COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) FOR PEACEBUILDING IN MOUNT ELGON REGION

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*The paper is part of the ongoing PhD research by the student.

Introduction

❏ Peace is defined as the absence of widespread physical violence. The term is derived from Galtung's (1976) idea of positive peace where non-violence, social justice and ecological sustainability remove the causes of war by addressing the root causes of war.

❏ This is contrasted with negative peace which is characterized by the absence of war and other forms of direct violence (Galtung, 1996; Sandole, 2003; and Tschigri, 2003).

❏ Hence the aim of peace building is to normalize relations, and to build institutions that can manage conflicts without resorting to violence. It is further held to be an unqualified goal in terms of orderly politics and the sanctity of life (Boaduo, 2010; United States Institute of Peace, 2011).

❏ The former UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali in his *Agenda for Peace* defined peace building as the action to identify and support structures which would tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict (Boutros-Ghali, 1992).

❏ The fact that peace building was restricted to post-conflict reconstruction was a major shortcoming that was soon rectified by Boutros-Ghali's *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* (1995) which extended the term across the conflict spectrum of pre-conflict prevention, actions during warfare, and post-conflict measures.

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❑The 2006-2008 intra-ethnic conflict between the Soy and Ndorobo clans of the Sabaot community and the subsequent formation of the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) greatly affected the region.

❑Although the 2008 military intervention led to a forced ceasefire, it raised questions of alternative dispute resolutions and peace building mechanisms that can be attained without great loss of lives and property.

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- Advancement in ICTs has led to increasing connectivity all over the world making internet meetings and conferences possible. They were instrumental in bringing about political change during the Arab Spring in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia by facilitating the organization of protests and the global broadcast of these in real time.

- The digital revolution in the 1990s and the social movements in Arab countries has seen new services such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, YouTube, Skype and so on (Camninos, 2013; Gujer, 2011; Nierkerk, Pillay & Maharaj, 2011).

- Through new media technologies such as digital audio, video, mobile video and multi-media services (MMS) it is possible to link community driven production of media that addresses local issues to potentially unlimited number of people (Hattotuwa, 2006; Gujer, 2011).

- Personal profiles on these websites help in the formation of new relationships which promote understandin across cultures and geographical boundaries leading to the concept of unity in diversity.

- According to Hattotuwa (2004) ICTs is the use of enabling technologies to augment existing stakeholder interventions, enable hitherto marginalized actors to participate more fully in peace building processes, empower grassroots communities and bring cohesion to the range of activities on multiple tiers that are an intrinsic part of full-field peace building and conflict transformation involving all stakeholders.

Statement of the problem

❑The 2006-2008 intra-ethnic conflict between the Soy and Ndorobo was devastating leading to the loss of many lives, property and livelihoods. Above all, it tore the social fabric which bound the clans together as one community and resulted in fear, hatred, suspicion and mistrust in the Sabaot society.

❑The fact that such conflicts recurred every so often is an indicator that the past peace building initiatives may have not been successful after all.

❑In an effort to enhance the impact of their peace building efforts, various players embraced ICT tools. However, no study has been conducted to ascertain the effectiveness of these tools in contributing to peace building in the Mount Elgon Region.

❑Thus, there exists a knowledge gap regarding the suitability, sustainability and impact of ICTs in peace building in the region.

❑This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the ICT tools which were used by the various players while striving to build lasting peace in Mount Elgon region; exploring how the ICTs were used

Objectives of the study

1. Identify the ICT tools used in peace building in Mt Elgon region
2. examine the contributions of ICTs to the peace building process in the region

Theoretical Framework

Conflict transformation theory

❑Conflict transformation theory is a new theory drawing on the concepts of conflict resolution and conflict management through contributions of many scholars such as Miall (2004), Lederach, (1997) and Vayrynen (1991).

❑The aim of conflict transformation is to pursue non-violent social change by transforming relationships and social organization into long-term peace (Lederach, 1997).

❑The key dimensions of this process are changes in the personal, structural, relational and cultural aspects of conflict, brought about over different time-periods (short, mid and long-term) and affecting different system levels at different times.

❑ The theory affirms that conflicts as the one witnessed in Mt Elgon region are inevitable. However, through appropriate interventions facilitated by ICTs, conflicts can be transformed into peaceful co-existence characterized by new structures and new relationships.

❑ The theory enables parties to address the conflicts at different levels. The theory informs the study since Mt Elgon region is emerging from the conflict hence the need to understanding the relational, structural and social aspects of peace building as well as the effectiveness of ICTs in transforming the conflict into peaceful coexistence.

Sampling technique

❑The total population in the area of study for the four sub-counties to be included was 20,000 people. To get the actual sample size from 20,000, a table for determining needed size (S) of a randomly chosen size from a finite population (N) was used (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

❑ The proportions in the table assumes a standard error of .05 (95% level of confidence) hence the researcher targeted 377 community members were purposively selected for interviews regarding their views on the effectiveness of ICTs in peace building and the peace building efforts in the region.

Table 1.1 Distribution of respondents by Sub-Counties

Sub-County	Frequency	Percentage
Mt.Elgon	175	46.4
Bungoma North	50	13.2
Cheptais	87	23.0
Trans- Nzoia West	22	5.8
Bungoma West	43	11.4
Total	377	100

Data collection methods

❑The main data collection method was qualitative in-depth interviews both individually and in groups although field notes from observations, focus group discussions and document analysis were used to complement the findings.

❑Hence, structured, semi-structured and unstructured questions were used to understand peace building, ICT tools used in peace building, contributions of ICTs in the peace building process, the actors involved in peace building and the effectiveness of ICTs in peace building. The responses from the interviews were recorded on digital voice recorders and later transcribed and translated into English.

❑Other methods used in data collection were FGDs, questionnaires and observation.

Findings

Table 1.2 Name of various ICT tools used in the region

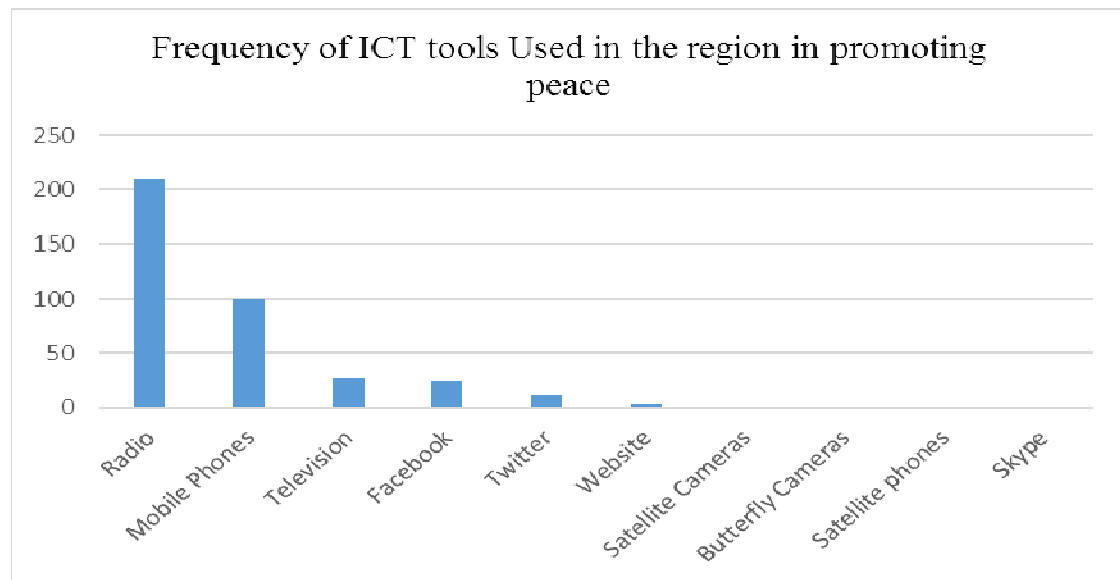| ICT tool	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Radio	210	55.7
Mobile Phones	100	26.5
Television	27	7.2
Facebook	25	6.6
Twitter	11	2.9
Website	3	3.9
Satellite Cameras	1	0.3
Butterfly Cameras	0	0
Satellite phones	0	0
Skype	0	0
Total	377	100

CT tools

Figure 1.1 ICT tools used for promoting peace in the region

CT tools

❑Table 1.2 shows the ICT tools used by the actors involved in peace building. Radio was the most accessible ICT tool in the region. The accessibility of the radio was due to its affordability and wider geographical coverage. It was followed by the mobile phone which was accessible to most members of the community.

❑Other ICT tools like, Satellite cameras, butterfly cameras and Skype, the website and satellite phones were not so popular among the residents and the actors involved in the reconstruction process.

❑Information from FGDs and key informant interviews confirmed the use of other ICT tools like the satellite phones, VHF radios and the websites.

Mobile phone usage in peace building in the region

❑The findings from FGDs and key informant interviews indicated that mobile phones were the widely used ICT tool in the region by various and community members as an early warning mechanism and also for information sharing.

❑For instance the Free Pentecostal Fellowship in Kenya (FPFK) distributed Google compliant phones to identified individuals in hot spot areas within the region.

❑The study also found that the residents employed SMS and mobile phone technology in contacting security agent in times of distress.

❑Consequently, all the security agents like the Officers Commanding Police Division (OCPDs), the Deputy County Commissioners (DCCs), Chiefs, DPC members and other stakeholders often gave their mobile numbers to community members in public forums.

TV stations

❑The findings indicate that K24 was the leading TV station promoting peace in the region and also the frequently watched TV station. This was followed by Kenya Television Network (KTN) (26.5 %), National Television (NTV) (10.3%), Citizen (5.3%) and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) which had (4.5%). This is shown in Figure 1.2.

❑Information from key informant interviews and FGDs indicate that the TV stations covering peace building Hope TV, NTV, K24, and Citizen TV.
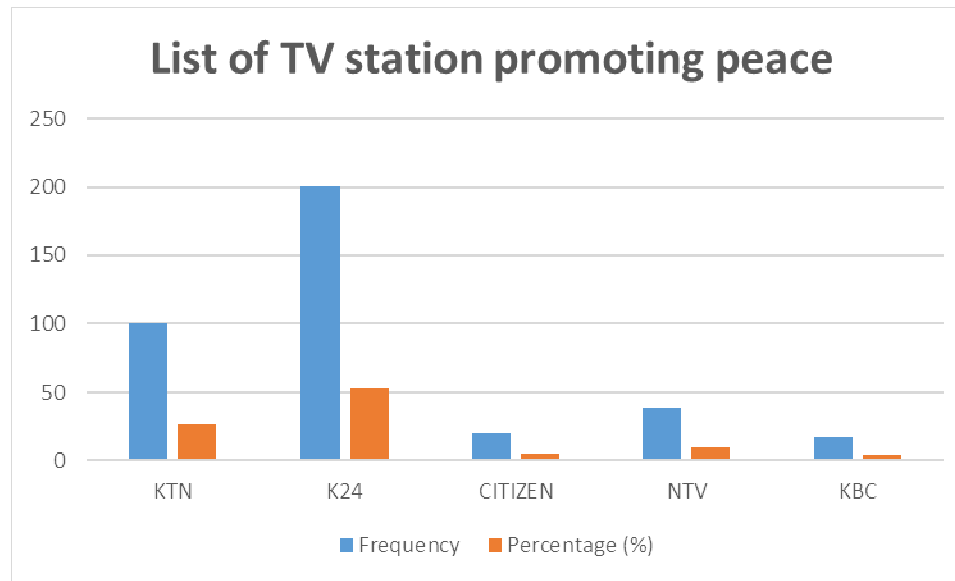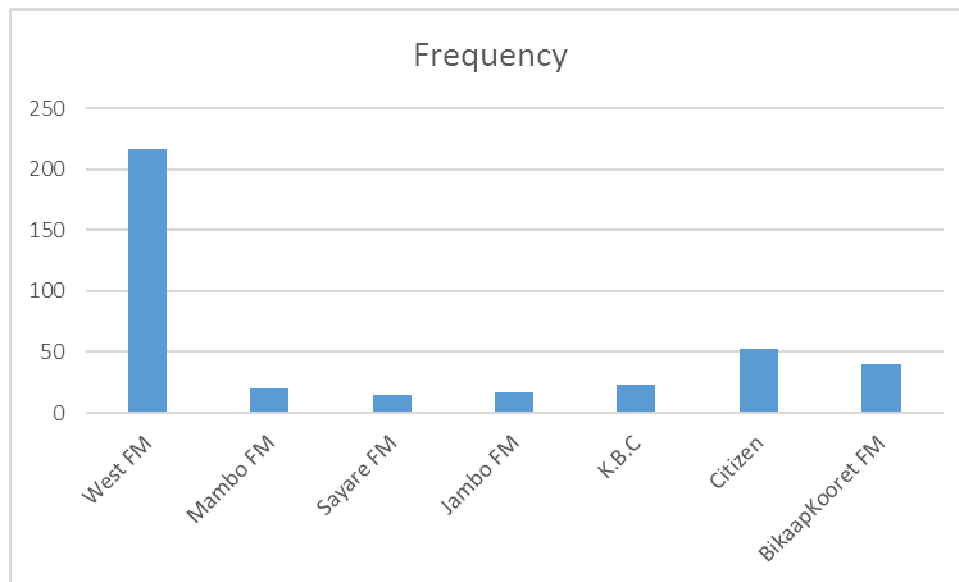
Figure 1.2 TV stations Promoting peace

Radio stations promoting peace in the region

The findings indicate that there were radio stations promoting peace in the region. They empowered the local residents and provided platforms for information sharing among all the stakeholders in the region. The findings are shown in Figure 1.3.

Radio stations

Figure 1.3 Radio stations promoting peace in Mt Elgon region

Radio stations

❑Figure 1.3 shows that there are 7 radio stations promoting peace in the region. West FM which broadcasts from Bungoma town was the most frequently listened to radio station. This was followed by Radio Citizen, Bikaap Kooret (BK) FM and KBC Radio.

❑Other stations in the region were Radio Mambo which broadcasts from Webuye, Radio Jambo (broadcasting from Nairobi) and Sayare Radio which broadcasts from Eldoret.

❑The findings from interviews FGDs and key informant interviews indicate that there were other radio stations promoting peace in the region. These included Imani Media in Kitale which has both radio (Imani Radio) and television (Hope TV) stations.

❑Other radio stations promoting peace in the region are Sabo Sema FM and Kaalya FM which cover Kitale, West Pokot, Turkana and parts of Samburu. Nyota FM broadcasting from Webuye and Radio Maisha (Nairobi) also highlighted and promoted peace in Mt Elgon region.

Social media platforms

Social media platforms includes the use of Facebook groups, Twitter and other user generated contents. The findings indicate that there wa Facebook use in peace building process among the residents in the egion as indicated in Table 1.3.

Social media

Table 1.3 Names of Facebook groups promoting peace in the region

Name of various Facebook groups in the region		Frequency	Percentage
	Kaboywo People Online	6	1.5
	Chepyuk Peoples Union	103	27.3
	Kapsokwony people's online	10	2.6
	Sabaot People Online	268	71.1
Total		377	

Social media

❑Table 1.3 shows that there are various Facebook groups in the region. The leading Facebook group in the region is Sabaot Peoples Online. The Facebook link is used by the Sabaots in the diaspora and in Kenya to keep in touch with the community members and spread peace among the Sabaot community in the region. This was followed by Chepyuk Peoples Online.

❑ The findings indicate that the group was formed to build solidarity among Chepyuk residents who had been scattered by the conflict. Kaboywo People Online and Kapsokwony Peoples Online had the objective of keeping up to date with the latest news in the region.

❑Results from the FGDs and Key Interviews indicated that there were other Facebook groups in the region which include Bungoma County 411, Mt Elgon News Network, Sabaot Women Online, Sabaot People Forum and Sabaot County (Saboti, Endebess and Mt Elgon). The Facebook groups are however, popular among the youth.

Twitter accounts

Table 1.4 Name of various Twitter accounts in the region that are promoting peace

Twitter account	Frequency	Percentage (%)
KTN	57	15.1
K24	50	13.3
Mt Elgon Peace Tweets	150	39.8
Our Citizens	120	31.8

Twitter

❏Table 1.4 shows the trending twitter accounts in the region. It emerged that the respondents had been following the trending twitter groups in the traditional media like the TV.

❏Our Citizens was the leading twitter account promoting peace in the region (26.3%) followed by Mt Elgon twits (2.7%), KTN (1.6) and K24 (1.1%). The results further support the study's findings on the leading TV stations that highlighted peace building in the region (KTN and K24).

Websites promoting peace in the region

There was minimal use of websites in promoting peace in the region.

There was SIDO website founded in 2010 by Sabaots living in America. SIDO gave rise to SIDO News Network website and Sabaots.com in 2011 which relays currents news updates about the Sabaot community globally.

Other websites include the Western Kenya Human Rights Watch (WKHRW) has a website for information sharing and documentation of human rights abuses with the human rights monitors at the ground level and international human rights organisations, Imani Media website, KRCS, FPFK, APT, MERA and PTN.

Conclusions

❑The findings show that ICTs have been greatly employed by various actors involved in peace building in Mt Elgon region.

❑The findings show that local radio stations have played a great role in enhancing peace in the region. This was mainly due to its affordability and the use of the local language in order to reach the residents.

❑Mobile phones and SMSs also played a great role in enhancing early warning mechanism among the residents apart from providing a platform for information sharing.

❑On the other hand, TV, social media platforms and the websites were mainly used by the elites to enhance information sharing and empowerment of the residents.

❑There use of twitter and Facebook groups among the residents provided updates on the latest news and events and also promoted cohesion among the Soy and Ndorobo clans.

Recommendations

❑Digital inclusion (digital literacy) should be enhanced through provision of ICT services and digital villages in the region.

❑There should be censoring of information especially from the social media platforms to avoid the spread of hate messages.

❑There should be continuous dialogue and consultation by all the stakeholders in the region in order to address emerging issues in the region.

❑There is need for county government should improve the infrastructure in the region in order to promote development and ICT use in the region. This is because most of the region had poor roads, low network coverage and lack of electricity.

❑The main cause of the conflict in the region was the dispute over the Chepyuk settlement scheme. Thus, the government should resolve all historical land injustices in the region by resettling the landless in order to avoid future conflicts

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THANK YOU