



Yabello Community gathering for peace dialogue, September 2010. Credit: CEWARN

Strengthening Traditional Conflict Resolution and Early Warning and Rapid Response Practices through Establishment of Peace Committees

Introduction

Due to recurrent drought in pastoral areas across Ethiopia, resource-induced conflicts are becoming a serious problem. Apart from that, livestock raiding is a common practice among the pastoral communities and has, for a long period, remained the most important challenge to pastoralism-based livelihood development in most pastoralist communities in Moyale and Wachile (Oromia), Moyale and Hudet (Somali) and Mile, Gewane and Amibara (Afar) woredas in Ethiopia.

An intervention implemented by the Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs (MoFPDA) in these pastoralist dominant woredas of Ethiopia promoted peace building mechanisms.

These mechanisms make use of the traditional conflict management practices of the targeted communities. The mechanisms involved establishment of a peace committee in each community. The committee is composed of religious leaders, elders, youth, kebele manager (field monitor),

women and community police. The committee, using the local traditional conflict management norms and procedures, manage any potential and real conflicts that may arise in their respective community. Members of the committee, especially the elders, know the root causes, nature and development of conflicts within their communities.

They know that effective management of the conflict could be achieved through application of the local conflict control mechanism. In addition, the traditional institutions bestow the elders with the authority to apprehend the perpetrators of raids, be they warriors or other elders. The intervention implemented by MoFPDA primarily seeks to empower the village elders in order to enhance the synergy between the local administration and traditional conflict prevention mechanisms.

The establishment of peace committees in the intervention is aimed at putting early information collection systems in place to strengthen grassroots structures for conflict mitigation

before they snowball into big conflicts. Establishment of conflict prevention and management resolution platforms will facilitate further communication to resolve any ongoing or arising issues. The peace committee established at village level monitor their community every day and report immediately to woreda peace committee when situation that may lead to conflict occur.

	INTERVENTION AREA Conflict prevention, resolution and peace building
	LOCATION Moyale and Wachile woredas of Oromia region, Moyale and Huded woredas of Ethiopian Somali region, Gewane, Amibara and Mille woredas of Afar region
	STAKEHOLDERS AND PARTNERS MoFPDA is implementer of the initiative. Regional, zonal and woreda level government administration are involved in the implementation process

Methodological approach

- Establishment of peace committees composed of individuals from within the communities which included representative of youth, women, religious leaders, local administration, elders, and community police. The selection process was participatory and involved organising community level meetings to elect the members of the peace committee.
- Capacity building training for the committee members provided in the area of nature of conflict; communication, monitoring of potential conflicts, reporting, conflict management/resolution etc.
- Specific tasks were identified and assigned to the communities on how to handle the conflict situation.
- Regular meetings by the peace committee to discuss different issues, review progress, evaluate performances etc.
- Generally, the peace committee is the source of information for conflict early warning and rapid response for the government structure. The underlying assumption is that by gathering information on early warning of escalating crises and analysing the possibilities of early responses, the prevention of violent conflict is of a greater likelihood.

Results

- The practice has been institutionalised as one of the mechanisms for strengthening early conflict warning and rapid response in the pastoral communities of Ethiopia.
- It impacted conflict mitigation, which enabled communities live together, share grazing and water resources, and carry out cross-border trade.
- Cattle raids/embezzlement reduced and associated conflict has been avoided.
- Violent conflicts, which disrupt the livelihood system, were averted due to the performance of the peace committee.

Success factors

- Existence of traditional conflict management mechanism, norms, practices among pastoralist communities.
- Commitment of local leaders and elders to work closely with local and regional authorities to control conflict and build peace.
- Strong coordination and networking among stakeholders in strengthening peace committees both technically and morally.
- Availability of telecommunication infrastructure in which the peace committee could use to rapidly communicate conflict early warning information to concerned body.

Constraints

- Limited resource availability hampered the expansion into more areas.
- Strengthening follow-up and technical support to the peace committee has been limited by shortage of financial resources. Focusing on few locations has been used as a solution until additional resources are obtained from government.
- High mobility of pastoralists at times of drought makes functioning of the peace committee difficult.

Sustainability

The local traditional conflict prevention mechanisms become more effective when supported by different levels of governmental institutions with technical capacity building, resources and legal means. Youth and women are key players in conflict prevention. It is clear that sustainable peace building could be sustainable when youth and women are part of the conflict management process.

Replicability and upscaling

- Understanding of the local tradition and culture of conflict management, socio cultural setting in relation to conflict management of the communities is an essential element for scaling up of the GP into other context.
- Formation of the peace building team should be carried out carefully to ensure inclusion of important figure/ personalities in the community who are widely accepted by the community.
- Getting conflict early warning information for rapid response could be widely scaled up in areas where information communication technologies such as mobile telecom services are well developed.

Additional resources

Kristensen, Katja H. (2019). Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism in the Horn of Africa: IGAD as a Pioneer in Regional Conflict Prevention in Africa.
 Saferworld (2015). Towards a more effective early warning system in the Horn of Africa. Learning lessons and seizing opportunities.

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