

Roles and Status of children in Forest related conflicts

ABSTRACT

Forest related conflicts, like any other conflict affects all populace, regardless of age, sex or status. Conflicts are destructive and affect the normal functioning of the society; It thus adversely affects the ability of families and communities to practice and sustain various simple health seeking and life saving practices. Women and Children are the most affected in most disasters; children are the most vulnerable group before and after disaster given that they depend on caregivers – mostly parents to protect them from vulnerability and effects of disasters. In most cases, children lives are the most affected including their current and after lives as a whole.

Researches have been conducted to study conflicts, its causes and effects and prevention mechanisms. However, it has not been documented, indepth, on how it affects children, especially the role and status of children in conflicts. Children are part of a society, and thus are part of any conflict including forest related conflicts.

Children can be victims or perpetrators of forest related conflicts. Children can also be used as peace agents. However, to use children as peace agents, it is crucial to understand what children perceive as the causes of conflicts, and what they think is their role in the conflicts. This study will seek to understand the roles and status of children in forest related conflicts.

Children are affected in more ways than one. This study will seek to understand and document the roles and status of children in forest related conflicts, with more focus on the activities children engage in that lead to Forest related conflicts, the perceptions and beliefs of children and how it affects or contribute to forest related conflicts, the effects of forest related conflicts on children, and how children can be used as peace agents.

The study will be conducted in Mau Forest because the study area is comprised of the target population, who are children between the age of 5-15years and who live in the forest which has experienced conflict at a particular moment. The study area is also an area that has experienced conflicts in previous years. The area is also made up of large heterogeneous population and thus will provide a wider selection of the target population while representing the cultures and views of different people.

The researcher will adopt both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The researcher will administer questionnaires and will also use focus group to generate the largest amount of information possible. Focus groups will be formed in churches and schools, made up of children aged between 5-15years. Quantitative data collected will be analyzed using SPSS. The main beneficiaries of the study will be the government, forest bodies (governmental and non governmental bodies) and other parties interested in children, conflicts and forests.