

ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KENYA ELDORET REGION CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SERVICES



“Churches for water in Africa”

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**Mediating Conflict around Water and
Natural Resources Experiences from
Mt. Elgon District, Kenya**

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Locating conflicts

- Prevalent in marginal climatic zones e.g. arid and semi-arid areas e.g. Turkana, Pokot areas.
- Mountain slopes e.g. Mt. Elgon.
- Communities living at the periphery where illiteracy is low, marginalized, poor habitat

Focus on Mt. Elgon district

- Mt. Elgon is a district in Western province of Kenya.
- Location: South-eastern slopes of Mount Elgon.
- Area: 944 sq. km.
- Population: 135,035 (1999).
- Inhabitants: Sabaot, Iteso and Bukusu ethnic communities.

Background

- British colonialist took land around 1910 and Sabaot people moved to higher to Mt. Elgon
- Successive governments continued similar policy
- 1971 Ogiek clan moved from the top of the Mountain to lower fertile part to farm
- 1991-1992 resource-based conflicts Sabaot versus Bukusu, Teso

Background cont.

- Ogiek brought to Chepyuk and given land
- Took time for land to be subdivided and people kept living on the land
- 7,500 applied to be allocated land in 2006
- 1,732 allocated land and rest left out
- This led to a group moving to the Mt. Elgon forest and forming Sabaot Land Defence Force

What is happening in Mt. Elgon?

- About 60,000 internally displaced
- About 200 killed
- 35 Schools closed
- Over 300 arrested
- Women and girls defiled, raped
- People's homes torched allegedly by security forces
- Humanitarian crisis e.g. food, shelter and clothing

What is really happening in Mt. Elgon?

- Resource based conflicts around water and land that is fast diminishing.
- Land expected for 1,732 live 7,500.
- Shrinking rivers, less pasture, areas strained
- Huge chunks of land own by a few rich and well connected people in the neighbouring district
- Poverty, illiteracy levels very high

ACK ELDORET REGION IN THE MEDIATION PROCESS

- Identification of the actors in the conflict.
- Identification of issues in the conflict.
- Formulation and adoption of rules of procedure.
- Negotiation process looking for the 'critical yeast'.
- Media advocacy nationalizing the issue.

Experiences

- Link mediation efforts with other issues like marginalization, health, agriculture, illiteracy.
- Move from NGOism to Activism- engage those who claim to offer services.
- Greater lobbying for water and natural resources touches other livelihoods issues.
- Bring more actors on board.
- Media advocacy critical but have facts and create informers.
- Use a variety of tools e.g. LCP, PLA etc

METHODOLOGIES

- Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)
- Do No Harm- Local Capacities for Peace
- Participatory Integrated Natural Resource Management (PINARM)
- Peace and Conflict transformation tools
- Media advocacy turn issue from local to national then to international

CHALLENGES

- Identifying relevant actors in the conflict e.g. visible and invisible actors.
- Identifying real issues in the conflict
- Parties take hard-line positions
- Failure to mediate and resolve conflicts decisively allows conflict to be protracted
- Cultural barriers

Challenges cont.

- Ever expanding population against diminishing resources
- Mt. Elgon a water catchment area depletion
- How to address the resource gap?
- Linking mediation to other processes and issues.

LESSONS LEARNT

- Communities learn and implement more through exchange and exposure tours.
- It is important to move at the pace of the community.
- Collaboration and networking enhances and eases implementation and monitoring
- Water resources have played the role of connector between previously hostile neighbouring communities e.g. Kerer Chemosong Project area btwn Pokot and Turkana communities.

Lessons Learnt cont.

- Participatory methodologies are effective ways of training the communities regardless of their level of education.
- Collaboration & Networking is key to success in mediation around water & natural resources.
- Relate to the entire regional conflicts.

What next?



THANK YOU

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