MEKELLE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

ANALISIS OF INTER-COMMUNAL CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN NORTH EAST ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF ATSBI WONBERTA AND THE NEIGHBORING AFAR

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MANAGMENT IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (GOVERNANCE, DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT)

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An Analysis of Inter-Communal Conflicts in North East Ethiopia: The Case of Atsbi Wonberta and Their Neighboring Afar

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Declaration

The thesis entitled “An Analysis of Inter-Communal Conflicts in North East Ethiopia: The Case of Atsbi Wonberta and Their Neighboring Afar” is my original work and has not been presented for a degree, diploma or fellowship to any other university and that all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been dully acknowledged.

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Certification

This is to certify that this thesis entitled “An Analysis of Inter-Communal Conflicts in North East Ethiopia: The Case of Atshi Wonbenta and Their Neighboring Afar” Submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of MA, in Development studies of the college of Business and Economics, Mekelle University, through the Department of Management, done by Mr. Atsbha Tekle, ID, No, CBE/PR066/05 is carried out by him under our guidance.

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<tr>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Central Statics Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDRE</td>
<td>Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<td>ICR</td>
<td>Indigenous Conflict Resolution</td>
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<td>Nd</td>
<td>No date</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSSRESA</td>
<td>Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environmental Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPRDF</td>
<td>Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISALW</td>
<td>Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons</td>
</tr>
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<td>E.C</td>
<td>Ethiopian Calendar</td>
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<td>NNGOs</td>
<td>Network of Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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Glossary

Abo-gereb: members of the elders in gereg

Abussma: marriage among cousins, most of the time practiced in Afar

Desso: afar term for reserved grazing land for lambs, calve, goats and camels

Fishih: common grazing land

Fukur: close friendship

Gereb: a joint institution which functions as indigenous court run by council of elders from Afar and Atsbi Wonbarta

Hafasi dem: someone who revenge and conserve his beloved blood

Halawi: persecutor of the reserved grazing lands

Hanta: a title of heroism given when someone killed Afar in ancient time

Hizaiti biray: reserved grazing land for oxen

Hurud Lahmi: slaughtered cow eaten after the reconciliation of two conflicting parties

Kushet: the lowest administrative unite below tabia in tigray regional state.

Sirit: traditional law

Tabia: the 5th administrative unite in tigray regional state down from federal

Ugugumo: a political party created during the last days of the derg regime to contain the influence of TPLF in afar region

Wereida: administrative unite next to zone in Ethiopia
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Abstract

Conflict is natural phenomena of human life. It is value free; it can be both constructive and destructive. The problem is, thus not the existence of conflict rather the way we react to it. The main themes of this research were to examine the dynamic inter-communal conflicts between Atsbi wonberta and their neighboring Afar in North East Ethiopia. This research gives emphasis to the underlying cause, dynamics and trends of the conflict by recognizing that this requires a deep understanding of historical and current relationship of the two communities in time of peace and conflict. To this end, both secondary and primary sources were used. However, due to the fact that either the recent conflict is less known and much neglected or literature on Atsbi Wonberta-Afar conflict is hardly available, secondary data have lesser share in this research. The research methodology employed for this study was qualitative, descriptive analysis. Atsbi Wonberta and their neighboring Afar communities have long history of peace full socio-economic interaction. Prior to 1991, these communities used to live peacefully. Conflicts were occurred rarely and if happened were resolved via traditional conflict resolution mechanism called Gereb/shimgilina. But after 1991, the relation of the two communities kept worsening and violent conflict continues to persist. The finding of this study revealed that the causes of the conflict are related to socio-cultural and economic variables. Government intervention in the conflict was very late and very little only focusing on treating symptoms of the problem than addressing the root causes. The pasture and water-related conflicts have been shown a shift with the intention of gaining territorial extension. This exacerbated the situation and hinders the sustainability of peace. Consequently, the conflict becomes catastrophic at one time and cools down at another time. The persistent conflict resulted in loss of human life, property damage and violation of people’s fundamental right and reduced development efforts in the study area. The culture of interdependence and symbiotic relationships between the two communities like “Fukur” (close friendship) and “Gereb” (joint institution for resolving conflict) have now fading away. This implies the gravity of the problem. Therefore, persistent efforts are required to bring about negotiable and non-confrontational commitment on the part of the two communities. To this end, the study underscores the importance of timely intervention on the part of the two wereda government. Government officials at wereda level should work hand in hand with the
local communities and support the deep-rooted local institution, Gereb, so as to strengthening conflict prevention and management between the two communities.

Key words: Conflict, Inter-Communal conflict, Conflict Dynamics, Gereb
CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The history of conflict is as old as human history. From the dawn of human history, communities have been competing for control of resources and for dominance. These competitions inevitably led individuals as well as social, political, economic, and religious groups to conflicts. Conflict is defined as contradiction where actors are in pursuit of incompatible goals including the means to achieve them (Galtung, 1973). Conflict has dual nature: violent and non violent (Bayer and Schernick, 2011). The former is destructive while the later is constructive and necessary aspect of life. Because of wide range of potential difference among people, the absence of conflict usually indicates the absence of meaning full interaction. Therefore, conflict is value free; it is neither good nor bad. What matter conflict to be good or bad is how we manage it. How we handle conflict determines whether it is constructive or destructive (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). But the focus of the research is on the violent (destructive) nature of conflict.

Now a day, conflicts present all over the world. But their nature, causes, actors and structures may be different. Despite of this fact, there are places in the world where conflicts are frequent and norm, one of which is Africa, particularly the horn of Africa. The Horn of African sub-region is one of the most unstable, fragile and conflict-prone areas in the world. The sources and types of conflict have become more diverse. Medhane (2004) noted that the major sources of conflict in the Horn Africa region as identity fault-lines, resource, poverty, super power rivalry, porous borders, among others. Bekelle (2010) also subscribe to hard security issues like sovereignty and self-determination and dissatisfaction with patterns of governance. All these factors are closely inter-related and are relevant to a contemporary issue of regionalized civil wars and inter-state rivalry in the Horn. They all catch aspects of the wider conflict system in the region. Attilo (2007) and Shimelis (2008), on the other hand, capitalize geographical location of the region as the main causes of conflict in the Horn African region. They noted that “geographical location of the region vis-à-vis the major petroleum producing states, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, as an important route for transporting petroleum. The region's proximity to
the Arab-Israeli conflict area needs also to be pointed out. This strategic location has called for the involvement of various states on the conflict in the Horn African region.” Today, communal conflict is one of the internationally recognized major social conflicts in the world. Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic country where diverse people live together (Madda, 2008 and Birhanu, 2006). As a multi-ethnic country, Ethiopia is not an exception to face ethnic confrontations. Despite differences in degree, extent, causes and actors of communal conflicts, Ethiopia has faced many inter-communal conflicts at different periods (Ibid). Birhanu (2006) claimed that although ethnic differentiation in Ethiopia has been taken as one dimension of its cultural and historical treasures, it seems, however, that the internal divisions are more of a curse than blessing in its development process. The Dizi-Surma conflict (Birhanu, 2006), the Afar-Issa conflict (Asnake, 2002; Bekelle, 2010) the Afar Krrayu conflict (Ayalew, 2001;Bekelle, 2010) and the Guji Gedio conflict (Hussien, 2001) are among the example of the recurrent inter-communal conflicts in Ethiopia.

According to Tadesse and Yonas (2005), the Afars are one of the large pastoral groups in the Horn of Africa. Their settlement distribution covers the borders of the three countries of the Horn: Ethiopia, Djibouti and Eritrea. They are almost entirely Muslim. Their native language is Afaraf, which is of Cushitic origin. As Tadesse and Yonas, 2005) noted that, though the Afar are divided by the borders of the three countries, they maintain close physical contact, strong sentiments of kinship, and an inclusive Afar identity. Conflict in the Afar and their neighbors has various manifestations: contested boundary lines (Bekelle, 2010), and (Tadesse and Yonas, 2005), competition for power among political parties, as mentioned earlier, the Afar pastoralists are in conflict with their neighbors. The Afar pastoral community has common borders with Oromia regional state, Amhara Regional National State and Tigray Regional National State. With the Tigray regional state, the Afar communities have common boundary with the Atsbi Wonberta District, Hintalo Wejerat and sothern zone of Tigrai. Few attempts have made to study the conflicts between Afar and their neighboring Tigrian. For instance see conflict between the Afar and their neighbors Wejerat (Abrha, 2012) and conflict between Afar and their neighboring Enderta (Kelemework, 2011) respectively. As constituents of the Ethiopian pastoralist and agro-pastoralist setting, the Atsbi Wonberta-Afar communities in this study are also prone inter-community conflict dilemma. Furthermore the study area is the least studied compared to other similar inter-communal conflict sites.
1.2 Statement of the Problem

There is debate on the causes of conflict between the Afar and their neighboring leaving adjacent to them. For instances, Mulugeta (2008) and Getachew (2001), explained the conflict as a result of incorporation of traditional Afar land to the Ethiopian state system. Bekelle (2010) on the same hand explained the conflict as a result of excessive appropriations of the Afar land to the Ethiopian state for development purpose and this creates pressure on the Afar pastoralists, hence resulted conflict. Unruh (2006) and Desalegn (2007) on the other hand explained the conflicts as a result of obscured bondary lines between the Afar and their neighbouring.

With regard to the actors of the conflict, Tadesse and Yonas (2005) mentioned that the regional governments of Afar and their neighbours, Afar political parties, legal and ilicit armed groups, Afar elders and clan leaders, the neighbouring communities in general are identified as major actors.

The conflict between the afar pastoralists and their neighbouring highlanders resulted in the loss of material and human life, heavey militarization of the people who live in the conflict sites, creates difficulties on the traditional rangeland managements, security related problems and the conflict create mistrust between the Afar, their neighbouring Atsbi Wonberta communities the violations of laws and regulations of the government in general (Abrha, 2012), (Tigist, 2010).

Both formal and informal conflict intervention mechanism are in place but most inter-communal conflicts are settled by using the informal conflict resolutions mechanism because the formal conflict resolution mechanism has the following flaws: Firstly, it is not acceptable by pastoralists who are not well educated. Secondly, In case of conflict sites are too remote, it is difficult to follow-up closely by the modern institutions due to lack of transportation and communication services. Thirdly, in case the conflict is communal and inter-communal, it is difficult to punish the offender because members of the community do not dare to find and hand over the offender to the modern court system (Abrha, 2012 and Kelemework, 2011). But this does not mean that the traditional conflict resolution mechanism is free of weakness. For instance, Abhra (2012) and Kelemework (2011) states that the traditional conflict resolution institution that has, for centuries, been a typical model in addressing inter--community conflict between the Afar and
their neighbors is getting challenged and being decayed. Now days, neither the new nor the old means of conflict resolution mechanisms are properly functional.

The causes of the conflict, (Mulugeta, 2008), (Getachew, 2001), (Bekelle, 2010) (Dessalegn, 2007) and Unruh, 2005,) are studied. Actors of the conflict in the Afar and their neighbors are studied by Tadesse and Yonas (2005) the outcome of the conflict between Afar and their neighbors is independently researched by (Abrha, 2012) and (Tigist, 2010). Interventions made so far by local (informal conflict resolution institutions) and formal (state or the court system) in resolving the conflict is assessed by (Kelemewerk, 2011) and to some extent by (Abrha, 2012).

The aforementioned researchers drew the elements of conflict (causes, actors, outcomes and interventions) independently. This approach of dealing with peace and conflict research may not give us the whole picture and true map of the conflict. The research, unlike the above researches, is going to study the conflict in the study area in a holistic approach, studding the conflict in a complete picture rather than isolating parts (causes, actors, outcomes and interventions) of the conflict. Holistic way of studying conflict may give clear and complete image of the conflict to policy makers and academia than the secluded way of studying conflict. The above researchers look conflict as static phenomena and have not given much attention to the core natural feature of conflict: the notion of “dynamics”. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there is no research conducted following this approach in the study area. Therefore, studying conflict dynamics, causes, actor and outcome in a single hole seems important. Are there new additions to the old causes of conflict in the study area? Are there new actors in the study area while the old actors are intact? Is there a change in the outcome of the because of additions/subtractions causes and actors? Are the local and formal ways of conflict resolutions still remaining with their limitations? How about the conflict dynamics in general? Are conflict incidence increases or decreases? Therefore, the purpose of this research is twofold: first, to bring methodological holism in to the realm of conflict and peace research and second, to capture the notion of conflict dynamics so as to challenge the implicit assumption of earlier research works that conflict is static in nature and hence its component parts can be dealt with separately.
1.3 Objective of the Study

1.3.1 General objective of the Study

The principal objective of this research is to analyze the dynamics of inter-communal conflict between the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta communities.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To assess the historical interaction of the two communities.
2. To describe the actor of the conflict and their interests.
3. To identify the peace making intervention mechanisms of the conflict in the study area.
4. To show the effect of the conflict on the two communities.
5. To indicate possible future scenario of the conflict

1.4 research Questions

Having the above general and specific objectives, here below are research questions designed to guide this research. This are:

a. What were the historical interactions of the two communities looks like in the past?
b. Who are actors of the conflict? What are their interests?
c. How can the dynamics of the conflict be explained in view of socio-cultural, political and economic perspective?
d. What peacemaking interventions have been tried so far?
e. What is the outcome of the conflict in the study area?
f. What possible future scenarios could possibly be driven from the past and present dynamics of the conflict?

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the study

Conflict as a social phenomenon is often described differently in various prescriptions. With regard to their level, conflicts can be national while others are international and still others are local. Based on their type, conflicts can be categorized as violent and non violent. The violent
conflict is the main focus of this study. The non violent conflict is beyond the scope of this study. The study mainly focuses on inter-communal conflicts dynamics and trends in north east Ethiopia, particularly the conflict between the Afar and their neighboring Atsbi Wonberta community. Conceptually, this research is limited on actor, cause, outcome and intervention dynamics and trends of conflict in a holistic approach at local level. The scope of the study is geographically limited to the border lines that the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta District have in common. Since the study is limited to the Afar and their neighboring Atsbi Wonberta community only, findings of this study may not represent or correspond to other areas of the country. The study is only conducted in Tabias (Kebelles), Atsbi Wonberta District, which have long common boundary with the Afar regional state. Border lines of the study areas with little or no prevalence of violent conflict were not part of this research. The areas which are included in this study are areas with recurrent violent conflicts. This study only deals with violent conflict between Afar and Atsbi Wonberta from 1991 to date.

As any research is not free of limitation, this research has its own limitation. The subject matter of the research is inter-communal conflict. The researcher is originally from Atsbi Wonberta community and this might raises an ethical question of neutrality and impartiality of the researcher’s argument. The researcher however tried his best to be impartial. To gain much more balanced picture of the conflict, it would have been important conducting field work by traveling to Kuneba, Afar. Besides, there were language problems with some of the informants as they cannot fluently speak Tigringna and the researchers also do not speak Afarigna. This was reconciled by employing enumerator who is fluent in both languages.
1.6 significance of the Study

The researcher is conducting this research thesis on the Afar and their neighboring Atsbi Wonberta community where a scant secondary source (literature) is found about the study area. The researcher is basically interested in explaining the most neglected parts of the conflict, which are actor, cause and intervention trends and dynamics. Since the researcher is interested / motivated to assess the actor, causes and intervention of the inter-communal conflict dynamics between the two groups, i.e. the Afar and their neighboring Atsbi Wonberta community, this academic research may have significance of both academic and policy implications.

Academically, this study may serve as a base for those who have interest and motives to study the conflict between the two, the Afar pastoralist and their neighboring agriculturalist Atsbi Wenberta community. This research may also contribute to the policy input in that it may show the way out to peace full coexistence of the two parties. Therefore, policy makers may get full picture of the conflict including its dynamics and historical trends and then to device best intervention mechanism to contain the conflict in to other areas with similar ecological contexts.

1.7 Organization of the Study

The paper is organized in to five chapters. Chapter one introduces the study by describing the background, statement of the problem, objectives and significance of the study. The second chapter covers literature review dealing with definition and concepts of conflict, relevant theories of conflict are reviewed in this chapter. The third chapter includes methodology of the study including description of the study area, research design, and sources of data, data collection and data analysis. The fourth chapter dealt with data presentation and data analysis. The last chapter includes conclusions and recommendation of the study.
1.8 Operational Definitions

- **Conflict**: in this study refers to a situation where two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express antagonistic attitudes, peruse their interests via violent actions that damage the other party. The parties may be individuals, small or large groups.

- **Inter-communal conflicts**: in this study, inter-communal conflicts refers to an inter ethnic conflict that occur in mass mode between two ethnic groups who have or are assumed to have different language, culture, religion, psychological makeup, geographical setting and politico-economic and historical experiences. Communal conflicts here are to mean organized violence between non-state groups mobilized along a shared communal identity with no professionally trained army (Jonansson, 2011)

- **Conflict dynamics**: in this study refers to the factors that inspire conflict to escalate or de-escalate conflict trends across time and space, most of the time lies between conflict formation and conflict resolution.
CHAPTER TWO:

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

2.1 Definitions and Conceptualizations of Conflicts

**Conflict**: life (action) is the pursuit of goal, and then social life (interaction) is the exchange of values. Actors inter in to exchange (interaction) for different reasons, one of them is to gain utility and others because they are forced to. Actors come together in space and time because they are relevant to each other and may engage in value exchange (interaction), the interaction may be positive, neutral or negative. It is here where conflict is occurred. Conflict can be defined on the notion of contradiction and incompatibility. According to this notion, there are goals to be realized. Gultung (1973) called this realization of goals as “goal consumption”. The unites being set by individuals (society) and the variables being goal dimensions becomes the regions of acceptable goal realizations (acceptable regions). A conflict, then, is a contradiction the acceptability region is located inside the incomputable goal. Finally, Gultung define conflict as having incompatibility of goals including the means to achieve them (Gultung, 1973) (Mohmmed, 2001) stated that the word conflict is derived from the Latin word configure meaning to strike together. It was anticipated that conflict may occurred in a physical sense when two or more different things moves to occupy the same space at the same time which there is logical inconsistency and the process of solution are identical. Megginson (1981) Mentioned that conflict happens whenever disagreements exist in a social situation over issues of substance, or whenever emotional antagonisms create frictions between individuals or groups. They agreed that conflict continues when either side do not believe in a certain agreement and intertwine of the other party is merely impossible. Human beings are of two minds about conflict. We say that conflict is natural, inevitable, necessary, and normal, and that the problem is not the existence of conflict but how we handle it. But we are also loath to admit that we are in the midst of conflict. How we view conflict will largely determine our attitude and approach to dealing with it. Conflict may be viewed as a feeling, a disagreement, a real or perceived incompatibility of interests, inconsistent worldviews, or a set of behaviors. If we are to be effective in handling conflict, we must start with an understanding of its nature. Therefore, conflict, like change is
always to occur given the dynamics of human interaction because we all have different interests, goals, perceptions, viewpoints, values and experiences. Cambel and Tilmaan (2011) Stressed that conflict is a fact of human life. As human beings we do not have a choice about whether conflict will happen in our lives but we do have a choice about how we will deal with it. The problem is whether people are able to manage the conflict or not? If managed effectively, conflict can be constructive. If not, conflict can be a destructive force.

**Conflict dynamics:** Conflicts may be originated somewhere and become articulated (uttered). Then it develops until a resolution phase can be emerging and the conflict dissolves as a system finally reaches a solution state where there is no longer conflict. The conflict origination and conflict resolution phases are certainly the parts and parcels of conflict dynamics (Gultung, 1996). The life history of many conflicts seems to be that the conflict imperceptible evolves, then there is a process often destructive behavior or attitude until some regulatory forces are called in to operation from within or without to start the phases of resolution which then finally lead to some kind of solution.

![Conflict Dynamics Diagram](image)

Adopted from Gultung theory of conflict (1973) with some modifications.

The term conflict dynamics refers to the factors that inspire the escalation or de-escalation of conflict trends across time and space. Gultung (1996) Verifies that dynamics in the conflict areas lies between conflict formation and conflict transformation. In other words, conflict is dynamic social processes in which the original structure themselves are re-shaped. Therefore is the likelihood for conflicts to increase, decrease and remain stable. However, much of the writing and thinking about conflict is static in sense that the true dynamic nature of conflict rarely take in to account. Too often is conflict viewed as an event of itself, to the exclusion of its rood, its longitudinal development and its post conflict settlement and procedures?
**Inter-communal conflicts:** Following the end of the Cold War, there has been an explosion of international conflict resolution activities and negotiated ends to armed conflict. Attention has also been drawn to the question of what makes such outcomes durable, as several negotiated settlements have collapsed into renewed armed conflict. This growing field of inquiry has almost exclusively focused on conflicts between states, or between a state and a rebel group. However, a few recent studies have directed interest towards another empirical phenomenon of importance to peace and stability: communal conflicts that are organized violence between non-state groups mobilized along a shared communal identity (Jonasson, 2011).

Despite a large number of insightful case studies within the anthropological field, very little attention within peace and conflict research has been devoted to these conflicts (inter-communal) and how they can be managed and resolved. As a result, there is still a lack of systematic empirical and theoretical understanding of this phenomenon of inter-communal conflicts (Jonasson, 2011).

Before discussing how communal conflicts can be escalated and resolved, a clear common understanding of exactly what these conflicts are is needed. Communal conflicts take place between non-state groups which are organized along a shared communal identity, with actors not have formal military structure (Jonasson, 2011) one central part of the definition of communal conflict concerns the concept of Communal identity. Someone could equate this concept with ethnic or religious identity; but here the definition is purposefully left more open, since group identity can be considered as socially constructed rather than a static phenomenon. Instead, communal identity is conceptualized as subjective group identification based on, for instance, a common history, culture or core values. Affirming that, communal identity refers to ethnic or religious identity would make the term less flexible, unable to capture other forms of possible communal identity. For instance, in non-state violence where the dividing line is between “original” inhabitants of an area (“indigenes”) and more recent “settlers”, this should be seen as a communal conflict since people very strongly identify themselves (and the “other” group) along these lines. Similarly, in other areas the main identification may be based on one’s livelihood, and conflict may be fought along those lines. The bottom line is that what constitutes the basis for communal identity may differ across time and space; hence, leaving the definition of this term more open allows for a broader contextual range (Brosch’e, 2009).
Communal conflicts differ in some important ways from other forms of armed conflict. First, and perhaps most fundamentally, both parties to a communal conflict are subject to a higher, national authority which controls state power and the national army. A second, related, difference is that while state-based intrastate conflicts are usually characterized by asymmetry, communal conflicts are generally more symmetrical. In an intrastate conflict, one party holds government power and hence has control of the security forces and state power; in a communal conflict, none of the actors usually has access to this type of power. Thirdly, in addition to being more symmetrical, the parties to a communal conflict usually do not have access to a professional military organization.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Causes and Dynamics of Conflict

Causes of conflict remains obscure as ever. Modern researches has left a condition of uncertainty, partial clue, contradiction and continued mystery on the causes of conflict. There is no single cause for conflict. Nor is there often any single precondition for sustainable peace. Different factors vary in importance and reinforced or neutralize each other. The analysis of conflict and peace situation must therefore include assessing the relative importance of different indicators and their inter-relationship with peace and conflict (Petro, 2002)

In the field of social science, there is no single option on the dynamics, cause and impact of conflict among scholars. Conflict is a fluid and infinitely dynamic concept which can be twisted in to different shape and become an issue over which scholars find them in a sharp debate and disagreement with their colleagues. This implies that conflict is controversial concept over which there is a theoretical debate on how to conceptualize it from different perspectives of different schools of thoughts. In doing so scholars have already written too much about the causes and dynamics and effect of conflict based on the schools of thought to which they belong.

The structural theory of conflict argues that conflict is originated from the specific ways in which the societies are organized and structured (Galtung, 1996). The political and economic exclusion and marginalization, structural injustices and exploitation, poverty, inequality so on and so forth are sources of conflict according to the structural theory of conflict. The structural theory of
conflict asserts that when the existing structures are skewed in favor of one group at the expense of other groups, conflict will be escalated. Marginalization in this theory includes social division and destruction of internal relations (Jeong, 2000). According to this theory, the role of structural inequality, that is economic and social inequality and access to political power is considered as one of the central causes of violent conflicts.

Frustration- Aggression theory on the other hand holds the position which is similar to that of human needs theory. Its major assumption is that all human being have basic needs which they seek to peruse, and that denial of and frustration of these needs by other groups could affect in the short or long run, thereby leading to conflict. Gultung, put this as follow: it is assumed that goals are not only set but also obtained and reached to the stage of goal consumption. However, it is fact of life that to reach to the set goal, it often takes time and other resources. if the actors as hard as possible, the set goals may nevertheless arrived at. It is this referred as frustration, which means that the access to the set goal has been blocked. The major class of source of frustration can be scarcity of resources (Gultung, 1973). The basic human needs refer to the essence of physical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs (Gultung, 1990). The argument is that all people and group are strife to attain certain basic and universal human need, in addition the above mentioned by Gultung are human needs to recognition, security and identity are just to mention few. A human need theorist therefore believes that the frustration to peruse these needs cause many social conflicts. According to (Gultung,1990), since human needs are non-negotiable, the inability to attain these needs always leads to intractable conflict. (Kriesburg, 2003) and (Mayer, 2000) also confirms to the above Gultung’s non-negotiable thoughts of human needs. According to the Human Need Theory, human needs should to be analyzed, communicated and satisfied for the conflict to be resolved.

The other school of thought that argues that conflict is the result of ongoing division, distrust and antagonism between different groupings in a community is the community relation theory. Sociological, political, economic and historical relationship of such groups is taken as a fundamental root of violent conflicts. In addition to this, community relation theory assumes that cultural difference and group interests influence relationship between individuals and groups in different behaviors (Falti n.d).
The other school of thought that explains the causes of conflict is the greed and grievance theory. Natural resource can contribute to economic growth, employment opportunity and fiscal revenue. But many resource rich areas are characterized by disappointing growth rate and increase risk of social conflict. In the 21st century access to natural resource is increasingly perceived as security risk. In 2009, the United Nation Environmental Program expert’s advisory groups on environment, conflict and peace building found that “there is significance potential for conflict over natural resources to intensify in the coming decades (UNEP, 2009).

As 2010 Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research Barometer shows resource conflicts are serious phenomena. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research Barometer records 363 conflicts in 2010 and natural resource conflicts were second most instigating causes next to system/ideology. The data shows that resources are the predominant conflict item in the Sub Saharan Africa.

The vast body of literature devoted to analyzing the connection between resource and conflict can be broadly categorized in to two groups: studies focused on resource scarcity and conflict, and studies that analyze the relationship between resource abundance and conflict. The abundance conflict school of thought identifies two causes of conflict: resource scarcity “grievance” which means the deprivation of basic needs can be the cause of conflict. In addition, “greed” which means opportunistic and selfish appropriation of resource can trigger conflicts (Le Billon, 2008) calls the grievance mechanism as “resource conflict”: conflict arises due to control of resource by one group that excludes others or destroys the resource they depend on for living. He calls the greed mechanism as “conflict resource” because some resource motivated civilians, soldiers and state officials to enrich themselves. Many researchers, among them Humer-Dixon (1994), Hauge and Ellingsen (1998), Raleigh and Urdal (2007) and Urdal (2008) find a positive relationship between resource scarcity and conflict. They suggest that depriving people from their livelihood leave them no choice apart from fighting for survival. Following the neo-Malthusian line of argument, they assume population growth reduces the availability of natural resources because of population growth if faster than food supply. This implies that computation and ultimately conflict over means of existence. However, this line of reasoning has been heavily challenged. Critics of the neo-Malthusian approach either argues that there are too many intervening variables to establish a direct linkage between Population growth and scarcity.
induced approach (Le Billon, 2001; Brown, 2010; Theisen, 2008). According to these scholars, scarcity rarely occurs because of, first and for most, technological innovation, substitution and international trade. These scholars convinced that people are able to substitute resource or invent new technology and creating remedial for scarcity. The concepts of social resilience- intelligent people are able to adapt to environmental changes and give rise similar interpretation of scarcity: scarcity is not is not necessarily a threat to livelihood, but an opportunity to be flexible given a adequate means. Around the turn of this century, various authors highlighted a possible relationship between resource abundance and conflict, adding to the literature on the so-called see for example (Collier and Hoeffler, 1998; De Soya, 2002a and 2002b). Abundance studies differentiate between rebel groups and the government as an actor. Resource abundance can represent an opportunity to either to finance rebel organization or to exploit resource wealth for personal enrichment. Collier and Hoeffler consider greed as the underlying motive while rebel behaviors can also motivated by poverty among the people.

A range of conflicts are caused by a past historical animosity. Such conflicts between groups possibly lead to the revitalization of unconstructive stereotype, cultural intolerance and prejudice. This history of past may make it difficult to integrate different ethnic and religious groups to succeed because their past experiences make it difficult for them to trust one another. The fact that “others” are perceived different make them feel they are entitled to lesser or inferior by reasons of conflict value. This may hinder the flow of communication between them and may go to the extent of twisting perceptions that they have about each other. Likewise, the subject two or more groups have contend for the same resources generate conditions that amplifies the chances of rough relationships between the will produce conflict over how to share such limited resources (Ibid). Therefore promotion of tolerance, acceptance of diversity and improving communication and understanding between conflicting parties are stated as possible remedies to maintain smooth relationship of community (Simon, 2000).

The lens of economic conflict theory tends differently to provide an economic explanation of conflict. This is largely because people in conflict are assumed to be fighting over something which is material (Abrha, 2012).some of the people actually benefit from the conflict whereas the majority of the population is affected by the negative impact of the conflict. The leaders of
the armed groups that are actually perpetrating the violence often profit from the crisis whereby they can generate incentives for rebellion and insurgency groups (Ibid).

The assumption is that every society is endowed with sets of wealth creating assets, such as land and mineral resources. There is, therefore, an incentive for agents to form a group to extract and control over the country’s resources. However, they may face the task of exclusion of the non-members. In particular, agents not belonging to the wining group will attempt to gain access to the resources. Thus, so as to participate in the ill-gotten gains, for example they may apply for land title, employments and government jobs etc., if the population is ethnically heterogeneous, groups can be formed along ethnic lines, and ethnic identity therefore can be use as a marker to political infiltration. Elsewhere, the rest seeking from the dominant groups take the form of exploitation and discrimination against the minority whereby ethnic cleavages form the base for political computation and economic exploitation.

2.2.2 Inter-communal Conflict Models: Assessing Thoughts

Despite the fact that there is a strong argument among scholars from various schools of thoughts, the theories of conflict are not mutually exclusive. They overlap each other to make sense of conflict as a multi-dimensional and dynamic fact of life. Conflict understanding, conflict resolution and conflict transformation entails models and tools of conflict analysis. As a result of this conflict scholars employ different approaches of conflict analysis tools and there are variety of conflict analysis tools, the Island method, the Onion method, conflict tree, conflict Mapping and ABC triangle methods are just to mention few. In view of that, the last two approaches are revealed below in this case.
Figure 1

A (attitude) situation

B (behavior)

C (contradiction or)

Table 1. Conflict triangle encompassing both symmetric and asymmetric conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict triangle type</th>
<th>representation</th>
<th>Manifestations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A                      | Attitude       | • Perception and misperception of each other, positively or negatively.  
                           |                | • Negative stereotype influenced by emotion, feeling, cognitive (believe), nonnative (will), feeling of anger and hater. |
| B                      | Behavior       | • Cooperation or coercion  
                           |                | • Gestures signifying conciliation or hostility, threat, coercion or violent attack |
| C                      | Contradiction  | • Represent underlying conflict situation i.e. actual or perceived, incompatibility of goals between conflicting parties.  
                           |                | • Contradictions generated by mismatched between social values and social structure.  
                           |                | • Symmetric conflicts and contradiction defined by clashes of interest between and among conflicting parties.  
                           |                | • Asymmetric conflicts and contradictions defined by the parties, their relationship and conflicting interest inherent in the relationship. |

Source: Gultung, 1996

Hypothetically, in this triangle, contradiction may be experienced as a frustration where a goal is being blocked by something leading to aggressiveness as an attitude and aggression as behavior. This can be used to sketch and clarify in all six directions starting anywhere in the conflict, (A to B), (B to A), (A to C), (C to A), (C to B) and (B to C). in conflict circumstances, problem arise between parties and their behaviors are the means for handling those issues and attaining their ambitions. This model serves as signal that the parties and their behavior are resulted by party
attitude. This then permits issues to be re-farmed in a range of prospective culture, ethnicity, and gender, political and socio-economic divisions and shares a suitable investigation of conflict situation (Gultung, 1996). According to Gultung, all the three components have to be present in a full conflict structure, without conflict behavior or conflict attitude, the conflict is dormant or structural. Therefore in conflict dynamics, attitude, behavior and contradiction are constantly changing. The other conflict analysis model is called conflict mapping chart. It consists of the types of conflict and its causative factors.

Table 2: conflict mapping chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of conflict</th>
<th>Causative factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Structural conflicts | - Destructive patterns of behavior or interaction.  
- Unequal control, ownership and distribution of resources.  
- Unequal power and authority weak or low enforcement of justice.  
- Geographical, physical or environmental factors that hinders cooperation. |
| Value conflict | - Different criteria for evolution of ideas or behaviors.  
- Exclusively intrinsically valuable goals. |
| Relationship conflict | - Strong emotion  
- Misperception or stereotype  
- Poor communication or miss-communication  
- Non-communication/ non communicado |
| Data conflict | - Lack of information  
- Misinformation  
- Different views about what is relevant.  
- Different interpretation of data  
- Different assessment of procedure. |
| Interest conflict | - Actual or perceived computation over substantive/content interest.  
- Procedural interest.  
- Psychological interest. |

Source: (Bright n.d)

This model simplifies a conflict by deconstructing its causes. The causative factors can be differentiated and by doing so, the primary generating factor as well as other contributing factors can be identified. According to this model, some conflicts are more difficult to resolve than others. Value and structure conflicts are more difficult to resolve as it is in these realms that negotiation and compromise is limited. Structure conflicts have infrastructure limitations that are
difficult to manipulate, and value conflicts are difficult as people are less likely to compromise their beliefs and ideologies. The other types of conflict, data, relationship, and interest, are easier to resolve as more leeway exists for negotiation, collaboration, and compromise.

However, this study, taking the structural theory of conflict as a point of reference to the causes of conflict in the study area is sound. This is because largely, the other conflict theories can be categorized under the umbrella of structural theory of conflict. This conflict theory at most symbolizes both socio-economic and political issues as agents of change of social relation. This may be illustrated in the triangular model of Johan Galtung.

The term “Galtung conflict triangle” or “the violence triangle” refers to a theoretical model developed by the Norwegian researcher Johan Galtung, who analyzed the causes of violence in three phases: before violence, during violence, and after violence. Galtung lists various types of violence that could roughly be classified in three categories: direct violence (behavioral), cultural violence (social constructs) and structural violence. Each of these categories represents individual angles of the violence triangle, which Galtung argues has “built-in vicious cycles.” He separates these categories into visible and invisible ones (Galtung, 1990)

According to (Ibid), the visible effects of direct violence are known: the killed, the wounded, the displaced, the material damage, all increasingly hitting the civilians. But the invisible effects may be even more vicious: direct violence reinforces structural and cultural violence. Galtung claims that although the cultural and structural aspects of the conflict are invisible, they in fact play the most important role during the prevention and rehabilitation stages of a conflict. He states that it is “cultural and structural violence that cause direct violence, using violent actors who revolt against the structures and using the culture to legitimize their use of violence as instruments...The direct violence may be the lesser evil, at least in the longer term, than the structural and cultural damage wrought.”
Figure 2: Gultung conflict triangle as applied in societal structure

This theory of violence resembles with manifestations of conflict dynamics. Direct violence refers to violent conflicts where people are killed and murdered. Structural violence on the other hand, is a situation where people die from hunger or poverty related issues and are treated under injustice system. All this problems possibly could be addressed by changing conflict behaviors, attitudes and injustice of the conflicting parties and the system.

Gultung’s theory of peace and conflict has undergone many changes since 1964, and Gultung’s view on peace and conflict have changed to a broad focus on the cause and effect of peace and violence. Gultungs original 1964 position was generally accepted by many scholars but not without change. For example, between 1964-1971, Johan Gultung publishes many theoretical papers based on his structural theory of conflict. Among these, Aggression (1964), Institutional Conflict Resolution (1965), Violence, Peace and Peace Research (1969), Structural and Direct Violence (1971) and Theory of Imperialism (1971). One important idea came from the above publications is that an adequate understanding conflict and violence is required in order to understand and define peace. This was the spring board where Gultung moved away from actor oriented explanation of peace and conflict to structure oriented explanations of peace and conflict. in the later explanation, the central idea is that conflict (violence) exists because of the structure and the actors are merely carry out the violence. Gultung (1969) defines violence as being “present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realizations below mental potential realization. This definition is much wider than violence as being merely somatic (direct) and includes structural violence. This extended the definition of peace, where peace is not the mere absence direct violence (negative peace) but also absence of structural violence (positive peace). According to Gultung(1969) and (1990), structural violence
comes from the structure of the society, rather than the actor-generated personal and direct violence.

By relating violence to the structure of the society, Gultung creates a connection between conflict and development research. The notion of structural violence is also relevant in conflict theories. Gultung states that since personal and direct violence are often built in the structure of the society, it is much better to focus on the bigger picture revealed by structural violence as this would reveal the causes and effects of violence and conditions for peace.

Another important idea that Gultung (1988) proposed was that peace should be achieved by peaceful means and the notion of just war are basically a violence committed by self-styled leaders of the world. Gultung (1990) introduced the concept of cultural violence as aspect of culture that can be used to justify and legitimate direct and structural violence. Then, violence was re-defined as “avoidable insult to basic human needs and more generally to life.” Cultural violence was added as a type of violence alongside direct violence and structural violence and then Gultung creates Cultural-Structural-direct violence triangle as shown in the above triangle and this model will be used in the analysis part as a model of inter-communal conflict.

2.2.3 Inter-Communal Conflicts in the Horn of Africa

Africa is a continent full of both untapped human and material resources. The continent is rich in productive labor forces in all aspects of social, political and economic walks. As luck would have it, it suffers from poverty, misery, under development and catastrophe of intra and inter-state violent conflicts. Conflict, continuous to be one of the great challenges facing the horn of Africa region. Indeed, the horn of Africa is one of the fragile crises regions in the world. It is described as the most turbulent in the world ‘set to go over the edge!’ It also continues to be avenue for typically intricate story of regional conflict (Medhane, 2004). There are two dimensions of Africa’s dilemma: Africa has passed through ups and downs to tackle all these problems, but still it is in the quagmire. The horn of Africa takes the majority share of ethnic or communal conflicts. This is because the region has been in turmoil of both inter and intra-state conflicts. According to (Djinnit, 2006), Africa has made notable improvement in resolving complex and old aged conflicts across the continent in the 21st century, but still millions of people sustained
to be severely affected. Capitalizing this idea, (Mohammed, 2007), alleges that the problem has been exacerbated regime type in the region. Although climate change and desertification have began to showing their harmful effect in the region, poor performance of leadership is the major threat for inter-communal conflicts in the region. Thus, the countries of the horn of Africa are characterized by unstable political economy, repressive governments, political insecurity, inter and intra community conflicts, humanitarian crisis and human right violations.

Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists community in the border areas of the horn states are the most vulnerable groups to such conflicts (Abrha, 2012). One of the key considerations is the question of the impact of conflict on livelihood and day-to-day activities of communities. The pastoral conflict sites affect not only conflict zones but also the communities in the conflict region and the state at large. The conflict destabilizes relationship between neighboring administrative regions and ethnic communities fabricate displaced peoples and refugees, and this diminishes steps towards development (Getachew, 2001). Why conflict? Some empirical works suggest that the key causes of conflict in the horn of Africa include: feeling of clan supremacy, bad governance and political marginalization, dispersion of small firearms throughout pastoral areas, computation overgrazing lands and water points, drought, the question of land ownership and territorial expansion among others (Getachew, 2001), (Mohammed, 2007). Cross border conflicts in Ethiopia and Somalia that has disseminated to Ethiopia and Kenya border sides is an illustrative example of inter-communal conflicts (Ibid). Who is responsible to address this problem? The issue of conflict resolution and conflict transformation involves elders, the governments of the conflicting parties and religious leaders. Governments, however, have failed to come up with clear approaches to attain these conflicts, despite various attempts that have been made so far to come up with policy documents (Mohammed, 2007) (Bekelle, 2010).

Similarly, claims that trigger factors for the conflicts in the horn of Africa are drought, migration from within and from out, miss-management of resources, bad politics that preach hatter and business rivalry and collapse traditional conflict resolution institutions. At the community level, prevalence of small arms and light weapons in the pastoral community possessed by young men stimulated conflict between pastoral and agro-pastoral communities. All this conflicts have lead to the attrition of traditional institutions of conflict resolutions; it has also created a situation where there is demand and supply of armies (Abrha, 2012)
Generally, conflict and ethnic tension, pastoral conflicts, poverty, scarcity of resources, importunate presence of armed groups and wide availability small army political volatility and are the like are characteristics of the state in the horn of Africa. All these, thus, have heavily effect on the stability of the states and dilute the effect of progress and peace in the region (Abrha, 2012)

2.2.4 Dynamics of Inter-communal Conflict: Ethiopian Focus

Many of the intra state conflicts in Africa are communal in nature (Abrha, 2012). This is because a communal group is one in which primary identity is prevailed. This implies that ethnic conflicts are communal conflicts too. Membership of community / group is not something to attain but to ascribe. Historically, individual’s involvement in life is defined in terms of their relationship in the religion, ethnic group and the family they belongs (Nnoli, 2003). Inter-communal conflicts are natural between/ among neighboring communities because of the interaction and the geographical proximity there. The potential for conflict nearly all the time among communities / institutions is the interaction among each other (Mayer, 2000). The point is that, conflict is always with us as far as we interact. In interaction/relationship, agreements and disagreements are always there. The problem is therefore, not the existence of conflict rather the way we react against it. If conflict is not managed timely from the onset, difference will be lead to social destruction. In line with this (fisher , 2006) argues that in community setting, division between interest groups on central social concerns can lead to polarization and hostility. At all levels of human interactions, defectively handled conflicts between majority and minority, can lead to frustration and alienations on both sides. When there is imperative difference between groups, there is potential for destruction of intergroup (Ibid). Patterns of relationships among ethnic groups in Ethiopia have historically been experienced both peaceful and conflicting patterns (Asnake, 2002). Some of the conflicts in Ethiopian ethnic groups are low intensity while others are serious and troublesome. The tit-for-tat reaction between / among pastoral community were not only occurring within the state boundaries, but also across the national borders of countries (Getachew, 2001). Every motive of the then inter-communal conflicts were mainly attributed to traditional computations ethnic groups over common resources such as water points, grazing lands, trading routes and some others for localautonomies (Buli, 2001) and (Bekelle,
Actors of the conflict were both communities and local governments. Conflict, therefore, never be new event in Ethiopian history. Nevertheless there is no consensus among scholars about the escalating factors of current inter-group conflicts in the agro-pastoralists and pastoralist areas of Ethiopia and the horn of Africa states.

Contrary to the above idea, some scholars like Hssien (2001) argues that the current conflict differ from the earlier one in terms of its frequency, intensity, causes and actors involved and their effects on the community. The dynamics of these conflicts may be analyzed in light of the past and ongoing complex process of political liberalization and ethnic federalism based on the policies that have been taking place since 1990s. Relating to this, Mulugeta (2008) argued that the post 1991 administrative decentralization is identified as a major driving force for the struggle over resources between the transhumant herdies in Ethiopia’s peripheral regions. Ethiopia witnessed a major departure in the area of national policies and strategies since the early of 1990s. Ethnic federalism introduced as a political instrument to offer sound management to end past conflict ridden ethnic relations in the country (Asnake, 2002;Getachew, 2001). However, the political changes that that is aimed to rebuild Ethiopian state encountered both sets of challenges and opportunities in the management of inter communal conflicts. Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities are the most vulnerable groups in such inter communal conflicts. Previous works suggest that inter-ethnic conflicts have been rising in the recent years. Relating to this, Getachew (2001) claims that pastoral communities in the low land areas of Ethiopia faces more challenge to the modes life and survival as a community nowadays than the earlier times. Several episodes of inter-communal conflicts are happened over territorial issues in the post 1990s. To mention few of the, Brona and Guri, the Afar and Issa, the Gujiand Gedo (Asnake, 2002). Issa Ittu-Kereyu, Afar-Kereyu (Getachew, 2001) is the manifestations of inter-communal conflicts. The low land areas are now marked by potential insecurity resulting from possession of small and light arms by all pastoral communities (Asnake, 2001; Abrha, 2012 and Bekelle, 2010). In contrary to these arguments, (yaynshet and kelemework, 2004) argues that frequency of inter-communal conflicts involving the Afar and their neighboring Tigrians in the north eastern Ethiopia over resources have been declined over the last few decades because of economic interdependence, cross cultural and emergent power balance between the two communities was put as a reason for the lessen of conflict. Conflict between the Afar and tigrian, if there, is reduced to interpersonal conflicts.
However, various reasons are given for the escalation of inter-communal conflicts in Ethiopia despite the disagreements on its trends among scholars. Among others, computation over scarce resource, shrinking of pastoral land, degradations of customary conflict resolution institutions in managing resource oriented and other related issues and dispersion of small and light weapons etc. are at the fore front. According to Tigist, the very weak presence of the state in the pastoral community and government inability to ensure their security; they habitually arm themselves to protect cattle rustling derived the demand for firearms. Undeniably, possession of firearms in the pastoral community is viewed as a must for self defense and symbol of supremacy (Tigist, 2010)

When we come to inter-communal conflicts in the study area, there is scant literature taking about the conflict between the Afar and their neighboring Atbsi Wonberta people. However, there are few literatures taking about the inter-communal conflict between the Afar and their adjacent Tigrian neighboring. Abrha (2012) for example tells us inter communal conflict between the Afar pastoralists and their Wejerat neighbors has long history go far prior to pre-Italian occupation. The Afar has experienced serious cattle raids from the Tigrian highlanders. The raid of highlanders to the lowlanders was called Gaz (Kelemework, 2006). The very motive of the raid (Gaz) was to gain social status. Beside this it was argued that the acquisition of cattle through raid campaign was supposed to have economic benefits for the highlanders (Kelemework, 2006). Regarding the primary causes that instigate conflict between the Afar and their neighboring Tigrions were related to probles of water points, and grazing rangelands (Abrha, 2012). In Ethiopia as elsewhere in Africa, pastoralism is a livelihood system based on extensive livestock rearing adapted to a difficult environment in which rainfall is poor and spatially and temporally variable, and resources are geographically scattered. The pastoral system of production functions best if it is able to ensure periodic mobility that enables it to exploit different ecosystems at different times of the year. Mobility is basic to pastoral livelihoods, both in terms of access to variable resources, and in terms of the regeneration of resources already used up and exhausted. While the form of mobility is dictated by the composition of the herd in the possession of the family at a given time, the distance and direction to be traveled, etc, mobility in one form or another is essential for most pastoralists. However, this mobility makes the Africa pastoralists in general and the Afar pastoralists in particular to
come in to periodic conflicts, even sometimes violent conflict with their neighbors. Many scholars explain the causes, actors and outcomes of inter-community conflicts between the afar and their neighboring (Dessalegn, 2007). In line with this, Desalegn noted that the obscured boundary lines between the Afar and their neighbors add fuel to the conflict.

There is debate regarding the causes of conflict between the afar and the highlanders living adjacent to them. For instance Hugman and Mulugeta (2010) and Getachew (1997) explain the conflict as it is resulted from the early incorporations of the Traditional Afar land to the Ethiopian statehood system. This early incorporation of the afar in to the Ethiopian state system creates value incompatibility; livelihood incompatibility with the people living near to them, hence conflicts is occurred. Bekele (2012) on his part notes that the conflict as a result of excessive pastoral land appropriation by the Ethiopian state for development purposes and this creates pastoral land shrivel, and this make the Afar pastoral community to Move out of their domain and come in to conflict with their neighbors. Desalegn (2007), in his analysis of “custom in conflict: land tenure issues among pastoralists in Ethiopia” reports that the cause of conflict between the Afar and their neighbors come out of UN clear boundary lines and obscure property rights. (Unruh 2005), also reports the same idea.

Kelemework (2006) on the other hand gives more emphasis to the historical legacy of the two ethnic groups. Kelemework went on to say that for intent and purposes of the current conflict seem to be the reflections of their mutual ill history.

2.2.5 The Nature and Context of Atsbi Wonberta–Afar Interaction: From Historical Perspective

The Afars trace the settlement of Tigrayans in the low land areas bordering the Afar to the time of Ras Mengesha Seyoum. Before then, the area that borders the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta was inhabited exclusively by the Afar. In the 1960s, the Tigrayan nobility developed interest in exploiting resources in the lowlands of Afar. Ras Mengesha, the then governor of Tigray province, linked Afar lowlands with the highlands by dry weather road. He then brought some peasants from the highlands to make charcoal in lowlands that will be sold in the big towns of the highlands. In general, Afar relations with the Tigrayan highlanders in this part of Ethiopia
are multifaceted extending from a state of prejudice, enmity and feud to that of mutual cooperation, integration and peaceful co-existence. The beginning of salt trade in the Afar depression is a historic moment in the establishment of highland-lowland interaction (Kelemework, n.d). Much of the northern parts of the present Afar Regional State had been under the Tigray provincial administration in the times prior to the reign of the EPRDF. This created free movement of politicians and ordinary Tigrayans into the area and created a good ground for them to establish social ties with the Afar (Ibid). Sometimes social relationships in trade and exchange develop into kinship ties. In principle, intermarriage between members of the two ethnic groups is not allowed because of religious restrictions; while the Atsbi Wonberta community is predominantly orthodox Christians the Afar are entirely Muslim. However, in practice, there are several instances of this form marriage. Historically, some Tigrayan kings and politically influential personalities are believed to have "Afar blood"; Emperor Yohannes’s son Ras Arayasillassie is cases in point (Gebrekidan, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the relationship of the two community form enmity and feud to friendship and cooperation. The Afar has been facing serious of raid from the Tigrians during the imperial regime (Markham, 1869). Some writers suggest that the very motive of the raid was economic in the sense that acquisition of cattle in the process was supposed to have economic importance and was also associated with social values. To hold political office, one should demonstrate bravery in the raid (Gebru, 1996). But, others argue that the social worth of the raid had more credit than the economic one. The most respected and honorable people were those who actively participated and managed looting the booty of the Afar. In contrast, those who were unable to loot after the raid and did not participate at all were the laughing stock of the society (Abraha, 2005 as cited in Abrha 2012). The victorious and successful raiders were those who could roar in any socially held feast. They used to wear the skin of either a lion or a leopard and were entitled hanta (hero) as a prize of heroism. They had also the right to grow their hair and to smear butter on it. They enjoyed the right to wear clothes the hemline of which was decorated with various brands as well (Hiluf, 2001 as cited in Abrha, 2012). In contrast, those who did not kill, loot, and participate in the raid were considered as cowards and inferior to the successful raiders within their community (Gebru, 1996). The raid was viewed as an academic field of military strategy for the young generation of Tigrians to prove one’s courage in the past. The Afar communities were also engaging in serious raids at different times against highlanders. According to
Kelemework, the Afar communities have shown varied reaction to the conflict with Tigrrians. One reaction was engagement in raids and counter-raids (Kelemework, 2006). The inter communal interaction in this period, thus, revealed consistent violent conflicts against one another.

Soon after it came to power, the military regime, compared to its predecessors, tried much harder to suppress the local autonomy of the afar and Tigrian autonomy. Working hand in hand with TPLF, the people of Atsbi Wonberta were forced to wage war against the military regime for 17 years. It is common knowledge that the TPLF had a base within the Atsbi Wonberta. Similarly, the Afar communities had fought in line with the ALF against the military regime, cooperating with other nationalist fronts like the TPLF to build internal freedom and self-rule (Tadesse and Yonas, 2005). During this time, the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta communities had strong social and market interactions. Close friendship and exchange of commodities, usually in kind, were their daily activities. At times of security problems, due to geographical interaction and resource share, the two communities were loyal to the joint institution of Abo Gereb (Shimagile). *Abo-gerebs* were real actors of peace and they addressed communal problems of the two communities for a long period of time (Degafi, 2009; as cited in Abrha, 2012). The Wejerat and Afar starved, were wounded, and sacrificed their life together while fighting against the Derg. They had strong interdependence and mutual assistance. Thus, the Afar without the Atsbi Wonberta and the Atsbi Wonberta without the Afar were unable to survive.

The post-1991 period is a landmark in Ethiopian politics. Ethiopia witnessed a major departure in the arena of national politics during this time. As a political instrument, ethnic--based federalism, hoped to improve conflict ridden ethnic relations across the country, has been introduced by the EPRDF. Nevertheless, there still are violent conflicts and several incidents of inter-communal tensions emerging over territorial issues (Asnake, 2002). Asnake further claims that the political changes are changing patterns of relationships between the Ethiopian ethnic groups, the nature of conflict and their management. Similarly, Getachew, in his work on “The Gurri and Borena conflict” in Southern Ethiopia, argues that the post-1991 period conflicts differ from the earlier ones in frequency, intensity, causes, and actors involved and their effects on the communities (Getachew, 2002). This is because of several factors among which are poor governance, insecurity, erosion of land rights and resource scarcity. This reality is reflected in all
lowlands of Ethiopia and the pastoral areas along the north-eastern to the southern part of the country. Some empirical studies suggest that the major cause of the current Atsbi Wonberta-Afar conflict is problem of access to water and grazing land (rangeland conflict) (Abera, 2009). However, others give more emphasis to the historical legacy of the two ethnic groups as a cause of the current conflicts (Kelemework, 2006). This scholar claims that the current conflict between the two seems to be a reflection of shared unhealthy relation in former times.

2.2.6 Overview of Formal and Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

Traditional conflict resolution processes are part of a well-structured, time-proven social system geared towards reconciliation, maintenance and improvement of social relationships. The methods, processes and regulations are deeply rooted in the customs and traditions of peoples of Africa. The importance and utility of the processes lie in the fact that they strive “to restore a balance, to settle conflict and eliminate disputes” (Choudree, 1999). Traditional processes are relatively informal and thus, less intimidating. Those who use them are also more at ease in a familiar environment. The role of chiefs, elders, family heads, and others is not only to resolve conflicts but also to anticipate and stop/or intercept conflicts. Group relationships and rights are as important as individual ones as emphasis is on restoring relationships and reconciling groups (Choudree, 1999).

Traditional conflict resolution mechanism is a social capital, defined as the “capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship… sustainability facilitates collective action for achieving mutually beneficial ends” (Fred-Mensah, 2005). Over the years, there have developed inter group conflict over land; increasing reliance on formal contracts to regulate relationships and create understanding; and shifts in methods of conflict resolution in that mediation seems to have given way to more confrontational statutory approaches based on formal court procedures (Fred-Mensah, 2005). Despite these, traditional methods still prevail, especially at the grassroots level.

Conflict resolution comprises a complex network of forces surrounding the parties in the conflict. It is a healing process in which all stakeholders contribute positive energy. The task is to
re-establish the energy flow within individuals, families and communities so as to re-build social harmony. In this context, reconciliation often requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals including exchange of gifts, and slaughter of animals (chickens, goats, sheep, cows) (Ndumbe, 2001).

Conflicts may be managed so that they do not escalate and lead to crisis. Conflict management is different from peacebuilding which seeks to prevent conflicts from developing in the first place by engaging all stakeholders in processes that facilitate peaceful coexistence. Conflict resolution deals with settlement of conflicts that may already exist. The spiritual dimension of conflict resolution refers to creating and restoring impaired relationship with God, the spirits, ancestors, family and neighbors as the case might be (Kealotswe, n.d.; Mbiti, 1991). This is critical in restoring other relationships at the physical level. In this context, rituals play an important role in the reconciliation process. They help to link people to the past, present and future.

Conflicts must be understood in their social context, involving “values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks…” (Brock-Utne, 2001). Thus, the root causes of conflicts must be explored to emphasize shared understandings of the past and present. Brock-Utne (2001) notes that: “The immediate objective of such conflict resolution is to mend the broken or damaged relationship, rectify wrongs, and restore justice”. Another aim is to ensure the full integration of parties into their societies again, and to adopt the mood of co-operation. The objective of conflict resolution, therefore, is to move away “from accusations and counter accusations, to settle hurt feelings and to reach a compromise that may help improve future relationship”. The effectiveness of the process and sustainability of the outcomes, generally, are attributed to such factors as simplicity, participatory nature, adaptable flexibility, complete relevance, and comprehensiveness (Brock-Utne, 2001).

Roles of the key players may change from time to time as the situation demands since there is no standard model. Thus, the approach is flexible and dynamic and the whole process and content are influenced by the social context. The social situation of those involved is also important. Thus, the social surroundings, feedback into or influence the process. The approach also seeks to build consensus. Often, this requires tact and patience. When agreement is reached, it is shared
with all parties including the general community. This social perspective on conflict transformation has general advantages including the “shared understanding of the conflict.” It also encourages harmony through active participation in the process by all parties (Brock–Utne, 2001). According to Okrah (2003), traditional societies resolved conflicts through internal and external social controls. The internal social controls use processes of deterrence such as personal shame and fear of supernatural powers. External controls rely on sanctions associated with actions taken by others in relation to behaviors that may be approved or disapproved.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms focus on the principles of empathy, sharing and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity (Murithi, 2006). Cultural approaches to resolving and managing disputes play a vital role in promoting peace and social order in communities. Cultural values and attitudes provide the basis for interaction and the norms by which individuals and communities live. These also promote sharing and equitable distribution of resources, thus promoting a climate for peace. African cultural principles relate to the very essence of existence and being human and how all humans are inextricably related. Therefore, peacemaking is underscored by the principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between people. It provides a value system for giving and receiving forgiveness. This is because society places greater emphasis on communal life. Therefore, creating and sustaining positive mutual relations, are shared tasks involving everyone? It is believed that people are linked to each other including disputants as perpetrators or victims (Murithi, 2006).

Conflict is a situation whereby individuals, groups, or countries are involved in disagreement over an issue. A conflict, as a state of disagreement may lead to crisis or violence (Peters, 2006). Peters (2006) notes that conflict, at all levels, and may arise due to the desire for political, economic and social advantages, greed, ego-related problems, injustice, inequitable distribution of resources and plain mischief. Edossa, Awulachew, Namara, Babel and DasGupta (2007) and Grimble and Wellard (1977) indicate that conflicts may be categorized with respect to whether they occur at the micro-micro, micro-mezzo, mezzo-macro or micro-macro levels (among individuals, individuals and groups, groups and communities, and between community groups and government); or within private or civil society organizations.
Usually, conflicts are the result of problems created by people. However, in the current global age, a period of greater cooperation and inter-dependence at all levels of society, a peaceful and sustainable conflict resolution process is very critical (Okrah, 2003). The goals of conflict resolution may be classified as preventive or corrective. Preventive goal deals with convincing individuals and groups “to choose to negotiate rather than resort to rancor in all matters of disagreement; thereby increasing the level of peaceful existence…” Corrective goal, however, focuses on measures to resolve existing conflicts “with less violence and more understanding of human nature” (Okrah, 2003).

Generally, conflict resolution is a community process involving the identification of the root cause of the problem, and bringing all parties involved to address the underlying issues. This usually ends with the guilty accepting wrong doing, leading to reconciliation which may include compensation or just forgiveness (Brock-Utne, 2001; Murthi, 2006). The process of conflict resolution has to do with how indigenous structures and systems ensure action in bringing peace at the individual and community level relationships. In this respect conflict resolution procedures are generated from general cultural life and daily experiences of living. In this context, indigenous “refers to the structures and the units of organization in a community and encompasses also the norms, values, beliefs and Cosmo vision that guide social interaction’” (Kendie and Guri, 2006).

The African continent continues to be afflicted by the blight of conflict. The mechanisms mandated to address these violent disputes seem to have a limited capacity to generate and sustain durable solutions. The importance of the role of culture in conflict resolution and governance has become increasingly more prominent. The relevance of endogenous approaches to post conflict reconciliation is now widely recognized. The inadequacy of Eurocentric and other western models to effectively address healing requirements within societies in Africa is increasingly evident. Opponents of endogenous approaches assert that these methods are neither completely adequate nor practicable in advancing healing and post conflict reconstruction, while proponents argue that such endogenous methods represent a model of alternative or restorative justice that fosters healing and reconciliation. Therefore ‘if Africa has to put the ‘falling apart
together’, her original values must be revisited (Bob-Manuel, 2000). It is now wide knowledge that Africa profiles the highest statistics of violent conflicts in the world. For years the treatment of conflicts in Africa involving national armies revolved around conventional mechanisms that have excluded the traditional approaches that are, according to Ofuho (1999) now in greater demand in the contemporary world, particularly in Africa.

The patterns of violent conflicts are common among the peripheral (borderlands) of pastoral communities in eastern Africa. There are always security dilemmas where governments appear to be incapable to contain conflicts (Mohammed, 2007). This may be because either the governments pay less attention to manage it or the areas are out of government control. It is in these areas that the demand for social knowledge has to be applied. Traditional institutions in conflict resolution and peace building is relevant for teething African states which are facing multiple challenges including limited capacity for providing development and security. Sometimes the result may be “state withdrawal” from the conflict. In this case, the vacuum is always filled by other form of governance, notably by traditional institutions, because the state institutions are not sufficiently capacitated to undertake conflict management at all levels. Social knowledge provides a significant input to genuine conflict resolution and reconciliation process. People who hold offices in these traditional institutions need to have personal qualities like analytical skills, knowledge of particular customs, patency, impartiality, respecting diversity in handling conflicts (Tarekegn, 2008 as cited in (Abrha, 2012). Mad'aa is Afar’s traditional system to settle conflict between and among clans in afar. Age has positive correlation with individual’s high status in Afar. In line of this argument (Kelemework, 2011) stated that the Afar people have sense of respect to the legendary traditional rules and guidelines that descended them from their predecessors. When a break of conduct is detected, reference made to such customary law. One of such fundamental norm of the Mad'aa is fear and respect of elderly personalities in respective villages. In Afar elders are believed to have wisdom and insightful thought accumulated over long periods of time.

However the Mad'aa is applicable only in Afar intra clan conflicts. In case of conflicts between the afar and other ethnic groups, mechanisms have evolved to manage interethnic tension and conflicts. One such institution is the bond in the form of a ‘friendship bond’ or ‘blood
brotherhood’ between some Afar lowlanders and their Tigrayan counterparts from the highlands. The bond is referred to in Afar as Qahanoyta or Fikur in Tigrinya. It puts certain obligations on the partner as the two are tied in times of peace and conflict. In effect, two bonded men become brothers in every sense of the word (Abrha, 2012; Kelemework, 2006). In the past the Afar used movement as one of the strategies of dealing with conflict with highlanders. Now, movement is no longer an effective response to disputes. This is because; following the shift to sedentary life, the degree of the Afar-Tigrayan interaction has been increasing (Ibid).

In terms of formal conflict mitigation structures between the afar and other ethnic groups, the afar regional state administration relies heavily on peace committees composed of elders from the Afar and those from the weredas that border the Afar region. The remit of these committees is limited to conflicts with communities in neighboring regional states. The joint peace committees are an interesting fusion of the traditional and modern. Thus, while the members of the joint peace committee are picked by the state (on the recommendation of the concerned wereda administration), the members are invariably elders or clan chiefs (Greendige and Fantaye, 2012). But there are circumstances where the informal conflict resolution mechanisms are in effective to manage inter-communal conflicts. Traditional institutions alone are not effective in managing conflicts and hence external intervention is indispensable. This is attributable to the gradual weakening of the ability of traditional institutions to manage resource use patterns and to the fact that some of the contemporary causes of conflicts are beyond the capacity of traditional authorities (Bekelle, 2010) It is essential to provide a locally motivated institutional framework whereby traditional and formal conflict management institutions cross-fertilize each other. These days, inter-communal conflicts become beyond the control of elders. Neither the formal court nor the traditional institutions are managing conflict in these days. Because the traditional institutions are fading away, prevalent of conflict is raising (Abrha, 2012) and (Bekelle, 2010) There for a deadlock prevailed neither the new nor the old conflict resolution institution is working properly.
CHAPTER THREE:

3.RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Description of the Study Area

The study area covered two Districts located in Tigray National Regional States. Atsbi Wonberta was selected from Tigray National Regional state and Koneba from Afar National Regional State. The Kneba District of the Afar National Regional State is selected purposively because it frequently inter in to conflict with the Atsbi wonberta district of the Tigray National Regional State.

3.1.1 Atsbi Wonberta District

Atsbi Wonberta District is located in the north eastern tip of Tigray Regional National State. The capital of the District is Atsbi Endasilassie 65 km north eastern of Mekelle, the capital of Tigray National Regional State. The District is consists of 18 kebeles, with the total size of 1223.451Kilometer square. The 18 kebels are, Gebrekidan, Hdinet, Hrasaw, Rubafeleg, Zrema, Felegeweyni, Golgoainele, Adimesanu, Kalamin, Habes, Barkaadisebha, Dibab, Michaelemba, Hayelom, Era, Kelishaemni, Hikimeshal and Endasilassie. Ten of the kebelles have common boundary with the Afar regional state. These are: Gebrekidan, Hrasaw, Rubafeleg, Felegeweyni, Kalamin, Michaelemba, Hayelom,Era and Kelishaemni. With regard to the size of the population, the total population is estimated to be 112341 from this total population, male compose 59659 while female compose about 58682. Town dwellers make up 11144 while the remaining 101179 is in rural area. The livelihood of the people in the area is more dominantly mixed farming, while other sources are rare. Almost all of the inhabitants are believers of orthodox Christianity (Central Sstastical Agency, 2007). For this study, three kebeles are selected on the bases of having long boundary lines with the Afar regional state and the recurrent communal conflicts they face with neigbouring Afar. These kebeles are Harasaw,Kalamin and Felegeweyni.
3.1.2 Kuneba District

The Afar National Regional State consists of five administrative zones and 29 Districts. Koneba is one of the Districts in Zone Two whose capital is Koneba with total kebeles of 13. Koneba is located north west of Semera, the capital of Afar National Regional State. The total population of the woreda is 34801. Out of this19558 are male while the remaining 15243 are female, with dominantly pastoralists and agro-pastoralists modes of life while few are engaged on day laborers and business. (Central Sately Agency, 2007).

3.2 Methodology of the Study

For researches in the dynamics of socio-economic environments, where the subjects of the study are human beings and their complex interactions, the qualitative approach was find to be more appropriate strategy to answer the research questions of this study. Even though quantitative research has still significant importance in answering questions about how much? How many? How often? To what extent? It leave out “how”, “in what way”, about opinions, experiences and feelings of individuals in a research phenomenon (Hancock, 1988). Very importantly, Kalewengel (2008) has also argued that the reality in research setting is too complex and people in it are mysterious to be explained by the techniques of quantitative research.

Furthermore, qualitative approach is concerned with subjective assessment of attitudes, opinions, and behaviors (Kothari, 2004). Holiday (2002) asserts that the aim qualitative research is get deep in to definable settings in which observable facts can be places meaningfully with in a specific event. In contrast to quantitative approach, that categorizes an event in to allotments, qualitative methods endeavors to understand the meaning of experiences (Marriam, 1988). This approach enables the researcher to claim knowledge based on his impressions and insights about the data collected from the respondents. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research allows researchers to view social phenomena holistically with their imperative knowledge on meanings and connotations of collected data and then to draw conclusions personally and theoretically. Accordingly, this research being conducted with conflict dynamics of complex human and social environment, has adopted qualitative approach to answer the research questions.
3.2.1 Sample Design

In this case, purposive and snowball sampling methods were applied to select the key informant as a case of generating chains of information transformation to get the needed information from the predetermined individuals respectively. Snowball sampling is a non-probability method for developing a research sample where existing study participants recruit future participants from among their acquaintances. This sampling technique is often used in hidden populations which are difficult for researchers to access or in cases where a sampling frame is hard to establish and it is assumed that cases are affiliated through links that can be exploited to locate other respondents based on existing ones (Katz, 2009). If the research requires the use of purposive sampling techniques, it may be difficult to specify at the beginning of your research how many people you intend to contact. Instead you continue using your chosen procedure such as snowballing or theoretical sampling until a ‘saturation point’ is reached. This was a term used by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to describe that time the research when the researcher really do think that everything is complete and that the researcher do not obtaining any new information by continuing. In written report the researcher can then describe his/her sampling procedure, including a description of how many people was contacted (Cathrine, 2007). Accordingly, individuals who are well versed in the history, culture, tradition and the current state of knowledge about the conflict were purposefully selected from the two Districts as a key informants from their respecting groups. A total of 41 key informants, 15 from Afar (Koneba) and 26 from Atsbi Wonberta District were selected. To make the sample representative of the population, respondents were selected from different sections of the community and form different government bodies. From the government sides of the respective regions, the police, wereda court, and wereda administrations are included in this study. From the community side, elders, peace committee members, youths and women of the respective community were participants of this research.
**Figure: 3** snowballing sampling through diagram

![Diagram showing the process of snowball sampling through waves 1, 2, and 3.]

**Figure 3: Snowball Sampling Technique through Diagram**

**Source:** from Johnston (2010) with slight modifications

The above diagram shows the process in which the researcher identifies each respondent to fill the in-depth interview in Atsbi Wonberta District. The same procedures were also used to identify respondents in Kuneba districts of Afar National Regional State.


3.2.2 Data Sources

Both primary and secondary sources of data were used to conduct this research. The secondary data were used to substantiate and investigate the issue under study. Literatures that focus on perspectives of communal conflicts were assessed. Previous works on the dynamics and trends of inter-communal conflicts in Ethiopia particularly; the Afar-Tigray conflict is more relevant and related ones to this study. Reports and minutes of the district police, reports and minutes of the peace committees of the respective Districts were also important sources to this study. The primary sources were collected from the key informant in-depth interview. In doing so, the following data collection instruments were used.

3.2.3 Data Collection Instruments

**Semi-structured in-depth interview:** As Densscombe(2007) cited in kalewengel(2008), in-depth interview enable researchers to gain insights about people’s opinion, feelings, emotion and experiences. In-depth interview enable researchers to explore the feelings and experiences of people in detail than simple report by using questioner. An individual face to face communication or conversations were held with respondents. To support data gathering process by interview, interview guide was prepared and interview was conducted for more than one hour per informant and it was crucial to use electronic voice recorder. Key informants were selected purposively by the researcher. The key informants (from the target population of the study are includes: local elders, religious leaders, government officials, security and militia heads, ex-and present members of the joint peace committee, victim individuals of the conflict as well as scholars who have knowledge on the study area were interviewed in this study. Therefore, total of 41 key informants were selected.26 of the key informants is from Atsbi wonberta district of Tigray while the rest 15 are from Kuneba districts Afar National Regional state.
**Focused Group Discussion:** Two focused group discussion were held. Two of them with each group of the study subjects. Each focused group discussion had on average eight members that will be treated differently on the bases of their culture, religion and language to avoid possible misunderstanding. Therefore, informants who are fluent on both Afaraf and Tigrigna were selected intentionally to avoid language misunderstanding. Local elders, religious leaders, present and ex peace committee members and others who have encyclopedic knowledge about the problem were included in the focused group discussion. The focused group discussion is supposed to help the researcher not only to generate new information that is missed in other methods, but also to check and counter-check the reliabilities of data gathered from key informant interviews. The place for meeting people and gathering of broad range of information is via formal and informal means for this study includes: government offices, churches and mosque, home, peace committee meeting hall, local drink houses, café, traveling to distant conflict sites on foot.

**Document Analysis:** Document analysis was the other data collection instruments that the researcher employed to obtain data from documents. This was done by referring different published and unpublished secondary sources like books, newspapers, magazines, journal articles. The researcher analyzed available documents with special emphasis to minutes of meeting of police, peace committee, and wereda administrative officials, court charges of the two groups. This was help the researcher to criticizes or acknowledge the previous works concerning the issues understudy and thereby to fill the gap in the research at hand.

**3.2.4 Methods of data analysis**

The data analysis for this research is qualitative type analysis particularly; it is the combination explanatory, descriptive and analytical data analysis. The researcher examined the data collected in order to find constructs, themes and patterns that can be used to describe and explain the phenomenon being studied. The researcher constructed meanings out of participant’s response. The data that were collected via interview and focused group discussion were transcribed from their original form (tape recording), they were condensed in to themes to construct meanings,
and then the themes discuss vis-à-vis literature and research findings of other. Analysis of data that were collected through document analysis was following the same procedure.

3.2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is a norm for conduct that distinguishes between acceptable and unacceptable behavior in a given context. A researcher is a member of community; hence in any case he/she should not undermine the values, norms, customs and traditions of the community. This is because the very purpose of a research is to benefit human kind in general. Accordingly, the researcher took into consideration some ethical issues during its conduct. Primarily, informed consent is at the heart of this research. To this effect, the researcher followed ethically appropriate steps to ensure informed consent in order to keep participant’s right to privacy and confidentiality. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to the informants so as not to impose any sort of physical or mental harm on them. In nutshell, the researcher was very sensitive to the local culture, beliefs like respecting elders, while asking people for an interview. This study was affirming the informed consent of all informants to whom the researcher explained the purpose of the study. It was also assured them that their ideas shall be kept anonymous in the body of the research. Instead, the researcher was used options to explain informant’s statement like “according to informants”, “as informants said”, “one elder, youth, affirmed that…” besides for those who are not volunteer to get their voices, the researcher take notes as fast and accurate as possible so as not to miss ideas.
CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 The Nature of Afar-Atsbi Wonberta Historical Interaction

The AtsbiWonberta agriculturalists and the Afar pastoralists have had a long history of Relationship manifested mostly by pleasant coexistences but sometimes by serious conflicts. Although the Atsbi Wonberta and the Afar preserve their separate ethnic identity, they interact with each other widely in various socio-economic and other securities related concerns. The interaction and cooperation of the two communities served as a ladder to enhance social bond and peaceful co-existence with each other for centuries. Let us have a look at their areas of harmonious relationship to have an understanding of the trends of social dynamics before dealing with conflicting relationships.

4.1.1 Market and Trade interaction

The symbiotic relationships and mutual interdependence of the two communities are explained in terms of trade exchange. Trade exchange in the study areas is dominated mostly by local markets. Three major markets are there in Atsbi Wonberta wereda territory: Atsbi, Dera and Hayqimeshal. Atsbi is a market located in the highland capital of Atsbi Wonberta, commonly known as Atsbi Enda silassie. Dera is a market place located north word of Atsbi while Hayqimeshal is found south ward of Atsbi, the capital of the wereda. These markets are held on weekly basis and are attended by several communities coming from different directions, including from near and distant low land areas of Afar. Most of the time, the Afar attending these markets are from zone two of Kuneba wereda of Afar.

The Afar communities have access to the above mentioned local markets and used to exchange commodities. Livestock and livestock products from kuneba and sometimes from Dalul woredas of Afar are sold in these markets. Various agricultural products such as grain, pulses, spice (from the highland), cattle, goats, sheep and other livestock and livestock products (from both highland and lowland areas) as well as modern and local industrial products such as clothes, shoes and other commodities are displayed for sale in these markets. These interdependence and important market networks has played a significant role in consolidating the peaceful coexistence between
the afar and Atsbi Wonberta communities. Most of the key informants from Atsbi Wonberta state this as follows:

We [Atsbi Wonberta] and they [Afar Kuneba] had very intimate interaction and sympathy for each other many years ago. The only market we had during the imperial regimes was in Atsbi. The markets of Dera, Hayqimeshal, as well as Kuneba in Afar are newly established markets. Thus, we were exchanging commodities in the old market of Atsbi. The Afar provided livestock and livestock products while we provide agricultural surpluses like grain. When the market price of the Afar livestock declines due to inadvertent drought, they were able to borrow grain from us [from Atsbi Wonberta] and return it later in kind (goat or sheep) when the season is favorable. Our relationship in the past was to this extent (my translation from Tigrigna) (information obtained from Atsbi Wonberta elder during field work on March 05-29/2014)

Similarly, the Atsbi Wonberta highlanders have access to markets Kuneba in Afar. Kuneba is a common market of the Afar regularly visited by Atsbi wonberta highlanders especially by Esot, Harasaw and Tseba’ayna. They supply honey, sugar and other items to the afar communities. According to the informants from Atsbi Wonberta (Tabia Felegeweyni), the Afars have relatively good access to food aid today. Therefore, when there is excess aid in Kuneba, the Atsbi Wonberta are active trade partners. They buy wheat and oil at relatively cheap price and take it to the highland market on camel and donkey to sell it at a profitable price. However, some informants from Atsbi Wonberta claims that when Christians go to Kuneba market to exchange commodities, some armed Afar attack them on their way to Atsbi (Ibid).

This view is shared by some Afar people who state that the Afar had good memory of mutual friendship and are considerate with Atsbi Wonberta people. Even so, there are some hateful people who exercise such unethical and disgraceful actions. But one should remember that these people never represent the entire Afar people who believe that the Tigrrians in general and the Atsbi Wonberta in particular are their friends and they do not like to see any one harming them (Information obtained from Afar elder during field work in Whdis, Afar on march 06/2014 and at Dera, market place of Atsbi Wonberta on March 11/2014). Generally, one may deduce from the informants is that there were periods of friendliness and peaceful cooperation they had with each other through market connections.
4.1.2 Inter-group resource sharing

The other fundamental manifestation of peaceful interaction between the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta is resource sharing. There was cross-boundary resource sharing between the two communities since ancient time through ‘Fukur’. Fukur has its origin in the daily interaction of the two groups. When there is drought in the highlands, the highlanders sent their herds to the low land until the drought gone and the same do the lowlanders. In the language of the communities, the one who keep the herds of the other until the drought go is called ‘Fukur’. The compelling reciprocity of Fukur is not limited only to resource sharing. It also applied in sharing of ideas in time of luck and misfortune, both manmade and natural. The reciprocal linkage of ‘Fukur’ is lifelong and can be transferred and consolidated from father to son. In addition to this, the two communities had give and take type of relationship whereby the Afar who does not practice farming takes grain (wheat) from the highlanders during the harvest time and pay the back in the form of sheep or goats at holidays like New Year or Easter (interview with Atsbi Wonberta elder during field work, March 06/2014)

Atsbi Wonberta and Afar Informants revealed that both communities have number of common grazing lands and water points like Hila and Hanka and distant low land areas such as Bahri, in Wahdis. The highlanders used to graze their cattle with the Afar in the low lands without any problems. Similarly, in the dry season, Afar herders used to move their herds to the highland areas of Atsbi Wonberta where there is better grazing and water. According to some informants, these interactions have social values further than just resources sharing. For instances, learning of each other’s language and adopting common tradition of settling conflict through elders (Gereb). (Data obtained from Focused group discussion in Atsbi on March, 15/2014 and in Kuneba on March, 26/2014) (The personal interview was held in different sites with both groups).

4.1.3 Inter-Ethnic Marriage Interaction

Inter-Ethnic marriage is uncommon between the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta communities mainly because of cultural and religious deference. Marriage among the Afar is mostly cross cousin which they called Abusma. But marriage among the Atsbi Wonberta (Christians) is goes beyond
the seventh generation. Even though the usual Afar custom is marriage of cross cousin, this may not be the case among the Afar in Wahdis. This fact was confirmed by both sides that there are some Afar from the low lands and Christians from the highland sides who by accident happened to have blood relationship with one another. With regard to this, one Afar informant said the following:

I am from the Afar community living in Wahdis Kebele. But I have blood relationship with Esot, in Atsbi Wonberta. I am in the second line in the clan of Alemayo Desta, Christian whose origin is from Atsbe-Dera. Members of this clan are now dispersed over Esot, Tseba’ayna, beliga (in Atsbi Wonberta and Wahdis and Fantoyta (in Afar). Therefore, we are brothers. The only difference we have is cultural and religious one. They speak Afar language and we speak Tigringna language. (Translated from Afarigna) (Information obtained from Whdis kebelle administrative official, Afar, March, 19, 2014, Kuneba)

The above informant further claims that the blood relationship plays a prominent role in recovering the friendship relation at times of inter-communual conflicts or inter-group conflicts. The Afar who has blood ties with the Atsbi Wonberta are always invited by both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta communities to mediate conflicts between the two groups. Therefore, the blood relationship serves as a bridge and gives way for restoring peace and stability. However, the current conflict between the two groups, particularly between Esot (Atsbi Wonberta) and Fantoyta (Afar) is get worsening from time to time. The current conflicts overshadow the historical peaceful relations of the two groups.

It is undeniable fact that conflict is multifaceted and dynamic social process. The natures of the causes are related to socio-economic and structural factors. This implies that the causes of conflicts are so diversified and intertwined that they cannot reduce to a single factor. The core causes of conflict in the study area can be classified as underling (structural) and triggering (immediate) causes. Underlying causes are factors necessary but not sufficient conditions for the outbreak of violent inter-communal conflicts whereas triggering (immediate) causes are factors that have immediate potential to escalate inter-group-conflicts. The two factors are inseparable entities, though not always, in that proximate (imitate) causes cannot exist
independently and structural (underling) causes are not self sufficient to escalate violent conflicts.

3.2 Structural causes of the conflict

3.2.1 Economic Issues: Competition over Scarce Resources

Violent conflicts are usually associated with shortage of needs or reserved natural resources. This might happened due to inter-wined dynamic factors like explosive population growth, poverty, environmental degradation and decline of local resources management system. Ayalew (2009) and Bekelle (2010) in their study in the upper-awash valley argued that the inter-communal clashes are associated with the scarcity of space pastoral resources and the decline of environmental space. The same is true in the case of Afar pastoralists and Atsbi Wonberta agriculturalists and agro-pastoralists, computation over scarce grazing lands bring the in to recurrent clashes. According to informants from both sides, particularly from Esot (Atsbi Wonberta) and Fantoyta (Afar), have many common grazing lands both in the highlands and lowlands. These common grazing lands are the main livestock feed and fresh water. Thus, during pasture-scarce seasons, both groups compute for other additional grazing lands and eventually come in to dispute. Based on the information secured from Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and key informant interview, conflicts due to computation over grazing land and ownership of land in the border areas are common incidents between the two groups. This is particularly because of the weakness of the local rule they call Srit (local tenure system on how to utilize common natural resources). These local laws are not comprehensive on how to use the common grazing lands. It does not mention specific issues like how to exclude non-members from using the common grazing lands. These laws are binding if it is accepted by both parties. It is not enforced if it is discarded by either side of the group. Indeed, there is also computation for other resources such as forests (fire wood and construction materials) claimed by some informants to be as causes of conflict. Nevertheless, the major causes of conflict repeatedly explained by the informants are stiff computation over grazing and farming lands (data obtained from FGD and local people interview of both group in various study sites, March6-29/2014).
Grazing land

Access to grazing land is the main cause of conflict raised in the discussions held with focused group discussion and most of the key informants. In inter-communal conflicts often occurred in the border areas. If these conflicts are not handled carefully, they would lead to destructive conflict between the two communities in particular and the two regional states in general. Regarding how the grazing land causes conflict, the two communities blame one another. Though the two communities agree that grazing land causes conflict, but they have different and incompatible ideas. In the words of informants from Atsbi Wonberta group, they said that their community have local rule related grazing land management called Srit. According to that Srit, the grazing lands are divided in to two: Fishih (common grazing lands) which are open for all members of both communities and Hizaiti Biray (reserved grazing land only open for oxen). Most of the hizaiti biray are owned by the Atsbi Wonberta communities while the Fishih are owned commonly by both communities. To manage the hizaiti biray grazing lands among the Atsbi Wonberta communities, there are set of local rules. Some of the local rules can be stated as follow: when the livestock of the Afar passes in to the reserved grazing lands of Atsbi Wonberta, the owner of livestock would pay money usually five Ethiopian birr per single livestock as a penalty to the local persecutor locally known as Halawi, which is entitled by the local people to protect and conserve the grazing land. Secondly, if the livestocks of members of Atsbi Wonberta penetrates in to the reserved grazing lands, the same penalty is imposed like that of the Afar. Thirdly, in case individuals from Afar or Atsbi Wonberta reject to pay the avowed amount of penalty, it will be informed to their respective Abo-Gereb representatives whereby they would be obliged to execute their charge through them.

The Atsbi Wonberta informants claim that the local rules were commonly applied by both communities for long years. The Abo-Gereb of the two communities know well these rules that governs the use of grazing land for they are part of the past history. However, currently, the Afar is not abiding by these rules. They claim the common grazing land of the two ethnic communities as theirs. Even they enter their herds in to the protected areas Atsbi Wonberta only open for oxen. When the local persecutor (Halawi) asks them to pay the stated amount of money as penalty and to refrain from such activities, they are not willing.
In contrary to this, the Afar informants argue that Atsbi Wonberta controlled most of the grazing lands. They raise examples in Esot, the graizing land found east of Esot and west of Fantoyta, Afar. The Hizaiti Biray (reserved grazing lands for oxen) that is claimed to be used only for oxen by Esot, Atsbi Wonberta. However, Esot used it also as grazing land for cattle in grazing scarce seasons apart from oxen for themselves while prohibiting the Afar. As a riposte and to challenge the resource scarce seasons, the Afar also keeps (reserves) some sort of grazing lands locally known as Desso for their calves, lambs, goats and camels to the north east Direction of Esot Kushet. This is because of scarcity of grazing lands these areas are traditionally a common grazing lands of both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta. Thus, the Atsbi Wonberta claims that the area reserved by Afar is common grazing land of the two communities based on the former local rule (Srit) and it is illegal to protect or reserve by the Afar. This dynamic problem, unfortunately, is changing in to conflict when the cattle graze in the protected grazing land of either community (interview with Afar elders, March, 20/2014, Wahdis, Afar).

**Changing Farming Practice**

Most of the time, low lands are often presumed to be as infertile regions with no potential for agricultural productions. However, this view is more or less imperfect in many pastoral areas today, animal husbandry always co-exist with farming (Degefa,2004 as cited in Abrha,2010 and Baudouin,2004). In the highland (Atsbi Wonberta) area, there are a number of youth with no land farm. Most of the time, the landless migrate to Humera, western Tigray and to Arab countries to get bread. But now days, migrating to Arab countries become hard and the youth prefer to go to the low land of the border between Atsbi Wonberta and Afar to establish farmland there. The landless are more vulnerable to poverty, they are eager to own land in the low lands. One elder from the Tseba Ayna informants express the pain as follow:

Today, there are many people with no farmland. This situation is exacerbated by booming population growth while the size of the farm land remains the same. The lucky youth survive by farming his family’s farmland while the unlucky migrates to Humera or Saudi Arabia. Those who remain in their homeland plough their parent’s farmland need to expand the existing
farmland in order to fulfill his current need of his families, particularly, when they get married. Thus, these people have the demand to cultivate the common grazing lands in the border of Atsbi Wonberta and Afar. Likewise, the cattle of Afar pastoralists decrease from time to time due to the recurrent drought and famine. Because of this, the Afar are on the way to practice sedentary way of life and hence practice agriculture. And the government is encouraging this. As a result, since the border is not well demarcated (somewhere not demarcated at all), both of the two communities claim land ownership on the same site and are driven in to conflict again and again (my own translation from Tigrigna) (information obtained from field work on March,09/2014, Felegeweyni, Atsbi)

Some of the key informants from Wahdis, Afar further said that the pastoral Afar these days practice cultivations as the Christian in the highlands do. This is due to degradation of grazing range land in many areas of the law land which has pushed pastoralists to look other means of livelihood (farming). Rather than searching for additional grazing lands. With more search for agricultural land, the Afar in to inter-communal conflicts with neighboring Atsbi wonberta communities:

At this time, we (Afar) live a relatively better life than we were. We are trying to change our livelihood from pastoral to agro--pastoral. Our neighboring brothers (Atsbbi wonberta) have the skill and experience of agriculture that they inherited from their ancestors, but we lack that skill. We asked them to cultivate the lowland areas on the basis of equal crop--sharing as they have the labor and the skill but they would not accept. Instead, they claim ownership of land and we made the same claim. The first violent conflict occurs before seven years when we try to cultivate the land. We sowed barley and wheat and sorghum, but unfortunately the Esot (Atsbi Wonberta) burned up and destroyed the sorghum. We took the case to Mekelle and Samara but got no solution. From that time onwards, the government forbad the cultivation of that land. The overall complaint we have is not against the Atsbi wonberta people but against both regional governments for they could not address the recurrent problem (information obtained from Afar interview during the field work23 March, 2014 in Whdis,Kuneba).
The above testaments clearly depict the dynamic condition of demand on land and land related issues. Pastureland is declining due to land degradation, increasing aridity and desertification in the low land area. Afar pastoralists need to shift their mode of life from pure pastoralism to agropastoralism (mixture of agriculture and pastoralism). But there is already landless population pressure among the Atsbi Wonberta communities. However, the existing needs forced both communities to claim farming land in the common traditionally grazing lands. The relationship between the resource demand (scarcity) and inter-communal conflicts between the two groups basically lies in the relative importance of socio-economic dimension and vague interface of how to share these resources. This is evident in Hussien (1999) who claims that the key cause of conflict is the booming population and land scarcity in the face of rising environmental degradation. Conflicts over arable land, wetland and grazing land have aggravated the mismanagement of resource. These conflicts arise throughout the border lands. But at the same time there is institutional failure, it is decline, computing with the institutional setting and dynamics of livelihood can be taken as fundamental causes.

3.2.2 Socio-cultural factors

The Decline of Local Traditional Institutions

Atsbi Wonberta and the Afar used to pass common essential decisions related to communal conflicts in their respective areas through their elders, most importantly, communities were responsible for maintaining peace and order via their common institution called Gerebet/shimagile. This institution has for years, been a distinctive model in addressing inter-communal conflicts related to resource management and homicide activities between members of the two communities (information gained from focused group discussion with Abo Gerbs of the two communities during the field work from March 06-29/2014 in different sites. ).

This implies that the members of the Gereb as a peace actor have a great role in the political and socio-economic role of the two communities. In the study area, it is a common assumption that aged people have full-fledged knowledge and wisdom to perform public reconciliations in time of conflict and they can pass wise decisions (see also Kelemewkh, 2011). According to one
member of Gereb from Atsbi Wonberta, however, now days, traditional institutions of
governance and conflict resolution mechanisms are fading away due to the failure government to
recognize their function of resolving inter-communal conflicts at local level. The governments of
the two woredas do not provide any budget for this case. They do not provide any facilities for
the members of the Gereb. Thus, function of Gereb, and Abo-Gereb as a social institution that
manages conflicts has deteriorated from time to time. So now days, this domestically grown
institution are hardly noteworthy device for resources management, particularly land, on account
of rise of self-centered approaches to posses land that was earlier governed by common
customary rules of the two communities (information obtained from well experienced Abo-
Gereb who has been serving for more than ten years in the Gereb representing Atsbi Wonberta,
13 March, 2014).

The Culture of Traditional Violence

The long-standing culture of revenge has destructive end result of prolonged conflict cycle in
Ethiopian history. This traditional culture of violence have for long been a root causes for inter-
communal conflict in the study area. These deep rooted culture and traditional values are
ascribed to social prestige. In some parts of Ethiopia, there is a very old culture of revenge
whereby members of a family, relative or loved one is often retaliated at any cost to restore
family prestige (Tigist, 2010). This holds true in the study area. for instance, if one of the
communities (Afar or Atsbi Wonberta), damage any resource of the other group, the victimized
group would take a revenge either by damaging property, killing a member, looting livestock
from the other side. The reason behind this is that individuals or groups who retaliate to restore
family honer are considered as most appreciated locally known Hafasi Dem. On the contrary,
those who are unable to take reprisal become a laughing stock of the society (information
obtained from both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta elders during field work in different sites from
March 06-29/2014). In line of this argument, there was a title given to the Tigrians. The title was
known as Hanta (hero). Every one need to kill Afar to have the title of Hanta. These
personalities have special place and privilege in the social life of the study area. They could roar
in any social festivals, they could wear the skin of Tiger or Lion and entitled Hanta as prize of
heroism. They have also the right to grow their hair and smear butter on it. They enjoy the right
to wear clothes of hemline of which was decorated in various colors and brands. The Afar hear
this stories from their grand fathers and take revenge against their Tigrian neighbors if there is favorable environment (information obtained from Atsbi wonberta elders during field work on 08 March/2014).

3.2.3 Security related causes

Contested borders

Border line between Afar and Atsbi Wonberta are not evidently hitherto defined. There is no clear boundary demarcation made between the two woredas. Thus there was feeling by both communities that dispute is inevitable unless a clear boundary demarcation is made to separate the two woredas in general and Fantoyta Esot in particular. The two woredas, Atsbi Wonberta and Kuneba, raise a question to their respective regional state administration. The response given by both regional states to the question of border demarcation was that the issue was not their business but that of the federal government. This hazy demarcation is a fertile ground for conflict between the two communities. The Atsbi Wonberta-Afar land is demarcated by artifacts like merchant routs, mountains and water points. In fact this demarcation was effectively functional when it was applied in the management of common and reserved grazing sites but ineffective in the case of farmland management. Each Kushet in Atsbi Wonberta has its own common grazing sites to be administrated by the local people themselves. The Atsbi Wonberta communities have also communal grazing sites they share with Afar. In case of sever resource scarcity; the Atsbi Wonberta communities have moral responsibility to share the grazing sites with the non-members (Afar) the resource at hand based on the mutual consent of the local people. The intra (Afar-Wonberta) and inter (Afar-Afar Wonberta) resource sharing in the border sites of Esot and Fantayto is the dominant feature of livelihood. This pasture administration and tenure system remained intact for decades (information obtained from interview with ex- and present AboGereb of Atsbi Wonberta on 08 March, 2014).

Based on language and ethnic border demarcation by EPRDF, the Afar claims most of the common grazing sites as theirs. Anyone who wants to live on these common grazing sites should have permanent residence certificate or letter from their respective woredas. The Atsbi Wonberta informants differently argue that the pastoral way of life is characterize by mobility from one place to another in time of resource scarcity or drought. They stay in one place albeit the area is
not part of Afar land. Therefore, the Afar neighbors, on the pre-text of principle of effective control over certain territory, they strive to claim and control areas that they lived in for short period of time as if it is permanently their own land. In the name of temporary residence in some site for few months, they ignite conflict that ultimately causes border conflict. The Atsbi Wonberta informants claim that there is no clear agreement with regard to their specific border that clearly separate the land of Atsbi Wonberta and the Afar. As a result, the question of land ownership, for the first time, grows in to a violent conflict in 1999 following air mapping by federal government in the study area in this particular period of time (information obtained from Atsbi Wonberta elders during field work on March 10/2014).

**Availability of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons**

The easy accessiblity and proliferation of firearms is another factor in addition to contested border in the study area. The abundance of Illegal Small Arms and Light Weapons (ISALW) is a kin to adding fuel to the fire. According to Tigist, following the dawn fall of the Derg regime in 1991, lots of SALWs left behind the armed forces of the defeated regime got in to the hands of civilian, criminals and others (Tigist,2010). Similarly, the informants from the community and justice system as well as government (Wereda) security bodies of the study sites argue that military automatic weapons/guns from the Derg soldiers were sold freely during the dawn fall of the regime. Using this as a chance, the Afar adults and those from the wealthy groups have become the owners of one to three guns per house hold. Many guns sold to anyone who wanted to buy in different illegal markets of the Afar region. Therefore, they got the opportunity to possess automatic refills. Some of the Atsbi Wonberta people had this opportunity too, but they were disarmed by EPRDF. As a result, the Afar youth are equipped with modern automatic weapons that shift the power balance and greatly aggravate dispute. Having these weapons as a communal tool, in the Afar communal community had its own impact on peace, stability and mutual tolerance of the communities (interview with Atsbi Wonberta wereda administration officials, justice and security government bodies March 14/ 2014).

One of the informants from Atsbi Wonberta also confirms the above idea as follow:

Having gun is considered as symbol of power to self-protection and wealth in Afar culture. This also used to hold true for the Atsbi Wonberta in the past, but now there is no more demand for
gun due to behavioral change and government control. However, the Afar youth, including those who are under eighteen year’s ages, possess automatic weapons like M-fourteen and Kalashnikov privately and out of law. Due to insecurity and weak government presence in that area, when a simple dispute happens with non-members (Atsbi Wonberta) in the grazing lands, the immature Afar youth with automatic rifles run to fire out the gun against the empty handed youths of Atsbi Wonberta. Thus, homicide occurs, this in turn leads to inter-communal vacillation (my translation from Tigrigna) (interview with Atsbi Wonberta elder during the field work on 11March/2014).

As most of the informants persistently confirmed, this variation in possessing firearms has made them to be victim whereas it favors the well armed to kill for ostensible grounds. The conflict that occurred in February, 2014 and March 1999, are vivid evidence in which an Afar youth (Wahdis) killed two young men from Esot. As a result of this, the conflict out spread in to inter-communal conflicts which further material destruction. This point goes with the idea Tigst (2010) on the area on Small Arms and Light Weapons. She affirmed that the arm acquisition is now both the cause and consequence of conflict in the dynamics of pastoral conflict. These conflicts in the past were fought with traditional weapons like Bows and Arrows but now with high caliber automatic weapons.

The Afar informants agree that they possess automatic firearms. The reason stated behind owning firearms according to the Afar informants goes as follow:

We had the chance to own gun during the demise of the Derg regime from the local dealers. We bought the weapons by selling our camels and cows. This was and now is necessary for us because we are living with wild animals. We possess arms to protect ourselves and our livestock from bandits and wild animals. Moreover, we feel that we are insecure due to the failure of the government to protect us. Therefore, in order to defend ourselves from bandits and wild beasts, we forced to own it (my translation from Afarigna) (information obtained from Afar (Wahdis) residents during the field work on March 26/2014).

Thus, weapons owned for self protection may be employed for retaliation. The acquisition of weapons is therefore, be both the cause and the outcome of the conflict in the study area.
3.2.4 Administrative factors

Poor Governance: Weak Law Enforcement and Justice System

Problems related to good governance, law enforcement and justice system are other issues identified as key factors that stimulate conflict in the study areas. Informants from both Atsbi Wonberta and Afar states that political authorities at local level (Wereda) do not give recognition to the existing conflicts. Lack of good governance is one of the flash points for the spreading of conflicts and ill-feeling among the communities. They argue that the problem is obvious fact for which no proper and speedy solution is tried. The justice organ and other concerned bodies in the study site rarely provide justice or take appropriate measures against criminals. The informants attribute this to the weakness of law enforcement and justice organ illegally favored the offenders on their respective sides rather than side with victim groups (information from Afar and Atsbi Wonberta people during field work, in different sites from March 06-29/2014)

The law enforcement organs at Wereda level lack capacity and willingness to examine thoughtfully, follow, capture and bring criminals before the court of law. In this case, FGD participants and key informants from Afar and Atsbi Wonberta complaint against their respective officials working in the area of justice, security and administration at Wereda level. They explain scenario as follow:

The Wereda administrative bodies do not feel our pain because their families, brothers, and sisters are not here and they do not share the pain. No one care about us. They only think about preserving their personal power while we are suffering from poor governance and justice system. We know all this is the result of lack of local self-administration, particularly, at wereda level because the administrators are non-native to the society conflicts and mal administration like this never happens in the past when Mehari Tsegay was the administrator of this Wereda (My translation from Tigrigna) (Information obtained from Atsbi Wonberta key elder during field work on 07March/2014).

The head of militia and local people in Atsbi Wonberta claim that there is unequal treatment between the two regions (Atbi Wonberta and neighboring Afar) while they are reside in one federal system. The statement they mad about inequality tells as follow:
We are suffering more while offenders (Afa, Whdis kebeles particularly) are allowed to proceed with impunity. The Kuneba district justice does not impose proportional penalty on individuals who trigger and participate in the conflict. In contrast, the Atsbi Wonberta Wereda takes serious measures against any militias who are suspected of offense. Such partial measure is one additional cause of conflict escalation between the two communities. When they (Afar) kill us, our leaders have one common saying, “They are nomads, tolerate them”. This act is unbearable to us. When would low level of awareness on the Afar side cease to be a reason for their continued perpetration of homicide? Then, the victims’ families will continue to retaliate because they feel that the treatment is unfair in a lawful state (my translation from Tigrigna) (Interview with Atsbi Wonberta local people and militia during the field work on March 12/2014).

Moreover, they express their anger against some Afar officials and other members of the justice system who they think are more loyal to their ethnic group than to the law. Such mistrust erodes the belief that the Atsbi Wonberta people have in the justice organ. They justify this saying that when they appeal to the concerned bodies, their charge will not reach the court; even if it does, the verdict will not be enforced due to various factors. For instance, administrative authorities, the police, and justice system try to hide whatever wrong their respective community members do. In addition, the clan structure is more dominant and powerful than the state structure in the Afar region. The state structure is rather a tool for the clan structure (ibid). The Afar respondents characterize the Atsbi Wonberta officials as they take side with their community but they do not blame their own wereda administrative bodies as the Atsbi Wonberta do.

Similarly, the Afar informants claim that both the Afar and Tigray regional governments do not give serious attention to the conflict and punish criminals according to the law. They are not accountable and transparent, and expose the fact to federal government. They rather try to hide the fact because they know it is their weakness (information obtained from Afar, Wahdis informants during field work on 23 March/2014 and at Dera market day in Atsbi Wonberta on March 11/2014). Officials from the Atsbi Wonberta side, however, claim that the regional government has tried its best, but still no decision is made so far about the contested border and the situation in Atsbi wonberta is more closely followed up than the Afar officials are doing in Kuneba. (Interview with Atsbi Wonberta wereda administration officials 14 March, 2014).
seems that the two regions try to focus only on their locality and they seem to be biased by the information they get from their respective communities.

As a result of poor governance and weak law enforcement, the two groups prefer to take their case to *abo--gerebs* than to the justice system. Unfortunately, the famous and commonly used cultural institutions in peace building are now weakened and could not be effective alternative conflict resolution mechanism. This, in one way or another, is attributed to the failure of the state. It is neither able to give recognition to the established practice of indigenous institutions nor provide impartial justice in modern courts. This implies that the state intervention is too weak. Its interference is not to support the already recognized age--old social institution but rather to abolish it. Thus, irresponsiveness to the public becomes problem and the cause for the prevalence of recurrent conflicts on both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta sides are clear manifestations of poor governance. Further, an administrative structure that is partial and unable to identify community problems and provide timely solution continues to be the source of conflict. This in turn widens the gap between the communities and the administration and aggravates inter-communal Conflict in the study area (information obtained from current and ex-*Abo Gereb* of the two communities’ during field work from 06-29/2014, Atsbi Wonberta).

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 ethnic groups. Thus, groups become fearful for their survival. Under such conditions, each ethnic group will look into their own devices for protection against others (Lobell, 2004).

### 3.3 Triggers of the conflict

#### 3.3.1 Murder and Theft

Theft and homicide acts are the triggering factors in the study sites. These are mentioned as the main cause of inter-communal conflict. From the perspective of Atsbi Wonberta-Afar, theft takes place at individual level and sometimes in groups which looks like raid. The case of 1999 was raised as an example by most of Afar-Atsbi Wonberta informants when the Afar raids forty five head animals and two donkeys from Atsbi Wonberta. In revenge to that, the Atsbi Wonberta also
take an unknown number of head animals and sell them at Edaga Robu'i, a place near Edaga Hamus in Tigray. This pattern is becoming habit among some of the two communities for the purpose of economic benefits and social prestige. However, compared to homicide, theft is not the main ground for inter-communal conflicts to happen. When one of the two communities kills a person or steals property, the victim group is ready to take retaliation, which are more serious one than the later (interview with Atsbi Wonberta elder and youth during field work on March 15/2014). Latent conflict erupts when the act of homicide takes place. Following the act of homicide, violent conflicts escalate to the level of involving both communities. This shows that how homicide could be an immediate cause to inter-communal conflict.

3.3.2 Drought

The other triggering factor is drought in the study sites. In fact, drought is a relative term that does not have universal meaning for scholars from different schools of thoughts or professions. However, in the framework of pastoral settings, drought occurs in two or more successive years when rainfall is less than 75% of the long--term average (Coppock as cited in Kelemework, 2004). The usual occurrence of this reality happens to be a driving force for searching additional grazing land and water points within and outside one’s proper territories. Pastoralist way of life is characterized by mobility in drought period to search for better pasture for their livestock. According to Kelemework (2004), seasonal movement to regular pasturing areas is logical for Afar pastoral groups in Ethiopia to practice some form of transhumance.

In the context of Afar-Atsbi Wonberta, this incident has been causing conflict in most of the disputes that occurred between them during the last ten years. As stated earlier, the agriculturalist Atabi Wonberta communities have better reserved (hizaeti) grazing land that is used in times of feed shortage. In contrast, among the Afar, livestock mobility to better pasture is traditionally practiced as the core approach to combating drought no matter whether it is theirs or not. Accordingly, the Afar moves to the protected sites of the Atsbi Wonberta community in times of drought but they are denied access by the latter. This usually leads to dispute between the two groups.
Most of the informants from the Atsbi Wonberta verify that the violent conflict usually occur during dry season but slightly less frequent in rainy season. Some conflicts are latent during dry season. When the Afar, in the dry season, are denied using the pasture reserved for oxen, they hide grievance in their heart and react in the rainy season. The common grazing lands become sites of revenge. When the Atsbi Wonberta claims these sites in the rainy season, the Afar claim that some parts of these sites and reserved for their young stock. However, this is only a pretext because they know these areas are common for both groups. The reality is that they want to retaliate for the earlier grievance of the dry season and this goes to the extent of homicide (information obtained from Atsbi Wonberta elders during the field work, March 15/2014).

In the same vein, the Afar informants endorse that their mobility emanates from the fact that they believe any natural resource is a God given asset. Thus, when resource scarcity happens in their own grazing land to supply livestock, particularly during drought, they move around to any close resource sites albeit they recognize the resource sites are not theirs. They claim that Afar livestock are not allowed to graze in resource sites of the Atsbi Wonberta during dry season. But, when the Afar reserve some sites for young stock in the grazing land near the residence, the Atsbi Wonberta claim that they are common grazing Lands and reject the request to keep away their cattle. Consequently, conflict up to the level of homicide occurs between the groups (interview with Afar youth herders and local elders during the field work on March 27/2014).

The way they blame each other, no matter who set fire to conflict, drought is a driving force that exacerbated the existing conflicting relationship of the two communities. One of the concrete justifications is that during the drought seasons, the demand for grazing lands increase and the mobility of pastoralists to nearby reserved grazing lands owned others become a culture and livestock will be concentrated in one site where resource is relatively abundant. However, the host communities feel that the site cannot feed huge livestock and therefore, reject the “outsiders”. This reflects the usual perspective, that herd mobility, for whatever reason is one of the of the essential root cause of conflict between the two community. The augmented frequency and intensity of drought in the past decades and the decline of local resource management is believed to have caused incidents of inter-communal conflicts in the study area.
Nevertheless, there is clear evidence from the perspective of informants from both sides that violent conflict arise even in the rainy season as it did in the dry season. Accordingly, though the explicit cause of conflict seems to be drought, but the implicit one is related to territorial claim and land tenure system.

3.4 Conflict Actors and their Interests

This part endeavors to present the decisive actors or groups that are directly or indirectly engaged in or affected by the conflict in the study area. Conflict never happened in vacuum. Actors of conflict may have visible/invisible interests to get involved in conflict. Actors in certain incidents of conflict can be identified as primary and secondary actors. Primary actors are those who involved in conflict directly whereas secondary actors are those whose involvement may not be observable but they have some stake in the conflict. The different level of analysis that should be considered in explaining ethnic/community conflicts are individuals (followers and leaders community), groups (as direct and indirect factors: group’s act on their own and influence the state’s action), the state (which can be part to the conflict or mediator between the conflicting groups) and the regional actors in interacting in the process of escalation and de-escalation of a given conflict (Wolf, 2006). In the context of Afar- Atsbi Wonberta, primary actors are everybody that are directly involved in the conflict whereas the secondary actors are those who push the primary actors from behind in hidden way provoking and providing material and moral support to escalate/ de-escalate conflict.

3.4.1 Political elites

One of the main actors in the conflict is a group of political elites who represent their respective groups in the study areas. Political elites in this case refer to regional actors that embrace the wereda, and kebele or local governments. The role of these political in instigating conflict is revealed by all informants from both sides. Informants have averred the high involvement of political leaders in the conflict of 1999 by being on the side of their respective communities. On how political elites involved in and aggravated the conflict, informants from both sides show slight difference though they agree on the existence of poor enforcement of the rule of law.
According to elders from Atsbi Wonberta and militia informants, political elites from Atsbi Wonberta and kuneba Wereda have no differences on the security of the Atsbi Wonberta community. The Atsbi Wonberta informants condemn both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta officials. When conflict arises between the two communities, the elites in Kuneba give order to the police force of the wereda to involve against Atsbi Wonberta communities. The key interest of the political elites involving in the conflict is to maintain their political power in their respective weredas by support their ethnic group.

In contrast, when the Atsbi Wonberta appeals to their respective wereda officials, they did not give attention. Ironically, they intimidate the people and disarm the militia making the society more vulnerable in the face of the illegal armed groups of Afar. They say that the government neither ensures stability nor allows them to protect themselves; they rather accuse them of offence when they try one. The Atsbi Wonberta associates the problem with lack of good governance and weak law enforcement and justice system of both Wereda governments (Information obtained from Atsbi Wonberta elders during field work on March 09/2014, Atsbi).

The Afar informants, on the other hand, claim that it is the Atsbi Wonberta legal government militias that take part on the incidence of the conflict on the behalf of the Atsbi Wonberta wereda. The Atsbi Wonberta wereda knows the involvement of militias in the conflict but never hands them over to the court of law. Like the Atsbi Wonberta, they put more blame on the Atsbi wonberta local militias and government than their own officials. They claim that wereda officials support their respective groups and do not refer them to the court of law (interview during field work with Afar local people and Kuneba wereda administrative officials on March26/2014).

From the above interview of both groups, it is clear that the inter-communal conflicts occur due to inefficiencies entrenched in the judiciary systems and poor governance. Government officials of the two weredas are biased and favor their own groups. They are not willing to share and pass the exact information about the conflict, for instance, as to who start the conflict, the local people blame each other. However, the wereda governments are not volunteer to work together at the grass root level and bring the offenders to the court of law. They only resort to the Gereb when the conflict is out of their control.
Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that pastoral and agricultural conflicts in the area have a positive correlation with the weakness of the governments at local, *wereda*, and zonal levels and even far beyond. 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 than to their own groups or personal interests, the Afar and the Atsbi Wonberta 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 area albeit each group points finger at the other. Therefore there is a tendency for the political elites to be loyal and be custodians to their own ethnic groups whom they think are the base for their status in politics.

### 3.4.2 Illicit armed groups

While some of the Eritrean-backed Afar armed groups have long existed as remnants of the so-called ‘*Ugugumo*’ (created during the *Derg* regime to contain the influence and movement of the TPLF in the Afar area), most groups were newly formed following the border conflict. At present the groups have no clear political purpose of their own. They have used violent means for so long that many members of these armed groups have adopted banditry as a way of life. For all practical purposes, the Eritrean government provides them with logistical support and uses them for subversive activities in the Afar Regional State. In addition to this political group, as all informants from Atsbi Wonberta agree, the availability of illicit arms owners, particularly modern small arms and light weapons with their bullets in the hands of the minor Afar youth is the actual threat to peace and stability. The free and unchecked spread of modern weapons combined with the absence of strong inspection by the regional government made the area more conflict prone.

According to the same informants, the major objective of having illicit arms is related to acquiring and maximizing the social values. That is, in Afar culture, having a gun is considered as a symbol of power for self-protection and wealth but now guns are often used for offence. The armed groups the main actors who ignite conflict and once it occurred, they stand by the side of their group and shoot against the other to get social honor. In fact, they also claim that the legal police forces of the Afar (*Kuneba*) are actors of the conflict; they fire against the Atsbi Wonberta community and aggravate the situation rather than stabilize it (interview with Atsbi
Wonberta former Gereb member and local people of Atsbi wonberta(felege weyni, Harasaw and Abyi Dera March 10/2014).

Therefore, the informants claim equal treatment and right before law. They argue that the Afar youth like the Atsbi Wonberta ones should only carry legal weapons and this has to be allowed considering the personal ethics (maturity, responsiveness, integrity, and tolerance), age and accountability of the individuals to the rule of law. They also demand a better political liability on the part of both Afar and Atsbi Wonberta wereda officials so as to avoid the security dilemma of the weredas. In short, it can be said that they are insisting on political power based on rule of law than on rule of men that promotes one’s own group or interest. Offenders from both groups must be captured and be held accountable (ibid).

In a similar treatment, the Afar informants insisted that the legal armed forces are the major actors from Atsbi Wonberta side are the armed force specially the legally armed militias. The same informants explained that a sudden clash often occurs between herders of both groups in the common grazing lands due to pasture competition. When that happens and particularly when it leads to violent conflicts, the government militias soon arrive in the conflict site and attack the local people of Afar. They worsen the scenario by retaliating rather than calming things down through dialogue and making efforts to capture the offenders. Such a reaction forces the local Afar-Atsbi Wonberta residents to involve in the conflict. However, after the clash is over, neither of the two groups brings criminals to the court to ensure justice. The informants further argue that the respective governments (the Wereda security and administrative bodies) do not control misuse of legal weapons of the Atsbi Wonberta militia (interview with kuneba wereda administrative official and local people of Whdis on March 26-29/2014).

Irrespective of blaming each other, the charge of the two kebele (Felege Weyni and Wahdis) reveal that there were members of the police, government officials and militias involved in the conflict that took place in this year. In this regard, legal and illegal armed groups and government officials are blamed for playing major role in the conflict from both communities although it has not yet been proven by the court as to who was responsible for the outbreak of the conflict. In these areas, behaviors of theft and hiding offenders are become norms in time of conflict.
3.4.3 Community Elders, Clan leaders and the Public in General

Because of their influential role within the Afar society, Afar elders and clan leaders are important actors during peace-making and conflict. Conflicts within Afar society (between individuals and families) are resolved using customary laws, through mediation, and the direct involvement of elders and clan leaders. The modern state apparatus like the police and courts play a minimal role in resolving conflicts that arise within the Afar society (Kelemework, 2002). Furthermore, Afar elders and clan leaders play a role in bringing rebellious groups back to a peaceful life by exerting their influence. On the other side, they are involved in conflict by representing the grievances of their community or clans. In most cases, revenge attacks and animal raids held by young Afar against the Atsbi Wonberta or other groups are carried out with the full knowledge and subtle approval of elders and clan leaders. In general, all members of the community of the two parties, directly or indirectly, are participants of the conflict. One can ask “the role of women in the conflict?” It is common in Tigray that to pass information to respective community in time of conflict or any crises for help. It is at this time that the visible role of women in conflict is observed. They pass information by wailing or crying at a specific conflict site by explaining it seriousness (by saying people are dying, wounded…). Then any capable adult men and youth rush to the conflict with local and modern weapons. The same holds true in the pastoral Afar women. They push men of their own to join the violence. At times of direct violence, women disseminate information to more remote areas from the conflict sites usually through weeping. Women are not direct combatant in conflict but agitators by disseminating information to the remote areas (interview with women representatives of Atsbi Wonberta and kuneba Wereda during field work, March 06-29/2014).

3.5 Conflict Dynamics: Conflict Escalation and De-escalation

In a general sense, the term ‘dynamics’ refers to forces or properties that stimulate growth, development, or change within a system or process of conflict. In conflict research, conflict dynamics’ lies between ‘conflict formation and conflict transformation’ (Galtung, 1996). Based on the analysis of actors and structures presented in the preceding sections, the long-term trends, short term triggers, and possible future scenarios of the conflict dynamics in the Afar Regional State can now be discussed.
3.5.1 Political Economy Transformation

In recent times, new trends of conflict are observed in the study area. New attitudes of conflict along with offensive and defensive mechanisms have been observed between the two communities in post 1991 period. In this regard, analysis of new trends is important in the study of conflict in the two communities. In the absence of effective conflict management competence at the grass root level of local administration to bestow achievable remedy, unconstructive trends in this conflict prone area may lead to vicious circle of conflict.

This is because “unresolved conflict may lead to frustration, which May in turn lead to violence (Gultung, 1996). Information obtained from the field work reveals that as Ethiopia establish a new political administration and as the socio-economic and political climate begun to change new types of conflict trend begun to emerge. Conflicts which were not observed prior to the emergence of the new government structure and administration have appeared in the study area since 1991. Violent conflict become visible in various shapes such as recurrent resource-oriented combats, particularly in the form of territorial claim for contested borders, and involvement of actors using new technologies. Of course, lack of justice and good governance were serious problems of the Derg regime, but the question of land ownership is a new dimension in the communities studied. In contrast, in the former days, when conflict resolution mechanisms were effective, conflict occurred at long interval. But now, conflict occurred more frequently and last longer.

For half a century prior to 1991, the Afar and the Atsbi Wonberta communities had somehow good relationship in terms of socio-economic and political power. The Afar used to take cereal crops from Atsbi wonberta at harvest time, and returned in kind (goat and sheep) when the time was favorable. It was easy to manage conflicts through Gereb in the then time because of the interdependence they had. Even most of the time conflicts that used to occur were in the area of theft and banditry, and sometimes in grazing and water points but never related to land ownership. The emergence of new political outlook that was not there during the imperial and Derg regime resulted in new conflict dynamics. The border area of Afar and Tigray become bone of contention because of contested border.
The deep-rooted and long-established relationships of Atsbi Wonberta and Afar have now changed due to several factors. The fact that the Afar are no longer dependent on the Atsbi Wonberta for food and the widespread government food aid distributed in the lowlands have affected market interaction of the lowlanders with highlanders. Moreover, the mobile nature of the Afar in the border areas is slowly shifting to sedentary agricultural life. This practice raises the question of land ownership between the two groups.

For instance, the demand for establishment of permanent infrastructures for social services like mosques, schools, clinic, etc. on the part of the Afar in the vaguely defined border sites has aggravated the conflict. Furthermore, in the highlands, there is strong firearm control and no one is allowed to own illicit arms. In contrary, this control of illegal arms is weak in the low land areas where every adult man capable of affording for firearms can have at least one. This makes the Afar to choose gun to solve dispute than find peace full solution. All this changed the interdependence and power balance of the two communities. Conflicts started occurring more frequently and lingering much longer, and they grew from simple competition for pasture into the question of land ownership. For example, four years ago, there were conflict between Fantayto and Esot that lasted for over four years and settled by Gereb and the wereda government of Atsbi Wonberta and Kuneba. The same problem happened in few years interval in March 2014. When we evaluate the current condition of relations between the Atsbi Wonbeta and the Afar neighbors (kuneba), it becomes clear that the gradual weakening of mutual disposition has attained a stage in unrivaled scale. The symbiotic relations of Fukur, which is based on give and take principle, and the culture of inter-group resource sharing are broken. Violent conflicts occur within few years interval affecting both groups. Currently, the traditional causes of conflict such as pasture, water, theft and the like are not only immediate triggers of conflict but also means’s to other objectives (land ownership) in the common grazing lands.

3.6 Outcome of the Conflict

The latent and actual violent conflict between the Afar and Atsbi wonberta has been imposing not only considerable impact on different socio-economic interactions of the communities but have also created security and stability related problems in the border areas of the two Wredas (Atsbi Wonberta and Kuneba). The volatile border areas have become a safe haven for criminals from both communities due to mistrust and lack of political and social will to hand over
criminals and bring them to justice by the governments and the communities in focus. According to the information obtained from the field work, post 1991 the conflict has resulted human loss and material destruction. Government rules and orders have been dismantled. Due the recurring conflicts between the two communities, several materials have been destroyed. Even human live was lost. In short, the constitutional rights to life (article 15) and security (article 16) of the FDRE Constitution are being violated. In short the loss in human life and damage in material can be summarized as follow in the table below.

Table: 3 outcome of the conflict in the study area from 1991-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Animal loss</th>
<th>Animal type</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Injury</th>
<th>Theft</th>
<th>Damage to human life</th>
<th>Property damage/robbed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-2002</td>
<td>Camel</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goats/sheep</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2014</td>
<td>Donkeys</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>260 quintal wheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>260 quintal wheat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: data obtained from field work and police document, on 27 March 2014.

As can be seen from table 1 above, the damage from 1991-2002 made to the human and property loss clearly imply the seriousness of the inter-communal conflict. The deaths of human are from Atsbi Wonberta while the injuries are from Afar.
3.7 Peace Making Intervention Mechanisms: Modern versus Traditional Mechanisms

3.7.1 Modern legal approach

Modern legal approaches as conflict resolution mechanism include court and police force. As a wing of government, the police force stresses more on preventing conflict instigating factors through awareness creation in the public on legal issues at formal and informal venues like religious gatherings and political meetings. Besides, the police have the responsibility to hand over offenders to the formal court of law so that corrective measures may be taken on the basis of the law.

Modern or formal court follows procedures put in place by the legal system including the constitution. It emphasizes on difficult issues such as murder and loss or theft of property that cannot be seen by the traditional/local courts. Its main function is preventing illegal actions and fostering peace, order, and stability of the communities and the nation at large. However, because of certain factors, the modern court has its own drawbacks to solve inter-communal conflicts. The first weakness is that it is not acceptable by most of the actors of the conflict due to its “win-loss” nature. The conflicts, most of the time is take place in the form of group/inter-communal conflicts. Thus, it is very difficult to identify the guilty party (field work interview with police and security administration of Atsbi Wonberta Wededa on March 08/2014). The intervention of the government in settling the conflict in the study area is not more than providing emergency aids for the victims by restoring the status quo after the violent conflict occurs. The government institutions of the two wereda not only lack early warning about the conflict, but also failed to address the real causes of the conflict.

3.7.2 Traditional approach

The contribution of cultural (traditional) administrative institutions in general and conflict resolution mechanisms in particular for the purpose of keeping peace and order is highly considerable. Ethiopia, as a multicultural and multilingual nation, has many of these essential
peacemaking institutions. The *gereb* institution (at ethnic group level) is one of such systems that have its own special function in managing conflicts in the study area.

**The Gereb: An Institution of Interethnic Conflict Resolution**

Whenever disputes arise between members of the two ethnic groups, the cases are handled by *Gareb*. Unlike the institution of intra-ethnic conflict management among the Afar, the *Gereb* bases itself on written laws (*Sirit*) that are drafted with the consent of elders from both ethnic groups. The laws are under constant reform to accommodate new situations. For instance the law was as follow before ten years.

**Table 4: former gereb laws (offences and their compensations prior to 1991)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>no</th>
<th>Type of offence</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stealing goat/sheep</td>
<td>50 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stealing oxen/cows</td>
<td>500 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Camel stealing</td>
<td>800 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Homicide/murder</td>
<td>5,000 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Physical injury lead to disability</td>
<td>1,500 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical injury not lead to disability</td>
<td>500 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above local law (*Sirit*) was written prior 1991. But it was revisited to accommodate new situations. Thus, it was revised in 1997 E.C by the councils of elders the new revised customary law of gereb presented as follow in the table below:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Type of offence</th>
<th>Compensation</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stealing goat/sheep</td>
<td>500 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stealing oxen/cows</td>
<td>8000 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Camel stealing</td>
<td>10,000 birr/head</td>
<td>Irrespective of size of animal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Homicide/murder</td>
<td>45,000 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Physical injury lead to disability</td>
<td>20,000 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical injury not lead to disability</td>
<td>12,000 birr</td>
<td>Irrespective of age and sex</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 5:* Amended gereg law (offences and their compensation; 1991-to date)  
Source: minutes of the current Abogereg on March 29, 2014.

Members of the Gereb council are elected by the people on both sides of the ethnic boundary based on their proven ability in making wise decision making, impartiality, honesty social acceptance and patience. The Atsbi Wonberta communities elect elder from Afar based on the aforementioned qualities. In case the Afar committed offence on Atsbi Wonberta, the Atsbi wonberta community go and ask the Abo Gereb they choose from Afar. If there is robbed or sealed property, it will return back via elder in Afar. The Afar also elect elder from the Atsbi Wonbert and the same procedure is followed to return back the property of Afar robbed or sealed by the Atsbi Wonbert.

Once a month, representatives from both ethnic groups (*Abo Gereb*) hold a regular meeting to discuss security problems. Whenever there is an extraordinary affair, they assemble twice a month. The gathering is held at varying places. If an offence is committed by a Atsbi Wonberta, the Tigrayans have to send their representatives (*Abo Gereb*) to Kuneba for the meeting. If the offence is committed by an Afar, the meeting will be held in Atsbi Wonbert locality. Unlike the
situation within the Afar themselves, all compensations in an inter-ethnic context are paid in cash as can be seen from the above tables.

The *Abo-Gerebs* have full power to impose sanction on the offender in the course of resolving conflict. Usually compensation “blood price” is imposed on the offender would decided through bilateral agreement of the *Abo-Gerebs* of the conflicting parties. All decisions pass are practical and binding. In general *Abo-Gerebs* are peacemaking agents that resolve inter-communal conflicts timely with less cost. They are real representative and watchdogs for the values and norms of the society so as to maintain peace and minimize conflict. They also expose and punish offenders. This way, peace is maintained through non-violent means. But the problem is that they have not special guarantee when they decide all these decisions. The governments of the two weredas (Atsbi Wonberta and Kuneba) did not provide transportation or they do not pay transportation costs. The *Abo-Gerebs* travel on foot for hours to attend meeting on either side. While they maintain peace and security of their locality, they themselves are insecure (information obtained from ex-and present member of *Abo-Gerb* of Atsbi Wonberta elder on March 09/2014).

The conflict resolution through Gereb has its own process. When an individual commits a crime, for example, from Afar side, the relative of the offender sent representatives to the community of the victim. This is way of admitting and notifying the offense committed on their part. The representative, with consent of the victimized group, arrange day for reconciliation assemblies usually held in the area of the victimized group. The reason behind this is that the offender should travel to the home of the victim and beg for mercy. After day for reconciliation was fixed, the offender is asked to kneel down in front of the victimized group and asked the victimized for pardon, usably followed local languages *Afu* in Afar and *Yikre* in Tigringa. Then the parties conflict greet and kiss (shake hands) each other. Then the *Abo-Gerebs* speak to the assembly on the advantage of peace and advise the communities that such offence should not be committed in the future. They specially, advise the victim’s group completely avoid feeling of retaliation. Having doing this, the blessing ceremony followed. The blessing ceremony called *du’ua* in Afar and *mireka* in Tigrigna continues after the reconciliation is completed. After that, the offender’s group invite for lunch or dinner to the victimized usually by slaughtering a cow locally known as *Hurud Lahmi*. After the lunch/dinner, *Abo-Gerbs* hand over the compensation to the victim.
group’s representative. The burden of compensation not lies on the individual offender but on the entire community. The compensation most of the time take the form of sharing punishment when conflict is peacefully resolved through the mediation of *Abo Gereb*. If subset of a community is found guilty, community members will share the penalty. Even in private case, when a community member commits crime against non-member for personal reasons, the corresponding sanction passes collectively to the whole community. Indeed, the principle of collective (as opposed to individual guilt and responsibility for in fractious against outsiders from the solidarity with in may dilute the sanctions of *Abo-Gereb*). Finally, religious elders from both communities bless both communities for reverence they have shown for peace (interview with ex-and present *abogereb* of Atsbi Wonberta during field work from March 06-29/2014 and personal observation on Atsbi and Kuneba in the reconciliation process)
CHAPTER FIVE

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 CONCLUSION

The main subject matter of the study was to examine the dynamics of inter-communal conflict between Atsbi Wonberta and neighboring Afar in north East Ethiopia. It tried to explore and assess the historical relationship of the two communities in the past, causes and dynamics of the conflict between the two communities, actors of the conflict and their interests, conflict resolution mechanisms in the study area (both traditional and modern) mechanisms as well as the outcome of the conflict on both communities. The study finally revealed the following findings and conclusions from the above analysis. The conflict in the study area has its own structural and immediate causes. The latent and violent conflict between Atsbi Wonberta and neighboring Afar is mostly portrayed as inter-communal conflict as people from each side are take side with their community and fight against the other community. The conflict is dynamic in nature with horrible effect though the traditional court of elders (Gereb) plays a critical role to address the problem.

The causes of the conflict in the study area sometimes overlap each other to make sense of conflict as multidimensional fact of life. Competition over scarce natural resources, especially on land and land-related issues are one of the main causes that ignite recurrent conflict between Atsbi Wonberta and their neighboring Afar. These computations over scarce resource gradually transformed in to land ownership claims in the border areas which is a new trend of conflict in post-1991. The case is exacerbated by contested and undemarcated boundaries with the presence of mutually shared natural resources like grazing lands, water points, the demand for farmlands etc. in addition to this, theft and murder acts accompanied by retaliation between the two communities are other source of conflict.

The uncontrolled availability, misuse and proliferation of illegal arms and light weapons in the pastoral communities are another underlying cause of violent conflict in the study area. The easy and abundant availability of firearms in the hands of immature youth add fuel to fire. The existence of high demand for and availability of firearms without the control of regional, zonal
and wereda government is the end result weak law enforcement and poor governance. Good governance is a worldwide mode of contemporary administration system to promote favorable environment for the purpose of ensuring peace, stability and development. Homicide and theft are common features of in the study area. As the proverb connotes “justice delayed is justice denied” and the people in the study area apply their own methods to secure their own survival. If it is possible, they present the case to the court of elders (Gereb). If not, they take their own measure. Drought and culture of revenge are also underlying causes of the conflict. The feeling of dishonor when one is unable to restore blood and the successive retaliatory actions are usually supposed as a shared responsibility of the communities in the study area. Thus, retaliatory actions that receive positive reactions by the communities to date are underlying causes of the conflict.

Most importantly, the research revealed that the decline of traditional governance institution has a great effect in the occurrence of recurrent conflict in the study area. Gereb is in the way of fading way because of failure of the government in recognizing the function of this institution in running of inter-communal conflicts at grass root level. Thus, conflict becomes a reality beyond the elders (Abo-Gereb) in the study area. Generally, the nature and context of conflict manifestation between the two communities on socio-economic, legal and security related causes and that could be addressed accordingly. It is clear that conflict never erupts in vacuum whatever causes and motivations might be in certain state of affairs. Causes of conflict need agents for their actual episodes. Accordingly, in the study area, conflict has held its own actors who involve in the course of conflict for various reasons. To this end, major actors of the conflict in the study area are political elites, illegal armed militias, clan leaders, communities of the two weredas in general. Political elites of the two weredas are found to be one of the major actors of the conflict. The key interest of these actors is holding better position in the political structure of their respective weredas or negligence of the rule of law. Most of the informants do not perceive all conflicts are made by either community. They rather claim that political elites are the main agents behind the screen. Inefficiencies of the justice system and poor law enforcement may contribute to the recurrence of the conflict. The wereda administration of the two weredas are biased favor their own communities. They lack transparency and accountability. They are not willing to pass the exact information about the conflict to their people. They are only loyal to one’s ethnic group whom they think focal point of their political power than rule of law.
What is more conspicuous among the major actors in the study area is the role of legal and illegal armed militias. Illegal armed militias refer to individuals who own private illegal guns which is common in the pastoral lowland areas. The role of illegal armed is found to be a driving force for changing latent conflicts in to overt and violent conflicts. Having gun used to for self and wealth protection in the Afar culture is now being often used for offense. These illegal armed groups are the main actors who ignite conflict and commit crime under the banner of self protection. Once conflict escalate, the legal and illegal militia forces stand by the side of their own group against non-ethnic group some to get political position and better social honor others to defense themselves. However, the two groups blame each other as offense and defense mechanisms. This make the conflict intense because of the offender and the defender are undistinguishable (Lobell and Mauceri 2004). On the top of the above actors, the role of elders, clan leaders, youth, women and the general public in the study area to exacerbate the conflict is not undermined. To begin with women, they are not direct participant of the conflict rather they are agitators by displaying news about the conflict to the remote areas. The failure of elders to wield and pressure on the youth specially, on the cattle keepers to behave decently and discourage conflict mongering as well as lack of timely response to end erupted conflict is another push factor for the recurrent conflicts in the study areas.

The above all, aspects of the conflict in the study area have shown new trends. Some of the newly emerging issues that impacted the trend of the conflict in the area includes shift of balance economic and political power between the two communities, the presence of uncontrolled firearms in the lowland. The Afar are demanding a permanent place and practice farming in the border areas today than they did before. The Atsbi wonberta communities also have the same demand by claiming these areas as their own. This condition raises question of land ownership. All these things whatever their motives, have contribute a lot to the outbreak of the conflict. In this regard, the current dynamics of social relation between the two communities especially Fantoyta (Afar) and Esot (Atsbi Wonberta) are in wrong track. The mutual relationship like “Fukur” which is based on the mutual interdependence and tradition of inter-group resource sharing are now on and off. When one talk about conflict, directly or indirectly he/she talks about the impact of the conflict. Every conflict has direct and indirect consequence on its actors and on the public at large. Thus, the conflict has affected the general socio-economic, political and
relation of the two communities. It has resulted in both human and material destruction and the volatile border areas become safe haven for criminals from both side.

Notwithstanding with the complex and dynamic nature of the conflict, different modes of peace making intervention have been practicing to prevent and control the escalation of conflict. This consists of modern and traditional methods of preventing and managing conflict. The modern methods of healing conflict have its own limitations to solve inter-communal conflicts because of certain factors. It is not acceptable by the Afar pastoralists because of its win-lose nature. It is also very difficult to punish offenders in the communal conflicts as communities are not dare to hand over the offenders. Furthermore, the government of the two weredas give little attention to the conflict and unable to punish the criminals. Because of these and other reasons, the traditional conflict healing mechanisms have better performance than the modern one at least in restoring peace and order and maintaining the status quo. This research, however, revealed that these traditional institutions used to enhance peace and order in the communities is not long lasting. Several attempts have been made from 1991 to date to bring permanent peace. This is because of addressing the question of land ownership, territorial claims and control of small arms is beyond the mandate and capacity of traditional institutions. It seems that the traditional institutions (Greb) has declined from time to time in resolving inter-communal conflicts and lost its power to influence their respective communities partly due to the decline of moral values of both to be loyal to these institutions and largely due to the weakness and ineffectiveness of modern state machinery to deal with this kind of problems. Therefore, post-1991 conflict as a complex observable fact is dynamic in terms of its actor’s causes and effects.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Because of wide range of potential difference among people, the absence of conflict usually indicates the absence of meaningful interactions. Conflict by itself is neither good nor bad. The matter is how we handle conflict determines whether its end result is constructive or destructive. The problem is therefore, not the existence of conflict but the way how handle conflict. In this regard, a timely intervention from all stake holders in general is crucial in the study area. Therefore, to maintain peace and order in the study area, the following recommendations may be worth mentioning based on the analysis of the study.
Because development efforts cannot produce the anticipated impact on the livelihood of communities in the study area, conflict management and conflict resolution should be given a great attention. The current situation indicates that traditional institution alone is not effective in managing inter-communal conflicts. The gradual weakening of the traditional institutions to manage conflicts rose because of question of land ownership and territorial claim became beyond the capacity of traditional institutions. The wereda government officials should credit to the traditional institutions of Gereb so as to strengthen the conflict resolution mechanisms. For example, they should giving capacity building trainings for Abo-Gerbs in the area of early warning system rather than calling them after the conflict erupts and become beyond the control of the wereda governments.

The two communities say “that grazing land were ours since ancient time”. This is because undemarcated/hazy demarcated borders between the two communities. The two weredas should work with their respective zonal and regional governments and especially with ministry of federal affair to clearly demarcate the border lines of the two communities.

Qualified political officials who are loyal to the rule of law than to one’s ethnic group and personal interest should be assigned at the wereda level. In addition to this, corrective measures should be taken on those political officials who try to abuse the rule of law and become the cause of conflict between the two communities.

Disarming all illegally owned firearms might be difficult. However, there are possibilities of disarming the youth under age and legalize the guns of the matured one on the bases of age and personal ethics to make the legal militias. It is also important to conduct illegal arm registration. This could help to reduce the sudden conflicts and enhance the responsibilities and accountabilities of the illegal gun holders. However, this may need political will and commitment on the part of local, wereda, zonal and regional governments of the two parties.

Creating awareness and condemn the tit-for-tat culture that are carried out in the name of cultural value. It is suggested that continued collective dialogue with the involvement of the two communities in general and the youth in particular might have some positive outcomes. The two wereda governments should motivate None-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) who work on peace order and development to enhance the security of the areas.

The law enforcement and justice system should perform their duties consistent with the rule of law to take appropriate measure against offenders. It will be vital to discover criminals and
hand them over to the court of law if the local government officials work hand in hand with the local communities.

Modern and traditional (Gereb) courts should work in collaboration mitigate conflicts. For instance the traditional court of elders can calm conflict incidence via public reconciliation meetings to control inter-communal conflicts and the modern one decide penalty instead of letting them pay only compensations.
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Appendices

Appendix I

Mekelle University

Collage of Business and Economics

Department of Management

Development Studies (DVS) Post Graduate Studies

A guide line for Focus Group Discussion and Semi-structured in-depth Interview

Introduction: the purpose of this guide is to collect data (information) on issues related to Afar-Atsbi Wonberta recurrent inter-communal conflicts. Therefore, these focused group discussion and semi-structure in-depth interviews are planned to obtain information on the problem and dynamics of inter-communal conflicts. The principal objective of this study is to explore and explain the Afar-Atsbi Wonberta conflict. The ultimate purpose is to generate evidence-based study about the root causes of the conflict, actors of the conflict, and dynamics of the conflict as well as possible remedies tried out in resolving the conflict between the two communities. Thus, feel free and be open to express your feelings and ideas. The information obtained from this interview will be only used for research purpose and it will be kept confidential. Your opinion may go far away to put further solutions that congregate the future designs for peace full co-existence, mutual understanding and promote sense of tolerance and sustainable political and socio-economic conditions of the two communities.
I. Focused Group Discussion and Interview guided for elders, religious leaders, Abo Gereb (peace committees) and government officials of Afar-Atsbi Wonberta communities.

a. Research site and participants’ personal information

a1. Research site identification

Site name: _______________________

Kebele: _______________________

Wereda: _______________________  

a2. Focused Group Discussion and individual interview participants’ personal information.

- Sex: _______________________
- Age: _______________________

1. Major types, source and actors of conflict and conflict resolution approaches.

- What are the causes of Afar-Atsbi Wonberta conflict in recent times?
- What are the triggers of the conflict (from the stated causes)?
- Who are the actors of the conflict? And what motivated them to flame conflict?
- What are the general needs, interests and positions of the actors?
- Do the actors have potential blight or uphold peace initiatives?
- What persistent political, economic and socio-cultural dynamics exist in the structure of the society that likely creates fertile ground for violence?
- What are the things (be it beliefs, attitudes, customs or traditions) of conflict resolution approach used during the resolution of the conflict?
- What mean such attitudes, beliefs, customs or tradition to the local people?
- How can these inter-communal conflicts peacefully?
- What are the effects of the conflict on the general public in general?

2. About profile/history of the conflict

- What is the history of the conflict?
- What are the political, economic and socio-cultural contexts of the conflict?
• What are the embryonic economic political and socio-cultural concerns of the conflict?
• Who are the precise conflict prone sites?
• Who are the most vulnerable groups during the conflict?

3. **About the conflict mediators**
• Who participate in the conflict resolution process?
• Who are conflict resolvers in the inter-communal conflict of the two communities?
• Who select the conflict resolvers? What are the selection criteria?
• Can the parties in the conflict (disputants) select conflict resolvers?

4. **Local people preference of conflict resolution approaches (modern or traditional)**
• Which institution prefers people to solve their problems? Legal or local courts?
• Do the local people prefer local institutions than the modern one? If so, why?
• Does the government of the weredas encourage the local conflict resolution? If so, in what way?

5. **The relationship between traditional conflict resolution approaches and the legal government institutions**
• Is there a mutual work between the Gereb (peace committees) institutions and legal institutions? If yes, on what conditions both institutions work jointly?
• What types of conflict are mostly resolved by Gereb (peace committees)? And what types of conflicts are difficult to resolve through Gereb?
• What could do the Gereb in such difficult state of affair?
• Were there situations where the Gereb refers cases to the legal court and vice versa? What were these cases?

6. **Dynamics/changes and continuity about the nature of the conflict**
• What have been the major junctures of the conflict thus far? And what is the future optimism?
• What looks like the current conflict trend? What about the past conflict trends (if there are changes, escalations or de-escalations)?
• How the profiles, causes and actors shifting over time?
• How do you compare the current conflict dynamics and trends of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms with that of the past?
• Are there new elements that spoil the local conflict resolution process? If yes, what are these elements?
• Does the political and socio-economic transformation of Ethiopia have any effect on the conflict between the Afar and Atsbi Wonberta community? And on the legitimacy of the Gereb (peace committee)? If yes, how?
• What are the responsiveness, apprehensions, initiations and attentiveness of the concerned bodies on the misfortune conflict?
• Do women and youth have direct participation in the local reconciliation meeting? If yes, how? If not, why?
• What means should be taken to put the trouble of the conflict on the therapy?

7. Disputants feeling and reflection about the conflict
• Was there violent inter-communal conflicts? If yes, how was the resolution process?
• How was the conflict dilemma addressed?
• What is your opinion about the conflict mediators?
• Who are the conflict mediators?
• Are you satisfied by the decision? Why?
• Do you have any additional idea/opinion related to the issue in focus?

Thank you a lot for your helpful information!!!
### Time and Budget Schedules

#### Time Schedule

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<td>3</td>
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