakeholder commitment (30%), insufficient funding (11%), poverty (9%), and beliefs and traditions (16%) such as hallowed cattle as a sign of wealth that fueled cattle rustling.

Recommendations:

According to this study, there is need for severe penalties for politicians inciting community members to engage in inter-communal conflicts in Torit County. Further, the government should come up with effective ways to help communities share resources in the county with sharing being the most effective way to inter-communal resource utilization. On emerging dimensions of human insecurity interventions to inter-communal conflict in Torit County, the government should subject community elders to intense training on conflict resolution methods and techniques to help them have knowledge on how best to address inter-communal conflicts. Besides, the government and other stakeholder in peacebuilding should intensify the use of local media to create awareness on the need for communities in Torit County to co-exist peacefully. Effectiveness of the emerging dimensions of human insecurity interventions to inter-communal conflict in Torit County include; stakeholders' commitment to the course of fostering peace among communities in Torit County. This will include commitment to mobilize

resources to implement inter-communal conflict intervention plans. Others include creation of awareness on the negative effects of traditions and beliefs among communities especially cattle rustling on the peaceful co-existence of communities in Torit County. Additionally, there is need for the government and other stakeholder in peacebuilding to come up with projects to tackle poverty among community members to help them shun livelihood activities like cattle rustling that breach peace among communities in the county.

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