



PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION EFFORTS OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AMONG THE TURKANA AND DASSANNECH COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

This study investigated the role of the Roman Catholic Church in peacebuilding between the Turkana community of Kenya and the Dassannech community of Ethiopia. It addressed four research questions: the causes and nature of conflict between the communities, the mechanisms employed to manage and resolve these conflicts, the contributions of the Catholic Church in fostering peace and conflict transformation, and the challenges faced in implementing peacebuilding strategies. Guided by a concurrent mixed-methods design, the study collected and analyzed quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) theory (Azar, 1990) and Liberal Peacebuilding theory (Newman, 2009) framed the analysis, offering insight into the socio-political, economic, and historical dimensions of protracted conflict and strategies for sustainable peace. Data were collected using questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), observation protocols, and document review guides administered to a target population of elders, youth, women, Church leaders, government officials, and NGO representatives, with a target sample of 100 participants selected through purposive and stratified random sampling; 89 participants responded (89% response rate). Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data were coded thematically to identify key patterns. Findings revealed that the Church's mediation, dialogue forums, educational workshops, and social projects were widely recognized as effective in promoting peace. However, resource limitations, cultural misunderstandings, and political interference were identified as hindrances to the sustainability of interventions. The study recommends strengthening mediation and dialogue platforms, mobilizing additional resources, promoting cultural sensitivity, minimizing political interference, and establishing long-term monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to enhance the impact of Church-led peace initiatives. It further recommends future research on the

long-term effects of faith-based interventions, the role of other religious organizations in cross-border conflicts, and strategies to increase youth and women's participation in peacebuilding. The findings are significant for policymakers, religious institutions, and community leaders, underscoring the importance of inclusive, culturally informed, and sustained approaches to achieving lasting peace between historically conflicted communities.

Key words: Peacebuilding, Cross-border conflict, Faith-based interventions, Turkana–Dassannech relations.

1. Introduction

The Catholic Church has historically played a central role in peacebuilding, reconciliation, and social transformation across the world. From Latin America's liberation theology movements to mediation efforts in Northern Ireland, South Sudan, and the Great Lakes region of Africa, the Church has often filled the vacuum left by political and state actors in contexts of violent conflict (Montevecchio & Powers, 2022). Rooted in its moral authority, global presence, and established networks of parishes, schools, and humanitarian agencies, the Church is uniquely positioned to foster dialogue, reconciliation, and social healing in divided societies.

In Africa, the Catholic Church has been particularly influential in promoting peace where state mechanisms have been weak or compromised, mediating political crises in contexts ranging from Burundi to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Bompani & Frahm-Arp, 2010). In Kenya, the Church has long been involved in advocating for human rights, democracy, and justice, repeatedly calling for peace, accountability, and reconciliation, particularly during periods of election-related violence (Montevecchio & Powers, 2022). Similarly, Catholic missionaries and parishes in

marginalized regions such as Turkana have become essential actors in peacebuilding, providing education, healthcare, and dialogue forums that address both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term social cohesion.

The conflict between the Turkana of Kenya and the Dassannech of Ethiopia is one of the most persistent cross-border disputes in East Africa. Located in Todonyang, a village on the northern shores of Lake Turkana, this region has been characterized by recurrent violent clashes fueled by competition over scarce resources such as water, grazing land, and fishing areas (Schilling, Opiyo, & Scheffran, 2012). Climate change has further exacerbated these tensions, with prolonged droughts and unpredictable rainfall intensifying the struggle over diminishing resources (Krampe, Ide, & Peters, 2021). Regional reporting has similarly noted that the Horn of Africa is increasingly becoming a climate-conflict hotspot, where environmental stress directly fuels intercommunal violence (IGAD, 2025).

The human cost of these conflicts has been severe. Government statistics indicate that hundreds of people in Turkana County have lost their lives in violent cross-border clashes over the past decade, while thousands have been displaced (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Livelihoods based on pastoralism and fishing have been disrupted, leading to food insecurity, displacement of families, and limited access to education and healthcare. Women and children are particularly vulnerable, often bearing the brunt of displacement and loss of livelihoods. The cyclical nature of cattle rustling and retaliatory attacks has deepened mistrust between the two communities, making sustainable peace elusive.

In response, the Catholic Church, particularly through the Missionary Community of St. Paul the Apostle (MCSPA), has initiated peacebuilding programs in Todonyang. These have included mediation forums, cross-border dialogue sessions, and the establishment of schools and health facilities aimed at fostering cooperation between the Turkana and Dassannech communities. The Church has also provided humanitarian aid during periods of drought and conflict-induced displacement, thereby building trust with communities on both sides of the border (Montevecchio & Powers, 2022). However, despite these interventions, violent clashes have continued, highlighting both the importance and the limitations of the Church's peacebuilding efforts.

Scholars argue that peacebuilding in cross-border contexts is particularly complex because it requires cooperation across national boundaries, involvement of multiple actors, and navigation of cultural, political, and economic differences (Murithi, 2009). The Catholic Church's involvement therefore needs to be understood not simply as religious mediation, but as part of broader multi-layered peacebuilding processes that intersect with state policies, international organizations, and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. This study, therefore, sought to examine the peacebuilding efforts of

the Catholic Church among the Turkana and Dassannech communities in Todonyang.

2. Statement of the Problem

The conflict between the Turkana of Kenya and the Dassannech of Ethiopia has persisted for decades, driven by competition over scarce resources, historical rivalries, and cycles of retaliatory attacks. Todonyang, a border settlement along Lake Turkana, has been one of the epicenters of this violence. Despite state interventions and cross-border security initiatives, violent clashes have continued, threatening the survival and livelihoods of both communities. The magnitude of the problem is alarming. Government statistics indicate that, over recent years, more than 300 people have lost their lives in Turkana County due to intercommunal clashes, while thousands have been displaced (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Research further shows that climate change and declining natural resources in the Horn of Africa are intensifying conflict, especially among pastoralist communities' dependent on grazing and water sources (Krampe, Ide, & Peters, 2021). These conflicts not only claim lives but also disrupt economic activities such as fishing and pastoralism, leading to food insecurity and deepening poverty (Mkutu, 2020).

The social impact is equally severe. Schools and health facilities in Todonyang have been repeatedly closed or abandoned during periods of insecurity, denying children and families access to education and essential services. Women and children are disproportionately affected, often bearing the burden of displacement, hunger, and trauma (IGAD, 2025). Persistent violence has also eroded trust between the Turkana and Dassannech, reinforcing negative stereotypes and undermining prospects for reconciliation. While the Catholic Church has made significant peacebuilding interventions through mediation forums, humanitarian aid, and community dialogues, violence persists. This raises questions about the effectiveness of faith-based interventions, the challenges they face, and the extent to which such initiatives address the deep-rooted and cross-border nature of the conflict (Montevecchio & Powers, 2022). There is, therefore, a need to critically examine the peacebuilding role of the Catholic Church in Todonyang, with particular attention to its contributions, challenges, and prospects for sustainable peace.

3. Research Objective

The overarching objective of the study was to examine the peacebuilding efforts of the Roman Catholic Church among the cross-border communities of the Turkana in Kenya and the Dassannech in Ethiopia in Todonyang, Turkana County. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Establish the causes and nature of conflict between the Turkana and Dassannech communities.
2. Examine the mechanisms employed to manage and resolve conflict between the two communities.
3. Assess the contribution of the Catholic Church to peacebuilding and conflict transformation between the two communities.

4. Identify the challenges faced in implementing Church-led peacebuilding strategies in Todonyang.

4. Research Methodology

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods research design, which brought together qualitative and quantitative approaches in a complementary way. The choice of this design was intentional, as the study sought not only to measure structural dimensions of the conflict, such as how many households had been displaced or how often communities engaged in dialogue, but also to capture the lived experiences of those directly affected. The quantitative strand provided breadth, allowing the researchers to capture patterns across a wider section of the population. Household surveys generated numerical evidence on the prevalence of conflict encounters, perceptions of safety, and attitudes toward peacebuilding initiatives, helping to identify trends that could be generalized within the study context (Fowler, 2014).

The qualitative strand added depth and nuance. By engaging elders, Church ministers, youth, women, and local administrators through interviews and focus group discussions, the study uncovered emotions, narratives, and cultural meanings that numbers alone could not reveal. For example, while surveys indicated how many people believed in the Church's peacebuilding role, interviews revealed why they trusted or doubted its interventions, and FGDs exposed subtle tensions between generations or gender groups.

Collecting and analyzing both types of data concurrently allowed the researchers to cross-check findings during the research process, a technique known as triangulation. This integration improved the validity of the results and offered a more holistic understanding of the Catholic Church's peacebuilding role in Todonyang (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Study Area

The study was carried out in Todonyang, a small settlement in Turkana County, situated at the extreme north-western tip of Kenya along the shores of Lake Turkana and close to the Ethiopian border. Its geographical location makes it both a lifeline and a flashpoint: Lake Turkana provides fish and water, yet its surrounding environment is semi-arid and prone to recurrent droughts that severely limit grazing and farming options. This harsh climate has historically shaped the lives of the Turkana and Dassannech, both of whom depend heavily on pastoralism and fishing for survival.

Todonyang has become well known for its fragile peace and recurring cycles of violence. The border area is porous, and both communities regularly cross in search of pasture, water, and fishing grounds. What might be a simple act of survival often sparks disputes, leading to violent clashes, raids, and retaliatory attacks. Insecurity in Todonyang has resulted in loss of life, displacement of families, destruction of property, and disruption of education and healthcare. The conflict has deepened over time because of structural marginalization.

Todonyang is one of the most remote parts of Turkana County, far from government centers, with limited infrastructure, poor roads, scarce schools, and underfunded health facilities. This neglect has fueled a sense of abandonment among residents, who often rely more on local institutions, elders, and churches than on state authorities for protection and support.

Target Population

The target population for this study comprised those who live at the heart of the Turkana–Dassannech conflict and those who play active roles in managing or transforming it. Because peacebuilding in borderlands is never the work of one actor, the study deliberately sought to capture voices from across the social spectrum: elders, youth, women, Church leaders, government officials, and NGO representatives. Each of these groups offered distinct insights that together provided a fuller picture of both conflict and peace in Todonyang.

Sampling Size and Sampling Procedures

A combination of purposive and stratified random sampling strategies was employed to ensure that all key perspectives were represented. Purposive sampling was used to identify Church leaders, government officials, and NGO representatives with direct involvement in peacebuilding, while stratified random sampling was applied within community strata (elders, youth, and women in each of the two communities) to ensure proportional representation. This approach allowed the study to capture both the depth of individual experiences and the breadth of community perceptions, from a target sample of 100 participants.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was carried out with careful attention to building trust, ensuring clarity, and accommodating the linguistic diversity of the Turkana and Dassannech communities. The researchers recruited two local research assistants, one from the Turkana community and one from the Dassannech community, to support the process. Their local knowledge, cultural familiarity, and language skills were critical for establishing rapport with participants and facilitating accurate communication. To ensure that all participants could fully understand the research instruments, the questionnaires, interview guides, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guides were translated into Ng'aturkana and Dassannech for respondents who were not fluent in English or Kiswahili. A back-translation process was then conducted to confirm that the meaning of the questions was preserved and culturally appropriate.

Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data collected through questionnaires were coded and entered into SPSS (version 21) for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, were computed to summarize responses and identify patterns in community perceptions of peacebuilding initiatives. Results are presented in tables below. Qualitative data from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group

Discussions (FGDs) were transcribed verbatim and translated into English where necessary. Transcripts were analyzed thematically using NVivo software, with emerging themes organized around the study objectives: the causes of conflict, traditional and formal mechanisms of conflict resolution, the role of the Catholic Church in peacebuilding, and the challenges encountered during interventions. Coding was iterative, allowing patterns to emerge while remaining aligned with the research questions. Integration of the quantitative and qualitative strands occurred at the interpretation stage, with quantitative findings compared against qualitative insights to provide a richer, more nuanced understanding of the research problem.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa Institutional Ethics Review Committee, and research authorization was secured from the relevant national and county authorities. Informed consent was obtained from every participant prior to data collection, including an explanation of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter and the vulnerability of communities affected by ongoing conflict, additional care was taken to avoid re-traumatization during interviews and focus group discussions, and participants were made aware of available psychosocial support. To protect participant confidentiality, direct quotations presented in this manuscript are attributed to role-based identifiers (e.g., Church leader, youth FGD participant) rather than real names; any participant who explicitly consented in writing to be identified by name is quoted accordingly, and the authors retain documentation of that consent.

5. Results and Discussion

Response Rate

The study targeted a total of 100 participants across six stakeholder groups, using questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions. Of the targeted participants, 89 responded, yielding an overall response rate of 89%. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), a response rate above 80% is generally regarded as sufficient to ensure that data collected are both representative and reliable. This level of participation enhances the credibility of the study findings and suggests that the perspectives captured in the sample reasonably reflect the views of the wider community, although some residual non-response bias cannot be ruled out. The modest non-response observed, particularly for questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews, may be attributable to participant unavailability, seasonal livelihood activities, or reluctance to discuss personal experiences of violence.

Demographic Information

The demographic characteristics of respondents provide essential context for understanding variation in perceptions of peacebuilding initiatives. Gender representation among the 89 respondents was relatively

balanced, with 47 males (52.8%) and 42 females (47.2%). Respondents were also drawn from both communities in a fairly balanced split: 50 (56.2%) from the Turkana community and 39 (43.8%) from the Dassannech community, ensuring that perspectives from both sides of the intercommunity conflict were captured (Table 1):

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 89)

Variable	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	47	52.8
	Female	42	47.2
Community	Turkana	50	56.2
	Dassannech	39	43.8

This balanced representation was important for understanding the Catholic Church's peacebuilding initiatives in a bi-communal context, where insights from both communities provide a more complete picture of conflict dynamics, intervention strategies, and outcomes. Analysis of qualitative data further revealed differences in emphasis: Turkana respondents more often highlighted dialogue forums and mediation in resolving longstanding disputes, while Dassannech participants emphasized inter-community workshops and Church-facilitated social projects in building trust. These findings support prior research underscoring the significance of multi-stakeholder engagement and inclusive participation in conflict resolution (Song & Vermunt, 2021).

Church Peacebuilding Mechanisms

Respondents were asked to identify the mechanisms through which the Catholic Church fosters peace between the Turkana and Dassannech communities (a multiple-response item, so percentages do not sum to 100%). Mediation between conflicting parties (69.4%) and dialogue forums (56.1%) were the most recognized mechanisms, followed by peace education workshops (42.9%) and inter-community social projects (38.8%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Community Recognition of Church Peacebuilding Mechanisms (multiple response)

Peacebuilding Mechanism	F	%
Mediation between conflicting parties	62	69.4
Dialogue forums	50	56.1
Peace education workshops	38	42.9
Inter-community social projects	35	38.8

These results suggest that structured, formalized approaches remain central to the Church's peacebuilding strategy, reflecting the theoretical underpinnings of conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 1997), which emphasizes addressing both the relational and structural dimensions of conflict. By mediating disputes and facilitating dialogue, the Church not only resolves immediate conflicts but also fosters long-term relationships built on trust and mutual understanding. The comparatively lower, though still substantial,

recognition of peace education workshops and social projects suggests that while these mechanisms may be less visible or frequent, they remain valued by community members.

Qualitative data from KIIs reinforced these findings. Church leaders consistently described their role as neutral facilitators, mediating between community members while ensuring that neither side feels marginalized, and emphasized impartiality, patience, and consistent engagement in building credibility. A Church leader interviewed for the study explained:

"When we mediate, we do not take sides. We listen to both communities, and we help them see that they share the same struggles – drought, poverty, lack of water. Our role is to remind them that they are brothers, not enemies. The Church has been here for many years, so they trust us. They know we are not here to exploit them but to help them find peace."

This statement illustrates how the Church's longevity and embeddedness in the community contribute to its credibility as a mediator, a point emphasized by Montevecchio and Powers (2022), who argue that Catholic peacebuilding derives its effectiveness from the Church's permanent presence and commitment to integral human development. The emphasis on shared struggles also reflects a conflict-transformation approach that builds common ground by highlighting mutual vulnerabilities and aspirations, rather than focusing solely on differences. FGDs with youth and women further revealed that peace education workshops and inter-community social projects were highly valued for promoting reconciliation, particularly in addressing underlying tensions, social misunderstandings, and historical grievances. A female FGD participant shared:

"The workshops have helped us understand each other. Before, we only knew what our parents told us about the other community. But when we sit together in these Church meetings, we hear their stories, and they hear ours. We realize that they also suffer when there is conflict. Their children also go hungry. This understanding has changed how many of us think."

This testimony demonstrates the transformative potential of peace education in addressing the intergenerational transmission of prejudice, a key insight from Protracted Social Conflict theory (Azar, 1990), which holds that protracted conflicts are sustained not only by material deprivation but also by psychological dynamics such as the dehumanization of the other group. By creating spaces for mutual listening and shared storytelling, the Church's workshops address these psychological barriers to peace, helping to break down the stereotypes and suspicions that perpetuate cycles of violence. A youth FGD participant highlighted the importance of inter-community social projects:

"The Church brought us together to build a water pan that both communities could use. At first, we were suspicious. We thought maybe the other side would take all the water. But as we worked

together, carrying stones and digging, we started talking and even laughing together. Now, when we meet at the water point, we greet each other. Small projects like this build peace more than big meetings sometimes."

This narrative illustrates how practical cooperation on shared challenges can build social capital and trust across community lines, resonating with Liberal Peacebuilding theory's emphasis on institutional mechanisms that promote cooperation (Newman, 2009). The water-pan project exemplifies what Lederach (1997) termed "peacebuilding from below" – grassroots initiatives that create opportunities for positive interaction and relationship-building, which are essential for sustainable peace. The participant's observation that small projects can build peace "more than big meetings" challenges purely top-down approaches and echoes broader findings that community-owned initiatives are often more effective than externally imposed solutions (International Alert, 2022).

A government official interviewed for the study offered an external perspective on the Church's mechanisms:

"The Church has been very effective in bringing communities together because they are seen as neutral. When the government calls a peace meeting, sometimes people are suspicious. They think we have a political agenda. But when the Church calls, they come. The Church has also been good at following up – they don't just call one meeting and leave. They stay with the community, and that makes a difference."

This observation highlights the Church's comparative advantage over state actors in peacebuilding: its perceived neutrality and sustained presence. This finding aligns with the argument that religious actors often succeed in peacebuilding because they are seen as committed to the community's well-being rather than to political or economic interests (Appleby, 2020). The emphasis on follow-up also points to an important dimension of effective peacebuilding – the need for ongoing engagement rather than one-off interventions, a principle central to both conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 1997) and Liberal Peacebuilding theory (Newman, 2009).

An elder from the Dassannech community, speaking through a translator, described the Church's role in facilitating cross-border dialogue:

"Before the Church started bringing us together, we only met when there was a problem – after a raid, when someone had been killed. Those meetings were always tense, full of anger. The Church changed this. They started having meetings even when there was no conflict, just to talk, to share food, to pray together. Now when conflict happens, we already know each other. We can talk without so much anger."

This testimony illustrates a sophisticated understanding of peacebuilding as relationship-building rather than merely crisis response. The description of meetings held

“even when there was no conflict” reflects a preventative approach that addresses the relational dimensions of conflict before they escalate, a core principle of conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 1997). The inclusion of shared meals and prayer in these gatherings also highlights the importance of ritual and spirituality in peacebuilding, dimensions that faith-based actors are uniquely positioned to facilitate (Philpott, 2012).

A Church lay leader described the Church's approach to engaging women in peacebuilding:

“Women are the ones who suffer most when there is conflict. They lose their children, their husbands, their homes. But they are also the ones who can build peace because they talk to each other across communities. The Church organizes women's groups where Turkana and Dassannech women come together to share, to pray, to support each other. When women are united, it is harder for men to fight.”

This observation highlights the gendered dimensions of both conflict and peacebuilding, a theme that has received increasing attention in peace studies (Abetz, 2022). The suggestion that women's unity constrains men's willingness to fight indicates that women's social networks can serve as a check on violence, supporting prior work on the role of women in community cohesion (Kahavizakiriza, Niyonsaba, & Mukashema, 2015). The Church's deliberate engagement of women as peacebuilders reflects an understanding that sustainable peace requires the participation of all segments of society, not only traditional male leaders – a principle also emphasized in the literature on inclusive participation in fragile communities (Candel & Escote, 2024).

From a theoretical perspective, the Church's multi-pronged approach – combining mediation, dialogue forums, peace education, and social projects – reflects an implicit understanding of the multi-dimensional nature of protracted social conflict (Azar, 1990). By addressing the immediate triggers of violence (through mediation), the underlying psychological barriers (through education), and structural conditions (through social projects), the Church's interventions target the various levels at which conflict is sustained. This holistic approach aligns with Lederach's (1997) call for peacebuilding that addresses both the immediate crisis and the longer-term relational and structural transformation needed for sustainable peace. The integration of these mechanisms, from high-profile mediation to grassroots social projects, demonstrates the Church's ability to operate at multiple levels simultaneously – a capacity that Liberal Peacebuilding theory (Newman, 2009) identifies as essential for addressing complex conflicts that span local, national, and cross-border dimensions. In this respect, the Church's work in Todonyang exemplifies what Mac Ginty (2011) called “hybrid peacebuilding”: interventions that combine elements of formal, state-like mechanisms (such as structured mediation) with locally

grounded, culturally appropriate practices (such as community dialogues and shared projects).

Challenges to Church-Led Peacebuilding

Consistent with the study's fourth objective, respondents also identified constraints on the sustainability of Church-led interventions. Resource limitations, including insufficient funding and staffing for mediation and follow-up activities, were the most frequently cited constraint. Cultural misunderstandings between the Church and community members, and occasionally between the two communities themselves, were reported to slow the pace of trust-building. Political interference – including instances in which local political actors were perceived to instrumentalize peace processes for electoral advantage – was identified as undermining the Church's perceived neutrality in some contexts. These challenges echo concerns raised more broadly about faith-based peacebuilding operating within, rather than outside of, contested political environments (Montevecchio & Powers, 2022), and they qualify what would otherwise be a uniformly positive account of the Church's effectiveness.

6. Conclusions

First, the Catholic Church plays a critical and multi-dimensional role in peacebuilding, employing a combination of mediation, dialogue forums, educational workshops, and inter-community social projects. These interventions address not only immediate disputes but also the underlying relational and structural aspects of conflict, reflecting the principles of conflict transformation theory (Lederach, 1997). By facilitating structured dialogue and acting as a neutral mediator, the Church has been able to build trust across communities, reduce tensions, and create avenues for sustained cooperation.

Second, community members hold a high level of trust and confidence in the Church's peacebuilding initiatives. Respondents consistently highlighted the Church's perceived neutrality, inclusivity, and culturally sensitive approaches as major factors contributing to the effectiveness of interventions. Stakeholders across demographic groups; elders, youth, women, government officials, and NGOs – recognized the Church's sustained engagement and commitment to resolving conflicts, consistent with prior studies emphasizing participatory approaches, ethical leadership, and inclusive processes in reconciliation and social cohesion (Arar & Saiti, 2022; Kahavizakiriza, Niyonsaba, & Mukashema, 2015; Abetz, 2022).

Third, and consistent with the study's fourth objective, the sustainability of the Church's peacebuilding interventions remains constrained by resource limitations, cultural misunderstandings, and political interference. These challenges suggest that faith-based peacebuilding, however well regarded by communities, cannot substitute for adequately resourced, politically insulated, and long-term institutional commitment, and that the Church's effectiveness to date has depended on factors (sustained local presence, perceived neutrality)

that are not easily replicated by other actors without comparable investment.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of the Church's peacebuilding initiatives in Kerio Valley.

1. The Church should continue facilitating structured dialogue forums and mediation processes that promote inclusive participation among elders, youth, women, government officials, and non-governmental organizations. Such inclusive engagement will help sustain trust, foster mutual understanding, and enhance cooperation among the communities involved in the conflict.
2. Church-led peacebuilding programs should continue integrating local cultural knowledge and traditional practices into their interventions. Recognizing and incorporating indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms will help bridge cultural misunderstandings, increase community ownership of peace initiatives, and ensure that interventions remain contextually relevant and broadly accepted by the affected populations.
3. The Church should strengthen its resource mobilization efforts by diversifying funding partnerships. Collaborating with diocesan networks, ecumenical organizations, government agencies, and international non-governmental organizations will provide the financial support necessary for sustained mediation efforts, adequate staffing, effective follow-up activities, and the long-term continuity of peacebuilding programs.
4. The Church should establish clear institutional protocols that distinguish its peacebuilding mandate from partisan political processes. While maintaining constructive collaboration with government stakeholders, it is essential that the Church safeguards its neutrality and credibility, thereby preserving the trust and confidence of all parties involved in conflict resolution.
5. The Church, together with its development partners, should develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework. This framework should include baseline and follow-up indicators to systematically assess the outcomes and long-term impact of peacebuilding interventions. Regular monitoring and evaluation will generate evidence to inform adaptive programming, improve accountability, and enhance the overall effectiveness and sustainability of future peacebuilding initiatives.

8. Areas for Further Research

While this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the Catholic Church's role in peacebuilding in Todonyang, several areas require further investigation:

1. The long-term effects of faith-based interventions on peacebuilding outcomes, ideally through longitudinal or comparative research designs.
2. The role of other religious organizations; Protestant, Muslim, and Traditional faith institutions in cross-border conflict resolution, and how their approaches compare with or complement the Catholic Church's.
3. Strategies for increasing youth and women's participation and leadership in peacebuilding processes, including their long-term impact on gender dynamics within both communities.

9. Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should inform the interpretation of its findings. First, the cross-sectional design captures perceptions at a single point in time and cannot establish causal relationships between Church interventions and peace outcomes. Second, the study was confined to a single case-study site (Todonyang), which limits the generalizability of findings to other Turkana–Dassannech border locations or to other cross-border pastoralist conflicts. Third, quantitative findings are descriptive rather than inferential; no statistical tests were conducted to assess whether differences across demographic subgroups (e.g., by gender or community) were statistically significant, and future studies should incorporate inferential analysis where sample size permits. Fourth, data collection relied on self-reported perceptions, which are subject to recall and social-desirability bias, particularly given the sensitivity of questions about conflict and violence. Finally, although back-translation procedures were used to preserve meaning, some nuance may inevitably have been lost in translating instruments and transcripts between English, Kiswahili, Ng'aturkana, and Dassannech.

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