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The Role of Children Mau Mau Movement. A Case of Nyandarua County, between 1945 -1957

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Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

04 June 2025 After the establishment of colonial rule, colonial land, labour, racial and other exploitative policies forced the Africans to take arms against colonial oppression. This led to the Mau Mau war of liberation. The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of children in the Mau Mau movement in Nyandarua County between 1945 to 1963. This paper examines how Mau Mau's oath was administered to children and the role played by children. The paper further analyses the challenges and sufferings experienced by the children in the Mau Mau movement. On the oathing, most of the informants who confessed to having undergone the oath ritual indicated that the exercise happened before the declaration of the state of emergency and were tricked into the oathing scene by people close to them - cousins, friends, and sometimes parents. The role of children in the Mau Mau movement included: One, spying and supplying intelligence to the Mau Mau forest fighters. They were charged with the responsibility of spying on the movements of the home guards and then infiltrating the same intelligence to the fighters who acted on the same. The same boys were used as messengers. As fast winners, they were hired to audaciously run combat intelligence from one location to another. Due to their innocence, this was perfectly done as both colonial and home guards never suspected them. Two, they were employed to furnish the forest fighters with food and other errands. Girls who had undertaken the Mau Mau oath took this task with precision and exhibited excellent skills that helped them disguise the colonial guards. Three, girls solicited information and firearms from unsuspecting colonial guards and home guards. Firearms were a necessity for the Africans whenever they were to launch successive expeditions against the imperialists. The young boys and girls did a commendable job in furnishing the fighters with this vital necessity. Four, young boys and girls did join the fighters in the forest.

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INTRODUCTION

The first part of this study examines European settlement in Naivasha, land that was occupied by the Maasai occupied. With the establishment of colonialism and the arrival of the Uganda railway in Naivasha, the imperialists embarked on the process of settling the Europeans. This was facilitated by the signing of the signing of treaties between the Maasai and the British in 1904 and 1911. Having acquired the land, the whites established plantations where Africans provided forced labour. Children too were part of the Africans that provided forced labour in these plantations. That explains why when the Mau Mau war of liberation was initiated children took a pivotal role as they were too experiencing the effect of colonization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using the descriptive research design. Social conflict theory has been used to show how children participated in the Mau Mau war. This study derived its data from both primary and secondary sources. Data from primary sources was obtained from the Kenya National Archives (KNA) and Oral Interviews. In the KNA, documents retrieved included annual reports, handover reports and secret files from various administrators in the Rift Valley province. Oral data was obtained from oral interviews conducted in three constituencies in Nyandarua County namely Kinangop, Kipipiri and Ol'Kalou. The study sampled 30 informants. Oral interviews were conducted in the homes of the informants. A question guide with open questions was formulated as a guide for conducting the oral interviews. This enabled the researcher to probe informants exhaustively and in turn ensure that

informants competently confined their responses and thought to the issues concerning the study. Interviews were conducted in the Gikuyu language. This was inevitable as this was the most appropriate language the informants could use to effectively articulate events. Consequently, a Kikuyu language translator was hired to translate the content in English and more so clarify several Kikuyu technical terminologies the researcher was not conversant with.

The study adopted the purposive through snowballing sampling techniques to identify informants who between 1952 and 1963 were below the age of eighteen and participated in the war. Through the snowballing sampling procedure, the informants recommended more informants whom the researcher may have experienced a challenge in identifying but held crucial data for this study.

A comparative analysis of the information from various respondents was conducted where similarities and differences were noted. The documents review analysis method was employed to interpret primary and secondary documents and determine their validity to this study. The collected data was analyzed thematically and periodically in line with the study objectives. The presentation of the analyzed data was in the form of narration and included quotations from oral interviews.

EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT IN NAIVASHA

The completion of the Kenya – Uganda railway facilitated European settlements in Kenya. The colonial government figured out that the cost of maintaining and supporting the enterprise would only be realized through European settlement in the colony and the consequential establishment of

a settler economy. As a result, the colonial government forcefully evicted Africans from their native lands and invited whites onto these lands who eventually settled and established a colonial political economy.

Before the arrival of the British colonizers in Kenya, the land the British referred to as the 'Maasai land' broadly followed the line of Rift Valley (Hughes, 2006, p.28). The pastoral Maasai people wandered freely with the cattle, sheep and goats across the great part of the country (Hughes, 2006, p.29). With the establishment of colonization, the first step the government took to accommodate the white settlers was to move the Maasai inhabiting the Rift Valley (Chege, 2015, p.154). In 1904, under the Maasai land agreement signed by Laibon Olo-Lenana and Sir Donald Stewart, more than a million hectares of communal land were leased to settlers (Kantai, 2007, p.110). Following this treaty, the Maasai were to move voluntarily to the south of the Ngong and Laikipia plateau. Secondly, a half-mile corridor was left out to separate Ngong and Laikipia.

A special area of about 6000 acres of the Kinangop plateau was reserved by the treaty for carrying out certain ceremonies, which must precede circumcision throughout the Maasai land (Chege, 2015, p.154). It was the occupation of the Kinangop region by the Maasai and the refusal by the Maasai to vacate other regions designated for white settlement that precipitated the signing of the Second Maasai Land Agreement of 1911 (Chege, 2015, p.154).

Kinangop plateau lies in the east of Naivasha district. The plateau slopes gradually at the foothill of the Aberdare Ranges. The climate of this region is conducive to agriculture. Rain falls in two seasons; long rainfall is experienced from March to May, with a maximum rainfall of 1600 mm. Short rains are received between October and December; minimum rainfall of 700 mm.

These conditions lured the captain and Mis Fey to take up land in the South Kinangop plateau in 1906. They called their farm Njibini now Njabini.

(Chege, 2015, p.156). As will be discussed later in this chapter, the Europeans who occupied lands in the Kinangop plateau established cash crop plantations and livestock production.

Wanjohi Valley; the 'heart of the happy valley set' neighbours Kinangop plateau. (Gacheri, June, 13, 2014). The former Wanjohi valley includes the present-day Bushi, Miharati, Ndemi, Kariamu and Ol'Kalau, in Nyandarua County.

The region's name – Happy Valley set suggests that the businesses conducted within this region were less economic and more of an intoxicating lifestyle. Geoffrey Buxton was the first colonial farmer around Naivasha. He moved up from the semi-arid Rift Valley to this area and named it Naivasha "Happy Valley" (Gacheri, op. cit, June 13, 2014). Buxton and other immigrants bought land in this region cheaply. They reared sheep and cattle, built comfortable houses and engaged in a lifestyle characterized by partying and zealous promiscuity. Idina Sackville, for example, one of the immigrants bought a plot on the slopes of Kipipiri Mountain. He built a house and named it "Cloud." He made it a partying and a drug den. Drug abuse and unregulated sex were the norm. Proceedings from illegally acquired farms coupled with profits earned from the relentless labour of poorly waged Africans financed this boisterous partying craze. These preposterous acts and behaviours of foreigners left Africans perplexed. This lifestyle left foreigners more vulnerable than ever before to attacks and ambushes from forest fighters when the Mau Mau war began. Therefore, it was logical that the first Europeans to be hacked to death by Mau Mau fighters hailed from this region.

EXPLOITATION OF CHILD LABOUR

Having suppressed African resistance, Europeans set to occupy land on the slopes of Aberdare Mountain, with the sole aim of making the slopes and their adjacent lands agriculturally productive.

Most of the informants who inhabited this region on the eve of the Mau Mau uprising pointed out that the main economic activity on these lands was mixed farming, dairy farming, grain and

pyrethrum growing. To ensure maximum production in the farms, Europeans coerced Americans to provide labour. Settlers and the colonial government made huge efforts to ensure that there was a free flow of labour in European farms. Further, various Legislations and Ordinances on labour enacted by the colonial government enhanced the free flow of labour.

It's worth noting that, at the onset of colonialism Nyandarua was not yet fully occupied by the Kikuyu. The Maa-speaking people occupied many areas and the Kikuyu were in the process of settling down during this period. The loss of the newly acquired lands made African families evolve into squatters in established settler farms. They sought employment in these farms, as it was the only viable option for earning a living. Their desperate need for employment coincided with the settlers' dire need for labour. Africans eventually found themselves begging the white 'aristocrats' for employment. However, labour was in surplus and settlers seized that opportunity to buy labour cheaply. Ruth Murugi born and brought up in Kinangop explains;

“People used to go to white settlers' farms seeking employment. Once they (settlers) employed a man, they used to give him his desired plot of land on the vast farm to build a house and cultivate a small portion of it. People loved to live close to each other thus the houses were built close nearby (O.I, 12/1/2016)”.

Africans cultivated and reared livestock in these pieces of land to supplement the meagre wages they earned from white settlers' farms.

Europeans exercised division of labour. They broke down the production process and assigned family members specific roles. This ensured that the colonial economy in the region was running successfully and that settlers benefited maximally. According to (Wanjiru Kamau, & O.I I, 22/11/2015), men at Kinyahwe farm were assigned tasks such as grazing livestock, milking and sometimes weeding pyrethrum. Women and

children were entrusted with harvesting and grading pyrethrum flowers.

Europeans subjected Africans to inhumane working conditions. They worked under strenuous conditions for long hours only to earn meagre pay. There was no regards regard for the aged, nursing mothers and even the sick. Ruth Murugi explains;

“The whites had a rule that every African was to work and not idle all day long in their houses. All that was valuable to the white man was the labour provided, not the person. We reported at seven in the morning. When the bell rang, everyone was supposed to be at his or her work workplace. A mean workingman-working Nyabara (black supervisor) employed employee always walked with a whip ready to use it on any hesitant labourer. There was no formal time for having lunch. It was only after the Nyabara would walk away that we could eat our lunch. We took a cold lunch since there was no time to make shift hearths to warm the food. The women used to work with their babies strapped on their backs. We had no choice, as we had to work and bring up our children. However, in case we were harvesting flowers, we could work from early morning until late in the evening (O.I, 12/01/2016)”.

More miseries were meted down to Africans through the poor wages. In polygamous families, the situation was even worse. What the parents accrued in terms of wages from settler farms could not sustain their household economy. Family members had to work extra hours to avoid succumbing to hunger. Women and children shouldered the larger share of the responsibility. Wanjiru Kamau (O.I, 22/11/2015) who had a big family explains;

“We worked from Monday to Saturday, from seven in the morning, until five in the evening. Women used to dig, weed or harvest pyrethrum. The young children and adolescents joined their mothers in the harvesting of pyrethrum. We were paid eight shillings a month while our husbands were

paid fifteen shillings a month. The amount was insufficient to purchase food and other items such as clothes for my children. Our evenings were no better; the young children went harvesting potatoes while we went weeding our little plots of land.

Men had their fair share of agony too. With their insufficient remuneration, they were expected to feed their families. Moreover, they were expected to ensure that discipline was maintained within their workplace as mischief and defiance were severely punished. Wanjira Kimathi who worked on the Ngebu settler farm observes,

My husband and I were employed every month every month. My husband used to milk cows twice a day, and sweep and wash cow droppings in the cattle sheds. The milk was then taken to the dairy, where whites churned butter and cheese. They used to give Africans mathache (buttermilk buttermilk). Any black person apprehended having fresh milk was condemned to a seven-year jail term (O.I, 10/11/2015).

Settler's relationship with African labourers was coated with innate distaste. Africans loathed the beastly treatment they were subjected to by the illegal encroachers. The rift between the two antagonists widened with time precipitating the Mau Mau rebellion. This is demonstrated by how Africans announced the coming of Europeans on the farm. Karani (2005, p.13) explains;

"Kigonye is coming!" The workers would cry out to alert the others. Kigonye, the cripple, was a name pyrethrum-pickers had given the white owner of the farm. The white man shouted abusive words at the pyrethrum pickers. Sometimes, he would come in the company of his wife, nicknamed Nyakang'a - know it all because she mocked the pickers".

To ensure a steady supply of labour, in European farms colonialists introduced various types of taxes. In Kinangop, the British required each homestead to pay tax in the form of grains and animals. The more huts one had the more they

would take. Moreover, they limited each homestead to fifteen goats and took any extra animals. (Karani, 2005, p. 16). According to Ruth Murugi, O. I., 12/01/2016 Africans were barred from rearing cows. This infringement of their right of ownership was propagated by whites, to eliminate any undue competition with Africans and probably avoid the contamination of their exotic breeds with diseases and parasites.

European agricultural industry expanded rapidly. More labour was requisite to ensure the continuous growth of the enterprise. The European land grabbers did the unexpected; they hired child labour. Young children and adolescents joined their parents in the pyrethrum farms. Their fundamental rights – education, health and parental care- were neglected. European settlers did not entertain the idea of educating African children. However, shrewd parents used to send their children to mission schools. This was done skillfully so as not to let the white man get wind of it, for if they did, they would apprehend them for not reporting to work with their children (Ruth Murugi, & O.I, 12/1/2016).

In very rare instances, the white man would construct a school for African children. One such school in Kinangop was in Mkungi. An informant who hailed from this region explains that the motives behind the construction of such schools were 'selfish' and European centred European-centred. They were never for the furtherance of African interests. Maina Ndungu explains;

"The schools the Europeans built were for their benefit; that of getting a little learned working force that only knew their names, the name names of their masters and had a little knowledge on of writing skills. They underwent a four-year education course and thereafter the partially educated children would go back to their mothers to weed and harvest pyrethrum (O.I, 21/12/2015)".

It would also be fair to mention here that, there were Africans whose children were able to acquire education up to the secondary level. Such parents

had closer links with the colonial government. Towards the eruption of the Mau Mau revolt in 1952 most of such parents collaborated with the immigrants to suppress forest fighters. One such parent was Daniel Thuku, father of Mumbi Gikonyo. In her testimony, Mumbi Gikonyo explains that after she completed class six, her father who had acquaintances in government helped her and her brother secure admissions admission to Kangaru government school. Unfortunately, she was unable to sit for her final exam as the state of emergency was declared before they could take the exam (Mumbi Gikonyo, O.I, 27/12/2015). This glaring discrepancy gave birth to mistrust and raised suspicion between European collaborators' children and peasants' children. The social gap between these children widened. Children who were coerced to surrender their rights and privileges to work as pyrethrum pickers, eventually developed 'militancy' discernible in their heroic endeavours during the Mau Mau war of independence.

Europeans were obsessed with submissive child labour in that the white farm owners preferred a polygamous man with many children (Wanjira Kimathi, O.I, 10/11/2015). When the local population could not supply sufficient children child labourers' as required, European farm owners through their syndicates in the government sourced for more families from neighbouring Districts. In a letter to the Rift Valley provincial commissioner dated 26th/ April/ 1938, the Kinangop Association (farmers) Labour Committee requested more child labourers from neighbouring districts to serve the fast-growing pyrethrum enterprise.

My committee is further interested in the possibility of recruiting contracted toto gangs for pyrethrum picking and other light duties. This form of labour has become very popular with both tolos and employers in this district, but it seems likely that supplies will have to be augmented to keep pace with the growth of the industry (KNA/PC/NKU /3/8/1).

The immediate outcome of the European use of child labour was the emergence of a wealthy class of white settlers on one hand and a consortium of children deprived of the normal process of development to adulthood and at times mental and physical incapacitation. When the Mau Mau war began this bitter faction of society did play an invaluable role in the movement.

Pesticides were sprayed on pyrethrum plants on the farms. Most of them were sprayed while labourers including their children were on duty. Of all informants interviewed, none affirmed to have been supplied with gloves or masks while on duty. Exposure to pesticides had far-reaching effects on both parent labourers and to a greater extent child labourers. Moreover, in rainy seasons, special treatment was never accorded to the labourers. The white man was extremely bestial he never considered the health risks young children were being exposed to. Wanjira Kimathi (O. I., 10/11/2015) who by 1950 had two sons, narrates the ordeal his sons had to endure at the hands of colonialists;

In case it rained, we could strap our children on our backs, and cover them with up to three sacks to try and keep them warm and dry from the rain. With our little children on our backs, we could hold our jembes the whole day working. Only the inhuman black supervisor had an umbrella with which he could shield himself from the rain.

Africans lamented against these heartless acts meted on out to them by settlers in the presence of their children. Moreover, the agony, suffering and torture adult labourers endured all happened at a spitting distance from their children. This created a deep feeling of hatred among children against the colonial regime. This was projected in their role in the Mau Mau movement.

FOREST SQUATTERS

The forest environment had social, economic, religious and cultural input daily to families that lived near or in the forest. Among other provisions, forests gave them access to grazing lands, firewood, medicinal herbs and water.

Before colonialism, forests were managed by local communities under traditional resource management institutions (Mwangi, 2016, p.6).

Colonialism, however, introduced forest laws and policies that encouraged forest conservation hence forcing communities out of those lands. Between 1902 and 1954, numerous laws, rules and ordinances were passed with the sole aim of 'forest preservation' (Loge, & Dyson, 1962, p.16).

As the colonial government formulated policies on forest preservation, they also embarked on establishing plantations based on the 'Taungya' system.

Agnes Wanjiru, born in the Geta forest explains that under the Taungya system Africans were allowed to cultivate in an apportioned piece of land in that forest. It is in these cultivated lands that trees were planted (O.I, 07/02/2016). She further explains that people would continue cultivating these pieces of land for three to five years after which the trees would be big enough to shade crops, not allowing any more crops growing to grow under them. People would then be allocated other virgin lands to clear and cultivate. This would open another seedbed for tree planting; this routine was continuous. In addition to the cheap labour, locals provided labour during the tree plantation. The system also absorbed displaced residents during the illegal encroachment of native land by settlers. Every individual in the family had a role in the tree plantations. Children were not spared either. Mwangi Wainaina (O. I, 7/02/2016) a child by 1950 notes,

“When I was big enough to carry a box our main activity in the forest was acquiring and transporting tree seedlings mainly cedar. Our parents would collect the seedlings from one of the settlers’ farms, and transport them to a meeting point – Kahuroko-from where we would assist them”.

To utilize cheap African labour at their disposal, the forest department brought forth the division of labour system. It ensured that no native had time

to idle, right from the youngest to the old within the neighbourhood. Hardworking Africans worked on their farms in the early hours of the morning or in the evening after work working in the forest plantations. Mwangi Wainaina explains how labour was divided in the forest department. According to him, some brought some tree seedlings to a specified meeting point – *Kahuruko*- those who took them to the specified areas of planting and those who planted. Men were the main forest workers. They would leave home early in the morning for work. Their wives would pack food to carry with them. Upon completion of their daily forest duties, women and children were left taking care of the homestead and tilling the land which the husband had been allocated (O.I, 7/02/2016).

The land in which trees were planted belonged to the colonial government. However, settlers did not directly supervise tree planting. Just like in the settled areas Agnes Wanjiru notes,

We had an African supervisor, one of the villagers who knew people well – *Nyabara*- who was employed purposely for that work (O.I, 07/02/2016).

The forest families pruned trees. However, they also had to prune and cultivate forestlands with a lot of caution not to destroy any tree trees as this would create unending conflict with the supervisors (Gathoni Waweru, & O.I, 15/02/2016). Africans cultivated Irish potatoes and maize in those forestlands. Apart from the goats and sheep, they were never allowed to keep any other animals (Agnes Wanjiru, & O.I, 07/02/2016).

The labour Africans offered in these tree plantations was never in congruence with the remuneration they received. What annoyed them most was the fact that after all the labour they provided, the end product (timber) only benefited the colonialists. Towards 1950, most of the Kenyan forests were being logged commercially. The colonial regime had to sell timber to meet the demand of the World Wars more so provide timber needed for the expansion of colonial

administration and settler population (Emerton, 1999, p.4). As a result, the colonial economy continued to grow, as the economy of Africans dwindled. This left Africans very bitter and when the Mau Mau movement erupted, the majority of Africans from the forest department joined it.

MAU MAU IN NAIVASHA DISTRICT (1950 – 1953)

Between 1950–1953, colonial repression against Africans was accelerated. Many innocent Kenyans were arrested and jailed with or without trial, and others were grisly tortured and then killed (Kinyatti, 1992, p.25). It was these and other atrocities inflicted on innocent Africans that prompted the eruption of the anti-imperialist movement. Upon its inception, leaders of the movement embarked on member recruitment exercises. In 1952, African political activities in various parts of the Rift Valley geared towards organizing Kikuyu in the province into taking the Mau Mau oath. Dissatisfied with the progress made, the movement resorted to the use of force and intimidations to get everyone to take the oath. Some Kikuyu who strongly opposed such measures became informers of the colonial administration (Kanogo, 1987, p.137). Oath rituals were being held in different regions; however, the Naivasha region eclipsed them all (Kanogo, 1987, p.137).

The emerging squatter movement was not perceived as a political problem. It was rather portrayed as a labour issue that would eventually sort itself out. Even when police intelligence began to report widespread underground activity on the farms, the colonial administration refused to see it as a political problem. From the administration's point of view, squatters were primitive, traditionalists and uneducated not from whom nationalists were made. When the administration turned its attention to the squatters, it remained under the assumption that it was dealing with irrational traditionalists or a religious sect (Furedi, 1989, p.117). Under this naïve assumption, colonialists underrated the aptitude of disgruntled Africans. The African organization only perplexed them

later after the declaration of the state of emergency in 1952 after several of their tribesmen were brutally murdered.

From the early days of the movement, Mau Mau leaders maintained that one of the ways in which Europeans could be defeated was by making their stay uncomfortable and making their economic position so precarious that the majority of them would voluntarily pack up and go (Leakey, 1954, p.190). Africans caught the unsuspecting European Europeans in their farms, maiming and looting their livestock and in some instances guillotined them and their families. All of these attacks were part of a plan to make life so uncomfortable for the European settlers that they would decide to leave Kenya and start life afresh elsewhere (Leakey, 1954, p.100).

Attacks on settlers began in the weeks leading up to the declaration of a state of emergency (Anderson, 2005, p.88). Mau Mau adherents in the Naivasha area commenced the long journey of evicting settlers by exterminating them and their loyal African workers. Aberdare forest provided cover to Mau Mau assailants after accomplishing their mission. As Anderson explains at first, they attacked weak Europeans who would have minimal resistance;

The first European victim to be murdered by Mau Mau was the reclusive Erick Bowker who had taken up his remote farm in Kinangop; in the Rift Valley as a retirement home..... It was seldom for him to be seen at social functions, lived a solitary life, his two Kikuyu male house servants being his only regular company. Bowkers made what little money he had not from the farm but from the rural store, he ran there, selling clothing and other essential supplies to the African families who worked on the farms in the neighbourhood. The assailants entered the farmhouse just after sunset. They swiftly killed his two house servants and then hacked Bowker to death as he lay in his bath.... (Anderson, 2005, p.88).

Although they looted the farm store before leaving for the forest, Anderson notes that at this stage the conflict seemed more like a crime wave than war.

The immediate response by frightened European farmers was the eviction of the squatter Kikuyu labourers from the settler farms. It was argued that Mau Mau violence was frightening off other sources of labour in the settled areas and that the only way of securing labour was to evict all Kikuyu. Hence, approximately 100,000 Kikuyu squatters were repatriated to the reserves. To fill the vacuum left by the Kikuyu, labourers from other ethnic groups, especially Luhya, Luo, and Kamba were hired (Kanogo, 1987, p.138).

Between January and April 1953, Governor Baring empowered his government with dozens of extreme and wide-ranging laws called Emergency Regulations. These laws included; provisions of communal punishment, curfews, control of individual and mass movement of people, confiscation of property and land, imposition of special taxes, issuance of special documentation and pass, censorship and banning of publications, disbandment of all African political organizations, control and disposition of labour, suspension of due process, and detention without trial (Elkins, 2005, p.55). These regulations were intended to intimidate Africans with the sole aim of forcing them to abandon the Mau Mau movement. Instead, they achieved the contrary; and pushed more Africans towards supporting the movement to expel colonialists.

Part of the new Emergency Regulations established by Governor Baring was the compulsory photographing of all African squatters, a regulation that was vehemently opposed. To many squatters, the regulation implied compromising a belief that, they might eventually acquire land then occupied by European settlers. Thousands of squatters refused to be photographed and the government decided that they too, must be repatriated. Transit camps were established whose reputation was so bad, such that many Kikuyu from the Rift Valley decided to make their own travel arrangements rather than be transited through them (Nottinham, & Rosberg, 1978, p.285).

The murder of Eric Bowler shook settlers from their slumber. They discovered that not all was

well. Africans were very determined and willing to use all means available to oust these settlers from their native land. With the help of fellow Africans residing and working in settler farms, Africans became more lethal. European settlers armed themselves in readiness for the forest fighters, although this never gave them sanctuary against the purposeful Mau Mau adherents. As Anderson (2005, p.93), notes, the African attacks on the European settlers never ceased.

Apparently, towards 1953, European settlers became more susceptible to Mau Mau attacks since quite a large portion of their labourers had taken the oath. On the night of the first day of 1953, two European settlers were hacked to death in Ol'Kallau (Furedi, 1989: op cit 120). As a result, local Europeans raided the farms and confiscated 5,000 sheep and other squatters' property and the government followed this up by ordering the evacuation of all Kikuyu living in the Ol'Kallau area.

On 24th January 1953, three weeks later Mau Mau fighters attacked the Ruck farm in Kinangop and hacked the Ruck family to death. This episode became the definitive movement of the war for the White Highlands (Anderson, 2005, p.93). As Caroline Elkins (2005 p.42), explains the Ruck family, Roger, Esme and their small boy (Michael) were hacked to death by their trusted servants, one of whom had tenderly carried home the child, six years old Michael after he fell from his pony, just days before the attack. After the horrifying experience, the colonial government became conscious of the deteriorating political situation in the colony and the need to put in place measures to contain and overturn the situation.

ROAD TO THE FOREST

Towards the end of 1952 and early 1953, quite several many Europeans died. The Mau Mau adherents killed them using machetes and other crude weapons. However, the assassination of Chief Waruhiu by the Mau Mau led to the declaration of the Emergency on 20th October 1952 by Evelyn Baring. This declaration escalated a full-scale war by the British government against

the Mau Mau Forest fighters. According to Sir Evelyn Baring, the colonial chief Waruhiu, had been one of the strongest supporters of British colonial enterprise in Kenya. The senior chief had embraced Western values, having become a devout Christian, an advocate of British law and order and one of the most outspoken critics of Mau Mau earning him the epitaph “African Churchill” in the British press (Elkins, 2005, p.:35). A patently, two weeks before he died, Chief Waruhiu had been persuading loyal Kikuyu to join the government in stamping out Mau Mau activities (Kanogo, 1987, p.:137).

Africans specifically Mau Mau followers, feted Waruhiu’s death. It was a fight by patriots against a few traitors who with colonial sponsorship, for several decades had siphoned wealth at the expense of the larger African population. The senior chief’s death, however, was a civil justice according to Mau Mau adherents and so most of the Kikuyu land did not mourn, but rather celebrated his murder by dancing and singing songs some of which are still remembered today. (Elkins, 2005, p.36).

The colonial government greatly enraged by the savage act enacted numerous rules targeting Africans. These laws were discriminating, offensive and disgusting and left Africans disgruntled. The most helpless Africans either joined the forest fighters or worked hard for them. As Furedi (1989, p.118), puts it, in many ways, the move of Mau Mau towards a guerilla type of action in the forest could be seen as a direct response to the state of emergency. In the settled farms, the illegal white farm owners began to evict the Kikuyu squatters. Large numbers were expelled from their homes in the Rift Valley by settlers, paranoid that, each formerly loyal Kikuyu employee was waiting for nightfall to exert a bloodthirsty treachery with *pangas* and spears (Bennett, 2012: op. cit 14). By doing nothing to stop the settlers, who often evicted their labourers with illegal force, the government condoned their behaviour; while evicting all Kikuyu from areas where alleged Mau Mau crimes occurred, only became an official policy on 15 December 1952.

The great number of squatters evicted created problems of transportation and accommodation for the government. Temporary detention centres were set up to deal with sorting out the evicted squatters (Furedi, 1989, p. 120). Evicted squatters from Kinangop and the Happy Valley were transported to transit camps (*kiugu*) at Naivasha, Gilgil and Thompson Falls. The motive behind the exercise was to repatriate the repatriates to their original homeland (Metumi, Gaki, Kabete) (Wanjira Kimathi, O.I, 10/11/2015). Living conditions within these camps were unbearable for any human being. Africans were exposed to a world of inadequacies. The government failed to provide them with basic amenities. Eventually, many Africans in the camps succumbed to death because of being neglected by the same system that had put them there in the first place. The conditions in the transit camps as described by Carol Elkins in *the British gulag* (2005 p.58) were horrible;

Thousands in the transit camps suffered from malnutrition, starvation and disease hardly surprising, given that the transit camps had inadequate sanitation or clean water and insufficient ration, if any at all. Most Kikuyu had no means of purchasing food having been deported without compensation for their livestock or outstanding wages. Thousands of the repatriates languished in the transit camps for months or more because there was simply nowhere to put them in the Kenya reserves.

These conditions *pushed more Africans to join the Mau Mau movement.*

However, some people survived and reached their native homes. Kanogo (1989, p.139) explains that the reserves could barely support their indigenous population and additional arrivals from the Rift Valley. This made a bad situation more desperate. Many Africans grew desperate and they chose to continue their anti-imperialist struggle in the forests. Wanjira Kimathi who hailed from Ol’Kallau then explains;

‘My group was taken to Thompson Falls where flour and beans were our daily ration. Later on, the whites became afraid of the people and decided to ferry them to their homes, using lorries. People were taken to Murang’a, Nyeri or Kiambu. There were difficulties during this period. Some people were born in Ol’Kallu and only heard about their extended families in these regions. When they were finally taken to places, they thought their relatives lived, they were handed over to chiefs who then questioned them about their origin and clan affiliations. However, most of them did not survive because their relatives who thought they had come to claim their forefathers’ land were brutal to them. For us, my husband and I on arrival in Nyeri were welcomed by a colonial home guard (Ngati). We had no place to live or a house to sleep in. My husband and I slept in my mother’s hut. Sacks served as our mattresses. We were in pain we were hunted because it was alleged that people who came from the Rift Valley were under oath. Death was apparent and the only easy way to survive was running into the forest (O.I, 10/11/2015)’.

The continuous ignorance of African socio-economic needs by colonial masters ultimately worked against them by pushing more and more Africans into the forest. The immediate outcome of this being was the death of a large number of Europeans in the hands of Mau Mau fighters.

OATHING OF CHILDREN

The exact number of men and women, who joined the Mau Mau liberation movement and launched a guerilla war against colonialists by early 1953, is unknown. However, with the deteriorating political situation in the white highlands and Central province as a whole definitely the number of Africans joining the forest kept on swelling.

Living conditions in the forests were extremely harsh for the former squatters. In European farms, they earned a living by working for the white man. Moreover, they were provided with shelter, food and other social amenities. There were no such

basic amenities in the forests. These tough circumstances forced them to link up with their fellow Africans on the farms, for social amenities and other particulars, eventually enabling them to launch successful expeditions against colonial imperialists.

Children became the Mau Mau war’s ‘middlemen’. They linked forest fighters with Africans in the reserves and settled areas. Their involvement in the war was purely informed by the fact that their innocent looks and tender age easily deceived anti-Mau Mau officers (Mary Waihera O.I. 12/02/2016). They were judged as guiltless and ignorant of the occurrences in their surroundings. The unsuspecting colonial anti-Mau Mau officers left the children to play their trade with minimal interruption. Forest fighters seized this opportunity. They hired children as Mau Mau “detectives”. Eventually, children’s role in the Mau Mau war of freedom became invaluable. They became the unsung heroes of the Mau Mau war, and as Kairu Ngugi a forest fighter in the Aberdare Forest puts it, “this war could not have been fought for more than a month, without the great input and the unyielding support that our scouts gave us” (O.I, 24/1/2016). (Scouts referring to children).

During the war, children had four vital roles; spying, gathering and supplying intelligence, supplying food, and sourcing ammunition. Moreover, brave and old enough children went into the battlefield.

It should be noted roles above, were not performed by any child. For purposes of secrecy and commitment, these noble duties were only assigned to a few who had taken the Mau Mau oath, undergone a rigorous ‘vetting process’ and were deemed strong enough to resist and withstand colonial brutality. Oath initiators would do a background check on the Mau Mau children, to know their personalities and identities. They did this to ensure that none of them would easily be compromised or tricked into revealing proceedings of the oathing ceremony to an un oathed children later. (Mary Wanjiku, O.I, 12/1/2016). It was taboo for children to discuss the

oath with other children who had not undergone the ritual.

Most of the informants confessed to having undergone the oath ritual. They indicated that the exercise happened before the declaration of the state of emergency and were taken unknowingly to the oathing scene by people close and dear to them cousins, friends and sometimes parents. In *Mau Mau's Daughters*, Otieno explains that as a sixteen-year-old school girl, she took the oath during one of the school holidays in 1952 and was ensnared to the oathing site by a cousin-Timothy cousin Timothy Chege (1999 8p.33).

At Gaitumbi, (the region she took the oath) Wambui Otieno (1998,p. 33), explains;

“I was asked whether I was menstruating, and I answered “No” and in turn received a hard slap, the purpose of which was not clear to me. I was then ordered to shed all clothes except my brassiere and underpants. I was led into a poorly lit room where a group of people were casually sitting. On one side were two sugarcane poles standing erect with their tips tied to form an arc. The poles were tall enough for a person to pass underneath. Each initiate was told to walk through the arch seven times. Then, I was tied to the other initiates with a long goat skin, which I later learned was called “Rukwaro” in a single line, we again walked through the two poles seven times. After that, an old man brought a calabash and told each of us to drink a mouthful of a concoction of blood and soil. I nearly threw up because it smelled like a goat’s intestines. However, I forced myself to swallow everything”.

She then took the oath of allegiance, carefully repeating after an instructor, she swore to:

Fight for the soil of Gikuyu and Mumbi’s children, which had been stolen from them by the whites.

If possible, get a gun from a white or a black collaborator and any other valuables or money to help strengthen the movement.

Kill anyone who was against the movement, even if that person was my brother.

Never reveal what had just happened or any other information disclosed to me as a member of the movement and if I don’t keep my word may the oath kill me.

Most of these oath ceremonies were officiated at nightfall, a time when there was minimal interruption since home guards had retired from their routine villages’ surveillance. It was after this endeavour that children in the company of their sponsors retired home. This oath was meant to strengthen and reinforce discipline, commitment, security and secrecy in the underground movement. It was also an effective tool for ensuring obedience, loyalty, truthfulness and devotion to the clandestine movement (Kinyatti, 1992, p. 23). Further, the oath prevented girls from getting married to other communities (Nduriri), that had not taken the oath as well as maintaining their purity by not venturing into prostitution (Mary Wanjiku, & O.I, 06/12/2015). They thus made it known that the children, were one with forest fighters, the people fighting to get back lost lands.

Boys ten to eighteen years old took the oath too. Their oath was simple unlike the one administered to the forest guerillas. Their oath included making them aware that the white man was evil, that the country belonged to them and that they were the generation that could live in the land that they were helping fight for (General Wamugumo, & O.I, 28/11/2015). These lessons also took place in their homes. Their mothers taught them nationalistic values because they too had taken the oath (Maina Ndungu, & O.I, 21/12/2015).

Mwangi Kamunye took the oath as a school-going child. He informed the researcher that the oath was not complicated as compared to the one administered to forest fighters. Both boys and girls were initiated though this was done separately. It was mainly an oral solemn agreement. In addition, during the oath-taking ceremony, animals were killed and part of their flesh used in the ritual. The meat sometimes was

cut and hung around the initiates' necks. The initiators then explained to them, what was required of them. They then took the oath, and swore by it, before the meat was taken away to be used on others. The meat was then eaten (O. II., 29/12/2015).

Mathenge Mwangi underwent the oath ritual at the age of fourteen years. His father took him to the Aberdare Forest where he took the Mau Mau oath. He explained that one evening a few months before the declaration of the state of emergency, Mathenge's father (Mwangi) requested him to accompany him on an evening expedition into the neighbourhood. He obliged not knowing exactly what was awaiting him. They left home just before dusk, taking a path leading to the forest. After a one-hour walk through the bamboo forest, the journey ended in a cave. Apparently, throughout the walk, his father never disclosed their mission and neither did he enquire the same from him. Upon entering the dark cave, Mathenge met other young boys like him seated silently. He joined them. After a few minutes, others came in and the ritual commenced. The oath administrator went round around with a basin of blood and pieces of meat. He would dip the meat into the blood in the basin and make the initiates eat them. Those who hesitated to bite the meat were slapped hard and death threats meted on them. After they had all taken the meat, the young boys were made to swear that they would keep the secrets of the movement and not disclose any information about the movement whatsoever, to anyone. Further, the initiators embarked on a mission to find out whether the boys were brave enough to withstand the adversities awaiting them. One of the elders in the cave pricked their thumb with a pin. They were not supposed to flinch or cry as that would exhibit signs of weakness in them (O.I., 17/02/2016). After this test, the kids were now in the club and society of their fathers.

Taking the oath was imbibing one to the knowledge of another faith. It was like serving a deity that one could not defy. After joining the ranks and file of the movement after a number of oaths, initiates were supposed to perform all tasks bestowed on them. Mary Wanjiku explains an

experience that highlights the courage, commitment and sacrifice that came about with the oath. She explains,

‘I remember one friend whose mother was very mouthy. She happened to let out a secret of where the oath was being administered. As she was moving out of her house days after leaking the Mau Mau secret, she was killed and buried by her sons inside her own house. This was so because sooner or later the Mau Mau could have torched their home because a senior member of their family had betrayed them (O. I., 06/12/2015)’.

The youngest within the society had an opportunity to undergo the oath ritual. This happened when their mothers were initiated into the movement. While strapped on their mothers' back backs oath administrators would touch the young sibling with blood on their forehead and lips. There the Kikuyu believed that the child was also a Mau Mau because he/she tasted the blood or because the mother had taken the oath and the baby would suck her breast (Ruth Murugi, & O.I, 12/1/2016). This was a very strong belief. Although this was not the actual oath, it acted as a sacred ratification of all children and they were supposed to identify themselves with their mothers and be born again in the spirit of the people of the land.

However, however solemn the oath purported to be not all who took the oath abided by it. Some of those who had taken the oath defied it. They surrendered to the white man. They spilt all the secrets that they could recall. Those who surrendered became home guards. They were more dangerous and evil than the white man himself was.

Robert Mungai (O.I., 02/03/2016) explains:

‘Many people took the oath of Gikuyu and Mumbi. Only some home guards denounced it and became agents of the invaders. They did that for monetary gains. They were materialistic since the white man promised all the lands and property could be bequeathed to them in case in case they won. The home

guards who surrendered went ahead and turned against the kindred and killed them solely to get the promised property. The Home Guards were insiders. They led the white man to make invasions, as well as confiscate property belonging to Mau Mau adherents. They killed black people''.

CHILDREN SPYING AND DISSEMINATING INTELLIGENCE

Spying for the forest fighters was not an easy job. It entailed, risking one's life, commitment and outstanding discipline. Any slight mistake in the process of collecting information would translate to a high number of casualties among forest fighters especially if they launched an attack with inadequate intelligence. The children needed to be prepared psychologically for these roles. They were made to understand the reasons for their enrollment in the war. A 'Syllabus' was organized and taught in African independent schools (Kinyatti, 2008). Children were taken through long hours of political indoctrination. Teachers who had already taken the oath actualized this. Specifically, students were taught that British imperialists and their African puppets were the enemies of their country. Secondly, they were taught the importance of secrecy, discipline, commitment and sacrifice in the struggle. Thirdly, they were taught that they had a primary, inherent and inalienable right to Kenya, their country and motherland. Lastly, they were taught Mau Mau songs, which in turn ignited their patriotism (Kinyatti, 2008, p.140). Armed with the aforementioned knowledge children were ready to undertake their assignments.

Before the Mau Mau Forest fighters could launch an expedition against African collaborators, police posts or even Europeans, it was incumbent for them to have prior information on the topography of the area, and the movement of police, to the finest detail. This enabled them to plan successfully in to reduce the aim of reducing the number of casualties, inflicting injury maximally to the enemies, collecting ammunition, or eliminating collaborators. Boys and girls performed this task perfectly now that schools had

all been closed, Mary Waithera (O.I., 12/02/2016) was in the custody of several children whose parents were either in the forest or had died during the war. She noted that every morning she would release the boys, for their daily duty surveillance. In case they saw some home guards, who were easy to identify because of the metal band bands on their arms, they would secretly follow them to identify their destination and their activities then report back to her. In turn, she could report this to the war elders who would then infiltrate the information to the forest fighters (O.I., 12/02/2016).

According to General Wamugumo;

The Kikuyu called these boys as "tuhii twa mibara". Colonial guards and whites had no interest in them. They moved from one area to another playfully looking for the whereabouts of the enemy; they were expert spies. These relatively young boys were seemingly innocent to colonialists. They were not targeted by home guards and therefore suitable as Mau Mau spies. They used to convey to fighters the whereabouts of the home guards. In so doing Mau Mau, fighters were able to find their way into the villages. Fighters were not sending any boy roaming along the roadside. There were some attributes of the child we took an interest in. We sent boys whose parents had taken the oath and were fully aware of the various ways of the Mau Mau. Boys who witnessed a Mau Mau get into their homestead were given a seat and a good meal.

Information on the whereabouts of the home guards and colonial officers, their movements and what information they held helped Mau Mau leaders plan their endeavours (oaths administration and attacks on the settlers). Moreover, if a child spy could get such secretive information, it could save thousands of lives of Mau Mau guerillas as they launched expeditions against colonialists. *Tuhii twa mibara* did a commendable job. Kennedy Kungu a forest fighter explains;

“Young children weren’t involved in the combat. We were only supposed to engage young circumcised adults whose parents were in the Mau Mau movement and those who had taken the oath. During the oath ritual, these young kids used to play along the roadsides looking for any home guards passing by. If they saw the enemy, one of the young child children would run playfully to pass the message and the exercise would stop. The congregation would then disperse and if the home guards would happen to pop in the homestead, there would not be even the slightest sign of an oathing ceremony (O.I., 02/02/2016)”.

Boys were used as emissaries. Being fast runners, they would be employed to audaciously run paramount combat intelligence from one location to another. In this endeavour, children had a genius arrangement, which was imperatively hard for colonialists to detect. Wanjiru Njuguna notes;

It was very hard for us to be apprehended by colonialists. The way the whole thing was organized, there was no room for anyone including the colonial guards to be suspicious. The arrangement was after running for a certain distance, one would hand over the letter to another boy or girl to avoid making the colonial guard suspicious and then return. In a relatively short distance, a letter dispatched by about ten children would reach its destination within the shortest time possible.

It should be pointed out here that, the efficiency of writing letters was scarce. Not all especially those in the forest had writing materials. Furthermore, this was a privilege for the more exposed and educated Africans. However, this was no reason enough not to disseminate vital tip-offs. Kairu Ngugi, (O.I, 24/01/2016) notes, ‘In the absence of pens and papers in the forest to write on one of the forest fighters would be pricked on the skin and the blood was used to write on the banana leaf which served as the paper. The spy kid would then be asked to deliver it. While rolling his wheel along up to the directed point he would drop the banana leaf.’

Despite the organization of Mau Mau spymasters, in some instances, though rare they were apprehended by colonial guards. When this happened, the Mau Mau scouts were brutally harassed for being Mau Mau suspects sometimes to death. Having been confined by the oath, they never disclosed any information to the enemy. Mathenge Waweru notes, ‘The boys had the courage of following every move of the home guards and the white soldiers to trace their moves. However, at times, the guards would be suspicious and the boys would be beaten up. In such a case some of the rude boys would be hit hard to the point of death.’

As the war intensified, children were subjected to intelligence-gathering, roles that entailed greater risks and hardships. They would be deployed to identify collaborators within their neighbourhood. They did the job with precision, determination and finality. General Wamugumo notes;

We sent children to find out whether a certain person was an intelligent officer of the colonial government. We asked them to join the children of the target person and play together while looking for anything that could link the parents with the colonial government. In this case, children were to speak ill of the Mau Mau as a way of attracting dissent or corresponding comments from the children of the target parents, as a trick. They had to identify themselves as anti-Mau Mau to gather information regarding the position of the target family. Such errands were fruitful because children would talk of their fathers as home guards (ngati). This then could be passed on to us and we could therefore identify certain homes as being friendly to the colonial authority (O.I, 28/11/2015).

Scouts were entrusted with crucial intelligence thus Mau Mau leaders were very cautious with them to ensure that there were no loose ends. They were expected to exercise high levels of confidentiality even when subjected to intense screening by colonialists. To ensure that there was no betrayal from this end the Mau Mau employed a very good investigative modus operandi. They

would come enquiring from the boys innocently about an operation they had conducted and in case a boy disclosed the happenings or was thought of being a possible informer of the solicited information, he was killed on the spot. Additionally, any other villager rumoured to have spoken ill of the Mau Mau was assassinated by the Mau Mau faithful (Mwangi Wainaina, & O. II, 20/11/2015).

Big boys beyond the age of rolling of wheels (*tuhii twa mibara*) and not old enough to join forest guerillas had their fair share of responsibilities within the Mau Mau society. This group was known as *cugi* (swing). Just like their name suggests theirs was to 'swing' information from patriotic home guards to the forest fighters. Mathenge Waweru who served as *cugi* until after the death of his father narrates how skillful skillful he was in this endeavour. He states that home guards were divided, some of them assisted the Mau Mau fighters, others, were avoided, as they appeared jealous. The cooperating guards would call us (*cugi*) in the pretence of sending us to bring them tobacco and it was at that particular juncture that they communicated what they wanted the forest fighters to know. At that time, borrowing tobacco served as a channel of communication. Everybody even those who had no appetite for tobacco was forced to use it. The *cugi* would manoeuvre all around and collect information. They took advantage of the fact that their movement was not restricted. They would therefore spy on anyone who was betraying the Mau Mau movement (O.I. op. cit 17/02/2016). Apart from furnishing forest fighters with intelligence, they also solicited guns for them. Having already created rapport with the *kamatimu* (home guards who assisted the Mau Mau fighters), they collected their guns which they handed over to the Mau Mau fighters to use them overnight and return them in the morning.

Mau Mau leaders also engaged girls in surveillance. They would be commissioned for higher and riskier jobs. Just like boys, they too deceived colonial officers of their innocence and successfully performed their respective duties with precision. Otieno (1993, p.40), narrates;

“I was assigned to spy on the Kirwara police post and the Kandara Home Guard post, an installation that Mau Mau intended to attack. Wearing a Bui bui to disguise myself, I travelled from Nairobi by train. Because of my light complexion, I easily passed for somebody from the coast. I deliberately wore the Bui bui to enhance this impression. I visited Kirwara and surveyed the area. I took the relevant information including details about the layout of the police post, the number of Men staffing it, the location of the armoury and the best direction from which to attack- to Ruiru, and it was further relayed to the higher authorities in Nyandarua forest. Kirwara police post was successfully hit and the Mau Mau killed eight police officers”.

Such tasks were left to the more mature, inculcated and self-selfless children.

Children were believed to be very innocent and hence truthful. When home guards came to interrogate them, they were already prepared on how to answer these traitors this traitor (Esther Kameme, & O.I, 18/01/2016). For concealment, the very small African children in the European-occupied areas of the Rift Valley were taught to say, “*Nii Ndiuui*” (I don't know), when asked by the enemy where their parents were and to answer plainly “*Aaca*” (no) when the enemy asked whether they had seen strangers wearing dreadlocks and carrying guns on their shoulders coming into their houses. Young as they were, they were politicized by the struggle and could therefore distinguish between enemies and friends (Kinyatti, 2008, p.140).

Occasionally, Mau Mau leaders tested the level of commitment and how staunch these young boys and girls would be. They subjected them to some probing. They would send a stranger to interrogate children and establish whether government agents had visited them testing whether they would disclose any information. The strangers addressed them by names name but none disclosed any information about anyone who used to or had visited their homes (Esther Kameme, & O.I, 18/01/2016). Those who passed the integrity test

became the Mau Mau renowned detectives. By completely denying the presence of freedom fighters, the children offered them ‘amnesty’ and they carried on with their trade- collecting food and ammunition and gathering information crucial for enabling the swift elimination of collaborators and white people –in the settled areas with minimal suspicion.

Boys in the forest were faced with the cumbersome job of evading white soldiers’ ambushes as they transferred information from the reserves to the forest fighters. General Wamugumo (O. I, 28/11/2015) notes that to evade British soldiers’ ambushes information from the villages was vital. Boys above the age of sixteen years used to be sent to the forest, to alert the Mau Mau warriors of any impending danger and heightened security measures of the colonial government. The boys we hired, as they were energetic, and thus could walk for long distances. Upon receiving the intelligence, we moved deeper into the forest from our base.

PROVISION OF FOOD AND OTHER SUPPLIES

Forest fighters’ received food from Africans in the European settlements, reserves and in the villages enabled. Supplies that kept them afloat came from the aforementioned areas. This task of transporting food had to be performed to perfection. Forest fighters had put their life on the line. They took up arms to reinforce African protests against British imperialists. The ultimate goal of the fight was to trigger a change in the social, political and economic system that kept natives in ignominy and misery. At the epicentre of the organization, were both women (married) and girls charged with the responsibility of dispensing amenities to the forest fighters. Their contributions were instrumental in inspiring the brave resistance of the Mau Mau fighters against colonialists. They supplied patriots in the forest among other things, food, clothes, and medical supplies. These consignments were basic to them.

Young girls were chosen and given the oath. They had the approval of the forest army to run Mau

Mau errands. Further, it was made known to them that the operations were crucial and precarious to the movement hence bound to high levels of purity and sobriety. For instance, as members of the Mau Mau, they were not supposed to maintain close relationship relationships with friends who had not undergone the oath ritual except to obtain information (Kanogo, 1987, p.145).

Between October 1952, after the declaration of a state of emergency and June 1953, arson attacks against European settler’s properties were very common. Military operations by the colonial imperialists were seriously flawed. Their forces had a shortage of manpower a scenario that limited their ability to launch offensive attacks against forest fighters (Bennett, 2012; p.12-16). It was in this period that the Mau Mau looted livestock from European settler farms and drove them to the forest for food. Food and other consignment delivery to the forest was not a hustle, especially due to the disorganization of the colonial security forces. Gathoni Waweru (O.I, 7/3/2016) notes that sometimes Mau Mau would come, and drive a cow with them to the forest for slaughtering. At other selected times, they would make arrangements with women within the reserves, settled areas or villages on ways of getting food.

Gathoni Waweru (O.I, 07/03/2016) further notes that there were people who had connections with the Mau Mau but were still living among the other people. They would therefore agree on a day the Mau Mau fighters from the forest would come for food. At times, Mau Mau fighters used to send one of them as an emissary at night to let people know when they would come for food. Once this information was received, people contributed what they had thus lots of food could be prepared. The food was cooked by women and young girls from the village, in one homestead but the ingredients were contributed by people who supported the Mau Mau course (Wanjiru Kamau, & O.I, 22/11/2015). To disguise the colonialists the raw food was transported to one homestead where it was cooked and later collected by the very young girls. Tabitha Njoki a seven years old girl by the time the Mau Mau war erupted

asserted, “About three of us were given baskets of food to take to a particular house. Afterwards the Mau Mau would take it or the sons in that home would deliver to them in the forest” (O.I, 21/04/2016).

When the Mau Mau came for food, they usually arrived at night of the agreed day. Food would be served to them and the remainder parked in their snap sacks— “*itumbeki*” destined for those in the forest (Mary Waithera, & O.I, 26/12/2016). As this was happening, young children would be left outside scouting the perimeter for British patrols (Wanjiku Ciira, & O.I, 12/01/2016). Young girls helped in the preparation of food. Once the young men came, they could wait outside the houses as a few of them collected the food. They carried this food to the forests. The only danger was the evidence of many footsteps at daybreak. Once the envoy had gone, it was the responsibility of young children especially girls to cut out twigs and sweep the compound, getting rid of the footsteps. (Wanjiru Kamau, & O. I, 22/11/2015). This setup, in which all members of the African community rose and aided each other against a common enemy, left the colonialists susceptible to more and more severe attacks. Moreover, the majority of European settlers were murdered during this period.

After June 1953, British officials became more aggressive against both the Mau Mau in the forests and their sympathizers in the villages. They came up with more offensive policies among them; the Prohibited Area (P.A) policy and the creation of a one-mile strip along the edge of the P.A. The one-mile allowed security forces to monitor the movement of the route allowed security forces to monitor the movement of African Africans between the reserves and the forests. In September, of the same year, the government approved the burning down of property within the strip, which owners had failed to destroy themselves (Bennett, 2012, p.:20). Further, the government- initiated measures to ensure that all stock in the settled areas was kept in the well-fenced boma (pens) inspected regularly and measures to ensure that all stock in the settled areas was kept in the well-fenced *boma*

(pens) which were inspected regularly and were well -guarded at night. At no time was the stock left unattended. In addition, all harvested food was to be guarded and suitably stored. Rations to labourers were to be issued frequently in limited quantities and not in bulk (Kanogo 1987, p.143).

In the villages, a perimeter trench was dug with sharp-edged sticks implanted in a way that no one could get in or go out through any other route apart from the main gate. However, this security measure never barred Mau Mau fighters from accessing food. During the day, Africans busied themselves in preparing their meals. They cooked large amount amounts of food without raising suspicions from the *ngati*. They had to replenish supplies of food to their fighters in the forest. Forest fighters came when Africans were in the villages farming on their lands. In whichever way they came, women knew that they had to eat and they expected that every household they visited had to provide food. Every ridge had to provide food in alternating sequences. The fighters were not cowards, they were fearless (Mwangi Wainaina, & O.I.,20/11/2015).

Colonial oppressive policies prompted Mau Mau sympathizers to seek the services of innocent young girls whose innocence easily disguised African home guards and British soldiers. With this new indispensable arrangement, Mau Mau's Forest fighters were given much-needed emancipation, enabling them to continue with the fierce resistance against European land grabbers.

Due to the numerous attacks by the British soldiers, the Mau Mau moved deeper into the forest. A food transfer system had to be adapted to ensure a steady supply of food. Food was handed over to several individuals until it reached the forest. Mary Wanjiku (O.I, 06/12/2015) explains that girls from one ridge could bring food to the bank of the river. Other girls, from the other ridge could take the food from there until the food got to the target. This way of smuggling food never lasted, as the patriots were reported to the colonial authorities by African collaborators leading to their apprehension. A new strategy had to be

devised to ensure a continuous food supply to the armed men in the forest.

Mary Wanjiku and two of her sisters (young girls) effected affected the new improvisation. She explains;

“We the young girls had to carry food using marebe maybe (Jericans) sometimes used to store honey. We could carry food to the river in pretence that we were on our way to fetch water. The colonial authorities were not concerned with young girls.I had two sisters. We could each get Irebe (jericanjerrican) in the kiondo and set forth to the river at about dusk, on arriving at the river we could meet others waiting. We exchanged our bags of food, fetched water and carried it back home. The home guards never knew this plan. We met them on our way to the river as we carried the food (O.I, 06/12/2015)”.

Africans continued to exploit the naivety of British soldiers and African collaborators to furnish forest fighters with food and other supplies. As days passed by, they invented better and misleading tactics to disguise the security personnel. Esther Kameme explains;

“Our mothers would prepare a meal, which we were given to take to the fighters. We were given pangas and ropes on the pretence that we were on a mission to fetch firewood. Once in the forest, we would spank a tree with a panga and those in the forest would know where food was placed. Interestingly, we never used to meet physically (O.I, 18/01/2016)”.

After placing the food, it was not the concern of the ‘shippers’ to bother whether the delivery got to the intended target. Therefore, apart from the forest fighters, there were quite several scavengers, who perhaps helped themselves with the food, including wild animals. Not once did the forest fighters find the food already consumed by forest ‘collectors’ (Kennedy Kungu, & O.I., 02/02/2016).

To curb this, the Mau Mau leaders in the forest resulted in the use of ‘*Ihii cia mutitu*’ (Forest boys). Stationed in different regions, they guided the girls, delivering food to the Mau Mau camps.

General Wamugumo explains;

Food was always prepared and packed. Every girl had to collect food from a house alone because if they came as a group, the home guards (Ngati) could get suspicious and apprehend them. These girls knew the homes very well and some collected food from their own homes. On their way out with food, their mother could first watch if a home guard was roaming a home guard was roaming nearby. They carried the food with Nyamikwa or Kiondo. These are bags, which carry two buckets of food. In the forest, there were stationed watchdogs at specific intervals along the paths. When they met the first one, he took them to the next watchdog. That was the sequence until the food got to the forest fighters. Those who received food were called ‘ihii cia mititu’ (forest boys).

Upon receiving this food, the head of the troop distributed its portions equally among people in the forest. Every fighter had two skin bags (*Itumbeki*). The forest fighters had ruled that only one of the two skin bags belonged to him, they could eat food from it anytime they felt like. The other one was communal. Fighters only ate from them when asked to do so. If food was delayed for a day, two or a week, fighters ate from the second *itumbeki* which was slightly larger than the first one (Githiri Gacheru, & O.I, 21/12/2015). Forest fighters never abandoned the communal aspect of the African community. Moreover, discipline was paramount. Fighters found to have eaten the ration of the second *Itumbeki* were punished severely.

The girls’ return from the forest was effectively choreographed to ensure that colonialists never apprehended them. Young women and girls who used to deliver food in the forest went into the forest under the pretext of fetching firewood. The colonial authorities could not deny them that privilege. They lived in villages. The *ngatis* and

johnies (British soldiers deployed to exterminate Mau Mau warriors) knew that they were on their routine activity of fetching firewood. They used to wrap food using *kiondo* in a different way from the norm making it difficult for the colonialists to know their motives. They had taken the oath and thus knew hideouts resided by the forest fighters in the forest (General Wamugumo, & O. I, 28/11/2015). In addition, they were taught techniques and skills that helped them elude home guards. They mastered them to perfection. Some included:

Once the girls took food to the forest, their mothers were not supposed to shut the door, so the girls didn't need to knock to get into the house.

They were not supposed to light any fire upon getting back home.

On arrival, they were first supposed to rush to the toilet before getting into the house, so that in case anyone saw them, they could claim to have come from the toilet.

They were to hide the bags at the base of the forest. If they carried these *nyamikwa* (bags) to the village, people could have known that they had already delivered food to the forest (General Wamugumo, O.I, 28/11/2015).

Such kind of arrangements enabled the girls to deliver food into the forest diligently. Apart from food, unarmed Africans in the European farms, reserves and forest villages supplied the freedom fighters with other pivotal consignments (Clothes, medical supplies, bottles for the manufacture of guns) that enhanced their stay in the forest.

Apart from supplying forest fighters with food, women and girls also availed sweaters to them. Girls left in the villages knit these sweaters. Girls spent most of their time knitting sweaters. (Gathoni Waweru, & O.I, 7/3/2016).

Cigarettes were a part of consignments delivered to forest fighters. Many Africans who worked in settlers, and farms learned smoking from European farm owners. By the time, they entered the forest most of them were chain smokers. They became addicts. They had to be supplied

continuously with cigars. Sometimes they purchased cigarettes using the little cash they collected during the oathing ceremony and after looting the European settlers. Robert Mungai (O.I, 02/03/2016) a fifteen-year-old at the time, explains how he supplied the highly coveted item to African soldiers in the forest. He explains that, while carrying books, pencils, and in uniform, he would pretend he was on his way to school. He would run to town to buy cigarettes, from the Indian shopkeeper. He would hide the cigarettes in between the pages of his books. As he undertook these errands, he would come face to face with white soldiers, who demanded to know where the Mau Mau were hiding. He would simply put them away by saying "*mimi apana jua*" (I don't know). Disguised by his innocence and the uniform, they would let him go. His home was not far away from the forest hence without haste he would deliver the cigars to them. Once the errands were exhausted, Robert Mungai (O.I, 02/03/2016), further explained;

They used to come to our homes at night and demand that the cargo be delivered by a certain date and time. This is the reason that the white men burn entire houses in the shamba (farm) and people are forced into the villages to minimize their contact with the Mau Mau.

The discussion above has elucidated that organs within the Mau Mau fabric were all functional leading to the success of the forest fighters. Every African perfected his or her task making imperialists have an uphill task in quelling the havoc. Much credit must be accorded to young boys, girls, and children who, ordinarily might have been thought to be weak, vulnerable and deserving of greater protection, but through their contributions, they became expendables.

SOLICITING INFORMATION AND FIREARMS

At the inception of the Mau Mau war, their chief weapon was a *panga*, although they still used arrows, spears, and swords among other weapons. They attacked and hacked both European settlers

and their accomplices using these crude weapons as a means of striking fear amongst them (Elkin, 2005, 5p.:35-45).

The war became fiercer, there was a need for more lethal weapons that could match those used by European soldiers. Europeans' guns were superior compared to African machetes. As a result, the war council encouraged its members to collect firearms (Itote, 1967, p.:43). Several means would later be employed in pursuit of acquiring firearms. They included theft or making purchases from compromised police and military *askaris*, giving incentives and rewards for every gun and cartridge and the Kenya prostitutes in Nairobi whose contribution to the cause was to give their professional services for one cartridge, which in their emergency tariff was considered equivalent (Majdalany, 1962, p.186).

Every European settler murdered in the Rift Valley had his gun seized by the attackers. On March 26, 1953, Mau Mau attacked Naivasha police station in the Rift Valley and harvested a basket full of firearms and cartridges. In this raid, Mau Mau guerillas executed a well-planned swoop. They broke into the armoury stole a large supply of firearms and ammunitions and released Mau Mau prisoners before making their escape (Elkins, 2005, p.44). This Mau Mau guerilla expedition was an embarrassment to the British security forces.

The war council also acquired guns by promising rewards. Itote (19693, p.:43) notes; that as an incentive, rewards were offered; Shs. 200 for a 303, Shs., 100 for a pistol, Shs. 10 for a grenade and other amounts, depending on the size of the weapon. A Bren gun, for example, fetched Shs. 500 and Sten gun Shs.250, while ammunition was worth 25 cent cents a bullet. Few people received any rewards and Itote for once received nothing although he collected many guns. Nevertheless, the incentives were necessary to make the younger people aware of the vital need for weapons. Itote (1967, p. 44), further explains that they were anxious to get arms that once, when they broke into a shop in River Road (Nairobi) and stole

twelve guns; they were so elated that in the end did not even bother with the nearby cashbox.

Young energetic men were mostly contacted after war leaders hatched a plan of stealing weapons. Mwangi Kariithi (O. II., 2016) after being circumcised joined the forest fighters in the Aberdare Forest. He explains an escapade in which Mau Mau attacked a British camp and was able to harvest quite several weapons.

The whites went for their training in their Nanyuki base. The Mau Mau generals hatched a plan. Together with General Kago and Dedan Kimathi, we attacked Nanyukii and killed many whites; stole guns and ran back to the forest. Anyone who had no gun in our camp acquired one. We attacked at night around 2:00 am in the morning.

As a result of that successful expedition against the British soldiers, a song was composed:

Nitwathire nanyuki-ii

*Turi iKumi na atano
Ii gucharia makaraMakara
Ii tuhure nyakeru
Nitwagereire muiga Iii twakora murimi
Ii twamuitia tuhutii
Ii twaguthie thabari
Iii kimondo nioigire
Ndubia irugwo nyingi
Ii njambaa cia uugikuyu niiguthie thabari
Iii twakinya mairu keenda
Iii kwa maathaiMaathai
Ii twanyita ribotii nanyukii-ii ti kwegu
Ndirangu wa muthura
Akiandika marua
Ii maguthie nanyuki-ii
Ii gukura turio oo guku
Ii jananga nioigire nituguakia mwaki
Iii na Nyakeru youka tuikanie rabuta
Wachira wa thirikwa unyite na unumie
Iii jamba cia uugikuyu kiguoya tikiega.*

*We travelled to Nanyuki-ii
In a convoy of fifteen
Searching for coal
For fighting the white man
We passed through Muiga*

*Came across murimii
 He gave us some leaves
 Because we were on a journey
 Kimondo said to them
 Prepare barrels of tea
 Because brave men of Uugikuyu are on a journey
 We came to mairu kenda
 Land of the Maasai
 We got a report that Nanyukii wasn't a friendly zone
 Ndirangu wa Muthura
 Wrote a letter
 To permit us to go to Nanyuki
 It will rain while still here
 Jananga said that we start a fire
 And if the white man comes, we throw rabuta
 Wachira wa Thirikwa
 Hold me right and tight
 Iii brave men of uugikuyu
 A coward has no right*

Girls and women were very resourceful in the Mau Mau war in the acquisition of firearms. They had mastered several genius techniques for obtaining weapons. The promiscuous soldiers became their target prey. Itote (1967, p.100-101), explains;

After a government 'swoop' the soldiers were returned to the camp. One of them was attracted to a pretty girl along the way and dropped out to chat with her, three of her girlfriends, s stayed discreetly in the background. Flattered by her interest and by her lively response, the soldier forgot the circumstances and suggested they leave the roadside for a more secluded spot. The girl agreed, to his obvious delight and led him into a banana grove where she threw herself on the ground. The soldier's good fortune lasted only a moment longer. However, as he joined in an embrace the three girlfriends, grabbed him from behind and quickly tied his legs, while the original temptress dashed off with his Bren gun. They left him helpless, undoubtedly furious and frustrated, knowing he had sold his weapon for mere play.

The beauty of African girls was always a weak spot for the anti-Mau Mau soldiers. Every time they encountered young beautiful African girls, European soldiers frequently lost their wits. African, fighters took full advantage of this weakness to collect as many guns as possible. Wanjira Kimathi narrates an incidence incident in which two beautiful girls were used to lure colonial guards into a party in which, not only were their guns seized but they were also slayed by the African army. She states that Njeeri daughter of Kariara and Njooki daughter of Iyego welcomed fifteen guards to a beer party. Every guard had a gun. Njeri and Njoki were in a plan to get them drunk. After the guards had drunk many horns of beer, they became excessively drunk, Njeeri and Njooki alerted Mau Mau guerillas who appeared, killed them and stole their guns together with bullets. (Wanjira Kimathi, 10/11/2015). So successful was the ambush that both Njeeri and Njooki became heroines. To honour them for their courage, wisdom and toughness a song was composed;

*Njeeri daughter of kariara
 Njooki daughter of iyego
 They are the ones in the snapshots
 Serving the tribe
 The snapshots we have
 Were snapped at Kinyona
 We were consulting a medicine man
 Wang'ombe the medicine man was consulting the gods
 We visited one administrator
 He was of three stars
 They inquired if we were the party fighting for freedom
 We talked with courage
 Of knowing our course
 We asked our God to bless His children
 Friends, problems are known to men
 Let us drink with Ndungu
 Then kill John's friend
 Later give him the cause
 That lanky man you see
 Is Ndung'u son of Gicheru
 He brings down fighter jets
 Coming to destroy the army
 (Wanjira Kimathi, 10/11/2015)*

Girls in urban centres contributed immensely to looting guns for the African army. However, the risks were equally high with the dangerous obligation at hand. Girls had to be very cautious.

Wambui Otieno (1998, p.:39), explains;

.....the girls would arrive at Dinaz Bar in the evening looking their best. They smoked and drank a lot. This was important because it encouraged the soldiers to indulge themselves. As for the girls, whenever they felt they were getting tipsy, they were under instruction to go to the toilet and induce vomiting by pushing their finger fingers as far down the throat as they would. This left them in a more sober state than their soldier partners. When it was time to leave for the girls' lodgings, taxis driven by our men were ready. After dropping the passengers off, the taxi would wait at a pre-arranged place because the women might emerge anytime with the evening's prize catch, the guns and ammunition. Sometimes they got cash as well. Once the girl was back in the taxi, a quick getaway was made.

The risk these girls exposed themselves to was super-colossal especially if their mission was aborted and were apprehended as thieves. Interestingly, most of these exercises had a successful ending.

These girls had taken the oath and they had total commitment, dedication and determination. They completely surrendered their safety for the sake of increasing the number of guns owned by guerilla fighters. These young women and girls approached home guard camps and barracks reservedly and cautiously and stole guns and bullets. Although most of the war leaders were apprehensive of this means, apparently any method that could secure arms was acceptable. Security at the barracks was lax for them, at the barracks they were treated as prostitutes, which served their purpose. This way they managed to smuggle out guns and sometimes a whole belt of live ammunition in their handbags without interception (Otieno, 1998, p. 39).

Although sex before marriage was a taboo among the Kikuyu community, during the Mau Mau struggle, girls were allowed to flirt with white men for the sole purpose of dispossessing them of their guns and ammunition. In addition, sometimes, African girls would be forced to love home guards in order to create an enabling environment to steal guns. Once mutual trust had developed, home guards would invite the girl to his home. The girl in return would trick the man to bed in his hut. Ultimately, the girl made sure that she escaped with the gun at night while the home guard was asleep. When she took the gun to Mau Mau leaders. She would be accorded medals and honour since acquiring guns through this means was a risky affair only for the strong at heart (General Wamugumo, O.I, 28/11/2015). In other instances, the Mau Mau and girls in the village worked together in pursuit of the guns. According to Githiiri Gacheru (O.I. 21/12/2015), women in the reserves played a big role. They used to seduce colonial guards and *ngati* and lure them to specific locations where the forest fighters had authorized. The women could sweetly ask their lovers to let them have a touch of their guns. The Mau Mau could then appear and give an ultimatum to guards either to surrender and join them or be killed. They were killed or set free if they cooperated. Those choreographed situations were always successful for the Mau Mau fighters.

Once the guns and ammunitions ammunition were acquired, women and girls in the villages were charged with the responsibility of transporting them to the Mau Mau warriors in the forest. At times women would wrap them around the thighs of infants, then tie the young children onto their backs with a cloth and make a delivery to the forest edge (Elkin, 2005, p.:74).

Despite all the risks involved, boys and girls performed tasks expected of them wholeheartedly with the patriotic aim of assisting Mau Mau fighters to drive oppressive colonialists out of their motherland.

YOUNG BOYS AND GIRLS ON THE BATTLEFRONT

The socio-economic and political policies of imperialists did not only affect the parent and the aged in the society but also young children, both boys and girls as discussed in this chapter. As a result, a number of them joined their elder siblings and parents in the forest in an effort to defend their community's sovereignty and drive away the white land grabbers.

A portion of the young boys and girls who entered the forest took part in direct combat. Wanjira Kimathi (O.I, 10/11/2015), was in the Aberdare Forest for three and half years. She says that she fought alongside two young uncircumcised boys Mathaa and Wagichu. They were deported from Nyandarua around Lake Feteni (Olborosat) to Murang'a. Due to numerous attacks on their homestead by the home guards, they opted to join the forest fighters. Wanjira Kimathi further notes that they were tall and muscular and one could not tell them apart from the others. They fought bravely and smartly as the other men. They had nowhere to undergo circumcision, however they later got circumcised in prison.

However, boys' and girls' roles were not limited to combat. They did perform other support tasks that enabled fighters to deliver maximally on the battlefield. They served as porters and cooks. Moreover, they performed other minor jobs assigned to them. In case a Mau Mau fighter was shot in battle, the young boys had to carry the injured man to their doctors in the forest. That was in case they had the chance to carry the man in the continuing battle. If by bad luck the victim died, his fellow fighters could carry him. In addition, Wanjiku Chiira (O.I, 12/01/2016) recounts how she entered the forest. Having been deported to Murang'a from Kinangop, she experienced excessive brutality from colonialists. She notes that they were never safe within the reserve and thus opted to join the forest fighters. While in the forest, they cooked for the forest fighters, looted from settler's farms, crops from their small farms or raw food (*Githeri*) that came from the villages. While not cooking, she records that, they were

involved in cutting grasses to make Mau Mau houses (*Nyumbu cia kahehia*) which had sloppy roofs. These houses were built in the bushes and caves. White soldiers knew the existence of such houses but they dared not attack. The moorlands, girls and women converted them into praying grounds.

It is also worth noting that other groups of young adults entered other groups of young adults entered the forest due to colonial brutality meted out by white soldiers and home guards. One such individual was Ruth Macharia. As a pretty young girl, she witnessed and could not stomach the horror attacks bestowed on girls her age. She explains that the home guards would invade the village, arrest small girls take them to the police post, where they would be sexually harassed and in most cases raped. To escape a similar ordeal, she went to the forest. Other female informants also echoed similar sentiments. (op. cit O.I. 16/12/2015). Teenage boys also joined the forests. In the reserves, they were killed recklessly. They had to be in the forest to survive.

While in their 'patriotic duty', men in the forest were forbidden from having canal knowledge with girls and women in the forest. It was widely believed that the fighters involved would die. (Itote, (1967, p. 78) explains; Girls that girls were forbidden to associate intimately with our soldiers, especially with the rank and file. A woman who became emotionally involved with a forest fighter and then quarrelled with him could neglect her duty either deliberately or unwillingly.

Forest soldiers had to remain focused and exercise high levels of integrity. If anyone became involved with a member of the opposite sex, he or she could easily be singled out. As Mwangi Kariithi (O.I, 07/01/2016) explains, it was not a challenge to identify lawbreakers. If a woman was involved, in a quickie with a soldier, there was a prophet who would notice and point at her. The guilty woman would be shot on the spot. Soldiers had to protect themselves from bodily pleasures. If one had such an encounter, he could inflict *thahu* (bad omen) on other fighters which according to tradition could have unforeseen

consequences on the fighters especially when out on an expedition.

In this paper we have discussed the coming of the Europeans to Naivasha East, their economic activities and the various roles children played in the Mau Mau movement. We have indicated that the coming and settlement of Europeans was facilitated by the completion of the Ugandan railway. In Kinangop and Wanjohi Valley, Europeans' main economic activity was agriculture. Labour was solicited from African squatters whose land had been alienated.

The treatment Africans received while working in European farms pushed them into joining the Mau Mau movement. They received the oath just like other Mau Mau adherents. They spied and disseminated intelligence to the forest fighters, and solicited firearms and other consignment consignments required by fighters while a few went into the battlefield. The colonialists evicted squatters from the highlands, enacted the institution of the home guards and confined the Africans into villages to monitor them effectively. In spite of the fact that even though the colonial imperialists defeated Africans, the process of decolonization reached its peak in 1963 causing the extinction of existing societal order, and giving rise to new social relations. In the new societal order, the Africans were to govern themselves.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the role children played in the Mau Mau movement. Their roles in the Mau Mau movement were effectively carried out due to their innocent appearance, which disguised them from the eyes of colonial guards. Children plied their trade smoothly assisting the forest fighters to sustain expeditions against the colonialists. The support that both young boys and girls gave the Mau Mau guerillas was responsible for the sustained resistance by the Mau Mau fighters between 1952 to 1956. This study has accorded children their rightful place in the history of decolonisation in Kenya.

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