TRUTH TELLING AND CULTURAL DYNAMICS AMONG MALE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE:

The Case of Mt. Elgon, Kenya

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<td>ACP</td>
<td>Ardoyne Commemoration Project.</td>
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<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
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<td>AfriCOG</td>
<td>Africa Centre for Open Governance</td>
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<td>AFRC</td>
<td>Armed Forces Ruling Council</td>
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<td>CDF</td>
<td>Civil Defence Forces</td>
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<td>CIPV</td>
<td>Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violation</td>
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<td>CL</td>
<td>Community Leaders</td>
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<td>CJPC</td>
<td>Catholic Justice and Peace Commission</td>
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<td>CONADEP</td>
<td>National Commission on the Disappeared</td>
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<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOMOG</td>
<td>Monitoring Observer Group of the Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<td>HRD</td>
<td>Human Rights Defenders</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Rights Violation</td>
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<td>HRW</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>ICTJ</td>
<td>International Centre for Transitional Justice</td>
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<td>ICTY</td>
<td>The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance</td>
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<td>KHRC</td>
<td>Kenya Human Rights Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>MVV</td>
<td>Male Victims of Violence</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>SALWs</td>
<td>Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
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<td>SLDF</td>
<td>Sabaot Land Defence Force</td>
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<td>TJRC</td>
<td>Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<td>TRC</td>
<td>Truth and Reconciliation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>RUF</td>
<td>Revolutionary United Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTO</td>
<td>Truth Telling Officers (those who worked with the TJRC)</td>
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<td>UNHCHR</td>
<td>United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
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INTRODUCTION

ABSTRACT

Key words: Key words
Male victims, Male victimization, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, Truth telling

Getting male victims of violence to tell their stories of violation in a truth telling process can be a daunting task. This process is often clouded by the gendered perceptions of the characterization of violence, cultural expectations on the male resilience and lack of a clear methodology of accessing and encouraging the male victims of violence (MVV) to participate in the process. This study examines the methodology, strategy and social-cultural implications that played into the truth telling process in Mt. Elgon, Kenya. In 2008, following the post-election violence over disputed elections that left more than 1500 people dead, the Kenyan Government established the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC). The TJRC was instituted with the mandate to investigate acts of gross human rights violations and other historical injustices in Kenya committed between 12th December 1963 and 28th February 2008. In its many rounds of public hearings in different parts of the country, it was evident that the TJRC was confronted with the difficult challenge of getting victims of violence, perpetrators turned-victims and non-victims to tell their stories. The fear, trauma and embarrassment from these humiliating experiences of violence made it difficult for the TJRC to draw out information from the victims, non-victims and perpetrators. This was even more difficult when it came to male victims, as in the case of Mt. Elgon region.

Competition for land and subsequent conflicts between different ethnic groups and clans that live in Mt. Elgon led to the formation of Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF), a militia group that committed gross human rights violations while purporting to defend the land. The Sabaot is among the three main ethnic groups in the region, the other two being Bukusu and Iteso. The SDLF took control of the Mt. Elgon region, instituted laws and committed violence against men and women. Men were particularly targeted, especially if suspected to be government informers or in opposition to the militia group. Some of the men were castrated while others maimed or killed.

It took a lot of efforts of the TJRC staff to get the male victims of violence (MVV) to come forward to tell their stories. This was mainly due to socio-cultural perceptions of indomitable role of men, stigma, personal disposition and other factors. This study therefore demonstrates that it is vital to have a clear methodological strategy, not only in accessing the MVV, but also in getting the society to recognize the social cultural vulnerabilities of the MVV in post-conflict reconstruction. The study asserts that in order to attain reconciliation and social healing, it is imperative to help the MVV to confront the past while engaging with other victims, non-victims and perpetrators. This common victimhood forms solidarity of justice and understanding geared towards restoration of broken relationships, reparations and social healing.
MT. ELGON: AN INTRODUCTION

Mt. Elgon is located in Bungoma County in western part of the Kenya and is largely inhabited by the Sabaot, Bukusu and Iteso communities. There are also other ethnic minorities coming from different parts of the country to farm in the fertile land along the slopes of the mountain.

**Figure 1: Map of Mt. Elgon**

![Map of Mt. Elgon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Elgon#/media/File:Kenya-relief-map-towns.jpg)

According to Simiyu (2011, p. vi) availability of small arms and light weapons (SALWs), intra and inter-communal rivalry, insecurity, uncertainty of land tenure, the geography and the structure of the local economy, and a declined presence of the state in the region were some of the pre-existing conditions which informed this conflict. The post-election violence of 2007-8 only helped to exacerbate a violent conflict in Mt. Elgon that had been going on for many years. There were many factors behind the conflict, however land distribution among different ethnic groups was one of the major causes. Since independence there have been tensions around allocation of land in Mt. Elgon region, and in early 1970s, the state began the process of resettlement of the squatters in Chepyuk settlement scheme, specifically intended for the Soy and Mosop clans of the Sabaot community.

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Sabaot Community is a sub-tribe of the Kalenjin which largely inhabits Kenya’s Rift Valley Region. It is composed of six sub ethnic groups (Forsberg, 2012) which include; the Kony, Bok, Rongomek, Sabiny/Sebei, Somek and the Chepkital/Mosop (Amugune, 2008). Broadly, they are categorized into two depending on the location of their stay. Thus, the Soy live/settled on the slopes of the mountain and the Mosop live in the highland region of the mountain (Medard, 2008). The Sabaot is the only Kalenjin sub-tribe that belongs to Bungoma County formerly part of the western province. The Sabaot community forms the lager population in Mt. Elgon. The Bukusu community is part of the larger Luhya community of western Kenya and it forms the second largest population in Mt. Elgon. Lastly, the Iteso community belongs to the Nilotic Cluster. Iteso is the minority community in Mt. Elgon although there is a larger population of Iteso community in neighboring Uganda.
The settlement was put in place in 1972 when 443 families from the Dorobo (also known as Mosop) community were asked to leave Mt. Elgon forest and settle in the allocated land. The Dorobo and Soy clans are part of the Sabaot ethnic group. Given that the government had a requirement that each settlement scheme required minimum 600 families, the then Soy chief added 157 Soy families to the 443 Dorobo families to bring the total to 600. Later, other ethnic groups like the Bukusu, Teso and Kikuyu settled into the scheme. The Dorobo or Mosop clan, insisted that they were not farmers and preferred going back to the forest. They later sold their allocated land and moved back to the forest.

However, in 1992/3 the government insisted that the Dorobos had to again leave the forest and go back to the settlement scheme, but they no longer had land to settle into given that they had earlier sold their land. In a rather arbitrary fashion, the government decided to divide the land equally into 5 acres per family, but the people resisted. The government later suggested that the land be divided into 2.5 acres per family. This was however not effected. The question of land distribution has been rather controversial. Out of 7,872 applicants for land allocation in June 2006, only 1,732 were considered to be genuine applicants by the district commissioner and government officials. This meant that more than 6000 applicants were left out, largely from the Sabaot community. The Sabaot Land Defense Force was thus formed to protect the land and ensure that the Sabaot maintained dominance of their land. The Sabaot have attempted to evict other communities from the settlement scheme. One major issue of contention has been the fact that local leaders awarded themselves large tracks of land. At the 2007 general elections conflict was heightened by politicians who incited their supporters against each other under the pretext of addressing contentions around land conflicts.

The conflict in Mt. Elgon is related to the land question which is an emotive issue in Kenya. A study carried out by the Conflict Sensitivity Consortium (2010, p. 94) notes that by 1957, there was already land related conflict among Mosop elders who were divided on where to be allocated land by the colonial administration. In 1920s and 30s, many Sabaots living in the Trans-Nzoia district were displaced by the British colonial government who appropriated their land for settler farmers. The Sabaot, in 1932 presented their grievances to the colonial government’s Kenya Land Commission which promised to investigate the land disputes, but this was never solved. In 1968 the recently independent Kenyan government wrongly addressed the Sabaot land disputes by reducing the available land at Chepkitale to an already growing population and designating parts of the land game reserve. Some of the inhabitants moved to settle in the forest reserve. At Chepyuk there were other displaced families. In 1971 the government came up with a resettlement program that would address displacements in the two locations. This was intended primarily for the Mosop (Ndorobo) and Soy clans of the dominant Sabaot community. According to Simiyu (2011, p. IV) from its inception, the settlement programme was derailed by claims and counterclaims of state favouritism and corruption by both clans, leading to a cycle of allocations, annulments and evictions. This led to disputes and conflicts. Tension thus arose “between the intended owners and the existing inhabitants” (Human Rights Watch, 2008b). This resettlement program was referred to as Chepyuk I.

The government then decided to evict everyone from the settlement schemes and in 1989 carried a second resettlement program known as Chepyuk II. This attempt failed and many people from Chepkitale attempted twice (1979 and 1988) to return to Chepkitale but were repulsed by the police since part of their land had now be designated as game reserve. In another dramatic twist, President Daniel Arap Moi, in 1993 annulled the entire Chepyuk settlement and initiated a new settlement scheme, Chepyuk III. However, by this time the population had increased and generation of families had lived in the same land. Given the controversies around the process, Chepyuk III was never implemented and the issue remained unresolved for a long time. In the wake of 2002 general elections that brought an end to the Kenya African National Union’s (KANU) 40 year rule, the issue of resettlement was rife again. Tension increased and immediately after 2002 general
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ditions the Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF) was formed and begun recruiting its militia. They mobilized young people to defend their land and resist any evictions. In 2005 during the constitutional referendum, the debate around land and resettlement was one of the major topics. In 2005 Chepyuk III was implemented but the process was however marred by irregularities. This situation engendered discontentment and exacerbated intra-communal tensions and conflicts, which took a more violent turn in 2006 after the finalization of the land allocation process. One of the outcomes of the process required some members of the Soy clan, who had already settled, to vacate their land and others to give up part of their land for subdivision and allocation to other families from the Mosop clan and a section of the Soy clan. This did not augur well with some members who are believed to be from the Soy clan. The SDLF became more lethal, attacking civilians and police, extorting money from civilians and committing rape and other human rights violations. It is the activities of this militia that were to greatly define the conflict in Mount Elgon (Simiyu, 2011, p. v).

While land allocation in the third phase of the resettlement programme was the immediate trigger to the conflict, a critical analysis of the conflict situation in Mt. Elgon also points to historical injustices related to colonial disinheritance of the Sabaot communal lands and to competition over scarce land resources in the post-colonial era, induced in part by unequitable distribution and access patterns but also demographics, as the root causes of intra and inter-community tensions and conflict escalation in Mount Elgon. Simiyu (2011, p. VI) also suggests that there were some pre-existing conditions that interacted with these root causes to configure a landscape of conflict in Mt. Elgon. Persistent politicization of the land question and local political dynamics only helped to exacerbate the situation inMt. Elgon making it one of the most violent conflicts in post-independent Kenya.

Despite the breaking out of violent conflict in Mt. Elgon in 2006, the response of the Government was largely insufficient and often uncoordinated. The SLDF continued to unleash terror on the communities in Mt. Elgon until the election period in December 2007. Given that 2007 was the year of elections and the government did not want to lose favour with the electorate, there was minimum action taken against the SLDF (Médecin San Frontier – MSF, 2008). The results of the 2007 general elections were disputed by the opposition party, Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), leading to violence that left deaths of over 1,500 people in the country. The SLDF seized the opportunity during the post-election violence of 2007-8 to become even more brutal. During this time, the SLDF killed maimed, raped and tortured hundreds of people. The militia also continued to harass people and beat them up, as well as extort money and confiscate property within targeted locations especially in Kopsiro and Cheptais (Simiyu, 2011, p. 28). Upon the end of the post-election violence and conclusion of the power sharing deal between the then incumbent President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga in February 2008, it was time for government to act.

In March 2008, the Kenya Army Operation Okoa Maisha (Swahili for ‘save life’) was launched in Mt. Elgon to stem the tide of violence that had overwhelmed the police. This led to the defeat of SLDF militia and restoration of calm and order in the region. Although the army achieved tremendous success in its war against the SLDF militia and killed its top commanders including the militia’s leader-Wycliffe Matakuei, it left behind traces of gross human rights violations and other injustices in Mt. Elgon (Human Rights Watch, 2008, p. 4; Simiyu, 2011; p. 31 & TJRC; 2013, p. 75). The atrocities that were committed by the army did not only undermine the confidence of the local residents in the army, but also exacerbated the feelings of the community as being persecuted by the state (Simiyu, 2011, pp. v-vi) which jeopardized the prospects for sustainable peace in the region. Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2008, p. 4) released a report accusing the army of killing and torturing people during its campaign to root out SLDF and restore peace, claims that have been since confirmed by the TJRC. In its report the TJRC (2013: 75) confirmed that indeed security agents committed serious human rights violations in Mt. Elgon. The social political tension still exists in Mt. Elgon and in February 2018 conflict erupted again when SLDF re-emerged with brutal force against the population leading the government to declare night to dawn curfew in certain locations.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted across two locations of Mt. Elgon, Cheptais and Kopsiro. The two locations were chosen because they were the epicenter of the crimes committed by the SLDF militias. The research was carried between July 2014 and March 2015, and again between September 2016 and May 2017 in Kopsiro, Cheptais, Kapsokwony, Sasur, Chwele and Bungoma.

The secondary data was collected through documentations availed from institutions, civil society groups, journals, newspapers and books. Primary data was put together from in-depth face to face interviews, focus group discussions and observational analysis contained in the researcher’s encounters and experiences in the field and with other relevant actors on the other.

The researchers had various interactive forums within and outside the Mt. Elgon region, particularly in Nairobi. Besides data collection was not restricted to the duration of physical field visits. Even during the analysis period, the researchers continued to seek clarification on certain issues and emerging data trickling from various people who had interest and stake in the study. This greatly improved the content and enriched to a greater extent the findings of this study.

A total of 72 respondents aged between 26 to 75 years were interviewed either personally or through telephone communication. Most of those interviewed had in one way or the other participated earlier in the truth telling processes by the TJRC. They included: different NGOs, religious institutions who offered psychosocial support programs and informal social-cultural activities to the victims, service providers who gave assistance to the victims of violence, community leaders and the general public.

This sampling helped to support the emerging theorizing and juxtaposition of data for comparison and development of a sequence that attempts a critical recovery of history in line with key components of participatory action research. The sequence of events unfolding since the violations and the truth telling processes were taken into consideration. This was an important strategy since it allowed data from respondents to offer an insight deemed to be atypical (negative case) in the context of what was being theorized, thereby challenging collective assumptions that lie on social constructions, such as ‘men are perpetrators and women are victims.’

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods, although essentially it was a participatory action research. However, as many other research methods, there are a number of distinct ‘schools’ within the participatory research method especially in their focus, terminology and political orientation (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). In its most straightforward understanding the participatory action research is defined by two key and intertwined elements; it is action research that is participatory and participatory research that unites action (Rahman, 1993, p. 75). Thus this approach was suitable to this research whose underlying purpose was not only the recovery of history, but also the enhancement of the value of shared truths and diffusion of generated knowledge from male victims of violence for meaning-making and social transformation in Mt. Elgon and beyond.
Furthermore, participatory action research is a socio-political approach and practice designated specifically to challenge the “means of knowledge production including the social power to determine what valid or useful knowledge is” (Rahman, 1993, p. 83). This tenet of participatory action research has propelled the current study into determining the validity of knowledge generated through interaction and direct interviews with male victims of violence (MVV) in Mt. Elgon.

Through the use of participatory action research, the current study attempted a critical analysis of the struggle for “knowledge-making” (Budd Hall, 2001, p. 176) through its concern with history-making” (Lundy & McGovern, 2006, p. 73) specifically among the MVV in Mt. Elgon. Participatory action research is designed to validate and disseminate popular, community-based knowledge in order to challenge both individual and collective marginalization and social structures of oppression. This aim is more relevant in societies which have been affected by armed conflict, like Mt. Elgon, and which are embarking on a process of post-conflict transition (Hayner, 2010).

The post-conflict transition in Mt. Elgon is exemplified by, among other initiatives, the truth telling process by the TJRC. While proponents of participatory action research tend to present a view that validation of popular knowledge as a largely unproblematic goal, this study is cautious on such a claim. Researchers in the current study are alive to the fact that such claim is contestable especially when dealing with deeply divided societies, especially those emerging from violent conflict and deep-seated divisions and grievances. There are very specific issues that can be raised for instance on ‘legitimization of memory.’ Such a context raises various valid questions for example on whose memories and about what needs to be legitimated and how (Lundy & McGovern, 2006, pp. 73-4).

This study is therefore, not in any way directed towards the legitimization of memory, but it is carefully tailored towards uncovering of the sufferings of MVV in Mt. Elgon. Furthermore, it attempted to understand the various measures and initiatives that different groups in Mt. Elgon employed to help male victims find their footing and move forward in a more coherent way even as they grappled with real issues of healing, forgiveness and reconciliation in a long and perilous journey towards lasting peace.

Analysis and presentation of data is laid in a discussion form but falling within themes in line with qualitative approaches and mixed research methods of participatory action design. The participatory action design allows for blending of various qualitative and mixed research strategies that can yield more desirable results towards engaging the affected community in finding long term solution. The study therefore applied some aspects of phenomenological approach which is a qualitative descriptive study design that has as its important tenet a description of the lived experiences of the respondents, especially in describing the details of violent experiences. Such a methodological approach was helpful in conducting in-depth interrogations and interviews on forms of violence, impact and experiences of the MVV.

The main purpose of the phenomenological design is to carry out a critical analysis of the specific cases of violence in Mt. Elgon, the sufferings that MVV have gone through and their experiences of the truth telling process by the TJRC. In the social sphere this translates into gathering deep information and perceptions through inductive, qualitative methods such as interviews and discussions (Lester, 1999). In accordance with the phenomenological requirements, this study did not entail any hypotheses or preconditions. The study
also selected a small sample size of 72 respondents, which according to the phenomenological requirements, allows the qualitative research to effectively test the strength of inferences, illustrate discrepancies, identify issues, and draw attention to different situations (Lester, 1999, p. 3).

In addition, particular effort was made throughout the research period to identify disconfirming (negative) cases (Miles & Huberman, 1994) in order to ensure data redundancy and saturation thus leading to high possible levels of empirical confidence. To do this, the researchers engaged in a repeated comparison of data to additional data, which was obtained from several participants in order to deliver a satisfactory mark of rigor. Data analysis was organized in themes that followed a set mind-map in tandem with emerging themes within the socio-cultural context of the MVV in Mt. Elgon. The themes are both collective and individual thus allowing for the critical analysis on how individual narratives gradually form part of the communal narrative on a largely patriarchal setting and how the social narratives of the people of Mt. Elgon find their outlet in individual life situations and realities.

The thematic analysis of data relied on systematic processes common to the grounded theory methodological approach. However, because of purposive sampling limitations, this research is not a purely based on grounded theory. The analysis process was achieved by operational techniques and research strategies that include the use of both field and personal journals and thematic log in the form of structured interview schedule during focus group discussions and individual interviews. Operational techniques such as negative case analysis, the constant comparison of data, member checking, and peer review were employed as well since these do not in any way contradict the mixed methods of the participatory action design through which this study has been conducted.

Conducting a study on experience of violence, trauma, truth telling, and reconciliation in a post-conflict setting requires fundamental ethical considerations and careful methodological design. Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR) ethically reviewed and authorized this research project. The research project was also ethically and methodologically reviewed and approved by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) which is the authority charged with the responsibility to authorize and extend permission for research. The researchers also took caution to acquire prior consent of the respondents as well as observing anonymity and confidentiality.
In many conflict situations both men and women are often tortured, killed and abused. In most cases, women and children tend to be the main victims of violence and subsequent consequences of conflict. However, armed conflict also brings danger of sexual violence for men and boys. Furthermore, sexual violence such as rape, sexual enslavement, castration, sexual humiliation, forced incest and forced rape against men and boys is a pervasive feature in armed conflicts worldwide. Besides, men are more likely than women to be killed or wounded as a result of fighting, becoming victims of forced recruitment, forced disappearance and extrajudicial killing (Bloomfield, Barnes & Huyse, 2003, p. 55; Rehn & Johnson Sirleaf, 2002, pp. 13-14).

Men have also become victims of different forms of violence, including sexual violence, during military operations against the civilian population but also in detention or in the context of forced conscription (Stern & Nystrand, 2006: 54-55; Goldstein, 2001: 251-300; Russell, 2007: 22). Thus, the experiences on the ground do not always correspond to the stereotypical gender roles and expectations imposed by society.

The case of Mt. Elgon reveals grave violations perpetrated against male victims and indeed the statements taken by the TJRC (2013) in Mt. Elgon profile many cases of men who suffered both in the hands of the SLDF and later became victims of the Kenya Defense Forces’ (KDF) infamous operation *okoa maisha*. This is a clear indicator that can help change the narrative from ‘men as perpetrators and women as victims’ into appreciation of the fact that during armed conflict men and women suffer differently and indeed uniquely. Getting male victims of violence to tell their stories of human rights violation ought to be conceptualized within the larger framework of truth telling in post conflict contexts.

According to International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (2003), confronting the past in a reconciliatory way calls for the mobilisation of a variety of techniques. Telling the truth is one of the most important norms, postulated by all moral systems and world religions. Scholars such as Brounéus (2007) and Byrne (2004) too posit that historical accounting via truth-telling is one of the most important steps in the reconciliation process.

The major purpose of truth telling is to enable people to retell their painful experiences, forgetting the past behind them coupled with all its struggles, so that they can lead a new way of life void of the past pain (TRC, 1998; p 351). However, risks for retraumatization and security threats as a result of truth telling have been demonstrated in recent empirical research (Brounéus 2007; Byrne 2004).

Truth telling is officially conducted through instituted truth commissions which are legally sanctioned and mandated to conduct truth seeking especially during the post-conflict reconstruction period. These commissions have gained global popularity. One measure for the institutionalization of TRCs at the international level is their official endorsement by international organizations, including leading human rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2009).
Legal institutions have played a central part in dealing with past atrocities in newly established democracies. Hayner (1994) argues that, besides criminal trials, truth commissions have become frequently used tool to investigate past human rights abuses. Throughout the world, truth commissions have been created under the assumption that getting people to understand the past somehow leads to reconciliation between those who were enemies under the ancient regime. The worldwide spread and the institutionalization of truth and reconciliation commissions indicate that undoubtedly they are here to stay as an indispensable and essential pillar for resolving conflicts (Borer, 2006; Bloomfield et al., 2003: 3).

By 2006, there were 41 truth commissions in various stages of operation, of which 23 were established only in the years between 1996 and 2006. By 2008, there were six additional truth commissions that were already in drafting stages (Colombia, Kenya, Afghanistan, Iraq, Côte d’Ivoire, and Nicaragua). Beyond their spread worldwide, truth commissions, and the truth-seeking principle they embody, have been institutionalized at the international level (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2007).

Nowhere is the endorsement of TRCs more obvious than at the United Nations (UN). In addition to making recommendations for truth commissions in specific cases, in 2003, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) commenced the process of developing a tool kit for establishing the rule of law. Truth telling strategies of transitional justice through official truth commissions were mainstreamed and the recommendations and guidelines for the truth commissions were developed by Priscilla Hayner and published in collaboration with the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and the European Commission (EC) in 2006 (UNHCHR, 2012).

The UN has also been actively involved in specific cases of truth commissions, including Sierra Leone (2002), East Timor (2002), Liberia (2004), Burundi (2005), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2005/6), and, more recently, in the initiation of truth seeking processes in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kenya. A second measure for internationalization of truth commissions is the institutionalization and professionalization of transitional justice as a policy area and a field of academic study (Ben-Josef Hirsch, 2009).

Truth commissions are hoped to provide a judicial balance for post-conflict societies. However, the assumed beneficial effects of truth telling processes have been questioned in the recent peace building literature. For example, in a comprehensive overview of research on the effects of transitional justice mechanisms, Thoms, Ron, and Paris (2008, p. 4) assert that there is insufficient evidence to support the proponents’ claims that truth telling processes can lead to reconciliation or some sort of psychological healing, nor is there strong evidence to support sceptics’ claims that truth telling undermines progress toward these goals. In the same vein, Mendeloff (2009, p. 595) claims that “the literature on transitional justice and post-conflict peace building has, surprisingly with very few exceptions, failed to ask whether truth telling has any salutary or harmful effects for the people involved.”

Hence, truth telling process can have both positive and negative impact on individuals and community. Truth telling can also create a positive atmosphere for reconciliation, memorialisation of the past and urgent claim for justice. However, there are cases where a truth telling process has led to more trauma and hence resentment from the affected persons. For example a research conducted in Rwanda in 2002 demonstrated that respondents who had experienced high levels of trauma were less likely to support the traditional mechanism.
of justice, *gacaca*, and less open to reconciliation (Pham et al, 2004). Another study conducted in South Africa examining victims’ responses to the TRC found out that the majority of victims were disappointment with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and many reported being stigmatized, abandoned, and threatened by their communities for participating in the TRC proceedings (Backer, 2007, p. 167).

So far, the claim that truth telling is catalytic is underdeveloped, both theoretically and empirically (Mendeloff, 2009). There is very little empirical knowledge of these processes, even from a therapeutic point of view. This has led some scholars into scepticism, for example Brouneus (2008, p. 58) argues that “the beneficial claims made in the literature of truth telling and truth seeking mechanisms on reconciliation and peace have been based on flawed assumptions and faith rather than on empirical evidence.” In one of the most cogent critiques of the field, Mendeloff (2004) argues that the beneficial claims made in the literature of truth telling and truth-seeking mechanisms on reconciliation and peace have been based on flawed assumptions and on faith rather than on empirical evidence. He argues that there is a necessity to restrain the enthusiasm for these mechanisms in the absence of empirical knowledge and stresses the urgent need of systematic research in the area.

Indeed, if one turns to recent findings within psychological research, the question arises whether or not there may be risks involved in truth-telling procedures (Brewin, 2001) since the common idea that truth telling is healing has not been systematically tested (Thoms, Ron, and Paris 2008). It is argued that the general causal mechanism through which truth telling is assumed to prevent renewed war is that it offers victims a sense of justice or psychological healing, which decreases any desire for vengeance and so increases the potential for sustainable peace (Brouneus, 2010, p. 412).

The opposite causal logic operates as well, implying that if truth telling is not applied, the benefits of a sense of justice and psychological healing will not be reaped and desires for vengeance will increase, leading to a heightened risk of war. The underlying assumption in much of the peacebuilding and transitional justice literature, as well as in political rhetoric, is that truth-telling is cathartic or healing and will thereby advance reconciliation (Moore, 2016; Waru, 2016; Opongo, 2016).

Truth telling can also be conducted by cultural institutions based on cultural practices that bring the community together to tell their stories of violence and create possibilities for forgiveness and reconciliation. Such cultural practices as such as *gacaca* process, a traditional mechanism that was used in post-genocide Rwanda to identify the perpetrators and victims of genocide, encourage them to tell their stories in order to allow the judges to issue a judgment based on the narrated truth. In northern Uganda, among the Acholi, there have been attempts to use *mato oput*, a social-cultural practice that brings together the perpetrator and victim to narrate their stories of violence and seek communal reconciliation through specific rituals.

Concerning truth telling and reconciliation at the societal and individual levels, several lines of reasoning can be discerned. While in general there’s a lack of empirical research, there are four studies on post-conflict truth telling processes at the societal and individual levels (Brouneus, 2010, p. 411) that are of particular relevance and significance to this study. First, an extensive survey conducted in Rwanda in 2002 demonstrated that respondents who had experienced high levels of trauma were less likely to support the gacaca process and less open to reconciliation (Pham, Weinstein, & Longman, 2004). Second, a survey conducted in South Africa
examining over four hundred victims’ responses to the TRC found that the majority of victims reported
disappointment with the TRC and many described being stigmatized, abandoned, and threatened by their
community as a result of participating in the proceedings (Backer 2007). Third, an epidemiological study
assessing psychological health in 134 survivors who had or had not given testimony in the South African TRC
indicated that testifying had no effect on mental health, either positive or negative (Kaminer et al. 2001).
While Kaminer et al.’s (2001) study had the same aim as the current study; they used a smaller, non-random
sample, which, as the authors point out, implies some limitations on the findings.

Biro et al.’s (2004: 201) survey in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina found that survivors of the war were
not particularly supportive of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in full,
which might have been expected “since the international community believes that trials are for the victims
and that they promote reconciliation.” Mendeloff (2009) spells out the causal logic of the assumed effects of
truth telling, thereby articulating the hypothesized links between individual and social healing (Brouneus,
2010, p. 411-2). Considering that the risk of relapse into war in the immediate post-conflict period is high
(Collier et al. 2003), increased knowledge is needed to determine when, where, and how a society and its
people have the capacity to bear the challenges of truth, justice, and reconciliation without breaking up again
(Thoms, Ron, and Paris 2008).

There are a number of potential benefits of truth telling, depending on the transparency and efficiency of the
process, the manner of accompaniment of the victims and implementation of the recommendations of the
commission.

First, acknowledgment of individual experiences afforded by truth telling can provide a sense of worth
and importance to the previously silenced survivors and victims. Truth telling attach a public worth and
significance to personal accounts and individual narratives of the victims, survivors, witnesses and even
perpetrators. Truth telling is therefore, a meaningful step in dismantling the past, addressing the problem of
silences and most often dominant state-biased history. It is a forum through which alternative narratives are
given a chance. Furthermore, truth telling can also be strongly felt leading to repentance and apology on the
part of the perpetrators (Stanley, 2002, p. 3).

Second, such acknowledgment, repentance, apology and eventual forgiveness and reconciliation are indeed
very important steps towards healing and sustainable peace. Some proponents of truth telling mechanisms
of transitional justice for instance Boobbyer (2000, p. 556) argue that the value of truth telling is that “it
humanizes the problem.” It humanizes the problem in the sense that it allows the state and the general public
to appreciate the sufferings that victims and survivors have gone through and as such enhance the resolve to
non-repetition of such violent situations.

Third, truth-telling can pave way for accountability through prosecutions of perpetrators of human rights
abuses and all forms of injustices. The end result of truth telling should not only entail guarantees of non-
repetition of the violations but also public acknowledgement of the facts and acceptance of responsibility,
apologies, as well as reparative measures such as compensation, rehabilitation, tracing of the lost, decent
burial for the deceased and restoration of the social needs of the victims and survivors, their families and the
community at large. Official declarations and judicial decisions, restoring the dignity, reputations, social and

Truth Telling and Cultural Dynamics among Male Victims of Violence: The Case of Mt. Elgon, Kenya
legal rights of victims and persons connected to them are indeed necessary. These measures are prerequisite for the process of healing and reconciliation (Parmentier et al., 2014, pp. 89-90).

**In addition**, as a post-conflict transitional justice process, truth telling is aimed at moving societies reeling in wounds and injuries caused by injustices and violations into healing and reconstruction. Truth telling has been eulogized by some scholars as one of the most effective approaches to “the post-conflict agenda” (Lundy & McGovern, 2008, p. 265). It is especially important because it can bring closure, healing, and may assist society in general to move forward by addressing the past together. According to Lundy and McGovern (2008, p. 270), “understanding this is the centrality of giving voice or enabling the victims to tell their story coupled with the practical issue of providing reparations for victims.”

**Furthermore**, it is aimed at breaking the culture of silence, revealing the injustices and violations, aiding the community towards constructive dialogue that heals and reconstructs. However experience elsewhere has indicated that it is not always true that truth telling brings about the desired social cohesion, in fact, in some instances truth telling can be the cause of further division, hatred, retraumatisation and even outright relapse into conflict. According to Lundy and McGovern, (2008, p. 270) in as far as truth telling is being lauded it suffers from clear dangers due to unpalatable trade-offs between truth and justice on the one hand and stability and pragmatic politics on the other. This therefore calls for very careful handling of the process of seeking the truth.

With regard to this current debate, it is evident that truth telling plays a pivotal role in post-conflict reconstruction, healing and reconciliation processes around the world. In the struggle to find a balance among truth, justice, and reconciliation, it is hoped that truth commissions may provide a judicial middle way, and they have become a fundamental part of peace building. This is especially true since truth telling has the potential to serve a crucial function for peace building in creating a space for a collective conversation after which no one can say “I did not know” or deny the realities of what took place (Villa-Vicencio, 2007, p. ). Truth commissions may also be vital for counteracting the “culture of silence” that can spread in the wake of atrocities among the community of perpetrators and the rhetoric of the bureaucrat that “I was only carrying out my duty or effecting an order.”

**Truth Telling and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Men in Kenya’s Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Process**

The Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) collected 42,465 statements and 1,828 memoranda from individuals, different groups and communities across the whole country, hence making it the truth commission with the highest number of recorded statements and memoranda in the world. The TJRC had structured methodologies of collecting information in four phases, namely: statement-taking, research and investigations, hearings and report writing (TJRC, 2013, p. viii). Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were identified by the Commission as a special category. The TJRC Act identified SGBV as acts associated with ‘rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilization, forced marriage,
and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict.” The Rome Statutes that guide International Criminal Court (ICC) in its definition of SGBV includes mutilation of sexual organs, that is ‘permanent disfigurement or permanently disabling or removing a sexual organ or appendage under circumstances that are not medically justified’ (Rome Statute, 1998, p. 4).

The TJRC recruited individuals with experience in handling SGBV cases and gave them a special training. The training was meant to ensure that SGBV victims and witnesses “were treated with dignity, utmost sensitivity and respect” (Vol. 2A, 2013, p. 712-713). The TJRC underscored that: “Sexual and gender based violence is a crime that intimately impacts the victim both physically and psychologically. It uses the victim’s own sexual anatomy to dominate, suppress and control” (Vol. 2A, 2013, p. 707). The commission: offered psychosocial services to affected individuals through counseling and health-care support; encouraged the observance of cultural sensitivity; ensured that victims of SGBV were interviewed by persons of the same sex; insisted on being attentive to victims’ emotional behavior and response; underlined that “because of the nature of the violation, victims/victims may withhold information for a number of reasons, including because of fear, shame or embarrassment” (TJRC Vol. 2A, 2013, p. 712-713).

The TJRC offered to interview SGBV women victims in private in order to encourage them to come forward. However, there were no similar arrangements for male victims. Perhaps the assumption could have been that women were more vulnerable to SGBV violations than men. However, the Commission noted that: “sexual and gender based violence against male victims is even more under-reported and under-investigated compared to sexual and gender based violence against women” (TJRC, 2013, Vol. 2A). The Commission received over 1,100 statements from adult victims of SGBV. Out of these 103 were given by men. However, combined statements and memoranda totaled to of 2,646 women and 346 men (KTJN, 2013). The Commission noted that:

“While some men actually testified about their ordeal with sodomy, many more women spoke about the sexual and gender based violence that their sons or husbands went through, reinforcing the existing view that sexually violated men find it extremely stigmatising to report and talk about the violations” (TJRC, Vol. 2A, p. 714).

To a large extent men find it difficult to narrate their stories of sexual violations largely due to cultural perceptions on masculinity. In relation to conflict settings, masculinity can have two definitional categorizations: one is the social construction based on male power and dominance over those perceived to be weaker or enemies, whether male or female. In this case, masculinity is expressed through violent subjugation of the other, often through humiliating acts such as rape, sodomy, genital mutilation or murder. The second category is the social-cultural construction of male figure as strong, dominant, protective and able to endure pain and suffering. In conflict settings these two categories sometimes overlap particularly given that offense, self-defense and male endurance to hardship and pain all tend towards male dominance.

In many post-conflict truth telling processes masculinity emasculates male vulnerability to violence and draws less attention to assisting male victims of violence. In other words, socialized masculinity tends to camouflage male experiences of violence. This is mainly due to stigmatization of male experiences of sexual and gender-based violence that make them afraid of social stigma associated with diminishing their manhood or maleness.
In a similar line, the TJRC noted that:

There is shame in reporting the act as they (male victims of SGBV) are made to feel that they are somehow to blame for what happened to them. In a society that promotes the male norm as being macho, male victims feel and are made to feel emasculated by sexual violence. (TJRC Vol. 2A, 2013, p. 760).

As a result male victimization in SGBV tends to marginalize male narratives and subsequently does not put into place the necessary response to assist the victims.

According to Commission of Inquiry Into Post Election Violence (CIPEV) report, during the post election violence there were organized gangs in Nairobi, Naivasha and Nakuru. The report indicated that “there were claims that Mungiki was involved, with their members targeting men as opposed to women. This might explain why there were no reported cases of rape and defilement in Naivasha, but instead there were cases of men being targeted and being forcibly circumcised” (CIPEV, 2008, P.258). The TJRC report outline different forms of SGBV committed during the post-election violence in 2007/2008, which included:

- Mass rapes (rape of many women in a community at the same time);
- Gang rape (rape of women by more than two men at the same time);
- Sodomy;
- Mutilation of male and female genitals;
- Castration;
- Forced circumcision of both men and women;
- Sexual torture;
- And penetration of women's sexual organs by harmful objects (Vol. 2A, 2008, p. 713).

The TJRC equally noted that male residents in Mt. Elgon were targeted during the violent attacks between 2006-2008. Many male victims had their genitals mutilated or castrated. As a result these victims were too embarrassed to come out and give their narratives during the TJRC hearings. Majority of these victims faced victimization in the society and became categorized as persons who have ‘lost their manhood.’

Research Findings and Presentation of Data

This section explains the empirical results of the data analysis as outlined in the research design. The presentation, analysis and interpretation of the data is in line with the research objectives and the presentation is based on the inferential statistics used in the analysis of the data.

Nature and Impacts of Conflict and Violence on Male Victims In Mt. Elgon

As indicated in the research objective, this study sought to highlight the nature and impact of violence on MVV in Mt. Elgon. Figure 4.1 below, indicates that a majority, 88% (24 out of 27) of the male victims who were interviewed reported that they had experienced physical injuries inflicted on them by either the Sabaot Land Defense Force (SLDF) militia or the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) or both. This was mainly because these men were suspected accomplices of either sides of the conflict.

Figure 4.1 Nature and Impact of Violence on Male Victims of Mt. Elgon
The explanation of the MVV was as follows:

“It is not true that all men are perpetrators, in fact, some of us suffered more than anybody else. We suffered in the hands of the SLDF and in the hands of the soldiers during the operation.” (Male victim of violence from Kopsiro)

“Both the SDLF and the government were responsible for the castration of men. The SDLF would castrate men suspected to be associated with the ‘enemy’, in this case the KDF. On the other hand the KDF would castrate men suspected to be associated with the SDLF. It was indeed a sad scenario.” (Human rights activists in Bungoma).

“I was beaten by the army, I sustained serious injuries on the back and marks of the wounds are still visible as you can see.” (A male victim from Cheptais).

“I was beaten and my ear was chopped off by the SLDF, also some of my teeth were knocked off.” (Male victim aged 43 year from Sasur).

These narratives were summarized by a medical practitioner from the district hospital in one of the villages -Kapsokwong who observed that during the military operation, 90% of the victims were civilians with the majority having physical injuries such as chopped ears, legs, hands or body marks from being whipped, stabbed or tortured. The victims were also humiliated by being forced to carry out certain acts, such as: being undressed in public places; forced to play sex with their own daughters, mothers and grandmothers; being mutilated by other men, for example, cutting their ears, mouths, hands; forced to kill their close relatives, those killed were often buried without rituals, thus causing a lot of trauma.

When asked whether or not the male victims went to hospital, the medical practitioner said that generally they never did but on few occasions some did. The fear of going to hospital was mainly associated with the fact that most people had taken oaths not to narrate any incidences of physical violence or militia activities to anyone. There were threats from the militia against any betrayers. Hence, anyone going to hospital to treat injuries was likely to be under pressure to reveal the cause of injury. Besides, cultural beliefs that men were supposed to be strong and not to be seen as weak compelled some to use traditional herbs for treatment and did not therefore see the need to go to hospital. The fact that people had been forced by the militia to commit violent acts against their own relatives meant that it was difficult for many people to reveal the perpetrators of violence. The militia had also threatened NGOs offering humanitarian assistance to the people and as such most NGOs had left, leaving people with minimum options for external assistance.

In explaining this the violence experienced by the community, a human rights activist in Bungoma, asserted that:

The KDF operation dubbed ‘Okoa Maisha’ (save lives) started on 10th March 2008 and according to the United Nations records 4,892 men were arrested between 10th March -11th June 2008, and when the curfew was imposed, 1200 were arrested. The army conducted arbitrary arrests – some people were tortured, others castrated. So you will hear people refer to the castrated as ‘those who have lost their manhood.’ The army killed many people, 128 people disappeared and we do not know whether they were killed or still alive. The violence was really extreme on men. In fact most castrated men do not want to talk about it. No NGOs or media were allowed in the area during the military operations. There were so many cases of unreported human rights violations.
One of the community leaders stated that:

Immediately the military set foot on Mt. Elgon they completely took over the operations. And this is the time that violence against male victims was at its highest. Men were indiscriminately assaulted, whether perpetrators or not. Additionally, any organizations working within the community was expelled and nobody was allowed to do any kind of activity during this period.

Another participant at the female focus group discussion in Chwele exclaimed ‘You won’t believe this! The policemen who were supposed to protect the community are the ones who caused them the most suffering.” She added that one of the male victims they talked to told them that the reason why they were so violent was because they wanted to defend themselves. The woman further elaborated that men felt humiliated by the police especially given that some police men had sexual affairs with wives of the men who had escaped the violence. In some cases these women were married by the police and had children making it difficult for the returning men to claim back their wives.

There were several cases of arbitrary detention of MVV in Mt. Elgon. At least, 44% of male victims that were interviewed reported having been detained either by the police or the army. According to one human rights activist from Cheptais:

There were so many people who were detained in Mt. Elgon. When the operation came, most young men were arrested and detained, the soldiers were literally sweeping this place and indiscriminately arresting young men, torturing and detaining them, we still need answers for the conduct of the soldiers, I mean we cannot have these atrocities go unquestioned, if the TJRC failed to bear any fruit, there must be some mechanisms to bring the culprits to book.

Apart from physical injury, loss and destruction of property remained the most prevalent kind of injustice that most MVV experienced in Mt. Elgon. Families were disintegrated, people were displaced and family members separated. This led to serious social disharmony and according to one community leader from Cheptais “this was largely the cause of many social ills such as early pregnancies, early marriages, and high rate of school drop outs in Mt. Elgon region.” One male victim of violence from Kipsis who lost all his property narrated the ordeal by stating that:

They came and tied us up, they beat up my sons and threatened to kill all of us, they then asked for KES 30,000 ($300) which we gave and they drove away with my cattle. I thought that was over but few days later they came back again and we luckily managed to escape, they then torched our houses, my whole homestead was torched and until now I do not have a home.

Another male victim from Kiptii, one of the villages in Mt. Elgon, reported having lost all his property to the SLDF. He claimed that his case was politically motivated since he wanted to vie for the seat of a councillor then. The SLDF warned him never to vie and he was told that as a discipline for wanting to vie all his cattle could be taken away and he had to give KES 100,000 ($1000) as a fine:

Sure enough they came the following day and drove off all my cattle, they later torched my house and I had to run way. I was later arrested by the KDF, beaten and detained for some time and as a result of the torture I suffered a terrible injury and I have not healed to date.

A human rights activist in Bungoma observed that “Already between 2003-2005 there were clear signs that a major conflict could erupt. There were young people conducting military combat training. Families were forced to give their young men to the SDLF. If a parent refused to give away their son to the militia group they had to pay Sh. 50,000 ($500), if not someone in the family would be killed. Many school going children had to join.” He added that the SDLF imposed taxes on the people. One had to pay according to the financial
capacity. Failure to pay the taxes meant death. For example, one of the judges of the high court was told he had to pay Ksh 100,000 ($1000) a month. He had to flee the area. At a focus group discussion exclusively for men in Chwene, one of the community leaders confirmed that he had gone to school with some of the SDLF members and that he knew them very well. He added that the SDLF were promised many things by the politicians and their sponsors but later became shortchanged.

All the male victims interviewed reported to have lost some property during the conflict. Property ranged from land and farm produce to homes and household items. In addition, most men were forced to remit some money to SLDF as fines and as such cases of extortion specifically targeting men were quite rampant. Failure to contribute led to either destruction of property such as homesteads or taking away some things such as household items and livestock. For instance, one victim from Chepyuk reported having lost all his donkeys as well as agricultural produce.

Sexual and psychological violence were yet other forms of violence that were reported by the MVV. Out of 27 MVV that were interviewed, 2 of them reported having been castrated and 7 affirmed that they had been sexually assaulted for instance by insertion of hard objects into their anus or having part of their reproductive organs chopped off. On the other hand, only 3 out of 27 reported having suffered psychological torture or trauma. However, further interrogation indicated that this number could significantly increase if the victims were sensitized to understand manifestations of trauma or other psychological impacts. While they do not talk about it or positively identify it, it is evident that underlying their statements and narratives there are clear pointers at psychological effects. For instance one respondent from Chongeiyo, one of the villages in Mt. Elgon, argued that:

> When I recall how they raped my wife and how they killed my own son, I still feel much traumatized. Remembering that is always very painful to me, sometimes somebody could be speaking to me and think I am listening to them but my mind is very far away and people may think I am being bad that is not the case. I feel lost sometimes.

Of the few who pointed out that they were victims of psychological torture, the following statements were echoed by different male victims:

> “Losing all those members of my family is very painful, I was psychologically affected and I have gone for counselling twice, but I still feel I need to continue with counselling since it is still very hard for me.”

> “I did not know about the psychological impact that I had suffered until some people from Acton Aid came and offered some counselling to us. That is when I realized that the torture I had gone through during detention and the news about the death of my wife had serious psychological impact on me.

Findings from this study indicate that all the 27 MVV interviewed recorded having suffered more than one of the mentioned forms of violations. The following citation from one of them from Chesikaki village highlights series of violations that victims went through:

> I was beaten thoroughly by the SLDF, they accused me of being a traitor and warned me of dire consequences, they then drove my cattle away and destroyed my property. Unfortunately, I was later to fall into the hands of the KDF soldiers during the operation; I was again thoroughly beaten. I was later to be detained for three months without any cause neither was I charged for any crime. I suffered in different remands, during this time my wife ran away and as such I lost my family. I lost many things including my job as a security guard. Since I was released my life has never been the same again and the situation is really very hard for me.
This was not an isolated case since the narrative of violations by MVV portrayed a web of injustices that they have gone through. One victim from Chebuek village summed it up when he stated that: “We lost a lot, what we lost we cannot recover. Imagine losing a family and the loved ones; how are you going to recover your family back again? I do not think there is any way. It is not possible.”

Another major impact of the conflict was the loss of social trust within the society. There was a general lack of trust between the between the Soy and Mosop communities. A district medical officer observed that: “During the conflict there was so much suspicion around. People did not even trust the medical practitioners like me. This was mainly because whenever the militia would cut people’s ears or lips they would warn them not to seek any medical help. However, some went for medical care later, and Red Cross particularly was helpful in tracking those who needed help.” Both sides of the conflict were heavily armed.

Male victims seemed to share a common story: they were tortured, threatened and some of their colleagues killed. This led to traumatization and many still do not know how to react or respond to what happened to them. What was most frustrating as stated by one of the male victim respondents was that:

‘When the army arrived, the men knew they were going to be victims in one way or the other. It was just a matter of time. What frustrated them most is that they did not know how to stop it, prevent it or where to hide since the military arrested men indiscriminately. Not knowing what else to do, many of them surrendered despite the fact that they were innocent and were not part of the militia. The issue was made worse by the fact that the conflicts also arose due to the fact that these men came from different communities. So they were also attacking one another for different reasons and could not join forces to fight against their enemies.’

Most male victims especially those who formed the militia groups have been isolated from the communities. The reintegration for them has almost been impossible, even though they are back in the different communities physically. Most people do not trust them and there is a lot of fear of what they are capable of doing. Many of them, after their return from the forest, failed to accept their changed role in general societal structures. As one woman stated ‘While the men were away, women took over their male roles and in worst scenarios other men took over their households as husbands, especially the policemen and armed militia.’ One of the local chiefs from Cheptais asserted that “this conflict had a terrible impact on our society. In many cases, men were killed and left their wives in desperate situation without any economic support. In some cases both the father and mother had been killed and children left orphans with no help at all.” The chief added that this situation has affected the education of our children. There is simply no motivation to go to school. Besides, the conflict also led to separation of families. There is immense trauma in this population, and something needs to be done to help us get out of this trauma.

Unemployment was one key negative impact on the community. Men were faced with a new kind of unemployment uncertainty in a society where socio-economic structures had been destroyed during the conflict. So when the men returned they realized they were confronted with diverse challenges from different fronts: by their spouses who no longer considered them as providers of the family; their communities who did not accept them back psychologically, making finding any kind of job rather impossible; the loss of their homes which left them with no actual place to return to, among others.

On the question of justice to the victims, one of the respondents at a focus group discussion exclusively for men in Chwele, was emphatic that there is no justice in the whole process of prosecution of perpetrators. He observed that his cousin was arrested by the KDF while running away from the conflict. He was taken to be one of the SDLF members and was imprisoned (in 2016) for life with 22 others. He complained: “What kind
of justice is this? How can my cousin be imprisoned for life yet he was innocent. Now I am given one week to raise 100,000 shillings to bail him out, where will I get 100,000 shillings in one week?"

The above experiences of violence had serious psychological impact on the male victims of violence. A male victim from Cheptais reported that: “I still find it hard to accept that my son disappeared, sometimes I feel that it is just a long dream.” It was interesting to note that this particular respondent was speaking about this while laughing. The interpretation of such gestures can be variedly explained but the psychological effect cannot be entirely ruled out. This is especially true since at some point one respondent from Chepkaibe location behaved in a very strange way during an interview. He abandoned the interview only to come back later with another victim. The first assumption was that perhaps he was under some form of influence of either drugs or alcohol but further investigation into his conduct revealed that he actually begun acting in a strange way recently and that he used to be a very orderly man. This kind of behaviour could be attributed to post traumatic stress disorder.

At a women’s focus group discussion in Chwele, one of the participants affirmed that many of the community members are traumatised due to the horrific nature of the conflict. In narrating about one of the male victims, she stated that: “I still get nightmares despite receiving counselling. My uncle was butchered and thrown into the pit latrine. I had to go with the police and try to retrieve his body, in the process I was given his head to carry as they were retrieving other parts of his body. I have never forgotten this experience.” It is indeed evident that almost all victims were subjected to serious trauma and psychological torture.

Targeting Government Officials

Local chiefs were targeted by the SDLF because of their role in protecting the public. One of the chiefs from Chebuek village asserted that the militia had formed their own government extorting money from people and those who refused were killed. They were a mix of people, from young to middle age, and some older ones who were ‘Oloibons’, that is, spiritual leaders who would give protection charms to the militia and perform rituals to defeat the enemy. Women were mostly used as informers. About 20% of the SDLF were child soldiers. When the army intervened a number of people were arrested. “I recall”, said the chief, “that 7 arrested militia men were given life imprisonment.” More than 80% of those arrested were men. In Kaptoboi Chemondi villages, men disappeared into the forest. As a result, the percentage of women-led homes became very high.

The case of one victim who was formerly a local chief in one of the locations in Kopsiro can be used as a typical example to show the impact of the conflict and violence in Mt. Elgon. This particular case brings to light some of the most serious factors that need to be taken into consideration during the post-truth telling reconstruction efforts. In 2016 when the SLDF militia begun its atrocities the former chief was one of the chiefs in Kopsiro region in Mt. Elgon. Kopsiro is the region where violence started, given that Chepyuk settlement scheme, which is at the centre of the conflict, is located within this region. This region was under the jurisdiction of the former chief. The chief had two homes within the area and had several children all of whom were young of age and most were in their early years of education. He was a respected and well established man with relative wealth in terms of farms, livestock and other property and medium education.

During a lengthy interview the former chief would pose and take a deep breath; the most moving moment was when he wiped his tears with a hand towel as he recalled the pain and agony he had gone through. He said that all the problems were caused by land and politics. He went on to reveal that:

The SLDF targeted the local provincial administrators, they looked at us as the informers of government and as first obstacles that they had to get rid of in order to succeed in their mission, and therefore they set to finish us first. The militia systematically targeted assistant chiefs, and all other people who appeared to
be supportive of government. They came and killed the assistant chief, after which they were coming to kill me but I had been tipped by my security officers who helped me to sneak out of my home.

The members of the militia finally reached the first home of the chief and after looking for him and failed, they ran to the next home and did not find him there either. Realizing that it was taking a long time before accomplishing their mission they left only to come a few days later and simultaneously flattened the chief’s two homes. The members of the militia then killed the brother to the former chief and dumped him in the pit latrine in one of the destroyed homes; they destroyed crops and drove away all livestock. This marked the beginning of hard times for the chief who had dedicated all his life to serving the state. He became a victim of his career as a provincial administrator. He had to stay away in a rented house in one of the urban centres far away from Mt. Elgon region. The social fabric was broken, his family disintegrated, the dream of education for his children vanished, all his property went up in ashes and in his own words “the life that I had worked hard to build for 28 years all went down.” He further claims that “it was traumatizing and I was greatly affected psychologically.”

The former chief stated that at some point he could sneak and come over to assess the situation, but he lamented: “the people could not even talk to me since talking to me in itself could earn someone death. He therefore, suffered from serious stigma and he exclaimed that “I felt abandoned and I desired death.” The SLDF eventually sub divided his land. He ran out of cash and subsequently could not afford to pay rent. He could not access his salary. He later came to stay in one of the government houses within the location but with a lot of insecurity since his security had been long withdrawn. However, he was later evicted from the said house and his attempt to get government help failed. He went into an internally displaced camp and since the people still recognized him they chose him to be their chairperson but he was later to be accused of stealing food meant for the internally displaced persons (IDPs). He was arrested and detained with no charge, tortured and injured only to be released later. The bank loan he had was accumulating all this time since he could not repay. He severally petitioned government to come to his aid through the provincial administration hierarchy and other forums without any success. The former chief painfully recounts that “I felt and still feel that the government I served so hard abandoned me at the time I needed it the most.” The former chief spoke about many other painful stories, and concluded that:

The people of Mt. Elgon have gone through a lot of suffering; we have lost a lot, more than we can ever recover. The government abandoned us and the local politics threatened to swallow us. We have emerged but with severe wounds. Now is not really time to point accusing fingers since I think there is no much we can do but if there is anybody out there who can take up our cases and do something about them, it will be a good thing to us.

A local chief from Chepyuk had a fatal experience while subdividing land meant for the residences of Chepyuk settlement. His children were also killed. One of the NGO participants said that the general perception was that: “hawa chiefs ndio wamepea District Commissioner list na wamegawa mashamba wakatuwacha nje” (translated from Kiswahili as - it is the chiefs who are giving the list to the District Commissioner (DC) and they have divided the plots and left us out.”)

Another chief from Chepyuk narrated how he was constantly threatened by different individuals because through the help of his ten armed government soldiers, he managed to prevent the SDLF militia from advancing across to the neighbouring region. The chief stated that “at one point the militia beheaded someone near my compound. This was meant to scare me. At another point when I was at public rally a grenade was launched at us but it never exploded. A certain Besigye had organized the operation. He later told me that ‘my target was you and the politicians.’ He was however arrested in Uganda.” This chief added that it was only
when he had traveled for a few days that the militia managed to cross over to the other side and killed so many people. He said that “due to fear of an attack, I left my chief’s camp and hid myself in Kimilili for 6 months. Besides, two chiefs had already been killed while administering their duties”

**Truth Telling Among Male Victims Of Violence**

Transitional justice is aimed at delivering justice to victims of mass atrocities and assisting societies devastated by conflict to achieve sustainable peace and reconciliation. Peace and reconciliation demand comprehensive societal transformation that ought to embrace a broad notion of justice, addressing the root causes of conflict and the related violations of all rights. Transitional justice mechanisms offer the potential for incorporating economic, social and cultural rights (Justice, Law & Order Sector, 2013, p. 3). Increasingly policy makers, academics and practitioners are questioning the problematic nature of the “one size fits all” transitional justice processes that do not take into account the imperatives of the local contexts (Lundy & McGovern, 2008, p. 271).

The findings of this study indicate that almost all male victims of violence (MVV) respondents 96% (26 out of 27), felt that the TJRC did not prepare well the population for the truth-telling exercise and relied on a top-down approach that expects people to respond to the process simply because it is government-led. Lundy and McGovern (2008: 271) propose a community based approach to truth telling. In their understanding this is the one in which decision-making over the design, conduct, character, and outcomes of the truth telling process are organized in, with, and by members of the community in question. Apparently, the TJRC failed to utilize such an approach in Mt. Elgon thereby falling short in meeting most people’s expectations. For instance one of the MVV from Chesikaki village lamented that:

> We expected the TJRC to listen to us but also to include us in the process of seeking solutions to our problems but they just came and took our statements and disappeared, we do not know of what use that will be to them if we are not involved in finding lasting solutions to these issues.

In patriarchal societies, men in a very unique way are at the centre of the history and communal narrative that permeates most spheres of societal existence. This was confirmed by one of the community leaders from Cheptais:

> You know women are here but most of them are either from outside or at some point they will go out (meaning they are married and given in marriage), but men are born here, they live here and they die here. In that case therefore, it is good to appreciate the fact that men have been and are still at the centre of all that happened in this place. Of course women suffered but, mainly they were victims of circumstances. On the contrary, men are directly involved since they are the ones who engage in fighting but also they are a direct target. I am giving you an example, here we have so many women who were raped, some in front of their husbands, the main intention of the rapists was to provoke and hurt their men through their heinous acts.

From this assertion the derivable conclusion is that men indeed largely form the history of violence in Mt. Elgon and that they have been, in a very unique way, involved from the start of the conflict and along the bitter journey of truth telling process and other peace building strategies. Uniquely the same men who are at the centre of the whole conflict appear to have suffered systematic alienation along the process due to reasons already highlighted above. The cultural and socio-economic demands, the historical circumstances, and other factors largely pushed men out of the mainstream peace building strategies. For instance, one human rights defender from Kopsiro said that:

> After traumatic violence that happened, most men did not find a priority to be involved in the truth telling process. Most of them were busy reconstructing their lives and could not come out since they
considered this as a waste of time. Furthermore, there was no sufficient civic education to train them on the importance of truth telling.

Another victim from Chesikaki village expressed the dilemma between going to the field to work and attending truth telling sessions. He stated:

I am sure most men would want to do their work than go to such forums. Actually most would rather send their wives to attend. I think that is how the TJRC ended up having more female victims than men but that should not mean that more women than men suffered here in Mt. Elgon.

Concerning the methodology of truth telling that the TJRC employed in Mt. Elgon, the study showed that the main ones were statement-taking, public and private hearings, site visits and collection of memoranda. The memoranda were drafted by different groups of people. Various organizations like Act/Pact Kenya and Action Aid as well as religious actors and the civil society helped communities a lot in coming up with the memoranda. However, according to some respondents, time constraint became a major impeding factor, especially in drafting the memoranda. For instance the county civic educator from Chepkube opined that:

Construction of a comprehensive memorandum cannot be a one day thing; we needed a lot of time, a lot of support and empowerment to the society, and comprehensive inclusivity in the process. Unfortunately, the TJRC was in a hurry so the memoranda that were drafted were not as comprehensive and inclusive as we could have wished them to be. However, we still believe that in those memoranda there is a lot of truth.

The TJRC commissioners visited various hot spot areas where atrocities had take place, especially in Cheptais, Chepyuk, and Kipsigong where there was a mass grave of victims of SDLF brutality. However, given the vastness of Mt. Elgon region, the TJRC was not able to cover all the areas. From the findings of the study, 90% of the respondents who indicated that the TJRC attained partial truth from the MVV due to time constraints. A human rights defender from Kopsiro held that “only few people were represented in the hearings. I think the TJRC was also running out of money and hence the follow up forums almost bordered on mere formality.” He added that “due to time constraints there was no way the TJRC could have drawn all the truth about what happened here.” He continued to assert that “nevertheless we still push for the implementation of the TJRC report since we believe that it contains some truth although not the whole truth.” It is interesting that even the four respondents who had earlier worked with the TJRC were in agreement that indeed there was no sufficient preparation and comprehensive civic education. They blamed this lack of preparation to time constraints.

Questioned on whether the TJRC employed any traditional and local mechanisms in its methodology of truth telling especially targeting MVV, one of the respondents who worked with the TJRC as a statement-taker had the following to say:

In reference to the male victims of violence, I think the TJRC had no particular strategy in regard to gender; the target was really to get as many victims as possible to record statements. Also the TJRC was not only targeting those violations caused by the SLDF or the army operation but rather all historical and other injustices that people have suffered since independence. The mandate of the Commission was therefore quite vast and if it begun categorizing and with the amount of time that they had I think they could have not managed even to get what they got.

On whether the TJRC used local mechanisms that were culturally-based for the truth telling process, the above responded elaborated that all the traditional mechanisms and methodologies were given a chance but
only within the framework of the memoranda since the TJRC could not dictate how the community was organizing itself in order to come up with a memorandum.

Some respondents held different views and insisted that the TJRC were not sensitive to the cultures and traditions of the people in Mt. Elgon region. For instance one community leader from Cheptais observed that: “It is very difficult for us men to speak about certain things.” Another victim from Chepkube posed the following question: “How do you expect a man to come out and say that he was castrated? It is very difficult, some cannot speak about it, and only very few can have the courage to openly speak about something like that.” One community leader from Cheptais made the following assertion:

We as the Sabaoit people are part of the Kalenjin and our cultural practice are strong. As a man therefore there are things that people should not know about you. For instance private family issues and even personal challenges should be kept within you or within a small group of people that you really trust. So telling the men to come out and reveal everything about what they know and saw or went through especially when it touches on private life is indeed very difficult.

A medical practitioner from the district hospital in Kapsokwong observed that part of the reason why the conflict has not been fully addressed at the community level is because of the culture of silence around. People pretend not to have seen anything nor heard anything. A human rights defender from Kopsiro asserted that:

I strongly believe that the cultural and traditional set up of our people affected the truth telling process. I know of cases whereby people were using hidden language since they could not speak openly. I doubt whether the TJRC was keen enough to get the real meaning of certain issues that were raised by victims.

All the respondents to this study affirmed their awareness of the TJRC’s truth telling hearings, especially the public ones. These were held in the form of public forums commonly referred to as ‘hearings’. There were two such hearings conducted in Mt. Elgon. Another mechanism that all the respondents identified was statement-taking. This entailed a process through which statement-takers working for the TJRC could meet with the people who wished to record statements on human rights violations. The statement-takers interviewed the victims, recorded their stories and submitted them to the commission.

Majority of the statements were taken from victims of past injustices and members of their families but fewer men than women recorded statements. Respondents gave different reasons why fewer men than women participated in the process, such as: accessibility to women was much easier than men; most men had run away, others were in detention; men feared victimization; there were cultural concerns related to masculinity especially for men who had been castrated or had their genital removed. They could not face the shame of appearing in public or private having ‘lost their manhood’; and generally lack of self-disposition.

There are those who reported experiencing backlash as a result of their involvement in the truth telling process. Two points of view in regard to security/insecurity of MVV emerged: on the one hand, there were some victims who completely refused to take part in the TJRC’s truth telling process, and on the other there were those who after testifying ran away from home for some time fearing for their safety. Some were victimized by the SDLF for participating in the TJRC process, as this MVV respondent from Chepyuk reported: “I wish I never went to record the statement with the TJRC because that marked a very terrible moment for me. I could not sleep in the house since we had been warned that all those who would give testimonies at the TJRC could be killed by the remnants of SLDF.” A male victim of violence from Ngachi village argued that “most of us lived in a lot of fear after recording statements since there were rumors that we could be arrested or killed by the SLDF militia.” One MVV from Chwele asserted that: “It is not easy to go and say something negative about government leave alone the soldiers. You can imagine how hard it was to stand there and accuse the
soldiers and you are seeing them! It was not an easy task. Besides we did not know what would follow.” Male victimization added to the trauma of dealing with past atrocities making it difficult for most of these victims to recover fully.

In Mt. Elgon where tribalism is a major problem, truth-telling ignited inter-ethnic tensions. For example one respondent from Cheptais opined that:

For us the Bukusu, it has become even more difficult to access land after it was revealed that we are the ones who encroached on the land which is perceived as belonging to the Sabaot. Some of us who were not formerly known as coming from down the valley (Bukusu region) are now known since we thought by stating the truth about our predicament we could be assisted, we revealed our identity so that we can be considered for land allocation. But we were wrong, now we have been known as coming from down the valley and it has become even more difficult for us to access land here, so we are staying in these shopping centres and we are not very secure here.

Most of the MVV in Mt. Elgon felt disenfranchised by TJRC’s choice of venue for the truth telling sessions. In this regard, 89% (24 out of 27) MVV who were interviewed felt that it was not appropriate for the TJRC to hold one of its major public hearings in Bungoma town. Their argument was that the conflict in Mt. Elgon mainly affected the Sabaot community and as such the hearings about this conflict should have been held within the Mt. Elgon region to give more local people an opportunity to actively take part in the proceedings. Other respondents read mischief in the Commission’s act to hold hearings in Bungoma saying that “we are not sure why the TJRC did that but I think they were hiding something.” Such sentiments discouraged some of the MVV from participating in the TJRC process.

The MVV raised concerns over political interference with the TJRC process and the challenges of truth telling that they encountered during the process. The following statements are a clear indicator of the perceptions of the MVV on this issue:

“How can one tell us that the TJRC was independent and impartial when the commissioners were working with the politicians, even being seen going to the houses of the area leaders? I think those leaders (politicians) knew what they were doing; just fixing their issues and covering up. As usual they could use their money;”

“I strongly doubt the independence of the TJRC and the personality of some commissioners. The way they were handling the process seemed like they knew something that they just wanted to protect.”

“The TJRC might not have gotten all the truth due to time constrains but I have no doubt that whatever they managed to get from Mt. Elgon especially from the victims is true. My doubt is whether that truth can be of any use with the kind of politics in our region.”

These observations of political interference hampered free participation in the TJRC hearings.

**Motivating Factors to Truth Telling Among Male Victims of Violence**

While to a large extent most MVV did not come out to tell their stories of atrocities to the TJRC, there were others who had the courage to come forward. The study found out that there were various motivations driving the MVV to come out and tell their stories before the TJRC. According to the responses, some people expected immediate action after the truth telling especially in terms of rehabilitation and reparations. For instance one victim from Kiptii said: “we thought the TJRC would help us to reconstruct our lives and to move forward but they just collected testimonies and left, so sometimes I wonder the whole meaning of that process.”
The therapeutic and healing value of the truth telling process was cited by the MVV as another motivation for participating in the process. One of them from Kiptii argued that “at first I felt tense but as I continued recalling and sharing my experience and what I went through, I felt lighter and freer.” Another victim from Chepyuk added that “speaking out what happened to me still remains the most important thing, it felt consoling. It was greatly helpful.” It thus emerged that truth telling can have a positive psychosocial impact on the victims, especially when it generates a sense of communal support for the victims of violence.

Other male victims of violence (MVV) pointed out that they were motivated by the social impact of truth telling. The following four examples from the MVV respondents were typical:

“For all those years there were people I could not talk to; I could not even greet them since I knew that they were among the group that killed my son and looted our property. However, after attending the TJRC process and being helped, I felt I could talk to them and indeed we can now interact.”

“Actually my life changed after encountering the TJRC and taking part in statement recording. We also went for counseling. I came to realize I had been carrying something heavy load in my heart, and this was affecting my family. I had problems with my wife but after that process of truth telling I think we managed to live happily again.”

“We had to separate with my wife and divide children after the conflict since we came from the disputant clans. We looked at each other as enemies and we could not talk. Fortunately, both of us managed to go to the TJRC. After that we realized that before giving the testimony to the TJRC our marriage was getting negatively affected, especially our children. But now we are happily together and moving on.”

“I always contemplated revenge until the day I appeared before the TJRC and narrated my story. I no longer have the urge to revenge to anyone. I have since forgiven these people and indeed we are staying here together with them, in fact, most of them have since regretted what they did to us.”

Interestingly most male victims of violence, 89% (24 out of 27), opined that truth telling was a very good experience for them. In order to evaluate further what the respondents meant by ‘good experience’ they were probed for clarification. This is how different respondents expressed it:

“I felt largely relieved, I think there is something that I might not be able to express but, generally speaking out what is in your heart brings some lightness in you.”

“Truth telling was very good since it enabled us to pour out what we have kept in our hearts for long, it was a good forum and I do not think whether we would have had any other chance to speak out if it were not of the TJRC.”

“The TJRC was very friendly, they gave us a chance to say everything, in fact, even if you forgot something and came back later and wanted to narrate further, they would still allow you. Many people were free and they spoke without fear. The TJRC had promised to help us, they had told us they were here to help us and so we trusted them and they helped us to begin talking about many things that previously were kept secret.”

A human rights activist from Bungoma asserted that: “A few men have come out to tell their stories of torture at a meeting we recently called between the victims and perpetrators. The Free Pentecostal Church and the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (CJPC) have been instrumental in encouraging men to come out.” Indeed there are quite a number of men who went against all odds to narrate their stories especially during
confidential sessions. The fact that the TJRC allowed victims to choose the appropriate forums allowed male victims who were suffering from stigma and shame to come out and speak their truth during the confidential statement taking forums. For instance, one male victim of violence from Cheptais said that “I was castrated, I am not a man anymore and I was not afraid to tell it to the TJRC when they came.” Another male victim stated that:

“The soldiers beat me up, they knew exactly what they were doing and they told us about it, they wanted to ensure that we do not give birth anymore since they said we have bad blood. I cannot marry anymore since I am impotent. The TJRC knows all these things since we were courageous enough and we told them. I do not see the reason to hide what we went through. Even if I hide it, that is the truth and at the end of the day it will be known.”

On the question of how the victims came out to tell their stories of torture, a human rights activist in Bungoma observed that, there are those who came out voluntarily, whereas others were encouraged to come out by human rights organizations. A number of organizations offered help to the men, both as victims and perpetrators. He further added that: “I was a statement-taker for the TJRC process and many men came forward to talk to me about their experiences of violence. They were however much more comfortable doing this in private.”

At a focus group discussion exclusively for men in Chwele, a participant from a civil society organization said he worked for an organization that traced male victims of violence in the village and the forests. He observed that he was able to meet the former SDLF members through a respected oloibon: “I went deep into the forest looking for the victims of violence. They showed me their body marks and how they had been tortured, and in some cases castrated. We worked with other organizations to get medical help for the victims.” The respondent added that the identified victims received counseling. Some of these men had been rejected by the community because they had “spilt blood” by their acts of violence. He said, “The oloibon stayed with me in the forest for two weeks. During this time I managed to talk to quite a number of the former victims of violence. They told me that they cannot tell anyone that they were castrated. It is not easy for them to open up.”

During the focus group discussions with women participants in Chwele, it was evident that, one commonality with many male victims is that abused men often hide evident injuries from friends and family without explanations, as stated by one woman: 

Men Don’t Tell. They will not even reveal to their wives anything that would embarrass them and make them look weak. In cases where they were seriously injured, even if it was obvious, the overwhelming majority (especially from the Laibon community) disguised their injuries as coming from an accident, like an attack by an animal rather than an attack by another man. For them, saying it was a fellow man was very dehumanizing. No man wants to admit to the world that he has been physically assaulted by another man. It is not an easy thing to do. Most of them especially from the Laibon community would rather die than tell the truth.”

Another woman added:

“The conditioning of society expects men to be strong, and not to show vulnerability before another man. Even if it is a military man, who is armed enough to hurt, a man must show his strength. In all of the male victims I have dealt with, this is a common reaction”

Social perceptions on masculinity dominated the reaction above leading to constant confrontations between different groups of men. Hence, different NGOs and organizations like CJPC helped the victims to come out and tell their stories.
One woman working with an NGO lamented,

“This problem is complex more than most of us would want to believe. I understand men’s dilemma - even if I was the one I would not easily come out. Can you imagine how embarrassing the situation must have been for the men? In these families where male victims came from, there were all sorts of things happening. In one family, you could find that the son takes drugs, is part of the militia and has taken oaths, while the father has raped the daughter, the mother has been made pregnant by strangers, the uncle is a drunkard, and the wife is having an affair with a policeman. Surely in such a family, who can you really trust and tell the truth.”

In other words there was so much mistrust and hatred among the families, communities and friends that no one would dare come out.

At a women focus group discussion, it emerged that after the conflict had subsided, there were some male victims who came out and told their stories. This was due to many factors such as: some NGOs and Christian organizations reached out to male victims of violence, listened to their stories and encouraged them to talk. The male victims found these organizations more sympathetic, and to some extent neutral players in the whole scenario of conflict. This was helpful in building trust amongst them. However, one of the respondents in Chwele observed that once the Kenya Defense Force (KDF) came to fight the SDLF, the NGOs and institutions providing humanitarian assistance as well as journalists were not allowed in Mt Elgon. A medical practitioner from a district hospital in Kapsokwong affirmed that the government gave 12 hours to Medecin Sans Frontier (MSF) to leave the region yet they were the main providers of the medical care to the victims of the violence. This meant that many people with medical needs were left unattended and hence vulnerable to further health complications.

**Lessons Learned from Truth-Telling by Male Victims In Mt. Elgon**

The lessons learned from the experiences of the Mt. Elgon male victims of violence (MVV) are diverse and very poignant but underlying them is the deep desire to move on and create a new future. The challenge for societies emerging from violent conflicts, like Mt. Elgon, is the dilemma of the demand for justice and the need for peace. Respondents to this study have added nuance to the enterprise of truth telling, particularly in relation to violence against men social-cultural implications of the tension between perceptions on masculinity underlined by male vulnerability, dominance and monopolization of violence.

In regard to Mt. Elgon mixed reactions emerged in regard to the lessons learned by MVV. A good number of respondents stated that the truth telling process allowed them to express their feelings, narrate past atrocities and seek remedies for the damages done to them, their families and property. Others expressed the frustration of ever finding justice for the past atrocities, given the complexity and convoluted nature of the conflict. There was a general sense of fear amongst MVV largely because of the fear of stigmatization by the community and victimization by the SDLF.

There are those who felt that truth telling was almost a waste of time since in their view, it did not make any difference. They stated that there was no follow-up by the TJRC after the truth telling process. They expected the TJRC to assist the victims of violence, especially the most vulnerable like the old people, single mothers, orphaned children, and traumatized and physically injured persons.
CONCLUSION

While truth telling may not always in itself be sufficient to bring about healing it plays a pivotal role in the healing process. The findings of this study show that men as much as women are susceptible to effects of violence. Truth telling in Mt. Elgon led to a revelation of grave human rights violations, historical injustices, human rights abuses and other deep seated cleavages around land resource and tenure, social order and exclusion as well as political intolerance. The nationalization of the conflict in Mt. Elgon is a clear indicator to the fluidness of conflict and how fast it moves into a national and even international crisis. Mt. Elgon therefore typifies the dilemma that plagues most African countries today. Through the TJRC the state has in some way acknowledged the plight of the people of Mt. Elgon. However, despite this acknowledgment there is still a lot that needs to be done to improve the conditions of the victims of violence.

This study once again has affirmed the importance of truth telling in the whole process of transitional justice. While MVV have indicated that it was not only necessary but also important to have the truth telling, they have raised concerns over the sequencing of the truth telling process by the TJRC. The MVV found themselves telling their stories before they could get adequate preparations by the TJRC. While they expressed dissatisfaction in the manner in which the whole process was conducted, they however acknowledged the fact that the TJRC process brought forward truths which should be acted upon.

The findings of this study equally conclude in order for the truth telling process to be effective, that there should be proper and sufficient prior preparation before the commencement of the truth telling process, and that it ought to be followed by immediate action especially in terms of reparations. Furthermore, it has been revealed that truth telling needs not be rushed without a wider consultation and involvement of key stakeholders.

The articulation of the needs of the victims ought to be integrated into the methodological process of truth telling. There were instances where the victims of injustices could not fully articulate the major concerns around historical injustices. In fact, from a cross section of MVV that were interviewed in Mt. Elgon, it emerged that while most victims and survivors know exactly what it is that they need, some were not in a position to articulate clear needs such as reparations. Furthermore this study has shown that it is indeed incumbent upon the TJRC, through expert input, to discern in a more coherent way the underlying issues especially when victims and survivors employ coded language to describe the injustices that they went through due to factors such as shame and taboo.

It is in the area of reparations where the dilemma of applying a transitional justice paradigm detached from the social and economic relationships among citizens, elites, and victims may emerge, as it has in the case of Mt Elgon. The truth telling process in Mt. Elgon could have led to comprehensive reparations. From the findings it is clear that for the MVV reparation measures that follow from those mechanisms should not ignore the causes and consequences of those periods of violence and episodes of abuse. It is evident that no serious consideration has been directed towards mitigation of such a danger leading to the flaws in truth telling, either perceived or real. This has greatly compromised prospects for transitional justice in Mt. Elgon and Kenya in
Some commentators have argued that actually the transitional justice process in Kenya is on halt. Lack of follow up mechanisms upon the conclusion of truth telling in Mt. Elgon is perhaps a clear indicator to this fact making some MVV to hold a view that the truth telling by the TJRC in Mt. Elgon was almost a waste of time. The question really should be on how to rekindle this process and bring it to its fruitful completion.

Failure of the political elite to connect with the concerns of the people in Mt. Elgon, especially the MVV, is a major challenge to truth telling. Truth commissions have an impact on political, economic and social reorganization but they require political good will and support along the whole process of implementation of their mandate. Truth Commissions should therefore not in their nature end at mere narrations of past experiences, but rather be programmed towards confronting the past and charting a clear way forward aimed at sustainable peace through justice means. The MVV in Mt. Elgon look at the TJRC process as one that if not implemented will be largely lacking in addressing the real issues and meeting the demands for justice, reconstruction and lasting peace in the region.

From the focus group discussions, from the media reports occasional re-emergence of the SDLF, it was evident that the SLDF may have been suppressed but not totally eliminated. In this regard, it is important for the government to mop up any remaining small arms and light weapons, reinforce efforts to find some of the remaining militia leaders, maintain a military base in Mt. Elgon and monitor activities of groups such as Kapchai Boys, 7 Brothers and Kill me Quick.
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