

# Challenges and Opportunities in Gender-Based Activities toward Cross-Border Conflict Management in Kisumu and Nandi Counties, Kenya

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## Abstract

Both men and women are significantly affected during conflicts. It is however important to note that the impacts differ from none gender to the next. In the same breath, conflict management efforts made by both men and women do not get the same recognition, with women facing a myriad of challenges in their attempt to be active participants in the process of conflict management. Therefore, gender parity in conflict management activities, just like in other activities within the society is a major concern. In this regard, the study sought to analyse the challenges that emanate from gender-based activities in the process of conflict management in Nandi and along the Nandi and Kisumu counties border. The target population of this study included Household heads, Deputy County Commissioners, senior police officers, the In-charge Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU), Chiefs, National Intelligence Officers, Local CBOs in-charges, Male and Female Members of Local Peace committees, Leaders of Sugarcane Out growers; Leaders of Market Traders, Local Micro-finance Institutions and religious leaders in the along the border of the two counties. The study employed a descriptive research design. The total sample size was 456. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used. Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS version 23 and presented as percentages and frequencies in charts, graphs and tables while qualitative data was summarized in themes and presented in form of narrative reports and verbatim quotations. The study found that there were a number of factors that prevented women from being actively involved in conflict management among them lack of trust in women, perception, gender roles and level of education of women. The study also found out that there were a number of actors who worked towards gender-based conflict man-

agement in the study area, and they included government agencies and religious leaders; civil society as well as the community members. The study further found that the role of actors provided opportunities for human rights protection, Reconciliation, Gender Mainstreaming, Peace Building Workshops, media peace campaigns and peace caravans. The study concluded that women face a number of challenges that obstruct their involvement in conflict management as compared to their male counterparts. It's however important to note that the involvement of various actors including government agencies, CSOs, religious leaders and community members provides an opportunity for sustainable conflict management through human rights protection and education, gender mainstreaming, reconciliation and peacebuilding activities and forums.

### Keywords

Conflict Management, Gender-Based Activities, Cross-Border Conflicts, Challenges in Conflict Management, Gender Parity, Gender Roles

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## 1. Introduction

Both men and women suffer from conflict. Women, however, bear a disproportionate share of the burden of conflicts, either as innocent bystanders or active participants. In times of conflict or war, women are disproportionately affected by attacks, sexual violence, and human rights abuses (UNIFEM, 1997). Common belief holds that males tend to be more aggressive and females more passive. For instance, Fukuyama (1998) cites neo-Darwinist evidence suggesting that males have a genetic predisposition to violence. Hilhorst and Frerks (1999) argue that gender differences are situational and dependent on context, which is a more constructivist stance. Reviewing the situation in Sierra Leone, Mazurana and Carlson (2004) draw the conclusion that women and girls serving in the armed forces had a mixed experience: they were captives and dependents, but they were also involved in the planning and execution of the war.

The concepts of sovereignty, nationalism and the army are traditionally associated with men. Patriarchal norms and customs are ingrained in societies that provide significant challenges to progress (Wilford & Miller, 1998). In South Africa for instance, women are considered the “mothers of the nation,” as described by Meintjes (1998). However, the national language was framed within patriarchal constraints, and women’s practical involvement and the ideological discourse employed in defining the realm of their actions centred on motherhood, responsibility for children, and defence of the family.

While women participate in huge numbers in informal peace processes, they are noticeably underrepresented in formal peace procedures. Early warning, preventative diplomacy, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacebuilding, and global disarmament are all examples of official peace processes recognized by the

UN (Porter, 2003). The UN maintains that women's participation in official peace processes is necessary for establishing greater gender parity and more inclusive peace in the aftermath of violence.

The vast majority of political institutions are hostile to women as compared to men regardless of whether or not there is a conflict. Therefore, many women opt to work in NGOs or political parties that promote social and political change outside of the traditional political arena. Not surprisingly, then, fewer women than males participate in formal peace processes, including the negotiations that often start in the midst of conflicts and continue through the various stages of transition to peace (Anderlini, 2000). Women are underrepresented at all levels, including foreign agencies supporting peace discussions, negotiation teams representing the warring parties, and other institutions called to the negotiating table (Porter, 2003).

Women are always at the center of the Kisumu-Nandi Conflict, which has been reoccurring for years. Much as men are seen to be the leaders in conflict management activities, women also have played significant roles in conflict management, though amid challenges. Taking into account the diverse issues women face in violence and their reactions to conflict aid in breaking free from traditional, and sometimes restrictive, methods of conflict management and resolution that are controlled by elite viewpoints. According to Donnelly et al. (2005), to exclude women is to overlook a particular set of changes that have frequently been overlooked. Women have been found to be able to discover mutual understanding and work effectively to better their communities in situations where men have not been successful, demonstrating the distinct perspectives that their abilities and social views afford them on peace and security and conflict. Therefore, the current study sought to analyze the challenges and opportunities in gender-based activities in the study area. This put into perspective what both men and women do or can do to make conflict prevention and management easier within a society that has been conflict-ridden for many years.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

The Stakeholder approach in conflict analysis is advanced by Jonathan Goodhand in 2004. Stakeholder analysis is a technique for analyzing a system that involves identifying the conflict's major players or stakeholders and assessing their respective interests in the system. A stakeholder analysis of the political economy of conflict gives a more detailed understanding of conflict's functions, which might lead to more focused conflict prevention and resolution policies and initiatives (Goodhand, 2004).

Every conflict has its own, dynamics, and stakeholders involved. Those who are involved with conflict management must address the issue of stakeholders. In order to prevent the recurrence of conflict, the conflict managers must ask themselves pertinent questions: Who are the primary stakeholders in the war economy? What are their motivations for participating in war economies? What

are their motivations for seeking peace? Who has authority over the weapons of war? This is important in properly evaluating the many roles of war economies (Freeman, 1984).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design was used to analyse the challenges and opportunities in gender-based activities toward cross-border conflict management in Nandi and Kisumu counties. According to Orodho and Kombo (2003), the descriptive survey can be used to collect information about people's attitudes, opinions, habits or social issues. They further contend that descriptive design seeks to uncover the nature of factors involved in a given situation, the degree to which it exists and the relationship between them. In this regard, the design was key in understanding the nature of challenges and opportunities with reference to gender-based activities in cross-border conflict management.

#### **3.2. Study Area**

The study was carried out in both the Kisumu and Nandi Counties of Kenya. Nandi County occupies an area of 2884.4 square kilometres and lies in a Latitude: 0°10'0.00"N. Longitude: 35°08'60.00"E. with a population of 885,711 (2019). Kisumu on the other hand lies in longitudes 33°20'E and 35°20'E and latitudes 0°20' South and 0°50' South with a population of 610,082 (KNBS population census 2019). The climate of the two counties is warm and overcast. The two counties also receive a significant amount of rainfall during the year. This makes it prime for agriculture especially maize and sugarcane. Hence, the majority of the residents are farmers. The two counties are of interest to the study due to the long-standing cross-border conflict in the Muhoroni-Tinderet area. This has negatively affected inhabitants' livelihood.

#### **3.3. Study Population, Sampling Strategy and Sample Size**

The target population of this study included Household heads, Deputy County Commissioners, senior police officers in the In-charge Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU), Chiefs, National Intelligence Officer in charges CBOs in-charges, Male and Female Members of Local Peace committees, Leaders of Sugarcane Out-growers; Leaders of Market Traders, Local Micro-finance Institutions and religious leaders in the along the border of the two counties.

The study was conducted along the border of Nandi and Kisumu counties. In particular, Tinderet Sub-county of Nandi County and Muhoroni Sub-county of Kisumu County were sampled as the study area. The study area was purposively sampled due to the magnitude of conflicts that occur in the area. Tinderet and Muhoroni were purposively sampled due to their proximity to one another and neighbouring sub-counties and also due to the recurrence of ethnic conflicts

between the two neighbouring sub-counties. According to the Kenya Population and household census of 2019, Tinderet had a population of 115,931 with a total of 24,331 households whereas Muhoroni had a population of 154,116 with a total of 37,193 households (KNBS, 2019).

The main item in the sampling frame for the study is the household heads who are 61,331 in the two sub-counties. The sample size for the household heads was determined using Fisher et al., (1983) cited in Mugenda & Mugenda, (1999). In this regard, therefore, since the target population is greater than 10000, the desired sample population was determined using Fisher's formula for sample size determination. The formula is as stated below.

$$n = (z^2 pq) / d^2$$

where  $n$  = desired sample size (the target population is greater than 10,000).

$z$  = the standard normal deviation at the confidence level of 95% is 1.96.

$p$  = the proportion of the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured is set at 50%.

$q$  =  $1-p$  (probability of non-success).

$d$  = level of statistical significance set at 0.05.

$$n = ((1.96)^2 * 0.5 * (1 - 0.5)) / ((0.05)^2) = 384$$

Simple random sampling and convenience sampling techniques were used to select the household heads in both Tinderet and Muhoroni Sub-counties who were the main unit of analysis in this study. The other groups of respondents in this study were Government officials who were sampled purposively for Key informant Interviews. They included Deputy County Commissioners from Tinderet and Muhoroni sub-counties, 2 senior police officers from each sub-county, the In-charge Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU), and 4 Chiefs out of 9 chiefs, representing 50% as recommended by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), 1 National Intelligence Officer. Key informant Interviews were further conducted to get responses from two Local CBOs in-charges, 2 Male Members of local peace committees and 2 Female members of Local Peace committees from each sub-county. 2 Leaders of Sugarcane Out growers; 8 Leaders of Market Traders (two i.e. male and female, each from the following markets; Kibigori, Chemelil, Muhoroni, Songor), 4 religious leaders (1 Catholic priest, 1 protestant priest, 1 Priest from Evangelical churches and 1 Muslim Cleric), 3 Local Micro-finance Institutions (Kenya Women Finance Trust, Muhoroni Sugar Company Sacco and Jumuika Sacco) all of who were sampled purposively.

The study further utilized Focus group discussions as one of the data collection techniques. There were four FGDs conducted in four different locations. There were Men's FGDs that were conducted in Muhoroni and Chemelil-Chemase locations and Women's FGDs conducted in Nyangore and Tinderet areas. Each FGD had 10 Participants bringing the total number of FGD participants to 40. **Table 1** shows a summary of the Sample size, Sampling Procedure and data collection techniques.

**Table 1.** Sample size, Sampling Procedure and data collection techniques.

Target Sample	Sample size	Sampling procedure	Method of Data collection
Household Heads	384	Convenience, simple random, Fishers formula	Questionnaire
Deputy County Commissioners	2	Purposive	KII
Senior Police officers	2	Purposive	KII
Chiefs	4	Purposive	KII
NIS Officer	1	Purposive	KII
Local CBOs	1	Purposive	KII
Members of Local Peace Committees	4	Purposive	KII
Sugarcane Out growers	2	Purposive	KII
Leaders of Market Trader	7	Purposive	KII
Religious Leaders	4	Purposive	KII
Local Micro-finance Institutions	3	Purposive	KII
FGD Participants	40	Simple Random	FGD
<b>Total</b>		<b>456</b>	

Source: Researcher 2021.

### 3.4. Data Collection Tools

This study used both secondary and primary data. The study data was gathered through a mixed approach from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected through household questionnaires, key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions. Secondary data (from books, journal articles, credible reports, etc.) were collected from published sources that include hard and soft library materials available in national, institutional, and organizational libraries

### 3.5. Data Analysis and Presentation

Quantitative data was coded and then entered into the SPSS 23 software and analysed to generate percentages and frequencies for various variables of the study. Some of the data were imported from SPSS and analyzed through spreadsheets. The researcher presented the data in descriptive form through frequencies and percentages in graphs, tables and charts. Conversely, qualitative data from interviews and documents were analyzed thematically and transcribed and organized in various themes and presented thematically in form of narrative reports and verbatim quotations. This helped the researcher to review, ascertain, and make meanings related to the study themes and research questions.

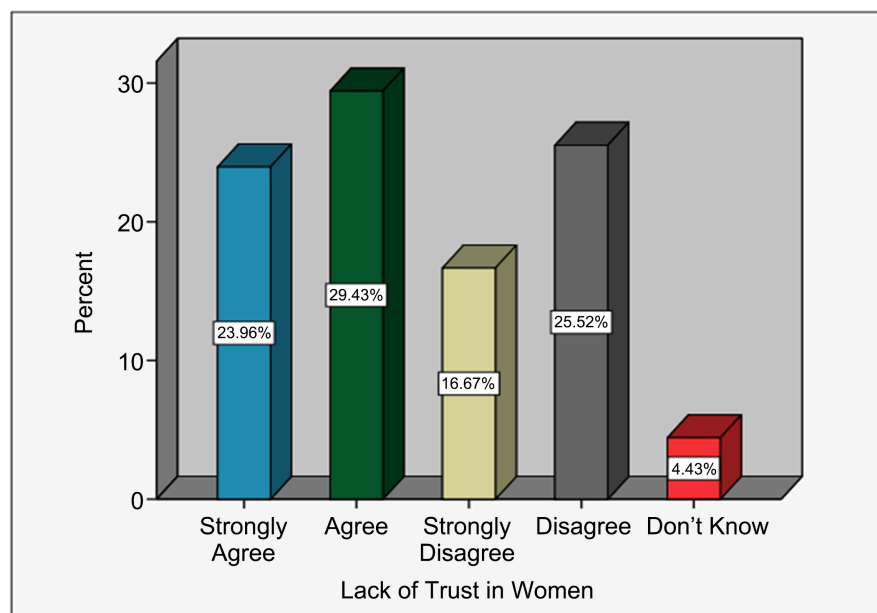
## 4. Study Findings and Discussions

### 4.1. Challenges Obstructing Women from Contributing toward Cross-Border Conflict Management in Nandi and Kisumu Counties

#### 4.1.1. Lack of Trust in Women

The study sought to assess the various factors that challenge women from contributing to cross-border conflict management. Results in **Figure 1** indicate that 92 (23.96%) disagreed, 113 (29.43%) agreed, 64 (16.67%) strongly disagreed, 98 (25.52%) disagreed while 17 (4.43%) were not aware that lack of trust in women was a challenge that obstructed women from contributing towards cross border conflict management.

Results in **Figure 1** indicate that majority of the household respondents agree that lack of trust in women is a challenge to women's ability to contribute towards cross border conflict management in Kisumu and Nandi Counties. According to the various focus group discussions in the study area, it emerged that from both sides of the border characterized by different ethnic groups, there exists mistrust between men and women. From men FGD participants, most men reiterated that when women are given powers to lead the rest towards the achievement of a community goal there, is possibility that they can take the whole community in the wrong direction. It, therefore, means that, the majority of the men in the study area do not trust that women can take charge in the management of cross border conflicts. This was based on the fact that management of conflicts employs negotiations where many men argued that the women may be driven by sympathy and recede too low to the loss of the whole community. Contrary, from women FGDs, majority of the participants had a lot of confidence with male led conflict management efforts and exuded confidence of



**Figure 1.** Lack of trust in Women; Source: Field data, 2022.

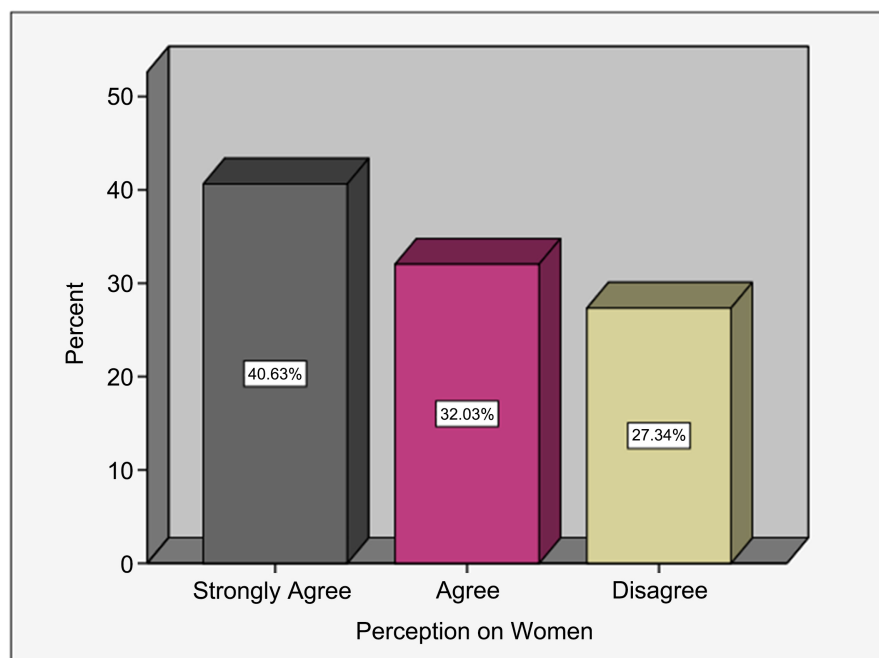
success as opposed to men having confidence in female conflict management. According to one participant from the male FGD;

*We fear these women because we can be a sell out in that they can share very critical information to our enemies just like in the historical story of Chemeli the Kalenjin girl and Luanda Magere where the girl shared very critical information of the strengths of Luanda leading to his murder. So from our for father, men have never trusted women when it comes to cross border relations. (FGD held in Chemeli 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022).*

#### 4.1.2. Perception on Women

To establish whether perception on women posed a challenge towards their contribution in cross border conflict in Nandi and Kisumu Counties, the results in **Figure 2** shows that 156 (40.63%) strongly agreed, 123 (32.03%) agreed while 105 (27.34%) disagreed. Analysis therefore indicated that majority of the respondents consider perception on women as a great hindrance towards women contribution to conflict management.

Perception on women was another challenge that was identified by the participants from various cross-border FGDs. The study found out that the majority of the men regard women as weak and should not be given the opportunity to steer conflict management strategies in the conflict-stricken border between Nandi and Kisumu Counties. Additionally, natural attitudes have been developed in women themselves as inferior to men and this hinders them from active participation in conflict management. It, therefore, implies that the men who are seen as superior are left to make sole decisions that affect everyone in the community without the input of the women.



**Figure 2.** Perception on women; Source: Field data, 2022.



The communities along and across the border are characterized by different cultures. The culture was identified by the participants as a challenge to conflict management. According to Kalenjin culture, women are not allowed to attend and also talk in meetings organized by men. This was confirmed by participants in an FGD in Nyangore. However, from a key informant as the local administrator, women have been incorporated in the conflict management efforts where some are even committee members. He pointed out at culture as a hindrance to women's participation however much there are laws that require involvement of women in conflict management using the a third representative policy.

It further emerged from the FGDs that according to Women culture, women are in the same category with children hence in many instances, they were not given a chance to head the conflict management strategies. Surprisingly youths who have been circumcised are regarded to be more superior to women and if the community had to choose between a woman and a youth, culturally they will chose a youth.

This study lends credence to the claims of [Gizelis \(2011\)](#), who posited that the degree to which women feel their roles in the community and their families are recognised may influence their comfort level in taking part in peace-building initiatives. The study by [Justino, Mitchell, and Müller \(2018\)](#) found that while many women participated in peace-building efforts in Afghanistan, Nepal, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, their perceptions of the significance and impact of their efforts varied greatly from those of men. No Afghan women came out to name themselves or their organisations as key leaders in the society who had helped bring about peace. Both women and men in the focus groups downplayed the importance of women's participation in peace-making. This was represented in a remark made during one of the focus groups with the young women:

*“... Men can have an impact on major issues, but women can't. These debates are dominated by male voices ...”*

However, when asked, female participants described efforts they were making to foster peaceful societies and reduce the occurrence of violence. However, women in Sierra Leone were also modest about the role they played in fostering peace. However, it was generally agreed, especially in the community with NGO presence, that the availability of safe spaces for women to come together and support one another had increased their understanding of issues like gender-based violence, women's rights, and girls' education ([Justino, Mitchell, & Müller, 2018](#)). There were positive results as a result of this as well, including the development of cooperative methods of making a living and the advancement of women to positions of leadership within their communities. Women's participation in peace building was seen as particularly crucial in Liberia due to the country's unique circumstances. In terms of home and community welfare, it was viewed as beneficial. The rebuilding of local infrastructure and educational facilities are two examples of these constructive endeavours. In addition, all respondents in their survey stressed the significance of women's groups in resolving

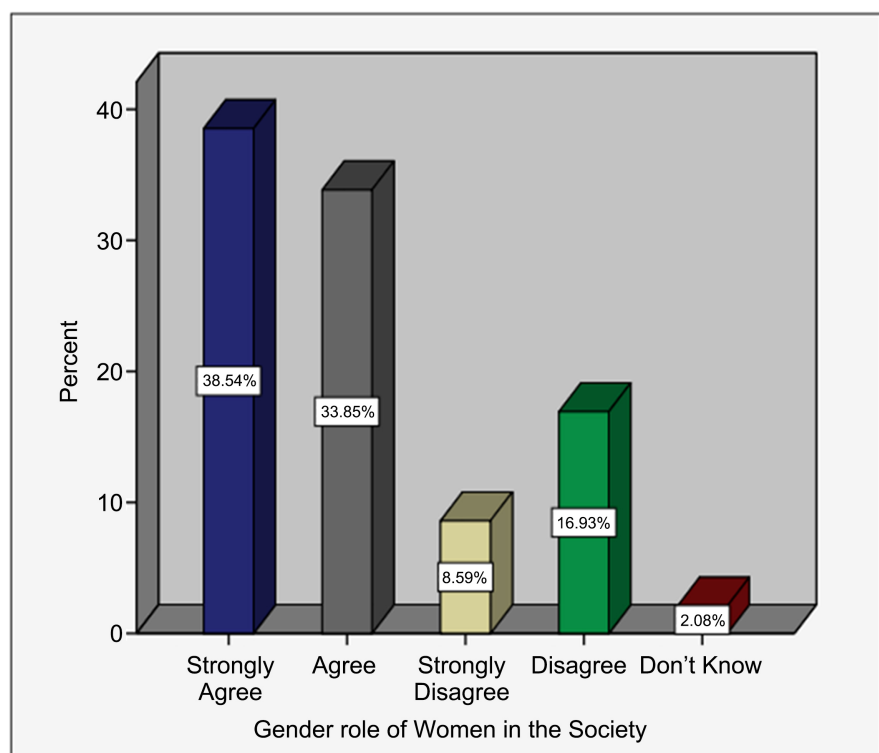
disagreements and preventing additional violence on a local and national level (Justino, Mitchell, & Müller, 2018).

#### 4.1.3. Gender Role of Women in the Society

The study sought to establish whether gender role of women in the society obstructs women towards cross-border conflict management. The results in **Figure 3** indicated that household heads strongly agreed at 148 (38.54%), 130 (33.85%) agreed, 65 (16.93%) disagree 33 (8.59%) strongly disagreed while 8 (2.08%) did not know that it is an obstruction for women's contribution towards conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu Counties.

The gender role of women in society was also another challenge that was identified by the participants of the study. According to African culture, both men and women have different roles that they practice in society. However, these roles at times are a social construct by the society themselves based on the diversity in the culture and interests. The study learnt that the two dominant ethnic groups across the border had a diverse culture that prescribed the type of roles performed by a different gender. The roles, therefore, are designed in a way that they either permit or prohibit certain actions by a given gender.

According to a key informant who was a member of the Luo council of elders in Muhoroni Sub County in Kisumu County described a woman's role in society as that of a caretaker of the family in terms of children and the husband's well-being. The study established similarity between the Luo and the Kalenjin roles of a woman as being much of house help. However, there occurs some differences



**Figure 3.** Gender roles of women in society; Source: Field data, 2022.

for example in Kalenjin, women are also expected to take care of some livestock while in Luo the role of taking care of livestock remains a man's role.

In line with the roles, that pins the women as caretakers of the family make the women not in a position to participate actively for example in peace caravans, peace education activities, cultural exchange programs and cross-border development projects. This is because with the roles to the expectation of the society lies responsibilities. According to an FGD in Chemelil-Chemase border, women get so engaged in the family chores to the expense of participation in solution finding on factors that affect the community like conflict management and peacebuilding in the study area.

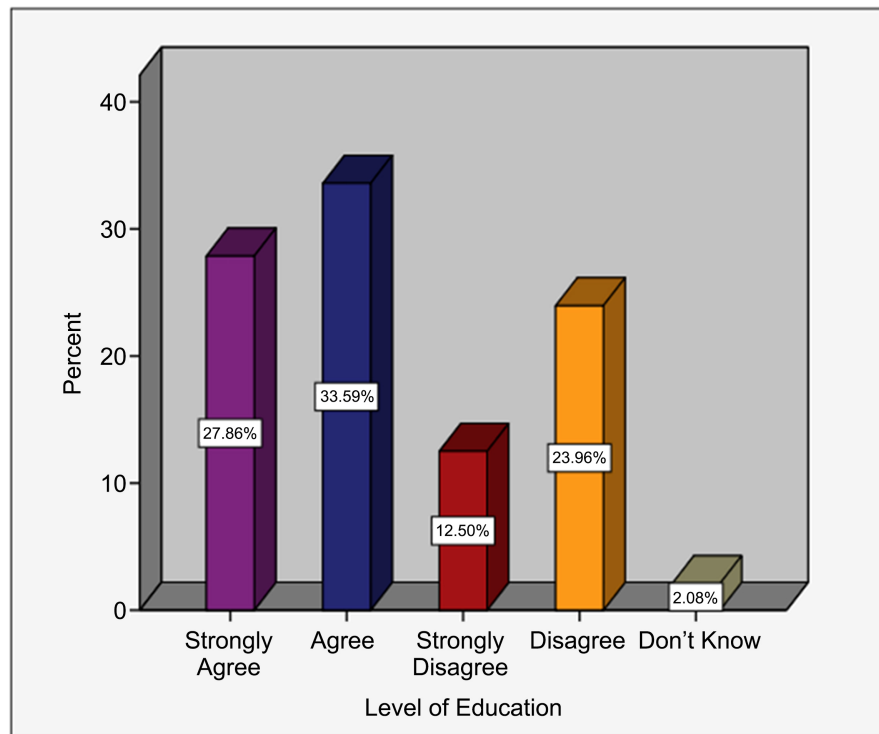
Equally, it was established that men might be also challenged on the grounds of the roles that they are entrusted with like Taking care of the large herds of livestock. This implies that there could be limited time in attending and participating in decision-making, implementation and general management of the conflicts that recur between Nandi and Kisumu.

The findings are in agreement with [Justino, Mitchell & Müller \(2018\)](#) who opined that across different cultures, the place of men and women varies greatly and hence this puts women in different positions than men hence creating inequalities. They give the example of Afghanistan where women created safe spaces to enable women and girls to meet and organize themselves on various issues affecting them. This was because formal systems of community engagement, such as *jirgas* (a traditional assembly of male leaders), are not open to women. These women-only spaces allow women to discuss and mobilize into peace and conflict resolution actions. Although the role of women in society is less restricted in the other countries that they studied, similar women's groups were created in the communities in Nepal, Sierra Leone and Liberia. In some of these areas, there were examples of women conducting peacebuilding activities individually. However, these activities were largely conducted by groups of women that organized collectively at the village level.

#### 4.1.4. Level of Education

The study sought to assess whether the level of education is an obstruction to women's contribution to cross-border conflict management. The results from household respondents show that 27.86% strongly agreed, 33.59% agreed, 12.5% strongly disagreed, 23.96% disagreed and 2.08% were not sure as presented in [Figure 4](#).

Education is regarded as a powerful tool for both social and economic development in a given community. Literacy levels of a given population need to be increased so they are empowered to reduce any possible risk like conflicts through better interventions. Contrary, high illiteracy levels imply that there exists increased vulnerability to social hazards like conflicts hence increased impacts on the populations in case they happen. The vulnerability can also reduce someone's ability to participate by being part of decision-making on issues that affect the community.



**Figure 4.** Level of education; Source: Field data, 2022.

According to participants in an FGD in Songhor, increased illiteracy levels reduces level of confidence and self-esteem in some people, therefore, making them shun away from taking a leading role in solving issues that affect the community. Additionally, according to the participants, members of the community have a tendency of assigning roles to only those they perceive as learned while those who are not may not be given a chance to take charge on issues like conflict management. The study hence analyzed that specific gender with high literacy levels have better chances of participating in cross-border gender-based activities than one with high illiteracy levels in conflict management.

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According to Justino, Mitchell, and Müller (2018), who agreed with the study's findings, a lack of education was cited as a significant impediment to women's participation in peace-building initiatives in Nepal. Their research showed that people of all ages, both sexes, generally held the view that women lacked the necessary expertise to take part in decision-making roles. On the other hand, women who had an active role in the civil war that raged in Nepal from 1996 to 2006 have claimed that they are aware of the peace process there. Most of the participants were members of peace-focused groups and organizations. This research found that low levels of education were used as an excuse to uphold discriminatory gender roles that keep women from participating in peace initiatives outside the home. Therefore, promoting peace and enhancing women's empowerment, awareness, and self-esteem require investments in education and training.

#### **4.2. Level of Actor Involvement in the Management of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Kisumu and Nandi Counties Kenya**

The study sought to establish the level of actor involvement in management of inter-ethnic conflicts between Kisumu and Nandi Counties. The household heads gave their opinion on the involvement of various actors including government agencies, Religious leaders, Civil Society organizations, and community members. The findings were as shown in **Figure 6**.

##### **4.2.1. Government Agencies**

The study sought to establish the level of government agencies involvement in inter-ethnic conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu counties. The results in **Figure 5** revealed that 244 (63.5%) of the household heads opined that they were very involved, 130 (33.9%) stated that they were involved to some extent while 10 (2.6%) opined that they were not involved.

These findings were supported by results from key informants who stated government agencies played a crucial role in the process of conflict management in the area. There are various stakeholders involved in the cross-border conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu Counties. These stakeholders range from security officers from the police, the local administration, and Peace committee members who also worked closely with the government among others. All these stakeholders have different roles that they play in line with their mandates to create a peaceful coexistence among the communities. The study learnt from various respondents that the stakeholders have made efforts towards conflict management but there is a need for acquired and improved personal skills for better management of the conflicts. According to one of the key informants as the Assistant County Commissioner in Tinderet Sub County in Nandi County, it is expected that the training would go a long way if it can also reach the

members of the community on better conflict resolution mechanisms or on alternatives for conflict management. The various stakeholders like the members of the peace committee would be act as ambassadors from the peace training on conflict management.

Additionally, there were several police officers stations including the RDU officers who played a very crucial role in helping to prevent the conflict mainly caused by cattle rustling. The RDU has worked closely with the regular police, chiefs, intelligence agencies and the local administrators in the office of the county commissioner to ensure that conflicts are prevented in the area. A rapid deployment unit is a unit within the National Police Service specially designated to respond to cross-border conflicts which include managing risk factors to conflicts across the border. The unit was first deployed in 2016 at the Songhor where the residents have experienced recurrent cases of cross-border conflicts and are described as very volatile by the residents of both communities across the border. The unit has the main mandate of protecting the lives and property of the of the communities living in both sides of the border.

The study conducted a Key informant interview with an officer in charge of the unit and the study confirmed various responses from other key informants, household interviews and from various focus group discussions in various locations across the Nandi-Kisumu border. From other interviews, respondents pointed out at the significant reduction of cross border conflicts since the deployment of the unit. It therefore means that the Rapid Deployment Unit (RDU) has created change that is very evident among the communities across the border. The Key informant pointed out the nature of their operations, which should be a very fast response in case of distress call of cattle rustling or an attack across the border.

Despite the positive change realized in the unit, the officer in charge identified challenges that they encounter in their daily operations. One of the challenges was none cooperation from other police service units where in case of any kind of distress call on cattle rustling, other units dismiss those who have raised the alarm and direct them to the RDU where they have earned a name of “*watu-wang’ombe*”. It therefore means that by the time the RDU gets the information and reach the location that has been affected then it will be late. He added that there are various police stations within the radius of coverage but because of the good work of the RDU then you find that many affected residents will walk all the way to the camp to report any incidences while passing many police stations because they believe that the unit is the only help to the cross border concerns.

Due to the vast nature of the area covered during operations of the unit and the unit is just located at one point between the two vast Counties, many times the response is delayed. The respondent added that when there is a delayed response the implication is that there is likely increased loss of lives and destruction of property. There occur again accusations of intended delay to respond where many do not understand the vastness of the area to be covered coupled

with other factors like the bad weather conditions and general lack of access to some places like Potopoto area where certain farms are not easy to reach.

Another challenge that was pointed out as a contributing factor that may reduce the efficient response is political interference. Politicians will always want to defend their communities even when they know that they are on the wrong side. The study learnt that whenever there is an occurrence of cattle rustling or just cattle theft and the unit responds and manages to arrest and recover the livestock then there are normally accusations of politicians of harassment on their communities by the unit.

Despite the challenges, majority of the respondents appreciate the work that has been done by the RDU based on the reduced cases of conflicts across the border and also reduced tension among the study population in the Nandi-Kisumu Counties. It is based on this positive change that the respondents identified opportunities based on the possibility of increasing the number of RDU camps in other volatile places like Kibigori, Chemelil-Chemase, Kopere, Nyangore, Miwani among other places. According to many an FGD participant in Kopere;

*The RDU has really brought a lot of change since its deployment in this area. The number of attacks has gone down from our neighbours. The RDU are very swift and in many cases, they have always managed to a rest the bandits and thieves and also recover the stolen cattle. If at all the government wanted to reduce to the lowest limits the issues of conflict and bring sustainable peace, then they must increase the number of the RDU Camps in this area of the border (FGD held in Kopere, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022).*

The opportunity for sustainable peace, therefore, lies in increasing the number of RDU camps to cover the two Counties of Nandi and Kisumu so that the time taken to respond to any incidences that may trigger conflicts is reduced. It means that when the response time is reduced then the efficiency of the unit is increased.

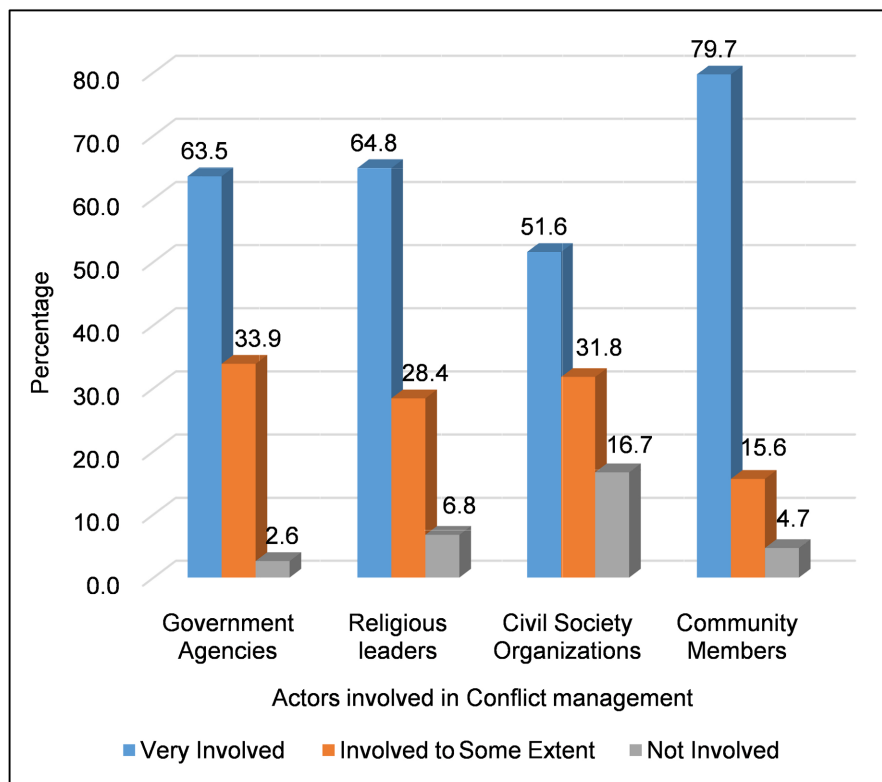
The findings were consistent with a study by Kioko (2017) in which he argued that the National Steering Committee on Peace-building and Conflict Management (NSC) was established by the Kenyan government in 2001 to coordinate conciliatory activities. The NSC brought together state and non-state players, such as major ministries, civil society organizations (such as the National Council of Churches in Kenya and the Peace and Development Network), and international organizations (Safer world and Mercy Corps). In response to the decentralization and delegation of conflict-mitigation tasks, the National Security Council (NSC) established Local Peace Committees (LPCs) at the community/village level to merge informal (traditional) and formal conflict-resolution processes (for example, the courts). At the ward level, chiefs and other state administrators serve as the sub-location (or location) peace and security committee's "eyes," while heads of LPCs make up the location peace and security com-

mittee. Kioko further argues that the system grows more bureaucratic as you move up the ranks. On the surface, the 47 counties in Kenya appear to share a common organizational framework. Consequently, it may be argued that the NSC and the Interior Ministry of the central government coordinate a very nebulous peace and security framework.

#### 4.2.2. Religious Leaders

The study sought to establish the level of religious leaders' involvement in inter-ethnic conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu counties. The results in **Figure 5** revealed that 64.8% of the household heads opined that they were very involved, 28.4% stated that they were involved to some extent while 6.8% opined that they were not involved in conflict management.

These were supported by a number of key informants who were interviewed during the study. One of the chiefs stated that the one place they normally run to for help is the church. Religious leaders were seen as a uniting factor in the community and this was key to the process of conflict management. One Catholic priest also revealed that in their preaching they always advocated for peace and would often encourage Christians to love one another just like Christ loved everyone. The priest however admitted that sometimes it would not be easy to stop the conflict entirely because theirs is only to preach but whatever people decide to do at the end of the day was beyond their control as a church. In one of the women's FGDs, it emerged that even some religious leaders were agents of



**Figure 5.** Level of Actor Involvement in Conflict Management; Source: Field Data, 2022.



incitements and conflicts thereby casting aspersions on the kind of influence these religious leaders had in terms of conflict management. One FGD participant stated that;

*Kuna pastor mmoja hapa kwetu mnandi aliwahioneka na namshale, kamayeyeni pastor nabadoalibebamshale, ni Amani ganianawezaleta?* (There is a pastor who once seen carrying an arrow during the conflicts, if he is a priest and he still carried an arrow, which peace can he bring here?) (FGD Participant in Tamu Location 15<sup>th</sup> January, 2022)

Additionally, a Key informant who was a member of the clergy in Tamu location confirmed that some of the stakeholders need training so that they do not lose on the course on peacebuilding. He admitted that even the clergy themselves and in many instances have lost it and drawn back to their ethnic cocoons. The clergy confirmed an incident where there was an attack and the attacked identified one of the church members among the attackers who she believed would help her but did not. When the attacked appealed for help the church member told her that church matters remained in the church.

*Don't call my name please, this is not a church, this is beyond our relationship in the church. Church matters remained in church* (Interview with a Clergy in Tamu Location, 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022)

Another FGD participant however indicated that the majority of the religious leaders had a positive influence on society and were helpful in times of distress. The religious leaders always gave hope to the people and it was also clear that when conflicts erupted, the church would be one place where people would turn as a safe haven. The role of religious leaders cannot be disregarded in the process of conflict resolution and management as underlined by Carney (2010) who noted that the process of Reconciliation in Rwanda led to Bishop John Rucyahana witnessed Hutu and Tutsi attending Church and worshipping, working and playing together. It is clear, he continues, that faiths may be utilized to create peace and reconciliation in conflict zones like the Nandi-Kisumu border, as seen by the widely read remarks of Church leaders like Desmond Tutu of South Africa and John Rucyahana of Rwanda.

A study by Juma & Simiyu (2019) further affirmed the role of religion in conflict management and peace building by indicating that the Catholic Church was actively involved in peace building activities through the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. One of the participants in the FGDs conducted in Nyakach Sub-county indicated that religious organizations were also involved in providing relief food and shelter to affected communities during ethnic clashes especially in Cherwa border area, the Church provided shelter to families whose houses were torched during the conflicts while preaching peace to the locals to coexist peacefully.

While religious leaders have a unique opportunity to promote peace in their communities, they also face a number of obstacles. One of these is the fact that ,

religious leaders often fail to recognize or take advantage of their position as a potential peace-building force in their own neighborhoods. Appleby argues that many religious leaders lack the strategic wherewithal to fully utilize their global actor potential. Moreover, [Chepkokrir \(2019\)](#) explains that peacebuilding efforts are more likely to succeed when they: have a global or transnational presence; constantly promote nonviolence as a means to resolve conflict; and maintain cordial connections among faiths as a means to a peaceful resolution. [Macaulay \(2013\)](#) identifies a lack of resources as a significant barrier to effective peacebuilding. This includes both financial and human resources, which have led to an emphasis on sacramental and pastoral activities at the expense of peacebuilding. Other barriers include a lack of training, more regional or national networking, better religious or ethical teaching, and bridges over the divide between grassroots peacebuilding and national or international success.

[Chepkokrir \(2019\)](#) argues that a lack of effective peacebuilding resources is another major hurdle. The United States Institute of Peace found that despite religious communities' dedication to peace, they lacked the knowledge and abilities necessary to implement well-defined strategies for achieving that goal. A viewpoint held by [Mwagiru \(2000\)](#), who observes that the church's position in conflict management lacks a wide theoretical vision to guide practice; actors lack technical knowledge of the terms used in conflict management and an appreciation of history, despite the fact that conflicts are influenced by their past. As a result, their peace-making activity is in Appleby's words inchoate, uncoordinated and in the need of appropriately qualified practitioners, additional study and testing and theoretical development. [Macaulay \(2013\)](#) argues that peacebuilders have difficulty worrying that they will not know how to respond properly, that they may anger lay members, and that they won't know what to say. Macaulay further claims that the lack of commitment by some parish Priests whose major goal is inwardly focused on sacramental and pastoral activities leaves little time for peacebuilding. In Macaulay's view, if internal church activities are prioritized above external ones, then there won't be much time for church leaders to be trained and involved in community development and peacebuilding.

#### 4.2.3. Civil Society Organizations

The study sought to establish the level of Civil Society Organization's involvement in inter-ethnic conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu counties. The results in [Figure 5](#) revealed that 51.6% of the household heads opined that they were very involved, 31.8% stated that they were involved to some extent while 16.7% opined that they were not involved in conflict management.

One of the key roles played by the civil society was to provide training for the local populations. The study established that there were organizations such as Shalom, which key in peace advocacy along the border areas and as such would provide training and workshops to help communities with conflict management skills. The call for conflict management training for stakeholders was also sug-

gested during a men's FGD in Kibigori where the majority of the participants acknowledged that the Peace committee members have tried but there was a need to train them through workshops organized by the government through NCIC or any other Non-Governmental organizations. The participants pointed out some individuals who many times lost the course of conflict management by being influenced by ethnicity. It also emerged from a women's FGD in Kibigori that so many stakeholders tend to work so hard before conflicts erupt but during conflicts, each and every individual tends to defend their sides. The participants mentioned one clergy who was identified during conflicts arming and participating in the wars where the participants allege that he even participated in killing an individual around the Nyangore location.

The findings were in agreement with [Watitu \(2014\)](#) whose research titled *Factors influencing the role of civil society on peacebuilding in Kenya: A case of Nairobi county* revealed that civil society has an important role in the process of peacebuilding and conflict management in Nairobi county. The findings from this study revealed that the government has an influence on peacebuilding due to the opportunity that these CSOs provide for conflict management in the county, in this regard, the government offers funds to these organizations. The researcher further revealed that training programmes run by the CSOs at the community level help reduce community conflict and recurrent of conflict to a very high extent. In this study also an overwhelming majority of the respondent agreed that CSOs have strengthened communities through networking and they have also helped shape government policy on peacebuilding and conflict management.

The findings further agreed with a study by [Dosch \(2012\)](#) who conducted a study in Cambodia on the Role of Civil Society Organizations in peacebuilding. He argued that the Peacebuilding programmes in Cambodia were mainly donor funded, further stating that at the core of the donor-funded peace-building in Cambodia stood the Civil Peace Service (CPS), which was founded in 1999 as an instrument of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development for advancing civil society-based peacebuilding and conflict prevention in post-conflict nations. Since 2007, the work of the CPS has been geared towards justice and reconciliation in Cambodia. CPS has in this regard been successful in its efforts to reconcile the victims of the Khmer Rouge and the perpetrators of atrocities committed against them. CPS has been key in coordinating peacebuilding and conflict management activities in Cambodia and has been successful in many respects.

Therefore, [Issifu \(2017\)](#) argues that the success of civil society organizations (CSOs) in conflict management could be attributed to the fact that CSOs have embedded neutrality and impartiality in their course to supporting peacebuilding activities. As a result, CSOs are much more free than governments to decide to which of the parties they will talk with. That is the situation with Ghana's civil society organizations. He further contends that civil society organizations in Ghana may be trusted because of their impartiality. The basic approach by the

CSOs in Northern Ghana, for example, was the creation of platforms, guided by the neutrality principle of active participation. They involved of all the stakeholders; primary, secondary and tertiary into the peacemaking process.

#### 4.2.4. Community Members

The study sought to establish the level of community members' involvement in inter-ethnic conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu counties. The results in **Figure 5** revealed that 306 (79.7%) of the household heads opined that they were very involved, 60 (15.6%) stated that they were involved to some extent while 18 (4.7%) opined that they were not involved in conflict management.

In support of the findings, it emerged that community members played a major role in the management of conflicts. It was them who initiated the peace process at the grassroots level. One of the chiefs stated that Peace community members who were drawn mainly from the community were the first to always give an alarm in the event that tensions were on the rise. There were several early warning signs that came from the community members that were key in informing local administrators of the impending danger. The community members were also more than willing to participate in Peacebuilding activities which was another great opportunity for conflict management within the study area.

One of the chiefs also stated that in as much as community members were involved in the conflict management activities, they were also greatly involved in causing it. During the study, the researcher met with one of the Peace Committee members from the Tinderet sub-county who tended to be talking the same language as other locals based on their stand on issues of the boundary ends, ownership of land and justification of the livestock "collection or picking" in reference to cattle theft. The members had a lot of defense on how then the land must be given back to those who have driven away. He commented, "Caesar must be given back to what belongs to him" that is the only way the conflicts will end between these two warring communities. He however did not blame the people but the government who he accused of instead of helping the people was busy fighting them while they knew the solution to the problems.

It is expected by the society that the community leaders and the peace committee members should play a great role in bringing peace through leadership hence they will always be included in peace committees. Due to such incidences, majority of the respondents believe that there is a need for workshops for all to have a better understanding of their roles in conflict management. Some of the training according to the majority of the respondents need to include mediation, reconciliation, peacebuilding, and gender mainstreaming in conflict management. The training will hence go a long way to every individual in the society through the trained stakeholders.

Similarly, to what [Ejere et al. \(2021\)](#) found in Laisamis Sub-county, data suggest that traditional leaders can spot potential disputes long before they become serious problems. This is due to the fact that the elders back the young men up 100% whenever they embark on a raid, and the women are always ready to bless

and celebrate the raiders after they return home with the loot. This indicates that the community's leaders are usually aware of what is going on and when the raids that cause disputes take place. In this regard, according to the findings of these researchers, the leadership of the numerous villages in the Laisamis Sub-county is ready and able to resolve the conflicts since they possess the necessary authority. According to the results of their research, community leaders bear the responsibility of ending ethnic conflicts through decision-making. Community leaders can assume the responsibility of ensuring that all decisions impacting the community are made with the goal of safeguarding life and respecting their neighbors through effective decision-making. Conflict-inciting decisions are reevaluated to rule out the possibility of future violent incidents, such as coordinated raids or acts of vengeance.

### 4.3. Opportunities That Emerge from Conflict Management Interventions by Various Actors

The study sought to establish the opportunities that emerged From Conflict Management Interventions by various Actors. The findings shown in **Table 2** revealed that human rights Protection was supported as an opportunity by 253 (65.9%) of the household heads who agreed. Reconciliation was supported as an opportunity by 300 (78.1%) of the household heads who agreed. Gender Mainstreaming was supported as an opportunity by 201 (52.3%) of the household heads who agreed; Peace Building Workshops was supported as an opportunity by 211 (54.9%) of the household heads who agreed. Media Campaigns was supported as an opportunity by 272 (70.8%) of the household heads who agreed; Peace Caravans was supported as an opportunity by 183 (47.7%) of the household heads who agreed and; Equity in service Provision was supported as an opportunity by 166 (43.2%) of the household heads who agreed with this assertions.

**Table 2.** Opportunities that emerge from conflict management interventions by various actors.

Opportunity	Agree		Disagree		Don't Know	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Human rights Protection	253	65.9	105	27.3	26	6.8
Reconciliation	300	78.1	67	17.4	17	4.4
Gender Mainstreaming	201	52.3	161	43	18	4.7
Peace Building Workshops	211	54.9	148	38.5	25	6.5
Media Campaigns	272	70.8	95	24.7	17	4.4
Peace Caravans	183	47.7	160	41.7	41	10.7
Equity in service Provision	166	43.2	152	39.6	66	17.2

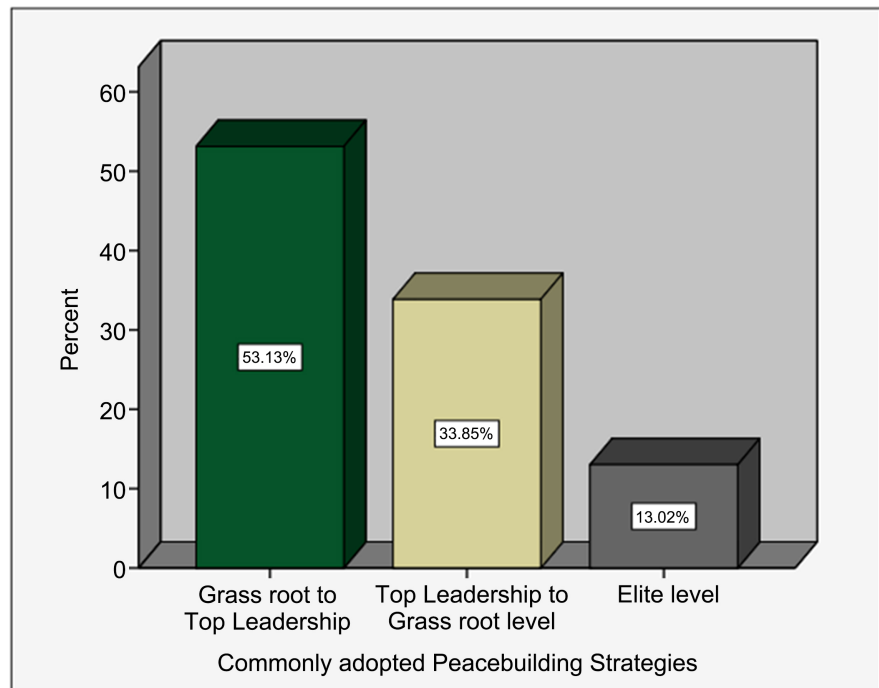
Source: Field Data, 2022.

#### 4.4. Commonly Adopted Peace building Strategies in Nandi and Kisumu Counties, Kenya

The study sought to establish the approaches that were commonly used in Peace building within the study area. The findings shown in **Figure 6** revealed that 196 (51.13%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the most commonly used strategy was the grassroots to top leadership approach, 130 (33.85%) were in favour of the top leadership to grassroots approach while 50 (13.02%) opined that Peacebuilding was mainly done at the elite level.

The findings from the household heads were in tandem with those from key informants who stated that Local ownership of the peace building and conflict resolution process need to be designed in a manner that the locals are to a greater extend involved from the decision making, planning and to implementation of the strategies. This can immensely contribute to the national peace building policies founded on the local knowledge capacity owned by the locals. The gender based activities towards cross border conflict management between Nandi and Kisumu Counties study found out that there exists local leadership towards conflict management.

The leadership have a representation from both gender and based on administrative boundaries. Some of the representatives are clan endorsed hence every clan is represented. An example of the formation of leadership is the “*nyumba-kumi*”. These *mlangokumi* memers are under the supervision of the local assistant chiefs and the chiefs. Additionally, most of the Peace committee members also originate from the same localities hence they work together in terms of information sharing that may reduce risk of conflict occurring in their localities.



**Figure 6.** Commonly adopted peace building strategies; Source Field Data, 2022.

According to an intelligence officer in Awasi, conflicts can be managed efficiently by investing in information sharing systems. He added that lack of or insufficient information increases risks of conflicts occurrence in a given location. It means that many times the security apparatus will always be responding to conflict emergencies instead of working on peacebuilding activities and related strategies. From a local administrator in Chemelil, the most reliable source of their information are the *nyumbakumi* and the head of the clans who have the mandate to investigate and relay the information about the existence of individuals in the community. The study additionally learnt that from the grass root, the information or any related early warning is relayed based on the existing security unit of command up to the top most for action.

Despite the clear chain of command, it emerged that the grass root formations encounter certain challenges that reduce their effectiveness. According to one of the *Nyumbakumi* leader in Tamu location in Muhoroni Sub-county, Kisumu County, some of the challenges that most of these grass root formations face are facilitation for faster and safe movement from one place to another on intelligence lead and normal operations in their jurisdictions. He added that the formation is purely voluntary while they also have families to feed and other duties to go about. When given a chance to choose between following an intelligence lead and going to an individual business to fend for the family, many will postpone voluntary work and go for individual business first.

The study, therefore, learnt that if there can exist elaborate support of the grassroots leadership on security matters then the risk to conflict occurrence may reduce largely. There exist an opportunity by the National government and interested parties to invest highly in the local security formation and encourage a people's driven cross border conflict management strategies. According to a local administrator in Tinderet Sub County, the chiefs and assistant chiefs are meant to work with other individuals who are not well facilitated so that has really affected their effectiveness. He suggested that grass root formation should also be given some reliable remuneration so that they remain committed to the work and help manage the conflicts. There is therefore an opportunity to reduce the possibility of conflicts occurrence at the border when the information is relayed at the right time for speedy response hence reducing risks of loss of lives and property.

The findings of the study were in agreement with Mac Ginty (2014) who indicated that the grassroots to top conflict management and peace building model is effective since it creates local ownership of the of the peace process. This strategy, which he dubs "Everyday Peace," entails the use of norms and practices by individuals and communities in highly divided societies to prevent or defuse conflict and unpleasant encounters within and among members of such communities. Every human culture makes use of these methods; therefore, we can safely say that they are ubiquitous. Peacebuilding, according to Mac Ginty, has taken a "technocratic turn," but he contends that this is not always a bad thing;



Possibilities for hyper-local projects, individual initiative, creativity, alternative approaches, and innovation persist. The everyday peace agenda is potentially subversive because it expands the concept of peace outside the realm of formal institutions like governments, NGOs, and international organizations. It takes place outside of the more formal contexts where restrictions like budget cycles, reporting methods, end dates, etc., play a role in shaping initiatives. Control and order are central to many conventional approaches to peacebuilding. The advocacy of “stabilization” as a means of peacebuilding is indicative of this trend. Everyday peace may have a link to resistance to the dominant narrative of liberal peacebuilding because it exists outside the realm of control and, therefore, beyond surveillance.

## **5. Conclusion**

The study concludes that women face a number of challenges that obstruct their involvement in conflict management as compared to their male counterparts. Some of these challenges included perception on women, gender roles that put women as the weaker sex and women’s level of education. It’s however important to note that the involvement of various actors including government agencies, CSOs, religious leaders and community members provides an opportunity towards sustainable conflict management through human rights protection and education, gender mainstreaming, reconciliation and peacebuilding activities and forums.

## **Recommendation**

The study recommends that women be considered more for leadership positions in grassroots peace initiatives. Additionally, actors and stakeholders including government agencies should give gender consideration a priority when it comes to dealing with various conflict management activities in the study area.

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## **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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