



Inter-Ethnic Conflict Resolution by Local Peace Committee: The Case of Afar-Amhara Conflict

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ABSTRACT

Over the years, the Afar and Amhara people of the North Eastern Ethiopia have locked horns over the control of resources. The federal government delegated power to the two regional governments to settle the conflict between the two ethnic groups. However, efforts made by this tier of governments are failed to stop the conflict in the area. As a result, they established the joint LPCs made up of local people from both ethnic groups. Hence, the objective of this study was to investigate the process, challenges and opportunities of these LPC in its conflict resolution journey. To this attempt, the study employed both primary and secondary data sources. The study revealed that the LPCs employ series of process to resolve the conflict in the study area. Besides, it identifies a number of glaring challenges that the LPCs faced with. Despite the challenges that the LPCs faced with, the study further identifies the existence of opportunities which can positively benefit the LPCs to transform the conflict in the study area. In nutshell, the LPCs are found to be very important institutions in conflict resolution and promoting peace in the study area. Therefore, the study recommended those governmental and non-governmental agencies, the LPC members, the community, and intellectuals altogether should strive to decrease the challenges and promote the opportunities of these LPCs to solve the Afar-Amhara conflicts at the border.

Keywords: Afar, Amhara, conflict resolution, inter-ethnic conflict, Local Peace Committees (LPCs)

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INTRODUCTION

Conflict has defined by many scholars in different ways. Accordingly, Nader (1968) defines the term as inevitable human phenomenon in which human society can hardly live outside it. Moreover, Schellenberg (1996) understands conflict as a relationship between two or more parties who have or perceived that they have incompatible goals.

According to Abbink (2006), inter-ethnic conflict is therefore, conflicts which take place between two or more politically identified ethnic groups. Thus globally, inter-ethnic conflicts have been fueled by the presence of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) (Mkutu, 2008).

Similarly, inter-ethnic conflicts have been witnessed across the African continent. While some of these conflicts are fueled by socio-economic and political competition, others have arisen due to deep rooted ethnicity along the “divide and rule” policy of the colonial administration (Mamdani, 2009).

Being non- colonized does not save Ethiopia from ethnic conflict. Otherwise, Ethiopia has also encountered a lot of inter- ethnic conflicts (Abrha, 2012). As identified by Sisay (2007), claims and counter claims for land and water points, exclusion from power, unmarked boundaries, blood feuds, proliferation of SALWs, feelings of insecurity, domination by a given group and lack of good governance are the main causes of ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia. Especially, the post 1991 political changes in Ethiopia brought more and complex inter-ethnic conflicts (Assefa, 2003).

There have been a number of recorded inter – ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia (Habtamu, 2013) and the post 1991 regime in the country has been less successful than expected in managing ethnic tensions. Hence, the Afar and their neighboring conflict is one of the inter-ethnic conflicts. Some of the major factors for these conflicts are contested boundary lines, and competition over natural resources (Bekele,

2010). Moreover, Jemal (2012) and Getachew (2011) argued that the conflict is the result of incorporation of the traditional Afar land to the Ethiopian state system.

Particularly, the Afar and Amhara communities at the border areas experienced a number of inter- ethnic conflicts. The Afars are cattle herders while the Amharas are depend on both cattle herding and settled farming. This resulted in the two groups struggle to control grazing lands, water points and arable lands (Anteneh, 2013). Thus, the Afar and Amhara National Regional States, due to their failed effort, established the joint LPCs made up of local people from both ethnic groups to settle the conflict.

Despite the organization of the LPCs to end the conflict, no attempt was made to investigate the LPCs conflict resolution journey. Studies in the area are focused on the causes, actors, and consequences of the conflict. Accordingly, Unruh (2006) argued that the conflict is the result of vaguely defined boundary lines between the Afar and their neighboring Amhara communities. Anteneh (2013), Admasu (2016) and Tewodros (2017) argued that undefined boundary lines, grazing lands, water points, revenge, theft and the existence of SALWs are the major causes for the Afar-Amhara conflicts at the border areas.

However, what is missing in the aforementioned studies is to uncover the efforts that the LPCs have to resolve the inter-ethnic conflict. In fact, the above studies tried to see the LPCs as local level intervention mechanisms of solving the conflict but failed to show what conflict resolution process that the LPCs follow? What challenges and opportunities that the LPCs have? Hence, this article is projected to answer the aforementioned questions by taking the Habru-Ewa, Habru-Chifra, Raya-kobo-Gulina, and Raya kobo-Awra woredas as a case.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the Afar-Amhara conflict resolution

by LPCs at the border areas of the two groups in North Eastern Ethiopia.

Specific Objectives of the Study

- ✓ To investigate the process of inter-ethnic conflict resolution by LPCs in the study area.
- ✓ To identify the major challenges that the LPCs are facing in their conflict resolution process in the study area.
- ✓ To dig out the existing opportunities that can help the LPC's effort of conflict resolution in the study area.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts

While conflict happens when two or more actors pursue incompatible goals, inter-ethnic conflicts occurred when two or more than ethnic groups go to sporadic relationship (Wolff, 2006). In Africa, the ethnic conflict between the Nuer and Dinka of South Sudan, the conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda are among the many inter-ethnic conflicts in the continent (Mamdani, 2009).

Coming to Ethiopia, ethnic conflicts are resulted from Ethiopia's multi ethnicity (Beken, 2007). In the pre-1991, conflicts were caused by the monopolization of state power and economic resources (Alem, 2004). In the post-1991, the adoption of ethnic federalism makes those conflicts more complex (Assefa, 2003). Thus, the conflicts at the borders of Oromia and Somali, Afar and Issa, Garre and Borena, Oromia and Gumuz, Guji and Gedeo, have occurred in the past couple of decades (Habtamu, 2013). Therefore, the post 1991 regime in Ethiopia has been less successful than expected in managing ethnic tensions.

Similarly, the Afar and their neighboring ethnic groups are experiencing conflicts for different reasons (Bekele, 2010; Abrha, 2012 and Getachew, 2000). Specifically, revenge, drought, SALW, competition over natural resources, contested territorial boundary, cattle raiding and looting of properties are the major causes for the Afar-Amhara conflicts (Anteneh,

2013; Jemal, 2012; Admasu, 2016 and Tewodros, 2017). The political parties, armed groups, elders, clan leaders, ethnic groups, and government bodies of the two communities are the main actors of the conflict (Tadesse and Yonas, 2005). Generally, the aforesaid studies on the Afar-Amhara conflict scenario focused on the causes, and actors of the conflict. So, the process, challenges and opportunities of the LPCs to settle the conflict is not studied.

Conflict Resolution by Local Peace Actors

Conflict resolution can be happening both in a top down and bottom up ways. The latter is more relevant to the African condition for it bases itself on the philosophy of communalism (Mekonnen, 2010 and Woubishet, 2011). Therefore, LPCs are a bottom up way of conflict resolution actors (Odendaal, 2010). In different parts of Africa, LPCs have successful contributions. In the early 1990's, LPCs were working at different levels in South Africa (Van Tongeran, 2011) and Kenya (Adan and Pkalya, 2006).

In Ethiopia, LPCs are formed in 2004, and legally recognized by the year 2009 in to the national Conflict Early Warning and Early Response Unit (CEWERU) (Glowacki and Gonc, 2013). As a result, the Afar and Amhara regional governments established the joint LPCs to settle their conflict. However, despite the organization and importance of the LPCs to end the conflict, little is known about it. Studies in the area, as mentioned above, over looked the conflict resolution journey of LPCs. Therefore, this creates a literature gap that could be filled by this study.

Theoretical Frame Work

A theory is a rational statement meant to elucidate, guide and interpret the findings of a study (Oliver, 2009). The article is guided by the social capital theory which explains the formation of communal societies, cultures, and the attendant social ties that bind them together. This theory posits that social networks, bonds, reciprocal duties and trust, bind people together and enable them to coexist by avoiding their

differences. It is these social ties that guaranteed the existence and effective functioning of the society in harmony. In most of Africa, true in Ethiopia, conflict resolution by local peace actors aimed at restoring the social ties or social capital that had been broken by the wrongs done, committed or omitted. Without strong social ties, communities could not exist and function effectively. Even in serious cases such as murder, the threat of excommunication from the society, and therefore exclusion from social ties, ensured that potential wrongdoers thought about and refrained before wrongdoing.

To sum up, the above theory is highly relevant for the conditions in the study area. This is because LPCs are using different social capitals and are existed as the society drives utility to solve the conflict between the two ethnic groups. Therefore, the Afar-Amhara conflict resolution by LPCs has analyzed in this theoretical framework.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

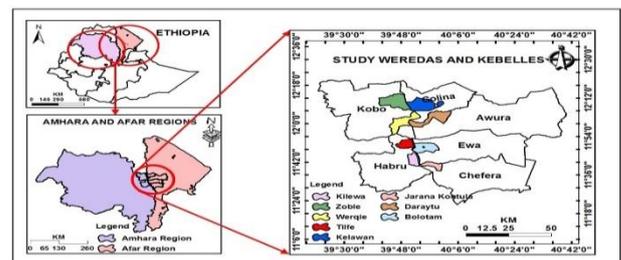
Study Area Description

Amhara National Regional State: Amhara National Regional State, one of the nine regional states in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is the home land of the Amhara people and other ethnic minorities. Its capital is Bahir Dar. Lake Tana, which is the source of the Blue Nile River, is located in this region. The Amhara Region is bordered with the Afar region (Eskindir, 2013). Of the Amhara region, the North Wollo Zone (Habru, Gubalafto and Raya Kobo woredas) which has a geographical linkage with Afar region is the target research area. This is a mixed farming zone combining cereal cultivation and livestock rearing.

Afar National Regional State: Afar National Regional State is located at the northeastern part of Ethiopia. The region shares borders with Amhara region in the southwest. Of the Afar region, Chifra, Ewa, Awra and Gulina woredas have geographical continuity with the Amhara region and are the target areas of this study. The

major livelihood of the Afar community is livestock rearing which accounts about 90% with limited irrigation agriculture. The climate of the region is characterized as arid and semi-arid. It remains dry and hot throughout the year (Tadesse and Yonas, 2005). These creates shortage of pasture and water for their livestock which forced them to come to the Amhara highland areas for extensive need of grazing land that causes the contradiction among the two ethnic groups at the border areas.

Figure 1: Study area map



Source: Author, 2017

Research Site and Participants Selection

The study area covers six woredas (Raya Kobo and Habru woredas) from Amhara National Regional State and (Chifra, Ewa, Awra and Gulina woredas) from the Afar National Regional State were focus areas of the study. Of these woredas of both regions, 8 kebeles were selected based on purposive sampling method taking in to consideration their geographical closer relationship and recurrence of conflicts. These include the cases of Workie-Darayitu; Zoble- kelawan; Kilewa-Jarana Kontula and Tilfe-Bolotamo from the Amhara and Afar Regions respectively.

Then, through contacting the selected woreda security bureaus, the LPCs and elders were accessed as study participants. Thus, 22 key informants from persons in the zonal, woredas, kebeles security bureaus, and elders in each selected kebele whom were interviewed individually which took 1-2 hours were selected purposefully. Similarly, the FGD discussants were selected from members of the LPCs purposefully taking their voluntarism and ability

to express ideas about the issue. Hence, there were 6 FGDs in six selected woredas containing 8-9 members. While the FGDs were conducted, the researcher had guidelines within which he can facilitate the discussion.

Data Collection and Analysis

The article is an exploratory study that seeks to reveal the Afar-Amhara conflict resolution by LPCs in north eastern Ethiopia. To achieve this objective, both primary and secondary relevant data was gathered. Primary data were collected from LPC members, security officers and elderly communities using interviews, FGDs and key informant interviews. The secondary data for the study was drawn from textbooks, journals, articles, magazines, and internet publications using document analysis as a tool of data collection. Finally, the collected data from different sources were analyzed via thematic analysis technique with its generic steps.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To manage the inter-ethnic conflicts, the Afar and Amhara National Regional states organized the joint LPCs. A local peace committee needs to be composed of local people (Odendaal, 2010). Similarly, members of the LPC in the study area are selected by the respective communities based on their honest and social acceptance. It consists of religious leaders, elders, youths, kebele administrators, kebele's community policing officers, and woreda security agents from both ethnic groups. The committee meets regularly every 15 days to discuss on how to sustain the peaceful co-existence between the two communities (Interview with the secretary of LPC in Habru woreda, April, 2017).

The Peace committee has the task of promoting peace between the two ethnic groups in the study area (Habru Woreda security Officer, 2017). In nutshell, LPCs are borne out of the deep frustration felt by people at the failure of government efforts to resolve conflict in the study area.

The Process of Conflict Resolution by the Local Peace Committees

Conflict resolution by LPCs has its own process. For instance, when a person of either group is killed by either group, and there is no information as to who did the crime, the family of the deceased take the case to their respective LPCs. Once the LPCs are told about the matter, they meet together and exchange information about the case with the LPCs of the perpetrator's group.

The first responsibility of the LPCs in the perpetrator side is to convene the whole people. Then, the leader of the LPC begins the meeting by blessing the community and inviting the aggrieved party to present their case before the panel. After that, the LPCs begin their investigation procedure. If there will be nobody who reports the crime, they agree to have another appointment in which every member of the panel promises that he will report the crime if he hears anything related to the crime. In the panel, the LPCs warned non-participation in the next day might cause the LPCs to suspect the non-participant as being the perpetrators. That makes the whole people to come in the next appointed date (LPC member in Habru woreda, 2017).

In the next appointed date, blessings, the curses, and the prayers are followed as in the first date. At this stage, the aggrieved party did not required to present its case again, mostly the elders and religious fathers, present oratories sayings like "he might hide his crimes from the living, but not from the dead." These kinds of oratories do have very significant roles in investigating the homicide, because the people fear spirit of the dead. After they finish the oratories, the LPC members ask the panel about the fact as to who is being suspected. The LPCs stress that it is not good for a person, his family and even for his kin group to do a crime. The panel discusses the matter again and also takes another date to give a chance for the suspect or hearsays. The roles of this oratories and curses

by the elderly persons and religious fathers is not be under emphasized by the people because what the elderly person and religious fathers say will never fall on the ground in ineffective(a LPC member in Raya kobo woreda, 2017).

At the third appointment, when everybody fails in finding out the perpetrator of the crime, LPC members stand and warn to the person who has done the crime or heard the crime being done, telling him that he is going to be perished together with his ethnic group for not exposing himself or the perpetrator of the crime. The LPC member emotionally continues his oratory saying that the LPCs would not be responsible for any outcomes of the curses from the elderly men. He further details the consequences of his evil acts among the community. In so doing, the oratory is in a way making initiations so that the perpetrator of the crime will be exposed (an elder from Habru woreda, 2017).

After identifying the perpetrator, there are complex ritual procedures for the reconciliation of conflicting individuals/groups. The guilty and his ethnic groups would be reconciled with the relatives and ethnic groups of the offended. In the case of homicide, the LPCs arrange for reconciliation with the family and ethnic group of the deceased. Then, the LPCs arrange a specific day and place for the reconciliation where families and relatives of the guilty and the deceased appear (LPC secretary in Habru Woreda, 2017).

Figure 2: A photo that shows the mediation process between the conflicting parties by LPCs.



Source: Habru Woreda Security Office PR (March, 2017)

The other step is the accomplishment of compensation process based on the agreements signed by the LPCs of the two ethnic groups. In fact, the amount of compensation is depending on the way how the murder is committed. The LPCs focus group discussants described the issue in the following manner:

The way the crime is committed determines the amount of compensation. If somebody is killed accidentally, it is traditionally said to be **keye dem** (Red blood) which can be compensated 40 thousand birr. However, if the murdering is committed deliberately as revenge, it is taken as a heavy crime and it is traditionally said to be **Tikur dem** (black blood). The amount of compensation for this type of killing is 60 thousand birr. The compensation payment is subscribed by the entire community of the perpetrator group (FGD in Chifra, April, 2017).

As part of the reconciliation process some social sanctions are also imposed on the criminals. For instance the criminals are not allowed to be seen in the common markets and to use common grazing areas until the victim party is mentally and physically healing from his injury.

The last step is the making of an oath and eating together. The victimized party makes an oaths, not to retaliate, being in front of religious leaders who have the holy Quran in their hands. After the oath practice is finished, the religious leaders and elders of the LPCs give blessing and the two conflicting parties are requested to eat together which symbolizes a sign of approving the reconciliation (an elder from Raya kobo, 2017).

Challenges for the LPCs in Afar-Amhara Conflict Resolution

The article identifies the following challenges for the LPCs conflict resolution journey in the study area.

Violence Cultural Practices in both Ethnic Groups: The culture of violence which is inherited among the two groups is found to be a challenge for the LPCs to settle the conflict. The

social capital theory argued that violence culture affects the societies by reducing trust and raising mutual suspicion. Similarly, a LPC member from Habru woreda explained the issue in the following way:

Figure 3: Photos that show disputant parties are meal together.



Source: Habru Woreda Security Office PR (April, 2017)

Killing Afar is the manifestation of one's heroism. But the one who killed the Afar should bring an evidence of proof by presenting the deceased properties (like finger ring, weapon and so on). Then he will be treated as hero and gets special recognition from the community. He will allow wearing a special ring in his left hand finger and bracelets in his hands which are the symbols of his braveness by killing his enemy (Afar)... Look! The children are growing in this culture. The son of the hero wants to continue the legacy of his father and motivated to be considered as the son of the brave be also brave.

Therefore, now the LPCs failed to change this violent culture. It becomes an impediment for their goal of peace building. Furthermore, the FGD discussants from the same setting explained that when a person who kills the Afar invited to the wedding ceremonies, he is boasting and making war songs by naming the places where he killed the Afar such as "Ama Geday" (I killed an Afar in a place called Ama), "Jara Geday" (I killed an Afar in a place called Jara), and "Gedero Geday" (I killed an Afar in a place called Gedero). He announces his talent of shooting to the audience. This motivates others to be like. In contrary, the one who did not kill the Afar is going to be defamed by the

Amhara community. One interviewee from Raya kobo Woreda put the Amharic popular poetic verses in the following way:

"Adal Gidel Biye Bsedew Gomeji, Ades Yizo Meta Mistune Liyabejaj."

The above Amharic popular poetic states that though I send a person Gomeji (a place in Afar) to kill Adal (Afar), he returned back without killing the enemy (Afar) but he brings Ades (a plant which is used by women to have good odder and smile face) to beautify his wife.

Analogously, there are bad cultures in Afar community which are responsible for an endless conflict between the two ethnic groups. In the Afar community, the one who kills the Amhara has special recognition based on the way how he kills the Amhara and the number of his killings. An interviewee from Gulina woreda, stated this issue in the following manner:

The degree of appreciation given to the killers is depending on the number of killings and the way the killer committed the murder. The one who kills an Amhara by hiding himself in the bush is called **Geno**, to mean hidden murderer and did not get recognition by the Afar community for it does not show his courage. On the other hand, an Afar who kills the Amhara through direct confrontation is named as **Agiru**, meaning hero and he is appreciated and recognized by the Afar community. Furthermore, the one who kills many Amhara is considered as **Ellama**-and given high social status for a long.

The above cases show that the culture of violence among the two ethnic groups are found to be the challenges for the LPCs to end the Afar-Amhara conflict for the reason that the two ethnic groups saw killings as the manifestation of heroism.

Rivalry among the Two Ethnic Groups:

While mutual respect and collaboration is important to solve the conflict, there is a mutual rivalry and suspicion among the two ethnic groups. LPC members, from Habru woreda,

discussed their idea about the issue in the following way:

Now days, the peace committee is helpless. The people from the two sides are not cooperative but rivalry to one another. The people did not help us in identifying the criminals. The Afar community did not identify and gives the wrong doers for their own LPCs. But they denied exposing the perpetrator and his case and the same is true for the Amhara people. So, how the peace committee can build peace in the area unilaterally? It is impossible to dream peace in the area.

These show the peoples of the two ethnic groups did not help the committee in providing information and identifying the wrong doers. Therefore, lack of partnering for sustaining peace means the LPCs cannot succeed alone.

Technical, Administrative and Incentive Gaps: The LPCs are not technically supported by either the government or other agencies. An interviewee from Habru woreda said that “no one provides us with technical and professional trainings which can help our peace building skill”. Though the LPCs should serve on a voluntary base, financing is found to be necessary to cover the transport and accommodation costs of the LPCs while they are going far from their kebeles for peace making. Not less importantly, the absence of administrative supports for them drags behind the LPC’s effort of conflict resolution. The discussants from Raya Kobo Woreda stated the issue in the following manner: We are farmers; we have family, children whose lively hood is dependent on us. We are working by being member of the local peace committee in addition to our farming. While we are working for peace, we do not have a salary but voluntarily and free. They are the police officers and security bodies who are paid for this work. Leaving aside the salary and other financial supports, we did not have adequate administrative supports like paper, pen and venue. These all compromises our conflict resolution role.

Thus lack of incentives, technical and administrative supports for LPCs limit their ability to solve the conflict.

Commitment Gaps: The lack of commitment in the side of LPCs is partly due to inadequate incentives to their role of peace making. Limits on funding and other resources have discouraged the LPCs from working from their heart. In Raya -Kobo Woreda, a LPC member said that “The government wants us to do too many things with no incentive.” They argued that the broad mandate of the LPC is irrelevant unless accompanied by sufficient resources. In nutshell, while some members of the LPCs, who are appointed by government such as the police, are paid, the elders are not paid thus reduces the elders commitment to perform their peace making task from their heart.

Lack of Sufficient Political Will: The regional governments of the two regions did not give the necessary attention for LPCs. The police forces did not execute what the LPC decided. This shows the role of the joint LPCs did not got sufficient political will. Participants from Habru Woreda argued that “the governments of the two regions did not want to see the LPCs as a strong peace making organ. They did not help us to end conflicts.” Furthermore, the participants stated their idea in the following way:

During our peace making process, we identify the criminals and analyses the problem, we decide the compensation to be paid by the perpetrators for the victim. However, some criminals from both ethnic groups are unwilling to pay the compensation for their crime. At this time we report the case to the Woreda security but the government did not give due regard for the case, because it is the people who is being killed not politics is being touched.

The above explanation shows the government body did not often take the conflict seriously. It has the tendency of enforcement on the issues that are political in nature. Hence, in the absence of political will, the LPCs cannot make progress.

The Proliferation of SALWs: The inability of the government to address the proliferation of SALWs in the area with functional policies and legislations is a challenge for the LPCs to settle the conflict. Firearms are common in both ethnic groups. According to the participants' view, the two communities have increased demand of gaining and accumulating firearms to protect themselves and their livestock. The community members in these areas did not feel secured unless they do have firearms to counter balance their 'enemies'. This availability of illegal weapons triggers the two ethnic groups to go to war in which the LPCs cannot stop.

Figure 4: Photos that show some of SALWs which are existed in the study area.



Source: Habru Woreda Security office (2017)

Opportunities for LPCs to Manage the Afar-Amhara Conflict

Despite the analysis of glaring challenges that the LPCs faced with the article argued that there are a window of opportunities for the LPCs to transform the conflict in the study area.

The Organization of the Peace Committee:

The way how the joint peace committee organized provides the LPCs with a potential to manage the inter-ethnic conflict. Being formed from the two ethnic groups, the LPCs have an opportunity to access cases and identify the criminals from both sides. Participants of the study, from Habru Woreda, expressed the issue in the following manner:

Our peace committee is organized from both Amhara and Afar Ethnic groups. Hence, it has an opportunity for us in accessing cases and perpetrators from both ethnic groups easily. The Afar LPCs bring the Afar perpetrators, and we

the Amhara committees are doing same from our ethnic groups for peace process and paying of the compensation for the victims. We the committee have an Oath not to hide the perpetrator and to give the criminals from our respective ethnic groups for the joint committee. Thus help the committee for working on the peace of the two ethnic groups together.

Similar Religion of the two communities around the border:

The other thing that can help the LPCs is the religious similarity and interaction between the two ethnic groups. Based on the data obtained from security affairs of North Wollo zone, a significant portion of the Amhara population (Habru and Raya-Kobo) along the border of the neighboring Afar region are Islam inhabitants. Furthermore, a key informant from Habru Woreda security office stated that "members of the two communities pray together in mosques along the border areas". This has strengthened the bond of their interaction and it has also contributed in the management of inter-ethnic conflict. This is in line with the social capital theory which explains the existence of social ties can bind societies together. In nutshell, the two ethnic groups are Muslims, so their religion unites them and has an opportunity for LPCs to solve the conflict.

The existence of Peaceful Cultures in both communities:

Despite the existence of violent cultures, there are also amicable cultures that promote peace between the two ethnic groups. As to the social capital theory, the formation of peaceful cultures among the communities increases social ties through increasing trust and reducing enmity of one another. Thus, Amana is one of the peaceful cultures which can promote the peace of the two ethnic groups. Amana is an agreement in which the Amhara inhabitants give their cattle to Afars for protection and production. The owner of the livestock provides gift like crops and claves among the newly born livestock to the one who is entrusted to keep the cattle. This activity makes friendly and peaceful relationship between the two

individuals from the two ethnic groups (Habru woreda security officer, 2017).

The culture of Ye dem Lij or literally to mean blood's son is another peaceful culture that can enhance the peace of the two ethnic groups. This culture is practiced when an individual Afar kills Amhara's son or the vice versa is true who is helping his parents by keeping livestock or farming activities. In this case, the one who kills would become in to negotiation with the family (father) of the dead via Koti (a long stick of Abegars). In so doing, the murderer would be decided to live with the families of the dead by helping them in activities which were covered by the dead. Then, the murderer is believed to be the replacement of the dead. The families of the dead love the murderer as their son. This powerful culture creates a family-hood between the family of the murderer and the dead families. The two families will be invited each other at times of holiday and wedding ceremonies. Thus, this culture promotes the goal of LPCs (LPC member in Habru woreda, 2017).

The other is the culture of Ketayisa (an Afar word which literally to mean my closer friend) which has an important role to cool down the conflicting situation between the two ethnic groups. Both the Amhara and Afars at the border keeping livestock in Guadana (a common grazing area) together would make friendship. Thus the existence of Ketayisas (closer friends) from both ethnic groups can be considered as an opportunity for the LPCs by enhancing friendly relationship between the two ethnic groups (Raya kobo security officer, 2017).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed that the LPCs are applying series of conflict resolution process. The study also revealed that there are glaring pitfalls which hinder the roles of the LPCs and there are fertile grounds which can help the LPCs to succeed. Thus, the LPCs are found to be very important institutions for conflict resolution in the study area. There are situations that LPCs have

several times saved lives, solved problems, and restored peace among the two ethnic groups.

Therefore, the government at different levels should give due regard to solidify and strengthen LPCs to make them more practicable agency. Members of LPCs should also uphold the important virtue of volunteerism and the desire to use their God given skills to serve the community. The LPCs should replace its members and incorporate local elders that have a long history of working at the community level. This will help to win the heart and mind of the community by earning their trust.

The two communities should promote peaceful coexistence including sharing of declining resources as one sure way of upholding peace. The community should help the LPCs in identifying the perpetrators. These will go a long way in helping peace committees go a score higher in their endeavors.

NGOs and scholars should support the LPCs and enhance their capacity by offering trainings so that LPCs can work effectively. Finally, the government, nongovernmental organizations, LPCs members, the community and intellectuals' altogether, should strive to strengthen the opportunities and struggling against the challenges to increase the LPCs capacity of resolving conflicts in the area.

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