

CONFLICT MAPPING AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS FOR PEACE BUILDING PROGRAMME IN ETHIOPIA



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II CONFLICT MAPPING AND CONTEXT ANALYSIS FOR PEACE BUILDING PROGRAMME IN ETHIOPIA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Pages
Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction	10
1.1. Background of the study	10
1.2. Overview of the Faith Actors Response Program	10
1.3. Objectives of Conflict Mapping and Analysis	12
2. Research Design, Methods of Data Collection and Analysis	16
2.1. Data Collection Methods	17
2.2. The Research Sites	18
3. Literature Review Approach and Findings	20
3.1. Few conceptions and definitions of conflict and peace	21
3.2. Peacemaking through Faith in Action	22
3.3. The Fundamentals of Conflict Mapping and Analysis	22
3.4. Framework for Analysis	24
4. Conflict Context in Ethiopia	28
4.1. Peace and Conflict Trends in Ethiopia	29
4.2. Causes of conflicts	36
4.3. Policy and Legal Frameworks to address conflicts	38
4.4. Main actors in conflicts and conflict prevention in Ethiopia	42
4.5. Faith Actors in peacebuilding in Ethiopian	50
5. Presentation of Fieldwork Findings	50
5.1. Conflict in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia border areas	50
5.2. Conflict in Gambella Region	58
5.3. Conflict in Central Gondor Zone-Chilga	67
5.4. Conflict in the Oromo Special Zone of the Amhara Region: Kemisie	73
5.5. Conflict in North Shewa: Ataye	79
6. Scenario Building	84
7. Essential Entry Points for Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion	88
8. Conclusion and Recommendations	92
9. Annex	97
Terms of Reference	97
Reference	104

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Underlying causes of internal conflict	23
Table 2: Example of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia	30
Table 3: Actors in conflict prevention and resolutions	37
Table 4: Major actors in peacebuilding in Ethiopia	45
Table 5: key drivers, push and pull conflict factors in Gumuz-Oromo conflicts	52
Table 6: Conflict triggering factors in Gambella	59
Table 7: Opportunities for peacebuilding and social cohesion	66
Table 8: Models of identity	68
Table 9: Peace building actors in Kemisie	77
Table 10: Conflict actors in Ataye	80

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
ECC	Ethiopian Catholic Church
EECMY-PO	Ethiopian Evangelical Church MekaneYesus – Peace Office
EMRDA	Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association
EOC-DICAC	Ethiopian Orthodox Church-Development Inter-Church Aid Commission
EOTC	Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church
FBOs	Faith-Based Organizations
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HOF	House of Federation
IRCE	Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia
KII	Key Informant Interview
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents findings from a conflict mapping and analysis study in Ethiopia commissioned by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) as part of the organization's Peacebuilding initiative: Towards a National Agenda for Peace and Social Cohesion in Ethiopia: The Faith Actors Response Program. Funded by the Swedish Embassy in Ethiopia and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is jointly implemented by NCA and Church of Sweden. The local Faith-Based partners of the program include Ethiopian Orthodox Church- Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC), Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Peace Office (EECMY-PO), Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE), and Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Association (EMRDA).

Objectives and Methods

The purpose of the study is to gain a better understanding of the nature and dynamics of conflicts, their causes, types, drivers, triggers, and actors at both national and community levels. It also identifies the performance of faith actors in conflict transformation and peacebuilding and their capacity to mobilize women and youth in the support of conflict transformation and peacebuilding efforts. The study also aimed at identifying local priority areas of focus for setting crucial benchmarks/strategies to inform NCA's peacebuilding and social cohesion programming and interventions.

The study employed participatory approaches of data collection that included key informant interviews, focus group discussions and street walk-in interviews. The participants included local government officials, security personnel, development partner officials, community leaders, religious leaders, youth, and women in the study communities. Additionally, a comprehensive literature review was conducted before the fieldwork to guide the tool development process and situate the study in context.

Context Analysis and Conflict Mapping Findings

Since 2014, Ethiopia has experienced violent conflicts with alarmingly increased frequency and magnitude. The findings indicate that most of those conflicts are linked to the sharp increase in militant ethnic nationalists against a backdrop of state and party fragility. The findings show that the nature and dynamics of conflicts in the study areas are intricate and interrelated. Politicized

ethnicity is found to be the main source of conflicts. In addition, poorly defined boundaries of the ethnically designated regional states, struggle for political power among opposing political forces; corruption and impunity; issues of natural resource management; perceived as well as actual discrimination and marginalization; high-level youth unemployment, religious fundamentalism, and the refugee crisis are all interwoven to influence conflict dynamics in the study localities.

The study identified various actors involved in conflicts at the national level. These include dominant political parties/forces, Federal and Regional security forces, and various armed groups. The major actors involved in the local conflicts include ethnocentric/corrupted political elites; ethnic-identity-based political parties; local administrators who have supports from higher levels; organized youth groups/mobs; some media institutions and operators; unidentified armed groups; regional security forces; the army; investors and third parties; arms dealers; fundamentalist Islamic leaders and Islamism educators.

A wide range of stakeholders are also involved in conflict transformation efforts, such as peacebuilding and fostering social cohesion. Some of these include faith-based actors, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, academic institutions, and others.

The study also identified and mapped the capacity gaps of actors in terms of their peacebuilding efforts. The main key capacity gaps include lack of professionally trained actors in peacebuilding efforts; lack of necessary skills to diagnose tensions/violence/conflicts that have political, ethnic, or religious roots, or a combination of these; and lack of direct and sustained engagement in peace-building and social cohesion activities that empower them to seek remedy, including justice and reconciliation measures.

The findings also revealed several salient factors of stability/peacebuilding capacities that exist in the study areas that can act as a countervailing force to check on and neutralize the drivers of conflict. These include: a) a long-lasting and strong relationship among the different ethnic groups, and that relationship has the potential to trump some of the recent divisions; b) the presence of different faith actors that have a close affinity with the population; c) rich history of traditional mechanisms for conflict resolution and social cohesion; and d) the presence of NGOs and civil society organizations that implement peace-building and social cohesion activities with a well-established base at the community level.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings along with the objectives of the study, the following recommendations can be forwarded to local governments in the study areas, the program, and faith actors.

Measures to strengthen engagement with government:

- ✓ The government should undertake a participatory and comprehensive demarcation of boundaries that are sources of conflicts in the study areas. Supporting and encouraging the Border Commission, newly established by the government, could be a good step forward.
- ✓ Local governments should commit specific budgets and plans for conflict prevention, management, and resolutions activities; Administrative units at different levels should take appropriate and timely actions before contentious issues escalate to violent conflicts;
- ✓ At a national level, organize forums that involve government and opposition groups/parties to promote non-ethnic, non-tribal multi-party democracy as the only viable option to address the underlying causes of conflict and guarantee stability, equity, and development;
- ✓ Utmost emphasis should be given to promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding; and when conflicts imbue, the concerned entities at all levels of government and their partners including the faith organizations like NCA should take quick proactive measures to curtail and control conflicts before they cause damages; and
- ✓ Results of the study and even court verdicts have established that a good number of office holders and security forces were implicated in the conflicts in Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Amhara regions. Government has to ensure the independence/neutrality of office holders and security forces at all levels.

Measures to strengthen engagement with the religious actors:

- ✓ Support initiatives that will enable religious leaders in all study areas to re-establish contact, trust, and confidence and engage in face-to-face dialogues at a community level;
- ✓ Provide a forum for high-profile religious leaders to demonstrate interfaith harmony and condemn violent conflicts;
- ✓ Train religious leaders and actors to diagnose issues related to violence and its incitement and possible measures and strategies to prevent and/or counter-violence;
- ✓ Organize forums/workshops that bring religious leaders from different faiths and beliefs to jointly seek common moral and theological ground to address conflicts and promote peace and coexistence;
- ✓ Support religious leaders and actors to identify and train influential youth and women to spread messages of peace, tolerance, and respect in the communities;
- ✓ Train religious leaders and actors on the importance and use of traditional and social media to spread peace messages in the local languages; and
- ✓ Support religious leaders and actors to identify extremist arguments and publicly respond with counter messages based on religious scriptures and principles.

Measures to strengthen engagement with the youth:

- ✓ Educate the youth in all study areas on intercultural and interreligious communication so that they can better understand, respect, and value ethnic and religious differences as blessings/opportunities than as threats to one another.
- ✓ Train the youth in all study areas on how to distinguish between tensions/violence that have political and ethnic roots, or a combination of them; on the indispensability of independent social cohesion and peacebuilding efforts
- ✓ Train the youth in all study areas to recognize the difference between offensive speech, hate speech, and incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence;
- ✓ Train youth faith groups such as youth peace choirs in mobilizing their peers and others in peacebuilding;
- ✓ Create forums for dialogue involving youth particularly those involved in mob violence in all study areas; and
- ✓ Provide youth in the study communities with economic and educational opportunities.

Measures to strengthen engagement with the women:

- ✓ Train women to better advocate their positions in peacebuilding to politicians, government officials, and other stakeholders;
- ✓ Provide financial and technical support to sustain women peacebuilding efforts such as women peace committees;
- ✓ Organize workshops that aim at sustaining interfaith and intra-faith relationship-building among women;
- ✓ Organize visits for women of faith across the regions to share best practices, promote the role of women in peacebuilding as well as accept and celebrate religious diversity;

- ✓ Strengthen the protection and representation of women affected and displaced by violent conflicts paying special attention to their health, rehabilitation, and training needs;
- ✓ Train women in how to identify conflict causes, triggers, actors as well as strategies for conflict resolution and transformations;
- ✓ Ensure women are actively participating in the design and implementation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities at different levels, and empower women economically to strengthen their resilience to conflicts.

1

INTRODUCTION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Conflicts in Ethiopia are historically rooted and very complex. These conflicts are largely made out of actors, events, relationships, and influencing factors such as economy, geography, or history. Understanding these factors requires a systemic analysis approach that draws on a two-tiered analysis, macro, and mezzo levels. The macro-level analysis of this study aims at understanding the overarching national aspects of conflict, mainly conflict history, conflict actors, conflict context, conflict issues, and conflict dynamics. The mezzo level analysis aims to assess the root causes/drivers of conflict, triggers, and actors, typical factors for and against peace in the project localities.

The theoretical framework used for exploring conflicts in this study includes the complexity theory, a sociological approach that envisions conflict as a complex set of inter-related and inter-dependent systems, and conflict transformation theory that has the potential to understand factors that induce change to transform a conflict towards peace.

This study in general comprises an actor analysis that identifies the primary and secondary actors involved in conflicts at a national and community levels. The establishment of the root causes, which also includes actors' motivations and interests, comprises another important part of the analysis. The conflict dynamics are identified and explored with a specific focus on issues, scope, and stages of conflicts. The study also addressed issues related to the capacity of faith-based actors in mobilizing youth and women for peace and social cohesion. Relevant recommendations are finally delineated to inform the peace-building initiatives of NCA and its partners.

1.2 Overview of the Peacebuilding Program

The Peacebuilding Program is an initiative by NCA with ACT Church of Sweden based on the existing needs of its partners to promote social cohesion and build peace. It aims to create an enabling environment to mobilize religious actors, men, women, and youth who are representing faith communities and faith institutions in Ethiopia. The program intends to strengthen weak and non-existing conflict handling mechanisms through trained religious actors.

An expected effect of such intervention is to reduce violence and strengthen social cohesion, reflected by improved intergroup relations and positive inter-communal interaction in the program areas. The program is premised on the belief that creating such opportunities for faith-based actors will help effectively address the current conflict dynamics in Ethiopia that are highly dominated by identity-related, inter-communal tension, and violence.

The program works in partnership with four key FBOs namely the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE); Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC); Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Peace Office (EECMY-PO); and Muslims Relief and Development Association (EMRDA).

The program targets areas that have recently been experiencing violent conflicts specifically in the bordering sites of eastern Benishangul-Gumuz and western Oromia regions, Amhara region, Arsi zone of Oromia region, and Gambella region. The four expected outcomes of the program include:

- ✓ Outcome 1: Religious Actors promote social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation on local and national levels;
- ✓ Outcome 2: Women of faith's participation and influence in promoting social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation on local and national levels have increased; Outcome 3: Increased participation and influence of youth in peace processes; and
- ✓ Outcome 4: The program providers' capacity and quality of interventions are enhanced.

At the community level, the program targets religious actors, women, men, and youth representing faith communities who are in a position and motivated to be engaged in the promotion of social cohesion and conflict transformation or reconciliation work. At the individual level, the program promotes their sense of ability and responsibility to contribute to social cohesion in their communities. Further, the program engages with various duty bearers such as local, federal, and national administration, media practitioners, political actors, traditional leaders, and religious leaders – both the ones who can be actors for peace as well as those who act as spoilers. The program generally follows an approach that snowballs from personal to social and local to national and sometimes vice versa, helping all concerned to recognize the connections and make profound differences in their own lives.

1.3 Objectives of Conflict Mapping and Analysis

Over the past few years, Ethiopia has experienced a surge in violent conflicts. These conflicts have resulted in human loss, large-scale displacements, injuries, and material damages. An understanding of these conflicts is necessary to determine the most appropriate means of mobilizing early and effective responses or interventions. In this regard, conflict mapping and analysis serves as an important source of information to gain a deeper understanding of the conflict contexts and plan effective interventions in areas affected by violent conflicts and insecurity. Overall, the conflict mapping and analysis study was guided by the following specific objectives in the course of data collection, analysis, and presentation of the findings:

The specific objectives of the mapping exercise are as follows:

Map the profile of conflict, its trends, and key actors at the national level:

- ✓ Identify the overall picture of the conflict in the country and its trends including major actors in the conflict;
- ✓ Identify and document the root causes/drivers of conflict, triggers, typical factors for and against peace;
- ✓ Document the added value and the main challenges of faith actors for peace-building and social cohesion and guide the program providing key recommendations in this regard;
- ✓ Identify key actors highlighting their thematic priorities and geographic focus including thematic areas of focus on women and youth; and
- ✓ Identify key platforms and coordination mechanisms related to peace building and reconciliation and identify opportunities for future collaboration and engagements.

Map out the capacity of faith actors in mobilizing women and youth:

- ✓ Identify existing capacity of faith actors in mobilizing women and youth; and
- ✓ Provide advice/recommendations for the program and faith actors in mobilizing women and youth.

Identify local priority areas of focus for the program and projects aligned to it:

- ✓ Identify and document the root causes/drivers of conflict, triggers, actors, typical factors for and against peace in each project locality;
- ✓ Identify key areas for policy advocacy and major policy issues related to peace and reconciliation;
- ✓ Identify the priority issue of focus for a specific location where the peace-building projects are going to be implemented;
- ✓ Recommend coordination platforms of relevance at both at local and national levels;
- ✓ Provide baseline data for the program concerning the level of interaction between and among the conflicting groups which can be compared at the end of the program period; and
- ✓ Provide input into the indicators of the results framework of the peace-building program.

2 RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

2. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

This study was conducted at the macro and mezzo levels. This two-tiered analysis makes it possible to give a clearer and more comprehensive account of conflicts in Ethiopia in general and the research sites in particular. The macro-level analysis was designed to get a general view of the conflict at the national level. A macro analysis of a conflict focused on the understanding of conflict history, conflict actors, conflict context, conflict issues, and conflict dynamics. The macro-level analysis involved a systematic literature review. The mezzo level analysis on the other hand focused on the assessment of conflict at specific geographic areas selected as study sites for primary data collection.

This study employed qualitative research methods that allowed interviewees to express, in detail, their thoughts about existing conflicts in their communities. The research methodology was developed to specifically understand the participants' views about the various types of conflicts that exist in their communities, critical factors that drive conflicts, key actors in the conflicts, and the roles of faith-based actors, women, and youth in conflict and peacebuilding, challenges and the needs for improved peacebuilding efforts at local levels.

The tools were tailored to the specific category of respondents. In each location, focus group discussions were held with three different stakeholder groups, namely religious leaders, women's groups, and youth groups. The research tools were translated into Afan Oromo, Amharic, and Aguak, and Nuer languages. Before the analysis, the field data was reviewed and quality-checked by the researchers. A validation workshop involving key stakeholders and partners was held to review and validate information, data, and evidence of the draft report.

In all interviews and focus groups discussions, informed consent was obtained from all respondents and participants. Due emphasis is also given to the confidentiality and anonymity issues to protect the privacy of the study subjects while collecting, analyzing, and reporting data. Names or any other personally identifying information of the study participants are removed from the data.

2.1. Data Collection Methods

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): In the field, 78 key informant interviews were conducted with various respondents. These categories of informants include Wereda officials from Wereda administrations, Peace and Security offices; Bureaus of Women and Children Affairs; Communication Affairs offices; Justice Bureaus; and the police; Faith leaders mainly from Orthodox Church, Evangelical Mekane Yesus Church and Muslims; Elders and community leaders; Youth leaders from youth leagues and other youth unions; Women of faith from different religions and leaders of women associations; Academicians from different universities including Gondor University, Assosa University, and Gambella University; Staff from community-based organizations; faith-based organizations; and Officials from Ministry of Peace.

The above categories of respondents were deliberately drawn because of the roles they play in matters related to conflict and peace, religion, the local economy/politics, and the knowledge that they have about their community from different dimensions. The KIIs relied on an interview guide that was designed to gather qualitative data relating to conflict perspectives in the study districts

2.1.2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): 27 FGDs were held across all study districts. Each FGDs engaged six participants in consideration of COVID-19 guidelines. The FGDs groups were religious leaders, youth, and women. Since they are part of the immediate communities of study interest, FGD participants were grouped according to their locations to allow for a context-specific analysis of conflicts based on their everyday experiences, knowledge, and roles in those contexts. In each group, the questioning techniques varied to ensure the accuracy or relevance of the information provided.

2.1.3. Person on the Street Interviews: A person on the street interview (PSI) is one of the fastest-growing forms of real-time data collection. During data collection, 20 randomly selected respondents were approached in the streets with targeted questions that are general, simple, and straightforward. The questions asked were mainly related to what respondents think about conflict issues in their localities and what they think should be done to address those issues.

2.1.4. Field observation: structured observation in the study locations yielded important information mainly on impacts of conflicts such as physical destructions, displacements as well as peace-building efforts that are visible on the streets, offices, faith, and other institutions (availability of manuals, posters, billboards and so on). A structured observation checklist was

used to gather such information. Photography was the main method by which observation data recorded.

2.2. The Research Sites

The geographical areas of the study are those where the peacebuilding initiatives of NCA and its partners are being implemented. The study sites selected for this study represent areas that have been seriously affected by violent ethnic conflicts. These include:

- 2.2.1. Benishangul-Oromia border areas: the study focused on the West Wollega zone of the Oromia region and the Kamashi Zone of the Benishangul Gumuz region. These zones are selected because of the economic, social, and geographical interconnectedness and occurrence of frequent violent conflicts. The selected districts within the zones are located along the poorly defined borders of the two regions. Districts bordering the two regions include Haro Limu, Belojigonfoi, Sasiga, Diga, and Boji Dirmeji. In Assosa town, some key interviews were made to obtain a broader picture of local conflicts.
- 2.2.2. Gambella region: this region has for long witnessed factional fighting and inter-community violence between the Anuak and the Nuer. Although these two communities have historically clashed, the nature and intensity of conflicts over the past few years have been transformed. To understand the conflict dynamics in the region, the town of Gambella was selected for fieldwork data collection.
- 2.2.3. South Wollo (The Oromo Special Zone-Kemise): Kemise is selected as a study site because it represents not only a violent inter-nationalist struggle but also a struggle involving minorities within minorities. Kemise has recently become a source of intense friction as the result of ethnic politics and religious fundamentalism.
- 2.2.4. North Shewa zone: this zone has been a hotspot for many recent conflicts. This study focused in particular on Ataye town that has recently been a center of tension and violent conflicts.
- 2.2.5. Central Gonder zone: the study targeted Chilga woreda in the Central Gonder zone. Chilga has been the center of unrest where questions of identity by the Qimant people triggered violent conflicts in the area.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW APPROACH AND FINDINGS

3. LITERATURE REVIEW APPROACH AND FINDINGS

The review process involved the identification of relevant literature on the topic of conflict. During this process, an interpretive technique (coding and recursive abstraction) was used. The issue of validity was given serious attention. To ensure the credibility of the review reference checks, conformability, and balance were given due attention. The literature review covered various materials that include program documents, project evaluation reports, research project publications, policy briefs, periodic publications, and proceedings from academic and research institutions. Print, electronics, and social media considered as reliable sources of information in reporting conflict events and have a wider audience were also reviewed. Generally, the literature review served to:

- Examine the history of the conflict to date and physical and demographic features relevant to conflict analysis;
- Understand the national context including drivers of conflicts, trends, major peace-building actors, geographical focus, and areas of interventions; and
- Serve as a base for dialogue, construction, and further consultation regarding the conflict mapping and analysis framework and tools development.

The documentary review findings highlighted some pertinent definitions and narratives of concepts of conflict and peace; the fundamentals of conflict mapping and analysis; the framework of analysis used in the study; and the national conflict context in Ethiopia.

3.1. Few conceptions and definitions of conflict and peace

1. Conflict: A conflict is a situation when the interests, needs, goals, or values of involved parties interfere with one another. It occurs when there are two or more incompatible goals.
2. Peace: Peace means a balanced, fair, just, and calm state of affairs, where all concerned know and enjoy their due rights and protection.
3. Peacebuilding: refers to a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict towards more sustainable, peaceful relationships.
4. Conflict Resolution: is "a variety of approaches aimed at terminating conflicts through the constructive solving of problems, distinct from management or transformation of conflict.
5. Conflict prevention: refers to a variety of activities aimed at anticipating and averting the outbreak of violent conflict, as well as preventing the relapse into conflict. The concept has evolved to include a broad range of longer-term efforts targeting structural causes of conflict and violence.
6. Conflict transformation: refers to turning a conflict into something hopeful and restoring relationships through negotiation and mediation.
7. The basic elements of conflict analysis: a conflict analysis involves the examination of the profile, causes, actors, and dynamics.
 - ✓ Profile: A brief characterization of the context (political, economic, socio-cultural context including existing and emerging issues, affected areas, and history);
 - ✓ Causes: Pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures, systems, and fabric of society and may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict;
 - ✓ Actors: All those engaged in or being affected by the conflict (groups, institutions, individuals), including their interests, goals, capacities, and relationships.
 - ✓ Dynamics: The resulting interactions between the conflict profile, the actors, and causes including projected future scenarios.
 - ✓ Social cohesion is the extent of trust in government and within society and the willingness to participate collectively toward a shared vision of sustainable peace and common development goals.
 - ✓ Reconciliation is the process of restoring social cohesion in societies damaged by conflict and investing in local and national capacities to heal past wrongs.

3.2 Peacemaking through Faith in Action

It is increasingly recognized that faith-based actors both presently and historically have played a fundamental role in fostering resilience, preventing violent conflict, and sustaining peace. Faith-based peacebuilding involves and deals with beliefs and peace-oriented pronouncements, statutes, and actions of spiritual and religious communities and societies. Central to this approach is pacifism, humanism, non-violence, brotherliness as promoted by dominant religions. This for example is reflected in Hebrews 12:14 that instructs us to always, “strive for peace with all men and for holiness without which no one will see the Lord”. Similarly, the holy scripture of Islam, the Quran is full of verses that projects peace and reconciliation. The following illustrates this point:

- ✓ Do you know what is better than charity, fasting, and prayer? It is keeping peace and good relations between people, as quarrels and bad feelings destroy mankind. (The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), as recorded in Muslim & Bukhari)
- ✓ Whoever pardons and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God. (Holy Quran [42:40](#))

The range of peacebuilding activities that faith-based actors engage in is extensive, and includes mediation, advocacy humanitarian aid, and reconciliation and development work, as well as offering sanctuary, challenging social injustice, promoting dialogue, breaking down prejudice, and protecting minorities or vulnerable groups. Recognizing the value of this, governments, donors, and policymakers are increasingly seeking to better understand and support the role of faith in shaping societies, particularly on issues of peace.

3.3. The Fundamentals of Conflict Mapping and Analysis

Research suggests that the need to understand the nature and causes of conflicts through conflict mapping and analysis has resulted in a paradigm shift from a focus on global actors to locals and their situations, instead¹. Conflict mapping is considered an essential step to a better understanding of a conflict and the most appropriate peacebuilding approach to it. The systemic analysis is one way of conceptualizing conflict and it has primarily been used to map intractable conflicts.

The literature on conflict analysis widely uses such concepts as causes, actors, and dynamics to describe conflicts.

¹ Porto, 2002.

3.3.1. Causes of conflict

Most conflicts involve value differences and power disparities, whereas misperception and miscommunication play an important role in the evolution of adversarial relationships. Even though a conflict may originate from economic and other material sources, it can quickly be expanded to identify differences with escalation. In most complex conflicts, a variety of issues, such as the availability of resources and basic human needs are interrelated with each other. Substantive issues of conflict can be tied to a range of contested objects (namely, wealth, power, and prestige) and their conditions of availability. Manifold structural, socio-economic, and cultural concerns are often mixed with political issues as shown in Michael Brown's approach below.

Table 1: Underlying causes of internal conflict²

Underlying causes	Proximate causes
Structural -Weak states -Intra-state security concerns -Ethnic geography	-Collapsing states -Changing intra-state military balances -Changing demographic patterns
Political factors -Discriminatory political institutions -Exclusionary national ideologies -Inter-group politics -Elite politics	-Political transitions -Increasingly exclusionary ideologies -Growing inter-group competition -Intensifying leadership struggles

² Adapted from Brown. Introduction, op cit, p 14.

<p>Economic/social factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic problems -Discriminatory economic systems -Modernization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mounting economic problems -Growing economic inequities -Fast-paced development and modernization
<p>Cultural/perceptual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Patterns of cultural discrimination -Problematic group histories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intensifying patterns of cultural discrimination -Ethnic bashing and propagandizing

3.3.2. Actors in Conflict

The term “actors” as used here refers to all those engaged in or being affected by conflict including individuals, groups, and institutions contributing to conflict or being affected by it positively or negatively, as well as those engaged in dealing with conflict. Some define actors as those who have a direct or indirect impact on the conflict (e.g. combatants), but not those the conflict has an impact on (e.g. the victims); others define actors as including both groups. Actors in a conflict have varying and even divergent interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships with other actors.

3.3.3. Conflict Dynamics

Conflict dynamics can be described as the resulting interaction between the conflict profile, the actors, and causes. Understanding conflict dynamics will help identify windows of opportunity using scenario building. Scenarios provide an assessment of what may happen next in a given context according to a specific timeframe, building on the analysis of conflict profile, causes, and actors.

3.4. Framework for Analysis

This study draws on the notion of Complexity theory that sees the world as being made up of sets of social relations³ such as class, gender, ethnicity, or age and each of these sets is a system

³ Cilliers 1998.

constituted of many interacting elements that interact and mutually influence each other.

According to this theory, a multiplicity of systems interact and create a conflict when a contradiction exists between any of these systems. The theory helps highlight the relationships, issues, and priorities in each system and the conflict as a whole. This ensures that the peacebuilding approach remains focused on the problem and provides a different perspective on the issue.

The choice of complexity theory is useful, particularly when dealing with ethnic conflicts⁴. Indeed ethnic conflicts present specific and even more complex characteristics than other conflicts because the interactions between the many systems involved in the conflict are influenced by non-visible factors such as identity, culture, grievances, and mistrust.

The other theory that this study employs is conflict transformation. The theory builds on ideas of interacting systems as being at the root of conflicts. It takes complexity theory one step further by proposing that, despite their complexity, systems and their interactions can be analyzed, modeled, and influenced to induce change and eventually achieve sustainable peace.

⁴ Michael L. Current, 2002.

4 **CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN ETHIOPIA**

4. CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN ETHIOPIA

4.1. Peace and Conflict Trends in Ethiopia

Exclusivist and authoritarian regimes since the imperial (1930–1974) and military (1974–1991) eras have played a role in the many conflicts that ravaged the country. Conflicts particularly those involving ethnic groups dates back to the formation of the modern Ethiopian state at the turn of the 19th century, incorporating different ethnic groups found at various levels of social and economic development using both forceful subjugation and peaceful persuasion⁵. In the military regime or Dergue period where Socialism was the main philosophy of the state, such conflicts were intensified and ethnic-based liberation groups formed and began a bitter struggle to demolish the regime.

During the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) era, however, conflicts resulting from ethnic federalism have become further complicated by creating multiple layers of causes and triggers. Ethnic federalism, which refers to the sharing of power among autonomous units, is given preference by the EPRDF government to a unitary form to accommodate divergent local interests that cannot bear centralized rule. Over the past 27 years or so, however, this system has sown political dysfunction as ordinary tasks of governance have turned into sites of ethnic competition and violent conflicts. From mid-2010 onwards, rising competing ethnic-nationalisms led to the relative weakening of party and state structures, resulting in the intensification of ethnic mobilizations⁶.

Tensions have intensified under the liberalizing reforms of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed since he took office in April 2018. With the press enjoying greater protections, political prisoners being released, and civil society able to organize more freely, several ethnic grievances have come to the fore. Relations have also become further strained among different ethnic groups in the country.

This rise in tensions and violent conflicts is mainly linked to the sharp increase in militant ethnic nationalism against a backdrop of state and party fragility. The recent violent conflicts in different parts of the country have resulted in the death of thousands and the displacement of millions of people. Over this period, well over a thousand people have died with close to three million

⁵ Markakis, 2003.

⁶ ISS: Drivers of ethnic conflict in contemporary Ethiopia, 2019.

displaced⁷. In 2018, Ethiopia had the highest number of internally displaced people in the world⁸.

4.2. Causes of conflicts

A deeper analysis of the causes of the violent conflicts in Ethiopia in light of the complexity theory indicates various structural and proximate factors. These causes as reflected in the existing peace and conflict literature and other relevant documents are presented below:

4.2.1. Economic Inequality and Unemployment

Inequality and conflict are inextricably linked. A considerable amount of research has been done attempting to understand the links between the two. In Ethiopia, a significant segment of the population (29.6%) still lingers in absolute poverty⁹. When poverty is widespread and resulting grievances are not met, it is argued, poor people will riot, question the government altogether, and join violent groups. Economic decline and extreme poverty may then reinforce tendencies to resort to violent means.

Research and media reports have voiced their concerns regarding the imbalance between economic growth and the actual living standards of the citizens. This dissatisfaction resulting from economic decline, low income, and high unemployment is fueling grievances among the many disadvantaged groups mainly the youth. While unemployment is a national challenge, the problem is more prevalent among the urban youth (estimated at 17%)¹⁰ who can take their frustration out to the streets. In rural areas land fragmentation and the highly controversial land tenure system rendered agriculture useless to the rural youth adding more fuel to the situation.

4.2.2. Federalism as a source of conflict in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a land of diverse people with divergent interests. The demographic diversity is expressed in multiple ways such as an ethnonational, cultural, religious, economic way of life, and so on¹¹. Despite the beauty in diversity, however, there is a distressing lack of consensus on several key issues ranging from the national flag, language (one vs. multiple languages at the national level), ownership of the capital city, and most importantly the federal structure itself.

⁷ Africa News, <https://www.africanews>, September 2019

⁸ Norwegian Refugee Council, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019.

⁹ World Bank 4th Ethiopia Economic Update. (2015).

¹⁰

¹¹ Bahru Zewde refers to this increasing salience of ethnicity as “the deification of ethnicity”.

Federalism in Ethiopia is contested by two dominant forces namely those ethno- nationalist/ centrifugal forces that strongly support the (ethnic) federal structure; and those centripetal forces that criticize the federal system for creating conflicts and undermining the country’s unity. For the latter group, several inter and intra-ethnic conflicts have unfolded across and within regions since the adoption of the federal structure. Studies show that the delimitation of the federal units in Ethiopia has not only created very dissimilar constituent parts and an asymmetrical federal system, but also many regional states with ethnic heterogeneity within their borders, and several states in which the competition between ethnic groups or clans for regional hegemony has led to destabilization and weakening of the regional governments.

The literature is clear in listing out the many ethnic conflicts that have occurred after 1991. Some of these are the Silte-Gurage conflict, the Sheko-Mezengir conflict, the Anuak- Nuer conflict, the Berta-Gumuz conflict, and the Gedeo- Guji conflict, the Oromo-Amhara conflict, the Borana-Gerri conflict, the Afar-Issa conflict, and the Oromo-Somali conflict. The major causes of each of these cases are shown as follows:

The Silte-Gurage conflict	This conflictual problem manifested itself as Silte ethnic self-assertion was based on a difference of language and Islamic faith. This conflict was rooted in the incompatibility of the opportunities of the Silte with those of the Gurage.
The “Wogagoda” language conflict	This was a violent inter-ethnic conflict manifested by the Wolayita ethnic group who objected to and successfully avoided the application of the “Wagagoda” language alleging that it is against their identity.

<p>The Shako-Mezengir conflict</p>	<p>This violent inter-ethnic conflict manifested when the Shako-Mezengir and the Yaki ethnic groups successfully demanded separate administrations in the same regional state. The cause of this conflict was that the inclusion of the Keficho Zone and Yaki Woreda into the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State. The inclusion was not in the interest of the Shako Mezengir Peoples Democratic Unity Organization, which wanted these people to be incorporated into the Gambela Peoples Regional State.</p>
<p>The Agnuak-Nuer conflict</p>	<p>The conflict was violent and was because of the dissatisfactions expressed by the Nuer ethnic group. The Nuer allegedly opposed the unjust allocations of power and resources in the Gambela Peoples' Regional State to the Agnuak.</p>
<p>The Berta-Gumuz conflict</p>	<p>This violent conflict was the result of dissatisfaction alleging that the Gumuz ethnic group with fewer populations was made to get more numbers of administrative units and greater representation at the Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples Regional State.</p>
<p>The Gedeo-Guji conflict</p>	<p>The violent conflict resulted because the Gedeo expressed their dissatisfaction with the use and allocations of pasturelands and water resources. The problem has persisted for a long resulting in many violent conflicts.</p>

The Oromo-Amhara conflict of Eastern Wollega,	This conflict was due to the incompatibility of interests of the locals and those referred to as 'settlers' in economic, social, and political opportunities created and further aggravated by ethnic federalism.
The Borana-Gerri conflict	This conflict resulted because of contention over grazing lands and water resources as well as the Gerri's demand for ethnic self-assertion. The conflict is also related to several interrelated factors that include traditional cattle raiding and competition over pasturelands as well as water resources which manifested itself as conflict over frontiers between Oromia and Somali regional states.
The Afar-Issa conflict	These violent conflicts were due to the dissatisfactions of the two groups on the uses and allocations of pasturelands and water resources. The competition for these scarce resources is aggravated by drought, famine, external intervention for geopolitical strategic interests, poverty, etc.
The Oromo-Somali conflict	This conflict is quite complicated in that there existed traditional conflicts on pasturelands and water resources worsened by poorly demarcated borders, natural and human catastrophes, and interventions of insurgents, and religious extremists for strategic positions. The conflict is also attributed to the involvement of elites from both sides to advance their power and political agenda.

Table 2: Example of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia

4.2.3. Competition for Natural resources as a source of conflicts

The link between natural resource management and conflict is strong in Ethiopia. Shortages of natural resources in light of the highly growing population and lack of policies that promote fair distribution and allocations have led to competition, which may, in turn, result in conflict. In addition, fighting and insecurity may prevent appropriate management of natural resources and reduce their production, thereby worsening shortages and intensifying competition and conflict¹².

Most of these conflicts occur among pastoralist communities and pastoralists in the Somali region, the Afar region, and the lowlands of the Southern, Gambella, and Benishangul regions. Coming under increasing pressure from poor natural resources governance, natural disasters such as drought and flooding which are compounded by climate change and, more conflicts are expected to happen. Population growth, increasing numbers of livestock produced for export, deforestation, environmental degradation, bush encroachment, land gapping, appropriation of large tracts of land for investments, and invasive species will further increase pressure and conflicts over shared and shrinking resources. Natural resource competitions that were traditionally managed before by different groups have increasingly become more complicated and less manageable by ethnic federalism. There has been an upsurge in resource-based conflicts as the result of the sharpening of boundaries among the different ethnic groups.

4.2.4. Religion as a source of conflicts

The long history of Ethiopia's robust religious pluralism and peaceful co-existence is well appreciated by various scholars. Ethiopia is often labeled as a model of religious tolerance¹³. Nevertheless, irrespective of the constitutionally guaranteed religious freedom and equality of religion, in recent times, there are increased interreligious tensions and violent conflicts. Most of these have been of a local character, often related to contestations over building of mosques, claims about the desecration of religious books or artifacts, and conflicts related to celebrations of religious rituals. Increased inter-religious fragility is intertwined with several factors, but remains connected to significant shifts in Ethiopia's religious landscape.

Ethiopia's religious landscape is rather peculiar by the way, it is made up of a tripartite constellation of Muslims, Orthodox, and Protestant Christians. While they each are separate communities, they remain entangled in the way that they are all affected by developments in each of them. This is, in

¹² Natural Resource Conflicts in South-West Ethiopia 1993.

¹³ Levine D.1974.

particular, evident as these often involve competition, transgression of religious boundaries, and carving out public space – inevitably causing tensions and sometimes conflict. Such developments and a shifting religious landscape have been intensified by the emergence of religious reform movements within these three communities. Many of these movements, particularly among Muslims, have been rather informal, thus making it more accurate to talk about reform currents. Common for them has been the urge to revitalize past traditions, to cleanse religious practice from assumed aberrations, to produce pious selves, and to expand one’s respective faiths¹⁴.

In recent times, there have been reports – confirmed and unconfirmed – about religious-based casualties, attacks on Christians and Muslims, churches burnt, mosques destroyed, and people seeking refuge in churches¹⁵. It is also claimed that many Christians have been killed and several churches burnt. On December 20, 2020, four mosques and several Muslim-owned businesses were burned in the town of Mota in the Amhara region. The incident has aggravated inter-religious tensions, which have risen amid an increasing number of attacks on churches and mosques. Earlier in 2019, other similar incidents took place in some parts of the country targeting Christians. In Jigjiga many churches were burned down and people including priests killed. In Southern Ethiopia in Halaba Zone, churches belonging to eight different Protestant Christian denominations were also destroyed.

Evidence shows that religion and ethnonationalism tend to intersect in many ways. A good example is the existence of a new splinter group within the Orthodox Church in the Oromo region. The group is demanding the church be re-structured like the government structure, with autonomous ethnic regions and a federal structure. On the other hand, there is a growing religious radicalization in some parts of the country deepening mistrust within and between faith communities.

The emerging trends of intolerance between followers of different religions can also be explained in terms of polemics¹⁶. In the name of comparative religion, some preachers unfairly criticize other religions’ doctrines and deeply held values. Hence, the effects of polemical exchanges in this sense are a redrawing of boundaries, discursive over-confidence if not recklessness, the decline of dialogue and tolerance, and deep rivalry, extending into tensions and even violence.

In addition to the above, tensions within the Muslim communities are reported to increase, at

¹⁴ Terje Østebø, 2019.

¹⁵ Special edition: the role and relevance of religion in Ethiopia’s current conflicts, Addis Standard / November 6,

¹⁶ Abbink, 2014.

times pitting the older establishment against reformist, neo-conservative youth, and educated elite movements. Studies show that the growing divergence of Islamic thought and practice in Ethiopia and attendant tensions have regional and ethnic undertones. In this regard, the Sufi schools (tariqa) had strongholds among specific regional ethnic communities (Harari and Wallo-Amhara in particular). Elsewhere, however, interaction with the wider Islamic world coincided with the rise of (Wahhabist) Saudi Arabia, Salafi influence is stronger; this is especially true of eastern Oromo (Bale and Arsi zones)¹⁷.

Theological differences and a lack of mutual recognition also continue to spur conflict between the Orthodox and Protestant churches. Hostilities between Protestant and Orthodox communities have at times erupted into violent confrontations in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State (SNNPRS), Amhara, Tigray, and Oromia¹⁸. Such outbreaks have declined recently, possibly because the Protestant churches have become more established in many communities, and their development initiatives may have prompted wider acceptance by local communities of other faiths; the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) and its local committees are likely also to have played a role.

As shown above, there is no doubt that religion has continued to play an increasing role in the dynamics of conflicts in Ethiopia. Despite this, however, religion can also provide a powerful resource for peace and transformation of conflict in society¹⁹. Despite the increasing presence of inter-religious conflicts, there are solid grounds that constitute the base for religious co-existence in the country. Religions in Ethiopia preach love, peace, tolerance, and forgiveness and reject violence. To promote these values, the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) is the lead agency responsible for bringing together, collectively, all faiths and religions to address issues of social exclusion and development in the country.

One of the most progressive approaches utilized by the IRCE was the establishment of the Inter-religious Dialogue- Ethiopia (IRD-E). The IRCE was designed to develop interpersonal relationships among the various leaders of member faiths with the primary goal of learning about the cultural, ideological, and religious views of each faith. Experiences in these dialogue sessions reveal that members of the various faiths have been able to enrich, deepen and broaden their own religious life through mutual understanding of one another's convictions and witness.

¹⁷ Terje Østebø, 2007.

¹⁸ Report on International Religious Freedom: Ethiopia, 2019.

¹⁹ Karbo, 2013.

4.2.5. The emergence of informal forces and youth groups

The new trend in violent conflicts is the emergence of informal forces and youth groups, particularly in the Oromia and Amhara regions. These groups compete for power and space as well as the replacement of formal institutions. The emergence of these forces and the inability of the federal government to ensure law and order trammled the initiated reform from reaching grassroots structures; and put the capacity and legitimacy of the security institutions in question. These groups include Qerroo in Oromia regions, Fano in Amhara, Ejjetto in the Sidama, and Zarma in Guraghe as well as Heggio in the Somali region. Many believe that the monopoly of violence by these groups has created fear of an eventual security vacuum that can be exploited by some political actors.

4.3. Policy and Legal Frameworks to address conflicts

Ethiopia has several legal provisions relating to conflict prevention and management. Some of these include:

- ✓ The Constitution through the Bill of rights and provisions relating to rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples.
- ✓ Criminal Code and sectoral policies such as the Ethiopian Water Policy, Environment Policy, Foreign Affairs, and National Security Strategy, Rural and Agricultural Development Policy and Strategy. To compound the absence of a coherent policy on conflict prevention and management, implementation of these policy pronouncements rely heavily on the formal legal system, even though increasingly, the majority of communal conflicts are settled through traditional mechanisms.

The following are institutions that directly have mandates in conflict management, mediation, and peacebuilding:

Institution	Roles
The Ministry of Peace	The office of the Ministry of Peace was created to sustain the reforms that Ethiopia is currently undergoing through peace-building measures, establishing and strengthening the rule of law, and building the capacity of peace and security-focused sectors. Additionally, the office is tasked with using already existing social customs to deepen and sustain peace-building objectives and building national consensus.
House of Federation (HoF)	The constitution remits the HoF as the legislative governmental organ responsible for conflict mitigation. The House is responsible for issues relating to the rights of Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples. It can decide on the right of self-determination.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Cognizance of the spillover of external conflict into Ethiopia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a central role in deploying external efforts to address internal challenges.
Regional States and Local Authorities	Regional states have a major responsibility to address local conflicts by undertaking conflict prevention and peace-building activities.
The Formal Justice System	Manage conflicts by improving independence, efficiency, quality, and access to justice.
Traditional Mechanisms	Being easily accessible to many communities, traditional mechanisms provide a quick solution to conflicts including inter-clan conflicts and other (e.g. border) disputes.
Ethiopian reconciliation commission	The objective of the Commission is to maintain peace, justice, national unity, and consensus and reconciliation among Ethiopian peoples.
Civil Society Organizations	Cultivating trust among conflicting parties, undertaking monitoring and advocacy in human rights, developing action programs to support the livelihood of conflict victims, and creating access to justice and peace education.

Table 3: Actors in conflict prevention and resolutions

4.4. Main actors in conflicts and conflict prevention in Ethiopia

The term “actors” as used here refers to all those engaged in or being affected by conflict including individuals, groups, and institutions contributing to conflict or being affected by it positively or negatively, as well as those engaged in dealing with conflict. In Ethiopia, actors in a conflict have varying and even divergent interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships with other actors. Analysis of the existing literature identified the following actors to be the most important ones:

4.4.1. Dominant Political Parties/Forces

The central role of political parties in building consolidated democracies is now widely accepted. Policymakers and democracy promotion organizations often display a strong normative bias in favor of cohesive, organizationally developed political parties²⁰. In Ethiopia, political parties have largely been weak, fragmented and the alliances formed are still at their formative stages. The outcome of elections including potential post-election violent conflicts could largely be influenced by centripetal and ethnonational-based centrifugal forces. It is argued that there is a growing need to address potential post-election violent conflicts as the upcoming election is approaching. Electoral system reform among others could have a huge impact on the peaceful outcome of the next Ethiopian national election.

So far, as part of such reform, Ethiopia’s House of People’s Representatives (HPR) approved Birtukan Mideksa, a former judge and opposition party leader as the new chairperson to lead the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). In addition to using automated systems, the government has also assured that the upcoming general elections will be free, fair, and democratic. Disciplinary code signed by the 107 political parties is also considered an important step in that the code serves the purpose of gathering information, hearing grievances, and investigating them to pass a decision.

Despite this, however, there is much more need to bridge the gap that the opposition parties have in terms of their overlapping political-ideological orientations, agendas, and programs. The oppositions are not only fragmented but also engage in inter-party squabbles. Moreover, the lack of cohesion and division in the leadership of the ruling party could potentially undermine the political process and the upcoming election in the country. The rift and confrontation grow

²⁰ Benjamin Reilly and Per Nordlund, 2008.

between the Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Prosperity party is a possible challenge for conducting a peaceful and democratic election as demonstrated by the election carried out by TPLF in the Tigray region in direct opposition to the condemnation by the House of Federation. These include:

Major centripetal Forces:

- ✓ Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) - now Prosperity Party (PP)
- ✓ Ethiopia Citizens for Social Justice (ECSJ)

Some Ethno-national-Based Centrifugal Forces:

- ✓ Oromo Federalist Parties
- ✓ National Movement of Amhara (NaMA)
- ✓ Oromo Liberation Front (OLF)
- ✓ Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)
- ✓ Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF)
- ✓ Benishangul Gumuz People's Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF)
- ✓ Gambela Peoples' Democratic Movement (GPDM)
- ✓ Sidama Liberation Movement (SLM)

4.4.2. The Federal Government

Led by the Prime Minister, the Federal Government of Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic with three branches of government – executive, legislative, and judicial. The legislative organ is bi-cameral: the House of Federation (HoF) and the House of People's Representatives (HoPR). The House of Federation (HoF) is considered instrumental as it has a mandate on issues related to self-determination that has ignited many violent conflicts in different parts of the country.

4.4.3. The Ethiopian Ministry of Peace

Established in 2018, the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace is one of the critical structures built by the new leadership to sustain the ongoing reforms through undertaking peace-building measures. This involves the development and strengthening of peace and security structures/institutions to ensure the rule of law and lasting peace. The Ministry oversees key peace and security offices, including the National Intelligence & Security Service (NISS), Information Network Security Agency (INSA); Federal Police Commission; and the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs²¹.

4.4.4. The Law Enforcement Agencies: Federal and Regional Security Forces

In Ethiopia, the military has been one of the most powerful institutions with a mandate of safeguarding national sovereignty and security. The country has one of the strongest militaries in Africa, ranked 6th in 2018, with 162,000 well-trained and equipped military personnel²².

Regardless of the multi-ethnic composition of the regular members and the middle-level military officers, the military establishment was perceived as partisan to the ruling Front. The government, however, announced recently that the Ethiopian Defense Forces have embarked on deep institutional reform that will enable them to build a strong and professional army that prioritizes the building of an army that is loyal to the Constitution.

Another actor in the security sectors of the regional states is regional police forces named Liyu Hayl or Special Forces. These forces include some specially trained and equipped units used for riot control and other threats. There has been a feeling of dissatisfaction and mistrust towards these forces. Many believed the power of the federal law enforcement agencies including the army is eroded and not capable of responding to the security threats of the country. This is because of the ever-increasing role played by regional special forces in security matters and the tendency of the federal government to limit its interventions through the application of force using the army to address conflicts.

²¹ See Ministry of Peace website. Retrieved from: <https://www.mop.gov.et/web/en/about>

²² Global Fire Power. (2018). Ethiopia Military Strength. Retrieved from: https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=Ethiopia.

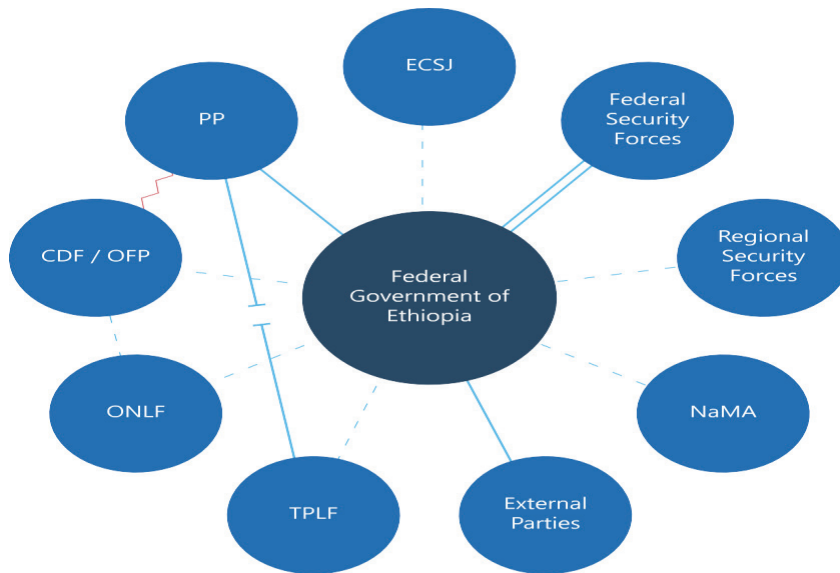


Figure 1: Main actors in conflicts²³

KEY

- ~~~~~ Discord/conflict
- Links/close relationship
- == Alliance
- Informal/intermittent
- |- Broken link

²³ Adopted from Ethiopia Conflict Insight, 2020.

4.5. Faith Actors in peacebuilding in Ethiopia

Amid the ongoing socio-political tensions and conflicts in Ethiopia, religions have a special role in national peacebuilding efforts. In the last decade, faith actors have increasingly been recognized as key actors in responses to the conflict including in humanitarian assistance, diplomacy, and conflict resolution efforts²⁴. Some of the most important faith actors working towards peace and social cohesion are shown below:

- 4.5.1.** The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC): EOC-DICAC is an Ethiopian Orthodox Faith-Based Organization (FBO). The development wing of the church has the potential of reaching more than half of Ethiopia's population. As the result of its historical roots and legitimacy, the organization has the potential of mobilizing critical masses of believers for changes in social norms. It operates locally with a high degree of voluntarism. Moreover, through its local operations and pastoral work, the church has also an intimate understanding of the multi-faceted nature of local peoples' lives and problems. EOC-DICAC has contributed greatly to peace initiatives by promoting peace and development programs for those caught up in conflicts, amongst other things by creating awareness-raising forums on Human Rights, Democracy, Good Governance, Advocacy, and Conflict Transformation issues. The EOC-DICAC is working with various stakeholders (forums, government bodies, CBOs & FBCSOs) to achieve sustainable peace in Ethiopia.
- 4.5.2.** The Ethiopian Catholic Church: The Ethiopian Catholic Church is one of the major religious institutions in Ethiopia. The church is well known for its engagements in humanitarian and development activities with special regard to peace processes. Following the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church in Ethiopia established a Justice and Peace Department, with special attention to the "role of the Church in developing evangelical justice and peace". The first of January is known as "peace days in the Catholic Church, on which occasion the Pope addresses a message of peace to all of mankind from the Vatican in Rome.
- 4.5.3.** The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) Peace Office: The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus is historically the most important Protestant denomination in Ethiopia. Through its development wing namely EECMY-DASSC provides

²⁴ World Humanitarian Summit, Global Consultation Final Report, Geneva, October, 14.-16, 2015, 191-192, https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/WHS_GloCon_final_report.pdf.

both humanitarian and development support to the Ethiopian needy communities. Across the country, EECMY-DASSC endeavored in emergency response, diversified Development and Social Service programs/projects. The EECMY Peace Office Department was established in 1993. In 2002, it was upgraded to the level of a commission. The establishment of this office was motivated by many years of injustice, bad governance, undemocratic political and social systems, and unfair distribution of resources, civil war, and strife endured by the people of Ethiopia. The EECMY has a duty to contribute to the effort to build a peaceful society.

- 4.5.4.** Lutheran World Federation (LWF): The LWF is a global communion of 148 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 77.8 million Christians in 99 countries. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) as part of its engagement mandate to promote peace launched an initiative to reduce escalating religious tension in Ethiopia. Peaceful coexistence between Muslims and Christians has been eroded in recent years with violence increasingly erupting in some parts of the country.
- 4.5.5.** The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE): IRCE was established in 2010 to join hands and hearts around common interests at the national and sovereign levels. IRCE is composed of Ethiopia's seven most influential religious institutions from the Orthodox, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant faiths. IRCE's role is to serve the council members, represented by their religious institutions, to help them freely practice their faiths, protect their constitutional rights and promote inter-faith cooperation and harmony. IRCE is an important and government-recognized umbrella organization, key for the facilitation of higher-level inter-faith dialogue forums. IRCE aims to bring together religious leaders and institutions of various faiths at national and regional levels to identify the potential for building trust among the various religious communities²⁵. The Council primarily focuses on peace education and conflict transformation through consultations and experience sharing.
- 4.5.6.** Norwegian Church Aid: Norwegian Church Aid is a member of the ACT Alliance, one of the world's largest humanitarian coalitions. NCA works around the world to create positive and sustainable change. Norwegian Church Aid's work is guided by its global strategy, Faith in Action. This defines humanitarian efforts and partnerships with religious actors as

²⁵ Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia, <http://www.irce7.org>

the two cornerstones of its work. The two long-term goals of the organization are to save lives and to seek justice. Together, these goals define NCA's work towards a just world. As part of its Peacebuilding program, NCA supported community peace structures in many countries.

NCA activities focus on conflict transformation, reconciliation, and social cohesion by bringing together religious institutions, politicians, women, and youth. NCA has in particular has been participating in Peace and Reconciliation processes at national and regional levels.

NCA has been active in peacebuilding programs in Ethiopia. Although its intervention in peacebuilding was closed as the result of the Charities and Societies Legislation, it resumed its activities in 2019 as part of the opportunity provided by the new Civil Society Legislation.

4.5.7. Tearfund: Tearfund is an international Christian relief and development agency based in Teddington, UK. It currently works in around 50 countries, with a primary focus on supporting those in poverty and providing disaster relief for disadvantaged communities. In Ethiopia, Tearfund is a potential actor in peacebuilding as it works with various FBOs such as Ethiopian Kale Heywot Church Development Commission (EKHCDC), Ethiopian Guenet Church Development and Welfare Organization (EGCDWO), Ethiopian Mulu Wongel Amagnoch Church Development Commission (EMWACDC), and Meserete Kristos Church – Relief and Development Association (MKC-RDA).

4.5.8. Catholic Relief Services has a long presence in Ethiopia. It has taken the lead in responding to natural and man-made disasters affecting the most vulnerable communities. The justice and peacebuilding programs of CRS engage civil society and the public and private sectors to foster social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

4.5.9. The World Vision is an International Christian Humanitarian Development organization. It works to build peace that contributes to good governance, sustainable and equitable economic development, peace and reconciliation, and civic empowerment.

4.5.10. Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia (ECFE): is an umbrella organization with a mission to equip its members through capacity building, advocacy, and Peacebuilding. Since its establishment in 1976, it has performed different activities including coordinating advocacy functions of the Fellowship members to promote peace, justice, and unity.

The other actors comprised of traditional, research, academic, and foundations having a stake in peacebuilding are shown in the following table:

Table 4: Major actors in peacebuilding in Ethiopia

Actors	Description of Activities and Initiatives
Abba Gada Council	The Abba Gada Council of the Oromo is the main traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Abba Gadas have a long history of resolving conflict through dialogue.
Jaarsa Araaran (Arsi Oromo Elders Council)	The Arsi Oromo elders' council called Jaarsa Araara is engaged in reconciliation processes (Jaarsummaa) that are different from those of the Gada system.
Deria Cimma (Wolayta Elders council)	The Deria Cimma is an ad hoc body of Wolayta Elders that come together as conflict arises and address it through dialogue with the conflict parties, witnesses, and other stakeholders.
Ethiopian National Reconciliation Commission	The commission has been tasked to evaluate the historical and contemporary reasons underlying the conflicts and develop a range of recommendations to bring about long-lasting peace.
Peace Committees	Peace Committees exist at every level of government (regional, zonal, wereda, and kebele) their activities include detecting and signaling violent conflicts early enough and preventing violent conflicts, engaging the public to promote sustainable peace and stability.
Peace & Development Center	The PDC is an independent national not-for-profit and non-governmental organization working for conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and development in Ethiopia.

Peace Family & Media Association	PFMA aims to promote sustainable peace through media development by working with communities and partner organizations at the grassroots level.
Life & Peace Institute	The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international and ecumenical centre that supports and promotes nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action. LPI has recently stepped up its engagement in Ethiopia through various activities focused on peace, conflict, and youth in particular. LPI supports civil society actors – especially and where possible relevant faith-based actors – in their conflict transformation work, through capacity building and joint engagement in research and action.
Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	IPSS is a research and policy institute based at Addis Ababa University with its primary activities focused on research, education, and policy dialogues.
Institute for Security Studies (ISS)	The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) is a regional human security policy think-tank with an exclusive focus on Africa. ISS focuses on several peace and security-related workstreams. ISS conducts research and analysis on conflict resolution and prevention through its publications and outputs.
International Women’s Peace Group	IWPG is a non-government organization with chapters across the world including Ethiopia and is engaged in empowering women to contribute actively to peace processes.

European Peace Institute	The European Institute of Peace is an independent body that collaborates with European states and the EU to “craft strategic and effective approaches to conflict prevention, resolution, dialogue and mediation”. The European Institute of Peace has been active in Ethiopia since 2017 and is currently implementing an EU-funded program focused on reducing the drivers of internal and external extremism in Ethiopia (August 2019 – February 2021).
Carter Center Ethiopia	The Center’s peace programs have worked with all factions of Ethiopian civil society and government to increase dialogue between disputing groups, mediate conflict, observe elections, prevent human rights violations, and build institutional protections for human rights in the nation.
Berghof Foundation	The Berghof Foundation strives to advance conflict transformation by preventing political and social violence.
African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)	ACCORD is a civil society organization working throughout Africa since 1992, to bring creative African solutions to the challenges posed by conflict on the continent. ACCORD’s primary aim is to influence political developments by specializing in conflict management.
Center for Humanitarian Dialogue	The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (HD) is a Swiss-based private diplomacy organization founded on the principles of humanity, impartiality, and independence. SHD’s mission is to prevent, mitigate and resolve armed conflicts, through dialogue and mediation.
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Ethiopia (FES)	FES seeks to provide and facilitate a platform for dialogues on important issues for Ethiopia’s present and future, including peace and conflict dynamics.

Inter-Africa Group	An independent non-profit organization that aims to promote peace, human rights, democratic culture, and sustainable development. Over the last 20 years, IAG has cultivated a reputable niche in research and public dialogue on vital development, governance, and peace-building policy issues both in the context of Ethiopia and regionally.
Mercy Corps	Mercy Corps focuses on climate change adaptation and resilience to reduce conflict.
UNDP	UNDP's approach to Democratic Governance and Peacebuilding in Ethiopia is tailored to strengthening the capacities of national and subnational institutions.
Academic intuitions	Universities have recently become places of violence and can be important actors in managing conflicts and creating peaceful coexistence. These include the Universities of Jimma, Haramaya, Hawasa, Welkite, Diredawa, Jijiga, Wello, and others.

5 PRESENTATION OF FIELDWORK FINDINGS

5. PRESENTATION OF FIELDWORK FINDINGS

5.1. Conflict in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia border areas

Evidence shows that communities in Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia regions have had a long-standing relationship based on political, social, and economic relations. Despite this, however, the lack of clearly demarcated and contested ethno-regional boundaries has become a major source of disputes between communities in the two regions in recent times. Ethno-regional boundaries have so far been left porous, highly politicized, and lacking effective federal institutions committed to addressing recurring cycles of conflicts.

The more recent violent conflicts in the regions are intensified by rising ethnic mobilizations. In September 2018, a new round of infighting flared up when four senior officials from the Benishangul Gumuz region were killed in an ambush in Gimbi, West Wollega zone of the Oromia region, by unidentified armed groups. This incident sparked inter-communal violence in the Kamashi zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz region between the Gumuz and the Oromo populations residing in the area. The conflict resulted in death, injury, damage of public and private infrastructure as well as deployment of security forces to the Kamashi zone.

In November 2018, a clash that initially broke out between two individuals turned into deadly inter-ethnic violence resulting in the death of three and dozens wounded. This conflict at Assosa University in the Benishangul-Gumuz is allegedly considered ethnically motivated between students²⁶. In December 2018, Command Post was established along the Oromia-Benishangul Gumuz regional states' border, after "more than 100 people from both sides across disputed regional boundaries between the two regions were killed and tens of thousands were displaced along the two regional states' border"²⁷. In May 2019, a report by Action against Hunger indicated ethnic-based conflict in border areas of Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia resulted in the displacement of more than 150,000 people²⁸.

²⁶ Ezega, 23 November 2018

²⁷ FBC, 20 December 2018

²⁸ Ethiopia Insight, 8 March 2019; UNHCR Protection Cluster, 2 August 2019; BBC News, 2 October 2018.

5.1.1. Existing Key Drivers, Push and Pull Conflict Factors

The study findings suggest that the nature and dynamics of conflict in the study areas are intricate, complex, and interrelated. Analysis of data indicates the centrality of poorly defined ethno-regional and administrative boundaries between the two regions. As the result, all localities along the border have experienced territorial and resource-based violent conflicts. Most of the key informants mentioned that these disputes are indicative of the problem that emanates from the post-1991 reconfiguration of state structures from unitary to ethnic-based -federalism that draws loosely demarcated intra- regional boundaries by the central government itself. The newly forged administrative boundaries failed to take into account the long-existing psychological make-ups, common resources, ways of lives and shared values of local communities residing on both sides of the imposed borders.

Some respondents from the Gumuz mentioned that the Oromo and Amhara have been grabbing lands that originally belongs to the Gumuz. Some Gumuz officials also accused that Oromia authorities have been distributing land to investors that are technically in the Benishangul Gumuz region. The recent large-scale state-led settlements of Amhara and Oromo farmers in the region to engage in farming activities adds to the already existing resentment. In some instances, it is reported that some Oromo farmers have refused to pay taxes directly to the Benishangul-Gumuz government. All these led to a sentiment that 'lost lands' of the Gumuz should be returned to their rightful owners.

Research participants from both the Gumuz and Oromo sides highlighted that the poorly demarcated and contentious boundaries between the two regions led to the creation of unclear administrative structures. This lack of clearly defined jurisdiction in the administrative units created additional tension between the communities. Other causes of conflicts in the study areas include growing competition for economic resources due to limited mobility/accessibility, lack of policies on equitable use of local resources, increasing unemployment, and deepening levels of poverty in the area.

Research participants further indicated that there are notable security triggers of conflicts in the border areas. These are the ineffectiveness of security agencies, the existence of "unidentified" armed groups, and the proliferation of illicit small arms. Lack of effective formal justice systems compounded by the erosion of the traditional ones is another factor contributing to conflicts. Key informants and FGD participants have also mentioned that there is widespread corruption by

government and public officials (such as selling plots of land from the public asset to the third party) at different administrative levels fueling conflicts of violent nature.

Table 5: FGD discussants and KII informants identified the following key drivers, push and pull conflict factors in Gumuz-Oromo conflicts

Push	Pull	Drivers
Definition: factors that force/propagate conflicts	Definition: Factors that precipitate conflicts	Definition: Factors that cement, underpin and sustain conflicts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Unclear and sometimes overlapping regional boundaries -Unclear and sometimes overlapping administrative structures -Weak justice system -Feeling of land alienation - Large scale settlements -Proliferation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons (SALW) Ethnic intolerance and mistrust -Identity consciousness -Ethnic and political supremacy contests among elites of both regions -Land appropriation for investment -Natural resource competition -Poor security infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Boundary disputes - Political incitement - Ethnic contestation for land - Politicization of identity - Land and property misappropriation - Administrative and legal disputes - Resource grabbing - Retaliations for previous attacks (physical harms, injuries, and killings) -Killings and materials destruction by armed groups -Lack of quick response by security forces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Problematic federal arrangements being made between the regions - Politically motivated elites across both regions -Weak governance - The involvement of third parties for self-economic and political gain -Organized corruption

5.1.2. Impact of Conflicts

The impact of violent conflicts is multidimensional and identifiable at different levels. The categories of people directly and indirectly impacted by conflicts vary, depending on circumstances or contexts as well as gender. Interviewees pointed to two interrelated consequences of the conflicts: i) societal and ideological divisions, and ii) a deterioration in law and order as well as economic life.

The study findings highlighted those societal divisions are exacerbated by the conflicts. Conflicts have reduced neutral space for promoting “brotherly existence” and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Another consequence of the conflict is seen in the decline of law and order that affects the day-to-day life activities of the communities including a free movement from one place to another. Similarly, economic deterioration is seen due to material damages, loss of property including land, and the high level of displacement. Study participants identified the following common impacts of conflicts:

- ✓ Loss of life;
- ✓ Sustained injuries of varying seriousness;
- ✓ Destruction of houses and private properties,
- ✓ Destruction of farmlands;
- ✓ Erosion of trust and mutual respect;
- ✓ Inability to uphold common cultural and social values (wedding, mourning, etc.)
- ✓ Large scale and frequent displacements;
- ✓ Disruption of communication between neighboring kebeles;
- ✓ Closure of common market places;
- ✓ Feeling of insecurity with persistent fear (psychological dimension);
- ✓ Increase in crimes;
- ✓ Rise in illegal arms trafficking;
- ✓ Increased corruption;
- ✓ Deforestation and clearing; and
- ✓ General impact on economic development of the regions.

5.1.3. Actors in Conflict

There are many actors directly or indirectly involved in instigating or fueling antagonism in the research areas. The study participants identified the following as the most important actors:

1. Political elites: these are reported to be the main actors in conflicts in the study areas. These elites tend to work based on patronage and clientelism. According to study participants, these elites from both ethnic groups have been fueling the existing identity-based grievances and antagonisms. By focusing on identity cleavages and the history of conflict, these political elites are accused of fueling hatred and promote extremist political agendas.
2. Identity-based parties: OLF Shene and Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) are reported to play a particularly crucial role in the conflict. Study findings revealed that the OLF has for long been opposing the formation of a separate region of Benishangul-Gumuz for the five ethnic groups found in the Oromo-dominated former Wollega province.
3. Organized groups/Mobs: youth armed with guns, knives, and other traditional weapons from both disputing parties are involved in violent conflicts. The mob killings and destruction of houses, properties, and evictions have recently become commonplace in the study areas.
4. Unidentified armed groups: there have been various reports indicating armed groups whose identity is unknown carrying out various attacks on the communities as well as government officials. This group lacks organized leadership, clear political goal and are opportunist elements relying on hit-run/ambush/ strategies against targeted officials and looting of lucrative resources. This can be seen from such reports as "On 26 September 2018, four senior officials from the Benishangul Gumuz region were killed in an ambush in Gimbi, West Wollega of the Oromia region, by unidentified armed groups²⁹".
5. Regional security personnel: informants have claimed that some security personnel from the two regions are directly involved in the conflicts. Their involvement ranges from instigating the conflicts to not quickly responding to address the ensuing killings and destructions. They also tend to harbor/protect individuals involved in violent conflicts from their ethnic groups.

²⁹ Protection Cluster UNHCR, 27 Aug 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/east-wollega-zone-oromia-and-kamashi-zone-benishangul-gumuz-16-19-july-2019>

6. The national army: most of the study respondents accuse the national army of inaction. They argued that when violent conflict breaks out, no quick actions are taken to effectively quell the conflicts before they result in a large number of deaths and destructions.
7. Investors and third parties: Although private investment in the area is viewed positively for the economy, most study participants regarded existing investors as key conflict actors. Local and external investors are accused of grabbing large tracts of lands for cash crops such as sesame and cotton replacing/affecting the traditional farming systems. This created land and market competition among the farmers from both communities.
8. The arms dealers: The illegal small arms trade is widespread in Benishangul. The kinds of weapons in circulation include firearms such as pistols and light machine guns. These arms have been increasingly used in the many violent ethnic conflicts. The study findings indicated that the proliferation and acquisition of small arms in the region are not given much attention and are not strictly controlled by the government.
9. The public: among the public past grievances, historical injustice, animosity, and lack of trust are widely propagated. The traditional tendency of the public to stop conflicts before they escalate to violence has declined. Some informants mentioned that many individuals within the communities do not want to take action or ignore instances of conflicts. This is due to fear of attack on self while intervening or involved in resolving conflicts perpetrated mainly by mob or youth groups.

5.1.4. Actors in Peacebuilding

The study sought to determine actors, structures, and institutions within the social and cultural framework in resolving conflict in the study areas. A few of these are singled out based on findings from the interviews and FGDs:

Community elders: communities in the study areas are strongly patriarchal and elders remain epitomes of authority and wisdom. Normally elders were involved on behalf of their communities to address inter-ethnic conflicts in many parts of the country. The engagement of community elders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding is of high necessity and most effective.

Community leaders: the category of community leaders encompasses a wide range of notable figures and involve men, women, elder, and youth. These actors influence their communities

in the study areas because of specific resources, access, or their traditional positions/ascribed status. Community leaders, however, seem not to effectively play their roles despite their potential in conflict reduction at the local level, mediating and promoting peaceful values of both the Gumuz and Oromo communities.

Religious leaders: religious leaders (Christianity, Islam, and indigenous beliefs) continue to be perceived as peacemakers since no religion including the traditional belief system of the Gumuz propagates conflict or violence. It is believed that the peacebuilding role of traditional practices and beliefs of the Gumuz that give them a sense of ethnocultural identity concerning others need to be further explored.

Local Peace Committees: local Peace Committees are considered important in peacebuilding. An assessment of such committees by GIZ in Benishangul-Gumuz Region indicates that the committees have capacities and potential to prevent violence through peer exchange, creating a team and relationship-building opportunities, and establishing an inter-communal peace network. These local peace committees (LPCs) have become important grassroots institutions and play a vital role in local conflict resolution, early warning in case of conflicts, and prevention through awareness-raising and advocacy. In most cases, peace committees employ a hybrid customary institution drawn from both ethnic groups and rule of law approaches to conflict resolution. The LPCs are a bottom-up way of conflict resolving actors that are made up of jointly from both ethnic groups, largely constituting religious and community leaders and elites as members.

Women peace actors: historically, women have been active members of peace actors in both the Gumuz and Oromo communities. So far, the role of women seems to be limited at an individual level rather than across ethnic boundaries. Analysis of data in this study indicated that despite their potential to broker peace, women have been sidelined from directly and actively engaging in conflict management and peacebuilding efforts. Although women and youth have a visible representation, they generally do not have a significant presence in Wereda peace committees. Thus, the capacity of LPCs, especially on the Kebele level and inter-Wereda level, would be increased through female and youth participation.

Youth peace actors: Youth have been involved in conflicts as well as in peacebuilding in the study areas. The degree to which the youth continue to play a role in peacebuilding, however, varies and is largely influenced by other actors mainly by the political elites and local administrators. The study finding shows that these days there is an expressed mistrust towards the youth as

they are accused of inciting cyclical conflicts and retaliations. Owing to this, like women they are underrepresented actors denied full incorporation into peace committees and training in conflict transformation targeting them, especially at the Kebele level.

Mekane Yesus peace office: has more than a decade of presence in conflict-affected areas of Bdnishangul-Gumuz and Oromia. The peace office implemented a project (2012-2016) to address a conflict that broke out between the Oromo and Gumuz people in Kamashi and Western Wollega Zones. The project activities included peacebuilding and conflict resolution trainings, trauma healing trainings, Training of Trainers on preventing domestic violence, organizing reconciliation conferences, and others. These interventions are reported to improve relationships between the two groups and help to avert potential inter-ethnic violence.

Civil society organizations: NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) can play crucial roles in providing key functions in the peace infrastructure, with many focusing on providing critical humanitarian aid and development services. Many of these are charitable organizations, providing social services, educational, and health programs and often affiliated with religious institutions, government entities, or privately formed. Some of these organizations include UNCHR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Food Programme (WFP), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Save the Children, Action Aid, and others.

5.1.5. Existing Gaps in Peacebuilding Efforts

The study identified the capacity gaps of main peace stakeholders namely the youth, women, and faith-based actors. Such gaps are found to be crosscutting across all three actors and multidimensional.

Youth FGD participants have highlighted that their role in peacebuilding is hampered by various gaps. Some of these include:

- ✓ Many young people are influenced by ethnic ideology and have increasingly become carriers of violence or perpetrators;
- ✓ Mistrust between the youth and local political elites as well as the wider community over recurring conflicts and their role in peace building efforts;
- ✓ Lack of knowledge base on peacebuilding strategies;

- ✓ Lack of forum that brings youth from both ethnic groups to discuss peace;
- ✓ The lack of incentive to stimulate youth peace building ambitions and efforts by other stakeholders including local governments; faith actors and
- ✓ Lack of Youth participation in both formal and informal political processes.

Women FGD participants highlighted that the role of women in peacebuilding in their localities is affected by the following gaps:

- ✓ Traditionally women play important roles in addressing local and small-scale conflicts. This is not, however, the case with violent ethnic conflicts that have high and inter-ethnic cross-boundary repercussions. Their role and representation in the latter case have been influenced by culture, religious practices, political trends, and household burden both among the Oromo and Gumuz communities; and
- ✓ Women peace builders cannot identify and analyze the dynamics or contours of conflicts and managing peace.

FGD participants with religious leaders highlighted the following gaps in their capacity to effectively address peace-building efforts:

- ✓ Due to the lack of support from political actors religious leaders in the study areas are not officially empowered to mobilize women and youth in peacebuilding and social cohesion;
- ✓ Although faith organizations are playing vital roles through their active projects, the peace building efforts of the religious leaders is not institutionalized; and
- ✓ Religious leaders have limited opportunities to meet and engage with different conflict actors.

5.2. CONFLICT IN GAMBELLA REGION

Gambella is one of the conflict-prone regions in Ethiopia. The conflict in this region involves an intricate web of interrelated and overlapping factors. Existing evidence shows that conflicts in Gambella include inter-ethnic, intra-ethnic, indigenous versus internal migrants, state against ethnic groups, and cross-border conflicts. The Anuak-Nuer inter-ethnic conflict is the most protracted and deep-rooted.

The Gambella region has witnessed factional fighting and inter-community violence between the Anuak and the Nuer in recent times. Although these two communities have historically clashed over resources and cultural identity-related issues, the nature and intensity of conflicts in recent times have significantly changed. This study sought to identify existing drivers of conflict, actors involved, and the capacity of peacebuilding stakeholders in the regions.

5.2.1. Drivers, Push and Pull Conflict Factors in Gambella Conflict

The findings of this study suggest that causes of conflict and political instability within the Gambella region are multidimensional. The inter-group conflict between the Anuak and Nuer can be attributed to the following:

Type	Triggering factors
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Weakly institutionalized political systems. ✓ Unrepresentative political arrangements (real and perceived). ✓ A sense of alienation and marginalization. ✓ The presence of political parties that exploited ethnic differences. ✓ A pronounced and chronic power struggle for leadership and senior posts.
Ethnic/cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long-standing ethnic rivalry ✓ The value for courage, fighting ability, and autonomy.
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Access to land and water became more competitive resulting in conflicts.
Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Weak conflict management institutions and mechanisms.

Cross border relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Refugee influx from South Sudan undermined the historical balance in inter-group relations ✓ Gambella has been experiencing raiding and counter-raiding with ethnic groups across the border
Small arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The proliferation of small arms in the region contributes to the bloody outcome of conflicts.

Table 6: Conflict triggering factors in Gambella³⁰

5.2.2. Conflict dynamics in Gambella

The study highlighted social cleavage, politicized ethnicity and struggle for political power; corruption and impunity; issues around natural resource management; discrimination and marginalization; and the refugee crisis from South Sudan are all intricately combined to influence conflict dynamics in Gambella.

Historically, the nature of social cleavage that existed between the Nuer and Anuak has been a common feature in the region. The relationship between the two groups is increasingly manifested by mutual mistrust and a sense of domination and marginalization. Anuaks, for example, fear that they are losing their land and political power to the pastoral Nuer – whose numbers in recent generations have steadily been increasing with the South Sudan refugee crisis. The change that this situation brought to the political landscape in Gambella can be seen from the fact that after decades in the presidency, the Anuak lost the election to the Nuer in 2013. Key informants indicated that traditional resource-based conflict gave way to issues of entitlement from the regional state down to the Wereda level. The Anuak/Nuer relationship is further complicated by the fact that the Nuer allegedly brought arms across the border, destabilizing an already tense region.

The Nuer/ Anuak divide and levels of mistrust is reported to increase. The level of mistrust is not limited to the political and administrative spheres but spills over to social and religious aspects of life as well. Among others, this can be seen from the fact that the Nuer and Anuak, though are followers of Mekane Yesus Church, tend to have their synods and attend churches separately.

³⁰ Capacity Development for local peace structures in the Benishangul-Gumuz region in Ethiopia.

The study findings further assert that there are several threats to the region's future peace and stability. These include the fierce struggle for political power and domination; persistent land disputes; refugee influx from South Sudan mainly of ethnic Nuer; corruption; and the proliferation of small arms. It is believed that these threats persist and can provide increased opportunities for violence and wider insecurity.

5.2.3. Actors in conflict

There are various state and non-state actors involved in the conflict in Gambella. The study findings from the FGDs and KIs identified the following as the most important ones:

1. The national government is accused of applying the highly contested federalism system in the region without consideration to socio-economic and cultural realities. The system has increased the social rifts and risks of alienation in the region. In addition, the way the federal government is handling conflicts and the overall poor security status of the region is highly debated.
2. Officials in the regional government are reported to play an integral part in local conflict dynamics. Since offices have decision-making powers on various issues, competitions and rivalries to occupy them are rife.
3. Politicians and elites have fueled conflict by employing others to carry out violence on their behalf and engaging in polarizing discourse against ethnic groups and highlanders. Tensions over access to political and economic influence have erupted many times in the region with armed groups backed by political elites.
4. Young people are susceptible to conflicts. Existing evidence shows that the study areas are troubled with poverty, unemployment, unfulfilled promises. FGD participants mentioned that these factors tend to frustrate the youth and led them increasingly to take part in conflicts.
5. Security forces of the region are allegedly accused of taking a side in the conflict supporting one ethnic group or the others. For example, media reports as shown below are frequent "On January 27, 2016, around 2:00 am local time, 'special police' from the regional administration of Gambella aided by local militia attacked Anuak civilians all over the region. Subsequently, the death of more than four dozen Anuak civilians has

been reported...³¹”

6. The local militia is also reported as active conflict actors. These groups are organized along the ethnic line and support specific government officials. It is believed that elites may use them to carry out certain acts of violence on their behalf, without appearing to be affiliated with the political violence,
7. Thousands of South Sudanese refugees are hosted in refugee camps around and Gambella. The presence of a large number of refugees meant that the already intricate balance between the two ethnic groups is upset and more tensions and conflicts among the locals are produced.
8. Anuak-led GPLF has antagonistic relations with the other actors in the region. This group led by Anuak intellectuals and activists in the diaspora claims to protect the interest of the Anuak vis-à-vis what it calls the expansion of the Nuer and the highlander community in Gambella. This conflict has diverse security, resource/economic-based, political and inter-ethnic implications between conflicting parties and other involved actors.

5.2.4. Actors in peacebuilding

Traditional leaders: ethnic conflicts between Nuer and Anuak have traditionally been solved by the active involvement of traditional leaders. This role has, however, diminished over time with the changing nature and dynamics of conflicts. If restored and well strengthened, the peacebuilding contribution of these stakeholders mainly the Guurtong (peace agreements) is of crucial importance.

Religious leaders: findings from FGD participants suggest that the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding has been remarkable. Religious leaders particularly from EECMY East and West Bethel Synods have been active in supporting peace initiatives. Many people listen to messages from religious leaders of the churches, as they are more trusted than politicians who are commonly regarded as corrupt and less reliable. In some instances reports indicated that religious leaders though influential, have also been vulnerable to many threats and attacks.

The youth: despite their potential in peacebuilding and conflict transformation, findings of this study indicated that the youth have not been provided with the necessary opportunities to do so.

³¹ <https://unpo.org/article/18883>

Respondents have mentioned that youth involvement has only been limited to participation in workshops and conferences. Many argued that there is a need for a strategic involvement of the youth in peacebuilding from all ethnic groups and conflicting parties in Gambella.

Women: similar to the youth, women have huge potential to bring about social cohesion and conflict management. Despite this, however, women are reported to greatly lack opportunities at a regional level to demonstrate their peacebuilding potentials. Study findings indicate that if effectively involved, women can contribute to reconciliation, economic development, education, and transitional justice – all critical elements of a sustained peace of everyone in the region.

Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus: the EECMY has a long and strong presence in Gambella. The peace office of the church implemented initiatives to build peace and social cohesion by diffusing tensions and reconcile communities. Activities of the office include peace and reconciliation conferences, community training workshops, and worships. The office targeted the East and West Gambella Bethel Synods. Efforts by EECMY to bring together religious leaders in events such as training workshops contributed to improved relations between the two groups.

CSOs: as the result of the refugee crisis from South Sudan, Gambella has become a hub for many NGOs, both local and international, working on humanitarian fronts. These organizations have capacities and resources to implement peacebuilding programs or at least integrate some activities into their ongoing initiatives.

Security forces: the national army and regional security forces have a crucial role in peacebuilding. However, both have been allegedly accused of inaction or delay to take measures as well as taking sides in conflicts. Given the bloody nature and level of destructions of recent conflicts, security forces with appropriate and the right scale of measures can stop conflicts from escalation.

Local businesses and the private sector: Locally owned and managed businesses are never neutral in conflict. Owners and managers of these businesses often play a crucial role in communities and may be well-connected via multiple business or social networks, giving them access to resources. The inclusion of local businesses in peacebuilding initiatives is often important to their success. Most conflicts, at least partly, are driven by economic agendas. Local business practices can be significant factors in generating instability and violence. These include corruption, rent-seeking on a massive scale, and a weakening of local security. While some local businesses benefit from conflict, for most, conflict is bad for business, which can be the fundamental motivation for

business involvement in peacebuilding. Moreover, their lack of a uniform agenda and their varied interests provide opportunities and challenges in identifying its potential to help build peace.

Academic Institutions: universities and schools have recently become grounds for violent conflicts. Since universities are places where various groups come together, they also provide a forum for peace dialogue among the youth. Gambella University and others can also be engaged in conflict and peacebuilding researches to provide evidence-based understanding to peacebuilding and policy initiatives. The Campus Peace-Building Initiative was created to recognize and provide resources for educational institutions, programs, and individuals that are helping make our schools places of peace and harmony.

5.2.5. Existing Challenges/gaps in Peacebuilding Efforts

The study identified key challenges that the peace actors namely the youth, women, and religious leaders are experiencing. Such challenges are found to be cross-cutting across all three actors and multidimensional.

According to the youth FGD participants, the role of the youth in peacebuilding is mainly affected by the following factors:

- ✓ Many young people are influenced by ethnic ideology and stories of discrimination, injustice, and other devising factors between the Anuak and Nuer. These led some of them to be perpetrators of violence;
- ✓ There is widespread youth unemployment in the region creating frustration and anger;
- ✓ Because of small arms proliferation in the region, youth tend to have easy access to weapons;
- ✓ Most of the youth do not have an adequate knowledge base in conflict management skills including constructive dialogue;
- ✓ The presence of a large number of youth refugees from South Sudan creates additional tension;
- ✓ Lack of youth engagements in political dialogues;
- ✓ There are no strong youth-led organizations and initiatives with the objective of

peacebuilding and social cohesion; and

- ✓ Lack of Youth participation in both formal and informal political processes.

Women FGD participants highlighted that the role of women in peacebuilding in their localities is affected by the following gaps:

- ✓ A major challenge is that women are often perceived by government officials, faith leaders as well as the wider community as having the skills, knowledge, or social status to address large-scale ethnic conflicts. Women also see themselves as having little power to change these culturally embedded and socially recognized perceptions that are impacting their rights and roles in peacebuilding activities;
- ✓ There is no direct and sustained engagement by women in peacebuilding and social cohesion programs that empower them to seek remedy, including justice and reconciliations;
- ✓ Women's political presence is too low. If the contribution of women in peacebuilding is going to increase, the need to bring more women into public office both elected and appointed is required. Creating a "critical mass" of women officials is therefore crucial, as this will encourage women to engage more substantively within male-dominated security institutions.

FGD participants with religious leaders highlighted the following gaps in their capacity to effectively address peace-building efforts:

- ✓ There are no staff/religious leaders who are professionally trained in peacebuilding and social cohesion;
- ✓ Religious leaders do not have the necessary skill to diagnose problems correctly and be able to distinguish between tensions/violence that have political, ethnic, or religious roots or a combination of them; and
- ✓ Some religious leaders at times are put under pressure or are politically manipulated by local authorities.

5.2.6. Opportunities for peacebuilding and social cohesion

Institutions/Actors	Opportunities for peacebuilding
Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms	Though the role of traditional mechanisms in addressing violent conflicts between Anuak and Nuer has been on the decline, there is still a possibility to strengthen and engage them in conflict management related to land, natural resources management, cattle raids, and others.
Religious leaders	Trusted, committed and unbiased religious leaders within their respective churches can bring conflicting parties to dialogue; can teach peace, promote forgiveness and tolerance as well as organize youth and women groups in peace structures.
Youth	A large number of youth mainly in the towns reported are to be engaged in activities related to promoting peaceful values and countering Agnuak/ Nuer ethnic rhetoric in their communities.
Women	The space that women occupy in peacebuilding is increasing as more women are actively participating in political processes and activism.
Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY)	The presence of EECMY with peace-building programs provides a great opportunity to address tensions and conflicts more constructively and sustainably. To achieve this, EECMY has been working closely with community groups that involve women, youth, and faith leaders.
CSOs	Peacebuilding requires the engagement of multiple actors in multiple sectors and multiple levels to address conflict drivers and support local capacities for peace. CSOs already on the ground such as NCA have the potential to provide integrated and multi-sectoral interventions in the regions.
Social media	Social media is frequently used for instigating conflicts. Despite this, however, social media can effectively be used to spread messages of peace and social cohesion and reach a large number of youth and other users. Peace activists already using social media to promote peace between the Anauk and Nuer need to be further supported.
Education	The existing education system is described as conflict insensitive because it tends to reinforce existing social tensions, marginalization, hostilities, or subsisting differences between ethnic groups. If this conflict insensitivity is properly addressed through a system that promotes solidarity, social cohesion, and peaceful coexistence, education can unlock a huge potential for future peace and social cohesion.

Table 7: Opportunities for peacebuilding and social cohesion

5.3 CONFLICT IN CENTRAL GONDOR ZONE-CHILGA

5.3.1. The nature of Amhara and Qemant relations

From historic points of view, the neighboring Amhara and Qemant peoples have had a long period of amicable ethnic relations. Existing evidence showed that this peaceful coexistence has remained in place until decades ago. Oral traditions from the two ethnic groups show that there was little antagonism between the two groups irrespective of their differences in terms of language, religion, ancestry, and traditions.

This amicable relationship has changed in recent times. Chilga Wereda has become one of the centers of contention. In 2015, an identity-based conflict erupted following a demonstration in Chilga wereda and other neighboring Kebeles like Shinifa. The demonstration was organized by the committee of Qemant to demand the self-determination of the people. The demonstration was followed by a conflict between Qemant youth and the regional State special security forces. Because of this conflict, four Qemants were killed and four others wounded. The mere conduct of the demonstration was not the immediate cause of ethnic conflict between the Amhara and Qemant peoples.

Conflicts of varying intensity took place in 2018 with the situation escalated in 2019. The root cause of the conflict in 2018 was related to the Qemant community's claim that some Kebeles need to be included under their administration. In 2018, a series of negotiations and a referendum that involved the House of Federation expanded the special Woreda of the Qemant to 69 kebeles, with only three remaining out of their reach.

Reports of fighting between the Amhara region's special police force and armed farmers in the Central Gonder zone started particularly to surface in 2019. In mid-September, heavy gunfights were reported claiming the lives of several people, mostly farmers, destruction of properties, and burning of houses. In November 2018³², 15,042 IDPs were identified within Chilga 1 and 2 weredas from both communities.

5.3.2. The root cause of the conflict

The conflict that involved the Qemant in the Amhara Regional State is a result of the long-running quest for recognition and autonomy in the context of growing Amhara nationalism and a reoriented

³² Interagency-Rapid-Protection-Assessment_Gondar-Amhara-Region_11-14-March-2019.pdf

Amhara regional autonomy³³. Key informant interviewees from the Qemant communities suggest that the Qemant quest for autonomy and self-administration has for long been at the center of Qemant-Amhara relationships and never been properly addressed by the concerned bodies since 2007. These respondents tried to affirm the unique identity of Qemant with historical narrative and demanded no less than full autonomy of the community.

On the other hand, informants with Amhara background claimed that the Qemant issue is not just an identity issue; it is rather a question of good governance. They believe that the Qemant issue is complicated by the exiting level of poverty, unemployment, and environmental challenges in the area. Prolonged instability, growing population, lack of employment opportunities, and adverse climatic changes resulting in poor productivity are all contributing to the vicious circling of conflict crises. There are also reports allegedly claiming that TPLF is funding the self-rule campaign of the Qemant with intentions to destabilize the region. The following table³⁴ elaborates the above:

Legitimizing Identity (the Amhara view)	Affirms dominant cultural, social, and moral norms – supports the status quo.
Resistance Identity (Qemant view)	Builds up confidence, solidarity, and capacity within marginalized groups by excluding oppressors/persecutors – can demonize ‘outsiders’
Project Identity	The development of networks of marginalized groups animated by resistance identities to bring about social change

Table 8: Models of identity

5.3.3. Who are the conflict actors?

According to findings from the interviews and FGDs actors involved in Qemant conflict are many. The most important ones are identified below:

- 1. Provisional Committee of Qemant Identity:** this committee was established as a sole political agent, for coordinating activities and presenting claims to the polity in a peaceful, nonviolent, and legal manner under the politico-legal framework provided in post-1991. With its political base in Gonder town, the Committee claims to represent all Kemant people, which legitimizes and hence consolidates the quest. The organizational structure of the Committee is extended to Wereda and Kebele level. It also includes Qemant Women Association (KWS) and Qemant Youth Association (KYA). The committee is allegedly

³³ Keeping Ethiopia’s Transition on the Rails Africa Report N°283 | 16 December 2019

³⁴ Adopted from Castells’ Models of Identity, 2016.

accused by the government and Amhara regional state officials of instigating violence that led to human loss and destructions of varying magnitude.

- 2. The militia:** armed farmers in many Qemant weredas are reported to take part in conflicts. These armed groups clashed in various instances with government security forces causing deaths from both sides. The regional government security officers for example claimed that armed groups organized in the name of Qemant opened fire on the region's special force while entering the region³⁵.
- 3. Qemant activists:** based in Gonder, Addis Ababa, and abroad, these activists are reported to distribute messages of intolerance and stories of discrimination and injustice using social media and other media outlets.
- 4. Weredea administrators:** At Chilga, interviewees and FGD participants mentioned that some local administrators are using their positions to advance their political agenda. Some officials in the Qemant led weredas are reported to support conflicts as quick strategies to achieve the quest for self-administration.
- 5. Amhara regional state Special Forces:** the Liyu Hayle is accused of using excessive force and killings of many Qemant in different weredas. Many respondents highlighted the atrocities of the force including the beatings and mass detentions. Media reports also highlighted that a series of clashes between Qemant activists and regional security forces led to "the killing and jailing of hundreds of people and destruction of property, including the burning of houses. Thousands were displaced".
- 6. National Movement of Amhara (NAMA):** this nationalist organization saw the Qemant self-assertion as a plot to divide and weaken the Amhara people. The party considers the Qemant question as a form of proxy war waged by the TPLF against the Amhara. The party is accused of promoting violent actions to stop such interventions.
- 7. The Amhara youth (Fano):** the informal youth groups namely the Fano are actively engaged in conflicts. The Fano tend to have contradictory interests with the Qemant youth on the self-administration and other issues of the community. Both youth groups came into a series of clashes resulting in human loss, property destruction, and other damages.

³⁵ <https://borkena.com/2019/09/30/ethiopia-kemant-amhara-violence-reported-in-central-gonder-region/>

5.3.4. Challenges/gaps for peace and social cohesion

The study identified the following as main challenges to peacebuilding and social cohesion efforts:

- ✓ The Qemant claim for self-identity and administration is not yet fully addressed. Many informants indicated that they have no confidence in the system (House of Federation) to grant their demands in a short time frame.
- ✓ A web of competing claims characterizes the Qemant issue. There are insufficient reporting and investigations to verify the claims of violence in Qemant areas including Chilga.
- ✓ There are Ahmaha and Qemant hardliners/political elites who are not or less willing to address the contested issues through dialogue and discussions. Both have shown a tendency to resort to violent methods to achieve their objectives.
- ✓ External actors are increasingly involved in the Qemant issue. These actors are using the Qemant quest for advancing their political agenda.
- ✓ Traditionally, the Qemant people carry weapons for self-defense. These weapons are reported to be frequently used in many instances in firefights between the framers/militia and the regional government forces. Attempts to disarm the framers of their weapons further intensified discontent in the area.
- ✓ Qemant and Amhara activists are vying to spread their opposing views using social media. Both target the youth of both communities increasingly with messages that instigate conflicts.

5.3.5. Peacebuilding actors

Although different actors are reported to work in the escalation of Qemant conflicts, there are also few other actors currently striving to build peace and social cohesion. These include:

- ✓ **Elders:** both the Qemant and Amhara elders have contributed much to the de-escalation of conflicts by organizing space for dialogues. Traditionally, elders in both communities command high respect as they are regarded as guardians of the cultural values of the communities. Often their advice and recommendations for peace and social cohesion are accepted by many.

- ✓ **Religious leaders:** Although the majority of Kemant are Christians today, the practice of the old traditional religion of the communities still exists. The religious leader (Wenber) is reported to be responsible for observing religious ceremonies, mostly attended by the residents of Chilga Woreda. In light of escalating trends of conflicts, this as well as Christian religious leaders are important actors for creating peace and social cohesion. Religious leaders who participated in the FGDs indicated that their role in peacebuilding is related to teaching and preaching the word of peace from the Bible to the wider community and organize youth and women in Sunday schools. These youth and women are actively engaged in spreading peace messages. Religious leaders in Chilga have also created a forum for the community members to discuss conflicts and their amicable resolutions by all parties involved.
- ✓ **Women:** apart from being the main victims of conflicts, women are reported to play important roles in conflict resolutions in their communities. From the FGDs conducted with women, it is found out that so far women have organized 69 peace discussion sessions/dialogues with government representatives, youths, elders, religious leaders, and Committee of Qemant Identity representatives. In addition to this, women have also organized a peaceful demonstration of 9 km travel on foot to spread messages of peace and social cohesion. Women are a member of reconciliation committee of elders and religious leaders in Amhara and Qemant people.
- ✓ **Youth:** youths are both conflict and peacebuilding actors in the study area. When mobilized along the peace lines, their contribution can range from restraining from violent conflict to promoting sustainable peace in their communities. Youths FGD participants in Chilga mentioned that efforts were made by the youth to organize peace dialogues involving youth themselves, religious leaders, women, and local administrators/officials, security personnel, Committee of Qemant Identity representatives, and others. These dialogues focused on tolerance and mutual respect for the cultural values, language, and religion of both communities. The youth organized events also focused on the identification of conflict triggers and stop them before they escalate into open and violent skirmishes.
- ✓ **The Orthodox Church:** the church has a long and strong presence in the study area. The church organizes evening sermons that focus on peace, harmony, forgiveness, reconsolidation, and social cohesion. The church also hosts Sunday school members

who are instrumental in disseminating a message of peace to the communities. The church also supports its faith leaders to organize forums to discuss conflict issues and find ways to address them before they escalate to violence. The involvement of the church in such endeavors is highly accepted by both the Amhara and Qemant communities as all agree that the Church interventions will contribute greatly to peacebuilding and social cohesion. This is the result of the trust and wide acceptance that the church built overtime on strong religious and moral grounds.

- ✓ **Gonder University:** For a while, universities in different parts of Ethiopia have become places where violent ethnic-based conflicts erupt occasionally. While the triggers of the conflicts in most cases are related to personal disagreements between students which then quickly morph into an ethnic-tinged clash, the structural issues that are behind the pervasive ethnic violence in universities are far more complicated and multi-layered. Relatively situations in Gonder University remained calm mainly owing to the Sustained Dialogue project that enhanced intergroup positive relationships among the students with diverse identities by promoting a culture of trust and collaboration.

5.3.6. The existing capacity of the peacebuilding actors

The study findings show that the above peacebuilding actors closely interact and work together to address conflicts in their communities. KII and FGD respondents believed that the actors mentioned above were able to lay the foundations for promoting social cohesion. It was commonly agreed that addressing conflict issues in Chilga through non-violent and collaborative processes has relatively increased the communities' resilience to violence.

Despite this, however, the full capacity of these peacebuilding actors is not adequately realized as a result of various factors. Some of these are indicated below:

- ✓ Despite their contribution to conflict resolutions and peacebuilding, the activities of elders towards these ends seem highly fragmented, self-motivated, and not officially backed up by existing institutions in the area.
- ✓ So far, fewer efforts are being made to increase to bring women to leadership, and build their acceptance as mediators at different levels. This requires recognizing the importance of women's participation in community activities and decision-making processes by the

local, regional, and federal level administrators.

- ✓ Religious actors play an important role in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Despite this, however, much of their efforts are not fully recognized. FGD findings suggest conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts are not systematically integrated within the churches' day-to-day activities. It is also suggested that religious leaders often tend to address post-conflict grievances through forgiveness preaching rather than identification of 'early warning' to conflicts or conflict prevention in general.
- ✓ The Qemant conflict is complex. Study findings indicated that peacebuilding actors significantly lack competencies that reflect the mix of knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to address such conflicts.
- ✓ Although women, youth, and religious actors work together, they do not have a clear coordination mechanism that can sustain their common efforts.

5.4. CONFLICT IN THE OROMO SPECIAL ZONE OF THE AMHARA REGION: KEMISIE

Kemissie (also called Kascim) town is located in North East of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with a distance of 325 KM and served as the administrative center of the Oromia Special Zone of the Amhara Region. Kemise has been rapidly growing stimulated by two major factors. First, in 1994 the town became the capital of the new zone of Oromiya and simultaneously became the Wereda (sub-zonal administration) town of the Dewa Chefa woreda. This administrative upgrading meant that the settlement attracted many new administrative functions and personnel. Second, and very recently, the boundaries of the town were extended leading to the incorporation of many rural Kebeles as well as a sizeable rural population into a much larger Kemise in terms of area and population.

5.4.1. The nature of conflict in Kemisie

Unlike the other study areas, conflict in Kemise represents not only a violent inter-nationalist struggle but also a struggle involving minorities within minorities³⁶. In the Oromo Special Zone of Kemisie, the Oromo have exercised autonomy for more than two decades. Existing evidence shows that the relationships of the Oromo in the special zone with the neighboring Amhara have remained peaceful until the recent turn of events in the country.

³⁶ Drivers of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, 2020.

According to some key interviewees, a sense of threat towards one another has increased among both the Oromos and Amharas in the past four to five years. While the Oromo felt an increasing encroachment of the Amhara towards their zone, the Amhara felt the need to contain the threat of rising Oromo nationalism in their homeland, and to protect their minorities within the Oromo minority. In addition to this, the Amhara within the zone felt that their religion is under attack by Muslim extremists who are increasingly gaining a huge momentum than ever before in Kemisie.

5.4.2. Conflict causes and triggers

The study identified the following causes and triggering factors of conflict in Kemisie:

1. An increasing sense of nationalism within the two ethnic groups has fueled conflicts. The Oromo felt that they are at risk of losing their autonomy as the result of the growing Amhara nationalistic movements; on the other hand, the Amhara consider Kemisie as a source of threat to the minority Amhara residents with the increasing OLF activities in the area.
2. Evidence shows that Kemisie has been growing fast posing a threat to the surrounding neighboring Amhara weredas. This expansion apart from its administrative ramifications has also led to conflicts mainly concerning competition over grazing lands and other resources.
3. Insufficient opportunities exist for young people to earn a living in Kemisie and other areas. A growing number of young people – including those who graduated from the Universities – seem to be unable to gain access to waged employment. Political patronage emerged as the main determinant of selection for jobs within the administrations, which in turn are allegedly accused of harboring the ideology of ethnic nationalism.
4. Religious fundamentalism has been on the rise in South Wello mainly in the three major urban centers: Dessie, Kombolcha, and Kemise cities³⁷. According to key informants of the study, Kemisie has in particular been a center for Muslim radical groups who are responsible for inter-religious hostilities and resulting conflicts between the Muslims and Christian communities in the areas. Respondents mentioned that many people including

³⁷ Ayalew Yimer, Countering “Islamic fundamentalism” and out-group hostility in North-East Ethiopia: Kemissie city administration Muslims, 2018.

religious leaders are killed because of their religious background. Numerous churches are burned down, with many followers losing their places of worship in their vicinities. Religious intolerance is also reflected in many other aspects of social life. For example, many Muslim youths are attracted to radicalization and have become less inclined to develop friendships with Christians. Some tend to ignore and shun non-Muslims, including former friends. Inter-faith marriage, burial services, and other social interactions have also significantly declined, if not completely stopped.

5. Youth in Kemisie are strongly attentive and responsive to political processes at a national level. This is greatly exploited by political elites who tend to call upon the youth for action/violence to advance their particular agenda. These political elites are allegedly reported to be from OLF and some activists based locally and abroad. Study participants indicated that measures that simply started with roadblocks often turn into attacks on the non-Muslim and non-Oromo groups including killings, beatings, displacement, and the burning of churches.
6. Conflict breeds conflict in the sense that it leads to revenge killings. Evidence shows that those who lost family members as the result of violent conflicts tend to resort to revenge killings at times. This practice is believed to be an extension of the blood feud tradition characteristic of the area from the old days.
7. Small arms proliferation is considered a serious problem in the area. Unlike before, weapons of choice for violence or self-protection have changed from sticks, stones, knives to AK47, grenades, and other types of small firearms. As a result of violent conflicts and measures being taken by the Liyu Hayle, possession of arms has significantly increased. Some key informants indicated that many families were forced to buy weapons by even selling their cattle and other properties for self-defense.
8. Social media is fueling conflicts in the sense that individuals are posting hate speeches, false information, or fake news, mainly on Facebook contributing to a sharp division and a growing feeling of intolerance. Key informants mainly elders mentioned that the youth are not critical in their use of information from social media.

5.4.3. Actors in the conflicts

The Kemisie conflict is complex in that it involves various actors having varying interests. Some of the key actors are indicated below:

The youth: the youth are increasingly involved in conflicts. Some are reported to take part in conflicts as mere instruments of other actors, while the majority are simply carried out by the sense of a mob. Some of the key informants believed that youth involvement in conflicts is largely motivated by a sense of alienation and prejudice that they inherited while growing up. For long, no efforts were made to engage the youth in reconciliation. Peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives to bring down the walls between what are perceived to be opposing ethnic groups.

Political parties: many consider Kemisie to be a hub for OLF political and military activities. Symbols of Oromo resistance are visible across Kemise and nearby woredas. In addition to this, zonal administrators including security officials are allegedly accused of being OLF sympathizers. On the other hand, the National Movement of Amhara (NaMA) presents itself as a guardian of the interest of the Amhara in Kemisie and mobilizes the youth and others along this line. The party even questions the legitimacy of the zone, perceiving it as a barrier to Amhara nationalism and unification.

Political activists: FGD with the youth shows that conflicts in Kemisie are instigated or influenced by political activists who have ethnic nationalistic agendas. These activists see kemisie as an island surrounded by an opposing ethnic group that poses a threat to its survival. Such messages are found to be widespread on their websites and Facebook pages.

Security forces: informants indicated that the special force of Amhara has clashed numerous times with armed groups in Kemisie and the nearby woredas. The force is accused by many for its use of excessive force and targeting the Oromos based on their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Most importantly, the efforts of the Amhara Liyu Hayle to disarm the Oromos is considered a targeted move to weaken and expose them to the threat from Amhara nationalists. On the other hand, some of the security officials in the special zone are reported to directly work with OLF and advance its nationalistic agenda. They are also accused of inaction during violent conflicts that result in life loss, physical harm, and property damages.

Local administrators: some officials holding political and administrative offices are allegedly reported to work with OLF and back its agenda directly or indirectly. Most of the time these

officials ignore conflict signs and fail to address or report them before it escalating into open violence.

Fundamentalist Islamic teachers and leaders: For long, the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims in Kemisie has been characterized by compromise and tolerance, not strife and antagonism. In recent times, however, extremist groups have been increasing in some of the established madrasas. These groups have specifically targeted the youth with teachings that aim at their radicalization. According to non-Muslim informants because of repetitive attacks perpetrated against the followers of other religions (mostly Orthodox Christians) and the burning of churches, extremism has further complicated the security situation of the area.

5.4.4. Peacebuilding actors

The following table identifies peace-building actors and summarizes their current challenges to respond to conflicts effectively:

Actors	Current challenges gaps
Religious leaders	Kemisie presents a place where the two major religions, Christian and Islam survive side by side. Leaders of the two religions do have a huge potential to build peace and social cohesion. This potential is not, however, well-realized as a result of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="511 878 1236 946">1. A growing number of Islamic leaders with reformist or fundamentalist views.<li data-bbox="511 954 1195 1022">2. The majority of Sheiks not being outspoken in their condemnation of the burning of churches.<li data-bbox="511 1029 1357 1097">3. Some religious leaders from the Christian side magnifying the fear of threat from the radical groups and call upon retaliations.<li data-bbox="511 1105 1291 1168">4. Absence of inter-faith dialogues aiming at assessing past wrongdoings and solutions for the future.

The youth	<p>The youth in Kemisie are both conflict perpetrators and peacebuilders. Those who are for peace and social cohesion are facing various challenges including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The conflict in Kimisie is complex. It has both ethnic and religious aspects, a dangerous combination that usually results in violence that is destructive and sustained for long. 2. The youth are under increasing pressure to take a certain side from opposing political parties, religious fundamentalists, activists, and other groups. 3. The youth are exposed to open messages of hostilities, hate, and fake news through social media. 4. The youth are experiencing widespread unemployment. 5. There are no larger forums to bring the youth from the two groups for dialogue existing security of the area, devise strategies for future resolution of conflicts, and so on.
Women	<p>It is commonly agreed that women play a significant role in peacebuilding and social cohesion. Despite this, however, their engagement is constrained by several factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Traditionally, the role of women in the resolution and transformation of violent conflicts is limited. This is particularly the case with conflicts fueled by ethnic identity and religion. 2. Women’s participation in political processes and representation in the town administration is significantly low. 3. Similar to women in the other study areas, no opportunities or forums are created for them to hold peace dialogues.
EOTC-DICAC	<p>The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOTC-DICAC) has been engaged in the study for a while. EOTC-DICAC held workshops in different parts of the country including Kemisie to facilitate peacebuilding and social cohesion involving both Christians and Muslims.</p>

Table 9: Peacebuilding actors in Kemisie

5.5. CONFLICT IN NORTH SHEWA: ATAYE

Efrata ena Gidim (“Efrata and Gedem”) is one of the Weredas in the Amhara Region of Ethiopia. The administrative center of the Worda is Ataye, also a study site for this conflict mapping and analysis exercise. Recently, Ataye has become a center of attention as a result of increasing violent conflicts. This can be seen from such media reports as “Unidentified gunmen have reportedly opened fire on Saturday in Ataye town in North Shewa zone of Amhara regional state³⁸”.

5.5.1. Conflict causes in Ataye

Findings from the FGDs and interviews indicated that conflict in Ataye has both ethnic and religious dimensions. The ethnic dimension is manifested by a confrontation between the Oromo and Amhara communities. These communities have long-standing relations of conflict and peace in the areas. In recent times, ethnic identity is heightened by events in other parts of the country and the strong presence of OLF Shene in the area.

For many, the attacks on churches and its followers in Ataye mean that recent violence is motivated by religious considerations. FGDs with religious leaders indicated that the area is witnessing increasing religious extremism in the form of Islamic fundamentalism and out-group hostilities. Video and photo records of churches being vandalizing and set ablaze by armed groups have surfaced on social media in 2019 attracting the attention of many.

Apart from the above, key informant interviewees mentioned that competition for land and resources or economic considerations can better explain the root causes of conflicts in the area. Conflicts are fueled by widespread poverty and youth unemployment. The presence of small arms contributes to these conflicts and makes them more deadly. The widespread availability of small arms is a threat to the security of the area because their presence encourages violence rather than peaceful ways of resolving problems, and negates confidence and security-building measures.

³⁸ <https://borkena.com/2019/10/06/reports-of-exchange-of-fire-in-ataye-other-areas-in-amhara-region/>

5.5.2. Actors in the conflicts

The following are the main conflict actors in the study area:

Actors	Actors interests and motivations
Armed militia groups	-Have ethnic and political motivations for their violent actions. - Are affiliated with ethno-nationalistic parties and groups.
Extremist groups	-Islamic fundamentalist who are hostile and intolerant to out-groups. -Want to instigate and use religious conflicts to advance other agendas.
OLF Shene(Allegedly)	-The party denies any involvement in conflicts in the area.
Security forces (Allegedly)	-Are accused of using excessive force that further fuels conflicts.
Youth	-Respond to demonstration calls by activists for roadblocks that usually end up in violent conflicts.

Table 10: Conflict actors in Ataye

5.5.3. Peacebuilding actors

The study identified the following actors as important stakeholders in peacebuilding:

- 1. Elders:** traditionally elders are considered important actors in mediations and conflict resolutions in the area. Elders command widespread respect among conflicting parties.
- 2. Religious leaders:** both from the Orthodox Christian Church and Muslim leaders are influential among their followers. Both have the potential to address the growing extremism in the area and promote peace by mobilizing their respective communities.
- 3. Women:** women can play an important role in mediation processes. They can also contribute to conflict prevention by promoting peaceful co-existence and social cohesion.
- 4. Youth:** With proper support and direction, youth in conflict can be turned into peacebuilding actors. Others can be mobilized to prevent conflicts, amend past grievances and build sustainable peace in their communities.

5.5.4. Current capacity and challenges of peacebuilding actors

Study findings indicate that the current capacity of actors to effectively contribute to conflict prevention and peacebuilding is weak. Their current engagement in addressing threats of violent conflicts is also highly inadequate. The following are identified challenges in the capacity of the above-mentioned actors:

- ✓ Lack of forums for constructive dialogues that leads to trust-building;
- ✓ Lack of knowledge and skill in conflict prevention, management, and strategies for peacebuilding and social cohesion;
- ✓ Peacebuilding initiatives appear to be scattered, uncoordinated, and in relative isolation from other socio-political dynamics in the study area; and
- ✓ Local peacebuilding initiatives lack financial resources for long-term and sustainable engagements.

6 **SCENARIO BUILDING**

6. SCENARIO BUILDING

6.1. Scenario 1: Status quo scenario

Several factors will contribute to the Status quo scenario in all the study areas:

Inter-regional relations: Before ethnic regionalization, relationships between the Oromo and the Gumuz, Oromo and the Amhara, and the Qemant and Amhara have remarkably changed after the introduction of ethnic federalism. Unclear boundaries have created contentions in light of dwindling natural resources. Competition for land, grazing areas, and water sources largely remain a major source of conflicts.

Ethnic identity and nationalism: In the Central Gondor zone, there is a mix of heightened ethnic consciousness among the Qemant informed mainly by political elites/activists. On the other hand, the growing Amhara nationalists consider this claim divisive. This situation has made the existing relationships across the ethnic lines highly fractious and volatile. The findings from this research site show that some actors are intentionally magnifying historical injustices to open old wounds. As a result, inter-ethnic mistrust persists and remains volatile.

Religious intolerance: In some of the research areas, mainly Kemisie, ethnic violence is accompanied by religious intolerance. For long, religion has played a unifying role across the different ethnic groups. Inter-faith social relations are declining resulting further into tensions. The role of religious leaders to heal past grievances and prevent future conflicts remains weak.

Access to rule of law: In all research areas, there is a heightened sense of insecurity. According to study participants, regional and federal security forces were not able to adequately address past violent conflicts for different reasons. The failure of the security apparatus to address conflicts quickly and effectively led many to procure weapons in the name of self-defense.

Weak conflict resolution institutions: The study findings illustrated that conflict resolution mechanisms for inter-ethnic violence remain too weak. This is particularly worrisome in the face of continuing conflicts and the absence of strong formal justice systems in all study areas.

6.2. Scenario 2: Worst-case scenario

The worst-case scenario for the study areas could be because of the following factors:

Inter-regional relations: Inter-regional relations such as those between the Oromo and the Gumuz, and the Amhara and the Oromo are strained as a result of contested boundary demarcations. In some cases, this led to administrative overlap as well as contentions over land and resources management. If regional boundaries are not clearly and quickly demarcated, additional conflicts with high magnitude could break out.

Ethnic identity and nationalism: FGD participants and key informants argued that the question of Qemant identity and self-administration is ignored both by the regional government and the House of Federation. This perception is found to be widespread and is creating a sense of frustration among the community members mainly the youth. Unless this situation is addressed quickly and amicably, the chance for renewed violent conflicts is high.

Religious intolerance: Religious intolerance has been on the rise in South Wello (Kemisie) and North Shewa (Ataye). Although the extent to which religion plays a role in the current conflicts requires further investigation, respondents mentioned that there is growing religious extremism mainly among the youth. Attacks on churches, religious leaders, and followers are frequently reported. Unless these are addressed quickly and effectively, conflicts of a larger magnitude can erupt across regions and even at the national level.

Access to the rule of law: Lack of rule of law has increased a sense of insecurity particularly among minority groups. At the Oromia-Benishangul border areas, respondents mentioned that the chance that the security forces can guarantee their safety is far from realistic. Similarly, access to justice remains low for many mainly for the conflict victims. With this level of deprivation of security and justice, the chance that people can take matters into their hands is high. This is more worrisome when one considers the level of weapons recently circulating in some of the areas under investigation. In any post-conflict situation, a feeling for revenge is always strong and can result in additional violence.

6.3. Scenario 3: Best-case scenario

The best-case scenario in the study areas would be a result of the factors analyzed herein:

- ✓ There will be a political will by the regional states and House of Federation to timely address the inter-regional boundary issues in some of the research areas. The result of this would be clearly demarcated regional boundaries with clear administrative structures, land and resources management.

- ✓ The Qemant quest for ethnic identity will be addressed by the concerned bodies leading to the restoration of relations with the Amhara. The communal values of both groups that emphasize tolerance, respect for others, justice, and social cohesion will revive once more.
- ✓ More vibrant and disciplined political parties and political elites will promote tolerance, trust, and social cohesion instead of division, hatred, and ethnic violence.
- ✓ Religious actors would take a strong initiative to address extremisms and promote positive interfaith relations based on mutual respect. The contributing factors for this could be the existing recognition by most stakeholders of the role that these actors play in peacebuilding and social cohesion.
- ✓ The security concern of study communities will be addressed through the application of the rule of law. One of the contributing factors to this could be the improved effectiveness of the security agencies in addressing the security challenges of the communities.
- ✓ The role of some activists and political elites to instigate conflict through social media will decrease as a result of the strict application of legislation against hate speech.
- ✓ The upcoming election will be peaceful further securing a democratic and inclusive dispensation in the study areas.

7 ESSENTIAL ENTRY POINTS FOR PEACEBUILDING

7. ESSENTIAL ENTRY POINTS FOR PEACEBUILDING

Several attempts have been made to address violent conflicts in different parts of the country including the research areas. Yet the success of these initiatives remains questionable. Given the complex nature of conflicts in the research areas, this study suggests both top-down or grassroots approaches and bottom-up processes in peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding efforts need to focus on working with those on the ground. These include community leaders, religious actors, women, youth, civil society, and local government. These actors have the potential to diffuse the intensity of the conflict and transform it into peace. A good part of the peacebuilding process must therefore focus on recognizing these actors and capitalizing on them for developing their skills and engaging them in the peace process.

Working with faith-based actors: The study shows that religious actors are at the center of conflict prevention, resolution, and peacebuilding efforts. These actors have long-term involvement in the communities they are serving. They all have well-established moral and spiritual authority to be engaged in peacebuilding activities. FGDs with religious leaders indicated that they can reach almost all residents in their areas and mobilize people for a common goal. In light of their current contributions and the potential they have, more direct and active interventions are needed to sustain their impacts on peacebuilding and social cohesion.

Working with the women: Peacebuilding interventions need to start with recognizing the ability of women to contribute to conflict resolutions and peace. Peacebuilding efforts must also address all forms of injustice against women. These include gender-based violence that is prevalent in conflict situations. Efforts by national and international actors to engage women in peace processes must be accelerated and commitments made more concrete.

Working with the youth: Youth FGDs indicated that youth could be both actors in conflict and peacebuilders. The youth are more likely to avoid violence and engage in peacebuilding if they are granted a specific set of opportunities, mainly employment and education. In addition, efforts to engage the youth in peacebuilding require improving their political participation; forging connections between youth and their communities; building forums for peace; training in conflict management, and building their confidence and self-esteem.

Working with local government: Local governments in the study areas have a responsibility to

address conflicts as part of their day-to-day activities. They have therefore resources to identify conflict issues and prevent them from being escalated to open violence. Local governments have also legal authority to use force and hold local-level conflict actors accountable for their actions. Study findings indicated that if technically and financially supported, local governments could contribute to smooth national political transition by addressing local conflicts mainly of non-ethnic nature.

Working with local peace structures: Local Peace Committees in the study areas are found to be important in preventing conflicts and build peace. These peace structures need to be supported and further engaged in peacebuilding and conflict transformation in their respective areas. Apart from organizing forums for dialogue, these peace structures need also to be engaged in early warning of conflicts, community peace education, conflict analysis, dialogues, and establishing a strong link with authorities.

Strengthening informal conflict resolution institutions: In all research areas, communities own conflict resolution mechanisms. In most cases, these mechanisms are weakened and replaced by a formal justice system. In the face of the inefficient state-owned mechanisms, the need to recognize and empower the traditional mechanisms. Since their position is neutral, these mechanisms are highly welcomed by all conflicting parties for initiating and leading peacebuilding interventions.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In terms of objectives, this study sets out to assess the underlying causes, triggers, and drivers of conflict at a national level and in the specific study areas. It also assesses the capacity of faith actors in mobilizing women and youth for peacebuilding and social cohesion. In line with this, the objectives have been met as follows:

1. The national context, nature, and dynamics of conflicts are assessed based on existing literature. Findings suggest that Ethiopia has experienced a high number of violent conflicts in recent times. Unlike before, these conflicts have assumed ethnic dimensions and have rocked different parts of the country. In due course, well over a thousand people have died, with close to three million people displaced³⁹. Ethiopia had also the highest number of internally displaced people in the world in 2018. In many parts of the country, the root causes of conflict remain unsolved. The chance for more violent conflicts is a grim reality for many.
2. The main actors involved in the conflicts include political parties, security forces (both regional and federal), informal armed groups; activists/political elites, and informal youth groups. Other actors that are contributing to peacebuilding and social cohesion at the national level include faith actors, civil society organizations, and government institutions.
3. The study highlights that amid the ongoing socio-political tensions and conflicts in Ethiopia, faith-based actors are playing crucial roles in national peacebuilding efforts. Faith actors have unique advantages over other actors to carry out effective peacebuilding initiatives in different parts of the country.
4. The nature and dynamics of the conflicts identified remain complex, multidimensional, and crosscutting in all the study areas. One of the reasons for this complexity arises from ethnic federalism that negatively affects age-long interactions and interdependencies of communities. Violent conflicts among the Oromo and Gumuz in the study areas, for example, are attributed to poorly demarcated borders. This led to competition over land and resources as well as the creation of overlapping administrative structures.

³⁹ Norwegian Refugee Council, Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019.

5. Drawing from the analysis of findings, the study concludes that the Anuak-Nuer conflicts are also ethnically motivated. However, land, resources, and power competition are found to be at the center of the strained relationship between the two groups. The Qemant-Amhara conflicts are also largely driven by ethnic identity claims and the desire for self-administration. This quest is, however, highly politicized as a result of the involvement of many external forces.
6. The study concludes that the religious actors are playing important roles in conflicts prevention, mitigation, and resolution in the research areas. Despite this, however, the study identified capacity gaps of these actors to mobilize communities mainly women and the youth in peacebuilding and social cohesion.
7. The study concludes that there are different opportunities through which conflict resolution and transformation activities could be effective. Some of these opportunities include the presence of institutions (formal and informal), faith-based actors, and local grassroots actors such as elders, women, and the youth.
8. Findings from the scenario building suggest that various conflict factors exist and these could lead to the worst-case scenario. These include the highly strained inter-regional relations, growing ethnic identity and nationalism, religious intolerance, and weak rule of law. The study also identified factors that would lead to the best-case scenario. Some of these include increasing the political will of regional governments to address ethnic issues; the emergence of more vibrant and disciplined political parties and political elites; improvement in the rule of law; and an upcoming election that is democratic and fair to all stakeholders.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the study objectives, the identified gaps, and opportunities as well as the conclusions above, the study recommends the following for the program and faith actors:

Measures to strengthen engagement with local governments:

- ✓ The regional governments should undertake a participatory and comprehensive demarcation of boundaries which is the main cause of conflict between the Oromo-Gumuz communities;
- ✓ Local governments of both regions should have specific budgets and plans for conflict prevention, management, and resolutions, and ensure conflict-sensitive planning of all development projects in the area;
- ✓ Government security forces of the two regions should take appropriate and timely actions to stop conflicts before claiming lives and result in extensive property destructions;
- ✓ Organize and facilitate exchange meetings between district officials and where possible inter-regional exchange meetings; and
- ✓ Control the circulation of illegal arms and weapons at the border areas.

Measures to strengthen engagement with the religious actors:

- ✓ Support initiatives that will enable religious leaders to re-establish contact, trust, and confidence and engage in face-to-face dialogues between contending bodies;
- ✓ Provide a forum for high-profile religious leaders to demonstrate interfaith harmony and condemn violent conflicts;
- ✓ Support religious leaders to carry out advocacy activities;
- ✓ Train religious leaders and actors to diagnose issues related to violence and its incitement and possible measures and strategies to prevent and/or counter-violence;
- ✓ Support initiatives that bring religious leaders from different faiths and beliefs to jointly

seek common moral and theological ground to address conflicts and promote peace and coexistence;

- ✓ Support religious leaders and actors to identify and train influential youth who can contribute to spreading messages of peace, tolerance, and respect in the communities;
- ✓ Train religious leaders and actors on the importance and use of traditional and social media to spread peace messages in the local languages; and
- ✓ Support religious leaders and actors to identify extremist arguments and publicly respond with counter messages based on religious scriptures and principles.

Measures to strengthen engagement with the youth:

- ✓ Train the youth on intercultural and interreligious communication so that they can better understand ethnic and religious differences as well as their consequences.
- ✓ Train the youth on how to distinguish between tensions/violence that have political and ethnic roots, or a combination of them;
- ✓ Train the youth to recognize the difference between offensive speech, hate speech, and incitement to discrimination, hostility, and violence;
- ✓ Strengthen youth faith groups such as youth choir;
- ✓ Create forums for dialogue involving youth from both communities; and
- ✓ Provide youth with economic and educational opportunities.

Measures to strengthen engagement with women:

- ✓ Train women to better advocate their positions in peacebuilding to politicians, government officials, and other stakeholders;
- ✓ Support and strengthen women's peacebuilding efforts such as women peace committees by providing adequate and sustained financial and technical support.
- ✓ Organize workshops that aim at sustaining interfaith and intra-faith relationship-building among women.

- ✓ Strengthen the protection and representation of women affected and displaced by violence paying special attention to their health, rehabilitation, and training needs.
- ✓ Train women on how to identify conflict causes, triggers, actors as well as strategies for conflict resolution and transformations;
- ✓ Ensure that women are actively participating in the design and implementation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities at different levels; and
- ✓ Empower women economically to strengthen their resilience to conflicts.

Annex

Terms of Reference

for Consultancy on Conflict Mapping and Context Analysis for the Peace Building Programme in Ethiopia

1. Intervention Background

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is an international non-profit organization mandated to work with people around the world to eradicate poverty and injustice. Guided by its vision 'Together for a Just World', NCA provides humanitarian assistance, supports long-term development. NCA is affiliated with the World Council of Churches and is a member of the ACT Alliance with a presence in 24 countries worldwide. In Ethiopia, NCA has been operating since 1974. NCA's programmes are implemented together with local faith-based partners. In Ethiopia, NCA is a member of various CSO networks, coordination mechanisms, and clusters.

In its new strategic period (2020-2024), NCA Ethiopia will focus on Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Reproductive Health/GBV, Faith-Based Climate Action, Peacebuilding, Gender-Based Violence/Sexual Reproductive Health, and Humanitarian Emergency Response.

Globally, NCA has a long history and experience in peacebuilding in more than 13 countries including a Regional Peace Programme covering the Horn and Great Lakes regions of Africa. In Ethiopia, NCA has worked with religious actors on peace between 1998-2012.

Currently, NCA has designed Peacebuilding program, and one of the interventions is a joint partnership with ACT Church of Sweden for three years (2019-2022). The programme is funded by the Swedish Embassy in Ethiopia and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will be implemented in partnership with key Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). The programme has three major outcomes stated as follows (please refer to the logic model attached with this TOR for further details):

Outcome 1: Religious actors promote social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation at local and national levels,

Outcome 2: Women of faith's participation and influence in promoting social cohesion, peace, and

reconciliation at local and national levels,

Outcome 3: Increased participation and influence of youth in peace processes

In working towards these outcomes and achieving objectives, the programme aims to work at national and local levels. At the national level, the key focus of the programme will be enhancing coordination and collaboration platforms among partners, including facilitation of regular joint platforms, facilitating and supporting periodic dialogues and initiatives on peace and social reconciliation involving key faith actors, women, and youth, facilitating learning and experience sharing events and building the capacity of women and youth in areas related to social cohesion, peace, and reconciliation.

At the local level, the key focus will be identifying/strengthening and establishing formal and informal inclusive peacebuilding structures and creating an enabling environment for these structures to play an active role in peace and social cohesion processes (please refer to the attached programme theory of change for further details).

Geographically, the programme will be implemented in West Wollega, Eastern Benishangul-Gumuz and in Gambella Regions in partnership with Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus – Peace Office, and in North Gonder, North Shewa, and South Wello, in partnership with the Ethiopia Orthodox Church, Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (EOC-DICAC). The programme will facilitate peace dialogues and interventions related to peace and reconciliation with faith actors, women, and youth at national, regional, and local levels in partnership with the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE). The programme is also exploring a partner to implement a peacebuilding project in the Arsi-Bale areas. Moreover, the programme will facilitate various training, learning, and experience-sharing platforms for its partners and other relevant stakeholders. The programme also works in collaboration with other peace-building actors.

NCA is currently planning to commission qualified consultant/s for mapping conflict and analyze the context for its peace-building programme and partners/projects aligned to the programme, which are implemented in different parts of the country. The details of the assignment are stated in sections that follow.

2. Objectives and Scope of the Task

2.1 Objectives of the Mapping

The overall objective of the task is to understand the profile, key actors, and trends of conflict and identify priority areas of focus as well as actors for collaboration, with particular emphasis on faith actors.

Specific objectives are stated as follows:

Objective 1: Map the profile of conflict, its trends, and key actors at the national level.

- Identify overall picture of the conflict in the country and its trends including major actors in the conflict,
- Identify and document conflict drivers/root causes, triggers, typical factors for and against peace,
- Document the added value of faith actors for peacebuilding and social cohesion and guide the programme providing key recommendations in this regard,
- Identify major actors (government, non-governmental, UN agencies, etc) involved in peacebuilding (with special emphasis on faith actors) highlighting their thematic priorities and geographic focus, including thematic areas focusing on women and youth,
- Identify key platforms and coordination mechanisms related to peacebuilding and reconciliation and identify opportunities for future collaboration and engagements.

Objective 2: Map out the capacity of faith actors in mobilizing women and youth.

- Identify existing capacity of faith actors in mobilizing women and youth,
- Provide advice/recommendations for the programme and faith actors on issues related to mobilizing women and youth.

Objective 3: With the analysis of objective 1, identify local priority areas of focus for the programme and projects aligned to it.

- Identify and document conflict drivers/root causes, triggers, typical factors for and against peace in each project locality,
- Identify key areas for policy advocacy and major policy issues related to peace and reconciliation,

- Identify priority issues of focus for specific locations where the peacebuilding projects are going to be implemented,
- Recommend coordination platforms of relevance for the programme both at local and national levels,
- Provide some baseline data for the programme concerning the level of interaction between and among the conflicting groups which can be compared at the end of the programme period,
- Provide input into the indicators of the results framework of the Peace Building programme.

2.2 Scope of the Mapping

The task of the consultancy focuses on two major levels (putting major emphasis on faith-based organizations). At the national level, the consultant/s will conduct desk review regarding the drivers of conflict, trends, major peacebuilding actors (such as faith actors, government, non-governmental organizations including UN agencies), their geographic focus, and areas of intervention. This includes actors both for peace and against peace. At the local level, the consultant/s in close consultation with respective partners will conduct an assessment in areas where NCA's Peace Building Programme partners implement projects and map the contexts through assessments with local communities, relevant government officials at regional and local levels, and non-governmental organizations implementing peace building-related projects. Moreover, the consultant/s will identify the individuals/institutions working both for peace and those perceived as working against peace to identify opportunities for future engagements. Throughout the consultancy period, the consultant/s are required to be conflict, religion, and gender-sensitive.

3. Methodology

The consultant/s is expected to use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to generate data for the assessment. The consultant is required to review relevant literature and draw data appropriate for the assessment and the list of references should be submitted as part of the assessment report. The consultant is also expected to apply the recognized conflict analysis frameworks and tools such as the conflict sensitivity framework to generate data for the assignment. The consultant is

required to conduct focus group discussions and key informant interviews as necessary with faith leaders, other programme partners, and key stakeholders related to peacebuilding work.

The consultant/s is required to develop detailed methodologies with all appropriate frameworks and tools necessary for the assessment and determine the structure of the report in line with the scope of the assignment. The inception report detailing all the methods and tools, required budget, list of organizations and individuals to be interviewed including a plan to travel to project sites should be submitted to NCA for approval as part of the inception report.

3.1 Key areas to explore in-depth, but not limited to, are as follows:

- Political, social, economic, and cultural context driving conflict in the country,
- Root causes and key triggers,
- Major conflict hot spots and key drivers and triggers,
- Main actors in conflict (for peace and against peace), In this regard, examine their main interests, positions, capacities and relationships, Opportunities for the programme to engage with those actors?
- Current trends of conflict: what opportunities/capacities exist to build peace and resolve conflicts,
- Coordination platforms related to peace exist and who the main actors are in this,
- Entry points for peacebuilding activities and what are major gaps,
- Context-specific issues which the programme can draw to build peace and resolve conflicts.

4. Expected Outputs/key deliverables

The consultant/s is expected to produce the following key outputs/deliverables (all written in English):

- Inception report (maximum 7 pages) outlining the key methodologies, tools, work plan, and detailed budget and a clear timetable of activities,
- Draft report with data sets from the field and summary of findings from partners' project locations as an annex,
- Validation workshop with NCA management, programme partners, and other key

stakeholders,

- Final report involving inputs from NCA and key stakeholders from the validation workshop with key recommendations on possible peace-building interventions relevant to each context. The final report should be a maximum of 30 pages excluding annexes. The final report should also include a list of key informants/interviewees and reference materials,
- Inputs/suggestions to the indicators of the peace-building programme results framework.

5. Timeframe

The timeframe for the assessment is proposed as follows (there may be some flexibility within the line items, but maximum days remain the same):

- Review literature, interview key informants, develop a work plan, and produce inception report: 5 days,
- Field trip and assessments with local stakeholders: 10 days,
- Draft reports with preliminary information from the assessment: 3 days
- Validation workshop with key stakeholders: ½ a day
- Final report incorporating comments from NCA and key stakeholders from the validation workshop: 4 and ½ days

6. Profile of the Consultant/s

Consultant/s are selected based on the following criteria/standards:

- Postgraduate degree in Peace and Conflict Studies, Social Anthropology, Social Work, Social Sciences or other related fields of study,
- Knowledge and proven experience working with faith-based organizations at local and national levels,
- Proven experience in conducting conflict analysis or related participatory research with faith-based or civil society organizations,
- Fluency in English and a good understanding of Amharic and Afaan Oromo is an advantage,
- Familiarity with the current conflict dynamism in the country and sensitivity to conflict, ethnicity, and religion,
- Excellent report writing, data collection, and analysis skills.

7. Application Process

The applicant should submit a technical proposal with a curriculum vitae, official work experience supported by official stamps /evidence from clients, and the educational background of the professionals stated in the TOR. Company experience in areas of conflict mapping and analysis of the context for peacebuilding should also be incorporated in the technical proposal with necessary evidence such as letters from previous clients. Bidder should submit in a separate envelope a bid bond CPO or Bank Grantee amounting to 2% of the bid price.

NCA Ethiopia reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids. Late bids will be rejected.

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