

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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## **Forms of Violence by Sabaot Land Defence Force and its Effects on the Wellbeing of Women in Kopsiro Division, Mt. Elgon, Kenya**

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### **Abstract**

*The World Health Organization's (WHO) report in 2014 indicates that approximately 1.4 million lives are lost every year as a result of violence. Even more people are injured and suffer from a range of physical, sexual, reproductive, and mental health issues with any death caused by abuse, with women being the most vulnerable. This paper addresses the issue of violence as orchestrated by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county. Four objectives guided the study. Establishing the forms of violence employed by the SLDF, identifying the effects of the SLDF violence on the women's psychosocial wellbeing, determining the coping strategies adopted by the women as victims of the SLDF violence and finding out the role of counselling in helping the women deal with post-traumatic effects of the SLDF violence. The study was carried out among women groups in Emia, Chepyuk, Kapkateny and Chongeywo locations in Kopsiro division and adopted ex post facto design. Targeting a population of 23,852 women in the region, 690 women were accessible from which forty (40) were selected through purposive sampling technique sixteen (16) of whom were leaders. Each study location therefore produced 10 women. The study used focus group discussions to obtain data from the sampled groups and interview schedule from the selected leaders. A pilot study was conducted in Cheptais division using twenty (20) women from two women groups. A detailed narration of the qualitative data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interview schedule were analyzed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the women suffered psychologically and socially during the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence. For instance: a number of them experienced stress and some of them developed ulcers, lack of sleep and nightmares. This paper is therefore expected to create more awareness through sensitization of the community on the effects of (SLDF) violence on the women's psychosocial wellbeing in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county.*

**Keywords:** Violence, Psychological, Psychosocial, Women's wellbeing, Land Defence Force

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### **INTRODUCTION**

A definition by the New Zealand Ministry for Justice indicates that violence is an intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person or against a group or community that

either results in or has a likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation (New Zealand Ministry for Justice, 2004). Violence can be experienced in various forms including physical, emotional (verbal),

sexual or psychological (Reiss & Roth, 1993).

Following the report produced by the World Health Organization on the growing number of people losing their lives to violence across the world, physical violence, sexual violence, reproductive complication and mental health problems were highly recorded causes of death (WHO, 2014). Nevertheless, violence places a massive burden on national economies, costing countries billions of US dollars each year in health care, law enforcement and lost productivity besides the psychosocial effects on human victims. It is to this end that the World Health Organization in partnership with other agencies work together to prevent violence through scientifically credible strategies which however will not be discussed in this paper.

Women's subordinate status to men in many societies, coupled with a general acceptance of interpersonal violence as a means of resolving conflict, renders women disproportionately vulnerable to violence from all levels of society: individual men, within the family and community and by the State. In 1993, the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women offered the first official definition of gender-based violence as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether in public or private life (Africa Centre for Gender and Social Development, 2010).

In Kenya, the 2014 Kenya Demographic and Health Survey affirm that four (4) out of every ten (10) Kenyan women undergo some form of violence, whether physical or sexual. These figures are staggering and should compel us to pause and reflect. The patriarchal system in Kenya and many parts of the world combined with absence of rights at the household level, have made women and girls vulnerable to sexual, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual violence.

We have to confront the cultural influences that reinforce the feeling that women are mere chattels, that they must be submissive even in the face of abuse (Kinyua & Chatterjee, 2015).

Santrock (2005) defines psychosocial as psychological and social aspects. Violence affects the psychosocial realities of the affected and their communities (Kaplan & Orlando, 1998). Psychosocial effects of violence are characterized by a variety of short- and long-term reactions in the area of mental health. For instance; the combination of post trauma, grief and dissociation pooled with different types of losses such as: family, friends, relatives, belonging, neighbourhood, homes and trust can be used to define violence syndrome (Loar, *et al.* 2005).

When violence strikes, it destroys the central values of human existence. On the other hand, when humanity witnesses death and destruction, they are exposed to the darkest side of human nature (Kaplan & Orlando, 1998). Victims of violence experience suspicion, mistrust and deprivation of human right to work, to health, to education and to the sense of belonging (Ehrenreich, 2001). This may lead to the loss of trust, dignity and the questioning of the value of life itself by those who have been victims of organized violence. Consequently, the faith of the victims in relation to justice is shaken (Reiss & Roth, 1993). According to Follingstand *et al.* (1990), the social reality on the victims of violence is the effects it has on their relationship with the people within the family and the community. It also has the consequence of decreased involvement and participation in productive routine work at home, workplace or in the community, inhibited communication, social isolation, questioning of values and detachment from organized community activities (WHO, 2002). It is true that when violence occurs, mistrust and suspicion take center stage. This study intended to establish if this is what transpired in Kopsiro division among the women as a result of the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence. The SLDF

in this paper refer to a gang of people who were not officially trained and recognized by the Government in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county who came together with assumed grievances with an aim of finding solutions to them as opposed to legal procedures. In particular, they were against land allocation by the Government in Kopsiro division. As a result, men either joined them or ran away leaving women vulnerable. This confirms the research by Africa Centre for Gender and Social Development (2010) which states that women subordinate status to men in many societies, coupled with a general acceptance of interpersonal violence as a means of resolving conflict, renders women disproportionately vulnerable from all levels of society.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Violence against women is internationally accepted as a major issue of concern. It is now globally recognized that all women irrespective of their race, colour, economic status and religious affiliation, face the problem of violence directed at them specifically because they are women. The fact of being a woman is a complex web of cultural, social and economic factors, which have the cumulative effect of leaving any woman vulnerable to acts that men may be shielded from (Matlin, 2004).

### Forms of Violence

Violence exists in many forms and at multiple levels. The forms include: physical, verbal, sexual and psychological (Reiss & Roth, 1993). These forms are defined as follows: physical violence is that which causes bodily harm, sexual violence occurs when someone forces another person to have sexual intercourse by means of physical force, threat, intimidation or by use of a weapon and psychological violence is a systematic attempt to control another person's thinking and behaviour. It includes isolation, pathological jealousy, threats, degradation, forced alcohol or drug abuse, brain washing or occasional indulgences (Sonkin, 2007). Ondicho (2018) adds that

violence against women in all its various forms is now widely considered as a serious social and public health problem in many parts of the world. He says that rigorous efforts are being made by governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other stakeholders to combat the menace and help the survivors.

Carroll (2007) affirms that violence can exist at micro and macro levels. Micro-violence also referred to as personal violence are acts of aggression or force performed by individuals and directed to inanimate objects, animals, oneself or others. Besides, Reiss and Roth (1993) state that, although individuals commit violence as a result of personality type, family background and possible psychological abnormalities as well as personal manifestations of violence are laid to broader social structures. Macro-violence (collective violence) results when individuals engage in violent activities at a group or institutional level. Its incidents such as riots, revolutions and gang warfare are viewed as local events tied to a specific cause or geographical region. Additionally, individuals in this level possess their own unique dynamics and therefore they are more destructive than personal violence. As a result, participants of group violence frequently feel less responsible for their activities and are willing to commit greater atrocities because they are acting in the name of higher cause, be it religion, political belief or loyalty to an ethnic group or nation (Reiss & Roth, 1993). Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence can be defined as all acts of aggression carried out against women in Kopsiro division such as verbal insults, killing, hurting, bodily harm and destruction of property. The SLDF in this paper refer to a gang of people who were not officially trained and recognized by the Government in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county who came together with assumed grievances with an aim of finding solutions to them as opposed to legal procedures. In particular, they were against land allocation by the Government in Kopsiro division. This gang was against anybody who did not support

their way of resolving issues or anybody who supported the legal procedures by the Government. Specifically, in Kopsiro division where land was their assumed grievance, any person who was not on their side was an enemy and that is why it was a must that you join them or they harm you. Therefore, men who did not join them ran away or they were killed leaving women and children vulnerable.

Violence can also be grouped into self-directed suicidal behaviour or self-harm. It can also be classified as interpersonal and community where interpersonal violence is inflicted against the individual by another or by small group of individuals while community violence is that which is between people who are not related and may or may not know each other (New Zealand Ministry for Justice, 2004). Violence can have devastating and long-term psychosocial effects on individuals and society (Issroff, 2008). Therefore, this study intended to establish what forms of violence the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) employed in Kopsiro division and how the women were affected.

Witnessing violence includes seeing, hearing, being used directly, viewing in the media or subsequent knowledge of another's victimization (Kaethe, 2004). Ehrenreich (2001) observes that violence affects not only those directly experiencing it but also the secondary victims. The secondary victims include onlookers, observers, relief workers, family members, co-workers, friends and the community at large (Herman, 1997). Moreover, Issroff (2008) adds that violence has negative psychosocial effects on those who watch its events on television or read it in the print media.

### **Effects of Violence**

Violence affects social life in diverse ways such as: people leaving their homes or land and migrating elsewhere, lack of trust or difficulty in trusting people (Baker, 2005). Violence affects intimate, personal and abstract relationships. For example, Herman (1997) observes that violence calls into

question human relationships and breaches the attachment and bonds of the family, friendship, love and community. It also shatters the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in the relationship to others (Ehrenreich, 2001). Due to loneliness experienced by the victims of violence, a sense of alienation and disconnection pervades every relationship from the most intimate familial bonds to the most abstract affiliations of community and religion (Herman, 1997). A good example is that violence may lead to separation or divorce (Women's Refugee, 2007). Baker (2005) affirms that violence is known to be a cause of social withdrawal and interpersonal stresses. For instance, in a study carried out in post-war Kosovo, results showed that violence had a significant effect on the cultural tradition of families. In particular, violence affected the traditional social role of men as economic providers and protectors of families leading to conflicts within the families (Braymer *et al.*, 2005). This study intended to establish if this was the case in Kopsiro division.

Violence too results in physical effects such as: broken bones, burns, cuts, stabs, firearm wounds, bites, skull fractures, perforated eardrums, chipped or lost teeth, hair loss, chronic gastro-intestinal pain, chronic neck or back pain, chronic headache, hypertension and substance abuse. Pregnant women experience direct and indirect impacts which can result in serious complications for the mother, the fetus and later the infant. In the worst cases, death may occur or the victim may commit suicide. Sexual effects are also prevalent for instance, sexually transmitted diseases, chronic pelvic or genital pain and chronic vaginal or urinary infection, bruising or tearing of the vagina or anus (Sonkin, 2007).

Ondicho (2018) affirms that women exposed to violence are said to be more likely to experience a multiplicity of health problems compared to women who have no history of violence in their lives. Generally, women exposed to violence tend to experience more

physical and emotional impairments, chronic mental, social and reproductive health problems. Moreover, women exposed to male violence are likely to exhibit more behavioural deviations and to adopt behaviours such as problematic substance abuse and alcohol abuse, suicidal tendencies and physical inactivity which can further affect their health. In addition, women experiencing violence are also at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including the Human Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV) and subsequent victimization (WHO, 2017).

Oyediran & Isiugo (2015) ascertain that violence and abuse affect women from all kinds of backgrounds every day. Sometimes women are attacked by strangers, but most often they are hurt by people who are close to them. Violence and abuse can cause terrible physical and emotional pain. In addition, violence against women occurs both within and outside the family and could take various forms. It could comprise physical violation of the woman's body through such acts as kicking, pushing, burning, punching, pulling hair and may result in minor bruising or death. It may also constitute sexual violence such as rape or psychological tormenting through verbal abuse, harassment, deprivation of resources or denial of access to various facilities. Another form of violence could be emotional abuse which includes: degradation, humiliation, belittling or name calling, fear, insecurity, dependence and refusal to speak (Kinyua & Chatterjee, 2015).

The psychological reality of violence on the affected involves emotional, cognitive and behavioural aspects (Follingstand, *et al.* 1990). According to Ehrenreich (2001), it may take weeks or months for the affected to realize the losses they have incurred as a result of violence. Upon realization of no return, the standards of living, jobs, family members, property, anxiety and depression may appear for the first time. These may result in increased suicidal rates which can lead to loss of relatives, friends, neighbours,

family pets, homes, property and important or cherished belongings (Myers, 2008). These losses may lead to anger, hurt, sadness, grief, anxiety, depression, shame and fear (Follingstand *et al.*, 1990). Furthermore, feelings of hopelessness, wanting to protect oneself or seek revenge and feeling unloved begin to manifest (Malcolm & Uhde, 2006). This study intended to establish whether the women in Kopsiro division could have experienced the above outlined psychological effects of violence.

Victims of violence are found to exhibit symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder similar to those of soldiers coming back from the war. These victims have difficulties expressing love feelings (Osofsky, 2003). They too have difficulty deriving pleasure from familiar activities (Issroff, 2008). Violence can bring fundamental changes in belief patterns about self, others and the world (Kaplan & Orlando, 1998). Osofsky (2003) says that individuals who have been violated exhibit symptoms such as: impaired concentration, impaired decision making, memory impairment, disbelief, confusion, nightmares, decreased self-esteem, self-blame, intrusive thoughts and memories, worry and dissociation. Issroff (2008) affirms that surrender to violence may result in dissociating from it and eventually lead to depression, amnesia, suicidal tendencies and other mental illnesses.

People living in impoverished neighbourhoods often are the victims of community violence and sometimes they are perpetrators. Their resultant behaviour is experimenting with drugs or alcohol, sexual activity and other risky behaviours (Mcfarlane *et al.*, 2008). Victims of violence might eat too much or too little. In addition, they may find falling asleep difficult and staying asleep even more intricate. They may as well find it easier to commit crimes (Wolpe, 2008). Violence can also lead to trembling, restlessness, lack of confidence, social withdrawal, paranoia, startle response and being unkempt (Issroff, 2008).

Violence against women in Kenya has a wide range of short-term and long-term fatal and nonfatal physical, economic and emotional consequences on the survivors. According to the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS) effects can manifest as poor health status, poor quality of life and high use of health services (KDHS, 2014). Women exposed to violence generally and young women in particular are likely to indulge in illegal abortions which greatly predispose them to chances of future infertility and risk of obstetric complications and/or gynecological disorders (WHO, 2002).

### METHODOLOGY

The study was a survey that adopted the *ex post-facto* research design. This form of research design combines literature searching, experience surveying and single or multiple case studies which allow researchers to attempt to identify variables of importance as well as their relationships (Davis, 2005). According to Davis, there is no manipulation or control of data collected which is often gathered in the most nonintrusive way possible (Davis, 2005). By use of this design therefore the study attempted to discover the pre-existing causal conditions between the Sabaot Land Defence

Force (SLDF) violence and how they influenced the psychosocial wellbeing of women in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county, Kenya.

The choice of Kopsiro division as the study area was due to the fact that it was one of the divisions in Mount Elgon sub-county that was adversely affected by the violence orchestrated by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF). Kopsiro division consists of four locations namely: Chepyuk, Emia, Chongeywo and Kapkateny with twelve sub-locations and a population of 48,392 according to population census of 2009 (Deputy County Commissioner's office Kopsiro Division, 2012). Media and human rights reports indicated that during the SLDF violence, Kopsiro division reported the highest number of casualties and destruction of properties such as houses, schools, shops and churches.

The target population for the study comprised women groups in Kopsiro division with an approximate total population of 23, 852 females (KNBS, 2010) and an accessible population of 690 women. Table 1 shows the distribution of the accessible population of women per location.

Table 1: Number of Groups and Women per Location

Location	Number of Groups	Number of Women in the Groups
Emia	29	290
Chongeywo	12	120
Kapkateny	13	130
Chepyuk	15	150
Total	69	690

Source: District Social Development Officer, Mt. Elgon/Cheptais Sub-County, (2017)

Purposive sampling was used in selecting respondents for the study. This technique allows the use of cases that have the required information with respect to the study objectives (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A sample size of 40 respondents was therefore obtained from the study locations using homogeneous sampling. This is whereby the researcher sampled out respondents with similar characteristics of having been affected directly by the Sabaot Land Defence

Force (SLDF) violence. This enabled the researcher to have an in-depth study of the group. This is in line with what Kombo and Tromp (2011) state that homogeneous sampling is where the researcher picks up a small sample with similar characteristics to describe some particular subgroup in depth, for instance, charcoal burners, touts or bar maids. The author thus sampled out ten women in each location who were directly affected by the SLDF violence. These are

women who had confessed openly on how the SLDF violence affected them. Sixteen of the total 40 women were leaders who were also selected purposively.

Data collection was done using Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide with open-ended questions and interview schedule for the leaders. One FGD of ten (10) women was held per location. This yielded a total of four (4) FGDs in the four locations. Interviews on the other hand were meant to provide in-depth data which was not possible to get using FGDs. Sensitive and personal information was extracted from the respondents through honest and personal interaction between the respondents and the author. The collected data was then analyzed and presented by emerging themes. Excerpts one to twelve were also used to summarize qualitative data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Forms of Violence Employed by the Sabaot Land Defence Force

Table 2: Forms of Violence per Location

		Location			
		Emia	Chepyuk	Chongeywo	Kapkateny
Form of Violence	Physical	9	6	10	10
	Verbal	10	2	8	4
	Sexual	9	1	10	8
	Psychological	10	10	10	9
	Other	0	0	0	2
Total		38	19	38	33

As shown in Table 2, most of the respondents experienced the psychological form of violence. That means the effects of Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence such as: rape, threats, isolation, torture, internal displacement, destruction of property and death affected the respondents across the four locations at a higher degree. It is also evident that the other three forms that is, physical, sexual and verbal affected the respondents as well across the four locations. It is only Kapkateny that experienced the other form of violence in particular stealing. Their responses agreed with the views of

Violence exists in many forms and at multiple levels. The forms include: physical, verbal, sexual and psychological (Reiss & Roth, 1993). Sonkin (2007) provides definitions of these forms as follows: physical violence is that which causes bodily harm, sexual violence occurs when someone forces another person to have sexual intercourse by means of physical force, threat, intimidation or by use of a weapon and psychological violence is a systematic attempt to control another person's thinking and behavior. The Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) used these forms to carry out atrocities in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county, Kenya.

The aim of the study was to establish the forms of violence employed by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county, Kenya and further determine the effects posed by the violence. The findings on the forms of violence are as indicated in Table 2.

Reiss and Roth who affirmed that violence exists in many forms and at multiple levels. The forms include: physical, verbal, sexual and psychological (Reiss & Roth, 1993). These forms are defined as follows: physical violence is that which causes bodily harm, sexual violence occurs when someone forces another person to have sexual intercourse by means of physical force, threat, intimidation or by use of a weapon and psychological violence is a systematic attempt to control another person's thinking and behaviour. It includes isolation, pathological jealousy, threats, degradation, forced alcohol or drug

abuse, brain washing or occasional indulgences (Sonkin, 2007).

### **Effects of Sabaot Land Defence Force Violence**

Objective two of the study sought to establish the effects of Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence on the women's psychosocial wellbeing in Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county, Kenya. Through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) the respondents gave their responses as shown in excerpts 1, 2, 3 and 4. In addition, through interview schedule the respondents gave their responses as shown in excerpts 6, 7, 8 and 9.

#### **Excerpt 1**

**FGD Question 1:** In what ways were you affected by the SLDF violence?

**FGD 1:** Respondents reported that SLDF violence led to: forced eviction, killing of husbands, stealing and grabbing of property, isolation of families, fleeing for safety, staying in rental houses, burning of houses and displacement.

**FGD 2:** Respondents outlined displacement, loss of property, separation of families, loss of homes, early marriages for the young girls, raping, killing of many people, cutting of ears, stealing of cows, hens and maize, poor health care and disruption of learning for the children as outcomes of the SLDF violence. For instance, one respondent said that she had not made with her husband for a long period of time because the husband ran away and the mother in-law did not allow her to visit the husband since the wife happened to belong to the clan that caused her husband to run away. Poor health care arose because the respondents could not access medical facilities and cutting of ears was done to warn those who were not supporting the SLDF assumed grievances.

**FGD 3:** Displacement, beating of husbands with blunt objects, stealing of property, forced migration and killing of people affected them greatly as a result of SLDF violence.

**FGD 4:** Respondents shared that SLDF violence led to: displacement, killing, beating of young boys, forced eviction, destruction and robbing of property, forced taxation and disruption of learning for the children. For instance, children were unable to attend school because of the hostile environment which later made the schools to be shut down.

Killing of people, stealing of property, displacement/forced eviction, separation of families, beating and disruption of children's education dominated the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence. This is in line with what Myers (2007) records that violence may lead to loss of loved ones, property and cherished belongings. In addition, Pinker (2007) asserts that violence describes forceful human destruction of property or injury to persons, usually intentional and forceful emotional abuse that harms others. Hence, the findings indicated that the violence in Kopsiro division agreed with the above studies that indeed violence leads to destruction and loss of lives.

#### **Excerpt 2**

**FGD Question 2:** What are your opinions about the SLDF violence?

**FGD 1:** Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence should not happen again and the perpetrators should be arrested. However, other respondents thought that the perpetrators should be guided because possibly they were forced to be part of the SLDF. The variance in opinion came because one respondent said that her son confessed that some of the youth were intoxicated before acting the way they were acting "*mama tulikuwa tunapewa dawa*" (personal communication, December 2018). The son managed to escape after being taken in a group to the forest. One respondent still felt that whether they were intoxicated or not, what the SLDF did was inhuman and therefore they should be arrested.

**FGD 2:** Respondents felt that SLDF violence was very bad, cruel and should not happen again. One respondent said "*I lost my land*



because of SLDF violence.” There is need for security and peace making.

**FGD 3:** Respondents felt that SLDF violence should be rebuked in the best terms possible so that it should not reoccur. There is need for enough security. That is, provide security every time in every place within the location because residents feel insecure.

**FGD 4:** Respondents in this group outlined the results of SLDF violence and wondered if the perpetrators were human beings. For Instance, rape, separation of families, school drop outs, displacement, death of children and destruction/stealing of property instilled fear on women. One respondent hinted that SLDF violence reduced procreation because of beating and raping.

All the respondents felt that Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence was very bad, cruel and should not happen again. In fact some called for more security because they felt insecure. These responses echo the studies carried out by Loar, *et al*, (2005) which state that effects of violence could be short term or long term in the area of mental health pooled with different types of losses such as: family, friends, relatives, belongings and homes. Thus, the respondents felt that violence should not reoccur based on what they had experienced. For example, some lost family members like children and husbands while some lost homes and land. Consequently, the responses concur with Santrock (2005) who states that a stressful situation depends on a person’s cognitive appraisal and interpretation of the event. Therefore, the respondents felt harmed and threatened by the SLDF violence and that is why their views were that it should not reoccur.

### Excerpt 3

**FGD Question 3:** In what ways has your family been affected?

#### a) Psychologically

**FGD 1:** Families were left with a lot of stress. Respondents developed ulcers, heart beating, lack of sleep and bad thinking as a result of the violence.

**FGD 2:** Trauma dominated a number of respondents as a result of rape and lack of education for their children. There was family separation and quarrelling as result of death. Women were left with the burden of taking care of children by themselves and there was stigmatization as well as a result of the shooting of their husbands. One respondent confessed that she was separated from her husband for one full year.

**FGD 3:** Children lacked education, there was sickness because of the climate change, lack of food as well and respondents felt threatened. The respondents too felt annoyed of what had transpired.

**FGD 4:** Respondents developed heart attack as a result of stress, abuse, cutting of ears, lack of peace in their minds and stigmatization.

Generally, as noted from the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), many families experienced stress as a result of Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence. Hence, they suffered psychologically. Responses confirmed the study carried out by Follingstand *et al*. (1990) which states that psychological effects of violence may lead to anger, hurt, sadness, grief, anxiety, depression, shame and fear. In addition, the responses affirmed feelings of hopelessness, wanting to protect oneself or seek revenge and feeling unloved as noted by (Malcolm & Thomas, 2006). Indeed, the respondents felt stressed because of what they experienced.

#### b) Socially

**FGD 1:** The predominant thought here was lack of education for the children but there was also an experience of difficult life. Marriages were distorted to the extent that even married couples could not greet each other.

**FGD 2:** Respondents in this group shared a number of issues like: lack of food, lack of protection for the young girls which led to early marriages and teenage pregnancies, scattering of families, lack of housing as a result of torching, isolation of families and desertion of duty from the husbands. One

respondent said “I could not visit my husband in the hospital because the situation was scaring.”

**FGD 3:** Respondents in this group outlined separation of families, hunger, sickness, climate change and school dropouts as consequences of SLDF violence. They too declared that they were a burden to other families that hosted them, hence they operated like refugees.

**FGD 4:** SLDF violence brought about: divorce, forced marriages for the young girls, poverty and hunger, separation of families, beatings by your own children, forced taxation, stealing of property and misunderstandings between husbands and wives. For example, one respondent confirmed that her husband told her to go to their home and never return because her clan who were members of the SLDF killed his brother. One respondent too confessed that her own son beat her so as to survive because the SLDF had planned to kill him. Hence, beating his mother assured the SLDF that he was with them since her mother was against the SLDF atrocities. Still one respondent confessed that she was paying two hundred shillings every week to the SLDF for her stay otherwise they had promised to send her away if she fails to pay.

Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence brought about separation of families, forced marriages, desertion of duty from the husbands, divorce and family misunderstandings between husbands and wives. Hence, the respondents suffered socially. This supports the findings of a study carried out by MHAT (2006), which proposed that in the previous century, each war was followed by an increase in divorce rates. In addition, the responses also concur with Pedersen *et al.* (2008) who noted that violence is known to lead to internal displacement of victims who later experience dramatic shifts in social, familial, gender roles and acculturation problems in the new location.

#### Excerpt 4

**FGD Question 4:** What activities did you do together as a family or neighbours that you are unable to do now? Why?

**FGD 1:** Respondents stated that they used to do farming, business and educating children together. They are unable to do it now because there is no capital.

**FGD 2:** Working together as relatives and friends in the *shambas*, supporting children’s education through family contributions, intermarriages among clans and unity in the families. We no longer do these activities together because of lack of trust. One respondent said “*we used to work in the shambas as relatives and friends because of love amongst ourselves but now we cannot because trust is no longer there, because the neighbour turned to neighbour.*” Unfaithfulness in marriages and lack of unity are also highlighted as the reasons why respondents are unable to do what they used to do together. A serious cause of not doing things together is mistrust as a result of Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF). For instance, any family that participated was stigmatized in the sense that no intermarriages were allowed. In fact, if a family learned that their son or daughter is courting from a family that participated in the SLDF violence, they will ensure that that relationship ends through all means and if the parties insisted the families will deny them.

**FGD 3:** Respondents outlined business, farming, ceremonies (circumcision) and conversations as activities that they used to do together. They are unable to do them now because of enmity, stigmatization, lack of cooperation and lack of trust.

**FGD 4:** Working together, visiting one another, sharing meals, conversing, farming, sharing household equipment and food like salt, sleeping and celebrations were noted as activities done together. These activities were not possible because of: migration, stealing/looting of property, lack of peace, instilled injuries, killing of family members for example husbands, fathers and children, cutting of ears, threats, disunity and enmity.

The neighbours became perpetrators. One respondent confessed that she was beaten by her neighbour. Before SLDF families used to work together, visit one another, share household equipment and food like salt, eat together during celebrations like circumcision and sleep together. However, these practices changed after the SLDF. For instance, one respondent confessed that the SLDF killed her father. Another respondent confessed that her neighbour helped the SLDF to loot their animals. Hence, the SLDF atrocities changed the original way of life in Kopsiro division completely.

The responses confirmed that the respondents used to have strong ties before the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence but that was destroyed because of enmity, stigmatization, lack of cooperation and lack of trust. Their responses are in agreement with the studies of (WHO, 2002) who found out that psychosocial effects of violence has the consequence of decreased involvement and participation in routine work at home, workplace or in the community, inhibited communication, social isolation, questioning of values and detachment from organized community activities. Moreover, the responses agreed with the studies carried out by (New Zealand Ministry for Justice, 2004) which indicated that psychosocial effects of violence may affect participation in community activities.

## CONCLUSION

With respect to establishing the forms of violence orchestrated by the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF), the study established that five forms of violence were employed by the SLDF in their search for recognition in Kopsiro division. The forms of violence included: Psychological, physical, sexual, verbal and stealing among others. Furthermore, there were similarities between the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interview schedule on what SLDF violence involved. These included: displacement, forced eviction, raping of women and girls, beating and killing of people, stealing, grabbing, destruction of property and

disruption of learning. In addition, the respondents revealed that SLDF violence was as a result of land allocation whereby the government's proposal aimed at equitable distribution which was against the SLDF's stand of retaining the original shares. Hence, in their search for recognition, the SLDF instilled fear to the residents of Kopsiro division.

In response to the effects of Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence on the women's psychosocial wellbeing in Kopsiro division, the respondents' experiences were that SLDF violence was bad and should not reoccur. This was as a result of the inhumane actions that were meted on them. For instance, stress, trauma as a result of threats and rape, lack of education for their children, family separation, beating and death of their loved ones. Distorted marriages, early marriages and teenage pregnancies, loss of homes, lack of food, poverty, forced taxation, robbery, overburdening of women and disruption of strong ties evident through community farming, businesses, education of children, intermarriages, initiation ceremonies and sharing of meals and properties. Hence, Sabaot Land Defence Force violence led to insecurity, disunity, enmity, mistrust and stigmatization.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that the triggers for violence should be looked into by the relevant authorities such as: Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Non-Governmental Organizations, Community Based Organizations and Faith Based Organizations among others to avoid such recurrence in the future. This could be done through civic education on the rights of citizens and consequent punishments to those who pose such threats to one's life.

From the experiences of the respondents, it is evident that they suffered greatly due to Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) violence. Therefore, it is recommended that the security in the division be enhanced through various diverse mechanisms like

empowering the home guards; more police posts closer to the people and frequent community meetings for the purposes of peaceful co-existence and restoration to normal life.

The study was confined to Kopsiro division of Mount Elgon sub-county hence its findings should be generalized with caution. It may therefore be necessary to conduct a similar study in other divisions within Mt. Elgon sub-county where Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) has been experienced.

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