THE MILITARY IN POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION:
THE CASE OF KENYA DEFENCE FORCES IN MOUNT
ELGON CONFLICT, 2005-2012

ABSTRACT

The post-conflict activities became commonplace in the Mt Elgon region after the emergence of the Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF) conflict in 2005. Rehabilitation of infrastructures such as schools, roads and restoring of security was the main concern of the people living in the region. This study examines the military involvement in issues related to intervention and post-conflict reconstruction in the Mt Elgon region focusing on specific case studies in selected projects rehabilitated in the region using the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) effort. The main question addressed by this study is to establish under what conditions did the military intervene and whether the intervention strategies were effective in reducing post-conflict vulnerability in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, specifically by increasing resilience and, or reducing uncertainty of the affected communities? In answering this question, the study addresses three main objectives. First, it investigates the role played by the Kenyan military in post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building in Mt Elgon. Second, it seeks to examine strategies the KDF used to accomplish the essential tasks of post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization of Mt Elgon. Third, it examines the institutional divergence that enabled KDF to carry out peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction.

The study concludes that in post-conflict environments, vulnerability is the result of multidimensional losses. These are related to the lack of resources a household or
individual owns at a point in time (resilience) as well as the inability to convert these resources into an achieved state of development (uncertainty from exposure to risk), also known as functioning’s. In order to measure what the KDF did in post-conflict reconstruction, this study uses various sources such as primary and secondary sources. In trying to assess the effectiveness of the military involvement in post-conflict reconstruction, the study applied the system dynamic model. This model represents social systems as a web of level values and efforts that relate to stabilize war-torn societies. Using the above approach, this study argues that in practice, the effectiveness of postconflict re-construction effort initiated by the military was dependent upon three factors. First, is the clarity of objectives. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, it was critical for the military as an instrument of National Power to garner political support and secure a legitimate entry into Mt Elgon conflict through its role as an alternative safety net. However, such interventions should be quickly followed by other instruments of social protection so that development strategies are comprehensive and the delivery systems are not over-loaded by other unrelated objectives. Second, design of such post-conflict reconstruction programmes should remain context-specific. Aspects such as return of IDPs and re-integration with the war-torn communities, targeting methods and re-construction techniques should be relevant for the specific environment in which these programmes are designed and implemented. Also, the success of post-conflict reconstruction in Mt Elgon was determined, to a large extent, by the nature and scope of complimentary activities such as improvement of health and education facilities, rejuvenation of agriculture, business development, marketing mechanisms and provision of rural transport services in the region. Third, implementation mechanisms should as much as possible remain flexible in the context of emerging challenges. Post-conflict environment needs evolve from emergency to long-term sustainable development. This evolution was reflected in the military intervention and post-conflict reconstruction objectives and design features. Implementation mechanisms by the military were able to incorporate these changes efficiently so that target populations are mainstreamed into the military led post conflict
re-construction tasks and derive maximum benefits from the programme.

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