



Assessment on the Role of Women in Peace and Reconciliation in Oromia and Somali Regional States

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Acronyms

AU	African Union
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
EPRDF	Ethiopia People Revolutionary Democratic Front
ERC	Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GIZ	Gesellschafts fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HoF	House of Federation
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Agreement for Development
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoP	Ministry of Peace
MoWCY	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UN	United Nations
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCY	Women, Children and Youth

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Executive Summary

Background and objectives

The Somali and Oromo have longstanding relationships and share an administrative boundary of more than 1000km. The interaction between them had a competitive and cooperative relationships. Though their livelihood is mainly dependent on pastoralism and agro-pastoralism, there has been an increase in sedentary farming in some areas, deriving most of their income from the livestock through export of live animals legally or illegally. Their competitive relationships over resources has been through time transformed into violent confrontation, which was reinforced by the transition of the Ethiopian political system into ethnic-based federalism before a few decades. The conflicts were traditionally resolved in the past. However, with increasing trend in the scale of conflict and dynamism in the causes, the traditional system has been ineffective. Women are often neglected from taking part in resolving conflict partly influenced by socio-cultural factors while they are the ones suffering most from the unexpected consequences of conflict. Providing concrete evidence on the role and experience of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts is timely and crucial to practically engage women in the process, protect them from the consequences of violent conflict, and empower them to contribute to quality and durable peacebuilding efforts in the country. The general objective of the assessment was to identify role of women in resolving conflict or in stabilizing and searching for peace before, during and after conflict in the contexts of Oromia and Somali Regional States.

The specific objectives are to: (1) identify the root causes of the conflict and how it affects women, children and other vulnerable and minorities groups in the two regions; (2) identify the important elements of the socio-cultural settings/value systems of communities in selected districts under study that are related to conflict and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms; (3) explore the cultural systems of conflict resolution in selected districts of Oromia and Somali Regions, and women's representation in the system; (4) identify women focused community-based peace structures and institutions working in peace and reconciliation within and with other neighboring regional states; (5) identify the role of women in the peace and reconciliation processes of the cultural and statutory conflict management systems; (6) explore and present ways on how women can effectively engage in peace and reconciliation process at both regional and national level.

Framework and Methodology

The assessment applied a combination of theoretical and empirical reviews. The causal analysis used three theories: property rights argument, environmental scarcity and political ecology with the possible interaction among these theories. Likewise, the reconciliation and peacebuilding analysis considered the three approaches to peacebuilding: liberal, local and hybrid peacebuilding approaches, each approach having its own characteristics. As the objectives of the study combine both causal analysis and conflict resolution and reconciliation, a conceptual framework was developed based on the causal analysis and peacebuilding approaches. The methodological approach combined desk review of literature and primary data collection. Data were collected from various community members at the local level (men, women, the youth), state actors (administrator, security, and women office holders) in each woreda, representatives of the regional and federal institutions, and civil society organizations. In view of the Corona pandemic, data collection was done using telephone interviewing to collect data and used narratives and cross-case comparison to analyze the data. The analytical approach followed narratives and cross-case comparative analysis.

Key findings of the study

With respect to the first objective, the findings reported under Section 6.2 and 6.3 show that the causes of violent conflict are diverse, complex and changing through time. While conflicts within an ethnic group are often related to resource uses such as land and water, the interethnic conflict between Somali and Oromo is mostly related to border issues and territorial control which is explained by the political ecology defined on the basis of identity along with the transition of Ethiopia from a unitary to a multiethnic group federalism subsequent to the removal of the socialist regime in the 1991. Political elites at the local level have reduced the capacity of the customary leaders who were effective in resolving conflicts in the past that used to occur mainly due to competition over natural resources. The results of the study indicate that the causes of violent conflict are related to the historical and ideological factors that have affected interethnic relations, disputes over territory, the contention between ethno-regionalists and centrists agenda in the political reform process, shrinkage of the grazing resources a result of climate change, pollution and mismanagement of natural resources, and the declining role of the customary systems to address border disputes due to the fact that they have also been increasingly coopted by the government and ruling party. Respondents perceived that the trend of the violence has shown an increasing frequency of conflict over the last thirty years and the shifting of the causes of the conflict from resource-based to conflict over administrative border. The triggering factors for inter-ethnic violence have also increased from purely livestock raiding and water-scarcity to the temptation to control more land under each other's administration. This was observed due to the change in interest groups in the conflict. Table 2 compares difference between intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts in terms of causes, actors or interest groups, nature of damages and resolution mechanisms.

Section 6.4 provides the effects of the conflict on women and children. The inter-ethnic conflict resulted in various immediate impacts on women and children. These include loss of properties (livestock, houses) and psychological trauma, displacement of families and death of men and women. While assessing those impacts in precise terms requires a separate study, there were 250,690 individuals and 37,811 households displaced from the four studied woredas until April 2018, with total displacement along Oromia-Somali border was 1,073,764. Specifically, there were 13,294 pregnant women, and 20,092 breastfeeding mothers displaced until November 2017 (as assessed by Mohammed, 2018). The total loss of properties along the border was 55,598,238 ETB over the years 2011 to 2017 (Figure 3 in this report). The respondents indicated that confiscation of the private properties in Jijjiga (capital of Somali region) in 2017 had a huge economic effect, which was difficult to assess in monetary terms.

In line with the second objective, there are a number of socio-cultural problems related to conflict and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms. This has been provided in Sections 6.5 and 6.6. For instance, women who were pregnant during the conflict and the resulting displacement were forced to give birth in the tents, and those who lost their livestock due to the violence did not have oxen for cultivation and the displacement caused migration of girls to towns forcing them to be exposed to a wide range of abuses (sexual, early marriage, addiction to substances and exploitation of their labor). Disruption of the market participation largely affected women from engaging in petty trades by selling agricultural products and in supporting their family to ensure food security. Those women who lost their husbands in the conflict suffered physically and psychologically some ending up in destitution and seeking support from their villages. A number of women in Gursum woreda who lost their husbands were forced to be employed as house maid in towns to fulfill their economic needs. The efforts made in resolving the conflict are socio-culturally recognized as incomplete. For example, the customary leaders criticize the returning of displaced people to their former villages without having a comprehensive peace plan arrangement and conducting a "true reconciliation". The assessment reveals that indigenous

conflict resolution mechanisms are increasingly challenged by political and institutional factors. The customary system is effective when conflicts are attributed to resource competition such as pasture and water while their role is limited when conflict was on administrative border. In some cases, communities classify elders as state and community elders making the role of traditional institutions in resolving conflict unreliable and gradually losing trust on the part of the community. It is important to note that the role of customary institutions cannot be undermined or overemphasized, and their limitations should be recognized.

In exploring the cultural system of conflict resolution in both regions (objective 3), such systems were effective in the past where the Abba Gadas among the Oromo and the Ugaz among the Somali lead the process of resolving a conflict when it occurs between the two ethnic groups as described in Section 6.7. The underlying attitude and behavior towards participation of women has held their contribution to remain indirect and mostly absent in the context of Somali, as the system has been heavily influenced by the sharia law. There is a general belief among the Somali traditional leaders who developed their own constitution (the Xeer) that women are represented through their husbands. Such belief has affected the attitude and actions of the Somali traditional leaders. Among the Oromo, within group conflict is resolved using elders and haadha sinqee where the youth and other members of the community can also be involved as observers. There has been a dramatic shift in the recognition of women's role and representation in resolving conflict. The practice varies across the studied woredas. The change in attitude has been observed among men at different positions in the state system and at village level in engaging women. The perception that (i) conflict affects women much more than men, (ii) women can influence the decision of their husbands at home, (iii) in some cases, women sing songs that encourage men to fight, (iv) social recognition of women whose husbands die in conflict as "wives of heroes", and (v) women serving as an agent to restore broken relationship are the underlying factors to recognize women's potential contribution to resolving conflicts. A related study reveals women's role in resolving conflict as they become a member of the peace and security committee.

In assessing women's participation in community-based peace structures and institutions working in peace and reconciliation and in cultural and statutory conflict management (the fourth and fifth objectives), the findings described in Sections 6.8 and 6.9 show the presence of some practices. Evidence from the field reveals that it is impossible to separate the peacebuilding and reconciliation activities of the state and the customary systems. Both are rather integrated where the state system relies on the functioning of the customary systems to resolve conflict. One of the weaknesses of the system is that, the reconciliation efforts undertaken at the local level have so far not given enough attention to the property loss and human costs of the violent conflict. Instead, they emphasize forgiveness and building the prospect to live in peace in the future. There is a difference between perception among the respondents, where some have placed value on the need to proceed investigations to identify perpetrators of violence, while others suggest losses (and compensation for victims to be an agenda for reconciliation.

State interventions in peacebuilding and reconciliation are often scattered following a piecemeal approach rather than strategic one based on analysis and prioritization of the issues to address them and provide guidance on how to commit resources (financial and human) to pursue a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation. Peacebuilding and reconciliation activities carried out at the community level, as facilitated by the local state agents, either exclude the participation of women or permit only limited involvement as in the case haadha sinqee in Oromia. These are largely influenced by underlying patriarchal tradition and entrenched beliefs that men have more wisdom than women in resolving conflicts. The evidence shows women's participation, where and when it happens, tends to be nominal without getting their voices heard in the decision-making procedure. Instead, they remained organizers of reconciliation

rituals serving men. For instance, Table 3 under Section 9 summarizes and compares women's positions, roles and participation in reconciliation across the studied woredas. It shows that there is a slight difference in women's participation in reconciliation and their influence in decision-making. There is a general tendency towards marginalizing them. A typical case as an example comes from Babile woreda (see Box 2). This implies that breaking such tradition and promoting attitudinal change are challenges ahead for the state machinery given the mandate of ensuring women empowerment. The creation of effective structures within which agents of women at various levels of governance in the formal system maneuver to translate national strategies into observable practices at community level is critical. To put this into a policy perspective, such structures can make use of existing women's organizations (formal and informal) at local level to engage women in peace and reconciliation. It is an imperative to learn from the disparity of practices in women's participation across the sites by organizing collective action to pool existing, but fragmented, successes within a region and between regions.

The sixth objective of the study was to explore ways towards including women in peace and reconciliation where the findings has been reported in Section 6.10 and Section 7. Section 6.10 elaborates on the national initiatives, the underlying challenges and the current institutional linkages to facilitate women's participation in peace and reconciliation (Figure 5). For example, nomination of women peace ambassadors, holding of various conferences to increase awareness on women's role in peace, and a lot of other promotional activities by the MoWCY and MoP. The challenges, among others, remain inactive role of the recently formed commissions (ERC and Boundaries and Identity Issues), HoF and the absence of general framework of peace agreements between the two regional states subsequent to the regional level peace conferences held. Based on the field-based evidence, the relationships of peace actors were mapped to show their role in favoring and influencing women's inclusion in dispute resolution and governance (Figure 6). The mapping shows that although women's federation favors women's inclusion, it has limited influence. The customary leaders, and local peace and security officers do not favor their inclusion.

Section 7 presents the different mechanisms identified in implementing inclusive sustainable peace and reconciliation. These include: (1) exploring the role of intermarriage between the two ethnic groups, (2) recognizing and using women's trading networks (3) reinforcing existing women's organization to entertain agenda of peace (4) empowering women through projects with a joint venture business across ethnic lines (5) prevention of self-centered individuals from using violence as an opportunity to capture rent (6) strengthening and institutionalizing enforcement of locally crafted agreements (covenant) by involving women (7) emphasizing the belief that women are socially recognized as 'truth tellers and seekers' (8) keeping a balance between investigating the real causes of violence and forgiveness aiming at reconciliation (9) recognizing women's unique role and advancing their participation (10) improving women's representation at executive level and strengthening their local level organizations. At the end of Section 7, Table 4 provides the challenges, opportunities and recommended actions on issues related to conflict and women's participation in reconciliation.

Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

Section 8.1 concludes that the causes of violent conflict between the two ethnic groups are explained more by the concept of political ecology and institutional failure to secure property rights. The intra-ethnic violence over land, pasture and water is explained more by the resource scarcity argument. Elders and state actors have been effective in resolving intra-ethnic conflicts on various occasions. Despite significant initiatives at different levels within the formal state

structures, women's role and participation in the mediation, dialogue, reconciliation and peacebuilding process at the community level is constrained by patriarchy which is consistent with the concept of hybrid peacebuilding. There is disparity in the level of participation between the two regional states owing to cultural differences. There is high level of interdependence between the state and customary systems where one cannot operate without the other. While such interdependence is appreciated, some community members recognize the action as co-opted of traditional authorities by the state, causing loss of legitimacy of the traditional authorities in the eyes of the public. In any case, the presence of various forms of women's organizations provides opportunity for state agents (woreda and regional WCY experts) to step up their action, in making use of these organizations to advance their participation and concretize intermittent actions.

Perpetrators of violence were difficult to trace by the law enforcement, in particular after committing livestock raids, as they tend to hide elsewhere and make effective use of the open border to trek the stolen livestock across the border. Others also hide themselves within other groups within the border. For instance, the Hawiya in Babile steal animals and take them to the Ogaden clan. This condition restrains the joint actions of the state and customary leaders in making peace. Power asymmetry (where one group is more armed than the other as in the case of Mieso) and self-interested behavior of political elites and some elders put a limitation to the success of reconciliation. As this persists, it becomes challenging to operationalize the outcomes of the referendum, which was implemented to put an end to the border dispute. The situation began to change in the aftermath of the political reform in 2018. Interviews with the national and regional key informants indicated that a delay in the full-scale implementation of the four pillars (participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery) of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 by the Ethiopian Government have affected the creation of a solid institutional framework and policy for effective inclusion of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Recommendations

Section 8.2 presents the recommendations, categorized as measures to promote attitudinal/behavioral changes and change in practices. To promote attitudinal and behavioral change, the following actions are instrumental: (a) inducing attitudinal change within the customary system through increasing awareness of elders and customary leaders is a required action, (b) enhancing women's knowledge and attitude on their role on peace, and (c) awareness raising among local peace agents which requires the concerted effort of the relevant ministries (for example MoWCY and MoP) and regional level actors by investing in capacity building.

To promote change of practices in women's participation in peace and reconciliation, the following measures are instrumental: (a) reliance on existing women's organizations such as the formal state structure and the informal marketing groups at the community level; (b) re-demarcation interventions using evidence from the 2004 referendum by considering women as members of a committee to be created; (c) empowering local women in the customary systems by promoting women's role and persuading attitudinal change among male elders; (d) creation of women peace forum and regular dialogue that provides an opportunity to consolidate diverse experiences in reconciliation in different woredas of the two regions, which allows co-learning, and identify strengths and limitations; this requires the advocacy role of women appointed as local government officials and as members of parliament at regional and federal levels (e) increasing the number of women in law enforcement and judiciary which will help improve law enforcement by developing monitoring mechanisms on the proper functioning of the woreda level justice system (in which women should be adequately represented) to penalize perpetrators of violence, in which women should play an active role (f) advocating for women's agency in

the definition of land rights in areas where diversity of livelihood sources cause disputes, and eventually violence by the rural land use and administration office and make it a public knowledge, (g) implementation of women-focused joint projects at the border between the two regions in order to promote change in behavior among those who could trigger violence; as they begin to value the project benefits that can be lost if violent conflict occurs (h) improved women's representation as executive at the regional and zonal levels is critical as peace and reconciliation is a cross-cutting issue, which has been included in the national Growth and Transformation Plan as an important element of the national consensus building, and i identifying and addressing the challenges to women's participation in peacebuilding, such as male dominance subscribed to patriarchy, as far as the formal system prescribes its reconciliation process by heavily valuing the relevance of hybrid peacebuilding. The practical application of these recommendations requires further work to properly integrate them as they are interrelated, and one requires the other as a pre-condition.



Photo: National Womens Dialogue

1. INTRODUCTION



1. Introduction

Historical accounts show that the Somali and Oromo have longstanding relationships ever since their 16th century mass population movements in the horn of Africa. Both regional states share an administrative boundary of more than 1000km. The interaction between Somali and Oromo ethnic groups began in 1500s and 1600s when the Oromo were expanding to the north, northeast and northwest (Baxter, 1978). They were competing for more than 400 years in their borderlands for water, grazing and agricultural land (Lewis 1999). Their livelihood is mainly dependent on pastoralism and agro-pastoralism. There has been an increase in sedentary farming in some areas due to increased land conversion in connection with expansion of small-scale irrigation and state support in the provision of improved seeds and fertilizer. Still the largest income source comes from the livestock through export of live animals legally or illegally. The livestock production system was based on extensive grazing involving herd mobility in search for pasture and water characterized by fugitive resource use. Access to such resources has been governed by traditional institutions practicing the principle of reciprocity designed to spread ecologically induced drought risks. Climate change and associated razing resource scarcity have affected such a traditional resource-use arrangement (Beyene, 2008).

Both ethnic groups at the border are Muslim and have some traditional institutions that govern their relationships. The long-lived interaction between Somali and Oromo communities manifested through marital and cultural relations makes drawing borders in a strict sense difficult. Nevertheless, Ethiopia's political transition towards federal restructuring that connects ethnicity, territory and administrative boundary has triggered competition for land. And the approach of ethnicization of territory has

been challenged as it generated inter-ethnic tensions in the process of territorial control (Kefale, 2013), which is referred to as "politics of protective territoriality" (Hussein et al., 2015).

The conflicts between Somali and Oromo ethnic groups around regional borders in Ethiopia are multifaceted and complex. They generated social and economic problems undermining local trade relationships. They affect investment activities and economic development in these areas of the country. Moreover, some scholars attributed violent conflicts to the presence of different political groups holding ground in these areas as the reason for increased complexity of the conflict (Mulugeta and Hagmann, 2008), others relate them to historical grievance over the incorporation of Ogaden-Somali into Ethiopian state and the desire to control certain grazing areas (Hagmann and Korf, 2012). Politicization of land in connection with the country's transition towards ethnic-based federalism has contributed to the deterioration of interregional relations (Lober and Worm, 2015).

As the transition to ethnic-based federalism has caused claims and counterclaims over territorial units, it has exacerbated violent conflict over grazing resources along ethnic lines. A more recent picture reveals that the underlying reason for the two communities to engage in conflict is that the grazing land used earlier, which was considered as tribal land, is being taken away for large-scale investments. Such state "land grabbing" for economic development based on a non-consultative state-centered modernization of agricultural production models has reduced the grazing resource base (Debelo, 2012). At local level, the reduction in available space for grazing has transformed resource competition into conflict among communities of the two ethnic groups. Taken at face value, any effort that could stop expansion of large-

scale investment is perceived to go with the benefit of the communities, implying that there is mismatch between the national large-scale agricultural investment plans and communities' adaptation to the drylands 'environment (Lober and Worm, 2015). State intervention in providing land for large-scale investment has affected the communal land use exposing herders' livelihood to the risk of resource-based violent conflict as they are dispossessed off the right to use the land (Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008; Rahmato, 2011). Such grievance by communities over the state on the one hand and conflicts between the two Somali and Oromo communities on the other hand are widespread. Such actions by the state did not involve community consultation. Moreover, limited opportunities for households to benefit from the GDP growth caused by such an investment reinforce their resistance, undermining their capacity to be resilient to changing climate as in the case of Karrayu Oromo (Beyene et al., 2020; FDRE, 2019).

Despite a number of studies on conflicts between Somali and Oromo ethnic groups, the reasons are far from being clear. Some tend to attribute them to the transition of Ethiopian political system towards ethnic-based federalism and competition for territorial control (Debelo, 2012), others associated them with resource scarcity exacerbated by climate change (Adano and Daudi, 2012) and still other scholars link the reasons to commercialized livestock raiding (Gray et al., 2003; Mulugeta and Hagmann, 2008). This makes exploring the reasons and root causes of the conflict an important step. Understanding the fundamental reasons is a precondition to explore strategies and institutional mechanisms to build peace. There is an urgency to search for institutional options and establishing a framework for peacebuilding. Beyond this, how to strengthen interregional relations

by implementing development projects benefiting residents of both regions at the borderlands can help the peacebuilding process.

This can be achieved using evidence from field-based research that provides insights on the part of the social groups who are affected by the violent conflict and the state and non-state actors (such as advocacy groups and NGOs) who could contribute to the peace process. In the past, peacebuilding in these areas of Ethiopia was effectively exercised by the customary authorities (clan heads and chiefs) (Quam, 1997; Tafere, 2006). Nevertheless, through time the efforts of these authorities have become ineffective as the causes of conflicts have become complicated (Abbink, 2000). The complication has arisen from the interaction of political, economic and social causes of violent conflict (Beyene, 2013). The issues triggering conflict surpasses the capacity of the customary authorities to address them. The degree of success in addressing conflict might vary across different localities where one locality could be better than the other depending on the specific contexts depending on the cause of the conflict. It has been easy to address conflict over farm boundary between neighbors than over permanent water wells located at the border (Beyene, 2017). Learning why the conflicts have been enduring and exploring institutions to build peace require an incisive assessment of political, economic and social factors.

International actions in peacebuilding are increasingly recognizing the role of women in peace and reconciliation (Lorentzen et al., 2019; Hendricks, 2017; Hendricks and Chivasa, 2008; Development and Peace, 2017). This is because the experiences of women and men in conflict situation differ significantly where women are often vulnerable to gender-based violence such as

the terrible crimes of rape, forced pregnancy, and sexual slavery. They are also excluded or confined to a marginal role in the conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts. Their limited access to education and the general cultural belief that women are too soft to be good leaders undermine their participation in peace processes which in turn increases their vulnerability to violence. It is also the problematic masculinities present in patriarchal societies, the way boys and girls are socialized to perpetrate these gender imbalances (Emile et al., 2020). In its political reform process, the Federal Government of Ethiopia is taking serious measures in appointing women as members of council of ministers with the basic understanding that women play central role in political leadership and will contribute to the national development. The government appointed a woman, H.E. Muferiat Kamil, as Minister of Peace, H.E. Sahle-Work Zewde as the first female president, and many other positions held by women. This action is guided by the notion expressed as “Jegnit” literally understood as heroine. Such an on-going government initiatives also tend to place women at the center of conflict resolution at different levels of governance. Peacebuilding efforts should involve not only women victims but also decision makers in order

to bring sustainable and lasting peace and stability. At this stage however, there is no documented evidence in Ethiopia that provides a comprehensive framework on how to engage women in peacebuilding and conflict resolution efforts including the level and nature of involvement of women.

Although women are the most affected during conflict, they are in many cases neglected from efforts and decisions made to resolve conflicts. Thus, providing concrete evidence on the role and experience of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts is timely and crucial to practically engage women in the process, protect them from the consequences of violent conflict, and empower them to contribute to quality and durable peacebuilding efforts in the country. In response to recurring conflicts in Ethiopia, the UNDP has initiated a project emphasizing how to increase the role of senior women leaders in conflict prevention, management and mediation processes as a means to contribute to sustained peace and stability in the country. As part of the exercise, assessment of women’s role in peace and reconciliation in Oromia and Somali Regional States is being given urgent priority to generate evidence-based knowledge that supports further interventions.

2. OBJECTIVES



2. Objectives

The general objective of the assessment was to identify the role of women in resolving conflict or in stabilizing and searching for peace before, during and after conflict in the contexts of Oromia and Somali Regional States.

The specific objectives are to:

- Identify the root causes of the conflict and how it affects women, children and other vulnerable and minorities groups in the two regions;
- Identify the important elements of the socio-cultural settings/value systems of communities in selected districts under study that are related to conflict and indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms;
- Explore the cultural systems of conflict resolution in selected districts of Oromia and Somali Regions, and women's representation in them;
- Identify women focused community-based peace structures and institutions working on peace and reconciliation within and with other neighboring regional states;
- Identify the role of women in the peace and reconciliation processes of the cultural and statutory conflict management systems;
- Explore and present ways on how women can effectively engage in peace and reconciliation process at both regional and national level.

3. EMPIRICAL REVIEW



3. Empirical Review

Existing evidence shows that the inclusion of women: helps prevent conflict, creates peace, enhances reconciliation processes, and sustains security after conflict. “Recent quantitative and qualitative research and empirical analysis have demonstrated that when including women is made a priority, peace is more likely—particularly when women are in a position to influence decision making” (Development and Peace, 2017:3). The impact of conflict on women varies from that of men in that women are likely to suffer from sexual abuse such as rape in times of violence and become more responsible for the family to provide food, shelter and education. Displacement resulting from violence will bring more burdens on women than men. UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) provides evidence on the humanitarian crises that have occurred due to the inter-communal violent conflict at the border between Somali and Oromia regional states where 1,073,764 people were displaced during which women and children suffered most (UN OCHA, 2018). Therefore, women, when included in peace-making and reconciliation, will have different perspective and priorities than that of men. They will look into not only short-term benefits of peace but contribute holistically to long-term needs of educating their children, maintaining a stable relationship with their neighbours and the wider community in which they live (Development and Peace, 2017).

Studies reveal that the Oromos have traditional institutions to resolve conflicts which are embedded in their belief system called *Abarsa* and *Kakku*, which in turn emanates from the long-established constitution of the Oromos known as the *Gada* system. Both are used as a tool in conflict management. *Abarsa* of elders and religious leaders is a statement or saying that God hears and acts. *Abarsa* and *Kakku* literally translated as a curse and swear respectively, are two most important institutions regulating conflict triggering behaviour (Beyene, 2009). *Gada* is a system of social organization among the Oromos where laws governing access to resources and conflict resolution are established (Desalegn et al. 2007). The *Gada* system permits women to play an economic and social role but it does not allow them to play political and leadership roles. They cannot be assigned as leaders and do not discuss with men to reach decisions on different issues such as resolving conflict although men tend to give priority to address women’s issue if they appeal to the *Gada* leader.

A related study reveals that the exclusion of women from participation in the *Gada* system goes back to the time of the powerful woman *Akko Manoye*, the last queen of the Oromo before the establishment of the *Gada* system, to justify behind marginalization of women. There is a story behind this:

“Once upon a time, there was a woman whose name was Akko Manoye. She ruled the Oromo society in an absolute dictatorship. During her rule, every task including caring for a family was performed by husbands, and every decision was made by women. She always ordered men to accomplish things that were impossible for them. The Oromo people tolerated such acts of the woman for several years. One day, Akko Manoye gathered all the men and ordered them to build for her a house between the earth and the sky. Frustrated by the order, the men went to a wise man and asked for a solution. The wise man told them to ask her to put up the poles, which according to Guji culture was done by the owner of the house. When the men asked her to put up poles for the house between the earth and the sky, she could not respond. Then, the men went back to the wise man and told him of her failure to respond. The wise man, again, told them to dig a deep hole in the ground, cover it with cattle skin, and invite her to sit on it with respect. The men did as the wise man told them. When she sat on the skin, she went down the hole, during which she uttered a message to all women: “pretend that you are loyal in order to live with men.” From then onwards, men took the power, established a Gada system and declared that women should not take part in it” (Jirata, 2019:5)

The above story indicates how men has taken retaliatory measure to exclude women from a leadership and decision-making roles in history. Among the Somalis, one can find a well-structured conflict management system involving inter-clan council (Guurti) consisting of elders who apply the Xeer as an institutional framework. It is through the Xeer that relations between clans are governed not only in conflict management but also in sharing of grazing resources, especially in pastoral areas but women do not play a role in such processes as well (Beyene, 2008). A recent shift in thinking among the Oromo community indicates that there are haadha sinquees who tend to play a role in managing conflicts as they occur in the village by holding their stick called sinqee (Sedeto and Ahmad, 2018).

However, when it comes to management of conflict between the two ethnic groups, it has been a tradition that a group that provokes conflict sacrifices bulls. Since the introduction of ethnic federalism in 1995, there has been a change in the nature of the conflict in relation to socio-economic and political factors (e.g. ethnic-based federalism). As the basis of the conflict has expanded from resource access and use to expansion of territories in connection with the formation of regional states and ethnic-based federalism, the capacity of elders to manage the conflict has deteriorated due to the co-option by the state and private interests. Decentralization of governance has introduced new forms of resource competition undermining “traditional reconciliatory mechanisms” (Shide 2005). In addition, traditional norms have strength in resolving resource-based conflicts occurring within clans of specific ethnic groups or at village levels due to social proximity and cultural homogeneity that make communication faster and sanctioning easier. As widely discussed in the literature, customary institutions with functions of conflict management are deeply embedded within social and cultural norms (Watson 2001; Sanginga et al. 2007; Unruh 2006). However, the mechanisms of negotiating agreements between ethnic groups are less successful mainly when there is unequal power relations and conflict of interest is defined along identity lines (such as ethnicity) other than a simple resource need (Cousins 1996). The evidence on the role that women could play in resolving conflicts, engaging in reconciliation and ensuring peace has not been widely stated. The scanty available literature indicates how cultural norms and traditions undermine participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation (Tadesse et al., 2010).

Following the global recognition of women in peace and reconciliation through the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in 2000 (Women, Peace and Security), the participation of women in peacebuilding has been largely advocated by different governments (Porter, 2010). For instance, participation of women in reconciliation has contributed to South African transition towards democracy (Development and Peace, 2017). The inclusion of women in peace processes can be realized through establishing local civil society organizations (CSOs) and women human rights defenders, including them at all levels of peace and reconciliation and supporting them to learn new leadership skills. This gives an opportunity for women to contribute to peace building. Though conflicts exacerbate women’s marginalization, they can also be an opportunity for women as they can be empowered when involved in conflict resolution, which increases their chance to contribute to the restoration of peace (Adjei, 2018). Likewise, Chandler (2016:24) states “Although women are more likely to become victims during war, they often are left out of subsequent peace and reconciliation efforts following armed conflict”.

Empirical evidence indicates that as Somalis are patriarchal communities, Somali women are culturally excluded from participation in indigenous institutions (particularly in mediation/ negotiation and collection of compensation payments). (Due to their cultural imposition, women and children are not allowed to participate formally in the process of negotiation in conflict resolution mechanisms (Tadesse et al., 2010). Women in other countries have been involved in

peace and reconciliation. Some of the best practices in involving women in peace processes include: (1) The establishment of “Political Training School” aimed at women’s participation in building peace at local, regional and national levels in Colombia, (2) a “House of Peace” in Syria where 70% of participants in peacebuilding workshops are women in order to empower them to initiate projects in their community to promote peace, and (3) the creation of “Noor Educational and Capacity Development Organization” in Afghanistan to empower women and eliminate violence against them (Development and Peace, 2017:5-7). A related study comparing African and Asian women concludes that women are not only victims of violence but also agents of change in peacebuilding and reconciliation although participation of women in peace negotiations is still minimal. There is difference in terms of success among African countries (Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen as it is not an African country and Zimbabwe covered by the study). While there is a big impact in Sudan where women were actively engaged in mediation, there is exclusion of women from mediation processes in Libya (Olofsson, 2018).

A recent study from the South Sudan reveals exclusion of women from decision-making at political level. Considering women’s initiatives in peacebuilding at grassroots level, this study advocates for an integration of bottom-up, horizontal and top-down approaches by involving women at all levels of decision-making (Jolaade and Muthuki, 2018). In order to improve women’s position in the political decision-making at different levels, the UN Women Ethiopia is closely working with the government especially in the areas of promoting greater cooperation and complementarities between development, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian action and sustaining peace initiatives, and engaging women in conflict prevention and mediation (UN Women Ethiopia, 2018). The establishment of the Reconciliation Commission by the Ethiopian government in 2018 is a response to create strategies to promote peace and reconciliation in all areas of the country where inter-communal violence has created tensions and instabilities as well as to investigate into cases of human rights violations as stipulated under Article 6 (sub-article 4) (FDRE, 2018). Such initiatives may complement a wide range of experiences in managing conflicts and peacebuilding by the long-lived traditional systems. A number of studies underline the strength of informal institutional arrangements governed by clan heads and elders in resolving conflicts over resources (Unruh, 2008) although women’s participation has been limited (Tadesse et al, 2010). The work of Reda (2016) among the Borana pastoralists in southern Ethiopia and Zigale (2016) among the Ittu Oromo and Issa Somali shows that indigenous systems of resolving conflicts provide an important area of intervention for the Reconciliation Commission to consolidate such experiences and explore best practices supporting reconciliation.

4. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING CONFLICT, PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



4. Framework for analyzing conflict, peace and reconciliation

There are four principles guiding the involvement of women in peace and reconciliation initiatives. The first is focusing on the process as reconciliation is not a single event where through forgiveness the lasting reconciliation between peoples occurs and women take part in the discussion as peacemakers and reconcilers. The second is the networking role women play as innovative community leaders with or without formal authority. Thirdly, they have special contribution in changing narrative that generates hope for peace much more than male policymakers. And the fourth is that they can be an integral part of the formal (or informal) peace and reconciliation initiatives (Chandler, 2016). The four principles when properly integrated can help women reconstruct narratives to confront memories of violence that in turn will support the reclaiming of the violated identities of the victims by sharing of rituals (Everett, 2014). They are based on conflict transformation theory and forgiveness model (Chandler, 2016), where the latter involves not forgetting what has happened in the past but rather emphasizing a new start and a fresh beginning in which women lead the way to restoring peace. This is alluded to the concept of restorative justice where those harmed by the conflict become part of the solution (Pope, 2014). A system of peacebuilding where state system of conflict resolution and traditional system are expected to be complementary is guided by the concept of a hybrid peacebuilding concept (Anam, 2015).

The objectives of the study also consider how state system and traditional systems of conflict management are functioning. Therefore, the conceptual framework combines two different elements, one emphasizing analysis of the causes and consequences of the conflict and the second is mechanisms of building peace and enhancing the involvement of women in peace and reconciliation (Figure 1). Disrupted political ecology (Korf, 2004; Collier, 2000), resource scarcity (Homer-Dixon, 2001) and insecure property rights (Aliston et al., 1997; Field, 1989) can generate violence where such violence increases vulnerability of women, children and other members of a society. The violence also triggers institutional response. Such responses could be made by state structures or through the customary system to prevent violence at least in the short term. Insecure property rights where feuding parties raid (such as livestock) or destroy the property of others (burning of houses and other facilities) can directly increase vulnerability, which can be expressed using reduced access to services, loss of productive assets and displacement of families from their residences. Insecure property rights can also be attributed to competition for resources (land, water, pasture) as they got scarce due to ecological change or when the existing political system marginalizes one group and favours the other, or when there are hostilities and tensions orchestrated by political elites at local level for their own political gains (Hussein et al., 2015). Policy level response to create institutions that correct for distributional imbalance over resources (such as contested lands at the border) can quickly reduce conflict.

Therefore, conflict transformation which aims at peacebuilding in the longer-term requires a favorable policy environment as well as a shift in the women's position in the socio-cultural environment. The formal system should develop a mechanism for improving women's representation at different levels of governance which creates an opportunity for them to play a role in peace and reconciliation. This process in the formal system can be reinforced if the customary system overcomes some of the cultural barriers inhibiting women's participation in

traditional conflict resolution and peace processes. The two are mutual reinforcing each other. As indicated in Figure 1, the change in political ecology that supports women’s engagement in policymaking generates positive results in increasing women’s participation in peace building. However, it is important to note that if the state policy environment undermines or contradicts the socio-cultural environment, the complementary role of the state and customary systems in peace and reconciliation could be lost, negatively affecting peacebuilding processes.

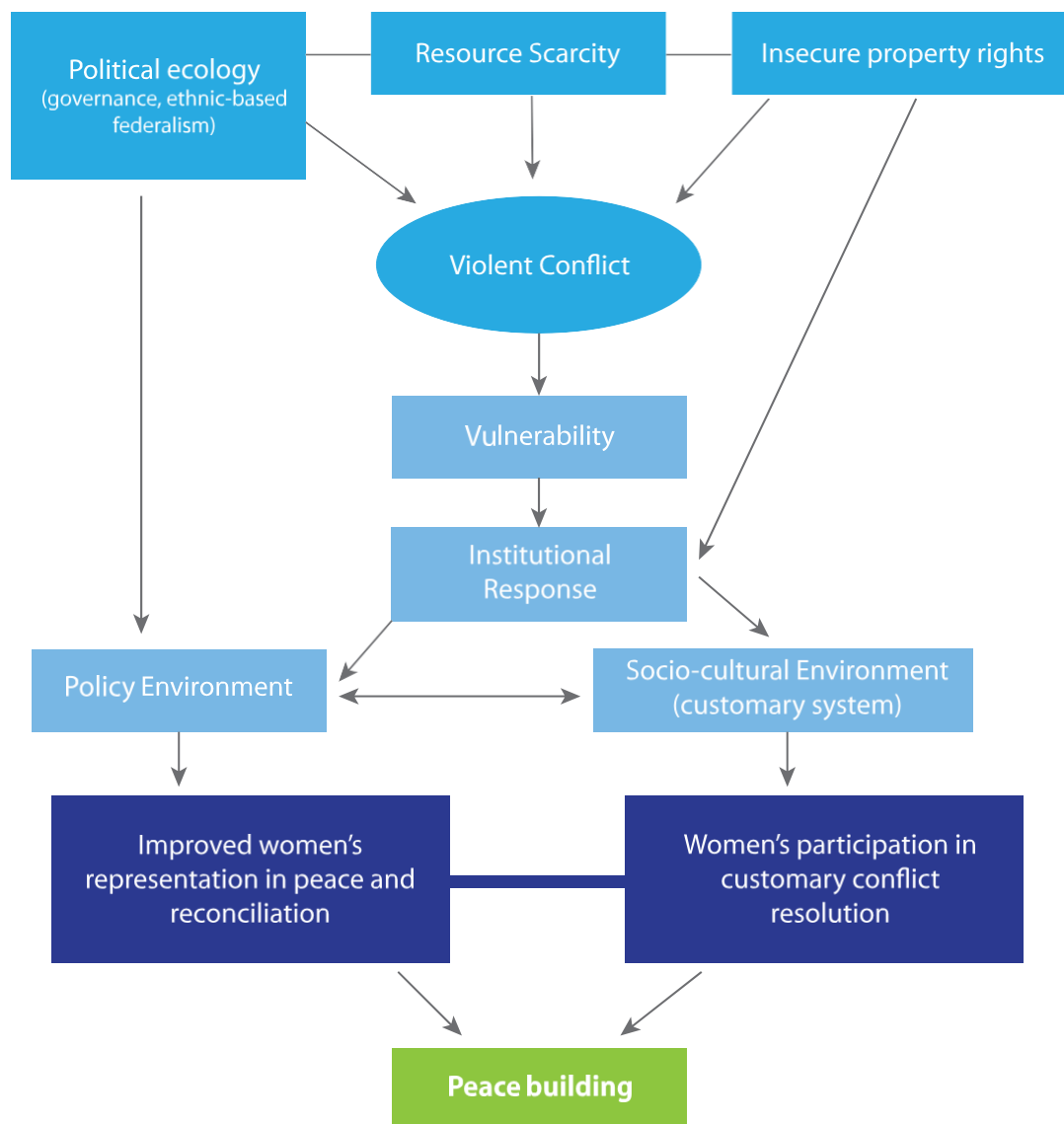


Figure 1: A Framework for conflict analysis and peacebuilding

This framework will serve as a tool to mainly examine root causes of violent conflict, its consequences, and the complementary or competitive role of the state and customary systems in resolving conflict. It indicates that conflict transformation requires improving women’s representation in the state structures and holding key decision-making positions where women’s interest and priorities are addressed. Moreover, involvement of women in traditional conflict resolution process is needed where their role in reconciliation remains critical. Thus, an inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding requires women’s involvement at the state level and in

the customary systems. The hybrid peace approach is preferred since it focuses on the process of “reconciliation, purification, and mental and spiritual healing” unlike the liberal peace approach which simply emphasizes “negotiations, political agreements, and material reconstruction” (Anam, 2015:43). The literature underlines the role of conflict entrepreneurs who have dual role and hold ambivalent positions. An individual can orchestrate violence in a systematic way while still playing a leadership role in peacemaking at institutional level. Conflict entrepreneurs are recognized as opportunistic actors (Bowd and Chikwanha, 2010). The framework helps capture how such behavioral pattern could challenge ensuring sustainable peace and the contribution of women at lower tier of governance (district level) in reducing such incidence.



Photo: Oromo Traditional leaders (Hadde Sinqqes)

5. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY



5. Proposed Methodology

The methodological approach followed the review of relevant literature, use of primary data from targeted communities in the woredas¹ selected for the assessment, different stakeholders at woreda, and regional levels as well as relevant ministries and CSOs who have roles to enhance the participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation.

5.1 Desk Review of Literature

Data collection has started with the desk review of related works on impact of conflict on women and their participation in peacebuilding in Ethiopia and Africa that could serve as examples and broaden understanding. Literature was reviewed on issues related to causal analysis, and consequences of conflict on women in ensuring food security and access to various public services, vulnerability of female children and the overall effect on livelihoods. The review has also considered how traditional systems of conflict resolution have historically involved or excluded women's participation in decision-making in resolving conflict and building peace. As conflict often involves violence between men of diverse groups in Africa while women often play a mediating role due to marriage and other cultural factors, women's role is critical in peace and reconciliation. Evidence on such practices was vital to learn about the overall role women can play in this aspect. The desk review examined trends on conflict and current practices by women in resolving conflict as affected by political, ecological and socio-cultural factors, and institutional practices in promoting the role of women in peace and reconciliation processes. Local empirical literature was reviewed to enrich findings of the study.

In addition to these, the desk review has also considered recommendations of the UN endorsed by Ethiopia, reports of human rights watch and periodic reviews made by other agencies which focus on the two regional states with specific reference to conflict and vulnerability of women. The review also emphasized the role of Civil Society Organizations and other partners, their successes and limitations, and the influence of social media during conflicts either in inciting violence or creating awareness towards resolving conflict and building peace.

5.2 Target groups

The target groups for this assessment were decision-makers and experts at Federal, Regional and District levels as well as the representatives of the Somali and Oromo communities. The conflict between Oromia and Somali ethnic groups is common at the regional border in the following districts: Mieso, Midhega-Tola, Kumbi, Meta, Chinaksen, Meyu-Muluke, Babile, Goro-Gutu, Hawwi-Gudina, Gumbi-Bordode and Gursum. Based on accessibility, and intensity and frequency of the violent conflict, four out of 11 districts were selected for this study: Mieso, Chinaksen, Babile and Gursum. While Mieso is located in the western Hararghe at the border between the two regions, the other three districts are located in eastern Hararghe bordering with the two regional states (Figure 2). These are conflict hotspot areas having rich cultural way of resolving conflicts. Especially, Chinaksen and Mieso were the most devastated woredas by the conflict that occurred in 2016 and 2017. Similarly, large number of households were displaced within Gursum (1145) and Babile (642) districts during the 2017 violent conflict². They have created a system of engaging different community members in peace and reconciliation. In all

1. The term woredas and districts are used interchangeably.

2 An assessment done by IOM available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/2018/12/ETH-IOM-East-Hararge-Oromia-IDP-Verification-Assessment-20171007.pdf>

selected districts, there are both Somali and Oromo communities, which has provided a chance to examine conflict and peace within and between the two communities. There is a difference among the woredas in biophysical conditions; while Gursum and Chinaksen are highlands, Mieso and Babile are lowlands. All districts were ideal to examine internal mechanisms of peacebuilding and reconciliation. The zonal administrations were consulted in selecting these districts.

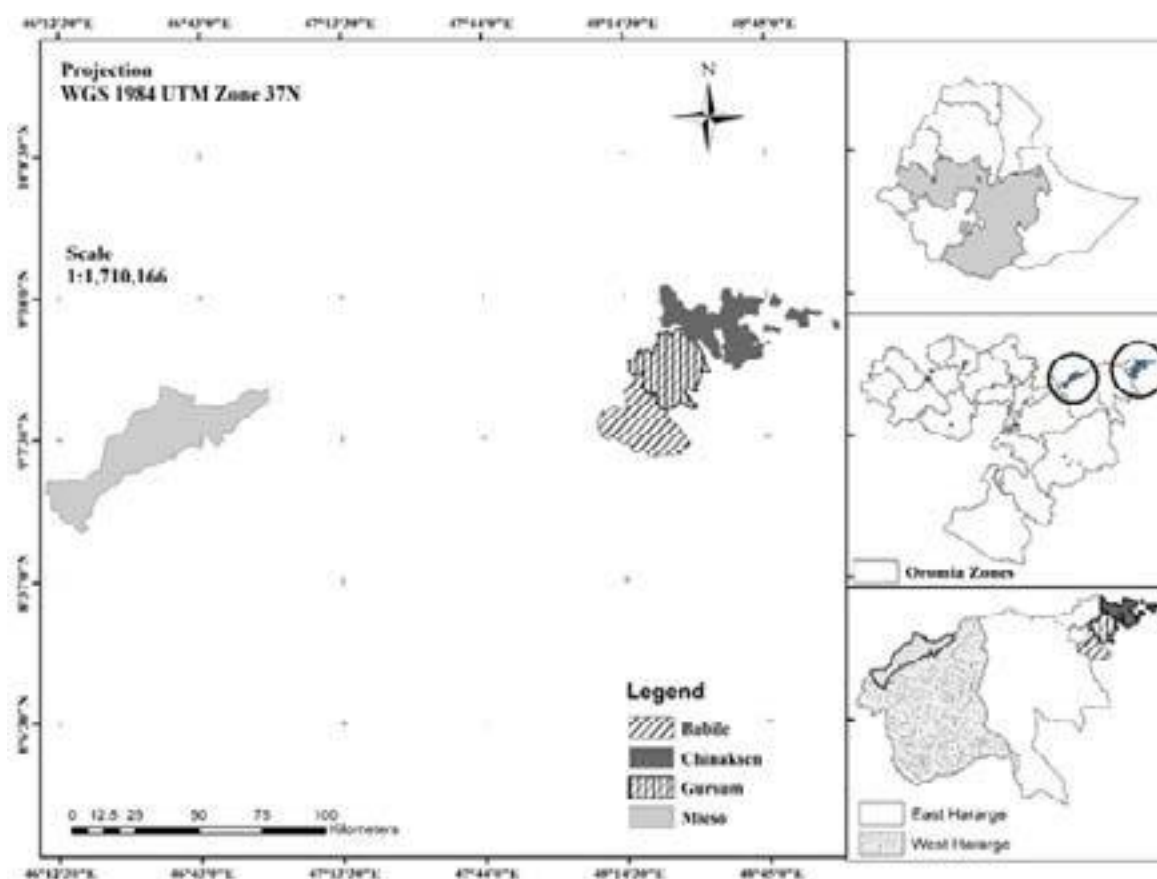


Figure 2: Map of the study area

5.3 Primary data collection

Data were collected using key informant interviews (individuals). The content of the questions for the regional and district level informants was similar in order to compare the views and understandings across the state structure. Organizational and policy related questions were included in the questions raised to regional and federal level key informants. The data collection used pre-defined and open-ended set of questions to guide the interviews with the different actors.

The guiding questions were prepared in such a way that they helped in: (1) enabling identification of the causes of the conflict in each study sites, (2) identifying state and customary responses to the conflict and different types of interventions in bringing peace and (3) generating evidence about those interventions, whether they have given space for women to influence the process of peace and reconciliation. Causal analysis typically connected the causes of conflict through time in order to capture dynamism in the causes of the conflicts. Procedurally, those experts and administrators at the district level were approached before organizing interviews with the community representatives (elders, youth and women). Interview questions were framed with this understanding. In each of the four woredas, 10 key informants were contacted including

woreda level key informants (3), community elders (2), women representatives (2), the youth (2) and 1 ordinary person who also assisted in the facilitation of the interviews. This has brought the total number of sampled interviewees to 40. As the data collection and analysis followed a qualitative approach, there was no a strict sampling technique followed. The number of key informants depended on the amount of information generated to achieve objectives of the study. Those respondents who were interviewed lately in each district have responded to a few questions as the responses to some of the questions were similar to that of the others. Interviewing continued until the level of information reached a saturation point or further interviews did not generate new information but rather become redundant. This is one of the key characteristics of qualitative data collection where responses were not standardized unlike the case of quantitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

5.3.1 District Level Key informant interviews

The key informants included selected district level actors (district administrators, district peace and security officers, and district women's affairs office) as they were expected to have in-depth knowledge about the conflict between Oromia and Somali Regions. The criteria for selecting them was that they have adequate technical experience of monitoring conflict in the area and were better exposed in designing stakeholder consultations in conflict resolution and peace building. The peace and security officers appointed by the state were interviewed to explore state efforts and limitation in using women as mediator for peace. Due to the unexpected incidence of Corona Virus Pandemic, telephone interviews were held with the district heads and other key informants. The advantage of telephone interviewing over face-to-face interview was that the former allowed continuous talks with the respondents by recording their voices, which allowed gathering a lot of information in a short time. There was no interruption while interviewing which allowed probing and asking questions deeply. The recorded voices were later on converted into written transcript. The disadvantage was the non-verbal responses cannot be captured.

5.3.2 Community Level Key Informant Interviews

Although community level focus group discussion was planned initially, the state of emergency declared in the country as a result of the Corona Virus pandemic did not permit the discussion at community level. Therefore, selected key informants from both Somali and Oromo communities in the selected districts were interviewed. The key informants were elders, women, youth and men of both ethnic groups in both regions. The data generated through key informant interviews were as exhaustive and comprehensive as possible to accommodate diverse perspectives on causes of conflicts and alternative ways of peace-making and reconciliation through engaging women. The interviewees have different backgrounds and domains of knowledge about conflict and peace. Community key informants were approached through the development agents of the districts selected for interviews using telephone. Since the Somalis in the four districts are bilingual (speaking Somali and Oromo language), there was no language barrier in using telephone interviews.

5.3.3 Regional and Federal Level Interviews

The purpose of interviews at these levels was to generate a detailed data on existing practices in involving women in peace processes and the barriers in mainstreaming women's participation in resolving conflicts and building peace. This helped identify the kind of supports perceived to be relevant to build the capacity of the women experts serving at regional, zonal and district

levels to play a key role in transforming conflict and ensuring peace and security. At the regional level, an interview was held with Regional Women's Affairs Bureau, and women members of the regional councils of the two regional states.

At the federal level, appropriate persons in the Ministry of Peace (MoP) and Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY) were interviewed to obtain policy-related information in peace building. Review of the document on the establishment of the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission (ERC) was made as it has the mandate of establishing values of forgiveness for the past, lasting love, solidarity and mutual understanding by identifying reasons of conflict, and contribute to the national peacebuilding process. Such methodological triangulation by data sources was essential to generate evidence on factors viewed as essential for inclusive and sustainable peace and reconciliation. All regional and federal level interviews were conducted using telephone. As some Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) also play a great role in supporting the process of engaging women in peace and reconciliation and/or work on the protection of women's rights, they were approached for interviews. These include Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia and the Consortium of Human Rights Organizations in Ethiopia. The purpose was to identify the role they could play in policy advocacy. In addition to interviews, reviews of various documents such as reports related to women's participation in political affairs and proclamations were made to support data from interviews.

5.4 Data analysis approach

The study employed a constructivist and holistic approach for analysis. This is because institution building for peace and security is assumed to be a learning process. To accomplish the assignment, the consultant were narratives and comparative case-study analysis based on interview transcripts. These approaches were preferred to accommodate 'multiple perspectives' with respect to the overall objective of the assessment. As the data generated were qualitative in nature, the analysis procedure followed transcribing the interviews, sorting of responses into different categories based on the objectives of the study and the nature of responses, forming themes and sub-themes and comparison of cases from each district. Such an analytical approach helped identify diversity of practices and strategies in engaging women in peace and reconciliation. It also helped reveal the potential that women have in peacebuilding and the socio-cultural barriers that could undermine their participation in peace and reconciliation.

The path towards identification of roles for women in fueling conflict and in peacebuilding requires the use of analytical tools considering time factor. To this end, the case-study approach to data analysis involved a documentation of evidence on conflict events in the specific sites and drawing patterns of change in the nature of conflicts in each woreda based on historical and prevailing context. This was needed as the causes of conflicts and peacebuilding efforts are assumed to vary across space and time, being determined by pace of technological change, socioeconomic and political transformation as well as change in natural resource systems. With this in mind, the case study approach was used to analyze deep historical grievances, underlying reasons and proximate causes of conflict and how they have evolved. Such an approach was helpful to examine the role of Xeer and Gada systems of the Somali and Oromo cultural institutions respectively in engaging or excluding women in peace and reconciliation; through that the relationship between formal and customary systems in transforming women's role in conflict resolution were analyzed. The assessment was unique in that it took the perspective of embedding women's participation in peace processes and reconciliation in the wider context of statutory and customary approaches. This was instrumental in gaining a clear picture of how

both systems value and practice the inclusion of women. While analyzing comparison of views was made as some interview questions were cross-cutting to allow triangulation of responses by data sources.

5.5 Methodological limitation

Due to the spread of the Corona Virus Pandemic, the data collection was carried out using telephone interviewing. One of the limitations of such data collection was loss of data due to absence of non-verbal communication. There could be low level of trust among the respondents due to the absence of physical contact. It was difficult to fix the time of interview as the key informants tended to resist the interview. To overcome the impact of this from affecting the quality of data obtained, the consultant used contact persons who are postgraduate students at Haramaya University. They assisted to explain the importance of the study to the key informants selected for interviews and discussed with the woreda officials on the timeliness of the study given the impact of the violence had at the regional border. In addition, the consultant spent adequate time in getting the respondents understand the need for the assessment. Interviews were carried out during evenings as it was easy to get the respondents settled to talk.

6. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY



6. Findings of the study

6.1 Introduction

The findings of the study provide the economic and non-economic causes of the conflicts. The economic causes include livestock raid and land use change that involved land conversion and disputes related to it. The non-economic causes examined ideological influence and socially accepted discourses that include the calculus of politics (elites' interest), and social media influence; historical narratives and current relationships of the two ethnic groups; the dynamics and trends of conflict over the last two decades. The result elaborates the effects of conflict on women and children, interpretation of conflict in the sociocultural context, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms by considering state and elders' relationships and the limitations of customary institutions. The findings also present how far women are represented in the sociocultural context of conflict resolution, the extent to which they participate in peace and reconciliation in each region both at intra-ethnic and interethnic levels. The mechanism of engaging women in peace processes established at community level and the challenges, and ways of including women towards ensuring sustainable peace are discussed.

6.2 Causes of the violent conflict

6.2.1 Economic causes

6.2.1.1 Livestock raids as a cause for violence

Livestock raid involves coercive way of taking away one's animal which occurs often when herds are kept on communal grazing land. It produces a threat to the weak actor in using communal grazing land. Hence, there is a direct link between fear of raids and avoidance of the grazing area. The gradual

increase in the scale and severity of conflict is partly associated with the ever-worsening livestock raiding. Raiding has been organized on a commercial basis, involving accumulation of wealth by one group at the cost of impoverishing the other. As there is retribution, this practice is expected to be reciprocal among different resource users. It occurs in all woredas. For instance, raids take place between Ittu and Issa clans in Mieso. Key informants underlined that Issa's benefit from raids is different from what is expected. The robbed animals can be instantly sold at local market or are trekked informally for export to neighbouring Djibouti. Moreover, informal export arrangement ahead of raiding is another reason for engagement in raids, which shows the trans-boundary flow of benefits from raids. Meanwhile, such arrangement helps as a means to escape from the repossessing efforts by the Ittu.

Raid stimulates conflict since part of the revenue generated from it is invested on conflict technology. Access to better conflict technology generates an incentive to perpetrate further raids. As a result, there is always a temptation to violate customary institutions. Hence, the higher the benefits from raids, the more frequent the violence will be. This puts a challenge to transformation of conflict and emergence of customary arrangements in improving access to pastoral resources. Some speculate that when property rights are unassigned, power asymmetry compounded over time encourages actors to invest in coercive activities in order to gain an advantage over their opponents (Skaperdas 1992). Though livestock raid is often high while the Ittu are grazing on the contested land, in exceptional cases it occurs at grazing places close to the villages.

Issa's gain from raids is closely associated with strategic land that the group occupied. For instance, the Issa have ethnic affiliation with political power holders in Djibouti. They inhabit the main trade route (railway) connecting the national capital to the major port. This route has become vital for the national economy ever since the outbreak of Ethio-Eritrea war in May 1998 that has in turn resulted in the shift in the Ethiopian state's position in taking any political measures disappointing the Issa to control the violent conflict. A recent study underlines that the war has led to the "renaissance" of Ethiopia-Djibouti relationships by triggering the establishment of new railway infrastructure that connect Addis Ababa to Djibouti (Mormul, 2016). There is also an open cross-border movement and uncontrollable import of firearms. From the perspective of the Ittu, all these factors are important in creating a suitable environment to perpetrate violence. Some of the interviewees indicated that the reason for the conflict goes beyond questions of grazing land and raids. They perceive these as short-term economic gains but the long-term goal being expulsion of agro-pastoralists from their permanent settlement. Livestock raids also exist in Chinaksen and Babile but not reported in Gursum. In the case of Chinaksen, there are cases where both ethnic groups loot each other's livestock and sell the stolen animals elsewhere where it cannot be traced. In Babile, the Hawiya clan of Somali also steal the livestock of the Ogaden and sell them at Babile livestock market because the Hawiya take advantage of the knowledge of Oromo language to hide themselves within the Babile Oromo.

In the context of livestock raiding, a system that increases the superiority of large and powerful clans, over small and weak clans, triggers conflicts. The more powerful ones tend to attack or raid the smaller one. Raiding is an action interpreted differently within the society. On the one hand, organizers of livestock raiding are believed to be those who are possessed with a bad manner in a community and then are given inferior position in a society. On the other hand, there are economic incentives and social reasons for a person to undertake raiding which include payment of bride wealth, slaughtering to feed the community itself and to sell for cash. Rustling occurs between clans where a member of a clan steals animals from the other clan while both clans belong to the same ethnic group. Livestock raiding takes place between ethnic groups and its organization involves collective action, resulting in violent forms of conflict. The underlying reason for raiding between ethnic groups is to use it as a strategy to increase a threat to those grazing at the disputed political boundary and in the long-term to expand territorial control. In situations of the on-going food insecurity, socio-political volatility and ecological variability, raiding between herding groups is practiced as a strategy to defend and acquire access to vital resources (Hendrickson et al. 1998). There is significant overall damage by the conflict (property loss and human life) in the districts located at the border of Somali and Oromia Regions (Figure 3). The total number of deaths between 2011 and 2017 was 404 with the number of injuries being 341 (Geremew, 2018)³.

3. The author used official archives of the woredas included in his studies along the border of the two regions. There could be a question of accuracy since such data are sensitive to provide.

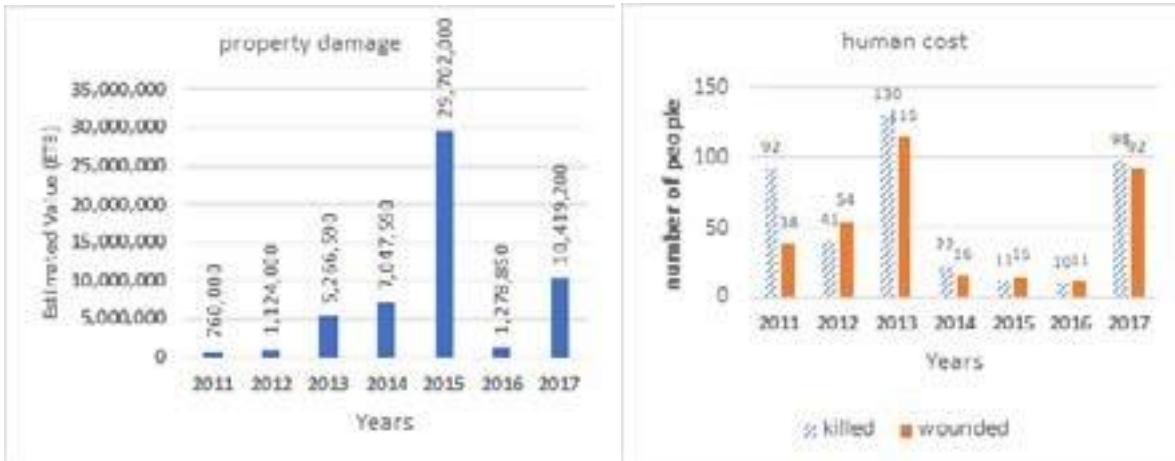


Figure 3: Property lost to robbery, raids and human cost (Source: Geremew, 2018).

Between 2011 and 2017, the general loss of property is 55,598,230 ETB where the lowest is in 2011 (760,000) and the highest is in 2015 (29,702,000). Moreover, the human cost is the lowest in 2016 and highest in 2013. The rise and fall in human cost show the intermittent nature of conflicts where they recur at certain intervals, indicating the absence of reliable peace. One of the key informants commented that the conflict over grazing land and water points (wells) is reducing while that of the livestock raiding is on the increase. Bringing the perpetrators of violence to justice has been a challenge as one party does and the other party hides the perpetrators of livestock raids. The formal system is perceived to be weak in enforcing the law and there is no reliability on the functioning of the justice system. Generally, generating economic rent through violent forms of livestock raiding has become an incentive for investing in conflict technologies, such as firearms, among different ethnic groups (Unruh, 2006).

6.2.1.2 Land use change and land-related conflict

Insights from the interviews show that internally induced land use change in pastoral areas has contributed to violent conflict over grazing resources. This is particularly the case in Mieso where formerly pastoral group, such as the Ittu clan, take up agro-pastoral livelihood where part of the grazing land historically shared with the Issa are converted into agricultural farms. There is an increasing shrinkage of grazing communal land. Land conversion in a semi-arid environment has multiple disadvantages: increasing carbon emission, reduction in browsing tree species and decline in ecosystem services. Such external effects are threats to pastoral groups. Somali key informant indicated that state investment in the provision of agricultural extension, improved seed and training services for the Ittu to cultivate crops has indirectly encouraged land conversion. A recent study shows that cultivated land in Mieso has increased from 16% in 1965 to 74.3% in 2014 considering the kebeles inhabited by the Ittu (Beyene et al., 2016:69). To discourage this action, the Issa has systematically attacked the Ittu during planting and harvesting seasons. This phenomenon conforms to the theoretical points of view, there is grievance on the part of the Issa as property rights are secured for land under private holding for cultivation by the Ittu consequent to the 1974 land reform, protecting the rights of agro-pastoralists, while ignoring communal land rights. This condition has systematically contributed to an increase in land conversion.

In Babile and Gursum, the violence is over cultivated land at the regional border. Men and women differ in their views on this. While women are unaware how land related conflict emerged, men attribute the conflict to the presence of refugee camps and the engagement of refugees in crop cultivation which has increased the violence over land. The issue of land-related conflict can

be seen at two levels. One is the conflict over land is attributed to the desire for territorial expansion at the border where each region wants to push its boundary. And the second level of conflict is an internal dispute over land between villages. Whichever the cause may be, security forces capture perpetrators of violence but without bringing them to justice. The woreda administrator considered this as critical limitation in addressing land-related conflicts, requiring further study. A study conducted on conflict between Oromo and Somali herders in southern Ethiopia ranks the causes of violent conflict considering both economic and non-economic causes:

“The result of the ranking exercise shows that access to pastoral livelihood resources such as water and pasture was considered as the basic cause of inter-ethnic violent conflicts. The rank order is indicated as follows: (1) uneven distribution of water-points, (2) competition over grazing land, (3) increased drought frequency, (4) boundary disputes, (5) livestock raid (or rustling), (6) raping women, (7) abduction of women, (8) sudden killings and subsequent acts of revenge, (9) erosion of cultural norms, (10) state undermining customary law, (11) expansion of rangeland enclosures, (12) deforestation causing a scarcity in browsing resources, (13) increase in human and livestock population, (14) expansion of crop farming (causing a reduction in grazing space and increased competition on the remaining resource), (15) illegal access to and accumulation of automatic weapons, (16) increased urbanization (causing importing of culturally unwanted practices), (17) increased poverty, (18) federalism and associated boundary issues and (19) effort to form new kebeles. The primary causes of violent conflict in pastoral areas of southern Ethiopia are competition over grazing resources as mediated by politicization of administrative boundaries. Erosion of cultural norms due to state influence has undermined the effectiveness of customary law in preventing violence” (Beyene, 2017:27-28). The author’s

work suggests the need to consider the interaction between economic and non-economic causes in triggering and sustaining conflicts at different levels.

As insights from the interviews show, one of the limitations of ranking the causes of the violent conflict in conflict analysis is that it undermines the possible causal chains, where one cause is linked to the other. In the context of Chinaksen, border dispute is attributed to the abuse of ethnic-based federalism where each feuding party uses forces to expand its territory instead of following legal means. In this process, livestock raiding emerges as a means to threaten mobile use of pastoral resources (water and pasture) at the border. As residents at the regional border are mostly pastoral and agro pastoral households, the uneven distribution of grazing resources has increased the chance for conflict to occur. Key informants from the studied sites considered this as an opportunity for some political elites to orchestrate violence to achieve personal goals.

6.2.2 Non-economic causes

6.2.2.1 Ideology and discourses as causes

The historical narratives during the interviews with the key informants show that ideology, discourse and stereotypes are often happening to be the root causes of violence. The relationships between Ittu and Issa as well as Jarso and Girhi are historically embedded in the ideological orientation associated with the establishment of great Somalia, which was a dream and vision of Siad Barre government before its collapse in 1991. At the time of war between Ethiopia and Somalia, the intention of the then Somalia government was to expand its territory to Ethiopia to achieve its goal. In characterizing the intentions of the Somali leaders, a related study states: “They promised the recovery of Somali lands in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti but were unable to bring about the irredentist⁴ promise of a larger Somalia”

4. Irredentism is a political movement that a particular

(Burgess, 2009:50). Even after its collapse, the perception has prevailed and the Somali clans in Ethiopia were viewed among the Ittu and Jarso as secessionist. This discourse at a local level has created a different image for the Somali pastoralists.

For example, the Ittu clan of Oromo labels the Issa as bandits, raiding their livestock and selling them elsewhere while the Issa do not accept such a claim and argue that they have the right to access grazing and water resources and continue to practice distant mobility that they were used to in the past as a pastoral way of life. On the other hand, the Issa assert the Ittu as expanding their territory through engagement in farming and establishment of fixed houses (unlike the moveable houses in the pastoral encampment); engage in the production of charcoal by cutting important tree species that could serve as livestock feed. A recent study underlines that misinformation and manipulation of information by the elites about the position of Ittu and Issa in accessing firearms and attacking had generated a widely held unfavorable attitudes and stereotypes along ethnic lines, contributing to the perpetuation of violence (Beyene, 2013).

Likewise, the Jarso consider that the Girhi are being supported by the regional government where armed groups fight against the Jarso in order to create more space for the Girhi or control the territory so that it will be administered under the Somali Regional State. The Jarso community key informants assert that the Oromia Regional State failed to secure their peace through the outcome of referendum in 2004 and make the region primarily responsible to protect them. Community key informants tend to generalize that although competition on pasture and water is transformed into violent conflict, the “conflict between Oromo and Somali has often been considered as a culture”.

6.2.2.2 The ‘calculus’ of politics

The quest for territory embedded in the unresolved boundary dispute associated with the outcome of the 2004 referendum between the two regional states has gone beyond a resource-based conflict. It has triggered public debate, promoted regional concern and caused the implicit involvement of the political activists in facilitating communication among the youth. Insights from the interviews with state security personnel indicates that the role of the state media in undermining the scale and spread of violent conflict at regional boundary might have escalated the condition. Such silence initially was expected to increase the time required to restore security in these districts. The conflict was feared to have a detrimental effect in disrupting trade relations between the two regional states as most agricultural products are traded to the Somali Region. Oromia Regional State also serves as a market corridor for livestock from the Somali region. Such interdependence is helpful in improving local livelihoods, but it can be challenged if peacebuilding efforts are not made, and the violence recurs. The delay in the effective political response to cease violence has threatened peace and stability. The nature of the violence by then has prompted alternative narrative where this went beyond the simple competition over land, water and grazing resources among pastoralists of both ethnic groups at the regional boundary.

The recent conflict has been related to boundary (territorial control) in the sense that the government of the Somali Regional State created an impression among the Somali people that the ‘Oromo movement’ is linked to expansion of territory, i.e. to annex the Somali region and the Liyu police are there to protect the Somalis, whereas the primary purpose of the Liyu police was to fight against the insurgents of ONLF which was recognized as terrorist organization by the then Ethiopian government. There are

government claims and reclaims territories that were lost historically or based on legend.

two worldviews on this. Some respondents viewed that the Somali political leadership used such propaganda to deceive the people of the Somali Regional State. The other view is that the administrative boundary introduced together with the formation of the federal regional states since 1991 has created a psychological impact in dividing people who used to live together. The two ethnic groups did not have serious agenda of boundary. Some respondents indicated that the border conflict between the two regions is used as a political strategy to shift attention from the Oromia Region wide movement of the Oromo's quest for freedom, justice, democracy and good governance.

Furthermore, the security officers also hold the view that the violent conflict was a product of structural problem and not conflict between Oromo and Somali people as such. There is no way that violence of this scale involving massive displacement of people occur if it were conflict between pastoral herders on resources. A clear indicator for this, as underlined by a key informant from Mieso, was attacks have repeatedly occurred while elders from both ethnic groups were at joint-meetings. As a result, such elders were perceived as if they were used as a political agent by the federal state receiving personal gains from attending such meetings. The federal defence army was also perceived to be lenient in preventing the violence which increased tensions and jeopardized the efforts of elders. The House of Federation has also failed to exercise the constitutional provision made under Article 48 (sub-article 1) emphasizing its role in addressing border disputes through settlement by agreement between states and Article 62 (sub-article 9) which gives it the power to order the federal government to intervene to stop the conflict.

Interviews with state and non-state actors at Chinaksen woreda show that the conflict over water and pasture has existed for long which was resolved by elders' intervention. The challenge arises when conflict between Oromo and Somali was attributed to a

different agenda (political agenda) where elders could not resolve it alone. The violence caused a lot of losses of lives and properties. Almost all key informants commented that the two ethnic groups did not have a problem and used to live in peace. The violence was orchestrated by a different organ. It was politically motivated to take more kebeles from part of the Somali Region and used provision of wheat as relief food to manipulate the views of the people, and forced those who did not accept the offer to leave the area. Together with instability in the Somali region, this has led to a massive displacement of the people in 2016 and 2017. Similar experiences exist among other woredas as well.

The above narratives from elders and security forces adhere to the concept of political ecology where political elites systematically incite violent conflict. Political ecology theory strongly explains the situation as it considers the interplay of environment, political, economic and social factors (Greenberg and Park 1994) that affect the relationships among groups with different identities (Light, 2000). In this context, political decisions in delineating boundaries have affected the resource use arrangements (economic) and reconfigured the pre-existing social relationships laying the foundation for conflict over resources.

6.2.2.3 The role of social media

The literature emphasizes that social media can play a great role in providing information (causes, casualties, level of damages) about any violent conflict on daily basis (Wolfsfeld, 2018). The events on the incidence of violence and its outcomes are reported. In the context of Oromo-Somali border conflict, the key informants underlined that social media played significant role in information exchange and influencing the behavior and emotion of the youth. While the reliability of the information was questionable, the dissemination of information on the scale of violence and victims of the violence affects

social stability and security feelings. Further scrutiny reveals that social media, while it was condemned as being abused by political activists to threaten the security of the nation, has remained an alternative source of information for the general public as state media is perceived to have failed in reporting details of the conflict. Interviews also show that the youth makes use of information from social media to update themselves about the process of the conflict. Some experts indicated that the government also benefits from social media in that it takes precautionary measures to prevent different kinds of protests organized through the use of social media. Others argued that social media provides feedback for the government to introduce some measures that can reduce the incidence of violence and ensure social stability at the border between the two regions.

Moreover, social media were perceived to serve as a space for argument between different scholars who reflect on ideas and procedures to be followed to build peace and resolve boundary disputes. The overall impression is that the state can selectively make use of alternative ideas proposed by different categories of people to establish institutional arrangements that support peace building. A recent study indicates that “neutral reporting where there is no distortion of the facts” in social media is much more effective than the state media where they are “exclusively emphasizing the views of elite decision-makers and only quoting from selected representatives of special interest groups” in peacebuilding processes (Savrum and Miller, 2015:7). Social media creates a platform for people from different socio-economic, religious, and ethnic groups to confront each other and organize rational discussions to develop shared understandings (Rohwerder, 2015).

Social media in the digital age has created an opportunity for the weak groups to challenge the most powerful groups by providing written information and images that serve

as evidence on what has happened and how. An optimist might assume that those working for peace are in a better position to use social media for mobilization resulting in a positive outcome. This happens as the ability to communicate directly between the conflicting parties provides the chance for reconciliation which was not previously available. To the contrary, empirical evidence also shows that social media is much more likely to spread violence and hate than they aid in any attempts at conflict resolution (Wolfsfeld, 2018).

6.2.3 Historical and current relationships

6.2.3.1 Mieso district

Mieso district is inhabited by both Somali and Oromo. The conflict between Somali clan of Issa and Oromo clan of Ittu is historically embedded. It can be referred to the events that took place during the three political regimes in Ethiopia: imperial, socialist and post-socialist regimes. Interview of elders indicate that during the imperial regime, the military commander of the government has armed the Oromo ethnic to fight against the Issa resulting in large livestock raiding and expulsion of the Issa youngsters. They migrated to Somalia and the then Ethiopian government has denied access to food aid by the Issa clan of Somali. Their water-wells were deliberately poisoned. During the reign of the socialist government (1974 – 1991), the Issa clan members who were in exile had reorganized themselves and participated in the war between Ethiopia and Somalia. Then the Issa had obtained financial and material support from Somalia and Djibouti to fight against the Oromo, while the victory of Ethiopia over Somalia eventually undermined the Issa not to continue attacking the Ittu clan.

Nevertheless, subsequent to the removal of the socialist regime, Ethiopian political system has been transformed into ethnic-

based federalism. Such a big and historic change has dramatically shifted the attention of the two ethnic groups as regional state formation brought in the delineation of regional boundary. In the early 1990s, there were relatively non-violent and peaceful relationships between them. Conflict over grazing areas was not so frequent and the culture of resource sharing under critical conditions of scarcity was common. The grievance and anger embedded in the perceived unfair treatment of Issa by the imperial and socialist regime and the newly arising dispute over administrative boundary have jointly contributed to the sustained conflict.

To provide a political solution, the Ethiopian government has carried out a referendum involving the voting by community members of Mieso district to be administered either under Oromia or Somali. In this district, the Somali won only Mulu town during the 2004 referendum. The current claim over territory is a revenge on the failure experienced thirteen years ago. There is a widespread perception that the outcome of popular vote has not settled the dispute over territorial claims.

At present, one group is trying to exclude and evict the other, with greater emphasis on territorial control by the Somalis. Unlike the old days, the conflict is not only related to scarcity of resources but also is resulting from “ethno politics” or abuse of “ethnic-based federalism” (Aalen, 2011). As elders further indicated, the formation of regional boundary by the government in creating a federal structure is the source of all problems related to violent conflict over territorial control. The system of governance has created its own challenges by diverting the attention from sharing resources to controlling a specific territorial unit. This happens when regional governments, especially their formal structures, extend their dominance into pastoral areas undermining the customary systems of resource governance (Hagmann and Mulugeta, 2008). To the contrary, the

Somali elders associate the violence with shortage of water and pasture where they attribute the scarcity of resources to rainfall shortage and increasing drought frequency.

The creation of new district called Gumbi-Bordode in 2016/17 which has 29 kebeles has extended the scale of the conflict because such rearrangement caused a transfer of 18 kebeles from Mieso district upon which the Somali region put a claim. The rearrangement was required to bring together those kebeles which are alike in their production systems, which are mainly pastoralists. Bordode is a strategic location where commodities are taxed and the motive behind the conflict is to control this state revenue collection point. As a general pattern, the violent conflict between Oromia and Somali pastoral groups is embedded in the claims made to a particular kebele followed by aggressive action causing displacement of the people from this place. There is no peaceful transition of one kebele from Oromia to Somali or vice versa. As soon as agreements are reached, not by the people, but by the two regional states to transfer a particular kebele from one region to the other, then forced eviction of the Oromo from their village would follow. This process has created tension and instability in the boundary between the two regional states. It is such an action that escalated tensions around the regional border. This condition subscribes itself to the growing literature on persistence of internal conflict in the horn of Africa as essentially attributed to governance failure (Catley and Iyas, 2010). Perpetration of violence demonstrates how opportunistic political elites mobilize ethnicity in order to attain their economic ends (Daley, 2006).

6.2.3.2 Chinaksen District

In Chinaksen district, there are 51 kebeles out of which 33 are governed effectively under Oromia and 18 were still contested due to the failure of the referendum to solve border issues. Further inquiry on why the referendum has failed shows the “absence of institutions that enforce outcome of the public choice”.

There are two ethnic groups in the woreda. The Jarso of Oromo has historically adopted the Girhi clan of Somali and accommodated them into the area. Then, they jointly fought against the imperial army in 1942 but they have eventually relinquished (Hussein et al., 2016). Though they lived over 200 years in the area (Caulk, 1977), the conflict between the two was intermittent despite the fact it has been intensified in 1991/92. Both groups practice agro-pastoralism and sedentary farming. In this case, agro-pastoral system is a production system where livestock and crops are equally important food source, while sedentary farming experiences mixed crop and livestock production. Communities of the two clans have communal grazing areas where other pastoral groups such as Gadabursi, Issa and Yeberre also claim the use of the grazing resource. In essence, the Jarso and Girhi cooperate to defend other pastoral groups intruding into their communal grazing land such as the Abskul and Bartiere. While boundary can be identified for different clans in the area, one can hardly find a boundary between Jarso and Girhi due to intermingled nature of their settlement where one can find a mixture of them in the same village.

However, it is still possible to find villages where greater composition of Jarso or Girhi inhabit, that has attracted the attention of the new political order of Ethiopia delineating boundary on the basis of ethnicity. This condition has created uncertainty, hostility and tension between Jarso and Girhi. This process has resulted in referendum which triggered contest over territoriality between the Somali Regional State and Oromia Regional State. It was a macro-level political architect characterized by ethnic-based federalism and regional state formation that has influenced local level inter-clan relationships (Hussein et al., 2015). Such a political transition has escalated greed for territorial control and grievance over territorial units lost by either party due to referendum in 2004. In the

post-referendum situations, the conflicts between Jarso and Girhi tend to persist in areas where regional states have members of their respective ethnic groups included within the territorial units controlled by one or the other regional state. Considering the entire regional boundary shard between Somali Regional State and Oromia Regional State, the referendum of 2004 has covered 85 contested districts and administrative units. Therefore, there are structural underlying factors manifested through weak and non-transparent administrative systems, lack of legal enforcement of agreed upon boundaries through referendum and macro-political instability. These factors have reinforced the embedded and distorted historical political relations and sustained the trajectory of interethnic violence.

Key informants indicate that the cause of violent conflict can also be resource scarcity when it is associated with random settlement by some Somali groups (not necessarily Gihri) on areas previously used by the Jarso. Spontaneous settlement has been practiced by the Somali without the recognition and permission of either the Oromia regional government or the Jarso community. The settlement was informal and followed by an attack from the Somali. The key informants argued that this was being used as a strategy to expand territory and occupying more resources. They suggested that settlement through negotiation involving elders could have prevented grievance by the Jarso. Systematic aggression of the Somali backed by a police force and retaliatory measures by the Jarso often made the violence extremely destructive. The Girhi of Somali had a difficult position in cooperating with Jarso or fighting them due to their blood relationships from intermarriage.

6.2.3.3 Babile district

Babile district is located 561 KM to the east of Addis-Ababa. The 2007 national census reported a total population for this woreda of 93,708, of whom 47,178 were men and

46,530 were women. The major ethnic groups found in the district are Oromo and Somali (Hawiya clan) and other ethnic groups in the Babile town. The three largest ethnic groups reported in Babile were the Somali (10.77%), the Oromo (85.77%), and the Amhara (3.76%); all other ethnic groups made up 1.03% of the population (CSA, 2007). Majority of the population in the district are agro-pastoralists and sedentary farmers. The altitude of this woreda ranges from 950 to 2000 meters above sea level with diverse ecology. Majority of residents of western, southern and northern parts of the district are predominantly farmers, while in the eastern and southeastern parts are dominated by agro-pastoralists and pastoralists. The current government structure divided the district into two distinct administrations. Accordingly, various identity groups of the district were put under Somali and Oromia regional state administrations. Babile district is surrounded by Gursum district to the northeast, Fedis District of Oromia Regional State to the southwest and Harari Regional State to the west.

Land related conflicts is very common as exacerbated due to increased scarcity which arose from the presence of the Babile Elephant Sanctuary. The sanctuary, as a national heritage and tourist attraction site, generates economic benefits while increasing grazing resource scarcity to the local communities. The presence of Flora Eco-power investment project in the area caused destruction of different browsing species of plants as camel feed such Acacia-Commiphora. This has eventually contributed to the growing resource scarcity, and human-wildlife conflicts that can in turn trigger illegal hunting (Reddy and Workineh, 2014).

Looking at history of land use, Emperor Hailesilase government's tribal land policy divided the rural settlements in the district on clan bases. That means, land was redistributed and thus owned on clan bases. This trend has continued during

Derg Regime. Elders' memory shows that during the Derg regime there has not been a report of violent conflicts between Somali and Oromo people in the district. During emperor Hailesilase time however, there had been violent conflicts within Somali tribal groups of Ogaden and Hawiya. A number of people were killed and huge livestock looted from both sides, which has continued nearly for seven years, but lately stopped by the state intervention (Liban, 2006).

The two groups (Somalis and Oromos) in Babile district had a long history of cultural and linguistic interactions. There has been cross-cultural fertilization and acculturation whereby similarity of many cultural traits, including bilingualism of the overwhelming majority of the people from both groups took place. Historically, there was conflict within Hawiya clan itself. The conflict within Hawiya took place as some members of the clan who left the area during the Ethio-Somali war in the Derg regime came back recently and claimed the land they used to cultivate. Such internal conflicts were settled through the traditional council of elders by exercising their customary system (Ali, 2005).

Under the governance of the EPRDF, both Somali and Oromia Regional States started claims and counterclaims for the "ownership" of the district as attributed to the formation of ethnically based regional states in 1991. The Oromia Regional State recognizes the dominance of Afan Oromo by the majority (such as Mayo, Maru, Madigan, Hawiya, Akisho) and others in the district, which should serve as evidence that these people belong to Oromo. On the contrary, Somali Regional State considered that the tribes that make up the Babile district as being originally ethnic Somalis, but speaking Afan Oromo does not make them to be Oromo (Shide, 2004). Such arguments and claims have contributed to politicization of the conflict. The reality on the ground, as underlined by elders, shows that the close interaction between Somali and Oromo during the imperial and socialist regimes has contributed to the dominance

of Afan Oromo. The Hawiya use Afan Oromo when they engage in livestock raiding from the Ogaden clan of the Somali. Language serves them as an instrument to hide within the Oromo. In general, the interest of political elites to govern the district has shifted the cause of the conflict from resource-based to territorial control to govern the woreda.

A related study shows that fighting erupted between the local militia of both ethnic groups in the late 1997 as triggered by the death of a cadre from the Oromia side. There was confrontation between regional police at the Babile town when the Oromia police prohibited the Somalis not to open office in the town. A number of subsequent actions have affected the peace and security of the district town and rural residents. Political competition among elites in trying to pressurize rural people to choose between being either Oromo or Somali was evident by using provision of some incentives such as grain relief food (Shide, 2004). However, the presence of high cultural and social affiliation, and strong traditional institutions have helped in resolving the conflict and prevented it from falling into severe violent conflict (Liban, 2006). State intervention to address the competing local elites, the then regional affairs office under the Office of The Prime Minister has sent a committee to Babile district in 1994. The committee undertook the assessment and made a suggestion for the Babile town and other 34 rural kebeles to be administered under Oromia but the outcome of the decision was rejected by Somali region (Ali, 2005:39). Since then, there has been grievance on the part of the Somali Region.

6.2.3.4 Gursum district

The livelihood base of the district is farming, pastoralism and agro-pastoralism. There are diverse water sources for human and livestock and for agricultural activities. Resource-based conflict is not frequent. There is a high irrigation potential for fruits and vegetables. While cultivated land is

under pressure due to an increase in human population, communal grazing areas are becoming an all-time grazing space due to increased cultivation and land conversion leading to a decline in mobility pattern. As one of the districts in eastern Hararghe, the population of Gursum is 470,000 having 43 kebeles, out of which 18 kebeles are located at the boundary with the Somali Region. There are still 5 disputed kebeles with a special dispute at Loni Bora kebele. The 5 kebeles were under the governance of Oromia before the 2004 referendum although the Somali Region did not accept the outcome of the referendum. Consequently, there has been conflict over these kebeles currently administered under the Somali Region. The issue is not yet settled. During the violence conflict of 2017, the Liyu police did not allow the Gursum administration to provide services and relief in those kebeles. There is a great pressure on the people. The residents of the five kebeles are Oromo and Somali but with great proportion of Oromo. As the key informants indicated, the people of Somali and Oromo do not have serious problem and the conflict is political. Although conflicts in the district are observed at different levels: (1) between individuals over cultivated land, and (2) between groups over grazing land and (3) between ethnic groups over the boundary. Even subsequent to the political reform or change of governance, the dispute over the kebeles continued but the regional governments discuss on this to resolve it. Nevertheless, the on-going discussion are being snatched by supporters of the former Somali Region President due to the underlying political interest. There is a hope among the people that the current Somali Region President has a positive attitude towards accepting the outcome of referendum.

One of the key informants stated that “the causes of interregional conflict is the divergence of interest between individuals that expands to the larger scale (political interest in association with the territorial

expansion). The conflict was over the disputed 5 kebeles inhabited by the Oromos subsequent to the referendum. The rights of the people are violated in that they are still governed under the Somali region. To give a lasting solution for this, the regional governments through the facilitation of the federal government established a committee to investigate the issue. The committee consists of the peace and security personnel, elders, women, youth, customary leaders where they are expected to investigate the case deeply, present evidence on the real causes of the violence and propose solutions. The investigation is still going on.” [an interview with the peace and security head of the district].

The diverse agro-ecology of the woreda consists of highland, mid-altitude and lowland. The lowland has large grazing areas where there have been conflicts between farmers and herders over grazing land as farmers encroach into the grazing area. The population of Gursum woreda is mixed having seven ethnic groups who do co-exist peacefully having strong economic relations. At the moment, the administration is working on how to strengthen economic integration. Personal interest and egos in orchestrating the violence conflict between people has distorted such relationships ending up in violent conflict. Prior to the outbreak of border conflict in 2016, the neighboring woredas (Gursum Somali and Gursum Oromia) of both regions used to meet monthly or every 15 days as needed to discuss on issues of peace and resolving some resource-based violent conflicts experienced by pastoralists and agro pastoralists who tend to compete for water and pasture. In those meetings woreda administration head, security personnel, police force, elders, and women participate.

After the violence of the 2016 and subsequent conflicts, an agreement has been reached between the neighboring zones: east Hararaghe Zone in Oromia and Fafen Zone of the Somali Region. The agreement was

to stop killings, and roads blocks and opt for legal measures to settle disputes over the claimed and counterclaimed 5 kebeles. An inquiry onto whether there is any legally enforceable agreement shows the presence of written agreement in which both parties have agreed that any region or woreda that violated this agreement will be judged through the national legal system as specified in the constitution. Based on this agreement, actions were taken where they returned the people displaced from Tuliguled and Gursum to their villages without any precondition. There are agreements signed between woredas, zones and regions to return the displaced and to settle controversies through legal means.

However, there are two obstacles central to resolving conflicts through employing those agreements. First, respecting the rule of law has increasingly become challenging as evidence on the causes of conflict presented is not often genuine. There is a difficulty in finding the truth. Reconciliation generates sustainable peace if all parties are committed to find the truth and believe in revealing the truth to find out a solution for the conflict. Truth is diverted due to the presence of different interest groups behind the reconciliation process some of which believe in violent confrontation to address their interests rather than finding the truth and resolve differences through dialogue. The second obstacle is the causes of violence are often concealed at the reconciliation rituals. This is the most important obstacle in reconciliation and consumes more time to reconcile.

Based on evidence from the field, the drivers of violent conflict can be categorized as displayed in Figure 4. There are political, economic, social and institutional factors. There are also interactions among these factors. For instance, shrinkage of grazing land is caused by land use change and ecological change where resource supply declines due to climate and environmental change. As population increases, more

youngsters started cultivating the land by inducing land use change, which contributed to disputes over land resources. Population has an indirect effect on conflict through causing resource scarcity, as experienced in all woredas. The intention to generate income through violence by raiding livestock is influenced by the political ambition to expand territory by the more powerful groups. Some unemployed youngsters who have affiliation with political elites can engage in livestock raid that is an important determinant of violence. The presence of border disputes has undermined the pre-existing role of customary leaders in resolving conflicts, as a result violent conflict tends to persist. Women’s limited access to basic social services can also trigger violence as they are forced to search for fuel wood and water from distant places. They can be exposed to rape and other forms of abuse as in the case of Mieso.



Figure 4: Drivers of conflict

6.3 Dynamics and Trends in the Causes

While looking into the conflict trend over time (last twenty years), there has been an increase in the frequency and level of conflict as regionalization and democratization processes set in under the prevailing regime. A further exploring of views reveals that the process of democratization has created a freedom to speak out to express own concerns and interests which has indirectly contributed to emergence of disputes over regional boundaries as well as within a region over territorial claims among the clans. The tone of the interview with the district administrator and security head shows that this should not be recognized as a negative effect but as part of the challenge in transition to democracy and good governance. One of the interviewees mentioned “The trend in conflict over the last thirty years is increasing as my parents informed me. Born and brought up in this area, I have heard such experience exists”.

While examining the nature of interethnic conflict, it is constantly shaped by external factors that influence local relationships. It has also been shaped by broader political dynamics, most notably changes in administrative boundaries that resulted from the interventions of government and local administrations. The territorial and political factors associated with the referendum consistently created tension, instability and fear. There are a number of factors attributed to the

change in the nature of the conflict including loss of respect for each other's culture, modern education creating a generation gap and transmission of indigenous knowledge in resolving conflict, educated and young people's attitude giving more value to ethnicity along with the demarcation of regions based on ethnicity and the weakening of the traditional institutions. From this, interventions that suppress factors transforming conflict into a more violent form would contribute to reducing the transaction cost of resolving conflict.

Before twenty years, the conflict had a much broader scope occurring at interstate level – between Ethiopia and Somalia. There were irregular conflicts between the Oromo and Somali. There was low level of damage due to low level of investment in automatic weapons and a few actors were engaged in the conflict. Nevertheless, the key informants indicate that within the past 20 years, a number of ethnic groups increasingly became actors and victims of violence. Conflict organization involves using automatic weapons that result in loss of large human lives and material resources and destruction of public and private property. The level of damage is higher in interethnic violence. The confiscation of private properties and destruction of public facilities in Jigjiga in July 2018 was a typical example.

Insights from the key informant interviews indicate that the proportion of communities affected by and engaged in conflicts at present are higher than it was twenty years ago. While physically capable men were the ones that took part in conflict before twenty years, almost all parts of the community were taking part in conflict regardless of sex and age in the current situation. Some of the informants stressed that it is difficult to find unaffected villages and groups. For instance, women fuel violent conflict while they are the primary victims.

A similar study in southern Ethiopia shows that the border dispute between Somali and Oromia region has been associated with the control of more territories by the political elites where local level administration is systematically fueling the conflict (Beyene, 2017). This situation has been reinforced by the role that the youth play in triggering conflict arising out of unemployment and underemployment. Assessment carried out in the lowland areas of Ethiopia shows that hopelessness and rural-urban migration from these areas have increasingly become a source of violence and instability in small towns and major cities. The assessment indicates that local institutions, together with formal legal machinery, provide the mechanism for redressing conflict while still high-level participatory governance and NGO interventions are required to ensure sustainable peace and post-conflict reconstruction (FDRE 2019).

6.4 Effects of the conflicts on women and children

In assessing the victims of the conflict, the key informants indicated that more Oromos are displaced than the Somali. Many of those displaced were scattered in different places in Oromia and around Addis Ababa. The displacement effects of the conflict were far-reaching as those displaced were not only from the border but also from the entire Somali region having a negative effect on women and children. In the studied districts there are a number of people displaced and lost their properties. A displacement tracking report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) shows that the figures were increasing from 2016 through 2018.

Table 1: Displacement effects of the conflicts tracked in 2018

Woredas	Individuals	Households	Current situation
Mieso	35,985	5,390	Still 299 households at displacement center
Babile	181,378	26,654	Still 400 households under relief support but returned to their village
Gursum	18,627	3,317	Most were returned
Chinaksen*	14,700	2,450	All were returned
Total	250,690	37,811	

Source: Mohamed (2018) and woreda archives

In addition, there were pregnant women (13,294), breastfeeding mothers (20,092), unaccompanied children (650), and separated children (1,292). Mohamed assessed based on the IOM data that until November 2017 “around 1 million persons have been displaced due to conflict along the Oromia-Somali regional border (nearly 700,000 in 2017 alone, with a significant spike after September 2017)” (Mohamed, 2018:43). The situation analyses report by the UN-OCHA shows that most displacement took place after September 2017 where 1,073,764 were displaced until mid-April 2018 (UN-OCHA, 2018). As indicated in Table 1, not all displaced were returned. The regional governments are providing improved seed and other supports to encourage them to return. However, as some of the displaced are relying on support from the state, they are not as such interested to return partly due to the presence of the support itself and partly due to the fear they still are affected psychologically by what happened during the violence. The impact of the displacement cannot be estimated in monetary terms. Consequently, Oromia Regional Government has a plan to empower displaced people economically where they are settled without returning them to their villages. Such arrangement was made for those who were displaced from Somali Region. The returning action has been focusing on those who were displaced from within the region at the border. There are still displaced people in Mieso and Babile who left their villages, who are afraid of the violence to return and yet are supported by the state.

Key informants at Mieso indicated that there are displaced people from 9 kebeles. There are two categories of displaced people: from the Somali Region and from the border within the region. There are 299 households in Mieso at IDP center. The displaced people do not intend to go back as they have been offered houses by the government and due to the trauma of what happened during the conflict. As they do not possess land, they could not engage in agricultural activities. Unless peace prevails and then they fully return to their villages, their livelihood will be at risk especially if relief support is withdrawn for any reason. Similarly, in Babile there are 400 households currently displaced from the border but have returned home living in tents as their houses were destroyed during the conflict. Many women give birth in tents at the Lakole kebele. The displaced people rely on the relief support from the state and do not have anything to start life easily. At the moment they cultivated their land waiting for seeds and fertilizer. Some of them need oxen since they lost livestock. The only support they get from the district administration was construction of schools. Though people have returned to their village, they still live in fear because there are occasional exchange of fires at the border.

The impact of conflict disproportionately affects women as they are limited in their movements when fleeing violence due to their children who move with them. As a result, their interest in peace and reconciliation is greater than that of men. Women as victims of conflict when displaced could

suffer from congested living conditions. They naturally have different demand from that of men and do need more than foods and drinks provided for the displaced people, in connection with their natural responsibility of bearing children, giving birth and feeding breast and taking care of their children. Violence and other forms of abuse may occur at the resettlement center. Women told that relocation is costly for them than for men as sanitation and other facilities could cause health problems to their children at the IDP center.

The conflict undermined mobility and prevented women from participating in markets. In some cases, women were also killed during the conflict as they provided food and water to the combatants. They are killed in the process of confrontation. However, women from each conflicting party are not targeted for killing as men do not intentionally kill women unless they are armed and participate in fighting. They are also discouraged from engaging in the collection of firewood as they rely on such biomass as energy source. The effect of conflict is significant in the case of Mieso where women are raped and loss (lost) their husbands. Women key informants stressed that exposure to rape is worse when there is severe drought time due to long distance travel in search for water. Hence, an intervention in supply of power and water reduces women's exposure to such rapes due to violence.

An inquiry into abduction of women shows that community elders indicate the widespread existence of abduction in Mieso while women key informant indicated the absence of abduction. Though women are abducted, they are kept with respect for the sake of getting information on what is going on with the enemy. Both Somali and Oromo abduct women for the same purpose. There is no way that fighters deliberately kill women. Women key informants indicated that "women are being raped but do not report if it happens as they are afraid of it due

to social influence. Women are not normally killed by the Issa. However, pregnant women are being killed by the Issa because the group believes that the newly born baby is going to be a son and future enemy of Issa. This has been a long-term practice from which pregnant women can suddenly be affected".

Women's burden increases when there is conflict as they supply food and water for the fighters, take care of children at home and also undertake farming activities which was usually men's business, indicating that conflict reduces labor productivity. Therefore, the impact of conflict on farming is clear as it affects labor availability, insecurity feeling reducing women's firewood collection activities far away from their localities and settlement areas, the risk of sexual assault by the enemy though women experiencing it do not express being influenced by social stigma.

In the case of Babile, the impact of the conflict on women is pervasive. There is displacement and destruction of property where women left the rural areas and lived in town for 9 months until the situation has improved. As girls were forced to live their villages, they were exposed to different cultures, abuses and early marriage. They suffered from psychological trauma while staying in others' houses, and remained unemployed. They were exposed to chewing Khat which is locally called aradi (literally means addiction). A number of girls suffered from such phenomenon. Contrary to Mieso woreda office for Women, Children and Youth has not received any report on the raping of women during the conflict nor abduction. There is evidence that staying away from the village in the town of Babile during the conflict and afterwards has exposed girls to sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV. There is no deliberate killing of women. But when men abandoned the area while fighting the Hawiya came and burned some women with their houses because women were hiding. Raping and abduction of women are common during conflicts among

Somali and Oromo ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia (Beyene, 2017).

In the case of Gursum, elders indicate that women have participated in the violent conflict as they were armed during the border dispute. There were some women killed, others who lost their husbands and properties due to the violence are currently working as house maids. Still others suffer from the trauma of the violence and displacement with psychic problems. In the case of Chinaksen as well, women were harmed during the intercommunal violence. There were 13 children under the age of 13 wounded and altogether 320 people died where women were also victims. There were over 2450 households displaced from 18 kebeles. After the violence, 1863 displaced households were returned to their villages at Tuliguled (a neighboring woreda of Chinaksen) and 587 Somali households returned to Chinaksen.

As described in section 6.2, the basic reasons for violent conflict are competition for territorial control and the motivation to restrict access to grazing land and exercise exclusive type of property rights. The conflict has been intensified since the last few years where children and women become victims. Interview with men in Mieso also shows that the most affected groups during conflict are elderly, women and children, where they are all told to leave the village while the adult and the youth remain in a village to protect the property and defend the attacks. In the evenings, the adult men stay together making themselves ready for any possible attack from the enemy. During the daytime the youth follow the herd to protect their livestock from raid. At times of the conflict children and elders are kept away from their residential areas as they do not play a role in defending or attacking, during which they suffer from psychological and physical stress. They emphasized that the trauma in the aftermath of the violence remains in the minds of children.

Robbery (looting of properties from home) and bullying have become common, resulting in women to live in apprehension and disruption of smooth day to day activities. There are displaced people who live in towns and scattered into other relatively safe kebeles. There is violence throughout the year, though intermittent. It is relatively more frequent in the dry season than in the wet season, showing the scale of violence tracks the nature of grazing resource availability. Another cause of conflict is competition for water where it is used for irrigation and livestock watering since a number of households do benefit from the irrigation system. Likewise, interviews with men shows that although the degree varies, children, women and the elderly are mostly exposed to violence for they expect that the armed forces will not kill them. In an extreme case, the killing of a pregnant woman was experienced in Mieso. As a result, women who lost their husbands have continued to rely on community-based safety-net programs where members of their villages contribute food grains; men operate on their farm at the time of cultivation and in maintaining victims' houses. There is strong social cohesion to protect such vulnerable households from falling into poverty. In areas where several women are affected by violence such as Golocha and Gurmaya kebeles of Chinaksen, there is a fear that livelihoods shocks may occur.

In examining the role of women in triggering violence, women do not have a role in encouraging men to undertake a revenge action. Instead, they used to restrain their fellow men not to take violent action. Currently, they support peaceful settlement of the violence by relying on legal means. However, they have expressed their concern that the legal system does not prohibit the armed men on the part of the Somali to stop violence. In assessing the potential role of the customary systems in building peace, women recognize that there are attempts made by elders to settle differences in a

traditional way for years. Nevertheless, the Somali elders are co-opted. Though interested in peace, they are being influenced by the regional government. Meanwhile, Oromo elders have tried all options at their disposal to find a solution for the problem even to the extent of taking up the case to the Oromia Regional State. However, nothing has changed on the ground and the violence has continued costing human lives and destroying the livelihoods of many agro-pastoral families. Some women indicated that the scale of violence was low under the state of emergency while it has intensified afterwards.

Women in the conflict prone kebeles have limited chance of participating in local markets due to risk of violence and rape. Some women emphasized that “none of the Oromo men raped Somali women, and such cases are not reported as far as we know”. The spread of resource-based violent conflict has caused restriction in the mobility of women to collect firewood. Further inquiry into the role of government as perceived by women shows the presence of inconsistency in the creation of stability and ensuring peace where violence stops for some weeks and suddenly erupts. The temporary measures by the federal forces to prevent violent action by the Somali armed forces did not yield produce sustainable outcomes. For example, a woman key informant indicated that the women at Sodoma-Goro-Misira kebele in Mieso were raped by a group of Somali men and are currently afraid of collecting firewood. Some women in the kebele left their villages with their family and became dependent on others. The key informant interviewed has observed families which carry their tents with their camel migrating to other kebeles for they fear to live in own villages adjacent to the Somali inhabited kebeles. The violence also constrained women’s participation in the harvesting of crops and in some cases crop-fields are destroyed by the herds of the Somali.

6.5 Conflict in the socio-cultural context

Conflict in all woredas are socio-culturally defined. In Mieso, the youth and adults are socially distinguished as responsible in defending the society from the enemy. Such animosity between the two ethnic groups has been developed through generations as described in section 6.2.2. In this woreda, dowry and debt are the primary causes of livestock raid. Youngsters who would like to marry tend to engage in raids to pay dowry. Others indebted do engage in raids to pay their debts. In the case of Babile, the conflict is between Oromo and Somali (Hawiya clan) where Hawiya is believed to be adopted by Oromo and mostly known as the son of Babile (Oromo clan). The Somalis consider Hawiya as an Oromo while the Oromo’s consider them as Somali. This shows that there is fluidity of identity that one cannot sometimes clearly distinguish Oromo from Somali. For this reason, it is sometimes difficult to conduct a reliable assessment and differentiate the scale of harms caused by the two groups (victim and victimizer). They harmed each other by destroying each other’s property (destruction/burning of houses), robbing properties, livestock raid and eventually resulting in displacement from their residence.

In the context of the Chinaksen woreda, the conflict and post-conflict of 2016/2017 situations are explained differently by the key informants. The elders do undermine the resource-based conflict between the Oromo and Somali that have existed for long and were being resolved under their customary systems. However, they have serious concern with the border conflict which was assumed by all actors interviewed as the game of political elites. While evaluating the post-conflict circumstances where the two regional states organize reconciliation among the two ethnic groups, the elders and the state actors have a different opinion. Customary leaders recognize that the

reconciliation process is not yet completed although the state administrators at woreda level consider that it is nearly complete. For example, the elders are not comfortable with the presence of soldiers between the two ethnic groups. So far, those displaced have been returned to their villages. Returning them to their villages without having thorough discussion will cause greater risk for the returnees. A comprehensive peace plan has not been developed to effectively reconcile the two ethnic groups. There is an attempt to resolve the conflict through the state system but not through the customary system. Although the state uses elders and recognize their role in reconciliation, the customary leaders perceive that elders were not freely engaged in reconciliation but being pressurized by the state where they demand a separate process of reconciliation free from state intervention. The agreements were oral and the reconciliation was not concrete. The perpetrators of the violence are not yet identified and brought to justice.

However, the Chinaksen woreda administrators indicate that there are about 12 points upon which agreements have been reached in 2019 through facilitation of the federal and local state agents focusing on cases of killings and destruction of properties. For instance, one of the agreements indicates that a person found guilty in killing will be obliged to compensate the victim a sum of 200,000 ETB. Subsequent to this agreement there has been only one event of killing and the situation is relatively peaceful. An interview with peace and security officer reveals that the role of the peace and security personnel during the reconciliation is to stand in between the two groups of elders (Somali and Oromo) and observe the discussion process and follow up how they reach at a final outcome whatever the outcome will be, without actually interfering into their business. The peace and security personnel might have gained skills of conducting reconciliation from the training provided by the MoP in 2019 on practices

of conflict prevention and peace building. This is contrary to the customary leaders' view that they do influence the process. In engaging elders, the security personnel do not maintain the same elders to address all types of conflicts. They are non-permanent depending on the level of conflicts differing for the border disputes and conflicts that resulted in the death of an individual. Abba Gadas and Ugaz are involved when there is a killing while it is often unlikely for them to resolve interethnic conflicts. For smaller conflicts within a village or between smaller groups only elders are involved. As the level of Somali-Oromo inter-marriage is the highest in Chinaksen (as perceived by respondents), reconciliation through elders is likely to be more effective. The benefit of inter-marriage in preventing violence before it breaks is expected to be high due to their kinship. Therefore, it is important to recognize the differences in perception of the society, state agents and customary leaders in the process of reconciliation. Dialogue and conversation among stakeholders will help understand the diversity of perceptions and understandings on the context of conflict.

6.6 Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

6.6.1 State and customary relations in resolving conflict

Insights from the interviews also reveals that prior to current government, land administration was falling under the customary system. Land-related disputes were settled in a customary way and interethnic negotiations governed access to grazing areas through an institutional arrangement characterized by the practice of reciprocity. However, these institutions have disappeared gradually as formal institutions started to intervene. Comparison of views from the key informants indicates that while some consider a return to the customary system as a sole solution to resolve this

problem, others underline the need to make a distinction between violence attributed to political administrative boundary and access to grazing resources. Both should be seen separately because the customary procedure can only deal with the latter problem while the former needs state interventions. Evidence from the field indicates the presence of diverse experiences, in the degree of success and failure, and variable judgment of stakeholders (as described in the preceding section) about the state intervention in backing elders to resolve or manage conflicts. A related study shows that despite the fact that customary institutions are legally recognized with respect to conflict (dispute) resolution, the assessment indicates the problem of capacity limitation at a very local level to effectively translate such constitutional provision (Unruh, 2006). Customary procedures to manage the conflict has lost appreciation due to deterioration of public trust on elected local officials who often tend to intervene in the traditional conflict management process. Those serving in the customary conflict resolution are not independent of state influence. In explaining the role of government, key informants underlined the use of security forces to stop the violence and open up an avenue for the elders of conflicting parties to come together and start the process of resolving conflict. There are general procedures followed in

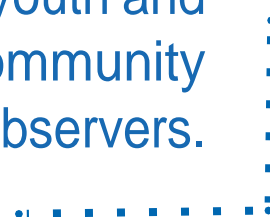
resolving conflict between clans within an ethnic group:

1. Elders from the conflicting parties call for settling the conflict
2. Elders come together and identify the causes
3. Identification of victims and victimizers
4. Agreed upon handing over of the victimizers
5. Setting compensation based on the accepted norms (different levels of punishments apply)

Looking at the process on the way the state and customary system work together is critical to understand whether they complement or compete each other. The practice shows that there is presence of interdependence between the customary and the state system. The Ugaz of Issa and Damina of Oromo as customary leaders organize reconciliation and peacemaking. Once the customary leaders ensure peace at least temporarily, then the state relies on the achievements of the cultural conflict resolution to strengthen the agreements they make. The first step of action is taken by the customary leaders. The security key informants underlined that they cannot succeed without them as their role is critical. The formal and informal systems do not operate in parallel but complement each other.



Among the Oromo, within group conflict is resolved using elders and Haadha Sinqee where the youth and other members of the community can also be involved as observers.



Such system is not often smooth as some elders do not have a favorable attitude towards local government leaders. An inquiry into the relationship of elders and the security shows that community elders consider as if the security personnel have a secret agenda. One of the key informants stated: “Yes we do work with the state security on building peace but they are liars and we do not trust them. They lie all the time and do not speak the truth. Some could try to bring peace and engage in reconciliation, but we are still doubtful of what they do. It is the truth that helps bring peace and the state agents do not have a concern for the society at all. I am not generalizing that everyone is like that but most of them.”

In all woredas, reconciliation has been conducted through the facilitation of the Ministry of Defense by bringing the customary leaders from both sides. The Federal Army facilitates meetings of the customary leaders and additional 100 people from both regions at Dire Dawa. An interview with key informants on the effectiveness of elders in resolving conflicts shows a change in the style of engaging elders. In the old days, people used to listen to elders. All that has been decided by elders was enforced by other elders in a very cultural way. The situation has changed. Elders are not anymore clean. There are two types of elders: “political elders and elders serving the interest of the society, the respondents classified them as ‘manguddo hawassa and manguddo siyaassa’. The political elders are looking after their own private interest rather looking for truth. They get per diem and receive money being manipulated by the political elites”. Regular conflict and reconciliation have become a business for this category of elders. It is generally perceived that as long as elders are picked by the defense army, it is likely that they will be manipulated, showing low level of trust on the part of the society. Trust is central to the success of any peace process and reconciliation. A best practice in state and customary relations in resolving conflicts and conducting reconciliation comes from Gursum woreda (Box 1).

Box 1: A typical state and customary relations in resolving conflict

In the case of Gursum woreda, there is a close relationship between customary and state system in peace and reconciliation. Both systems work together. If conflict occurs in a kebele, elders will be selected from the kebele by the woreda leader and give them the assignment to address the issue and provide feedback so that the case will be presented to the woreda court. Generally, it is arranged in such a way that the woreda administration provides all responsibility to the elders to investigate issues on conflict, undertake detail assessment and provide a comprehensive report to the district for decision-making. Therefore, customary leaders are acting as agents of the state in resolving conflicts. If they can resolve the problem by themselves, they do not bring the issue back to the woreda. The reason why they report to the woreda office is to implement the rule of law. The people elect the elders who have acceptance by the community and the woreda administrator, the main criteria being transparency, free from bias, and those who are genuine in making judgments. The ultimate rule enforcer is the state and that is the reason why the elders report to the woreda authorities. The elders also had a role to play in returning the displaced people due to the conflict. The process of resettlement has been ongoing and not yet finalized in the woreda. The elders, haadha sinqee and religious leaders take part in this.

There are slight differences among the Somali and Oromo of Gursum. Among the Somali pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the woreda, the traditional conflict resolution system is managed by the clan leaders who manage inter-clan and intra-clan conflicts through bringing together the two antagonists in order to reconcile and stop their enmity. The time of resolving the conflict depends on the criticality of the conflict where the perpetrator pays compensation that varies from clan to clan. However, if the conflict is with other non-Somali ethnic groups, it is handled and settled by the Ugaz, who is the leader of clans in Somali ethnic groups and has supreme power. Any decision made by the Ugaz is automatically accepted by the ethnic group. The Ugaz together with other clan leaders (Abba Gadas) are responsible to resolve inter-ethnic conflict.

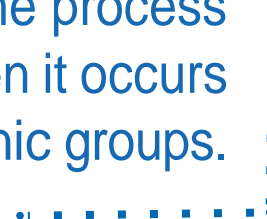
In general, the Oromo uses Gada system as a socio-political organization. Abba Gada among the Oromo is equivalent to Ugaz among the Somali, who is involved in resolving and reconciling interethnic conflicts. Inter-group conflict among the Oromo is resolved using the elders and haadha sinqee where the youth and other members of the community can be involved as observers. The selection of elders is done by the peace and security or any conflicting parties. The woreda head also discuss with customary leaders in selecting the elders. The process is called Jaarsumma. Conflicts are resolved through the formal government structures whenever the issue is beyond Jaarssumma. Key informants indicate that the level of punishment for the wrongdoers varies when the conflict occurs between individuals or between small groups within an ethnic group. It could range from payment of small amount of money to slaughtering animals of the victimizer. The traditional

system works like the formal justice system with a range of punishment possibilities commensurate with the level of damage.

All the state administrators and security forces indicate that the failure to resolve border conflict lies in the weakness of the central government where the established border demarcation commission subsequent to the referendum in 2004 did not undertake a proper action. They converge on the view that the conflict on water and pasture which pushes people to move away from their settlement can be reduced through improved investment in forage supply. As most communities in the regional border are consisting of pastoralists and agropastoralists, an assessment recently carried out reveals that the traditional conflict management mechanism has been successful. Inter-ethnic interaction is governed by reciprocity where both groups have access to each other's resources (FDRE, 2019).



The cultural system of conflict resolution in Oromia and Somali regions were effective in the past where the Abba Gadas among the Oromo and the Ugaz among the Somali lead the process of resolving a conflict when it occurs between the two ethnic groups.



6.6.2 *Weakening of the indigenous institutions*

The weakening of the customary authorities in resolving conflicts have increased with participation of state representatives despite the fact their task is limited to facilitation of elders' meeting. The state agents play simply a mediating role. In the inter-ethnic conflict, elders from the two ethnic groups hold meetings to investigate the reasons for conflict and identify a group who initiated the conflict. These elders also pass a resolution on mechanisms of compensations for properties and livestock lost during the conflict and make them agree to avoid further attacks. Indeed, payment of compensation is very unlikely. Important questions including how grazing resources should be used, who has the right to graze where and under what conditions remain marginal. "Passive state involvement" has undermined the effort of elders from producing positive outcome in reducing the incidence of conflict. Negotiations usually lead to promises to refrain from further raids and killings. However, the effect is usually short-lived. The actual practice often turns out to the other way round. An outbreak of livestock raid-related violence is observed shortly after mediation and negotiations. Such violation of commitment is one of the reasons for the recurrence of the interethnic conflict.

The key lesson that can be learnt from the above explanation is that conflict resolution efforts concentrate more on compensation and punishments of the wrong doer other than developing clear rules of resource access. The victim of the conflict attaches more values to the compensation to be made for the lives and livestock lost. But this has a temporary remedial effect. Such palliative processes by attempting to promote interaction between conflicting parties divert attention away from the underlying structural causes of protracted conflict. One of these structural causes is the difference in power and unclear property rights arrangements for the different land use systems evolved over time as in the case of Mieso (Table 2).

Insights from the interviews also show that customary institutions are effective in resolving conflicts when they occur within an ethnic group. They become ineffective when violence occurs between the two ethnic groups. Which factors inhibit the success of customary systems and why such institutions have become ineffective are critical questions. This is an effort to portray inhibiting factors. Both the Oromo and the Somalis have their own customary institutions.

An inquiry into why the customary leaders from both sides fail to settle the conflict shows that there are others behind the customary leaders who have interest in the perpetuation of violence. There is a marked difference between the two regional states with respect to getting the rule of law being respected. Those who kill individuals are not brought to justice. The defense army is negligent about it. As a result of this, the customary leader's effort in reconciliation does not bring success. In the customary system, the elders and the youth are also taking part in the enforcement of the agreements reached by the elders but it was often difficult to trace perpetrators of violence due to the nature of settlement at the borders where perpetrators of violence hide themselves in the other Woredas. For example, in Babile, perpetrators of violence among the Hawiya clan join the Ogaden clan of Oromo and that of Oromo also disappear from their village.

Table 2: Difference between intra-ethnic and interethnic violent conflicts

Table 2: Difference between intra-ethnic and interethnic violent conflicts		
Causes	Farm-boundary; enclosed land; water points; grazing reserves; crop damage by livestock;	Livestock raid; ideology and discourses; competition for territory; divergence in land use systems
		Fragile; hard to enforce due to absence of regional level concrete agreement;

A related case from southern part of Oromia indicates that customary leaders make an interethnic agreement with the Somali ethnic groups. With respect to cattle raiding, the interethnic agreement enforces a person or a group engaged in cattle raiding to repay (in kind) 5 heads of cattle for every head raided cattle. This agreement was reached among the Borana, Garri, Gabra and Guji pastoral groups (Beyene, 2017). This practice can be supported by organizing or recruiting committees that are trusted and accepted by communities of a certain ethnic group. This committee should also play substantial role in resolving conflicts that cross their boundary. Another assessment suggest that such committee should further work strongly in the protection of conflicts within and outside their border before it intensifies and claim life and property by promoting peaceful co-existence (FDRE, 2019). Based on evidence from the field, intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic violent conflicts are compared using different dimensions: causes, actors involved, nature of damages, reconciliation mechanisms, and easiness in enforcing commitment (Table 2).

Insights from interviews show that it was difficult to bring peace for a long time using customary leaders from both regions even without the involvement of the state. The reconciliation for the conflict that occurred between Somali and Oromo over pasture and water was successful in the past and even now. But border conflict associated with divergence of political interests cannot be addressed through the customary system. Therefore, the Ugaz of Somali and Abba Gadas of Oromo are effective to resolve resource-based violent conflict. The role of reconciliation in ensuring peace depends on the causes of the violent conflict. However, this border issue can be solved by combining the efforts of the state and customary leaders at present.

6.7 Women’s representation in cultural system of conflict resolution

This section describes the attitude and some behavioural patterns in involving women in cultural system of conflict resolution. It reveals the difference between the two regional states in terms of attitudes and the changes observed through time.

The Case of Somali

Women have a dual role of triggering and resolving conflict. In the case of Somali, a group of women called “the gabayaa” put pressure on men to move into violence promoting the culture of heroism, making men primarily responsible to defend their community. Such action of agitating men to fight occurs only when they want to take a revenge in case of killings of their ethnic members by the other clans or ethnic groups. There are traditional songs through which they can insult those men who may defect from taking revenge in the case of violence. Women engage in triggering conflict especially when the conflict is related to livestock raid. The women say “if you are not willing to take the revenge, I will go and fight. Just give me a gun.” They open their legs and tell men: “you can come back to where you were, i.e. their womb” which is very disappointing for men. Even if such culture-induced expression is very harmful promoting impatience among men, it does not mean that they promote violence. It symbolizes the right to self-defence.

However, in the Somali customary law (the Xeer) as well as the Sharia law, women are not allowed to participate as judges or as members of community elders who are responsible for resolving conflicts. This is partly due to economic reasons that women are mostly engaged in reproductive activities (chores house works) rather than productive ones. The underlying reason is that allowing them to participate in public meetings (in the council of elders for conflict resolutions) would undermine their contribution to reproductive (domestic) roles such as child caring, food preparation and taking care of sick and weak animals which are often considered to be women’s responsibility. Socio-culturally defined gender roles limit their participation.

The second reason for exclusion of women is embedded in the fact that the Ugaz’s Constitution (the Xeer) that governs processes of resolving conflict traditionally excludes women, which is influenced by Sharia Law. In order to gain a better understanding of the role of women in conflict prevention and the peaceful settlement of conflicts, it is important first to describe the traditional social organization of the Somali communities, its structure and machinery for the prevention and settlement of disputes. A study by Tadesse et al. (2010) shows that the Ugaz is considered as the father of all Issa communities and his wife entitled borqodi (queen) is also considered as the mother of all Issa communities. After his death or if he divorces her, no one can marry her as she is considered as the mother of all. The Xeer is developed by 12 sub-clans of Issa all members being men. Those community elders who were responsible for the formulation of Ugaz’s constitution were elders’ representatives from all the 12 sub-clans of Issa. They were isolated from the community and protected by 4 guards when they formulated the governing principles, rules and regulations of Ugaz’s constitution. They were all men since Somali communities are patriarchal. Even their meal was served by men. This means that women do not have the chance to participate in the formulation of the constitution.

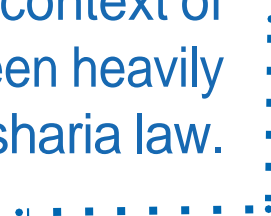
In the formulation of this constitution, society accepts women’s representation by men. This might be one reason that there is the unequal treatment between men and women. Matters related to compensations due to theft, rape and murder are addressed in the constitution. There is a bias against women. The amount of compensations paid is different for men, women, girls, boys, young and adults for different cases. The amount given for women is less by half than men. The constitution also talks about the principle of property inheritance. It is clearly

stated that boys/men and girls/women have no equal right to inherit the property of their parents. There are also other discriminatory actions against women which are stated in the Xeer. For instance, women are not allowed to participate in public meetings with men like ritual ceremonies/gatherings, conflict resolutions and funeral ceremonies. Their customary law forbids them to participate in important public events and restrict them around their homesteads. Nevertheless, some Somali key informants consider that physical absence of women does not mean that their ideas do not influence the process of decision-making. There were instances when men who were member of conflict resolution council have consulted their wives, indicating that the absence of women's representation does not necessarily mean their views are not entertained.

When conflict occurs within the Issa Somali community, the Ugaz serves as mediator and is responsible for the collection and payment of compensation to the victim and in organizing of the community elders who are responsible for the conflict resolution. The election of Ugaz is not democratic but rather hereditary following a family line. Such an indigenous system has been powerful in resolving conflict, but its influence is declining due to societies exposure to the formal system. Limited inheritance right and exclusion of women from public meetings be it for conflict resolution or other purposes indicate how women are suffering from holding a subordinate position in the customary system.



The underlying attitude and behavior towards participation of women has held their contribution to remain indirect and mostly absent in the context of Somali, as the system has been heavily influenced by the sharia law.



The Case of Oromo

Women's participation in peacebuilding can be justified by the roles and responsibilities they bear which can be disrupted due to violence. In that sense their interest could be different from that of men where women are more sensitive than men in their contribution to peacebuilding than in the perpetuation of violence as men take revenge. We raised the question "Why are women more sensitive to violence than men?" Women key informants underlined that when violence involves cattle raiding, they do not have a means to supply milk for their children as their primary role. Fear and tension in the incidence of violence restrict their market participation to sell milk. Among irrigating households in Chinaksen, women could not take their vegetables to the market, resulting in loss of outputs. Of course, there are limited cases of rape being reported at times of violence, restraining women from market participation. The economic crises that follow violence by undermining women's productive and domestic roles are significant. There are also social crises that women suffer when they lose their husbands due to violence. Interviews with the women's representative reveals that women who lost their husbands due to violence become the wife of their husband's brother, as he is morally and socially obliged to take care of the children of the deceased.

Among the Issa who conflict with the Ittu in Mieso, women play a role in resolving conflict and reconciling. There are opportunities for women to serve as an agent in facilitating restoring the broken relationship after violence. They use especially their trading relationships with the wives of the perceived enemies as they participate in the distant market. This is typical where customary leaders often use women as an envoy to begin reconciliation in the post-violence situation. Marriage relationship also serves a purpose in the process of reconciliation whether violence occurs between clans or ethnic groups as it plays a role in social capital

formation. An in-depth inquiry with different state actors shows that the success of this depends on the extent and scale of conflict as formal procedures tend to dominate the customary systems for large-scale conflicts such as disputes over administrative boundary. A related study underlines that marriage outside of the clan and ethnic groups has recently been discouraged as women married to others may suffer from exclusive feeling at times of conflict (Tadesse et al., 2010).

What other roles can women play in peace building? Women's role in reconciliation can be traced based on the level of influence they could have on their husbands and the entire community in either triggering violence or calming it down. Oromo women hold limited level of trust for the Somali men. This was attributed to the "breaching of agreements and engagement in sudden attack" in the past. On the other hand, women from both groups mobilize support for the victims of violence, by providing milk and food, and taking care of their children. This adds burden to their domestic work. The presence of violent conflict increases social responsibility of women as attributed to their culturally defined role in taking care of the family. One of the key informants said, "if peace prevails, such a burden would reduce". This makes women more sensitive to reconciliation efforts at all levels much more than men. Women appreciate the culture of oath-taking by breaking bones of slaughtered animals while such a practice in resolving conflicts did not sustain peace where it was being breached shortly. Contrary to the evidence on the role of exogamy in the literature in reconciliation, the Oromo women married to Somali do have little power to extend influence to the wider community through their husbands because they are expected to respect the community views. Nevertheless, they serve as a primary source of information for their Oromo parents to protect themselves prior to the outbreak of violence. This was counted as a risky decision for the woman

but very useful for the potential victims of the conflict. Oromo women suspected of leaking information predating attacks are often put under the surveillance of their neighbours and vice-versa.

The experience from Mieso shows that women would like to bear more children as they perceive that most of their children could die in the conflict as children are attacked while keeping the herd. This implies that women are more sensitive to conflict than men and thus are more likely to have concerns with peace and reconciliation. A related study in southern Ethiopia by Michael et al. (2005) states: “Yet women also have a role in supporting the culture of heroism through proverbs, songs and ceremonies that encourage men to kill their enemy. The wife of a killer is also granted respect and is given a special status within the community. Given the negative impact of conflict on women, they could potentially have an important role to play in peace-making, whereas men seem to benefit more from conflict as they gain assets and respect. Yet the cultural traditions and social status of women are potential complicating factors for them to play this role” (p.25). The study further shows that three mechanisms of resolving conflict has been adopted: the use of traditional institutions exercised by elders, the peace and security committee mandated to prevent and control conflicts and the use of widely practiced inter-marriage as a means to facilitate social harmony and cement peaceful relationships. Women’s role comes in the third mechanism as they become subject of peace-making due to blood relationships between feuding parties. The use of peace and security committee has its own limitation as it is hampered by the limited experience and knowledge of staff on conflict resolution, and sometimes by biased attitudes among staff because of ethnic affiliations with the conflicting parties. In general, practicing mixed settlements, expanding trade relations, peace education,

compensation, and establishing local militia have been considered as peace-making initiatives among different ethnic groups in southern Ethiopia (Michael et al., 2005).

Interviews with woreda heads of WCY show that the reconciliation started after the massive displacement. The informant stated “I remember a moment when a woman just stood up and cried, affecting the whole participants of the meeting intended to carry out the reconciliation as the elders were not able to make any meaningful progress after sitting together for days. The woman said we want to return back to our villages. The woman listened to what the elders were saying and broke the dilemma”. What women usually do is they influence their young men and their husbands at home asking them to push forward towards making peace and reconciling with the Somali. In a similar manner the ordinary Somali are interested in peacemaking as they are aware that the violence and displacement was orchestrated by political leaders. Women in Babile are best examples in this aspect.

The woreda WCY office heads have made an effort in organizing women as committee or any form of organization. Women are organized into informal associations of saving and credit where they support each other during times of stress and improve their economic status. This support group is intended to share whatever they have and do on their own. The offices used this traditional group formally, which includes milk marketing groups by pooling their milk and selling on rotational basis locally called Gumi Annani. Membership is free for all who are married and have interest. Such organized group is available in all districts. In this process, there are about 20,000 women organized in the studied woredas except in Mieso. Some women also engaged in marketing of groundnut and Khat. The community-based customary structures and the formal system of conflict resolution can make use of such informally organized

women's group to influence the peace and reconciliation processes, which are currently dominated by men.

One observation is the difference in the level of understanding between the zone and woreda level WCY office. For example, the zonal offices for women, children and youth has plans to engage haadha sinquees in peace and reconciliation. But a few woreda offices are not conscious of the role played by haadha sinquees in this aspect. There are some women selected by woreda administrators to participate in meetings and peace conferences occasionally organized. Oromo elders also indicate that women's participation in reconciliation is represented primarily by engaging haadha sinquee who participate in zonal and regional meetings conducted with the elders. There were 30 women who participated in the reconciliation meetings together with men elders. They were selected by the kebeles, especially by those men in kebele council. Age (with minimum of 40 years) and ability to speak and convince others were considered as criteria. Thus, it is important to learn how far men believe in women's participation in reconciliation.

Men key informants do believe in women's participation for long. In the current practice of involving women, ability to articulate cases before men is the single most important criterion. Further probing on the role of culture in undermining women's position in challenging men at such meetings shows divergence of views. While some women key informants pointed out the absence of cultural and religious influence at present, others claim that elders consider reconciliation activities as their own private business. It is unfortunate that most literature recognize women as only victims. They have voice but with limited visibility. The Abba Gadas discuss with women before they make any decisions. Their role is great but they do not appear in reconciliation meetings. Their ideas are

influential in resolving inter-group conflict. We inquired into how the customary system be penetrated and find women arguing and challenging the customary system in decision making. Informants emphasized the need to have a role model from woman, whose capacity can be improved by providing training. Elders should also be trained to induce attitudinal change. The elders have long time experience in conflict resolution and resource management but women's role was limited to domestic activities. Therefore, engaging women requires a systematic intervention to break the tradition that limits their role to domestic activities. Interviews with state actors discloses the importance of using local state media to promote attitudinal change.

It is also important to note that using existing women's organization helps as an entry option to better inform them that it is their rights to be part of the system. The socialization process in history has excluded them from taking part in peacebuilding and reconciliation. And thus, reversing this requires awareness creation and training as important interventions. There are instances where women were also excluded from tree planting. One of the underlying reasons for this exclusion of women is that "they leave their village when they marry and are not recognized as a member of the village" – a feeling which creates the impression that their participation in peacebuilding remains limited. A key informant mentioned "calling women in the name of their husbands, not in their own name once they got married, reflects the tradition of undermining women".

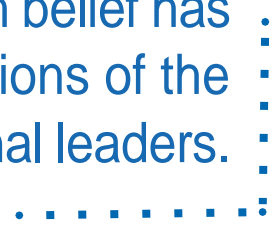
The literature provides some shortcomings of engaging men alone in conflict resolution and peace processes. Payment by the state and NGOs in addressing conflict becomes a lucrative business for the customary leaders (Lober and Worm, 2015). The collection of bribes from wrong doers (Beyene, 2009),

and other personal incentives (Zigale, 2016) have contributed to a reduction in trust on the customary leaders to conduct reconciliation in resolving conflict. Zigale summarizes conditions that humper the success of peacebuilding efforts as: “Conflict resolution thereby became a profitable activity for indigenous leaders who promote local government agendas in return for per diems, khat and other personal incentives. At the regional level special budget lines for conflict resolution were established, providing generous funding for politicians and government appointed elders. ... As a

result, the trust of the pastoral community in the indigenous system of conflict resolution has been degraded from time to time. The potential effectiveness of indigenous conflict resolution is diminished where indigenous authority has eroded and formal authority has increased” (Zigale, 2016:105). There is mounting evidence that sporadic firing and vandalism have continued unabated while customary leaders and security forces from both sides have made efforts for years to install peace. This can be a good justification for the need to bring in women to take up the role of peacebuilding and reconciliation.



There is a general belief among the Somali traditional leaders who developed their own constitution (the Xeer) that women are represented through their husbands. Such belief has affected the attitude and actions of the Somali traditional leaders.



6.8 Practices and prospects in women’s participation in peace and reconciliation

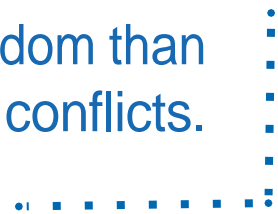
This section describes the existing practices in women’s participation with the specific focus on the formal system and how the formal system is using the customary system in creating peace through reconciliation. There is generally a difference between the two regional states in this aspect. Regional experiences are presented separately to uncover the differences. Comparisons are also made where required.

6.8.1 *The case of Somali Region*

Traditionally, the role of women in resolving conflicts is very much minimal. They intervene to prevent conflicts when it occurs between individuals within a village. There is no organized way of resolving conflict unlike that of Oromia where there is a mother of women (Sinqee). Since 2019, the Regional Bureau of WCY has been providing training for women (government employees) on peacebuilding as part of the capacity building on quarterly basis. But such efforts at the regional level are not being translated into practice since the Somali customary system does not engage women in conflict resolution unlike that of Oromia. Interviews with Somali key informants indicate women’s role is often limited to resolving domestic violence between



Peacebuilding and reconciliation activities carried out at the community level, as facilitated by the local state agents, either exclude the participation of women or permit only limited involvement as in the case Haadha Sinqee in Oromia. These are largely influenced by underlying patriarchal tradition and entrenched beliefs that men have more wisdom than women in resolving conflicts.



husband and wife. The regional WCYA bureau has a peacebuilding activity plan on how to engage women using the already established women's association. The bureau has direct link with the woreda level women's office but insights from the interview shows that there seem to be a loose relationship. Women's participation in local militia is also limited (or almost not existing) that undermined their participation in law enforcement, but they are mostly taking part in special police force. In principle, the bureau emphasizes empowering women socially, economically and politically, on the development of entrepreneurship of women as part of the regional food security program. There are different women's associations established for various purposes which can be a potential to work on issues of peace. However, the recent development in the recognition of women's role has shown increased participation of women in the regional parliament closely working on issues of peace. They provided training for women at lower level of governance who will in turn train women at community level. Regular visits by these women to the areas affected by the conflict at the regional border is counted as a remarkable progress.

Generally, women's role is not direct in the customary systems of reconciliation. It is rather indirect where women inform their concern to the elders secretly without coming to forefront and sitting around the table to participate in the reconciliation process. Elders take their concerns and ideas seriously and address them in the process. The decisions of the elders are thus influenced by the ideas of women. The role of women in directly being involved in reconciliation comes clearly when the conflict takes place at village between women themselves where elders leave it for them. The underlying reason for not involving women directly in the discussions with men in resolving the conflict is embedded in the culture and tradition of the society. Insights from the interview shows that the regional bureau focuses more on the health and job creation activities for the youth rather than on peace building. Insights from the interviews in Chinaksen woreda shows that there are some groups of youth organized for the purpose of engaging in income generating activities such as supply of construction inputs accumulating a capital amounting to 12 million ETB. The engagement of the youth in conflict is also clear in the woreda but elders exclude them from participation in reconciliation. Therefore, women's participation in peace and reconciliation is passive and that of the youth is not visible. A related literature underlines that "in Somali society it is men, specifically the elders, who traditionally have the means to make peace through dialogue and mediation. But women are typically excluded from decision-making forums where peace accords are negotiated. Their position within the clan system gives them the ability to bridge clan divisions and to act as a first channel for dialogue between parties in conflict" (Jama, 2010:62).

What about the formal system? Somali women do participate in resolving conflicts through reconciliation when it comes to the formal system. Evidence from the field shows that participation of the Somali women is confined to the formal system when reconciliation meetings are held at zonal and regional levels. An interview with a number of Somali women shows that while the cultural system excludes women from influencing the decision-making processes among elders, the formal system does engage them.

6.8.2 The case of Oromia Region

Historically, Oromo women did not have much contribution to peace processes due to the cultural influence that tend to be dominated by men. The situation has improved recently. The regional Bureau of WCYA has assessed such limitation and took an initiative to involve haadha sinqee. The Bureau has established a forum called "Forum for Haadholla Sinqee for Oromia Region" for the purpose of engaging women in peace and reconciliation (to address the instability) that has occurred at the universities in Oromia Region. This is an independent forum free from state

influence. The state role was limited to creating awareness by providing training and providing support needed over the last one year. The achievements were not systematically evaluated due to the political instability and COVID 19 pandemic. The Bureau also conducted women's peace conferences at the local level. The organization of haadhlee sinqee and the formation of haadha sinqee committee aimed at creating peace with all regional states bordering Oromia.

The underlying reason for the creation of the forum was the exclusion of women by the traditional Gada system of Oromo. There is success in establishing the structure from the region down to the woreda level. But implementation is being challenged by a number of factors inhibiting it from operating on a large scale. For instance, haadha sinqeess were members of women peace ambassadors who were travelling to universities to bring peace. Two women were represented from Oromia in the team of ambassadors. This is officially recognized as a good start. But the support from the government and customary system is essential for such an effort to succeed. The plan of the Bureau is to increase awareness of the society on women's contribution to peace. There is slight difference between woredas in involving women.

A) Mieso

In the customary system as well, women in Mieso woreda are engaged in resolving conflict since recently. They join customary leaders and participate in reconciliation ceremony where bulls are slaughtered, and conflict is settled. It is a new practice of engaging those who are able to express themselves. Women participate in the reconciliation ceremony by performing some roles. They sit together with the men whether the conflict is between clans or ethnic groups. When they sit, they provide ideas, argue equally with men and actively participate in the decision-making procedure. All women (married and youth) participate depending on conditions. In the inquiry on the influence of culture in performing these roles elders believe that "women give birth to individuals of different capacity and should not be denied the right to take part in decision-making". This is the principle held by the elders in including women in peacemaking. The Woreda WCY office recognizes: "This change in involving women has been introduced by the formal system and the customary leaders accepted the idea".

Nevertheless, there is no way for the women of both ethnic groups to come together for peace and reconciliation. There is an effort made by Haadha sinqee where they work with the security forces by feeding the people participating in the reconciliation rituals. Customary leaders believe that they are more powerful than the state security and administration in organizing reconciliation events and bringing together the conflicting parties. In reference to age and marital status, both girls and married women participate. The girls sing to give shape to the reconciliation rituals. Such songs carry messages for bad times and evil spirit to go away and instead peace prevail in the future, which is recognized that women's voice is central to fight evil actions. The reconciliation ritual takes place mostly under a big tree which has a cultural symbol. There is no concrete agreement made at those reconciliation meetings. There is only oral agreement (not written and without defined content) that elders from both ethnic groups make a general commitment that they will settle their differences peacefully instead of moving into violence if there are issues on land, water and pasture.

Another formal way of peacebuilding process by the government was the creation of the peace and development committee. The assessment shows that the role of the existing formal structures in involving women in (at) village level peace and development committee varies from one to the other district. In Mieso, women take part in the committee which was responsible to make an assessment of emergency needs (on relief food), and peace and security issues. There

are also security personnel in the committee. This practice of involving women has been started recently but it was interrupted due to the pandemic. Such committee was dissolved or weak in other places where their role was to serve political elites rather than supporting peace and development. The security officer from Mieso indicated that so far there are only three women who took part in the recent reconciliation from the Oromo side but the Somali did not involve women because it is thought that women would disclose the secrets. The Somali do not involve women because the Oromo women who are married to the Somali, if they hear something, they will share information with their Oromo relatives so they exclude them intentionally. Then the Oromo started to prefer excluding women from the reconciliation process as they think that they do not keep the secret. Both groups mimic each other's behavior and tend to exclude women. The reason is that each reconciliation meetings are often followed by an attack by the other party. Reconciliation efforts do not yield sustainable peace. By emphasizing the risk that conflict has on women as some are often wounded during the conflict, there is a firmly held believe in advocating their involvement in the reconciliation process.

B) Babile

Women are involved in reconciliation when conflict occurs at village level, between clans, and between ethnic groups where customary leaders consider women above the age of 30 to participate as this age level enables them to differentiate good deeds from bad in life. Women key informants have underlined the need to distinguish conflict between individuals from that of mass or inter-communal conflict. For the individual level conflict, the conflicting parties are reconciled in such a way that compensation is paid to the victim of the violence as facilitated by the elders. In another instance, intermarriage is arranged between the victimized and victimizer (families to restore the broken relationship and bring peace. It is a culture for the Babile Oromo that a girl will be married to the victim's family members to prevent any further revenge from the victim family, where women are considered as a gift. Is this violation of basic human rights? For the communal conflict (between Oromo and Hawiya), reconciliation is done through legal mechanisms such as through the intervention of the defense army by mobilizing elders. The reconciliation ceremony involved making decisions on who should be punished if found guilty. The discussion does not consider the underlying cause of the conflict but focus on the outcomes of the conflict such as destruction of property.

C) Gursum

In Gursum woreda, the close relationship between haadha sinqeess, elders and the youth have resulted in the temporary peace at the border of the two regions. Women key informants recognize peace as a necessary condition for development and they got involved in peace and development committee at the village level. Haadha sinqeess travel to take part in reconciliation meetings not only at the woreda level but at the zonal and regional levels. They influence the decision-making process of the elders in the customary system. Further inquiry on how women do participate in reconciliation meetings reveals that they have their own stories which are different from men on the costs of conflicts and benefits from peace, where both aspects are valued by men and women differently. However, the Somali women in Gursum do participate when reconciliation meetings are held at the regional and zonal levels but not at the woreda level. Only men elders attend woreda level reconciliation meetings from the Somali side. Even at the zonal and regional levels the Somali women are office holders, not local women representatives.

D) Chinaksen

Such participation in reconciliation meetings is almost nil in the context of Chinaksen when all key informants indicated the Woreda WCY head attending reconciliation meetings.

What is the empirical evidence? A study conducted among the Arsi Oromo shows that there are some cultural elements giving special space for women. To reconcile village level conflict, “women are asked to bring an old cow to be sacrificed. They tie it to the tree while the prayer goes on steadily and go around the cow eight times to symbolize the period of one Gada class, singing and praying for peace and fullness. Prior to the sacrificing the cow, the elder women bless the celebrants by moving her hand over the back of the cow gently” (Hamdo and Chala, 2016:41). The cultural understanding here is that the woman is believed to be closer to God because she is humbler, weaker, softer and more innocent than male counterparts. She is culturally thought to be unfit for a fight and God will listen more to women than to men.

Another powerful practice undertaken by Oromo women is the use of Ateetee which symbolizes a female deity or a spirit that what women pray for will be realized. Such practice is used to mitigate conflict events and all other hazards against the society. Ateetee ritual is organized by women in order to safeguard and protect their rights from infringement by husband (or any male offenders) and to solve arising conflicts peacefully. It is a female practice that served women’s empowerment (Nicolas, 2018). Because of this some argued that the Oromo institution of Ateetee contributed to the growth of democracy, the principles of human rights and conflict resolving mechanisms (Hussein, 2019). Oromo women play a role in Oromo society in settling disputes among clans and sub-clans. For instance, if conflict emerged among members of Oromo clans, the Oromo women could stop it through removing a belt made of leather by which they tie their waist. Once this action is symbolically performed by Oromo women everybody that has been involved in the conflict will stop it automatically (Woliye, 2004).

The third practice is the use of Sinqee which is symbolized by a long stick which is given on marriage day by a mother to her married girl prepared from a specific species of tree. When people see a woman carrying this stick and moving in a village, they believe that something went wrong. And women with Sinqee will be respected as it represents a big weapon for women for fighting injustice and oppression. It enables them to solve conflicts emerged in their locality easily (Hussein, 2019). Women do not serve as judges in such traditional Oromo Gada system, but they play a significant role in arranging and opening negotiation between any two Oromo clans in conflict where any clan has a cultural duty to fairly treat such “a pleading by women for mercy”, as long as they forward their requests by holding their sinqee (Sedeto and Ahmad, 2018). The sinqee system also helps resolve conflict between a husband and a wife where a woman beaten by her husband will hold sinqee and sing a song demanding the penalization of her husband calling for all women in the neighborhood to gather and hold sinqee. This will lead to intervention by elders and imposing penalty on the wrongdoer where he pays compensation without which the women will never return home. Such practice is also taken up to the clan level when conflict occurs between clans of Oromo.

6.9 Local experiences in engaging women in peace and reconciliation

Investigating the causes of the conflict is often important when one thinks of mechanisms of engaging different stakeholders (including women) in peace and reconciliation. As elaborated earlier, the causes of the conflict could be classified in different ways: economic or non-economic, intra-ethnic or interethnic, resource-based or politically motivated or the interaction of these components. It is, thus, important to link the reasons for the conflict with the reconciliation

practices. For example, resource-based conflicts caused by natural resource scarcity can be resolved by increasing supply of these resources, especially water and pasture as implied in the resource-scarcity argument whereas politically motivated interethnic violent conflicts such as border dispute can be resolved through state intervention. Sustainable peacebuilding and reconciliation are aiming at resolving differences and ensuring peaceful co-existence in the future without actually emphasizing historical and political factors that contributed to violent conflict. It is essential to look at the mechanisms of achieving this by practically involving women. Although there are different formal structures established to engage women in peace and reconciliation, evidence from the field shows that a one-time reconciliation failed to generate sustainable peace will be followed by several reconciliation actions to end violent conflicts and subsequent similar incidences. The main reason is the reconciliation is not going deeper in addressing the 'real causes' of the conflict. It is simply a local practice designed to settle the conflict temporarily, giving a short-time relief for feuding parties. Unless the regional administration addresses the real causes of the conflict, reconciliation will not generate sustainable peace.

Moreover, access to early warning information is critical to prevent violence and work towards peace. In this regard, the use of women's trade and inter-marriage networks is one strategy to reduce the impact of violent even if it occurs. In exploring mechanisms of engaging women in peace and reconciliation, the Oromia Bureau of WCYA has established a system by identifying and working with haadha sinqeess who are considered as 'mothers'. This group of women were formed following the Adama people-to-people conference which aimed at restoring distorted relationships following the border conflict and the removal of the former Somali Regional President who was implicated in the orchestration of large-scale violence. Participants of the meeting were elders, regional presidents, people's representatives, political elites and the youth from both ethnic groups. A similar conference was held later in Jigjiga. The impact of the Adama and Jigjiga conferences was the free movement of people in both regions and the drivers from the Somali region were able to cross the Oromia border entering Addis. Efforts at regional levels might not bring success unless women are used effectively at community level, which requires the regional and federal governments to take further measures. One of these measures could be revitalizing the pre-existing common platform for Somali, Dire Dawa and Oromia WCY bureaus which was interrupted due to the violent conflict.



The evidence shows women's participation, where and when it happens, tends to be nominal without getting their voices heard in the decision-making procedure. Instead, they remained organizers of reconciliation rituals serving men.

A common criticism to these events as emphasized by the key informants is the reconciliation was not organized in a way it is possible to trace the victims and victimizers and punishing wrongdoers. The emphasis was on restoring peaceful relations without looking into the underlying reasons. The two regional presidents made a speech about their regional governments stand and emphasized that the violence and massive displacement will not disturb the long-existing peaceful relationships of the two “Cushitic Families”. Consequently, there has been a regular public gathering to evaluate the progress achieved in building peace at some of the districts where the conflict brought significant psychological and economic damage. Considering these initiatives and existing experiences, we examined the nature of women’s involvement in peace and reconciliation across the four woredas on the bases of some themes: organization, women capacity building through training, styles of participation, nature of women’s influence, and incidence of abduction, women’s exposure to rape and killing (Table 3).

A) Mieso

In the case of Mieso woreda, women are not organized into different types of associations, experience passive types of participation and a number of unreported cases of women’s rape, which is expected to raise the motivation of women to push for reconciliation and conflict prevention. The role of women in reconciliation comes clear when there is domestic violence. As soon as complaints are reported to woreda WCY office, the conflict will be resolved at kebele level and anything in excess of that comes to woreda WCY Office. As much as possible the woreda WCY office tries to reconcile the domestic violence by bringing the husband and wife together. But when such effort fails, the case will be referred to the woreda court. Failure of reconciliation at both woreda and kebele levels creates divergence of interest between men and women where the former prefers the case to be referred to the sharia law while the latter prefer state law since sharia law favors men than women. Sharia law is based on religious law that may be biased. The role of woreda WCY and haadha sinqee at kebele level is much appreciated as they put maximum efforts to address domestic violence through reconciliation rather than taking it to the court to reduce the chance of divorce.

B) Babile

In Babile district as well, the participation of women is limited to providing services to the men customary leaders who attend the meetings. They have a role in gathering information on what has happened and is happening within a village on issues of conflict and feed report to the customary leaders to enable them make decisions. The role of women is thus limited to providing information. But women are not organized in Babile for the purpose of peace making and participation in reconciliation. There is divergence between the views of the woreda security officer and administrator. While the woreda administrator is unaware of the role played by haadha sinqee (Box 2), the security officer does recognize. There are women who are serving as kebele leaders and who are capable of taking a role in such activities. There is one haadha sinqee in each of the 21 kebeles. The woreda security head said: “We select capable women one from each kebele and take part in meetings which was arranged by haadha sinqee”. The woreda WCY office is responsible for organizing haadha sinqees to take part in peace and reconciliation. The office can rely on those women who lost their fathers, brothers and their properties and who do frequently request for reconciliation to give them justice. This gives a clue for the future plans in reconciliation to target those women who were severely affected by the violent conflict.

Box 2: Women missing in reconciling interethnic conflict

Women informants from Babile indicated that they raised the issue of livestock raid where their livestock were taken away at the reconciliation meeting. One of the key informants asked the elders: “Why didn’t you prohibit those who destroyed our property? Then I saw people crying due to my speech at the gathering followed by shaking hands and hugging each other, and eventually reconciling. Then we prayed together after which we had meal together. However, there were no women from the Somali side. There were no Somali and Oromo women from both sides except me at the reconciliation. I was selected by elders as representative of women from Babile district, serving as haadha sinqee, and was elected by Abba Gada. There were 15 elders from each ethnic group who took part in the reconciliation meetings. Elders do not have a role at village level individual conflicts. Customary leaders do not involve us in the process. Elders made it their own business. I was only thrown into the elders’ group as haadha sinqee.”

C) Gursum

In the case of Gursum woreda, women are organized for different purposes: economic (milk marketing groups on a large scale from five rural kebeles, laundry houses, small restaurants and cafes in small towns, and social organizations (such as iddir). There are several NGOs providing training and support to empower women economically in different kebeles by providing funding to invest in income generating activities such as poultry and vegetable production and eventually organized as marketing groups. Such collective action helped women educate their children where they have opened up bank accounts to save the proceeds from those economic activities.

A number of cultural and religious motives influences women’s participation in reconciliation. The woreda WCY office works towards improving this using the existing women organizations to prevent male dominance in decision-making and encourages them to attend reconciliation. A strategy has been developed on how to ensure women’s freedom to exercise their rights as they are affected by the absence of peace. As a result, there are improvements. But some challenges persist, as reflected in the absence of awareness among elders on women’s rights. To the contrary, men key informants specifically elders do believe that women do not know the traditional procedures on how reconciliation is actually conducted and cannot make good judgment in decision-making process. The choice of words and procedures of reconciliation are unique, and elders have accumulated the art of articulating to bring peace and harmony easily and effectively where women are viewed as lacking those skills.

There is a general perception among woreda officials that inclusion of women should not be assessed in terms of “number of participants”, but whether or not they participate. There is one elected woman as haadha sinqee who participates. She has limited influence on the decisions of male elders, with marginal contribution. The support of the regional government in overcoming local challenges to improve upon this is not as such visible, except providing occasional training for women. Training often focuses on economic empowerment of women rather than on their contribution to peace building.

In spite of limited involvement, their contribution is observed when the conflict takes place to calm down the violence temporarily. They tell the conflicting parties in a village to stop fighting. Women do not give ideas at the reconciliation meetings but appear as observers like the youth. The number of observers can be up to 20 or 30. One of the elders interviewed mentioned an event as “There was a time when a woman has interfered into the discussion of elders and as a result the elders passed a harsh rule where the daughter of a woman of such sort should be

married to a blind man”. This was something that demeans women’ status. The woreda WCY works aggressively to break the tradition. For instance, domestic violence is often addressed through the sharia law by religious leaders, which tends to undermine women’s rights. However, recently women tend to take their cases to woreda WCY office rather than to sharia law in order to receive justice from the formal system which is believed to be fairly treating their cases. This case shows how women’s participation is systematically challenged and the efforts being put in place to improve the situation.

There are different forms of women’s organizations serving various purposes. Women’s committee at kebele level mobilizes resources (in kind and financial) to assist the victims during conflict. The woreda WCY head organizes meeting with kebele level women’s association head and league of women to discuss on social, economic, and peace issues. The regional WCY Bureau is engaged in continuous consultation of women organizations at the woreda level and identify issues that can affect the existing peace and development activities. As the woreda population consists of seven ethnic groups, there is no bias in the assignment of posts forming women’s associations on the basis of ethnicity. Emphasis should be placed on women’s capacity building to lead and exercise their rights to contribute to peace processes.

D) Chinaksen

Women’s participation is taking place through the representative of women locally named as haadha sinqee. There is one haadha sinqee recognized at woreda level. There are many haadha sinquees; one in each kebele. While kebele haadha sinquees role is limited to resolving conflict between the individual, the one recognized at woreda level partake in resolving inter-group conflict. In This woreda, the administrator resolved the dispute over the contested kebeles at the regional border by convening 12 elders from each region. Women did not participate in the reconciliation process. Community level women representatives were not invited for the event which began in April 2020 by returning displaced people from both regions (Tuliguled and Chinaksen, adjacent woredas), through the facilitation of General Zewdu Jemal who has been appointed by the federal government to lead the process of settling border conflict. From among the women, only Woreda WCY heads of both regions participated in the reconciliation by excluding community women representatives from both regions. After reconciliation, heads of both woredas signed a written agreement⁵, which includes the commitment to stop fighting and displacement of members of any ethnic group.

Women are excluded from reconciliation when there is inter-ethnic violence because elders believe that they do not know the customary law. A frequent request by the woreda WCY to allow women to take part in it has received resistance from the elders. Further inquiry on how this can be reversed or corrected for in the future shows the presence of efforts to find ways to engage haadha sinqee to participate in zonal and regional meetings in the formal system as the informal systems becomes resistant to women’s participation. The Woreda WCY has strong relationship with the zonal level WCY office in coordinating training of women focusing on different themes that promote the rights of women.

Chinaksen women are engaged in formal and informal businesses. Some are organized and recognized by the state. Others are organized as informal milk-marketing groups. They pool milk and sell it on rotational basis at local markets. In this case, a woman collects milk from others and sells it and takes the money when it is her turn. The formally organized ones do

5. Nevertheless, a few weeks later there was a death of one person due to explosion that took place in the town of Tuliguled in response to the inclusion of the 18 contested kebeles into Oromia in light of the 2004 E.C referendum.

consist of 10 women per group and travel beyond their woreda border to sell their milk, and khat in Tog Wajaale and Hargeisa. When they return, they buy contraband goods as an informal business activity. Some are engaged in poultry production as income generating activities. In this case, women have through time established strong informal networks through trade with other Somali women in the neighborhood where such network of women could be used to play the role of bringing new and relevant information for elders if involved in reconciliation. There are two key reasons that increase the role for them as a neutral agent in making reconciliation successful: (1) exposure of women to extensive mobility as they engage in trade; (2) the culturally-established protection given to them that none of the two ethnic groups kill each other's women intentionally.

Table 3: Comparison of women's positions, roles, organizations and participation in reconciliation

THEMES	MIESO	BABILE	GURSUM	CHINAKSEN
1. Organization of women	Only for relief or assistance	Saving and credit association (economic)	Economic, social, political (women's league)	Economic, and political
2. Training on reconciliation	No training at all		Training on entrepreneurship	FGM, domestic violence, child
3. Styles of women's		Serving elders at reconciliation	Observers, active participation by	
4. Role of their influence		provision; push men towards	Haadha sinqeess discuss with elders, but with limited influence on their decisions	Information and informal
5. Abduction, of women	information; unreported rape, intentional killing of	Women burned with houses during violence; no rape or abduction	Participate in fighting, killed/injured, with no rape and abduction	Unintentional

Note: As key informants mentioned, the incidence of rape was reported only once during the border conflict in 2017 where two women were raped and killed by the armed groups.

6.10 Linking national initiatives, institutional structures and challenges

Federal institutions took an initiative to improve women's role in peace building. There are national level policies being put in place to support peace and reconciliation such as the formation of Reconciliation Commission (four women out of 41 members) and Boundaries and Identity Commission (Proc. No.1101/2019). There are also interventions designed by the regional governments through supporting grass-roots movements. Insights with the interviews of some ministries indicate that the federal government has carried out different tasks to advance women's participation. The MoWCY has carried out the following tasks:

- establishing peace ambassadors of women to settle peace which focused more on universities;
- national peacebuilding plans developed and communicated to regions to discuss on them at different levels;
- holding national conference on peace organized in cooperation with the MoP and regional counterparts with a focus on how to engage women at community levels (such as haadha sinqees) in peacebuilding and reconciliation; giving recognition to successful women in promoting peace;
- investment in mobilization of women in peace and reconciliation to address conflicts carried out in different regions such as Amhara, SNNPR and Oromia where women from the three regions shared experiences at a nationally held meeting;
- identifying the challenges at national level in involving women in Peace and Reconciliation, one of which is male dominance (as this is a serious problem in the Somali region);
- improving women's participation in mediation and reconciliation by engaging them in public diplomacy which is operating at African Union level; this initiative is focusing on women with diversified background and has planned to train 2000 women to enhance their capacity to undertake mediation and reconciliation.

Government efforts in all these requires the contribution of Ethiopian political parties to take reconciliation as one of their political and policy agenda, such as increasing women's representation at different levels of governance, and participation of women in political parties and parliaments (at national and regional levels) to get women's voices and concerns heard in the public. Election campaigns can take this into consideration to ensure women's political empowerment. These activities are considered essential as reconciliation is neither a one-time event nor just an outcome but rather a process taking longer time than expected. The findings show that the idea of reconciliation is understood differently among the locals and the state agents. While communities of the two ethnic groups consider that no proper reconciliation was carried out, the state agents tend to argue that they have reconciled. The efforts put in place by the state in conducting reconciliation are limited to holding a few conferences.

The assessment identified some gaps at national level that would have supported the reconciliation process and enhanced women's participation in the process. These include:

- Inactive movement by the Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission, and Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission in undertaking its activities based on the provisions made in the proclamation (no. 1102/2018) towards the establishment of the commission;
- Failure on the part of the House of Federation (HoF) in resolving border disputes between the Oromia and Somali region based on the provisions made in the constitution under Article 48; the violent conflict resulted in massive displacement of Somali and Oromo at the border and beyond since 2016; the House of Representatives (HoR) also did not push HoF to discharge its responsibilities contrary to their expected role in being the voice for the voiceless; some of the provisions in the constitution were not actually practiced. This gap can be filled by scaling up the initiatives taken by the MoP in cooperation with the regional peace and security bureaus. MoP can develop framework of agreement between the regions on peacebuilding while peace and security bureaus will support the enforcement process.

- The reconciliation platforms organized afterwards (in Adama and Jijjiga) also did not look into the causes of the conflict seriously as the findings of this study show; they were rather temporary, superficial and fragmented in nature without giving substantive focus. The objective of the conferences was to secure a quick public acceptance of the newly appointed regional president on the part of Somali and relieve the two ethnic groups from strains of massive displacement caused by the violence, which was perceived to be orchestrated by egoistic political elites. Subsequent follow up was not put in place partly showing limited commitment on the part of the leaders.

Moreover, the MoP, in partnership with different stakeholders with shared interest, has attempted to promote women’s role in peace and reconciliation:

- strengthening the existing formal structures that engage women in peace by providing trainings, but most of the trainings provided in the studied woredas were not related to issues of peace and conflict; the assessment also shows that there is no well-organized way of engaging women, despite a range of efforts being made by the local level administration;
- Organizing women as “mother for peace” who have shown their own initiative;
- Tried to use this structure to address conflict at universities; it was engaged in mediation and reconciliation through consultation with the university administration and selected students at the university; student riots and inter-ethnic tensions has increased in 2019 and early 2020 at universities in a few regions. few of the regions.
- Have a plan to expand the mother of peace, multiply them and reach grassroots level (future plan);
- use women as peace agents by giving recognition for some women during the celebration of “peace day” which is expected to encourage others to perform better;
- giving training as capacity building for office holders at regional level; and
- coordination of women’s federations in each region to work with other organs of the government on issues of peace (contact details are appended to this report including women leaders, regional and federal MPs and customary authorities). However, low level of synergy at various levels (federal, regional and local) has undermined the extent of success in coordination.

Looking at the vertical link, MoP has close connection with different offices at regional level, in particular with the regional Peace and Security Bureau and others such as regional women’s federations to use their structure, with the regional WCYA directly and sometimes indirectly depending on type of activities identified. In terms of scope of operation, the MoP encourages the involvement of the female youth and married women. There are criteria used in involving women (especially when training is provided) such as neutrality (having no political affiliation), education background, whether the training is of the “training of trainers” type or not. Both girls and married women do participate in community dialogue training on peace as an effort to reach wider community. Absence of men in such training can multiply the challenges in preventing male dominance experienced at the grass-roots’ level.

As peacebuilding and reconciliation are joint actions requiring the collaboration of different stakeholders, the MoP also has horizontal linkage with various organizations having shared goals in capacity building and financing some of its planned activities. In this case, other ministries, federal institutions and CSOs can be cited as examples including Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission, funders and collaborators (USAID, GIZ, World Bank) and state media in order to use

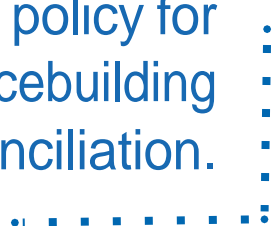
media to create dialogue. The role of media in creating sustainable peace between regions by correcting misunderstandings, overcoming ambiguities and promoting dialogue is immense. Along this, the Ministry has provided training for journalists to develop skills on how: (1) to conduct fair assessment of conflict and peace situations and (2) hold professional ethics to support consensus building. As key informants emphasized, one of the limitations of media is under-reporting of conflict events and limited coverage of issues to be covered. The training has emphasized how to cover the voice of the community (including women whose voices are excluded) rather than focusing on the voice of elites. As a recently established Ministry, MoP has made an assessment of potential peace actors who can work with it.

As a result of implementing these activities of networking with local and international organizations and conducting training in collaboration with regional and federal actors, the Ministry has explored the potential and motivation among women in peacebuilding and promoting reconciliation which would contribute ultimately towards the national consensus. The intervention has resulted in the development of strong motivation among women to promote peace issues and the creation of “knowledge of gender mainstreaming and activism on peace”.

However, there are more serious challenges in the implementation of these activities and realizing changes at grassroots’ level. For instance, more efforts are needed to ensure substantive change at community level. The result from “mother for peace” movement (driven by the motto of “Jegniti”) is not yet visible due to poor focus by the existing media. MoP operates with limited resources which could affect its plan to scale-up investment in capacity building on mediation and reconciliation. Interviews with woreda and regional stakeholders disclose that the weak coordination within the regions themselves affects implementation of planned activities related to peace at grassroots’ level. There is a need to strengthen the existing structures of women and reorient them in promoting peace in conflict prone areas of the country.



Interviews with the national and regional actors indicated that a delay in the full-scale implementation of the four pillars-participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery, of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 by the Ethiopian Government have affected the creation of a solid institutional framework and policy for effective inclusion of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation.



One of the reasons for weak coordination of women’s participation in peace and reconciliation could be attributed to absence of well-defined institutional framework. Within the framework of the UNSCR 1325, which encourages the involvement of women and girls in the formal and informal peace processes (UN, 2002) and has been adopted by 19 African countries, as one of the initiatives of the African Union is to promote women’s equal participation in peace processes and their representation in political processes in order to realize prosperity in Africa (AU, n.d.). Along this Ethiopia has achieved a lot in enhancing women’s participation in political processes such as decision-making at the regional and federal levels by appointing women ministers. Yet, there is a lot to be done at the lower tiers of governance. The evidence from the case study in the four woredas shows limited participation of women and girls in peace processes where the state and customary systems jointly undertake reconciliation at the village, woreda and regional levels. The existing practices and attempts being made in improving their participation is however encouraging.

Women’s role in peace and reconciliation can be seen along the four pillars identified as participation (in peace process), prevention (conflict early warning), protection (right to be protected in conflict situation), and relief and recovery (meeting specific needs of women and girls after conflict), where the pillars refer to situations before, during and after the conflict (Sida, 2015). Provision of information before the conflict due to inter-marriage relations between the two ethnic groups as in the case of Mieso is essential to prevent conflict while rituals arranged by women in the post conflict situation in Chinaksen falls under the relief and recovery pillar which can also be considered as elements of the reconciliation process.

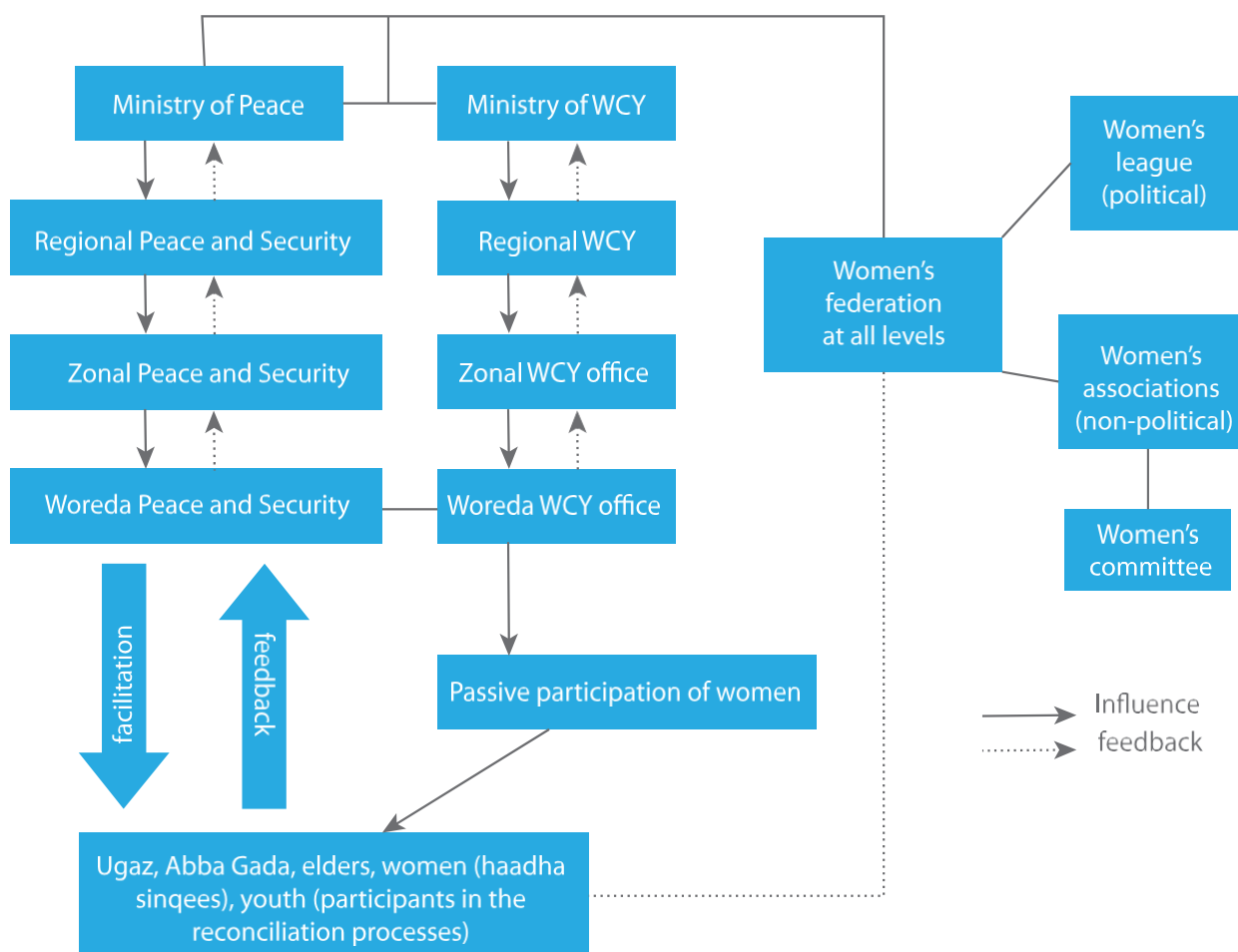


Figure 5: Institutional structure for women’s participation in peace and reconciliation (own design)

A recent assessment on whether Ethiopia has practiced UNSCR 1325 shows mixed results. On the one hand, there is gender mainstreaming by taking initiatives to enhance women's role in conflict prevention and to engage women in peace committees. Creation of women's associations, awareness raising at local levels and engagement of women in peacekeeping missions are important dimensions. On the other hand, the absence of clear guidance in the harmonization and alignment of UNSCR 1325 within the national policy framework and absence of discussions on national level strategic interventions have remained important gaps. IGAD's Women and Peace Conference in 2011, which resulted in development of implementation plan for UNSCR 1325, calls for women's participation in decision-making processes in conflict prevention, resolution, management and peacebuilding (Kassahun, 2015). Evidence from the field and related studies on the relationship of the customary and formal systems in involving women in peace and reconciliation process shows the presence of a huge potential in reinforcing women's inclusion (Figure 5).

As findings show, there is disparity across woredas in women's participation in reconciliation. While the role of the woreda WCY head is responsible to facilitate women's participation, the level of women involvement is restricted to addressing gender-based domestic violence by reconciling husbands and wife. Their role in reconciling intra-ethnic or interethnic violent conflict is either missing in some cases (such as in Somali) or inadequately represented in the other cases which shows the characteristics of the local peacebuilding approach (Ginty, 2010). In the context of the UNSCR framework, participation is judged not with respect to physical presence around the reconciliation ceremony where women serve various purposes related to organizing of the events. It must be assessed based on whether or not they make a real contribution to the discussion process and influence the decision-making procedure (Porter, 2010).

Moreover, the local women's organizations such as women's federation is not active enough in supporting the process of including women as shown by broken line (Figure 5). Women are organized and aware of their rights and social obligations in contributing to peace, but the tradition that reconciliation is men's activity has persisted. Higher level intervention by the MoP through directly working with the regional peace and security and with the women's federation through facilitation of the Ministry of WCYA is beginning to result in positive move in enhancing inclusion of women. There is still not visible influence of women's federation in enhancing women's participation in the reconciliation process which subscribes itself to the feature of hybrid peacebuilding approach⁶. While the woreda level peace and security offices heavily rely on the customary systems to exercise reconciliation, there is a gap in capacity building activities as a strategy to influence existing tradition to open up a space for women. The absence of uniformity in the level of women's participation provides a clue on the limited monitoring and vertical linkages.

There are a number of actors (individuals and organizations) having different levels of influence in supporting women's participation in peace and reconciliation. Based on the findings of the study, the relationship among the peace actors and the degree of influence they have on women participation in peacebuilding and governance are displayed in Figure 6. Federal and regional level actors have strong influence and favor towards women's inclusion, while local level actors are either passive or do not favor their inclusion for different reasons. The customary leaders, and the local peace and security staff do not favor their participation. On the other hand, women's federation and the Woreda WCY have the potential to open up space for women's inclusion

6. The approaches to peacebuilding can be classified as liberal, local and hybrid. A hybrid peacebuilding approach considers the interaction of local peacebuilding process (by relying on traditional, indigenous and customary practices) and the liberal peace agents (Ginty, 2010). The approach connects the liberal and local peace building. The critiques to liberal peacebuilding and the need to adopt a more accommodative and emancipative approach have shifted the discourse of peacebuilding towards hybridizing the liberal with the local (Anam, 2015).

but with limited degree of influence. The woreda WCY works closely with the local security and woreda administrators to protect women’s rights such as addressing domestic violence against women.

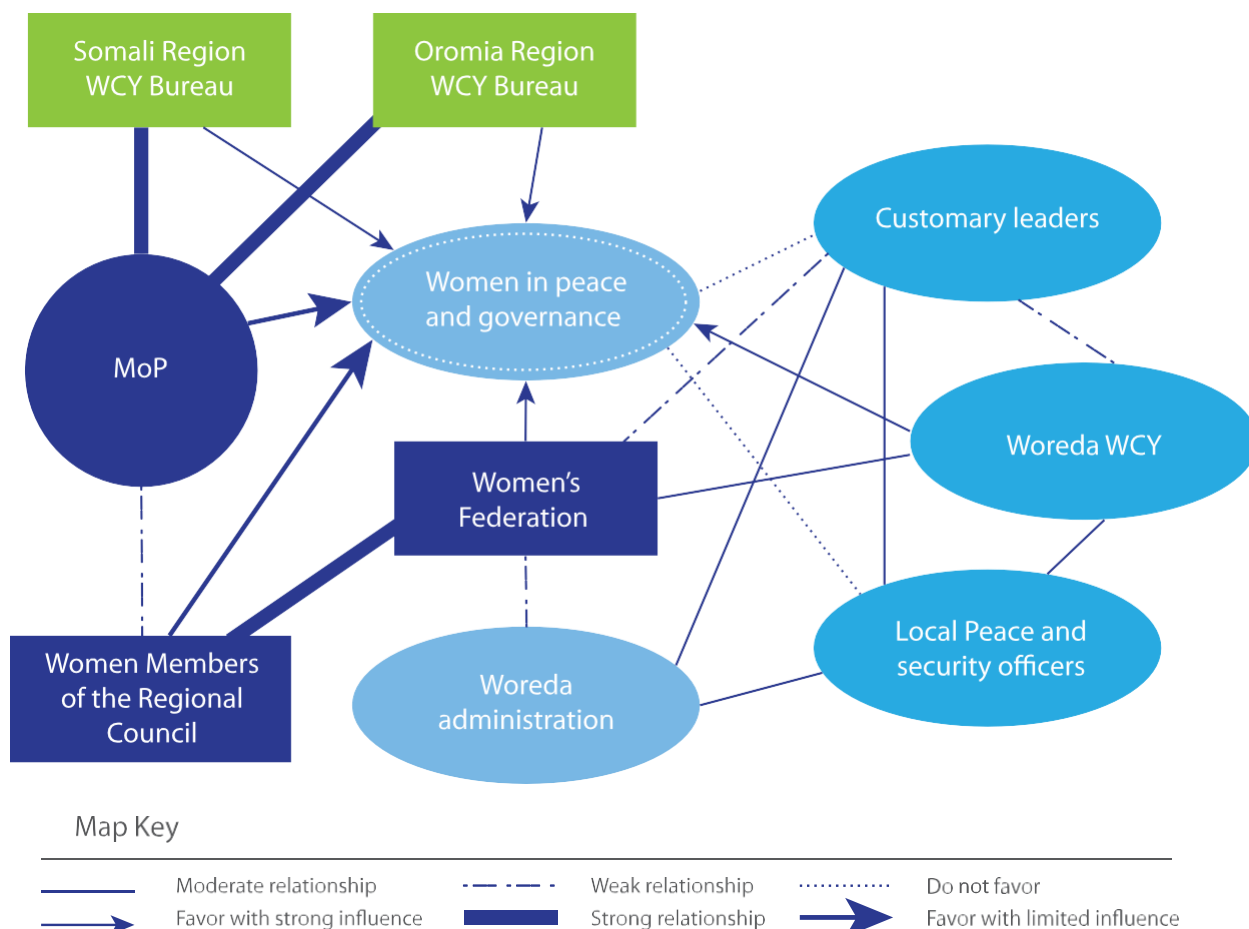


Figure 6: Relationship mapping for peace actors favoring and disfavoring women’s inclusion in dispute resolution and governance

Such cooperation and close relationship can be transformed into favorable actions in encouraging men security staff to favor women’s inclusion in peace and reconciliation, and the woreda administration to give space for women in governance. The current practice in trying to include women in peace and reconciliation has followed a top-down approach with strong policy support but with limited favor at the local level by the informal system. Meanwhile, the local state structure of both regional states appreciates and values the customary system as key agents of dispute resolution. The assessment generally shows that there are some elements of systemic marginalization of women with varied levels of influence on their participation across the studied woredas.

7. TOWARDS INCLUSIVE, AND SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND RECONCILIATION



7. Towards inclusive, and sustainable peace and reconciliation

Based on the evidence from the field, there are different mechanisms identified in implementing inclusive, and sustainable peace and reconciliation.

1) Exploring the role of intermarriage

The evidence from the field shows that the level of inclusion of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation varies across the studied woredas. Inter-marriage between Somali and Oromo plays great role in facilitating communication and organizing reconciliation. It reduces incidence of conflict and smoothens the reconciliation process. One can exploit the potential of women in inter-marriage to play a mediating task as in the case of Chinaksen where inter-marriage between the Jarso and Girhi served as the creation of social-capital upon which state agents can rely to conduct reconciliation easily. A woman key informant indicated that blood relations and the fluid nature of identity due to inter-marriage increases the degree of being sensitive to any form of violence at local levels. Another benefit of inter-marriage, as in the case of Ittu and Issa clans in Mieso enhancing exchange of information ahead of the conflict. It reduces the cost of conflict as women leak the information to their relatives, i.e. it promotes conflict early warning. Inter-marriage has a role in peace and reconciliation since children born from Oromo and Somali become very sensitive to the conflict owing to kinship. This demonstrates the indirect role women play in peace and reconciliation and the prospect of relying on such networks to build sustainable peace.

2) Recognizing and using women's trading networks

Another important element is that women are engaged in trade activities in the four woredas studied much more than men. The assessment shows that as a result of the limited effort made in conducting reconciliation between Oromo and Somali, there is not much improvement in restoring trade relations. Trade relations between the two regions, which was interrupted during the violence, have not been fully restored. There are food and non-food items being imported through Somali region. Some of the goods traded, including livestock from Somali pastoralists previously sold at Mieso Market prior to the violence, are currently sold at Mullu (far from Mieso) due to insecurity feeling. Restoring such relations is essential for women by exploiting their role in peace building. Women key informants asserted that when the livestock was sold at Mieso, Oromia region benefits from the market by taxing sellers while the Somali would have access to better livestock market. To the contrary, women in Chinaksen are engaged in business and trade activities. Their trade route extends from Chinaksen town up to Hargeisa where they export milk. Women's trade network can be useful as their participation in trade activities creates link with women in other communities and ethnic groups, hence serve the purpose of mobilizing elders from feuding parties. Organizing socially and economically important events such as bazar as a means of smoothing relationships was perceived to be central. In this process women could play a great role. Insights from the interview suggests the need to consider this as critical activity to build peaceful relations.

3) Reinforcing women's organization

Organization of women is critical in creating strategies for engaging them in peace and reconciliation. Most of the interviews highlighted that women's participation in customary

system of reconciliation is random and simply nominal. The assessment of the presence of women's organizations in various woreda's shows that women are organized as business entity or associations with varying degrees. It is absent in Mieso, but common in other woredas (Table 3). On the other hand, women's league exists in all woredas as it is part of the formal state structure.

4) Empowering women through projects

The local women representatives called haadha sinqeess have suggested that in order to build sustainable peace, the government should emphasize: establishment of water supply project at the border for them to use jointly, different business-related projects in which women of both ethnic groups participate to create a room for peaceful relationships. Any dairy-related project, in which women from both ethnic groups can pool their assets and engage, as a joint venture business has been indicated. This is feasible as it is a pastoral area with significant milk production. Women, if they earn adequate income through such projects, will encourage their sons and husband to "refrain from conflicts". Projects that emphasize women's economic empowerment will help contribute sustainable peace.

5) Prevention of self-centered individuals from using violence as an opportunity to capture rent

As elaborated earlier, there are some groups generating rent from violence. This affects reconciliation and achieving sustainable peace. Woreda security officers pointed out the presence of individuals among both ethnic groups who commit livestock raiding. As this reiterates the reconciliation process aiming at making peace fails. Stealing of one's livestock triggers violent conflict as the other group tends to retaliate. However, the recent experience shows that both parties discussed and identified that the ordinary people need peace and harmony and mechanism should be established to expose those wrong doers (thieves) and punish them. Livestock stolen by one group are returned to the owner but it is difficult to trace the perpetrators of raids. This is the major problem in connection with the nature of the terrain to track them. Overall, most people are aware of the benefits of peace to engage in trade and other relationships, while violence is still perpetrated by the people with hidden agenda. The legal system has to take measures against perpetrators by strengthening the local justice system that was perceived to be "reluctant and corrupt".

6) Strengthening and institutionalizing enforcement of agreements by involving women

Events of reconciliation is essentially ceremonial (slaughtering of animals and having meals together). Available practices have been applied to developing internal rules on how to govern relationships and restore peace in a sustainable way. In principle, reconciliation is required to prevent conflicts by monitoring events that could lead to inter-communal violence. It has been often the case that reconciliation meetings enable elders to reach some agreements in general terms. These agreements do not generate sustainable peace. Instead, there are confrontations. This happens to be the case as the coordination of the reconciliation process has been poor and the legal system is weak in tracking and punishing perpetrators. A recent reconciliation event in Mieso shows a simple meeting of 10 elders from each ethnic group, which lasted for two days. The report of the meeting was handed over to the defense army leaders. This was arranged together with the security office of the Somali side and agreed to accept the outcome of the meetings of the elders of both groups. In doing so, the formal state system is trying to exploit the wisdom of the customary system to exercise reconciliation and realize peace.

In such reconciliation meetings the role of women was reduced to providing services by feeding elders who conducted the meetings. This view contradicts the observation of elders who conduct the reconciliation meetings in other woredas. Elders admit that women were originally the customary law makers in the culture of Oromo, but they left the role of conflict resolution to be played by men because they did not want to sit under a tree. In history, they developed the rules. At present, women not only serve the men in providing food and water, but also play a role in providing information for men for decision at the meeting. In situations of deadlock, women sympathize in favor of quick fix as the failure to reconcile affects them more than men. This evidence suggests the need to strengthen enforcement of agreements by involving women actively. The current literature raises questions where it is the right for women to take part in peace processes. Insights from the interviews show that women do raise such questions of rights through their associations.

7) Emphasizing the belief that women are truth seekers

Our inquiry shows that women “do not sit together with men elders” during the reconciliation as influenced by religion. Their contribution remained indirect, even if they participate. Women are more concerned with finding the truth than men which is the key reason for involving women. They carefully watch what is going on and whenever elders fail to reach consensus, women will interfere. The role of women is critical in pushing men to reach agreement. Women do not support reconciliation in which the truth is concealed. Based on its assessment, the East Hararghe Zonal WCY office provides training for women with the belief: (1) they are ‘truth finders and tell the truth’, and (2) they do not do that in the public meetings. The training is aiming at improving their confidence to speak in public what they do speak in private at home with their husbands. It is only then their role in peace and reconciliation can be enhanced.

8) Keeping a balance between investigating causes of violence and forgiveness

An assessment shows that reconciliation process does not take into account the causes of violent conflict and the damage resulted from it. For instance, in the case of Babile and Mieso, issues on violence related to land as one of the structural factors is not discussed. An informant from Babile raised during the interview that “it is impossible to reconcile without actually looking at the causes of the conflict”. The underlying reason remains untouched during the reconciliation meetings. Reconciliation has not been properly carried out. Likewise, the community women representatives underlined that reconciliation has emphasized on ‘the future without paying attention to what happened’. In their view, this is ‘not a true reconciliation’ but rather having a short-lived impact in ensuring peace.

To the contrary, other key informants appreciate the fact that “they don’t talk about the past but rather about the future”. As a result, people from both ethnic groups are now able to move relatively further from home with their livestock; there is relatively better peace than a year ago. Theoretically, this is how reconciliation needs to be organized where parties in conflict give more weight to the value of peace in the future than emphasizing the costs and victims of the conflict. This process of repairing the harm caused by a criminal behavior as linked to the concept of ‘restorative justice’ (Pope, 2014), and conflict transformation theory and forgiveness model (Chandler, 2016). But the context here is different since some community members are after investigating the causes and penalizing the victimizers for a ‘true reconciliation’ to take place.

9) Recognizing women's unique role and advancing their participation

The findings from the previous section present cases where women have subordinate position in contributing to peace process. Examples can be cited from the woredas. In Gursum woreda, elders resolve border conflict first by conducting a separate meeting to develop ideas on how to proceed. In the second step, elders of the two regions deliberate on how to create peace and what actions need to be taken in the future. For instance, last year's meeting has resulted in agreements to end violent confrontation on resources and resolve differences using traditional norms. At the moment, there is no fighting. The state agents (woreda administrator and security personnel) have observed the elders reconciliation meeting and documented the agreements in writing showing the cultural conflict resolution is systematically formalized and used as a reference by state administrators. Swearing or oath-taking is also used as a means to make commitments without any mechanism to enforce such agreements. While elders reduce ordinary women's role to providing foods and drinks at the reconciliation meeting, haadha sinqeas (who are elected by the women themselves) participate in the meetings and give ideas at the reconciliation.

In Chinaksen woreda, there is a convergence of views among the key informants while assessing women's participation in reconciliation. The elders indicate that only the woreda WCY head is involved in the reconciliation process. Haadha sinqeas do not participate at woreda level but are instrumental in reconciliation at the kebele or when the issues are handled at the kebele level. Among the youth, only adults of age 25 up to 30 participate. Elders believe that "the cause of the conflict comes from the problem created by men not by women, therefore, there is no need to involve them". The woreda WCY head is sufficient in representing women. Likewise, the state actors have the view that women are most affected and raise their concerns related to conflict seriously. Women do not interfere into the dialogue of elders during the reconciliation meetings ; rather they do provide support and advice. For instance, they welcome the returnees by organizing different rituals such as singing and tying leaves to their heads, which symbolizes peace and happiness and is considered as the process of reconciliation. In particular, women do care in the choice of words to avoid terms that can induce violence during the rituals. This is the unique character of women in promoting peace consistent with the theory where women have "integrative role by altering narratives" in favor of reconciliation while leaving aside provocative expressions (Everett, 2014; Chandler, 2016).

10) Improving women's representation

It is thus important to examine the level of women's representation in political affairs and how this has influenced women's participation in peacebuilding and reconciliation. With regard to women's representation in Oromia, there are 537 regional council members of which 251 (47%) are women where women's representation is low at the lower levels. At the executive level, the proportion of women are very limited although it has improved significantly at the federal level over the last eight years. In Somali Region as well, out of 270 seats, 78 (28.9%) are women at the regional council. In 2012, women's representation in Ethiopia was 9.7% (3/31) at the ministerial level (ranking 73rd) and 21.9% (116/529) at the parliamentary level ranking 47th in the world (Okuma and Asfaw, 2014). The global assessment report of 2020 shows that women's representation in Ethiopia has reached 46.7 % (10/21) for ministerial positions ranking 16th and 38.8 (212/547) in the parliament ranking 26th in the world (UN Women, 2020).

However, evidence from the interview shows that there are a few women leading sectoral bureaus at regional level, not more than two or three women in each region. But down the level

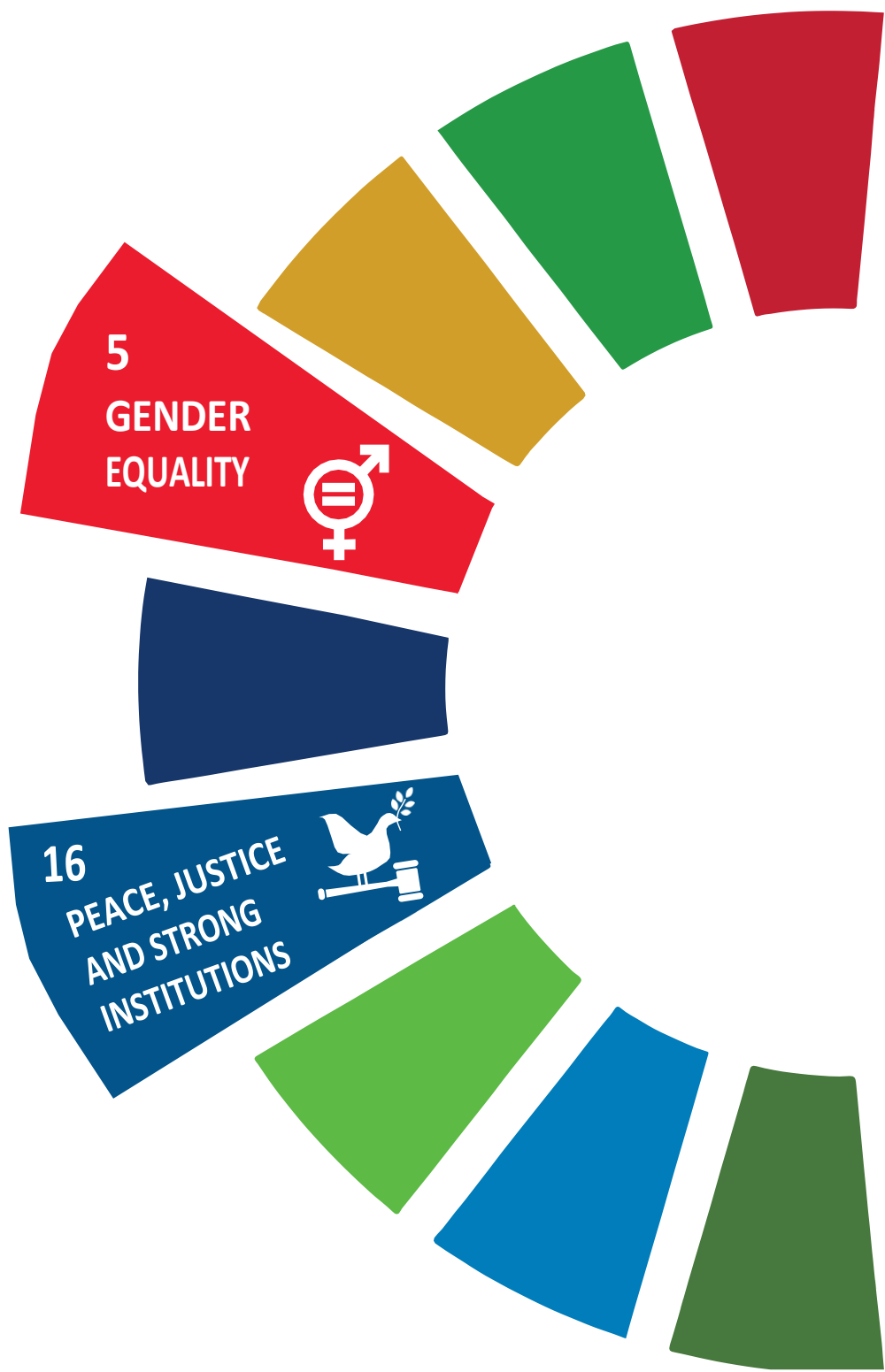
at zones and woredas, there is better representation of women at the executive level in Oromia. There is generally a problem in bringing women to the leadership level. In assessing the level of women's participation in the regional reconciliation process (as they are more affected by the conflict), interventions by federal level institutions such as the MoP is perceived to be limited to conducting awareness raising conferences organized by the regional WCY bureaus. One of the duties of the female regional council members is to follow up activities on the ground based on the reports submitted by the lower levels of government in enhancing women's role in any social, economic and political activities. There is a general perception on limited participation of women (such as haadha sinqee) in reconciliation as influenced by the feeling that "women are able to do this" is not really developed or internalized among the elders or customary leaders. In the formal system, none of the studied woredas appointed women at the position of the peace and security administration but only as members of the militia.

The assessment reveals that one strategy to tackle this unfavorable attitude towards women's participation can be through working with women's organizations. There are three forms of women's organizations: women's associations, women's league and their federations. How are they distinguished and what is their role? Women association is an independent body organized upon their interest to defend their rights where women can raise their concerns and even challenge the government when their rights are not protected in which all interested women above the age of 18 can participate. They can have their own committee and change them whenever they need every two years. They can be organized for economic purpose to achieve their economic objectives. Women's league is organized by women by members of the ruling party when women becomes party members. It is a political organization. Women's federation is an umbrella organization for women's league and women's associations. The women's federation exists at regional, zonal, woreda and kebele levels. All girls whose age are above 18 whether married or not will be part of these organs. The presence of these forms of organizations has contributed to moving one step forward in making progress on protection of women from 'not to be a victim of violence' to 'defending for their rights' to influence political decisions. There is yet more to be done to fully address women's rights to participate in public affairs, such as peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Table 4: Summary of challenges, opportunities and recommended actions

S. NO.	CHALLENGES	OPPORTUNITIES	RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
1	Difficulty to enforce inter-ethnic agreements	Regional level elders meeting to share information on such gaps	Regular inter-regional peace forum
2	Unfavorable attitude among elders towards women's participation in reconciliation	Using haadha sinqees as role models	Creation of forum for haadha sinqees
3	Somali women agitating men in taking revenge	Using women's organization to promote attitudinal change	Improving law enforcement to take legal measures
4	Persistence of livestock raids as cause for violence	Mobilize women's networks to trace perpetrators	Forming inter-regional relations among women security forces
5	Limited participation of Somali women in peace processes	Advocacy for existing women's federations to secure support from the formal system	Somali women's caucus in the parliament develop concrete action plans based on Oromia's experience in creating "forum for haadha sinqees"
6	Men conceal or overlook facts at the reconciliation	Relying on "locally recognized articulative women" to attend the ritual and speak the truth	Woreda WCY office identifying such women
7	Poor interregional relations to systematize for long-term peacebuilding	Joint celebration of peace day each year	Coordinated action by the two regions with the facilitation of MoP

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

Evidence from the field shows that the causes of the violence conflict between the two ethnic groups is explained more by the political ecology and institutional failure to secure property rights. The intra-ethnic violence over pasture and water is explained more by the resource scarcity argument. Elders and state actors have been effective in resolving intra-ethnic conflicts on various occasions.

The initiatives and practices at the local level in involving women in peacebuilding and reconciliation is an encouraging phenomenon. The increased representation of women at the higher levels of governance and the creation of different forms of women's organizations at the local level has a far-reaching consequence in improving women's participation in peace building. The vertical and horizontal linkages created by the relevant ministries (such as the MoP and MoWCY), while challenged by limited resources and availability of expertise, are critical moves in supporting this. There is also regional disparity in women's participation in peace and reconciliation. The role of women is much clearer in the Oromia region than in Somali region where women never appear at the reconciliation meetings organized by the Somali customary leaders. However, the different narratives provided by elders and state actors under certain circumstances in involving women in reconciliation is consistent with theoretical argument. It reflects the weakness of hybrid peacebuilding in that the involvement of women in public space (social and political affairs) in patriarchal societies is an underlying challenge.

The practices in resolving conflicts and organization of reconciliation in all studied sites show that the state (formal) and customary (informal) systems are highly interdependent where the state actors facilitate the relationships of elders from the two regional states. This has been interpreted by the state and customary systems differently. While elders are uncomfortable with the presence of peace and security personnel from each woreda as it is violating their traditional norms, agents of the state value the participation of elders as a critical step in their success towards peace building. In some cases, selection of elders by the state agents is interpreted by other community members as if these elders are loyal to the state than their own community.

The presence of various forms of women's organizations (political, economic and social) and their agency within the customary conflict resolution and reconciliation, and the close relationship between women's league and representative of women at the woreda level shows the presence of a fertile ground to promote substantive participation of women in peacebuilding and reconciliation. Exploiting this potential requires improved coordination of activities that support the process from the federal down to the village level. The formation of women peace ambassadors and recognition of women talents by the MoP and the selection of haadha sinquees (especially by Oromia) over the last few years needs follow-up and evaluation of achievements made. The evidence from the field shows that such activities did not generate desirable outcomes at community level in realizing women's participation.

The fragmented nature of reconciliation where each woreda organizes its own meetings sporadically and the difficulty in enforcement of commitments made by the two regions as specified in the agreement often drafted and kept at the woreda level has created challenges in realizing sustainable peace. The people-to-people conferences made in 2018 at the regional capital of both regions did not result in substantive change in restoring relationships. There is no follow up of events on what happened in the conflict prone areas along the border of the two regions.

Evidence from the interviews indicates it was difficult to track the perpetrators of violence. The justice system at woreda level is perceived to be either weak or negligent in taking actions against identified perpetrators. As true reconciliation affects the 'state of mind', the functioning of the justice system in taking legal decisions on the perpetrators of violence will push the reconciliation process to take longer time, resulting in the deterioration of trust on the state system itself. These conditions have affected the combined efforts of the state and the customary systems not to result in sustainable peace. In reference to the framework for analysis displayed by Figure 1, effective reconciliation can result from ensuring the complementary role of the policy environment (formal system) and the socio-cultural environment (customary system).

The influence of power asymmetry on peace and reconciliation is important to consider as more armed groups tended to engage in violent attacks subsequent to any reconciliation events conducted by the customary leaders. The rent-seeking behavior on the part of political elites and those elders gaining personal benefits as they engage in resolving conflicts have created a momentum for the violence to sustain. Such behavior of elites has manifested itself through rejection of the outcome of referendum as explained by the grievance argument where they attempt to reclaim territory. Such behavior is changing after the 2018 political reform in Ethiopia, creating a fresh move towards making peace through reconciliation. Peacebuilding interventions can capitalize on inter-ethnic marriage and the social capital created along this line, which would serve as an entry option. Women from both ethnic groups could play a role of agency to undermine confrontation while facilitating reconciliation.

The absence of clear policy and institutional framework in the adoption and implementation of the UNSCR 1325 by Ethiopia can be cited as one of the limitations in the creation of institutions and structures that support the implementation of plans in the participation and inclusion of women in peace and reconciliation. The findings of the study indicate the lack of clarity in the mechanisms of involving women and fragmented nature of women's participation at local level despite all the initiatives and efforts made by the federal and regional institutions in implementing some of the components of the UNSCR. Therefore, formal adoption and implementation of the different components of the UNSCR can reinforce the existing initiatives in women's participation in conflict transformation and peace building.

8.2. Recommendations

The findings of the study have shown a number of challenges in involving women in peacebuilding and reconciliation including structural, sociocultural, and institutional factors despite the favorable political and policy environment. The structural issue is significant as one takes into account the limited effort in bringing change in attitude among the state actors at the lower level of governance on the need to involve women in peace processes. The presence of women in reconciliation meetings was nominal rather than enabling them to make substantive contribution in influencing and shaping decisions. Sociocultural factors also tend to persist as elders in the customary systems reiterate the domestic roles culturally assigned to women instead of interfering into men's business. The institutional dimensions consist of lack of legal means to put agreements between regional states into practice and failure on the part of the federal government to settle border disputes using the provisions made in the national constitution. Therefore, there are a number of measures that need to be taken by different state and not-state actors to improve the contribution of women to peacebuilding and reconciliation. These recommendations are categorized as measures to promote attitudinal/behavioral changes and change in practices. To promote attitudinal and behavioral change, the following measures are instrumental:

1. Inducing attitudinal change within the customary system – evidence from the field shows that the peacebuilding strategy exhibits the characteristics of the hybrid peacebuilding where the interaction between the liberal peace agents (such as security personnel and civil administrators) and customary leaders work together to exercise reconciliation. The study results show that the approach is dominated by patriarchy (the tendency to exclude women). Although the liberal peace agents spend resources into the creation of women's organizations (such as women's league) as part of ensuring the democratic rights of women (and for business purposes to ensure their economic freedom), their belief in hybrid peacebuilding and heavy reliance on customary systems to resolve conflicts have undermined their participation. The customary system has unfavorable attitude towards women's participation as heavily influenced by religious and cultural beliefs. Promoting attitudinal change by increasing awareness of elders and customary leaders is a required action.
2. Enhancing women's knowledge and attitude on their role on peace – the findings reveal that conflict resolution is considered to be men's business as they are socially recognized to be perpetrators of violent conflict. It was along this belief that the state system at the local level has been inclined towards giving priority to men than women. Women have become observers of the reconciliation ceremony rather than providers of information to influence decision-making. This has affected their attitude and behavior and forced them to accept that they have a subordinate role.
3. Awareness raising among local peace agents – it is evident that the local peace and security personnel work closely with the woreda officials and the customary leaders to facilitate reconciliation. They are in favor of selecting men than women as they consult woreda officials each time reconciliation is held. Improving women's visibility in such system of reconciliation through raising the awareness of local peace agents is necessary. Therefore, relevant ministries (such as the MoP and Mo WCYA) need to work together with regional and federal government to increase women's visibility in order to reverse their exclusion, and invest in capacity building to raise awareness, and the required skills in conducting reconciliation and peacebuilding by recognizing gender disaggregated views.

To promote change of practices in women's participation in peace and reconciliation, the following measures are instrumental:

1. Reliance on existing women's organizations - The use of informal milk marketing groups as entry option towards organizing women in peacebuilding is critical. Informal organization for marketing of milk is common among women where a woman collects milk from others and sells it taking the money. All other members are contributing milk for her to sell it and take the money. This will be rotated among the members. Such a reciprocal relationship has served as a means to ensure food security and encouraged saving. These informal groups have established social capital or networks and should be approached by the local state agents to better organize them and persuade the group members to take up the agenda of peace and reconciliation. One of the mechanisms is to convince them that the prospect for continuity of such practice that depends on the presence of peace that in turn affects access to grazing resources for their livestock and milk production. Women's economic empowerment through milk marketing can be realized only if their participation in peacebuilding is successful. There are a number of organizations such as women' league and women development army which are government organs and can also be used in mobilizing and training women to participate in peace and reconciliation.

2. Engaging women in re-demarcation of borders using evidence from the 2004 referendum – The recently established commissions called the ‘Boundaries and Identity Issues Commission’ led by the former president of Ethiopia and the ‘Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission’ have a role to play in bolstering the process of demarcation that was very slow as mainly attributed to the failure of the former ‘border commission’ in implementing the border demarcation subsequent to the referendum conducted at the disputed territories along the border of the two regions. There are still a number of disputed kebeles at the border of the two regions in Chinaksen and Babile woredas demanding urgent action of the House of Federations (HoF) and the MoP to develop mechanisms of resolving the issues through re-demarcation based on evidence from 2004 referendum. The evidence from the study reveals that increased settlement at the regional border has exacerbated the violence since such settlements were politically interpreted as an attempt to expand territory. Women must be involved as committee members in the process of re-demarcation to review the situation and contribute to the lasting peace.
3. Empowering local women in the customary systems – Results show limited or absence of women’s participation in reconciliation processes, as guided by the customary leaders and organized by the state administrators at the woreda level. While there is regional and national support provided to effectively enhance the role of women at grassroots’ level, there is still a gap in building their capacity and influencing the attitude of the men elders in accommodating them in the process of reconciliation. There is a need to invest in awareness creation among elders to change their perception in favor of women’s participation in a real sense. The use of local state media (radio, newspapers) is instrumental where issues of gender and peace could be integrated in an existing program, or else create a new one. This is an urgent action as there is no common understanding at different levels of regional state administrations. While women at community level (such as haadha sinqeess) are traditionally selected by the villagers, they are selected by the officials in the current practice where they informally become part of the state system. They are falling under the direct supervision of the zonal and woreda level WCY office heads. They are the ones who send these women as representatives of other women to attend reconciliation meetings no matter how little influence they have in the decision-making process. Most of the women representatives interviewed do recognize that their voices are not heard. This system of participation is even absent in the context of the Somali region where women’s voice remains unheard during reconciliation. Therefore, there is a need to empower local women in a way they directly take part in the customary systems, without being influenced by the state system.
4. Creation of women-centered peace forum and regular dialogue - As the results show, each woreda organizes its own reconciliation by mobilizing elders, women and the youth. There is variability across the woredas in the degree of women involvement in the peace process. As each woreda has its own unique socioeconomic and geographical features, there is always something to learn from each other. Therefore, there is a need to create a women-centered peace forum which accommodates perhaps all woredas in a zone on regular basis by the regional governments and engage them in a much more systematic way rather than having sporadic reconciliation. This can be replicated across all other woredas along the border of the two regional states. The Somali and Oromia regional level people-to-people conference was held once at the capital of the two regions. To build peace, however, this needs to continue on a small-scale where representatives of women participate in a regular dialogue that permits learning from existing practices and undertake regular evaluation of progress made in restoring peace. This can be scaled-up to the national level and augment the

initiatives by the MoP where innovative women peace activists gain recognition. Such inter-regional dialogue helps reverse the hostile relationships created in the past and contribute to positive social capital to support peace building. Women parliament members of the two regions can assist in the formation and functioning of such a forum for dialogue. The recently established Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission can also take up this as one of its agenda to ensure national level reconciliation. The success of women-centered peace forum requires the advocacy role of women appointed as local government officials and as members of parliament at regional and federal levels, who are already supporting women's participation in peace and reconciliation.

5. Increasing the number of women in law enforcement and judiciary - The two regional states undertook security sector reform (abolishing of the special forces from taking part in the violent conflict) at the local level to deal with the problem whilst this is not enough on its own. The findings of the study show that one of the reasons for failure of reconciliation efforts in generating sustainable peace is the weakness of the law enforcement in bringing the perpetrators of violence on both sides to justice while the degree varies between the two regions. To restore peace and order at the regional borders, monitoring mechanisms on the proper functioning of the woreda level justice system should be put in place so that perpetrators will be brought to justice. This may include exposing and punishing of those who earn rent out of violent conflict in various ways. The law enforcement process can be improved by establishing a clear structure for peacebuilding and reconciliation where representatives of all social groups (including women) and stakeholders (women agents in the formal system) are engaged in community dialogue on continual basis. Mechanisms should be established to improve women's participation in peace and security forces at kebele, woreda and regional levels, and reinforce the women security forces from the two regions to have a joint forum to support law enforcement process in tracing perpetrators. Regional women parliament members indicated that they need to take it as part of their assignment to advocate for this action. One form of advocacy can be improving women's access to legal aid and civic education to advance their rights.
6. Advocating for women's land rights - there is evidence that land-related conflicts are also attributed to lack of property rights definition over land used for cultivation and grazing where this comes as a reason for violence at different levels (within an ethnic group and inter-ethnic). Divergence of livelihoods (as pastoralists or farmers) causes competition for land to invest in crop farming and livestock grazing. This requires delineation of land for grazing and for cultivation as such institutional measures were not put in place. The land administration of both regions should involve women in the delineation process and work together to identify land use types based on sources of livelihoods irrespective of ethnicity because both ethnic groups are either pastoralists or farmers. The involvement of women is critical as they are primarily responsible to feed their livestock under sedentary farming systems by practicing tethering. Differentiation of rights to resources is a solution to resolve land-related conflicts. The reconciliation processes aimed at building peace should take this into consideration. Essentially, this is part of the national problem where Ethiopia still lacks clear land use policy.

7. Implementation of women-focused joint projects at borderlands – a number of state and non-state actors implement development projects in both regions. If such projects target border areas and ensure women’s participation, they will be pivotal in transforming a hostile relationship into peaceful coexistence as projects change the behavior of men who would otherwise trigger violence but do likely prefer peace to ensure the benefits of women from such projects. Some women respondents underlined the need to establish dairy-related projects as there is high potential for milk production. The current practice shows that women are heavily involved in group-based milk marketing which serves as entry option to design a project in dairy processing from which women would benefit. The existing trade networks of women can be used to mobilize them to actively take part in such projects. The intermarriage between the two ethnic groups around the border is also a potential source of women-based social capital to undertake collective action towards smooth implementation of such projects. Evidence from elsewhere also shows that joint projects serve as an important tool and a means to integrate development programs into peace building, playing a key role in addressing potential inter-group conflicts as far as those projects fairly benefit feuding parties (Rogers et al., 2010).
8. Improved women’s representation in the governance system – women’s representation in the customary conflict resolution and reconciliation is not a sufficient condition for their active participation. Their assignment as executives at higher level such as regional and zonal has been perceived to be essential to enable them exercise influence at the lower tiers of governance such as woreda and kebele. Nevertheless, women are left not being adequately represented at those levels despite their involvement at the federal levels. Therefore, there is a need to improve women’s representation where and when required at different levels of governance (woreda, zonal, region). In particular, in the Somali Region, such representation is essential to empower women’s participation in reconciliation by breaking the sociocultural barriers embedded in patriarchal society.

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Appendix

List of contacts of individuals and organizations championing women's inclusion in peacebuilding and reconciliation in the two regions

NAMES	REGIONS
Mrs. Zahara Abdi	WCY Bureau A/Head, Somali Region
Ayan Abdi Ali	HOPR (Women's Representative), Somali Region
Habiba Umer Yesuf	HOPR (Women's Representative), Somali Region
Mestawot Feyissa	Oromia Regional Council
Muna Ahmed	WCY Bureau Head, Oromia Region
Nejat Mohammed	WCY Office Head, Mieso Woreda, Oromia Region
Fatuma Adam	Women Representative, Mieso Woreda, Somali Region
Rudwan Mohammed	Customary Community Elder, Mieso Woreda, Oromia Region
Alika Nasradin	WCY Office, East Hararghe Zone, Oromia Region
Malika Mohammed	WCY Office Head, Babile Woreda, Oromia Region
Halima Abdule	Women Representative, Babile Woreda, Oromia Region
Jamal Ahmed	Customary Community Elder, Babile Woreda, Oromia Region
Fozia Kalis	WCY Head, Gursum Woreda, Oromia Region
Abdulnasir	Customary Community Leader, Gursum Woreda, Oromia Region
Abdi Mohammed	Somali Elder, Gursum Woreda, Oromia Region
Ayan (women)	WCY Head, Chinaksen Woreda, Oromia Region
Kadir Ahmed	Chinaksen Woreda, Customary Leader, Somali Region
Honey Hassen	Pastoralist Forum Ethiopia
Zeinab Haji Mohammed	WCY Regional Bureau Head, Somali Region



The assessment on the role of Women in Peace and Reconciliation is conducted under UNDP Ethiopia Country office project entitled “Women in Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution in Oromia and Somali Regions” . The project overarching objective was to empower women groups, actors and institutions with a commitment to resolving recurring or emerging conflict in Oromia and Somali regions and towards building sustainable peace and stability in Ethiopia. Particularly the assessment report is produced to inform peacebuilding programming by addressing the challenges of evidence on the role of women in peace and security in Oromia and Somali Regional States and beyond.