

Full Length Research

State Presence and Security Problem in North Gondar Zone: The Case of Wogera and West Belessa Districts

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Data from North Gondar Administration Justice Bureau indicated that there has been high rate of conflict in most districts of the North Gondar zone. However, little attention has been given to the sources, consequences and intervention mechanisms of the problem. The aim of this research article was to explore the presence of the state and security problem in the two districts of North Gondar zone (Wogera and West Belessa). The study was conducted in these districts as the problem of conflict and its consequences (like murder, family breakdown, less in production) is high. To study these issues, qualitative research methodology was employed. This is because qualitative approach is best suited for detailed and complex analysis conflict among groups and individuals. This research employed focus group discussion and in-depth interview with key informant as data collection methods. Additionally, the research employed different documents issued by the respective bureau of the two districts. The finding of this research indicated that almost 300 people lost their lives every year in each district. Property loss and physical injury was usually much higher than lives lost. The major cause of this problem was the security management in these districts is not well organized. The enforcement mechanism of the state is weak. Problems are related to lack of trained personnel and shortage of vehicle to cover all kebeles. Last but not least failure to pass proper verdict to the guilty is the major factor for the prevalence of conflict in the two districts.

Key words: State, Security, State Presence, District

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INTRODUCTION

Conflicts are intrinsic, inevitable, and unavoidable aspect of social life which occurs during human interaction. They can play a positive role in acting as a springboard for social change and a means of promoting justice, peace, and sustainable development. Yet, conflicts bring about a negative consequence in causing widespread destruction in terms of life and property. Scholars in the area of peace and security agree in one important point. As to these scholars, it is impossible to eradicate conflicts

among individuals, between states and intrastate conflicts. But the violence and its destructive result could be minimized. Gleditsch (2001) argued "conflict dates from the beginning of human history and will probably never end as it is impossible to prevent this natural behavior from the life of society; but its violence and escalation can be minimized."

In order to minimize the impact of conflict in the society, people created state. One social institution which is

created to minimize conflict between individuals and communities is the presence of effective government in every corner of a particular state. Henderson noted (2010) for a state to be effective to bring peace and security, it must carry out three classic functions. These are rule-making, rule enforcement, and rule adjudication. When a state fails to perform the above functions and government faces inability to ensure security, individuals will be forced to bring justice on their own means.

Among nine regions of Ethiopia which have developed solving security problems through the use of violence instead of through dialogue and legal procedure is *Amhara* region. The region, especially Northern Gondar Zone, is known by conflictual relations among rural communities. These conflicts are caused by competition for scarce resource, blood revenge as the cultural practice, and conflicts related to land registration and ownership. As mentioned above, one of the major causes for this conflict is related to the culture of the society. To have firearms and kill ones rivalry is the sign of manly distinction. The acquisition of fire arms has been a matter of utmost precondition in Northern part of Ethiopia (Bahru, 2008). The second reason of conflict among rural communities in North Gondar Zone is related to competition for scarce resources. In Ethiopia, farmers' survival is dependent upon their access to agricultural resources such as arable land and water. High population density and rapid population growth often leads to stiff competition among users. Access to these resources leads to conflicts as each farmer wants to gain maximum share from this limited resources.

The data from North Gondar Justice Bureau (2015) reveals that the death of individuals has been increasing for the last five years. For example, in 2011, 255 people lost their life. In 2012, 290 people were killed. In 2013, 266 people became victims. In 2014, the number of people who lost their life reached at 324. Lastly, in 2015, it was 270. This number is only registered at the zonal level. In other words, it does not include all criminal cases committed in the zone. Many cases of criminal activity have not been reported at districts and zonal level. Additionally, this report does not include property loss and heavy and minor physical injuries inflicted on individuals.

The problem of conflict and its destructive consequences is common in all districts of North Gondar zone. But, the problem is worse in the two districts of the zone: Wogera and West Belessa. Yet, relevant governmental bodies have failed to solve the recurrent conflicts among rural communities in these districts. Hence, the problem still continues and causes shortage in production, destruction of homes, deaths of hundreds of people and displacement of people from their residence. The major purpose of this study is, there for, to investigate the presence of the states and security problem in north Gondar zone in general and the two

selected districts in particular.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

In *Amhara* Regional State, in particular North Gondar zone, the centuries-old tradition of conflict has been continued since the time of immemorial. Revenge and other forms of conflict have been one of the negative social problems in this region, particularly in peasant communities. Why and how it has been such a negative social force and on what rate it has occurred and engulfed and disrupted the social life of the inhabitants of the study area needs special attention and researching. Different Studies, including North Gondar Justice Bureau, indicate that there has been high rate of killing practices in different districts of North Gondar zone. But, no comprehensive study has been conducted to unearth the sources, consequences, and the capacity of the states to reduce (if not eliminate) such kind of conflict. *Few scholars like* Bahru (2008) indicate that, "one of the major causes for violence and conflict northern part of Ethiopia this is related to the culture of the society. To have firearms and kill ones rivalry is the sign of manly distinction. The evolution of the meaning of the term *chawa* is in itself indicative of the high prestige that attached to the soldier's profession. Social prestige that is attached with the warrior people is deep- rooted." Furthermore, Agmassie *et al* (2014) conflict in these zones destroys homes, breaks down trust among people, and disrupts health and education services. This conflict also brought the disintegration of families and communities; children would remain without their parents.

Nevertheless, these researches which have been conducted on conflict in North Gondar zone did not address the detail aspects of the issues under consideration. This is because, these researches have failed to discuss issues from the victims' point of view, from the killers' point of view and from government's capacity to bring peace and security in all districts of North Gondar zone. For this reason, the life of many farmers has been lost. The victims of these people did not get proper justice. Property loses and physical injuries are uncountable. This study deals with state presence and security problem in the two districts of North Gondar zone-Wogera and West Belessa. The study will discuss the various dimensions of source of conflict, consequences and intervention mechanisms from different stakeholders: state and peace and reconciliation committee. Moreover, this research, based on the findings of the study, will recommend policy implications so that the above stake-holders will take a lesson so that they can find intervention mechanisms to reduce the recurrent conflict.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The major objective of this research is to examine the state presence and security problem in North Gondar zone focusing on Wogera and West Belessa as the case study.

The study also has the following specific objectives.

1. To show the nature of conflict among farmers in these districts.
2. To overview the security problem and its causes in the two districts.
3. To discuss the capacity of the state to bring peace and security in these districts
4. To put forward policy recommendations emanating from the findings of the study.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study employed qualitative approach for exploring the problem at hand. Creswell (2009) stated that qualitative approach is best suited for researches that are explorative so that it will be possible to identify variables that can be used as a springboard for quantitative studies through objective measure of variables. Moreover, qualitative approach is also best suited for detailed and complex analysis of a given issue as well as for problems that cannot easily be quantified.

As far as the main focus of this research is to explore and describe the state presence and security problem in North Gondar zone in general West Belessa and Wogera districts in particular involves understanding the causes of conflict and examining the role of the state to bring peace and security, this aspects of research are usually described by qualitative research methodology. Hence, to discuss these issues, the researcher will employ qualitative research methodology. Qualitatively, the mass of words which will be generated by focus group discussion and in-depth interview on the problem of security will be described and summarized.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design can be thought of as the master plan of a research that throws light on how the study is to be conducted. It shows how all of the major parts of the research study- the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programs, etc- work together in an attempt to address the research questions. According to Creswell (2014) the research design serves to plan, structure and execute the research to maximize the validity of the findings. It gives directions from the underlying philosophical assumptions to research design, and data

collection. The research design which will be applied in this research is exploratory research design. Usually, this type of design is used when the researcher wants to identify problems which are less known and he wants to explore new developments. Creswell (2014) further argued "this is the most useful (and appropriate) research design for those projects that are addressing a subject about which there are high levels of uncertainty and lack of knowledge about the subject, and when the problem is not very well understood (i.e. very little existing research on the subject matter)." Hence, in this research, the exploratory research design will be used to overview the state presence and security problems in West Belessa and Wogera districts.

SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

This research will employ non-probability sampling technique. Non- probability sampling technique is divided into three categories. These are convenience, quota and snowball sampling technique. The researcher, because it is easy to access key informants, will employ the snowball sampling technique. In this case, snowball was applied to generate a chain of information and to get the needed data from predetermined individuals. Accordingly people well versed in the history, culture, tradition and knowledge about current conflict were selected as key informants from their respective group. A total of 20 sample representatives, 10 from Wogera and 10 from West Belesa were selected. Hence, to get key informants for focus group and in-depth interview, the researcher will use snowball sampling technique.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

For the purpose of this study, both primary and secondary sources of data were used. The secondary sources of data include: documents, journal articles and books. Documents from North Gondar Justice Bureau and Police report from West Belessa and Wogera districts on the area of conflicts and their causes were meticulously consulted. To discuss the theoretical part of the conflict, the research employed books and journal articles written on the area. The primary sources are key informants who are involved in conflict prevention, conflict escalation and conflict investigation. These bodies are farmers themselves, police men and judges. As far as in-depth interview is one of the data collection techniques apparent in social science research to generate primary information from individuals who have experienced the problem, in-depth interview was conducted. Hence, this researcher employed a face-to-face, in-depth interviews with victims of conflict and perpetrators to collect information about the causes,

consequences of conflict in the two districts mentioned above. To make the primary data more valid, the researcher also used Focus Group Discussions (FGD). A focus group is effectively a type of semi-structured interview carried out in a group setting. A list of security problems like the cause of conflict and the capacity of the state to bring justice and order tabled for discussion. The benefit of group interview is the possibility of additional insights being gained through the interaction of ideas and suggestions from the group. Hence, to get data on the state presence and security problem four focus group discussions were applied with relevant government bodies: policemen and peace and reconciliation committee. The method of FGD was employed by the researcher to obtain information that is not obtained from in-depth interviews. The third method of getting data on the security problem and state presence is referring documents written on the area. For the purpose of analyzing and buttressing what was gathered through primary sources, secondary sources also are important sources of data. The researcher used secondary data to critically evaluate policy documents of government. This helps to triangulate the findings and put data into a larger context. Hence, relevant books written on the area, journals articles, and policy documents were used intensively.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Data analysis is more than number crunching. It is an activity that permeates all stages of a study. Choice among possible analyses should be based partly on the nature of the data. The data, in this study, were analyzed using qualitative techniques. Richie *et al* (2003) define qualitative data analysis as “working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns”. The aim of analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. Data that were gathered through in-depth interview and focus group discussion were analyzed using thematic and document analysis. The Data gathered through these methods were transcribed into categories, themes and analyzed together with the existing literature and documents. The technique to analyze data from these sources is document analysis.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study provides empirical data on the ability of the state to bring peace and security in North Gondar zone, focusing on Western Belessa and Wogera districts.

Since the prevalence of peace and security in any region is the first priority for the concerned bodies, this research has many benefits. At the first place, the results of this study will allow the government officials and policy makers to get real problem of security in the different districts of North Gondar Zone. Knowing the problem helps them to take appropriate measures. Policy makers, in all organs of government, could use this research as the guideline in the policy making process. In particular, Ethiopian policy makers could use this project intensively and evaluate their policy towards peace and security in the region. This is because the problem of West Belessa and Wogera is direct replica of other districts. Secondly, this study will contribute to the development of theoretical knowledge on the issues of security in North Gondar zone. In this, it helps to generate new knowledge in the security problem in the zone. Hence, this research will be taken as the starting point for other researchers on the area and they could use as the reference materials.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Articles, like any piece of academic research, suffer from limitations. Limitations are matters and occurrences that arise in a study which are out of the researcher's control. They limit the extensity to which a study can go, and sometimes affect the end result and conclusions that can be drawn. In conducting this study, the researcher, undoubtedly, faced some difficulties, which contributed to the limitations of the study. In the first place, the topic “State Presence and Security Problem in North Gondar Zone: The Case of West Belessa and Wegera Districts” is a new and highly politicized issue; hence, little previous work has been done. So, getting relevant materials were a difficult task for the researcher. Second, securing permission from different district officials to carry out the focus group discussion and in-depth interview were another challenge. This is because; key informants were not willing to participate in the study due to security problem they would face in the future. Finally, financial constraints were the third problem in this research. This is because, the research by its very nature, needs traveling in different *kebeles* of the two districts. Hence, transportation cost will be a challenge for this study.

State and its Role in Conflict Prevention and Conflict Management

Conflict has, generally, been defined as a situation in which two or more parties strive to acquire the same scarce resources at the same time. Conflict is a multi-dimensional social phenomenon which is an integral feature of human existence, essential to the ongoing processes of history, to social change, and

transformation. Conflicts arise because of a perceived incompatibility over material or symbolic resources. Conflict is inherent to the human condition. It arises when individuals or groups hold divergent interests and values. It is not necessarily violent, however. In the words of Picciotto (2011) "indeed, it may evince dialogue, lead to compromise, and as a result, improve mutual understanding and promote social harmony."

Conflicts arise from human relations in two principle ways: first, individuals or groups of individuals have different values, needs and interests; and, second, most resources are not available in unlimited quantities and so access to them must be controlled and fought for. Wallensteen (2007) has pointed out that resources are not only economic in nature, and that the terminology might miss conflicts involving economic orientation, human security, environment, historical issues, etc. Such conflicts are not necessarily about resources, and when they are, these resources are more importantly, not necessarily scarce. A conflict is, moreover, in many cases based on perceptions, rather than on attitudes or behavior as it has generally been defined.

To have peace, reduce conflict, and to live predictable lives, people have created an institution. This institution is a state. The control of violence is not only distinguishing features of the state. The state also shows physical, territorial, and ideological monopolies. The state is, according to most political science definitions, is the only legitimate user of physical violence in a society. The control of violence is not the only distinguishing feature. There are also fiscal, territorial and ideological monopolies. These functions of the state are, in fact, highly interrelated. To collect revenue, the state needs to have credible legal means and a reliable police system. In order to maintain an efficient police and legal system, it needs revenue. Revenue is collected from citizens. The state has a fiscal monopoly, being the only unit that can collect taxes and tariffs, as the inhabitants have to pay a certain sum of money in return for services. To be able to do that, the state needs to have effective control over its territory. This requires police and militia resources. This is to provide security and welfare to its citizens.

A particular state to be effective and strong to bring peace and security should perform the following five major activities:

- The ability of state organizations to provide basic security to its citizens;
- The ability of state organizations to raise revenues to finance the basic functioning of their operations;
- The ability of state organizations to ensure their primacy over rival institutions among the state's significant population;

- The ability and willingness of the state to provide basic services to all citizens; and
- A lack of bias or favour by the state in allocation of jobs and resources among major groups.

When the state is weak and when it does not fulfill the above activities, a different dynamic can be observed. The state cannot maintain law and order within its defined area. In this case, security forces of government do not serve the citizens. Instead, they protect the interests of the regime itself or they protect particular population groups- defending the interests of some sectors by wielding violence against others. This creates a climate of insecurity which enables state elites to offer despotic power as a solution while they preserve their privileged access to wealth and resources. In other contexts, where official state security provision is weak or inadequate within certain geographical pockets, security provision is effectively delegated-with varying degrees of complicity or tolerance to non-state organizations. Ayoob (2011) argued "where there is conflict and all forms of criminal violence, it creates insecurity. This insecurity contributes to the fragility of a particular state. When the state faces fragility, it cannot control the flow of arms and pursue the collection of taxes." Many scholars argue conflicts often arise from the failure of a state's legal system to protect rights of innocent people and punish perpetrators. Discrimination, corruption, and abuse of power by law enforcement officials, and the military in many cases, fuel and exacerbate conflicts and make it even harder to achieve reconciliation after the conflict has occurred. Injustice in the management of conflict, literally, drives people to take up arms and get justice by themselves (Wallensteen, 2007). Wallensteen (2007) further argued "when the state fails to provide peace and security to its citizens, other loyalties become stronger." It is obvious that people will take their own measures to maintain their security if the government is unable to protect them from any illegal threat. This goes with Lobell's argument that the weakening of state institutional structures will create insecurities on the part of vulnerable communities. Thus, groups become fearful for their survival. Under such conditions, each group and individual will look into their own devices for protection against others (Lobell, 2004).

In most of Europe countries, state making usually antedated the emergence of nations and nation-states by a couple of centuries. This is why it is essential not to confuse the building of modern sovereign states with the emergence of nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Tilly (1990) has highlighted the distinction between modern sovereign states and nation-states. Tilly defines modern sovereign state as "relatively centralized, differentiated, and autonomous organizations successfully claiming priority in the use of force within their defined territories." Nation-states, on the other hand, are those whose people share a strong linguistic,

religious, and symbolic identity. Nationalism, the necessary condition for the establishment of nation-states, although not of sovereign states, is primarily a principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent. Sovereign and relatively centralized states that have performed successfully over a long period of time and have therefore knit their people together in terms of historical memories, legal codes, language, religion, and so forth. Historical evidence has convincingly demonstrated that in almost all cases in Europe, with the exception of the Balkans, the emergence of the modern sovereign state was the precondition for the formation of the nation.

Africa and other Third World states are created artificially by European colonizers. Though there have been the demands for the establishment of modern states which is socially cohesive, politically responsive, and administratively effective states in Africa and other Third World states, these states faced many problems. In the words of Salih (2001) after the departure of colonialists, the African political elite who inherited the reign of political power behaved much like their departing masters. For this reason during the second half of twentieth century, most of Africans were governed by repressive governments. "Though there is an economic growth in many African states and democratization process in some African states, still today the citizens of Somalia, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burundi are not getting peace and security.

Unlike other African states, Ethiopia is the oldest state in sub-Saharan Africa. It is unique among African countries in that it escaped colonization and maintained its independence. Ethiopia's imperial lineage is reputedly traced to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, and the empire was one of the last remaining feudal states of the modern era. The country was built by as large succession of emperors, arguably the most important being Menelik II in the late nineteenth century, who brought together numerous smaller kingdoms encompassing various Eastern, Southern and Western African ethnic and religious groups. The last Emperor, Haile Selassie I, was crowned in 1930 and during his rule he undertook to consolidate and unite the country. Despite his enactment in 1931 of an imperial constitution that created a bicameral parliament and a system of courts, as Clapham (1988) commented all real power and authority remained firmly entrenched in the emperor and the traditional ruling class. His Imperial Court operated a highly elitist government that oversaw expensive 'development' projects that did little to alleviate the massive inequality that characterized the country."

Emperor Haile Selassie's rule came to an end in 1974, when he was deposed by a military junta known as the *Derg* ("Committee"). The *Derg* suspended the constitution and established a highly centralized socialist state ruled by a military dictatorship and characterized by brutal

oppression of its own people. A coalition of opposition forces-the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)-overthrew the *Derg* in 1991. The EPRDF established a transitional government with an interim constitution (Transitional Charter) and embarked on a wide-ranging process of democratic decentralization. The 1995 Constitution assigns extensive powers to the newly-created states, which are divided sub-regionally into zones, districts, and *kebeles*. The districts are considered to be the fundamental unit of local government and have an average population of 100,000-200,000. *Kebeles* are villages or urban communities with an average population of 5,000, and are the smallest recognized division of local government. *Kebeles* do not have the same constitutional formality as states and other sub-regions, but have parallel administrative and judicial structures, and in practice serve as the primary level of governmental contact for most Ethiopian citizens.

Among the newly created federal states of Ethiopia is the *Amhara* regional state. It consists of eleven zones and 120 districts. These districts are subdivided into *kebeles* for administrative purpose. The largest zone in terms of geographical size is North Gondar Administrative zone. The zone has twenty districts. Almost all districts of these zones are characterized by conflict and prevalence of violence among farmers.

The next chapter will discuss the major cause of conflict among farmers and it will also explore why it is impossible to reduce the escalation of the conflict in *Amhara* region, North Gondar zone taking Wegera and West Belessa as case study. This chapter, further, discusses the problems the state face to bring peace and security in different districts of the zone.

DATA ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION: CONFLICT IN WOGERA AND WEST BELESSA DISTRICTS

Conflict in North Gondar Administrative zone is a serious problem which claims the lives of many people. Major and minor body injuries on individuals are usually considered as common issues. People also loss their property every day. The following diagram shows the magnitude of the problem. It is clear that the following data is only reported data to North Gondar Administrative Zone. Many cases are not reported. This is because in remote districts, many cases of death and property damage are not usually reported.

The following graph shows the crime committed in the last five years in all districts of North Gondar zone and Gondar city. The Amharic translation of districts from the left to the right is Gondar city, Metama, Denbia, Chilga, Wogrea, Gondar Zuria, Debark, West Belessa, West Armachiho, Tach Armachiho, Lay Armachiho, Janamora, Dabat, Tegede, Alepha, East Belessa, Quara,

Takusa, Adi Arkay Beyeda and Telemit. The figures in the above diagram depicts that the conflict has claimed the life of many people; many were wounded and became disabled in different districts of North Gondar zone, including the two districts of the study area: West Belessa and Wogera. The reported crime in these two districts is 245 and 349 respectively. The conflict in Wegera district is much higher than West Belessa districts. In the words of Wegera district main inspector "the population number of this district is highest compared to other districts. The Second reason is in terms of geographical size it is the second largest district second only Quara districts" (Abebe *et al*, 2016).

Conflicts often arise from the failure of a regional government's legal system to protect rights victims and punish perpetrators. The following table shows the lives lost due to the continuous conflict in all districts of North Gondar zone. The following number accounts only reported case at the zonal level. Many cases of murder and other physical injuries are not usually reported. See Table 1

From the Table 2 can understand the maximum case of murder is 324 in 2014. The minimum number of life lost is 255 in 2011. The following table shows different crimes committed in North Gondar Zone

The two districts that are close to Gondar city and known in conflict among farmers are West Belessa and Wogera. Conflict and killing in these districts are frequent problem. Data from the district police office show that many people lost their life every day. For example, table shown below, tells how many people have lost their lives for the last five years. The following data only shows the lives lost and cases that are reported to the districts police office. See Tables 3-5

The following table shows the number of people killed in Wegera district. The number of people killed, as one can see, is much higher than that of West Belessa district.

From the tables 3 to 4, one can draw a conclusion that murder and other forms of crimes are common in West Belessa and Wegera districts. Conflict and Murder in West Belessa and Wegera district cause wide spread violation of human rights, exacerbating famine conditions as productive activities are disrupted and farms are abandoned. Conflicts divert scarce resources away from social service. This is because people are forced to buy firearms instead of using the money to buy fertilizer and other agricultural inputs. The persistence of conflict also has grave psychological consequences as children are traumatized or become accustomed to a culture of violence.

The shrinking natural resources including pastures and water triggered by environmental degradation and erratic rainfall patterns in the two districts over the last twenty years has led to a competition over the limited scarce resources, causing conflict among farmers. The

level of poverty in the two districts of Wogera and West Belessa is specifically related to meager access and possession of farm resources such as oxen, farmland and other resources. The two districts are mountainous and the construction of roads connecting one *kebele* to the other *kebele* is almost non-existence. So, controlling criminals has become a difficult task. The easy availability of small arms in the districts exacerbated the problem.

Because of the above factors, the state loses control over its security functions as it fails to maintain the security of its citizens. As Lobell (2004) argued "the state has a moral duty to provide security to its citizens. He further argued the security provided must be broad and all encompassing to include physical, property social and economic security." Where the state fails or unable to provide such security to its people, the people seek alternative means to meet these challenges. This is what is happening in West Belessa and Wegera districts. Farmers in North Gondar zone are well-armed and have small and large firearms.

Problems related to governance, law enforcement, and justice systems are other issues identified as key factors that stimulate conflict in the study sites. Informants from both Wogera and West Belessa districts disclosed that the policemen are not ready to bring the attacker to justice. They argue that the problem is an obvious fact for which no proper and urgent remedy has been tried. The focus of government is not the security of people. The law enforcement agencies at all levels of government lack the capacity and, in fact, the will to examine, thoughtfully follow, capture, and bring criminals to the court. In this case, FGD participants and key informants of the West Belessa complaint against their respective officials working in the area of justice, security, and administration at district levels. The justice organs and other concerned bodies in the study sites hardly provide justice or take appropriate measures against criminals. These criminals are well-armed. The police force fails to take measures against these individuals. These criminals do not fear the police force (Demiss *et al*, 2016). So, the police force usually prefer to indifference rather than facing the people creating problems.

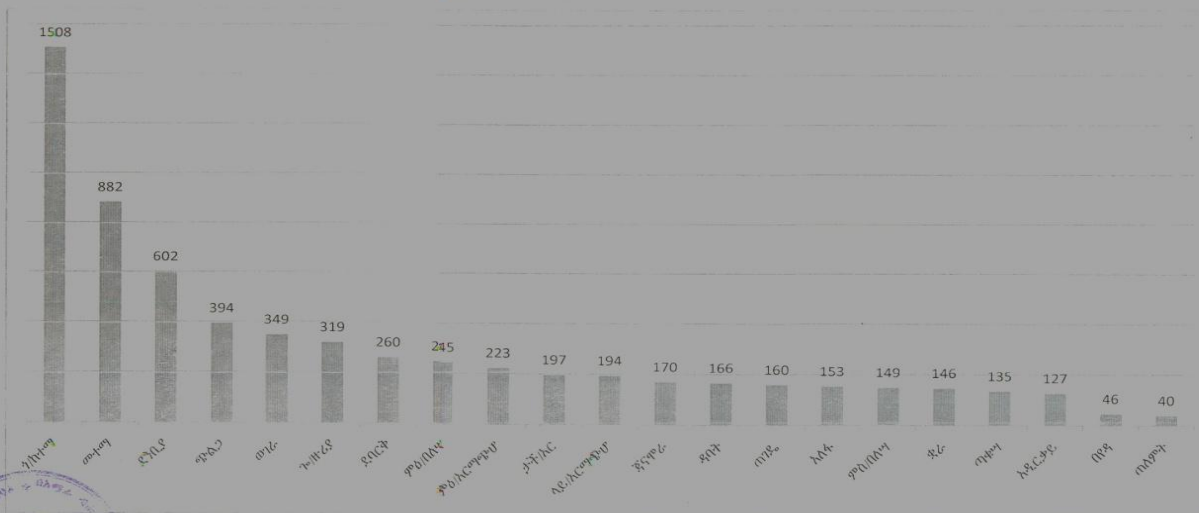
A 65 year old woman who lives in Gedebege¹ and who lost her son explains the scenario as follows:

---the district and zonal administrative bodies do not feel our pain. My son lost his life by minor conflict cause. They could have saved his life.

¹ Gedebege is a small town in Wegera districts which is almost 20 kilometer from Ambagiorgis, the capital city of Wegera district.

Table 1: List of North Gondar Administrative districts and crimes committed

4. በሁሉም የወንጀል ተግባር በአምስት አመት ጊዜ ውስጥ ከወረዳዎች ተገርተው የተላኩልን የምርመራ መዛግብት በወረዳዎች ደረጃ ሲቀመጥ



Source: North Gondar Administrative Justice Bureau

Table 2: Lives lost in North Gondar Administrative zone in the last five years

| Year | Life lost |
|------|-----------|
| 2011 | 255 |
| 2012 | 292 |
| 2013 | 266 |
| 2014 | 324 |
| 2015 | 270 |

Source: North Gondar Administrative Justice Bureau

He left six children². Now, who is going to bring up them? Who cares about us? We know all this is the result of weak law enforcement. For this reason people in the district prefer to take revenge than going to the

justice system. This, shows to the failure of the district's officials. The people here in our area are armed. Every time especially at night you here people shouting each other. People in this case lose their life.

An administrative structure is unable to identify community problems and provide a timely solution continues to be a source of conflict (2016).

² This researcher saw six children of the victim with their grandmother who lost her son.

It is obvious that people will take their own measures to

Table 3: all sorts of crime committed in North Gondar zone in the last five years

| Year | All sorts of crime committed |
|------|------------------------------|
| 2011 | 1139 |
| 2012 | 1552 |
| 2013 | 1371 |
| 2014 | 1407 |
| 2015 | 1050 |

Source: North Gondar Administrative Justice Bureau

Table 4: lives lost in West Belessa District

| Years | Lives lost | Efforts to kill |
|-------|------------|-----------------|
| 2011 | 17 | 8 |
| 2012 | 10 | 12 |
| 2013 | 9 | 25 |
| 2014 | 19 | 12 |
| 2015 | 27 | 8 |

Source: West Belessa Police Department

Table 5: lives lost in Wegera districts

| Years | Lives lost |
|-------|------------|
| 2011 | 20 |
| 2012 | 37 |
| 2013 | 16 |
| 2014 | 20 |
| 2015 | 15 |

Source: Wegera District Police Department

maintain their security if the government is unable to protect them from any illegal threat. For this reason, revenge killing is common in all *kebeles* of the two districts. West Belessa has 29 rural *kebeles* and one urban *kebele*, Arbaya city the capital city of West Belessa. On the other hand, Wegera district has 39 rural *kebeles* and two small towns: Gedebge and Ambagiorgis. The latter is the capital city of Wegera district. Though the insecurity is a widespread problem in all *kebeles* of the two districts, this researcher identified conflict-prone *kebeles*. Ankash, Jegeh, Kura Egig and Woybey are four *kebeles* where conflict among individuals is prevalent. Dahuch, Macha, Fenta, Abiye and Kossa are the most conflict prone *kebeles* of West Belessa districts. In these all *kebeles*, the presence of police is very limited and individuals bring peace and security by themselves. This goes with Lobell's argument that the weakening of state institutional structures will create insecurities on the part of individuals (Lobell, 2004). Farmers in this case are forced to take measures on their own means. For this reason every farmer in the study area has firearms, even

poor farmers who do not have single ox have firearms. This is because they have developed sense of insecurity. With regard to the presence of the state to control criminals in their district, Focus group discussion with four police officers of Wegera district comments the following remarks:

---based on the Business Processing Re-engineering (BPR) study, we planned one police force for every 1000 people in the rural kebeles and one police force for 500 people in urban kebeles. But we cannot accomplish this plan as it is difficult to fulfill all human resources. We usually face difficulties to retain our police members. As soon as we hire and train them, they leave for other jobs. There are two major factors of high turnover. One is the salary is too small and they could not afford to cover their

expenses³. Secondly, the nature of police work is related to facing challenges at night and at days. No rest. You are always on duty. So for this reason, the rate of turnover is very high. For this reason we face difficulties to control and cover some of the kebeles of the district. We have 41 kebeles; from these we tried to cover only 30 kebeles, the rest 11 are not covered. So there is high rate of criminal activity in these districts, specially the remote area like Chinfas which is most conflict ridden area (Abebe et al, 2016).

Amhara regional state, trained 7,500, police officers, 3,500 they went to other office and only the rest are on duty. The reason of high turnover is related to law salary. The newly recruited police officer earns 1280.00 Birr per month. This researcher believes that, taking into consideration the hard task of police, this income is not sufficient to cover their expense. It is clear that the task of police is related to hardship and other related factors.

A woman whose sister has been killed by another person argued "the legal system is weak. Imagine a person who kills other person gets nine years of imprisonment. How it could be? There is a trend of reducing the sentence of the court. After five or four years, the perpetrator may be released based on his code of conduct in jail. So, so how can we get justice?"

Focus group discussion with a four member peace and reconciliation committee argues the following points:

---here in West Belessa district killing a person is common tradition of the society. Usually, the cause of the conflict is related to land inheritance of parents' property and to some extent drunkenness. Problems are created because of these issues. People then develop a sense of revenge. Then, they arrange their fire-arm and ready to kill other person. Usually, killing takes place during November and Easter time. The reason is that these seasons are characterized by preparation of alcoholic beverage. So, people after taking too much alcohol, they create some minor disagreement and then it will grow to serious crime (Demiss et al, 2016).

These people continued to comment "the impact of conflict is different. After a person kills then he will not live a normal life. He cares for himself and for his families. He develops suspicion to everyone. His movement is restricted. He cannot go and plough his farm and feed his

children. The impact on the victim side is also serious. The first is they lost their bread winner, so children will be without parents. The psychological impact on the family is unthinkable."

These committee members further argue "the government is not doing its task properly. The police force is not sufficient to cover all kebeles. Additionally, the police force is not ready to share the problem of society. Furthermore, once the killer is captured, he will go to Gondar prison center. The problem is, he will come within short period of time getting different kinds of training. Even the prisoner shows an increase in weight." In the Belessa district, there is a usual trend. As is perpetrator is released from prison, he then buys different firearms to kill people who certified on him. This happens in one kebele of West Belessa district named Kossa. Now the families of these people are in the state of war.

Tewdros, deputy police inspector at Arbaya city argued "we are trying to do our best to reduce the conflict. The problem is related to two factors: the cultural value of the society, who considers minor issues and exaggerates it. Additionally, people usually hide the perpetrators. The second reason for the prevalence of crime in this district is related to the political leadership." It is clear that the political leadership does not give proper attention for this serious crime. If the regional government and the federal government give proper attention, in other words, if they place well trained police force, even military force, the problem could have been minimized.

From the above views of victims, policeman, and elderly people, it is clear that the conflict and killing recurs due to the inefficiencies entrenched in the judicial system and the poor enforcement of the rule of law. Government officials of the two districts are not capable enough to bring peace and security in these districts and other North Gondar zones. The political leadership does not bring the offenders to the legal court. If they bring the offenders to the legal court, they release these offenders after five or four years. The problem of conflict will continue. Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that conflict between farmers in the area have a positive correlation with the weakness of the governments at district, zonal and even federal level. The argument is that had the rule of law and its enforcement been strong enough, particularly against those who commit homicide, and had the political elites been loyal to the rule of law, the West Belessa and Wogera district people would not have been involved in a series of retaliation. Almost all informants agree on the political abuse in relation to law enforcement in the study areas.

³ When a police officer is hired, the starting salary is 1268.00 Ethiopian Birr.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

The main theme of this study is to examine the dynamics conflict and the role of the state to reduce conflicts among farmers in the two districts of West Belessa and Wogera. The paper attempted to examine and assess the causes, actors and their interests as well as effects of the conflict in the study sites. Besides, it highlighted the peace interventions applied so far to resolve conflict. The study eventually revealed the following findings and conclusions from the analysis.

Growing demand for natural resources and the increasing complexity of conflicts make conflict management and resolution more difficult. Since natural resources are necessary for life and growth, it is not surprising that resource scarcity, and environmental degradation in all *kebeles* of the West Belessa and Wogera districts contribute to the violent conflict. Competition over natural resources, particularly land and land-related issues are one of the major causes that ignite recurring conflict between farmers.

The second cause of the conflict in West Belessa and Wogera districts is related to the weakness of the state to punish the perpetrators. The law enforcement mechanism to punish perpetrators is not sufficient. There are three basic reasons. The first, the state is not in the position to control the flow of illegal firearms in the two districts. People are well-armed in the study sites and other North Gondar districts. The offenders, after committing crime, could live without fear and punishment. The victims then, develop a sense of revenge and would bring justice by himself. Secondly, even if the offenders are red handed and convicted as prisoners, the punishment is not fare. It is almost seven to ten years of imprisonment. The perpetrators could be released earlier based on their good conduct in the prison. Thirdly, conflict in the two districts is related to shortage of manpower and other resources. Police officers do not stay in their office; there is high turnover. Since they cannot support their family with meager income, they usually find another job. Lastly, as far as the two districts are rugged and mountainous, infrastructure problem coupled with shortage of vehicle is the main problem to bring peace and security in the two districts.

With regard to the impact of the conflict among farmers, the study showed that children became without their parents, sense of insecurity has increased among the population. People in the two districts have developed sense of fear due to the recurrent problem in the districts. To solve this problem people prefer to go other regions of Ethiopia. Arable land has become uncultivated and this resulted in decrease in production and then starvation. People do not fully in engaged in productive activity. Relatively speaking, the two districts are suitable for

agricultural production and animal husbandry. But, what is produced is used to buy fire arms and bullet in as famers are not sure what will happen tomorrow.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Conflict, among farmers in North Gondar Administrative zone, is common. The problem is not the existence of conflict but the way how it is handled. In this regard, a timely sound intervention from government officials at the district, zonal and regional levels, are indispensable. Thus, to maintain peace and security, the following recommendations may be worth mentioning based on the findings of the study.

The government officials at local, district, zonal and regional levels of *Amhara* region should give credit and recognition to the deep-rooted problem in the two districts in particular and North Gondar Zone in general. Capacity building trainings for the people in the area of early warning system and conflict prevention mechanisms should be given in advance rather than engaging in conflict resolution after the crime is committed.

The level of poverty in the two districts of Wogera and West Belessa is highest when compared with other districts. The regional government should engage itself to solve these problems. It could be building small dams and help the farmers to produce three items per year. This could create wealth for farmers. Finally conflict could be reduced because of land and other resources.

Law enforcement and the justice system should execute their duty consistent with the rule of law to take appropriate measures against offenders. This will allow justice to flourish because it is not only preventing criminals from their wrong deeds but also preventing victims to use their own devices as revenge for they feel the law is ineffective.

As mentioned earlier, the major cause of conflict in the two districts is related to the proliferation of illegal firearms throughout different districts of North Gondar zone. So the federal government should issue proper laws with regard to the circulation of firearms.

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2. Interview and Focus Group Discussion

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