

**THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS IN PEACE BUILDING AMONG
THE CONFLICT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES OF KARAMOJA SUB-
REGION: A CASE OF NGOLERIET SUB-COUNTY,
NAPAK DISTRICT, UGANDA**

BY

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DECLARATION

I **Ebiachu Patrick** declare that this dissertation is original and has not been submitted for any other diploma/degree award to any other university or institution of higher learning before. All the information presented here is the result of personal work unless otherwise cited or quoted.

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APPROVAL

This dissertation has been prepared under our supervision and is ready for submission with our approval as supervisor (s).

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DEDICATION

To my dear wife Margaret Iwanyu and children (Elijah, Jeremiah and Eudes) for their unwavering love, patience and support during my course of study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARLPI	Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GISO	Government Intelligence Security Officer
KIG	Key Informant Guide
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LC I	Local Council I
LC II	Local Council II
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
NDLG	National Development and Local Government
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
RDC	Resident District Commissioner
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

DEFINITION OF OPERATIONAL TERMS

- Conflict Affected Communities** Groups of people who have experienced or are experiencing the impacts of violent conflict or prolonged tensions. Impacts include displacement, loss of life, destruction of property, economic hardship, and disruption of social structures.
- Religious Actors** In this study, religious actors refer to individuals who hold leadership positions or play influential roles within religious institutions, including priests, pastors, imams, and other spiritual leaders from the Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, and Pentecostal faiths. These actors are characterized by their moral authority, social influence, and active involvement in addressing societal challenges within their communities.
- Peacebuilding** A process that involves actions and strategies aimed at resolving conflicts and preventing their recurrence by addressing underlying causes of tension and violence. It includes efforts to foster reconciliation, establish trust, support community dialogue, and create conditions for sustainable peace. Peacebuilding encompasses activities such as mediation, conflict resolution, and the promotion of social cohesion and justice, often involving multiple stakeholders, including local communities, governments, and international organizations.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of religious actors in peacebuilding within the conflict-affected communities of Ngoleriet Sub-County, Napak District. Specific objectives were to: to establish the forms of conflicts and their underlying factors, assess the methods of engagement employed by religious actors in peacebuilding efforts, and analyze the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions implemented by religious actors. Data was collected through the study employed in-depth interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews, engaging a total of 29 participants. Among them were religious actors (primary participants), with six representatives each from Protestant, Catholic, Islamic, and Pentecostal faiths. Additionally, five key informants participated, including the Sub-County Chief, LC I Chairperson, LC II Chairperson, Resident District Commissioner, and Government Intelligence Security Officer. To ensure a broader community perspective, four FGDs were conducted—two with elderly individuals and two with youths.

Findings reveal a combination of conflicts and various triggers in Ngoleriet sub-county, including resource-based conflicts, land tenure disputes, ethnic tensions, political factionalism, and cattle rustling. Historical grievances lead to recurring communal conflicts over resources such as grazing land and water points. Land tenure conflicts arose from unclear ownership and tenure systems, exacerbated by population growth and differing land use practices between settled agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists. Others were ethnic tensions, fueled by socio-economic inequalities and historical injustices, and political factions exploiting ethnic divisions. Cattle rustling remains a persistent issue, leading to violent clashes and retaliation cycles. These conflicts were triggered by historical, socio-economic, and political factors, compounded by environmental stresses.

Religious actors played a key role in peacebuilding through dialogue, mediation, community projects, education, advocacy, psycho-social support, etc. Their efforts have resulted in significant outcomes, including reduced conflict intensity and increased community cooperation, though continuous engagement and support are necessary to sustain these gains. In conclusion, religious actors are indispensable in peacebuilding efforts, leveraging their moral authority and community networks to foster reconciliation and social cohesion. Recommendations for enhancing peacebuilding include ongoing training for religious leaders, collaboration between religious and local leaders, engagement of youth and women, and the design of programs focused on economic development and conflict management by NGOs. Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of these interventions on conflict reduction and community resilience.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter covers the study background, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, objectives, research questions as well as the study significance, the justification and the scope of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

Globally, religion has garnered recognition for its pivotal role in fostering non-violence and peacebuilding, a role that religious actors from various institutions have been largely involved in. This recognition extends across diverse contexts, including both developed and developing countries. Notable instances include Northern Ireland, where religious actors and institutions played a central role in the pursuit of peace and reconciliation during the turbulent era known as "The Troubles" (Philpott, 2007). Through interfaith dialogues, grassroots initiatives, and community engagement, these religious actors facilitated dialogue and understanding among divided communities, significantly contributing to the eventual peace process (Philpott, 2007). Similarly, during the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa, religious leaders and organizations emerged as influential advocates for justice, equality, and a peaceful transition (Haynes, 2012). Their moral authority and commitment to human rights laid the foundation for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an institution aimed at addressing past injustices and promoting healing and reconciliation (Haynes, 2012).

Across Africa, Christian denominations have been involved in mediation, conflict resolution, and promoting transitional justice (Rodriguez, 2002). For example, in Liberia, religious actors, including Catholic Priests, Protestant Reverends, and Muslim Imams, were instrumental in peacebuilding efforts. During the country's civil war, religious actors from various faiths formed interfaith coalitions and actively engaged in mediation, dialogue, and humanitarian initiatives (Philpott, 2007). Their endeavors fostered trust, bridged divides, and played a vital role in the successful peacebuilding process (Philpott, 2007). These examples underscore positive contributions of religious actors to peacebuilding, and highlight positive contributions of religion to peacebuilding, but it is vital to acknowledge that religious actors can be used to incite violence, as seen in conflicts in Bosnia and Nigeria (Haynes, 2012).

The Bosnian War, which occurred from 1992 to 1995, was a complex conflict involving ethnic and religious tensions among Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Serbs, and Croats. Religious tension, particularly the interplay between Muslim and Christian religious actors, was exploited by political leaders to mobilize support for their respective factions. In Nigeria, religious actors among Muslims and Christians, in regions where these communities coexist, exacerbated tensions in the city of Jos, located in Nigeria's Middle Belt region.

Uganda, too, has witnessed the influential role of religious actors in shaping societal dynamics and addressing conflicts, particularly the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) conflict in the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda. Religious actors were instrumental, particularly the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI) – an inter-denominational religious network – which supported

community peace mobilization, after 1994 ministerial efforts by Betty Bigombe to negotiate with the LRA on behalf of the government failed. In 1997, a number of religious leaders, many of whom had been personally affected by the conflict, came together to speak out against the violence. They included the then Anglican Bishop of Kitgum Diocese, Macleod Baker Ochola II; the Catholic Archbishop of Gulu, Archdiocese of Northern Uganda, John Baptist Odama; the Episcopal Vicar of the Catholic Church, Monsignor Matthew Ojara; Fr. Carlos Ludigrie; and Fr. Joseph Genna. The ARLPI, an inter-denominational body, brought together Catholics, Anglicans, Muslims, Orthodox Christians, Seventh-day Adventists and Born-Again Faith Federation worshippers under one umbrella (Latigo &Ochola, 2015).

The ARLPI and other community leaders organised peace rallies and prayers, providing a source of support for communities affected by violence, as well as demonstrating communities' need and desire for peace to the government and the LRA. But the most notable act was when Arch bishop Odama received a direct call from the LRA's second in command, Vincent Otti, who asked religious leaders to mediate between the government and the LRA. ARLPI leaders took advantage of this show of trust to begin dialogue, and selected ARLPI members and traditional leaders trekked unescorted into the bush and met with the LRA for three days (Latigo &Ochola).

The Karamoja sub-region, including Napak District, has faced persistent conflicts over decades. These conflicts are deeply rooted in historical grievances, socio-economic disparities, competition for scarce resources, and the proliferation of small arms. Napak District, specifically Ngoleriet Sub- County, is home to three primary ethnic groups: the Bokora, Matheniko, and Tepeth. These groups share

cultural similarities but often compete for resources, leading to tensions.

The Bokora primarily reside in central Napak and are semi-nomadic pastoralists who depend on cattle for survival. For the Bokora, livestock is not only a source of livelihood but also a symbol of wealth and social status. The Matheniko, on the other hand, are located in southern Napak and engage in both pastoralism and small-scale crop farming. This group has historically involved in cattle raids, both as victims and perpetrators. Meanwhile, the Tepeth, based in northern Karamoja, including parts of Ngoleriet, are known for their strong cultural identity and heavy reliance on cattle. However, their dependence on livestock has led to frequent clashes with neighboring groups over grazing land and water.

The conflicts in Ngoleriet are predominantly resource-based, involving disputes over grazing land, access to water, and cattle rustling. These tensions have escalated due to environmental degradation and prolonged dry seasons, which have strained the already limited resources. In addition to the inter-ethnic conflicts between the Bokora, Pian, and Jie, intra-ethnic conflicts between sub-clans of the Bokora also occur frequently. These conflicts are often violent, exacerbated by the widespread availability of small arms in the region.

Several factors contribute to the persistent conflicts in Ngoleriet. Long-standing disputes over land ownership and access to resources have created cycles of revenge among ethnic groups. The semi-arid climate of Karamoja limits the availability of water and pasture, intensifying competition between communities. High levels of poverty and marginalization also exacerbate tensions, as communities struggle to secure their livelihoods. Moreover, the traditional practice of cattle raiding, once considered a cultural rite of passage, has evolved into a more

violent and commercialized activity. The easy availability of firearms has further intensified the scale and lethality of these conflicts.

Despite these challenges, religious actors hold significant potential to transform conflicts in Ngoleriet. Their moral authority, grassroots connections, and ability to mediate between warring factions can foster dialogue, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. In Ngoleriet they have historically been central to resolving disputes and fostering reconciliation. In this study, the religious strand focuses on the influence of faith-based institutions and individuals in addressing social conflicts and promoting peacebuilding efforts. By engaging priests, pastors, imams, and other religious leaders, the study seeks to understand how their moral authority and spiritual guidance shape the community's response to conflict.

Brewer, Higgins, and Teeney (2010) identified four spaces that positively influence peacemaking, including intellectual spaces, institutional spaces, market spaces, and political spaces. Religious actors are experts in supporting all these spaces (Brewer et al., 2010). In intellectual spaces, they can offer reconciliation, help with forgiveness, and form truth committees (Brewer et al., 2010). In institutional spaces, they can connect local groups with each other and employ international guidance (Brewer et al., 2010). In market spaces, they can mobilize their material resources to support movements and mobilize groups in other states for fund and material raising (Brewer et al., 2010).

Sampson (1997) asserts that religious actors play an active role in peacebuilding and religions offer existing channels for communication and organization, including ethical visions that can motivate believers to action (Sampson, 1997). However, in regard to Karamojong Conflicts, known efforts explored in literature

by religious actors mostly pertain to inter-state mediation efforts between Uganda's Karimojong and Kenya's Turkana (Kipuri & Ridgewell, 2008). Even then, what is not clearly apparent is their roles in peacebuilding within the context of intra-ethnic Karamoja conflicts in Napak. Moreover, while non-government organizations such as World Vision, Action Aid, USAID and Mercy Corps and a few faith-based organizations (FBOs) like Catholic Peace and Justice (Kona, 2004) have been identified as involved in peacebuilding in Karamoja, little is known about the direct involvement of religious actors from main religions, including Catholicism, Islam and Protestant.

Consequently, a gap remains in understanding different forms of conflict in Napak district, and how religious actors contribute to peacebuilding efforts. Other gaps pertain to lack of knowledge of methods of engagement in peacebuilding efforts used by religious actors, and in understanding outcomes of peacebuilding interventions by religious actors. This study examined the role of religious actors in peace building among the conflict affected communities of Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Karamoja sub-region.

1.2 Problem Statement

Despite government efforts at peacebuilding, conflict continues to ravage the Karamoja region, with raiders in recent years killing hundreds of people and stealing the cattle that serve as the primary source of livelihood for households in Napak district (UNDP, 2022). Since November 2020, approximately 150 people have been killed by cattle raiders, while 73 raiders have been killed by security forces (Taylor, 2021). A government press release in September 2021 reported 400 deaths, while the Karamoja Development Forum estimated 600 deaths from raids

between 2019 and July 2021. These incidents stem from an average of 300 raiding events annually, accompanied by violent clashes between rival groups and security forces, leading to an average of 50 conflict-related deaths each year (Uganda Media Centre, 2021).

The continued violence, disarmament, recurring cattle theft, arbitrary arrests, and other forms of conflict, have caused profound devastation in Karamoja sub-region where Ngoleriet sub-county is located (Uganda Media Centre, 2021). Many people have lost their lives, others have been displaced, and extensive destruction of property and family units has ensued (Taylor, 2021; Uganda Media Centre, 2021).

The trust between community members in Ngoleriet sub-county has eroded, as has trust in the government, fueled by allegations of harsh military tactics used to address the conflict (Uganda Media Centre, 2021; Kees, 2012). The army launched a disarmament campaign in July 2021, but the initiative has not effectively curtailed violence. Efforts to rehabilitate and reintegrate young people who surrender their arms have also remained inadequate, leaving them vulnerable to relapsing into violent activities.

Komakec (2010) examined the theological underpinnings of peacemaking in Uganda, but focused on armed conflicts like LRA, while Datzberger (2017) assessed Peacebuilding in Karamoja, but focused on non-formal education programmes. To bridge this gap, the current study assessed the nature of conflicts, the methods employed by religious actors, and the efficacy of their interventions in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district.

1.3 Main Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine the role of religious actors in peace

building among conflict affected communities in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Karamoja sub-region, Uganda.

1.4 Specific Objectives

- (i) To establish the forms of conflicts and their underlying factors in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda.
- (ii) To assess the methods of engagement employed by religious actors in peacebuilding efforts in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda.
- (iii) To analyse the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions implemented by religious actors in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda.

1.5 Research Questions

- (i) What are the major forms of conflicts, who are involved, and what sparks conflicts in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda?
- (ii) What are the specific ways in which conflicts are handled by religious actors in peacebuilding efforts in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda?
- (iii) What are the outcomes of the peacebuilding interventions implemented by religious actors in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda?

1.6 Justification of the study

Religious actors are more commonly associated with extremism and conflict between religious communities. The many other dimensions and contributions of religion, in particular in relation to peacemaking and peacebuilding processes, are less known, or maybe misunderstood, if not entirely neglected (Sampson, 2009), thus there is need for more studies.

Attempts have been made in the last two decades to record the positive roles that

religious actors played in contemporary peacebuilding, these attempts, despite showing that religious actors in some circumstances and contexts can be effective peacemakers and peacebuilders, remain limited, and leave a wide literature gap (PhilPott, 2007).

1.7 Study Significance

Government institutions responsible for peace and security in the region, including the Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, and the Ministry of Ethics, stand to benefit from the insights generated by this study. Policymakers in the Parliament of Uganda and other relevant government bodies can utilize the findings to inform the development of policies and programs aimed at harnessing the potential of religious actors for peacebuilding in similar conflict-affected regions. By incorporating evidence-based approaches into policy formulation, governments can enhance the effectiveness of their peacebuilding initiatives and promote sustainable peace and stability in the long term.

The study findings hold significant implications for NGOs engaged in peacebuilding and development initiatives within the Karamoja region. By providing a comprehensive understanding of the intricate dynamics of conflict in the area, NGOs can tailor their intervention strategies more precisely, thereby maximizing their impact on promoting peace and stability. These insights enable NGOs to target resources effectively towards addressing the root causes of conflict and facilitating sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

Also, NGOs involved in peace advocacy can leverage evidence-based insights derived from this study to strengthen advocacy endeavors. By utilizing the study findings as a credible resource, NGOs can effectively lobby for policy changes and

reforms that address the underlying factors contributing to conflict in the region. This enhanced advocacy capacity can lead to the adoption of more inclusive and effective peacebuilding policies at local, national, and international levels.

Moreover, the study findings are invaluable to local religious actors seeking to play a more active role in fostering peace within their communities. Armed with a deeper understanding of conflict dynamics, religious leaders can design and implement new approaches to preaching and community engagement that promote reconciliation, tolerance, and non-violent conflict resolution. By incorporating these evidence-based strategies into their religious teachings, local religious actors can contribute significantly to building a culture of peace and coexistence.

This also research offered me a valuable opportunity to deepen my understanding of the complex relationship between religion, conflict, and peacebuilding, particularly in the Karamoja region. It allowed me to develop essential academic skills in data collection, analysis, and interpretation while also enhancing my ability to communicate with key stakeholders and build professional networks. The insights gained from this study contributed to both academic discourse and practical applications in peacebuilding, equipping me with the expertise needed for a future career in peace and conflict studies.

1.8 Study Scope

1.8.1 Content Scope

The study described the forms of conflicts in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda, including an assessment of their forms, causes, and underlying factors. The study further assessed the methods of engagement employed by religious actors, focusing on their approaches to peacebuilding and reconciliation initiatives.

Additionally, the research analyzed the outcomes of interventions implemented by religious actors on conflict resolution and reconciliation processes within Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak District, Uganda.

1.8.2 Geographic Scope

The study was conducted in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district because it is a conflict-ridden area in the district (UNDP, 2022), specifically the parishes of Naitaikwai, Kautako, Ngoleriet, Nagulyeny, Nangerang, Kangole TC, Kalotom and Kaangole complex, Karamoja sub-region, situated in northeastern Uganda.

1.8.3 Time Scope

The study was conducted from January to August 2025, allowing for an analysis of recent developments in the Karamoja region, set against a historical backdrop of conflicts, including violent disarmament between 2000 and 2011, cattle rustling, and ongoing violence.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the critical role of religious actors in peacebuilding across different contexts, including global, African, and Ugandan experiences. While religious leaders and institutions had historically contributed to conflict resolution, mediation, and reconciliation, their specific role in intra-ethnic conflicts within Napak District was inadequately explored, a gap which this study filled, contributing to the broader discourse on the intersection of religion and peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities. Chapter two reviewed relevant literature to provide a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a thematic review of existing literature on the role of religious actors in peacebuilding. The review is organized into key themes: the theoretical framework, the forms of conflicts in society; methods of engagement employed by religious actors to contribute to peacebuilding; and the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions by religious actors. Religion has been widely acknowledged as a critical dimension in peacebuilding, particularly in conflict-affected regions where traditional state mechanisms for conflict resolution may be limited (Smith, 2010). The current state of knowledge about the role of religious actors in peacebuilding, especially in regard to mediating conflicting parties, providing moral guidance, leveraging their platforms to address grievances, encouraging forgiveness, and promoting non-violent dialogue, is therefore synthesized. This religious strand forms the basis for understanding how faith-based approaches complement or contrast with secular peacebuilding strategies.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

To understand the role of religious actors in peacebuilding, four theories are relevant: Religious Peacebuilding Theory, Conflict Transformation Theory, Religious Peacemaking Theory, and Hermeneutics of Peace (HoP) Theory.

Religious Peacebuilding Theory, developed by R. Scott Appleby, underscores the unique moral authority and capacity for moral and ethical dialogue that religious actors and institutions possess. This theory emphasizes their potential to mediate conflicts, foster reconciliation, and address the root causes of violence, making

them valuable agents in promoting peace in conflict-affected regions. Conflict Transformation Theory, pioneered by John Paul Lederach, focuses on changing the underlying dynamics and causes of conflict rather than just ending violence. It places importance on addressing issues related to identity, justice, and reconciliation. This theory is highly relevant to the current study, as it can guide the exploration of how religious actors transform the root causes of conflict, promote justice, and restore relationships within communities.

Religious Peacemaking Theory, advanced by scholars like Marc Gopin and David Smock, examines the relationship between religion and peacemaking. It considers both individual religious motivation and the use of religious peacemaking tools and tactics. This theory can be valuable in understanding the impact of interventions by religious actors on peacebuilding in Karamoja sub-region. The Hermeneutics of Peace (HoP) Theory introduced by Little (2007) and built upon by Antoni (2014) focuses on interpreting religious texts and traditions in ways that promote peace and reconciliation. It underscores the importance of understanding the context of interpretation and the role of interpretation in shaping religious beliefs and practices.

In this study, the Religious Peacebuilding Theory and the Conflict Transformation Theory were utilized. The Religious Peacebuilding Theory is relevant to this study because it emphasizes the unique moral authority and capacity for moral and ethical dialogue possessed by religious actors. This theory provides valuable insights into how religious actors can contribute to peacebuilding in Karamoja. On the other hand, the Conflict Transformation Theory is also applicable to this study as it emphasizes the need to address the root causes of conflict and promote justice and reconciliation. Since this study focuses on peacebuilding in a conflict-affected

region, understanding how religious actors work to transform these root causes and restore relationships within communities is crucial.

2.2 Forms of conflicts in society

Conflicts are present in many regions around the world, including in Africa, the Middle East and North Africa, Asia, Europe, and elsewhere. These conflicts can be caused by a variety of factors, including unresolved regional tensions, a breakdown in the rule of law, absent or co-opted state institutions, illicit economic gain, and the scarcity of resources.

Inter-communal conflicts involve tensions and violence between different communities or groups, often driven by disputes over resources, territorial boundaries, or historical grievances. In such conflicts, communities pitted against each other engage in various forms of violence, including armed clashes (Stark, 2011). These conflicts are not unique to any region and can be found across the globe. For example, in Sudan, inter-communal conflicts have been a long-standing issue, particularly in Darfur. Research by institutions like the United Nations and academic studies like "Conflict Dynamics in Darfur" by Abdel Salam Sidahmed provide valuable insights into the dynamics and resolution efforts of inter-communal conflicts in Sudan. Understanding these conflicts on a broader scale can help in analyzing similar dynamics in Karamoja.

Resource-based conflicts are rooted in disputes over valuable resources such as land, water, minerals, or even oil. These conflicts can be found in various parts of the world and are often exacerbated by issues like unequal distribution of resources and environmental factors. A notable example is the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which has experienced prolonged conflicts linked to the control of

mineral resources. The book "Africa's World War" (Prunier, 2008) offers a comprehensive analysis of the resource-driven conflicts in the Great Lakes region of Africa, including the DRC. Research on similar resource-based conflicts in regions like the Middle East, where oil resources are central to geopolitical conflicts, can provide valuable insights into how resource disputes escalate and potential strategies for resolution.

Ethnic conflict, characterized by tensions and violence between different ethnic or tribal groups. These conflicts typically revolve around territorial disputes, competition for resources, and historical grievances. While such conflicts can be found worldwide, they often have unique features based on the specific ethnic groups involved. For instance, Rwanda's history is marked by a tragic ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi communities, leading to the Rwandan Genocide in 1994. Numerous studies, including "Shake Hands with the Devil" (Dallaire, 2003) delve into the ethnic dynamics and the international response to such conflicts. Research on ethnic conflicts in diverse regions can provide insights into the complexities and potential solutions for these types of conflicts.

Political Conflicts are driven by power struggles, ideological differences, or disputes over governance and political representation. These conflicts can manifest as civil wars, insurgencies, coups, or large-scale protests and revolutions. For example, the Arab Spring, which began in 2010, saw a wave of political upheaval across the Middle East and North Africa, leading to significant changes in governments but also prolonged conflicts in countries like Syria, Libya, and Yemen. The dynamics of political conflicts are often complex, involving various internal and external actors. Works such as "Revolution and Reform in North Africa: Politics, Religion, and Social Change" (Kostiner, 2011) provide detailed

analyses of political conflicts and their transformative impacts on societies. Understanding political conflicts requires an examination of the underlying causes, including governance issues, corruption, human rights abuses, and the role of external powers.

Economic Conflicts arise from disparities in wealth distribution, economic opportunities, and access to jobs and services. These conflicts can lead to social unrest, strikes, and riots, particularly in societies with significant economic inequalities. An example of economic conflict is the unrest that occurred in Venezuela during the 2010s, where economic mismanagement, hyperinflation, and shortages of basic goods fueled widespread protests and violent clashes. The book "Venezuela: What Everyone Needs to Know" (Naím & Toro, 2018) provides an in-depth exploration of the economic factors that led to the crisis. Economic conflicts often highlight the need for economic reforms, social safety nets, and equitable distribution of resources to prevent social instability and violence.

Ideological Conflicts are driven by differences in beliefs, values, and ideologies. These conflicts can occur within a country or between nations and often involve intense emotional and intellectual clashes. Ideological conflicts are evident in global terrorism, where extremist groups like ISIS or Al-Qaeda pursue violent means to impose their beliefs. The impact of these conflicts extends beyond immediate violence, affecting international relations and security policies. Books like "The Age of Sacred Terror" (Benjamin & Simon, 2003) offer insights into the ideological underpinnings of modern terrorism and the global response to these threats. Ideological conflicts necessitate a multi-faceted approach that includes counter-terrorism efforts, ideological counter-narratives, and addressing the root causes of radicalization.

Cultural Conflicts involve clashes between different cultural identities, practices, and traditions. These conflicts can arise from globalization, migration, and cultural integration processes, often leading to tensions in multicultural societies. A contemporary example is the debate over immigration and cultural integration in Europe, where the influx of migrants and refugees has sparked conflicts over national identity, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. "The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order" (Huntington, 1996) explores the concept of cultural conflicts on a global scale, arguing that future conflicts will be based on cultural and civilizational differences rather than ideological or economic factors. Addressing cultural conflicts requires policies that promote intercultural dialogue, social integration, and mutual respect among diverse communities.

Religious Conflicts stem from differences in religious beliefs, practices, and identities. These conflicts can occur within a single religion or between different religions and often involve deeply rooted historical grievances and doctrinal disputes. An example is the ongoing conflict between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the Middle East, which has influenced regional politics and led to violence in countries like Iraq and Syria. The book "The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future" (Nasr, 2006) provides a detailed analysis of the origins and implications of Sunni-Shia conflicts. Religious conflicts can be particularly challenging to resolve because they involve deeply held beliefs and identities, requiring interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, and efforts to address historical injustices.

Environmental Conflicts arise from the degradation and competition over natural resources and environmental changes, including climate change. These conflicts can involve disputes over water rights, deforestation, pollution, and land use. The

competition for increasingly scarce resources, such as freshwater in regions like the Sahel in Africa, often leads to violent clashes between communities. The book "Environment, Scarcity, and Violence" (Homer-Dixon, 1999) explores the links between environmental stress and violent conflict. Addressing environmental conflicts involves sustainable resource management, environmental protection policies, and collaborative approaches to resource sharing and conservation.

In Uganda, competition for water and pastures lead to cycles of reciprocal violence between pastoralist groups in north-eastern Karamoja (Climate Diplomacy, 2023). Disputes over grazing lands and water sources are intricately connected to the pastoralist way of life in the Karamoja. These disputes often lead to cycles of reciprocal violence among pastoralist groups in northeastern Uganda. Access to key resources, such as pastures and water is a critical concern for these communities, particularly during times of drought and resource scarcity. The competition for these resources often results in violent confrontations, as different groups seek to secure their livelihoods. These disputes can have a profound impact on the region's overall stability.

2.3 Methods of engagement employed by religious actors to contribute to peacebuilding

Religious groups have been very active in peacebuilding in recent decades. Sampson (1997) suggests several reasons for this increased activity. Religions are organized at national and international levels, and so offer existing channels for communication and organization. Religious actors offer ethical visions that can motivate believers to action. In cases where the central government is in disarray, religious actors of various religious denominations may be the only ones with some degree of popular credibility, trust and moral authority. Actors from indigenous

religious groups are long-term players, who are present throughout the conflict's lifecycle (Sampson, 1997).

Mediation and Facilitation are critical methods employed by religious actors in peacebuilding, leveraging their moral authority and trust within communities to bring conflicting parties together. Religious leaders often act as neutral intermediaries, facilitating dialogue and negotiation. For example, the Community of Sant'Egidio, a Catholic lay organization, played a pivotal role in mediating the peace process in Mozambique during the 1990s, leading to the General Peace Agreement in 1992 (Haynes, 2009). Religious actors use their respected positions to foster communication, reduce tensions, and build consensus among conflicting parties, making mediation and facilitation particularly effective in contexts where religious institutions are deeply trusted.

Interfaith Dialogue is another significant method, involving leaders and followers of different religious traditions in conversations to promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation. Organizations like the Interfaith Youth Core in the United States and the United Religions Initiative globally work to build bridges between diverse religious communities. These dialogues address misconceptions, prejudices, and stereotypes, facilitating deeper understanding and respect for different beliefs (Appleby, 2000). Interfaith dialogue is crucial in multicultural and multi-religious societies where religious differences can be a source of tension, helping to prevent conflicts by promoting peaceful coexistence and resolving misunderstandings.

Education and Advocacy are vital methods employed by religious actors to promote peace. Religious organizations often run educational programs teaching

values of peace, reconciliation, and coexistence. For instance, the Catholic Church in Rwanda has been involved in post-genocide peacebuilding efforts through education on reconciliation and forgiveness (Longman, 2010). Religious actors also advocate for peace and justice, using their platforms to influence public opinion and policy. They engage in lobbying efforts, participate in public debates, and collaborate with other civil society organizations to promote policies that support peace and social justice. These efforts create an environment conducive to peace by addressing root causes of conflict such as inequality, injustice, and lack of education.

Humanitarian Assistance and Development play a significant role in peacebuilding efforts by religious actors. Organizations like Islamic Relief and Caritas Internationalis provide critical support to communities affected by conflict, including food, shelter, medical care, and education (Ferris, 2011). By addressing immediate humanitarian needs and contributing to long-term development, these organizations help stabilize regions and reduce the conditions that lead to conflict. Humanitarian assistance fosters goodwill and trust between conflicting parties and provides a foundation for sustainable peace. Development projects often include elements of peacebuilding, such as community-building activities and initiatives that promote economic cooperation between previously conflicting groups.

Trauma Healing and Counseling are essential components of peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings. Religious actors often provide psychological and spiritual support to individuals and communities affected by violence and war. For instance, the Quakers have been involved in trauma healing programs in Africa, offering counseling and support to victims of conflict (Smock, 2002). These efforts help individuals process their experiences, overcome trauma, and rebuild

their lives, which is crucial for the long-term peace and stability of communities. By promoting emotional and psychological healing, religious actors contribute to breaking the cycles of violence and fostering reconciliation and peace.

Advocacy for Social Justice and Human Rights is another critical method employed by religious actors in peacebuilding. Many religious leaders and organizations advocate for the protection of human rights and the establishment of just social structures. They often address issues like poverty, discrimination, and inequality, which are underlying causes of conflict. For example, the Liberation Theology movement in Latin America saw Catholic clergy advocating for the rights of the poor and oppressed, challenging unjust political and economic systems (Boff & Boff, 1987). Through advocacy, religious actors can influence policy changes, raise awareness about social injustices, and mobilize communities to demand their rights, thereby contributing to peace and justice.

Community-Based Peace Initiatives involve grassroots efforts led by religious actors to build peace at the local level. These initiatives can include peace education programs, community dialogues, and local conflict resolution mechanisms. In Nigeria, for example, the Interfaith Mediation Centre, co-led by a Christian pastor and a Muslim imam, works to resolve inter-communal conflicts through community engagement and mediation (Sampson, 2014). These initiatives leverage the local knowledge and trust that religious actors have within their communities, making them effective in addressing local conflicts and promoting peace from the ground up. By empowering communities to take an active role in peacebuilding, these efforts contribute to sustainable and lasting peace.

Advocacy for Peace and Reconciliation is a significant method employed by religious actors. Religious leaders often use their moral authority to advocate for peace and reconciliation at both the community and national levels. They can issue public statements, sermons, and pastoral letters that call for an end to violence and promote forgiveness and reconciliation. For instance, in South Africa, religious leaders like Archbishop Desmond Tutu played a crucial role in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, advocating for restorative justice and reconciliation in the post-apartheid era (Tutu, 1999). By promoting messages of peace and reconciliation, religious actors can influence public attitudes and foster a culture of peace.

Training and Capacity Building initiatives by religious actors are essential for empowering communities to engage in peacebuilding efforts. Religious organizations often provide training programs on conflict resolution, mediation, and peacebuilding skills. These programs are aimed at equipping community leaders, youth, and women with the necessary skills to manage and resolve conflicts peacefully. For example, the Mennonite Central Committee offers peacebuilding training in various conflict-affected regions, focusing on nonviolent conflict resolution and community building (Kraybill, 2006). Through capacity building, religious actors help to develop local peacebuilding capacities, ensuring that communities have the tools and knowledge to address conflicts constructively.

Building Social Cohesion involves efforts by religious actors to strengthen the bonds within and between communities to promote unity and prevent conflict. Social cohesion activities can include community events, interfaith services, and collaborative social projects that bring together people from different backgrounds. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Interreligious Council works to

rebuild social cohesion among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities by promoting interfaith dialogue and cooperation (Little, 2007). By fostering a sense of shared identity and common purpose, religious actors can mitigate social divisions and promote a peaceful coexistence.

Promoting Restorative Justice is another method used by religious actors in peacebuilding efforts. Restorative justice focuses on healing the harm caused by conflict and rebuilding relationships, rather than punitive measures. Religious actors often facilitate restorative justice processes, such as community-based reconciliation rituals and victim-offender mediation. For example, in post-genocide Rwanda, Christian and traditional leaders have promoted restorative justice through community courts known as Gacaca, which aim to bring about healing and reconciliation (Clark, 2010). This approach helps to address the root causes of conflict, restore social harmony, and promote long-term peace.

2.4 Outcomes of peacebuilding interventions by religious actors

Reduction in Violence is a primary outcome of peacebuilding interventions by religious actors. Through mediation, facilitation, and dialogue, religious leaders often succeed in de-escalating tensions and preventing the outbreak or continuation of violence. For instance, the mediation efforts of the Community of Sant'Egidio in Mozambique resulted in the General Peace Agreement of 1992, effectively ending years of civil war (Haynes, 2009). This intervention highlights the capacity of religious actors to broker peace deals that significantly reduce violence. The reduction in violence not only saves lives but also stabilizes regions, allowing for reconstruction and development to commence.

Promotion of Reconciliation and Healing is another significant outcome. Religious

peacebuilding often emphasizes forgiveness, healing, and reconciliation among conflicted parties. In post-genocide Rwanda, the Catholic Church and other religious organizations have been instrumental in promoting reconciliation through community-based healing processes and rituals (Longman, 2010). These interventions help individuals and communities to process trauma, rebuild trust, and establish a foundation for lasting peace. Reconciliation and healing are essential for restoring social cohesion and preventing the recurrence of conflict.

Strengthening Social Cohesion is a critical benefit of peacebuilding interventions. Religious actors often work to rebuild the social fabric torn apart by conflict. For example, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Interreligious Council has promoted interfaith dialogue and cooperation to rebuild trust and social cohesion among Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities (Little, 2007). Strengthened social cohesion leads to more resilient communities that can better withstand future tensions and conflicts. This sense of unity and shared purpose is vital for long-term stability and peace.

Enhanced Community Resilience is another outcome of peacebuilding efforts by religious actors. By providing training and capacity-building programs, religious organizations empower communities to manage and resolve conflicts on their own. The Mennonite Central Committee's peacebuilding training programs in various conflict-affected regions are a prime example of how local capacities are strengthened (Kraybill, 2006). Enhanced resilience means that communities are better equipped to handle disputes without resorting to violence, ensuring a more sustainable peace.

Promotion of Social Justice and Human Rights is often an outcome of the advocacy work by religious actors. Many religious organizations focus on addressing the root

causes of conflict, such as inequality, discrimination, and human rights abuses. The Liberation Theology movement in Latin America is a notable example, where religious leaders advocated for the rights of the poor and oppressed, contributing to significant social and political changes (Boff & Boff, 1987). Such advocacy helps create more just and equitable societies, which are less prone to conflict.

Provision of Humanitarian Assistance is another critical intervention by religious actors, leading to immediate and long-term benefits. Organizations like Islamic Relief and Caritas Internationalis provide essential services such as food, shelter, medical care, and education in conflict-affected areas (Ferris, 2011). This humanitarian assistance not only addresses immediate needs but also lays the groundwork for recovery and development, fostering conditions necessary for peace.

Economic Revitalization and Development are often outcomes of peacebuilding interventions, especially when religious actors are involved in development projects. These projects can include building infrastructure, supporting local businesses, and providing vocational training. Economic development initiatives help to reduce poverty and unemployment, which are often underlying causes of conflict. For instance, religious organizations in Nigeria have engaged in various development projects that have contributed to economic stability and peace (Sampson, 2014).

Improvement in Governance and Rule of Law can result from the involvement of religious actors in peacebuilding. By advocating for good governance, accountability, and the rule of law, religious organizations can influence political and legal reforms. In post-apartheid South Africa, religious leaders like Desmond Tutu have played a significant role in promoting democratic governance and the

rule of law through their involvement in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Tutu, 1999). Improved governance reduces corruption and enhances trust in public institutions, which are essential for sustained peace.

Cultural Preservation and Respect for Diversity are outcomes of peacebuilding interventions that emphasize the importance of cultural and religious diversity. Interfaith dialogue initiatives, such as those led by the United Religions Initiative, promote mutual respect and understanding among different cultural and religious groups (Appleby, 2000). This respect for diversity helps to prevent cultural and religious conflicts and fosters a more inclusive society where differences are celebrated rather than feared.

Long-Term Peace and Stability are the ultimate goals of peacebuilding interventions by religious actors. By addressing the immediate and root causes of conflict, promoting reconciliation, and building resilient communities, religious actors contribute to sustainable peace. The long-term stability achieved through these interventions enables societies to thrive, as people can live without fear of violence and can focus on development and prosperity. The comprehensive approach of religious peacebuilding—encompassing mediation, dialogue, education, humanitarian aid, and advocacy—ensures that peace is not just a temporary state but a lasting reality.

Studies have shown that the interventions implemented by religious actors have had positive effects on peacebuilding efforts. For example, Odihambo (2003) found that interfaith dialogue initiatives facilitated by religious leaders have helped reduce inter-communal tensions, fostered trust, and created spaces for open dialogue. These efforts have contributed to a more peaceful coexistence among different religious and ethnic groups.

Peace education programs implemented by religious actors have also demonstrated positive impacts. By equipping individuals, especially youth, with conflict resolution skills and promoting non-violence, these programs have helped in transforming attitudes and behaviors towards peaceful engagement (Mukombe et al., 2018). The emphasis on education and awareness has the potential to address root causes of conflicts and promote long-term sustainable peacebuilding. Additionally, the establishment of peace committees and councils has proven effective in providing platforms for dialogue and mediation. These structures have played a vital role in resolving conflicts, promoting reconciliation, and fostering cooperation among diverse communities (Mukombe et al., 2018).

The involvement of religious actors in humanitarian assistance and development projects has also had a positive impact on sustainable peacebuilding. By addressing the immediate needs of conflict-affected communities and promoting social and economic stability, these interventions contribute to an environment conducive to peace (Koech & Odiambo, 2019). Access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and livelihood opportunities enhances community resilience and reduces the likelihood of conflicts arising from resource scarcity and competition.

While the interventions implemented by religious actors have shown promise, it is important to critically evaluate their efficacy. This requires assessing both the short-term outcomes and long-term impacts of these interventions on sustainable peacebuilding (Antoni, 2003). Evaluations should consider factors such as the extent of community participation, the level of ownership of the initiatives, and the sustainability of the interventions beyond the involvement of religious actors. The current study intends to account for the contextual factors, such as the unique socio-political dynamics of the Karamoja region and the complexities of religious

identities and intergroup relations to understanding the nuanced effects of religious interventions and provide insights into how to adapt and tailor approaches to different situations.

2.5 Gaps identified in literature

Existing literature provides a global and regional perspective on conflicts, such as those in Sudan, the DRC, Rwanda, and the Middle East, but lacks localized analysis specific to Karamoja, Uganda. It overlooks the cultural, economic, and environmental nuances that underpin conflicts among pastoralist communities in this region. Resource-based conflicts, particularly those involving competition for water and grazing land, are inadequately explored in the context of pastoralist livelihoods. Although religious conflicts and interfaith dialogues are discussed broadly, little is said about how religious actors can mediate resource-based and intercommunal conflicts in Karamoja. Also, literature focuses more on macro-level drivers such as governance, neglecting the micro-level dynamics, including community-specific challenges, social norms, and power structures.

This study addresses these gaps by providing a localized analysis of how religious actors mediate conflicts and examining methods of engagement, such as leveraging moral authority, cultural understanding, and community trust to advocate for peace. By exploring the role of faith-based interventions in mediating resource-driven conflicts, the research highlights the potential of religious actors as peacebuilders in this context. The study also offers detailed insights into community-specific power dynamics, conflict resolution mechanisms, and the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions by religious leaders in Ngoleriet Sub-County. This localized approach enriches the understanding of conflict resolution in Karamoja, bridging the gap between macro-level theories and micro-level

realities.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive review of the existing literature on the role of religious actors in peacebuilding. It explored the theoretical foundations underpinning religious engagement in conflict resolution, highlighting the relevance of Religious Peacebuilding Theory and Conflict Transformation Theory in understanding the impact of faith-based interventions. Various forms of conflict were examined, demonstrating the complex socio-political, economic, and ideological dimensions that shape conflicts globally and within the Karamoja sub-region. The chapter further outlined the key methods employed by religious actors, including mediation, interfaith dialogue, education, and advocacy, illustrating their role in fostering reconciliation, justice, and social cohesion. This review establishes a foundation for the subsequent chapters by contextualizing the study within broader scholarly discussions and providing insights into how religious actors contribute to peacebuilding efforts in conflict-affected communities.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the procedures that were followed to come up with the research results. It specifies the research design, study population, sample size, and sampling techniques and procedure to follow. It also captures the techniques and procedures of data collection and analysis. The chapter also states the research principles that were considered as part of the ethical evaluation standards for the research.

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a case study design, which was suitable for investigating the specific roles of religious actors in peacebuilding and conflict resolution within Ngoleriet Sub-County, Napak District, Uganda. The case study design enables an in-depth exploration of the context and practices of religious actors within their real-life environment. In terms of research approach, a qualitative approach was adopted to explore the subjective experiences and perspectives of the religious actors involved. The qualitative approach, which focuses on understanding meanings, experiences, and perceptions, is ideal for capturing the richness and depth of the peacebuilding processes as experienced by the participants. This approach enables the emergence of themes and findings grounded in the lived experiences of the actors, offering insights that would not be captured by quantitative measures.

3.3 Study Area

The study was done in Ngoleriet Sub- County, Napak District of Karamoja sub-region because it is a conflict-ridden area within the district (UNDP, 2022). The district has a total area of 4,978 square kilometers, and by 2018 the population projection (from 2014 census profiles) was 266,800. (NDLG, 2019). It also has 7 sub counties (Ngoleriet, Irii, Lokopo, Lotome, Matany, Lopeei, Lorengecora), and 3 Town Councils (Matany, Kangole, Lorengecora), and 35 parishes (NDLG, 2019) but the study was specifically done in Ngoleriet sub- county, in the parishes of Naitaikwai, Kautako, Ngoleriet, Naguleny, Nangerang, Kangole TC, Kalotom and Kaangole complex, because they were conflict-ridden areas in the district (UNDP, 2022).

3.4 Target Population

The study included a diverse set of participants to ensure a comprehensive understanding of conflicts and peacebuilding in the Karamoja region. The target population specifically included individual religious actors, such as priests, pastors, and imams from the main religious groups (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islam, and Pentecostal denominations). These individuals were selected because of their influential roles within their communities in Ngoleriet and their involvement in addressing social challenges, including conflict mediation.

The study also engaged community leaders, including the sub-county Chief, LC I, and LC II leaders, who participated as key informants. These individuals were considered key informants due to their direct involvement in the governance and administration of their communities, as well as their pivotal role in addressing local conflicts and facilitating peacebuilding initiatives. Their positions enable them to

provide a unique perspective on the dynamics of conflict and resolution efforts at both the grassroots and administrative levels.

The study included the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) and Government Intelligence Security Officer (GISO), whose roles in monitoring security and advising on community matters made them critical to understanding the broader context of conflict and peacebuilding in the region. Community members, including elderly persons and opinion leaders, were also engaged in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to capture lived experiences and insights.

3.5 Sample size

The sample size was 29 participants, including primary participants, key informants and FGD participants. The primary participants were religious actors, including 6 Reverends from Protestant Church, 6 Priests from Catholic church, 6 Imams from Islam, and 6 Pastors from Pentecostal church), totaling 24 primary participants. Key Informants (KIs) were five (5), including the sub-county chief, LC II official, LC I official, Resident District Commissioner (RDC), and Government Intelligence Security Officer (GISO). Four (4) FGDs of (6 participants each) were also conducted, including two for males and two for women. This helped capture meaningful perspectives and contextual understanding from individuals actively involved in conflicts and peace efforts.

3.6 Sampling Techniques and Procedure

The study employed a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling, to select religious actors and other key informants for interviews. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose individuals such as the Sub-County Chief, LC I, LC II, RDC, and GISO. The Sub-County Chief, as local government

head, has significant insight into administrative structures, local governance, and peacebuilding efforts within the community. Their perspective is crucial in understanding the governmental approach to conflict resolution and how it interacts with religious actors and local communities. Similarly, LC I and LC II are grassroots leaders with direct involvement in community-level conflict resolution. They are intimately familiar with social dynamics, cultural practices, and specific challenges faced by local populations. Their roles in conflict mediation and understanding of the community's needs made them essential sources of information for this study. The RDC and GISO are key state actors responsible for maintaining security, addressing conflict, and coordinating interventions between local and national levels of government., and offered invaluable understanding of broader security context and the state-driven involvement in peacebuilding.

In addition to these individuals, purposive sampling was employed to select participants for FGDs, ensuring that a diverse range of experiences and perspectives were included. The inclusion of community members with varied backgrounds and experiences provided rich and detailed insights into the peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes in Ngoleriet Sub-County. Purposive sampling, being a common and effective method in qualitative research, is particularly useful when selecting participants with specialized knowledge or experience directly related to the research focus (Yazan, 2015).

3.7 Data Collection Methods

3.7.1 In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews using an interview guide, were conducted with primary participants, specifically religious actors, including Protestant Reverends, Catholic

Priests, Pentecostal Pastors, and Muslim Imams. An interview guide ensured comprehensive coverage of relevant topics while allowing flexibility in the conversation. It included a number of questions, such as what the roles religious actors play in peacebuilding within Ngoleriet Sub- County, and description of the methods that religious actors employed in peacebuilding interventions. This approach enabled the interviewer to probe deeper into specific responses and adapt the flow of the interview based on the participant's experiences and insights. Semi-structured interviews are beneficial in qualitative research as they provide a balance between structured questions and open-ended dialogue, facilitating rich and detailed data collection (Creswell, 2013).

3.7.2 Key Informant Interviews (KII)

Key Informant Interviews (KII) were conducted with the Sub-County Chief, LC I, LC II, RDC, and GISO. These interviews used a Key Informant Guide (KIG) to maintain consistency across interviews while allowing for in-depth exploration of specific topics. The KIG was designed to cover essential themes while permitting flexibility for follow-up questions and deeper probing into responses. The open-ended nature of the questions encouraged participants to share their perspectives freely, providing rich qualitative data. This strategy aligns with Creswell's (2013) recommendation for using open-ended questions in qualitative research to elicit detailed responses and capture nuanced insights. Interviews with key informants included questions such as: In what ways have religious actors been involved in addressing or managing conflicts within this sub-county? How have government leaders and religious actors collaborated in peacebuilding initiatives? Could you provide examples?

To ensure accuracy and completeness in data collection, a digital recorder was utilized during both the semi-structured interviews and the KIIs. This practice is supported by Patton (2014), who emphasizes the importance of accurately documenting qualitative data to facilitate thorough analysis. Recording the interviews allowed for precise capturing of participants' responses, ensuring that no valuable information was lost and enabling detailed and accurate transcription for subsequent analysis.

3.7.3 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were utilized to gather perspectives from community members using an FGD Guide. Four FGDs were conducted, each comprising 6 participants to encourage active participation while maintaining manageable group dynamics. According to Krueger and Casey (2015), a group size of 6-12 participants is ideal for focus group discussions, as it allows for diverse viewpoints while ensuring that each participant has an opportunity to contribute.

Participants for the FGDs were selected using purposive sampling to ensure a diverse representation of community members. Two FGDs were conducted with elderly people above 60 years (1 for males and 1 for females). Participants of the first FGD were asked questions such as: What are the major forms of conflicts in this community that you witnessed over the years? What are the specific methods of engagement that religious actors often use when promoting peacebuilding in this community? And, do the religious actors involve other community members in their peacebuilding interventions?

Two more FGDs with younger people between 18 and 35 years who had experienced or participated in any conflict (1 for males and 1 for females) were

done. Participants of these FGDs were asked several questions, including: What are the major forms of conflicts in this community that you have been involved in? What are the specific methods of engagement that religious actors use when promoting peacebuilding in this community? And, have the interventions by religious actors helped to contribute to peacebuilding in this community? The separation of FGDs by age and gender created a comfortable environment where participants could freely share their experiences and opinions without fear of gender-related bias or generational gaps in perspective.

Each FGD session began with an introduction and explanation of the purpose of the discussion. Participants were informed about the confidentiality of the discussion and encouraged to speak openly and honestly. The discussions were guided by a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit in-depth responses and stimulate conversation. These questions focused on the participants' experiences with conflict, their views on the role of religious actors in peacebuilding, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of various peacebuilding efforts. The use of open-ended questions aligns with Creswell's (2013) recommendation for qualitative research to encourage participants to share their perspectives freely and provide rich qualitative data.

The researcher facilitated the FGDs, ensuring that the discussion remained focused and that all participants had an opportunity to contribute. Probing questions were used to explore specific points in greater detail and to clarify participants' responses. An assistant moderator took detailed notes and operated a digital recorder to capture the discussion accurately. This ensured that no valuable information was lost and facilitated thorough analysis. The use of digital recording

is supported by Patton (2014), who emphasizes the importance of accurately documenting qualitative data.

This process allowed for the systematic organization and interpretation of the qualitative data, providing a clear understanding of the community members' perspectives on conflict and peacebuilding in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district, Uganda.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability play key roles in determining the quality of an instrument designed for a research study.

3.8.1 Validity

Validity refers to the appropriateness of the evaluation instrument for a group of individuals and not to the instrument itself (Taale & Ngman-Wara, 2015). External validity, which is the extent to which the results of a study can be generalized from a sample to a population was determined by ensuring the use of an appropriate sampling technique to make the sample as representative as possible. Content validity, referring to the appropriateness of the content of the instrument, was ensured by reading literature and basing on it to generate appropriate and suitable questions.

3.8.2 Reliability

To ensure reliability, member checking was done after data collection by returning to participants with summaries or interpretations of their responses to ensure that they accurately represent their perspectives. This allowed participants to confirm or correct any misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

3.9 Procedure of data collection

The researcher first obtained formal permission and an introductory letter from Kyambogo University. This letter was then presented to the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) of Napak District, introducing the researcher and outlining the purpose of the study. The CAO's approval facilitated access to local institutions and stakeholders. With permission from the CAO, the researcher approached the respective Church Administrators in Napak District. An introduction was made to each church administrator, and formal permission was requested to conduct the study within their churches and church leaders in Ngoleriet sub-county. This was crucial for gaining trust and ensuring cooperation from the church leaders. In addition to interviews with church leaders and FGDs, the researcher identified and engaged key informants relevant to the study. To identify relevant key informants, the researcher consulted with church administrators and district leaders such as the CAO identify those influential individuals who could provide valuable insights into the role of religious actors in peacebuilding. Based on recommendations from church leaders and district leaders, stakeholders, key informants were approached directly to request their participation in the study. This method ensured that the selected informants were knowledgeable and had relevant experience. Once permissions were secured and key informants identified, the researcher proceeded with data collection. This involved:

3.10 Data Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis to identify recurrent themes, patterns, and narratives in the qualitative data collected from in-depth interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The data analysis process involved several key steps:

3.10.1 Data recording and transcription

During the data collection process, all interviews and discussions were recorded using a digital audio recorder, with participants' consent. In addition to audio recordings, detailed field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues, context, and other observations that might not be evident in the recordings. After each session, the recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data.

3.10.2 Coding and categorization

Once the data were transcribed, the researcher began the process of coding. Initial codes were assigned to segments of the text that reflected significant statements, phrases, or ideas relevant to the research questions. These codes were then categorized into broader themes that emerged from the data. This process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of coding and re-coding to refine the categories and ensure they accurately represented the data.

3.10.3 Thematic analysis

After coding and categorization, the researcher analyzed the content to identify relationships between the themes. This involved examining how different themes interacted with one another and what patterns emerged across the various interviews and discussions. Thematic analysis allowed the researcher to extract meaningful insights and draw conclusions based on the qualitative data. The identified themes were then contextualized within the broader research framework to provide a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives.

To ensure the reliability of the findings, the researcher cross-checked the identified themes with the field notes and re-listened to the audio recordings where necessary.

This process helped verify that the themes were consistent with the raw data and that no critical information was overlooked. The iterative nature of the analysis also contributed to the depth and validity of the conclusions drawn from the data.

3.11 Ethical Issues

The researcher obtained written permission from Kyambogo University, before commencing the study in the designated research area.

Written informed consent was obtained from all participants before their involvement. The researcher explained the purpose, procedures, potential risks (such as emotional distress due to discussing conflicts), and benefits of the research to the participants. They were then given the opportunity to ask questions and make an informed decision about their participation. Consent forms were securely stored to protect participants' privacy and confidentiality.

Participants were assured that their participation in the study was voluntary. They were informed that they have the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences.

The research instruments did not contain any personally identifiable information, and respondents were explicitly informed that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality. Data was stored securely and only accessed by authorized researchers. The findings were reported in a manner that ensures participants' anonymity.

3.12 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in the study, detailing the research design, study area, target population, sampling techniques, and data

collection methods. The use of a case study design with a qualitative approach enabled an in-depth exploration of the role of religious actors in peacebuilding in Ngoleriet Sub-County. The study relied on purposive sampling to select key informants and participants, ensuring that data was collected from individuals with relevant experience. Methods such as in-depth interviews, key informant interviews, and FGDs were used to gather comprehensive and diverse perspectives. Ethical considerations were also observed throughout the research process.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents findings on the forms of conflict in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district, the methods used by religious actors to address them and their outcomes. The data collected through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews and FGDs are analyzed to provide insights into the types of conflicts and their triggers; ways in which religious actors are contributing to peacebuilding efforts, and the results of the peacebuilding interventions by religious actors.

4.1 Background information of Primary Participants

The study involved 24 religious actors as primary participants, selected based on their roles and involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution within the community. In this context, the community conceptualized religious actors not just as spiritual leaders but also as key mediators in resolving conflicts, fostering reconciliation, and promoting social cohesion. They were often seen as neutral figures who could bridge divides between conflicting groups due to their moral authority and respected positions. The religious actors included individual Reverends from Protestant churches, Priests from Catholic churches, Imams from the Islamic faith, and Pastors from Pentecostal churches, all of whom played active roles in addressing disputes and fostering peace.

The participants varied in age, sex, and levels of education. Their ages ranged from 35 to 65 years, providing a broad perspective from mid-career to more experienced leaders. The participants included 16 males and 8 females, ensuring representation of both genders. The females were few because women leaders in religious

institutions are generally few, and men are dominant. Educational levels among the participants varied, with the majority holding tertiary education qualifications in theology, religious studies, or related fields. Specifically, 19 participants had obtained a bachelor's degree, which included courses in pastoral care, religious history, and ethics. All 19 had worked in Ngoleriet Sub- County for at least three years, engaging in community-based peacebuilding efforts. Three (3) participants held master's degrees, with specializations in areas such as divinity, peace studies, and interfaith dialogue. These individuals had been actively involved in conflict resolution and reconciliation initiatives within the study area for an average of five years. Additionally, two (2) participants were pursuing doctoral studies, focusing on contemporary religious challenges and community leadership, both of whom had over six years of experience working with local communities in Ngoleriet Sub-County.

The importance of these primary participants lies in their key roles in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts within their communities. As religious leaders, they are often the first point of contact for individuals seeking guidance and reconciliation during conflicts. Their diverse educational backgrounds in theology, peace studies, and interfaith dialogue equip them with the expertise to address complex issues related to conflict. The inclusion of both male and female leaders, though there are fewer women in religious leadership positions, provides a balanced perspective on the roles of gender in peacebuilding efforts. The religious actors' broad experience and educational qualifications make them crucial to understanding how religious institutions contribute to peace and social cohesion in Ngoleriet sub-county.

4.2 Types of conflicts and their triggers in Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district

4.2.1 Resource-based conflicts triggered by unresolved historical grievance

Unresolved historical grievances in Ngoleriet sub-county primarily stem from long-standing disputes over land ownership and access to essential resources like grazing land and water points. These conflicts, especially between communities in Lokori and Lokodiokodoi villages, have their roots in historical land claims, territorial shifts, and the scarcity of resources during the dry season. Competition for vital resources like water and grazing land becomes more intense during droughts, exacerbating tensions and sometimes resulting in violence. These grievances are fueled by absence of formal dispute resolution mechanisms, making it difficult to address underlying issues and leading to recurring conflicts.

At least seven participants highlighted the recurring nature of these conflicts, attributing their frequency to unresolved historical disputes and ongoing competition for limited resources. One elderly community leader from Naitaikwai parish explained:

We have conflicts between communities from neighboring villages, for example from Lokori village and from Lokodiokodoi, often arising due to unresolved historical grievances over (*alupok*) land ownership and access to resources like (*aboisio nu woket akipi kede acok ibaren*) water points and grazing land. These disputes are exacerbated during dry seasons when resources become scarce, leading to heightened tensions and occasional outbreaks of violence.

However, Ngoleriet's conflicts are more specifically linked to ethnic variations in historical land usage. The Bokora, Matheniko, and Tepeth groups, while all part of

the broader Karamoja region, have distinct, long-standing grievances tied to the boundaries of land ownership and resource control. Unlike the general conflicts in Karamoja, in Ngoleriet, the disputes over grazing lands often occur within these ethnic groups themselves, exacerbated by the shifting dynamics between the traditional communal land tenure system and more recent, formal land registration systems.

Reflecting on a particularly memorable incident, another community elder from Lokodiokodi village, Naitaikwai parish, recounted:

I remember when a dispute over grazing rights escalated into a violent confrontation last year (2023) in early July during the dry season. Two herdsmen from the neighboring Lomusi village crossed to our village, and were grazing their livestock on our grazing land. When we stopped them, they returned to their village, but after a day, came back in a large group that was armed with spears and even a gun. When our young men confronted them, a fight broke out, killing one and injuring many others.

Four Reverends from Protestant churches also gave their insights into inter-communal conflicts, and indicated that these conflicts often reflect the deep-rooted historical animosities. For example, one Anglican Reverend from Natari village, Kautako Parish, commented that:

Inter-communal conflicts are deeply rooted in historical animosities over land and resources. Just three months ago, around April, The Matheniko youth clashed with youth from Tepeth community for control of a land tract each making a historic claim, which had remained unresolved. These tensions often escalate during resource-scarce periods, leading to outbreaks of violence.

Government leaders such as sub-county chiefs emphasized the existence of inter-communal conflicts, often between the *okerelek* clan of the Matheniko and the

Kolotik clan of the Tepeth ethnic group, and between even families, providing a broader perspective on the governance challenges and community dynamics. The sub-county chief of Ngoleriet sub-county, commented that:

Conflicts between clans or even families in our community stem from deep-rooted historical disputes over land and resources. These conflicts often escalate during dry seasons when resources are scarce, leading to tensions and occasional outbreaks of violence among communities competing for the same resources. As sub-county chief, I have witnessed several such conflicts, particularly in Nawaikorot, Kautako and Kangolecini villages, which I was part of the mediation team representing government. IN Kangolecini, we registered some success, and peacefully resolved the conflict between the Bokora and Matheniko, but in Kautako parish, we faced many challenges arising from long-standing grievances, which require more sustained engagement and time for healing.

The same view was echoed by the LC 1 Chairperson of Nawaikorot village, Ngoleriet Sub County:

From my experience, inter-communal conflicts are exacerbated by competition over grazing land and water points. For instance, in Nawaikorot village, tensions flared when Matheniko herders from Kautako village brought their animals to graze and access a key water source during the dry season. The disputes are further compounded by historical grievances between the Matheniko and Tepeth ethnic groups, that have not been adequately addressed, making it challenging to find sustainable solutions to these recurring conflicts.

An elderly FGD participant from Nawaikorot village, elaborated on the conflicts over water and land:

Our community faces recurring conflicts over land and water. For example, in 2021 during Covid-19 time, tensions arose between

Ikariwok clan and *Itekok* clan when herders from both groups attempted to access the same water source at Nawoikorot village. Disputes over grazing areas and clan boundaries intensified, leading to confrontations that required intervention from local leaders. The competition for grazing areas and water points is especially fierce during the dry seasons, often leading to disagreements over clan boundaries and usage rights, which can escalate into conflicts if not managed properly.

Another elderly FGD participant of the Bokora ethnic group from Kautako village, elaborated on these conflicts:

Our community faces recurring conflicts over land and water. The competition for grazing areas such as *Kautako Atip* and water points like *Akipinikin* is fierce, especially during the dry seasons. For example, conflicts have frequently erupted over *Teleket*, a strip of land in Kautako village where different clans claim ownership and attempt to restrict access. Similarly, *Aanya Akituk* in Kautako, has been a flashpoint, as herders from neighboring areas like Kolotom converge there when other sources dry up. This competition often leads to disagreements over boundaries and usage rights, which can escalate into conflicts if not managed properly.

Another young community member participating in the FGD who belonged to the Matheniko ethnic group, and was previously involved in an inter-community scuffle with another young man from the Bokora ethnicity, emphasized the criticality of the conflicts over water sources and agricultural land are prevalent in their community:

Access to water is critical for our survival, and disputes over wells often lead to violence. Last month (May), we had a scuffle with other youth from the neighboring Bokora ethnic group over the *Amat Akip* water well because the Bokora boys felt entitled, and wanted to fetch first.

Unique to Ngoleriet, resource control, particularly over water sources such *Amat Akip* has intertwined with gender dynamics. Access to water not only signifies survival but also power within the community. In contrast to Karamoja at large, where water disputes are common, the situation in Ngoleriet is marked by the monopoly of certain ethnic groups, like the Bokora, over key water points during the dry season. Women, often the main providers of water for household use, find themselves in constant tension, not just for access, but for respect and power within their communities. The control over wells by the Bokora is a major point of contention, particularly for the Tepeth and Matheniko women, who experience exclusion and marginalization when these water sources become scarce. This pattern of gendered resource control exacerbates tensions between communities and reinforces socio-political inequalities, adding a unique layer to the conflict in Ngoleriet.

Participants in females' FGDs indeed highlighted that access to water sources goes beyond mere survival; it also symbolizes social status and power dynamics within the community. They noted instances where control over wells or boreholes became contentious, with certain clan groups monopolizing access, leading to inequitable distribution and heightened tensions, especially during droughts. A female community member of 28 years, of Tepeth ethnicity, from Lokodoi village, Natakwai Parish, mentioned:

During the dry seasons, tensions over water reach their peak. I've witnessed how disputes over wells like *Amat Akip well* in Nawoikorot village, the *kaloto well* claimed by the Bokoro community in Kalotom Parish and the *Ilamak Tup well* in Lokodoi village tear the Bokora, Tepeth and Matheniko communities apart. It's not just about quenching thirst; it's about power and control.

Those Bokora who are the majority, and control the water yield immense influence, leaving the rest of us the Tepeth, at their mercy.

4.2.2 Land Tenure conflicts

Findings also indicate that some conflicts between the Bokora, who are the majority, and the Matheniko and the Tepeth ethnic groups in Napak District are significantly influenced by issues related to land tenure systems. Participants noted that these conflicts often arise due to unclear land ownership and tenure systems for the Tepeth and Matheniko people in Bokora dominated areas such as Ngoleriet village, contributing to disputes between different ethnic groups. The complex and often overlapping claims to land ownership lead to frequent fights between individuals, families, and sometimes even clans from different ethnic groups.

Participants explained that the traditional land tenure system, which is based on communal ownership, often clashes with formal land registration processes. This dual system creates confusion and opportunities for manipulation, where individuals or groups may claim ownership of the same piece of land. For example, some family or clan may claim that the grazing land that is shared, historically belonged to them, and so they have a right to decide what to use it for. So, they might want to register it formally as theirs, and use it for another purpose such as building. However, other families or clans may object and also claim ownership of the same traditional grazing land. One Key Informant, a local leader aged 43, from the Bokora ethnic group in Ngoleriet village noted:

Our traditional land tenure system does not align with formal land laws. This discrepancy leads to conflicts when land is claimed under both systems, creating a situation where multiple parties believe they have legitimate ownership. As a local leader who is respected,

I bridge the community and the religious actors from various churches who need to help the community in building peace.

Conflicts also arise between settled agriculturalists and nomadic pastoralists due to differing land use practices. Agriculturalists often claim permanent ownership of land for cultivation, while pastoralists traditionally use land for grazing, moving their herds seasonally. These differing land use practices lead to disputes, especially during planting or harvesting seasons when agriculturalists want to protect their crops. An elderly FGD participant from Kangolecini village, Naguleny Parish, explained:

"Settled farmers and nomadic herders frequently clash over land use. Farmers want to keep their fields secure, while herders need access to grazing land. During the farming seasons, these conflicting needs can lead to violent confrontations."

Additionally, participants highlighted that land tenure conflicts are exacerbated by population growth and increasing pressure on land resources. As the population grows, the demand for land increases, leading to more intense competition and conflicts. A sub-county official of Ngoleriet pointed out:

The growing population in our district is putting immense pressure on land resources. For example, in Ngoleriet village, disputes have arisen as families expand and seek to cultivate land that was previously communal grazing land. In Nawaikorot village, a conflict emerged when newly settled households encroached on land traditionally claimed by another clan, leading to boundary disputes that required intervention from us local leaders. As more people need land for farming and housing, disputes over land ownership and boundaries are becoming more frequent and intense.

The complex land tenure system in Ngoleriet village, Ngoleriet Parish, with its mix of traditional & formal land claims, contributes significantly to land tenure influenced conflicts.

Ngoleriet sub-county thus also faces a unique variant of land tenure-related conflicts, where traditional clan-based land systems clash with the formal legal processes of land registration. The competition for land ownership, particularly between settled farmers and nomadic pastoralists, is not just about securing space for cultivation or grazing, but also about upholding traditional authority over land. Unlike other areas in Karamoja, in Ngoleriet, we found these conflicts deeply rooted in clan-specific interpretations of land rights. For example, a Bokora clan might assert its traditional right over grazing lands that were historically shared, now contending with settled agriculturalists from the Tepeth and Matheniko, who see this land as their own due to new formal titles or boundaries established by local government bodies. This unique tension between communal and formalized ownership creates frequent disputes, escalating into violence, especially when external actors, such as political leaders take sides.

4.2.3 Ethnic tensions

Findings indicate that ethnic tensions, exacerbated by social and economic inequalities, were a source of conflicts in Ngoleriet sub-county, as one elderly participant from Nasike Village, Nangerang parish, mentioned:

The mistrust between the Bokora, Matheniko, and Tepeth ethnic groups is deep-rooted and goes back to many years, and to many generations before us, so it takes only a small spark to ignite violence between these ethnic groups. Such sparks often arise from cattle raids, land disputes, and resource competition. For example, last year, a disagreement over grazing land escalated into violence

when cattle belonging to the Tepeth clan came grazing in the land territory of the Matheniko. Similarly, in 2021, tensions flared after a suspected cattle raid by the Tepeth led to retaliatory attacks from the Matheniko, deepening the cycle of conflict.

Ethnic tensions were also linked to socio-economic inequalities and feelings of marginalization between the Matheniko and the Bokora within the community. FGD Conversations with elders and community leaders unveiled a history of injustices, including land dispossession and discriminatory practices such as preferential treatment in employment and resource allocation, fueling resentment and suspicion among various ethnic groups. An elderly member of the FGD, from the Tepeth ethnic group from Kangole Town Council mentioned:

Our people have endured generations of marginalization and oppression by more powerful neighboring communities and political structures. The Tepeth people, for example, have historically been disadvantaged by the dominant Matheniko and Bokora community and local government officials. The scars run deep, and the wounds of the past are not forgotten. Any perceived slight or injustice can reignite old animosities, tearing apart the fragile unity of our community. I recall in 2021, a young Tepeth herder was accused of trespassing onto Matheniko grazing land. The Matheniko elders demanded compensation, but the Tepeth elders refused, arguing that the land was historically shared. Tensions escalated, and within days, a confrontation erupted at a local market in Kangole, where members of both communities clashed, leading to injuries and property destruction. Religious leaders from a local church attempted to mediate by organizing dialogue meetings, but their efforts were met with resistance. The Matheniko elders saw the intervention as biased, claiming the church favored the Tepeth. The conflict remained unresolved for months.

4.2.4 Political factions

While political factionalism is a common issue in Karamoja, Ngoleriet's political conflicts are heavily influenced by its ethnic composition and the leadership dynamics within these communities. Unlike the broader regional patterns of political manipulation, in Ngoleriet, political leaders often align themselves with particular ethnic groups, such as the Bokora or Matheniko, exacerbating ethnic divisions. This alliance-building not only fosters mistrust between communities but also triggers political violence during election periods, as leaders mobilize their ethnic bases for control over both local government offices and resource-rich areas.

At least five participants mentioned the emergence of political factions aligned with specific ethnic identities, which further polarized the community and made it susceptible to manipulation by opportunistic leaders seeking to consolidate power. For instance, the Bokora and Matheniko ethnic groups have historically been at odds, and political factions have often exploited these ethnic divisions. Leaders from these groups mobilize support based on ethnic identity, exacerbating tensions and conflicts within the community. The LC II Chairperson of Bokora ethnicity from Kalotom Parish, mentioned that:

The mixing up of politics with ethnicity has worsened our divisions. Instead of uniting us for the common good, it has become a tool for those in power to exploit our differences and maintain their grip on authority. For example, political leaders from the Matheniko ethnic group often seek to consolidate power by fostering animosity towards the Bokora, and vice versa. For example, during the 2021 local council elections, a Matheniko candidate, campaigning for district leadership, accused the Bokora community of plotting to take over key government positions. At a rally in Kalotom, he warned his supporters that if they did not vote along ethnic lines,

the Bokora would dominate the district administration and marginalize the Matheniko. In response, Bokora elders held a counter-gathering, urging their youth to "protect their political space." This heightened tensions, leading to physical confrontations between rival youth groups, vandalism of campaign offices, and threats against opposing candidates.

In the aftermath, religious leaders and elders attempted to intervene, calling for peace dialogues. However, their efforts were undermined by political actors who continued to use inflammatory rhetoric. As a result, tensions persisted beyond the election, influencing later disputes over resource allocation and government appointments.

Ngoleriet's political environment is further complicated by the historical marginalization of some ethnic groups. For example, the Tepeth, long overshadowed by the political and economic dominance of the Bokora and Matheniko, are often left out of local governance structures. This exclusion fosters a sense of injustice, which is exploited by local leaders to rally support during politically sensitive periods, deepening existing ethnic divides and sparking intermittent violent outbreaks.

A community elder aged 65 years of the Matheniko ethnic group from Kautako village, Kangole complex parish, also reflected on the impact of these political conflicts:

Political leaders play a dangerous game with our ethnic identities. They stir up old grievances and turn us against each other to gain power. I've seen how election periods turn into times of intense conflict, as leaders from different ethnic groups use rhetoric to mobilize their supporters, creating an environment of fear and possible violence.

4.2.5 Cattle rustling

Cattle rustling, while a known conflict in Karamoja, manifests in a more entrenched form in Ngoleriet due to the area's deep cultural ties to livestock. Unlike other parts of Karamoja where cattle rustling can be sporadic, in Ngoleriet, it operates within a cyclical pattern, driven by both economic desperation and the deeply ingrained practice of seeking revenge. Each incident of cattle theft is met with retaliation, leading to further loss of life and intensifying community fractures. The ongoing violence around cattle rustling is not just about theft; it is about maintaining power, asserting identity, and ensuring survival in a region where cattle represent both wealth and status. This unique feature of Ngoleriet's conflict highlights how traditional practices have evolved into violent modern-day disputes, setting it apart from the general patterns seen in the broader Karamoja region.

A local community leader aged 71 years, of Tepeth ethnic group described the situation:

Cattle rustling has become a serious problem in our district. The theft of cattle not only robs families of their most valuable assets but also leads to violent clashes between communities. These clashes often result in loss of life and further deepen the mistrust among us. The cycle of violence continues as each act of theft is met with revenge, perpetuating conflict and instability.

Just last year, a group of Matheniko raided a Bokora kraal near Lokapel River, stealing over 60 cattle. In retaliation, the Bokora youth mobilized and ambushed them at a watering point, leading to a fierce fight where three young men lost their lives. I was called to intervene, along with elders and some religious leaders. We gathered at the local church to convince the youth not to retaliate

further, but they refused, saying they could not let their cattle go without a fight. Before security forces could respond, another counter-raid had already taken place, leaving two more dead and even more cattle stolen. This is how the cycle continues, and unless something changes, we will never see peace.

4.3 Ways in which religious actors are contributing to peacebuilding in Ngoleriet sub-county.

4.3.1 Mediation and Dialogue

Findings indicate that religious actors from various denominations often acted as mediators in conflict situations within the community. The primary method of engagement that they used, as mentioned by at least 17 religious actors across the religions, was mediation and dialogue. A Catholic Priest from Martyr Day Parish, Kangole:

We bring together leaders from conflicting communities into dialogue, giving them a platform to find common ground and reconcile. Just last year, tensions flared between the Matheniko and Bokora over accusations of cattle theft. A group of Bokora warriors had raided a Matheniko kraal in Lokitela, stealing dozens of cattle. In retaliation, the Matheniko youth mobilized to launch a counter-raid, which could have escalated into a deadly clash.

When we heard of this, we alongside elders and local officials organized an urgent mediation meeting at Martyr Day Parish. We invited leaders from both sides, including kraal elders, youth representatives, and security personnel. The meeting lasted two days. There was anger and accusations, but eventually, both sides agreed to a temporary ceasefire while security forces intervened to retrieve the stolen cattle. Some of the cattle were recovered, and through continued dialogue, the communities agreed on

compensation rather than more violence. This is how we try to use dialogue to prevent bloodshed, though it is never easy.

This finding underscores the role of religious actors as bridge-builders, fostering communication between conflicting parties. Their ability to mediate is rooted in religious ideologies that emphasize peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. For instance, Christian doctrines such as "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God*" (Matthew 5:9) align with their commitment to resolving disputes amicably. Similarly, Islamic teachings on the value of unity (*Ummah*) and brotherhood resonate with efforts to mediate and foster reconciliation. The practice of dialogue further reflects a contextual understanding of communal dynamics. Inter-community conflicts among the Bokora in Kalotom parish, the Matheniko from Kautako parish, and Tepeth from Kangole Town Council over resources, cattle rustling, and land disputes are common across the villages in Ngoleriet Sub-County, with major flashpoints in Kautako, Nasike and Ngoleriet villages. By creating safe spaces for open communication, religious leaders address underlying grievances while leveraging moral authority to encourage respect.

Additionally, the inter-denominational nature of mediation efforts highlights the inclusivity of religious actors in peacebuilding. The shared moral imperative to promote harmony transcends denominational boundaries, enabling cooperation among Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, and Pentecostal leaders. These joint efforts enhance the legitimacy of peace initiatives, as they reflect the collective will of diverse spiritual leaders.

Members of FGDs for the older persons aged above 60 years indicated that religious actors facilitated inter-ethnic community dialogues at the start of 2024, which in turn served as major platforms for fostering understanding, reconciliation,

and conflict resolution. These dialogues created safe spaces for members to voice grievances, express concerns, and collectively seek solutions. An FGD female member aged 65 years from Naitaikwai Parish mentioned:

In January 2024, religious actors, including pastors from Naitaikwai Pentecostal Assemblies and imams from Majid Mosque organized a dialogue in Naitaikwai village. The gathering brought together representatives from the Ikariwok and Itekok clans, who openly discussed disputes over land and water access. Through these discussions, agreements were reached on rotational use of water sources and shared grazing rights, preventing further clashes. Such dialogues help people from different backgrounds and beliefs to engage in meaningful conversations and find common ground.

This practice of facilitating dialogue reflects a core religious ideology bridging divides and promoting mutual understanding. Across religious traditions, dialogue is viewed as a tool for fostering empathy, recognizing shared humanity, and creating opportunities for reconciliation. For example, Christianity advocates for unity through love and understanding (*John 17:21: "That they may all be one..."*). In Islam, the concept of *Shura* (consultation) encourages collective deliberation and mutual respect, which aligns with the purpose of open dialogue.

In context of Kalotom Parish, these dialogues are particularly significant given the diversity of the community, comprising Bokora, Tepeth and Matheniko ethnicities, as well as the interwoven nature of resource-based, cultural, and ethnic conflicts. By involving people from different backgrounds and beliefs, religious leaders help reduce tensions caused by misunderstandings or perceived marginalization. Their moral authority, derived from their roles as spiritual guides, enables them to convene diverse groups and foster conversations that might otherwise not occur. The ability of religious actors to navigate ideological, cultural diversity within

these dialogues reinforces their unique position in peacebuilding. Their efforts exemplify how religious principles of inclusion, respect, and reconciliation can be effectively applied to address conflicts in Kalotom parish.

Findings also indicate that there were some challenges that affected the dialogues that religious actors facilitated between conflicting clans in Ngoleriet parish. A 63-year-old participant from an FGD with elderly males highlighted:

Sometimes, dialogues between *Ngidoketa* and *Ngikatap* clans in Ngoleriet parish organized by religious actors are not attended by all the parties involved, which limits their effectiveness. Indeed, there are times when certain groups and clans refuse to participate, making it hard to reach a consensus.

This observation highlights the limitations that religious actors face, even with their moral and spiritual authority. The reluctance of certain groups to engage in dialogue reveals the deep-rooted mistrust or political dynamics that undermine collective peace efforts. This issue underscores the need for more inclusive strategies, where religious actors might collaborate with local government structures or community influencers to ensure greater participation. It also reflects a key challenge in applying religious ideologies to peacebuilding—dialogue can only succeed when all parties are willing to engage in good faith.

Additionally, community members acknowledged the importance of grassroots initiatives driven by themselves in promoting sustainable peace. By empowering communities to take ownership of peacebuilding processes, these initiatives foster a sense of responsibility and commitment among residents. The Chairperson LC 1, aged 40, of Nawoikorot village, stated:

When communities are actively involved in decision-making and implementation, they feel a sense of ownership over the outcomes, leading to more lasting and impactful results. For instance, in Nawoikorotvillage, local elders and youth groups formed a peace committee in 2021 to mediate land disputes without relying solely on external authorities. This initiative has successfully resolved conflicts between *Ngicaak* clan and *Ngikapwer* clan leading to agreements on land boundaries and shared access to grazing areas. Such efforts strengthen communal ties and reduce tensions over time.

Findings also indicate that besides mediating conflicts in the community as part of their peacebuilding efforts to resolve immediate conflicts, religious actors were also involved in addressing underlying grievances and fostering long-term reconciliation among the Matheniko and the Bokora communities. They emphasized forgiveness, reconciliation and mutual respect through mediation sessions and peace dialogues. One young FGD participant aged 32 years from Kangole parish mentioned:

Religious actors go beyond just settling disputes. For instance, in December 2023, they organized a peace dialogue in Kangole village, bringing together elders and youth from both the Bokora and Matheniko communities. During the meeting, religious leaders, including Catholic Priests, Anglican Reverends, led discussions on past grievances and encouraged forgiveness. Testimonies were shared by victims of past conflicts, and both communities agreed to set up a joint peace committee to prevent future disputes. These dialogues help heal the wounds of those who have been hurt and build bridges of understanding to avert future conflicts.

This statement reflects the transformative power of religious ideologies when applied to conflict resolution. The focus on reconciliation and healing is deeply

rooted in theological principles. For instance, Christianity emphasizes forgiveness and restoring relationships (*Matthew 18:21-22*), while Islam encourages the pursuit of peace and the mending of relationships (*Surah Al-Hujurat 49:10: "The believers are but a single brotherhood: So make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers"*). In Ngoleriet Sub County, these dialogues help not only to address the immediate grievances of ethnic groups like the Bokora and Matheniko but also to establish preventive measures to avert future conflicts. By fostering mutual understanding and compassion, religious actors build social cohesion in a fractured community.

Some FGD participants however pointed out that religious actors sometimes face resistance from entrenched interests. A young female participant from an FGD held in Kautako parish mentioned:

There are times when the local power structures are threatened by the involvement of religious actors in peacebuilding, leading to resistance and lack of cooperation. For example, in Kautako Parish, religious leaders attempted to mediate a dispute over grazing land in Kautakoke village, but some local leaders, fearing that their influence would be undermined, discouraged community members from participating. In another case, a religious group's efforts to broker peace between *Ngiiyan* and *Ngikonyen* clans were met with resistance from political figures who had vested interests in maintaining divisions. Such challenges often slow down peace efforts and make reconciliation more difficult.

This resistance could stem from the perception that religious actors are encroaching on traditional power or political influence. It reflects the complexities of navigating the interplay between religious and secular leadership in peacebuilding efforts. While religious actors operate from a moral and spiritual authority, local leaders

may perceive this as undermining their control or legitimacy. This dynamic highlight the need for a collaborative approach where religious actors and local power structures can work in tandem, respecting each other's roles to achieve a unified goal of peace.

Another young FGD participant added:

I remember a case last year when a religious leader tried to intervene in a land dispute between two families in Kangole. The local council leaders were already taking sides because one of the families had strong political ties. When the priest called for dialogue, some local officials dismissed him, saying he had no authority to interfere in 'government matters.' The mediation efforts stalled, and the conflict escalated into a physical fight that left two people injured. Eventually, elders had to step in, but by then, the situation had already worsened. This is why sometimes religious actors struggle—because those in power see them as a threat to their influence

Findings also indicate that religious actors collaborated with traditional leaders to leverage existing social structures and norms to promote conflict resolutions and peacebuilding. An FGD participant from Nawoikorot village, mentioned:

Religioud actors here collaborate with other influential people such as traditional leaders to conduct community dialogues, where we they get the opportunity to talk and give their views on building peace in our local communities. This enables religious actors to tap into their wisdom and influence to reach the whole community, thereby fostering greater acceptance of peaceful coexistence.

This collaboration demonstrates the complementary roles of community opinion leaders, such as traditional leaders in peacebuilding. While opinion leaders such as traditional leaders carry cultural legitimacy and knowledge of local customs, religious actors bring moral and spiritual authority, which resonates deeply with

community members. Together, they amplify each other's efforts in promoting reconciliation and fostering social cohesion. The involvement of religious actors also ensures peacebuilding initiatives are inclusive, engaging the broader community through the lens of shared values and beliefs.

This collaboration resonates with biblical teachings such as Proverbs 11:14, which states, *"Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety."* The partnership between traditional leaders and religious actors exemplifies this wisdom, as both groups combine their knowledge and influence to guide the community toward peace. Similarly, the Quran encourages consultation and cooperation in decision-making. Surah Ash-Shura (42:38) highlights the value of consultation (*Shura*) by praising those who *"conduct their affairs by mutual consultation."* These scriptural principles underscore the importance of collaborative efforts in achieving sustainable peace.

4.3.2 Humanitarian Assistance

Findings also indicate that religious actors provided aid and humanitarian assistance to members of the community affected by conflict without discrimination. This assistance not only addressed immediate needs but also played a major role in building trust and fostering reconciliation among affected communities. One elderly FGD participant from Kangole parish commented:

Religious actors often distribute food, clothes, and beddings to us, regardless of our ethnic affiliations. For example, in June 2023, during the dry season, the Martyr Day parish distributed maize flour, blankets, and even clothes to families in Kangole Village. I personally received a blanket, and it made me feel cared for and respected. It was a good gesture because it showed that they did not

see us as divided by ethnicity. This helped to reduce tensions and showed their commitment to impartial support.

This act of providing humanitarian assistance reflects the principle of *agape* (unconditional love), a central tenet in Christian theology, as well as the Islamic concept of *sadaqah* (voluntary charity). By offering help impartially, religious actors embody the values they preach, reinforcing trust and fostering unity in divided communities. This act of providing aid reflects biblical principles, such as Galatians 6:10: *"So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."* The impartial distribution of resources also aligns with the Quranic teaching of *sadaqah* (charity), which emphasizes the importance of giving to those in need without discrimination. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:177) states, *"Righteousness is in giving wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask, and for freeing slaves."* By embodying these principles, religious actors foster trust and solidarity, showing the community how-to live-in harmony despite their differences.

A similar thought was validated by the religious actors. A Protestant Reverend from the Ngoleriet parish, Church of Uganda, mentioned:

We often make announcements and calls in church on Sundays for our members to contribute in cash and kind, such as clothes, beddings, and food items. I and other church leaders such as the Chairperson laity, then liaise with local leaders such as the LC 1 chairperson to distribute to the needy community members who are victims of violence regardless of their background. This act of providing for those in need helps in creating a sense of solidarity, showing that help is extended to everyone irrespective of their ethnicity.

This practice reflects Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:35-36, "*For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me.*"

Religious leaders not only provide material support but also set a powerful example of unconditional love and care. Likewise, the Quran emphasizes that charity is a means of purification and unity, as seen in Surah At-Tawbah (9:103): "*Take from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them to increase, and invoke Allah's blessings upon them.*"

Through these humanitarian efforts, religious actors demonstrate their faith in action, bridging divides and fostering a culture of mutual respect and equality. These acts of charity and collaboration reinforce the principles of peacebuilding and provide a foundation for healing and reconciliation in conflict-affected communities.

Community members also acknowledged the positive impact of humanitarian assistance but highlighted challenges in distribution. A participant of an FGD held in Kolotom parish from the younger male group noted:

Sometimes, the aid distribution is perceived as biased, which can create further tensions. It is crucial to ensure transparency in how aid is distributed to avoid any perceptions of favoritism.

Findings also indicate that religious actors implemented sustainable development projects aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. A Catholic Priest from Martyr Day parish mentioned:

Within Martyr Day parish, we have pioneered various income-generating activities. For example, we have *Kimoraak* Women's

SACCOs which includes of widows to victims of cattle rustling. We also have the *Kabara* community vocational program for training vulnerable young people with a history of involvement in inter-ethnic conflict.

This highlights the proactive role of religious actors in addressing the root causes of conflict, such as poverty and lack of opportunities, by equipping vulnerable groups with sustainable livelihood options.

Community members corroborated how religious actors pioneered income generating activities. A young woman aged 31 from the FGD of females held in Lodoi village, mentioned:

Religious actors run several income generating projects which benefit young people who have been involved in or are affected by conflict such as savings groups, and giving start-up capital. I am part of the tailoring group comprising 11 women. These have improved household income especially for widows and helped in re-integrating young cattle rustlers into our community to earn a living. This keeps them away from further involvement in cattle rustling, thereby contributing to peacebuilding."

These actions align with biblical principles of helping the vulnerable and promoting work as a pathway to dignity. Proverbs 31:8-9 reminds us to "*Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves... Defend the rights of the poor and needy.*" Additionally, the Quran calls for the empowerment of vulnerable groups through wealth redistribution and support, as seen in Surah An-Nisa (4:36), which commands believers to "*Be good to parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the distant neighbor, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess.*" These teachings underscore the importance of addressing systemic inequalities as a foundation for lasting peace.

4.3.3 Advocacy for peace

Religious actors mentioned using their moral authority to advocate for inclusive policies and resource allocation, lobbying government agencies and international organizations to prioritize the needs of conflict-ridden communities. A Catholic Priest from Tibenativity of Our Lord Catholic parish mentioned:

We run the *Aicor* radio program to ensure reconciliation and also ensure voices of marginalized people in Matany parish, Ngoleriet Sub-County and the wider Karamoja are heard and their concerns regarding peace addressed. By advocating for policies that promote social justice and equitable distribution of resources, we are creating an inclusive society in Matany parish.

Radio programs serve as a medium for community members to express their concerns, fostering dialogue and inclusion.

Community members corroborated the existence of Reconciliation (*Aicor*) radio programs run by religious actors in Ngoleriet sub-county. The sub-county chief mentioned:

Catholic parishes like Tibenativity of our Lord inn Matany parish facilitate radio programs and discussions which provide local people with opportunities to voice their concerns and be heard.

This approach aligns with the scriptural mandate to advocate for justice. Isaiah 1:17 calls on believers to "*Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, and plead the widow's cause.*" The Quran similarly emphasizes advocacy for justice in Surah An-Nisa (4:135): "*O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives.*"

Key informants also recognized the advocacy efforts but mentioned challenges such as limited access to policymakers. The LC II councilor noted:

While religious actors do a commendable job in advocating for peace, they often struggle to get the attention of higher government officials. There needs to be a stronger network to amplify the voices of religious actors at the national level.

This reflects the need for structural reforms to bridge the gap between grassroots peacebuilding efforts and national policy frameworks. By strengthening partnerships and creating networks that amplify the voices of religious actors, their impact can extend beyond the local level to influence systemic change.

4.3.4 Interfaith Collaboration

According to religious actors, interfaith initiatives are a key strategy for building trust and fostering social cohesion in communities across Napak District. Joint initiatives between different religious groups promote unity, as observed by a Muslim Imam from Kangole Town Council:

We work together with other religious denominations such as Catholic and Protestant in joint initiatives such as dialogue and community sensitization. For instance, in November 2022, we organized a community peace dialogue at Kangole centre where Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims came together to address issues of land disputes and inter-ethnic tensions. The outcome was significant—attendees expressed a renewed commitment to peaceful coexistence, and a joint peace committee was formed to monitor ongoing conflicts and promote unity. When people see us working together, it sends a powerful message of peace and cooperation.

This collaboration fosters mutual respect and strengthens ties among diverse religious communities.

Community members also appreciated the interfaith efforts but mentioned occasional friction between different religious groups. A younger female FGD participant noted:

While interfaith collaborations are generally positive, there are times when differences in religious practices and beliefs can create misunderstandings. For example, during a joint religious service last year (2023), there was tension when Catholic and Protestant participants disagreed on how to conduct the prayers. Some of the Catholic members felt uncomfortable with the Protestant way of leading the service, which caused a brief but noticeable disruption. Similarly, some Muslim community members expressed discomfort during interfaith dialogues when issues related to religious holidays and fasting practices were discussed. These experiences highlight the need for continuous dialogue and mutual respect to maintain harmony.

Religious actors leverage interfaith forums for dialogue, joint worship services, and community outreach programs to promote mutual understanding and solidarity. A Pentecostal Pastor from Kalotom village, Kangole Town Council mentioned:

These collaborative efforts have not only strengthened ties between religious communities but also served as a powerful example of unity in diversity, challenging stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuated conflict and division in this region. For example, in 2022, we organized a joint community outreach event, where Catholics, Protestants, and Muslims collaborated on a food distribution drive for displaced families. This event was significant because it brought together people from different religious backgrounds to work towards a common goal. Through this event, many of the community members who had previously harbored prejudices against other religious groups realized the shared values

we hold, and the tensions that once existed between groups were visibly reduced.

Similar thoughts were echoed by another Muslim Imam from Kangole Town Council:

Our interfaith dialogue initiatives have been instrumental in bridging divides and promoting reconciliation among different religious communities. By emphasizing shared values of peace and compassion, we have been able to foster greater unity and cooperation.

This aligns with the biblical call for unity and peace, as seen in Ephesians 4:3:

"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Similarly, the Quran highlights the importance of understanding and cooperation in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13): *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you."*

A Catholic Priest from Christ the King Catholic Parish in Naitakwai parish, also noted:

Interfaith dialogue allows us to transcend religious divides and recognize our shared humanity.

Religious actors added that interfaith collaboration strengthens social cohesion and builds trust between communities. By working together on common goals, religious leaders and community members demonstrate the power of solidarity and cooperation. Another Pentecostal Pastor Kangole Pentecostal Assemblies Church in from Nasike village, mentioned:

Through joint initiatives, we've been able to bridge divides and build bridges of understanding between different clan and families.

These efforts are rooted in the teachings of reconciliation and forgiveness, which are central to both the Bible and the Quran. Matthew 5:9 says: *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."* The Quran similarly advocates for peace in Surah An-Nisa (4:128): *"And reconciliation is best."*

4.3.5 Peace Education Programs

Findings indicate that religious actors were involved in peace education and sensitization programs, which were key to equipping community leaders with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for conflict resolution and reconciliation. These programs include workshops and training sessions on topics such as conflict transformation, non-violent communication, and mediation skills.

A Catholic Priest Christ the King Catholic Parish in Naitakwai parish, mentioned:

We facilitate peace education programs, including workshops and local radio segments under the parish community outreach programs, to equip people with the skills they need to address conflicts constructively.

Key informants corroborated this and mentioned that peace education programs by religious actors address the root causes of conflict by promoting empathy, understanding, and dialogue among community members. By fostering a culture of peace through education, participants learn to challenge harmful beliefs, build relationships based on mutual respect, and promote social justice and equality. A

Chairperson LC 1 of Nawoikorot village, mentioned:

Education is very important to building a more peaceful and just society. By facilitating peace education, religious actors help to nurture local champions of peace who advocate for it locally in our families and communities. For example, religious leaders in our village have been working with youth groups to provide peace education, and we've seen young people emerge as leaders in their

households, promoting understanding and reconciliation after conflicts. These champions of peace have been instrumental in reducing tensions, especially during disputes over land and resources

Regarding literacy levels in Nawoikorot village, my observations on the ground indicate that literacy levels are generally low, particularly among older community members, with a higher level of illiteracy observed among women. However, the younger population, particularly those who have had access to education through peace education programs and church-based initiatives, display a higher level of literacy.

However, some community members pointed out challenges in the reach and effectiveness of these programs. An elder male participant from an FGD mentioned:

Not everyone has access to these programs, especially those in remote areas. More effort is needed to ensure that peace education reaches every corner of the community.

4.4 Outcomes of the interventions implemented by religious actors in Ngoloriet sub-county

Participants mentioned several outcomes of interventions by religious actors which had contributed positively to peacebuilding in Ngoloriet sub-county, Napak district, as well as some of the challenges encountered.

4.4.1 Reduction in Violence

FGD members from the community of Nawoikorot village, both elderly and younger, and across the genders, indicated that there was a notable decrease in

violent incidents as a result of interventions through mediation by religious actors.

A female FGD member observed:

The frequency of occurrence of violence has reduced in the community, compared to before, ever since religious leaders started mediation. There are now few fights in water sources such as boreholes, which used to be frequent. The last major incident occurred around 2021, when a dispute over water access escalated, but it was quickly addressed through mediation by religious actors. Since then, the number of violent incidents has significantly decreased.

The reduction in violence, particularly in public spaces such as boreholes, highlights the effectiveness of religious leaders' mediation efforts in transforming conflict dynamics. Historically, access to common resources, such as water, has been a major source of tension. By intervening in this space, religious actors address both the immediate violence and the underlying social tensions that fuel such conflicts. The role of religious leaders as peacemakers is well-supported in Christian teachings. Matthew 5:9 proclaims, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*" This reinforces the centrality of peace-building in the mission of religious actors. Their work aligns with biblical teachings, positioning them as agents of divine peace in situations where human efforts have often failed. The reduction in violence, therefore, reflects the fulfillment of this calling.

Other FGD members emphasized the reduction in frequency of violent conflicts, and the prevention of new conflicts in the community. Elderly male FGD participant in Kolotom parish, emphasized:

By addressing underlying grievances, promoting dialogue, and facilitating reconciliation, religious leaders contribute to de-

escalating tensions and preventing the outbreak of new conflicts. For instance, in Kolotom, when tensions were rising between the Ngiribo and Ngimiiro clans over land usage rights, Protestant religious actors facilitated a series of meetings that allowed both sides to air their grievances. This helped prevent the conflict from escalating further. By creating a space for dialogue and ensuring that both parties felt heard, they were able to reach a mutual understanding, and the situation was defused without violence.

This emphasizes the multifaceted role of religious actors in not only mediating present conflicts but also preventing future violence by addressing root causes such as grievances. Their work in fostering dialogue and reconciliation is an active effort in creating long-term peace. It highlights a shift from reactive to proactive peacebuilding, ensuring that tensions do not escalate into violence.

The importance of reconciliation is found in Matthew 18:15, which advises resolving conflicts privately and directly, with the aim of reconciliation. *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over."* This scripture outlines a key principle in conflict resolution that religious leaders are employing—approaching individuals and communities directly to address grievances and prevent future conflicts.

However, some participants pointed out that not all violent incidents have been completely eradicated. An FGD participant aged 30 in Lokopo village, noted:

While the overall violence has decreased, occasional skirmishes still occur, especially in more remote areas where the presence of religious actors is limited and where few religious actors are responsible for large areas. For example, in *Anyayaata* grazing field in Lokopo village, a dispute broke out between two herding groups over water access in October 2023. Due to the lack of immediate

intervention, the confrontation escalated into a physical altercation before local elders stepped in to calm the situation.

Although the religious interventions have yielded positive results in terms of violence reduction, the persistence of occasional skirmishes suggests that the reach and influence of religious actors remain constrained, particularly in remote or isolated regions. This highlights a key challenge in peacebuilding: the difficulty of ensuring consistent interventions across all areas. In James 3:18, it is stated, *"Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness."* The verse acknowledges that peacebuilding efforts are ongoing, and while progress is visible, the full harvest of peace requires sustained effort. The persistence of violence in remote areas serves as a reminder that peace takes time and must be nurtured continuously, especially where access is limited.

4.4.2 Improvement in Community Cohesion

Key informants observed that there was a notable improvement in community trust, particularly among different ethnic groups, due to the interventions of religious actors. The sub-county Chief Ngoleriet Sub County mentioned that:

The work religious actors have done is commendable because today, people in our community, regardless of their ethnic background, see each other as neighbors rather than enemies and are more willing to work together in community projects that benefit all members of the community. For example, in early 2024, members of different ethnic groups, came together for a joint reforestation initiative, led Reverands from the Anglican parish of St. Peters Parish, Matany. Members of both the Bokora and Matheniko communities collaborated to plant trees along shared grazing corridors. In the past, such cooperation was rare due to longstanding tensions, but religious leaders played a key role in encouraging participation, making this project a success.

This finding underscores the transformative power of religious interventions in bridging ethnic divides. By reframing the way community members perceive one another—from enemies to neighbors—religious actors help foster an environment of cooperation and shared purpose. This shift is vital for long-term social cohesion, as it builds a foundation for collective action in community development projects. The call for unity and inclusivity is emphasized in Romans 15:7, *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."* Religious actors are following this principle by promoting unity across ethnic groups. The acceptance and cooperation among people from different backgrounds in Ngoleriet sub-county mirror the Christian teaching of acceptance and love, essential for fostering peace and cohesion in divided communities.

Other key informants revealed that, through the advocacy of religious actors for inclusivity and tolerance, the community had developed a sense of shared identity and belonging, transcending ethnic and sectarian divisions. The Chairperson LC II of Nawoikorot mentioned:

Today, community members are more willing to collaborate and cooperate with one another, laying the groundwork for sustainable peace and development in our community. This was not the case before when it was difficult to work with someone who is not from your tribe.

The increased willingness to collaborate, particularly in areas once defined by ethnic divisions, demonstrates the success of religious actors in transforming the local social fabric. By fostering trust and dismantling barriers of suspicion, religious leaders help establish the foundation for both peace and development. This cooperation is essential for sustainable growth and social harmony. Ephesians 2:14-16 speaks of Christ as the one who *"has made the two groups one*

and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility." This verse speaks to the healing and unity brought about by religious intervention. The work of religious leaders in overcoming ethnic divisions mirrors Christ's reconciliation efforts, where barriers of hostility are broken, and peace is established.

Nonetheless, some community members highlighted ongoing challenges in achieving full cohesion. A younger female FGD participant aged 29 mentioned:

There are still deep-seated prejudices and mistrust among some community members. It will take continuous effort and time to completely overcome these divisions.

While progress has been made, the persistence of prejudices underscores the complexities of reconciliation. Deep-seated mistrust requires ongoing effort, and the process of healing social wounds is slow and incremental. This highlights the need for continued and sustained interventions by religious actors, as peacebuilding is not a one-time effort but a long-term process. Colossians 3:12-13 calls for patience, kindness, and humility in bearing with one another and forgiving grievances. *"Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* This scriptural reference highlights the patience and perseverance required in overcoming deep-seated prejudices, emphasizing that forgiveness and reconciliation are ongoing processes, not instantaneous results.

4.4.3 Rehabilitation of Former Combatants

Participants who were community leaders also mentioned that, as a result of the programs by religious actors targeting former combatants, many of the young people who had previously taken part in active conflicts such as cattle rustling had

been successfully reintegrated to the community. The LC 1 Chairperson of Nawekorut village, Kalotom parish, mentioned:

The support from religious groups has given former combatants a new purpose and a way to contribute positively to our community. Many of them have been trained in other income generating activities such as carpentry, so they are now able to make a living on their own, and not to be involved in violence."

Religious groups play a pivotal role in rehabilitating former combatants by providing not only spiritual support but also practical skills for reintegration into society. Vocational training, such as carpentry, serves as a form of economic empowerment, enabling these individuals to find new livelihoods outside of violence. This holistic approach addresses both the economic and emotional aspects of reintegration. 2 Corinthians 5:17 speaks to the transformative power of new beginnings in Christ: *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"* The rehabilitation of former combatants reflects this spiritual transformation, where individuals are given a second chance at life and a new purpose, away from violence.

Through counseling, vocational training, and community-based support programs, religious leaders also provided former fighters with the skills and resources necessary to rebuild their lives and contribute positively to their communities. One Younger FGD participant from Nawekorut village said:

Many former combatants have been trained in vocational skill like building and masonry, and they have successfully reintegrated into our community, leaving behind their violent pasts, thanks to the work of religious actors.

The success of former combatants in finding stable employment through vocational skills training exemplifies the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs. By providing practical skills that are in demand in the community, religious actors help reintegrate these individuals in ways that offer dignity and stability, while reducing the likelihood of returning to violence. Isaiah 61:1 speaks of the mission to heal and restore: *"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners."* Religious actors fulfill this mission by helping former combatants escape the bondage of their violent pasts and find freedom in productive and peaceful livelihoods.

However, there were mentions of difficulties in sustaining these rehabilitation efforts. An elderly male FGD participant noted:

While many former combatants have been helped, some still struggle with limited economic opportunities and social acceptance, which can lead to a relapse into violent behaviors.

The struggles faced by some former combatants in achieving full economic and social reintegration highlight the limitations of rehabilitation efforts. While vocational training may provide skills, the broader issues of poverty and social stigma require ongoing attention. These barriers suggest that the reintegration process must be multifaceted, addressing not just immediate employment but also broader social and economic challenges. Matthew 26:41 acknowledges human vulnerability: *"Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* This verse reflects the ongoing struggles of former combatants, even after rehabilitation. It emphasizes the need for

continuous support to prevent relapse into violent behaviors, acknowledging the complexity of human transformation and the need for sustained spiritual and community care.

4.4.4 Return of stolen livestock

Participants also revealed that through collaborative efforts of religious actors, including involving community elders and other groups, livestock raided at night from some families had been recovered and returned to the owners. One elder FGD community member aged 60 years of the Bokora ethnic group from Naitaikwai parish, mentioned:

The mediation of religious actors has led to the return and recovery of stolen livestock. For example, in December 2023, following a cattle raid in Lokipetot village, religious leaders, together with elders and local authorities, intervened by engaging both the raiders and the affected families in a series of dialogues. After persistent mediation efforts, 15 cattle and 7 goats were successfully returned to their rightful owners, preventing an escalation of violence and restoring some level of trust among the affected groups.

This highlights the tangible impact of religious mediation in resolving conflicts related to stolen livestock. The role of religious actors in facilitating dialogue between conflicting parties is key to the restoration of stolen property. By creating a space for open communication, these religious leaders help rebuild trust and provide a mechanism for resolving disputes. The recovery of livestock symbolizes the restoration of both property and relationships within the community. In Luke 19:8, the story of Zacchaeus illustrates the principle of restitution: *"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay*

back four times the amount.” Zacchaeus’ commitment to restitution reflects the biblical principle of making amends for wrongdoings. Religious actors facilitating the return of stolen livestock align with this principle, fostering both restitution and reconciliation within the community.

The above view was collaborated by religious actors themselves who emphasized that they had been involved in a number of mediation efforts between conflicting families and members of the community, and that through their efforts they had managed to recover and return stolen livestock to the rightful owners. A Catholic Priest from Martyr Day catholic Parish, in Kangole emphasized:

Through our mediation efforts and fostering dialogue, we have been able to rebuild trust among community members, including some individuals previously involved in cattle theft. For instance, in November 2023, after a series of reconciliation meetings in Kangole village, some individuals from the Bokora community who had stolen livestock confessed and returned 8 cattle to their rightful owners from the Matheniko community. With continued dialogue and spiritual guidance, tensions eased, and reconciliation was achieved, reducing hostilities between these two pastoral groups.

This view emphasizes the profound transformation facilitated by religious mediation, not only in recovering stolen livestock but also in healing relationships between formerly hostile communities. The willingness of individuals to confess and return stolen livestock reflects a breakthrough in trust and a collective commitment to peace. The restoration of trust between the Bokora and Matheniko communities, once divided by cattle theft and conflict, is a key achievement in inter-community relations.

2 Corinthians 5:18 reminds us that reconciliation is part of the Christian mission: *"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the*

ministry of reconciliation." Religious actors are engaging in this ministry by not only facilitating reconciliation between individuals but also restoring peace between entire communities. The act of returning stolen livestock goes beyond physical restitution; it symbolizes spiritual and relational reconciliation, mirroring the divine reconciliation offered to humanity through Christ.

Despite these successes, some community members highlighted persistent challenges. A young male FGD participant in Kautako village, mentioned:

While many livestock previously stolen from Matany village have been returned to Lokopo village, there are still cases where stolen animals are never recovered, and some individuals remain uncooperative.

Despite the successes in recovering stolen livestock, this quote highlights the persistent challenges that remain, such as uncooperative individuals and unresolved thefts. These ongoing difficulties suggest that while religious mediation is effective, it is not always fully successful in overcoming the deep-seated resistance or distrust that may exist within certain individuals or factions. This reflects the complex nature of restorative justice, which requires ongoing effort and engagement to address all obstacles.

In Matthew 18:15-17, Jesus outlines the steps to address conflict: *"If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'"* This scripture speaks to the challenges of resolving disputes when some individuals refuse to cooperate. Despite efforts to mediate, there will always be some who remain resistant, underscoring the necessity for persistence in conflict resolution.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented and analyzed findings of the study, highlighting various forms of conflict in Ngoleriet sub-county, revealing a range of triggers rooted in historical, socio-economic, and cultural dynamics. Religious actors play a significant role in peacebuilding, employing various strategies such as mediation, reconciliation, and community dialogues. These efforts have yielded notable outcomes, including reduced hostilities, strengthened social cohesion, and improved intergroup relations. However, challenges such as resource constraints and deep-seated grievances remain.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This section presents a discussion of the findings of the study, synthesizing and comparing findings of this study with existing literature to gain deeper insights into the role of religious actors in peacebuilding within conflict-affected regions, particularly Napak District in the Karamoja sub-region of Uganda

5.1 Discussion of Findings

5.1.1 Conflicts and their triggers in Pastoral Communities

Conflicts in Napak district are diverse, reflecting a combination of historical, socio-economic, and political factors. Predominantly, these conflicts include resource-based conflicts which stem from resource scarcity, particularly over grazing lands and water resources, which are critical for the predominantly pastoral communities in the Karamoja sub-region. Additionally, cattle rustling, a practice with deep cultural roots, exacerbates tensions and often leads to violent confrontations. This aligns with the findings of Krampe (2016), who noted that resource-based conflicts in pastoral communities are a common trigger of violence in regions with limited state presence and support.

Inter-ethnic rivalries further fuel conflicts in Napak, with various ethnic groups vying for dominance and control over resources. The lack of effective governance and law enforcement mechanisms often means that these conflicts escalate without timely intervention. According to the study by Mkutu (2008), such conflicts are exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which are readily available in the region. This has turned what might have been manageable disputes

into deadly confrontations, significantly impacting the local population's safety and security.

Moreover, socio-economic disparities and competition for resources have deepened the animosity between different ethnic and social groups. The pastoral communities, often marginalized and living in abject poverty, view the access to resources as a critical survival issue. This scarcity-driven competition is a significant conflict driver, as outlined by Omosa (2005), who found that resource-based conflicts in marginalized regions are often exacerbated by poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods.

Political factors also play a crucial role in the conflicts in Napak district. Historical grievances and perceptions of neglect by the central government have fostered a sense of disenfranchisement among the local population. The lack of political representation and inadequate state services contribute to the feeling of marginalization. As Azar's (1990) theory of protracted social conflict suggests, these structural inequalities and the failure of the state to address the needs of its people create fertile ground for prolonged conflicts.

Environmental changes, particularly those driven by climate change, have further strained the already limited resources in Napak district. Unpredictable weather patterns, prolonged droughts, and desertification have reduced the availability of grazing lands and water sources, intensifying the competition among pastoralists. This environmental stress is a critical factor in the increasing frequency of conflicts, as noted by Raleigh and Urdal (2007), who linked climate-induced resource scarcity to violent conflicts in vulnerable regions.

The involvement of external actors, such as armed groups and militias, complicates the conflict dynamics in Napak. These groups often exploit the existing tensions for their gain, providing weapons and support to local factions. This external interference not only prolongs the conflicts but also escalates their intensity. As evidenced by Collier and Hoeffler (2004), the presence of external support can sustain and exacerbate internal conflicts, making resolution efforts more challenging.

5.1.2 How religious actors are contributing to peacebuilding efforts

Religious actors in Napak district have employed a variety of methods to engage in peacebuilding efforts. One prominent method is the use of dialogue and mediation. Religious leaders leverage their moral authority and the respect they command within their communities to bring conflicting parties together. They facilitate discussions aimed at understanding the root causes of conflicts and finding amicable solutions. This approach is supported by Hayward and Marshall (2015), who argue that religious leaders are uniquely positioned to mediate conflicts due to their perceived neutrality and moral influence.

Another significant method is the promotion of social cohesion through community activities and interfaith initiatives. Religious organizations often organize joint community projects, such as building schools and healthcare centers, which require cooperation between different ethnic groups. These projects help to build trust and foster a sense of shared purpose among community members. This method resonates with the findings of Smock (2006), who highlighted the role of collaborative community projects in strengthening social ties and reducing intergroup tensions.

Education and sensitization campaigns are also crucial in the methods employed by religious actors. These campaigns aim to educate the population about the negative impacts of conflict and the importance of peace. They often involve workshops, seminars, and public preaching that emphasize peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. As noted by Sampson (2007), education is a powerful tool in transforming mindsets and promoting a culture of peace.

Religious actors also engage in advocacy, both at the local and national levels, to address the structural causes of conflict. They advocate for policies that promote equitable resource distribution, enhance political representation, and improve access to social services. By addressing these underlying issues, religious leaders aim to create a more just and peaceful society. This approach is consistent with Lederach's (1997) theory of peacebuilding, which emphasizes the importance of addressing structural injustices to achieve sustainable peace.

In addition to these methods, religious actors often provide psycho-social support to conflict-affected individuals and communities. This support includes counseling, trauma healing sessions, and other forms of emotional and psychological assistance. Such interventions are crucial for helping individuals and communities recover from the trauma of conflict and rebuild their lives. The importance of psycho-social support in peacebuilding is well-documented, with scholars like Jeong (2005) highlighting its role in facilitating reconciliation and long-term peace.

Religious actors also utilize their extensive networks to mobilize resources and support for peacebuilding initiatives. These networks, which often span local, national, and international levels, enable them to gather the necessary financial,

logistical, and human resources to implement their programs. The ability to mobilize resources is a significant advantage that religious actors have over other local organizations, as noted by Appleby (2000).

Furthermore, religious actors often engage in cultural and symbolic acts to promote peace and reconciliation. These acts include traditional rituals, interfaith prayers, and peace marches, which serve to unify communities and reinforce the message of peace. Such cultural and symbolic acts are powerful tools for healing and reconciliation, as they tap into the deep-seated cultural and religious beliefs of the community. This approach is supported by the work of Schirch (2005), who emphasized the role of rituals and symbols in peacebuilding.

5.1.3 Outcomes of interventions carried out by religious actors in pastoral communities

The peacebuilding interventions by religious actors in Napak District have yielded notable outcomes, contributing significantly to reducing conflicts and fostering social cohesion. However, these interventions have not been without challenges and limitations.

One significant outcome is the reduction in the frequency and intensity of conflicts. Through mediation and dialogue, religious leaders have successfully resolved numerous disputes that might otherwise have escalated into violent confrontations. This aligns with Appleby (2000), who emphasized the effectiveness of religious mediation in conflict resolution. However, some community members noted that occasional skirmishes still occur, especially in remote areas where the presence of religious actors is limited. This indicates a need for expanded reach and continuous engagement to ensure sustained peace.

Another positive outcome is the increased cooperation and coexistence among different ethnic groups. Joint community projects and interfaith initiatives have fostered a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect, leading to a more cohesive society. Bercovitch and Kadayifci-Orellana (2009) support this, highlighting how intergroup cooperation in community projects can significantly enhance social cohesion. However, deep-seated prejudices and mistrust among some community members persist, suggesting that long-term efforts are necessary to fully overcome ethnic divisions.

Education and sensitization campaigns have contributed to a change in attitudes towards conflict and peace. Many community members have embraced the principles of non-violence and reconciliation, leading to more peaceful coexistence. This change in mindset is critical for the sustainability of peace efforts, as noted by Gopin (2000). Nevertheless, continuous education and reinforcement of these principles are required to ensure that these attitudinal changes are deeply ingrained and sustained.

The psycho-social support provided by religious actors has played a crucial role in healing the trauma of conflict-affected individuals and communities. By addressing the emotional and psychological wounds caused by conflict, religious actors have helped individuals and communities to rebuild their lives and move towards reconciliation. Jeong (2005) highlights the importance of psycho-social interventions in post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding. Despite these efforts, some individuals may require long-term support to fully recover, indicating a need for sustained psycho-social programs.

Religious actors' advocacy efforts have led to significant policy changes at local and national levels. Their advocacy for equitable resource distribution, improved political representation, and enhanced access to social services has resulted in policies that address some of the structural causes of conflict. Lederach (1997) emphasizes the importance of such policy changes for creating a more just and peaceful society. However, the implementation of these policies can be inconsistent, and continuous advocacy is necessary to ensure that the intended benefits are realized.

Cultural and symbolic acts organized by religious actors have had a profound impact on promoting peace and reconciliation. These acts have brought communities together and reinforced the message of peace and unity. By tapping into the deep-seated cultural and religious beliefs of the community, these acts have facilitated healing and reconciliation. Schirch (2005) notes the effectiveness of rituals and symbols in peacebuilding. Nonetheless, the impact of these acts may vary across different community segments, and additional efforts may be required to engage all groups effectively.

The extensive networks utilized by religious actors have enabled them to mobilize significant resources for their peacebuilding initiatives. The ability to gather financial, logistical, and human resources has allowed religious actors to implement comprehensive and sustainable peacebuilding programs. Appleby (2000) highlights the advantage that religious actors have in mobilizing resources. However, the sustainability of these programs depends on continued resource mobilization and effective management.

While the outcomes achieved so far demonstrate the significant impact of religious actors in promoting peace and reconciliation, challenges remain. For instance, some community members highlighted ongoing issues such as occasional violence and deep-seated mistrust. Furthermore, the reliance on volunteerism and donations for resource mobilization can be unpredictable, potentially affecting the continuity of peacebuilding efforts. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing support, adaptive strategies, and continuous engagement with all community stakeholders.

5.2 Conclusion

The role of religious actors in peacebuilding in Ngolerient sub-county, Napak district is indispensable. Their unique position within the community, coupled with their moral authority, enables them to effectively mediate conflicts and foster social cohesion. The forms of conflict in the region are complex and multifaceted, requiring nuanced and sustained efforts to address. Religious actors have demonstrated that through dialogue, mediation, community projects, and education, it is possible to mitigate conflicts and promote a culture of peace. The outcomes of these interventions are promising, but continuous effort and support are necessary to maintain and build on these gains.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for religious institutions

Religious institutions such as Catholic, Protestants, Pentecostals and Muslims should implement ongoing training and capacity-building programs for religious actors to enhance their conflict resolution skills. This includes developing and funding initiatives that equip religious leaders with the tools needed to address evolving conflicts effectively.

Religious institutions should also establish conflict resolution committees within their communities. These committees, composed of representatives from various religious backgrounds, should work together to mediate disputes, provide guidance on conflict management, and promote a culture of peace and reconciliation.

5.3.2 Recommendations for Local Leaders (Traditional and Government Leaders)

Traditional Council Leaders and local government officials should encourage collaboration between different religious groups. This involves facilitating joint initiatives and interfaith dialogues to foster unity and cooperation among diverse religious communities.

Traditional Leaders and local government officials should integrate traditional conflict resolution practices with modern methods. They should combine traditional techniques with contemporary approaches, leveraging traditional leaders' influence to enhance peacebuilding outcomes.

Local Government Units and NGOs such as the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU) should ensure that religious actors have the necessary resources, including financial and logistical support. They should provide consistent support to religious organizations involved in peacebuilding to ensure the sustainability of their efforts.

5.3.3 Recommendations for community members

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and local grassroots groups should engage youth and women in peacebuilding initiatives. The youth should be engaged because they are the ones who are often involved in violent conflicts and therefore need to be sensitized. Women too should be engaged because they are often the victims of such conflicts. They can be engaged through creating

opportunities for these groups to participate actively in peacebuilding activities and ensuring their perspectives and contributions are valued.

Community members should actively participate in and support local peacebuilding programs and initiatives. This includes attending community meetings, participating in dialogues, and volunteering for activities that promote social cohesion and conflict resolution.

5.3.4 Recommendations for NGOs and Development Agencies

NGOs and development agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and local partners should design and implement programs that focus on economic development and alternative livelihoods. These programs should aim to alleviate poverty and reduce competition for scarce resources, which often fuels conflict.

NGOs should facilitate workshops and training sessions on non-violent communication and conflict management for community members. By providing these skills, NGOs can help individuals and groups handle disputes more effectively and contribute to a more peaceful community environment.

Future researchers should explore the long-term impacts of economic development programs on conflict reduction in pastoral communities. Specifically, they should investigate how these programs influence community resilience and whether they contribute to sustainable peace in conflict regions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Religious Actors

Dear respondent,

My name is Ebiachu Patrick (Rev.) and I am carrying out research on "***THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS IN PEACE BUILDING AMONG THE CONFLICT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES OF KARAMOJA SUB-REGION: A CASE OF NGOLERIET SUB-COUNTY, NAPAK DISTRICT, UGANDA***" This study is academic-oriented and seeks your responses.

Objective 1: Assessing forms of conflict Personal Experiences in Peace Building

1. Can you describe a specific conflict situation in the Karamoja region that you have been directly involved in addressing?
2. How did you personally become involved in efforts to address conflicts in the Karamoja region?
3. What challenges have you encountered while participating in peacebuilding initiatives in Napak District?
4. Can you share a memorable experience where your involvement as a religious actor led to positive changes or outcomes in peacebuilding efforts?
5. How do you maintain your personal motivation and resilience in the face of challenges encountered during peacebuilding efforts?

Objective 2: Examining Methods of Engagement

6. In your experience, what methods or approaches have you found most

effective in engaging with communities for peacebuilding in the Karamoja region?

7. Could you share a specific example of an interfaith dialogue initiative that you have been involved in, and its impact on peacebuilding?
8. How do you personally conduct peace education programs, and what do you consider to be their key components?
9. Can you discuss a situation where you had to adapt your engagement approach to suit the specific cultural or social context of a community in Napak District?
10. What strategies do you employ to ensure inclusivity and participation of all community members in your peacebuilding initiatives?

Objective 3: Assessing Outcomes of Interventions

11. Can you discuss a successful intervention or initiative that you have been part of, and explain its impact on promoting peace in the region?
12. Conversely, have there been any interventions that did not achieve their intended peacebuilding outcomes? If so, what were the challenges faced?
13. How do you measure the success of your peacebuilding interventions in the Karamoja region?
14. Can you share any examples of unexpected or unintended outcomes of your peacebuilding interventions?
15. What lessons have you learned from your past experiences in implementing peacebuilding interventions, and how have these lessons influenced your future initiatives?

Thank you for your time and valuable insights.

Appendix 2:Key Informant Guide for community leaders

Dear respondent,

My name is **Ebiachu Patrick (Rev.)** I am carrying out research on “***THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS ACTORS IN PEACE BUILDING AMONG THE CONFLICT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES OF KARAMOJA SUB-REGION: A CASE OF NGOLERIET SUB-COUNTY, NAPAK DISTRICT, UGANDA***” This study is academic-oriented and seeks your responses.

Objective 1: Understanding the forms of conflict

1. Are there any conflicts within your sub-county? If so, could you describe them?
2. What are the primary causes of conflicts in your sub-county, as you perceive them?
3. How do these conflicts impact the social fabric and development within your sub-county?
4. In what ways have religious actors been involved in addressing or managing conflicts within this sub-county
5. What do you see as the role of religious actors in addressing conflicts within your sub-county?

Objective 2: Methods of Engagement

1. Could you describe the strategies or approaches employed by religious actors to engage with communities for conflict resolution and peacebuilding?

2. Have there been instances of collaboration between sub-county leaders and religious actors in peacebuilding initiatives? If so, could you provide examples?
3. How do religious actors facilitate dialogue and cooperation among different community groups to promote peace and reconciliation?
4. Are there specific programs or initiatives aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation within your sub-county? If yes, could you elaborate on them?

Objective 3: Evaluation of outcomes of Interventions

1. What outcomes have been observed from the interventions or programs aimed at peacebuilding within your sub-county?
2. In your opinion, have these interventions been successful in promoting peace and reconciliation? Why or why not?
3. Can you describe any challenges faced in implementing peacebuilding initiatives within your sub-county?
4. How do you measure the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions within your jurisdiction?

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your insights are invaluable in understanding the dynamics of peacebuilding efforts in Napak District.

Sincerely,

Ebiachu Patrick (Rev.)

Appendix 3: FGD Guide for Older people (60 years and above)

1. What are the major forms of conflicts in this community that you witnessed over the years?
2. What are the specific methods of engagement that religious actors often use when promoting peacebuilding in this community?
3. Do the religious actors involve other community members such as traditional leaders in their peacebuilding interventions?
4. Have the interventions by religious actors helped to contribute to peacebuilding in this community?
5. According to you, what are the outcomes of the peacebuilding interventions implemented by religious actors in this community?
6. What are some of the ways in which peacebuilding interventions by religious actors in this community have failed?

Appendix 4: FGD Guide for younger people (18 to 35 years)

1. What are the major forms of conflicts in this community that you have been involved in?
2. What are the specific methods of engagement that religious actors use when promoting peacebuilding in this community?
3. Have the interventions by religious actors helped to contribute to peacebuilding in this community?
4. According to you, what are the outcomes of the peacebuilding interventions implemented by religious actors in this community?
5. What are some of the ways in which peacebuilding interventions by religious actors in this community have failed.

Appendix 5: Consent Form

The role of religious actors in peace building among the conflict affected communities of Karamoja sub-region: a case of Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district, Uganda

Researcher

I Ebiachu Patrick (Rev.), a student of Kyambogo University pursuing “Master of Arts in Religious Studies, is conducting a study on “The role of religious actors in peace building among the conflict affected communities of Karamoja sub-region: a case of Ngoleriet sub-county, Napak district, Uganda” This explains to you the important details of the study, before you decide whether or not to participate, in it. I kindly request you to participate in the study.

Signature of the researcher Date.....

Respondent

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and no consequence will result if I refuse to participate.

Respondent’s signature/thumb print

Date.....

Date of interview.....

Time: Start

End

Interviewer's name.....

Appendix 6: Introductory Letter



DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

21st March 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

The bearer of this letter EBIACHU PATRICK (REV) is a student of Kyambogo University pursuing a Master's Programme.

He/She is conducting a research which is part of the requirements for the fulfillment of the award.

You are therefore requested to assist him/her with data collection.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. Robert Kuloba Wabyanga
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



c.c. Academic Registrar

Appendix 7: Field Photos



Figure 1. FGD for young people (female) with the researcher



Figure 2. FGD for young people (Male) with the researcher



Figure 3. FGD for Older Persons (Male) with the researcher.



Figure 4. FGD for Older Persons (Female) with the researcher.



Figure 5. Researcher interviewing Anglican Reverend



Figure 6. Researcher interviewing Pentecostal Pastor



Figure 7. Researcher interviewing Catholic Priest