



Pastoralism and Conflict Transformation in Nyangatom, Hammer, and Dassanech Community of Ethiopia

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Abstract: This study examined the practices of conflict transformation in Nyangatom, hammer, and Dassanech community of South Omo Zone Ethiopia using Qualitative research methodology, case study research design and employed FGD, semi structured interview, non-participant observation and document analysis. The issue of conflict transformation traced back to the works of Lederach in the 1980s and Galtung in the late 1970s. The concept, however, gained recognition because of the coming of the issue of human security by the international community and scholars. The nature of pastoralist and agro pastoralist conflicts arising in the study area led to examine the practices of the conflict transformation by various actors. This study indicated that the various actors working on conflict and peace do a very little activity to transform conflicts. They focus on conflict management, prevention, and resolution activities. This has been as a result of lack of attention to plan the issue of conflict transformation by the government. This study, therefore, sought to find out the role of the various actors in conflict transformation. The findings show those grievances, animal raiding, land claims, fishing rights, competition on water and pasture resources use are the sources of conflict. The study also examines the practices of conflict transformation activities in the study area. Resilience, rangeland management, NGOs intervention in peace dialogue, integration of pastoralism and agro pastoralism with commercial agricultures, drought and conflict early warning system, water resource management and development, development, rehabilitations of range land, and providing education to the conflict affected community are the activities done for conflict transformation. These activities had been instrumental in addressing conflicts and transforming relationships. The pastoralist conflict transformation and peace are not given emphasis by the government. The activities are not enough to transform conflicts, but they are served as the driver of peace. The researcher recommends that the current conflict transformation mechanism tried in the area is did not change the conflict situation, but the beginnings are goodly appreciated.

Keywords: Conflict transformation, pastoralism, conflict, natural resources, peace, agro- pastoralism, tribal groups

1. Introduction

The beginning conflict transformation traced back to 1980s to act beyond conflict management and resolution. It contains views with regard to how conflict emerges from, evolves within and brings about changes in the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions and designing strategies create positive peaceful relationship (Lederach, 1997). The mechanism to change the conflict using the various options for peace rather than using only military power alone and can reach human security in a community (Rummel, 1994). Conflict transformation focus on the need for systemic change in order to improve and create healthy social structures, relationships, conflict parties and institutions within which conflicts were embedded in the pastoralist community of the study area which are found in now in conflict because of resources. The emergence of the conflict passes through various transformational processes including all phases of conflict and violence (Senghaas, 1973). Conflict management is not significant since it targets

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on the containment of violence and conflict without resolving the root cause of conflict, but conflict resolution focuses on settling the causes of the conflict and violence, however it does not care for building new relationships among and between conflicting parties (Lederach, 2003 and Mitchell, 2002). Conflict transformation is especially the driver of peace for complex conflicts, where transforming unjust social and resource use relationships. It helps to resolve the social and cultural causes of conflict and violence. It can heal the effects of behavioral and attitudinal manifestations of conflict, violence and alter the deeper structural or indirect sources of conflict and violence (Miall, 2004). The conflict transformation approach takes conflict as positive, constructive and a catalyst for any change and priority is on the issue social justice (Bloomfield, 2006). As conflict transformation works and being concerned with the process and outcomes, the attention is on the conflict affected community and important resources in the community. Such as resources including natural resources, cultural resources, and economic resources for conflict transformation in the context of the conflict and the community rather than external actor involvement out of the conflict, community, and contexts. Conflict transformation believes and argues in peace is the result of the change in relationship from negative to positive relationship (Mitchell, 2000 and Curle, 1987). Conflict transformation as part of peacebuilding activities must be conflict sensitive to achieve its goal of sustaining peace. The resources which are important to residents of the study area community are mainly livestock, water, grazing land, pasture and flood retreat agricultural land, with rain-fed crop cultivation practice. Seasonal migration with their diverse types of livestock to find the water and pasture resources mostly led to conflict inter and intra ethnic conflicts (USAID, 2021). Cultural factors are also the cause of conflict in the study area (Ibid).

The objective of the study is to examine the practices of inter and intra ethnic pastoralist resource-based conflict transformation to create peaceful relations among the ethnic groups of nyangatom, Dassanech and hammer ethnic groups. Based on the researchers' information and online sources there is no study conducted in the study area on the issue under examination. There is an evidence gap in what is going on in the study area with regard to conflict transformation. Thus, this study is conducted to fill this gap in the study area.

2. Methodologies and Methods of The Study

The Study area is found in south Omo zone Ethiopia. The community in the study area practiced pastoralism and agro pastoralism as a way of life. For the purpose of this study, I used case study research design and Qualitative research approach. Data is collected through interviews, FGD, and from written documents. A case study is a strategy to respond to current phenomenon in a living context of the study and embedded case study as one with multiple units of analysis (Yin, 1994). The issues of conflict and the practices of peacebuilding are examined in the study area in relation to various actors.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

John Paul Lederach the known author of conflict transformation approaches and practices, he stated peace building as a long-term transformation of a conflict system into a peace system. He identified the key time-based process and dimensions over the short-, medium- and long-term time and the personal, structural, relational and cultural dimensional aspects of the conflicts. Thus, peace building is seen as a structured process through time and many dimensions (Lederach, 1997). In grassroot out structure, he contributes the idea of the pyramided decision and action with elite leaders and decision makers at the top, leaders of social institutions, religious leaders and academicians in the mid-level and grass root community leaders at the base of the pyramid. Based on him, a comprehensive conflict transformation process needs changes at all these levels is required for transforming conflict and violence into peace. Conflicts in the study area have different dimensions ranging from inter-ethnic, and intra-intra-ethnic. According to Vayrynen, 1991, conflict transformation needs context, actor, and personal transformation. For the realization of problems and transformation, it needs capacity building, strategies through various time frames, producing solutions to immediate conflict problems, and identifying a complex of causal determinants of the conflict any conflict. This theoretical framework enabled the researchers to examine the practices of conflict transformation in the study area.

3. Discussions and Findings of The Study

3.1 Conflict in The Study Area: Grievances as Threats to Peace in The Community

There are grievances in the study area that derive from the demand for scarce resources of water, pastureland and lack development set of actors. In pastoralist and agro-pastoralists groups such as the hammer, Dassanech and Nyangatom, there are new actors such as government development agencies which are responsible for constructing dams, irrigation, and sugar development projects, ad private investors on commercial agriculture. These resources competitions often take the form of ethnic conflicts, with groups organized around narratives of territorial land attachment, historical grievances enmities, and cultural patterns of conflict and violence. Cultural factors such as animal raiding and killing for heroism are the source conflict violence. There are grievances around the absence of compensation for loss of land for government projects, private commercial agricultures and grievances on access to water, and pasture. These grievances poised new drivers of conflict in the study area.

3.2 Animal Raiding and Conflict

Among East African pastoral communities, livestock raiding has been a common traditional practice (IGAD, 2022). In the study area, the participants of animal raiding are resident member of agro pastoral and pastoral communities and raided animals are sometimes returned to the rightful owners through the help of security forces of the government, and elders through negotiations, and reconciliations. According to FGD participants and Key interview informants in Hammer, Dassanech and Nyangatom Woreda, mobilized non-pastoral individuals from the Kenyan side of the border area engaged in livestock raiding from the Ethiopian pastoralist and agro pastoralists. Livestock raiding is done for economic purposes. People engaged in livestock trade and meat selling, and students who need money for tuition fees participated in it. This problem exacerbated the existing resources-based conflicts violence in border areas of Kenya and Ethiopia.

3.3 Land Claims and Conflict in The Study Area

In the study area various unresolved historical land claims and grievances continued to become the structural cause of violent conflicts between ethnic groups. Territorial land claims are the catalyst of conflict in the study area. Nowadays, the conflicts related to land claims are not resolved. The following land claims are the cause and driver of conflict in the study area:

3.4 Dassanech and Turkana Land Claim

The Dassanech share borders with the Turkana in Kenya. Key informants and Focus group discussion participants in Koro villages uncover that they lost their land to the Turkana during the government of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974). Peoples still needs their land to be returned but the government is negligent to deal with the Kenyan government. But starting from June 2021 peace initiatives are started by the local people to create peaceful relations. The peace initiative is created for resources sharing of pasture and water in Kibish. Now also the local government is involved to strengthen the healthy relationship of the community. Trade relations are also improved.

3.5 Nyangatom and Turkana Land Claims

The Nyangatom community shared border with the Turkana and claim that their traditional home and pastureland on the western side of the Kibish River is now occupied by the Turkana (Gebre 2016b). During Key informant interview and focus group discussion, they stated as they have lost their territory from the Kibish River to the east to the Mount Tepes to the west to the Turkana due to arbitrary colonial demarcation of the border and the continued northward expansion of the Turkana. The local narrative about the northward expansion of the Turkana is consistent with the reports of de Waal (1991) and Mburu (2003) that the boundary of Turkana grazing and the limits of Kenyan administration moved north over the years (Cited in USID, 2021). The Nyangatom communities feel that they lost land to the Turkana during the colonial period and in the 1980s.

Nyangatom and Hamer land claims: The overall relationship between the Hamer and the Nyangatom community is more conflictual. The root causes of the conflict between the two Communities are livestock raiding, claim over a territory that belonged to the Murle people, who are found in Nyangatom. According to (USAID, 2021), the Nyangatom community and the Murle community, as an affiliated entity, challenge the Hamer ethnic group's alleged recent claim over the former Murle territory, especially the fertile Kiso and Kuma areas, which became attractive to investors.

3.6 Dassanech and Nyangatom Land Claim

The Dassanech-Nyangatom land conflicts are explained as territorial claims, competition over scarce resources of land for cultivation, pasture and on water points. In this area there are two resource-rich places, that is Kare and Kuraz mountain areas found along the border of the two ethnic groups. The Dassanech Key informants stated that "they were the original occupants of the Kare area, which is now controlled by the Nyangatom ethnic group".

3.7 Dassanech and Gabra

The Gabra of Kenya people shared a border with the Dassanech community are pastoralists and agro pastoralists. The relationship between the Dassanech community and the Gabra Kenya people are mostly conflictual and peaceful. The main causes of the conflict between the Dassanech and the Gabra community are land claims, livestock raiding, individualized killings and pasture for grazing. According to Gebre, (2012) the Dassanech on the Gabra side, in defiance of the international boundary that divides their ancestral homeland into Ethiopian and Kenyan territories, continue to use their traditional grazing lands located up to 200 km deep inside the legal territory of Kenya. The Gabra is opposed to the fact that the Dassanech continue to enjoy access to grazing land in Kenyan territory. Conflicts are a common phenomenon in this area.

3.8 Fishing Rights and Conflicts

There is conflict in turkana delta- Dassanech-turkana over access to fish. According to Key informants and FGD participants, the fish concentration is high in the northern tip of Lake Turkana. It is the place where the Omo River enters. The existence of fish in the area attracted Kenyan fishermen using modern motorboats armed with machine guns. The Ethiopian fishermen use light motorboats and wooden canoes equipped with light weapons for self-protection. The fishermen entered into conflict to control the fishing area. The triggering cause of the conflict is fishing net thefts by an identified person. They suspected each other. The Dassanech Woreda is also facing competition for fisheries in Lake Turkana with Ethiopian individuals who have official business licenses to engage in fishing for a living. In the past, the Dassanech ethnic group depended on livestock production and crop cultivation, sometimes using fishing for food and as a source of income. Due to this, there was no competition in fishing. However, due to the loss of income from livestock and crop production, the Dassanech engaged in fishing. This increased the competition in the fishing business. The Dassanech claims rights to control the area and the fish resources. All in all, the completion is not healthy and mostly conflictual. The power imbalance between the anglers of the two countries needs intervention to stop the probability of violence.

4. Actors of The Conflicts in The Study Area

- a. The Youths are promoted by elders for fighting enemies. The youth in each territorial area community are responsible for the protection of territorial borders grazing land, livestock, and they revenge against external offender enemies.
- b. The other actor of conflict is elders need to continue the legacy of killing for bravery, respect for their ethnicity, leading a life without boundary to pastureland, and other cultural activities like making decision on conflict and peace.
- c. The third actor of conflict is women in the community encourage fearlessness, selflessness, heroism, sacrifice for honor, and restoration of pride. They have a role in triggering conflict and violence. They are not only the victims, but they are also triggers and part of solutions to conflict.
- d. Magicians: They have a role in predicting conflict and war. The communities believe in them in the phenomena of conflict. E.g, in hammer community getting a shoe in public places like roads are taken as indicating the event of conflict in the near future.
- e. Government development agencies and private commercial farm owners: According to informants, these institutions-controlled land without compensation for the community. There is grievance in the absence of compensation for the pastureland.

5. The Practices of Conflict Transformation in the Study Area

5.1 Resilience

Resilience approaches to peacebuilding gives an importance to the process by which societies collectively and peacefully transform relationships to address the factors which enabled conflict to emerge in the first place. Well organized communities may have strong solidarity networks that allow them to cope with hardship or conflict (Interpeace, 2016). The social systems of the community have various resources for peace. Using the community knowledge for problems in the pastoralist and agro pastoralist community is one of the mechanisms to peace. Using the indigenous knowledge for conflict resolution and other system is the way to peace. The ethnic groups in the study area have their own conflict resilience mechanisms. Strengthening the communities' culture in conflict management, prevention and resolution is the best mechanism in conflict resilience.

5.2 The Rangeland Management in Hammer

By using the local community institutions and practices of rangeland management, the Hammer has conducted communal enclosures in the degraded environment. This helped rangelands to regenerate and covered by vegetation, bushes and changing the degraded environment and again reducing further environmental degradation. This activity in the area reduced the scarcity of pasture related conflicts.

5.3 The Involvement of NGOs

NGOs participation in Peace Dialogues and reconciliation contributes to the stability of the community in the study area. Raim Raim and EPaRDA have been working in the peace dialogue forums in the Dassanech and Turkana area community. In addition, Farm Africa also engaged in conflict management and resolution activities. This tries to contribute to the building of a cooperative and peaceful relationship between the two ethnic groups however, it was not as such fruitful. The Catholic Church which engages in peace making and conflict management works in the study area. The Catholic Churches of Ethiopia and Kenya are working along the border area and held a meeting discussion to promote a culture of peace in border area communities. Such peace initiative could support making the border areas

more peaceful and to create interdependence and cooperation in the life of the community. The peace indicative was functional in Dassanech and Hammer community based on the local peace culture.

5.4 Integration of Pastoralism and Agro-Pastoralism in The Market

To increase the income generation power of the livelihood of the community the government did not do anything about this issue. To transform the poverty related conflicts activities towards engaging pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in market exchanges can benefit the community and reduce conflicts on fishing as a source of income.

5.5 Conflict and Drought Early Warning System

The rural development Program in Ethiopia being implemented by the state did not give attention to the pastoralist and agro-pastoralist areas. The area is marginalized from development programs. Conflict and drought is a common phenomenon and the main source of vulnerability in the study area, peoples are reputedly affected by drought and conflict. The conflict and drought early warning and response system is very weak. Having functional drought and conflict early warning and response system will help reduce its negative impacts on the community. Adopting Drought and conflict early warning and response information gathering, and rapid response mechanism is useful to pastoralists and agro-pastoralists for conflict transformation. However, the system in the study area is not working. The existence of the system has long term importance for livelihood change and diversification. Furthermore, it is good for grass adaptation to drought and water development.

Conflict early warning and response mechanism is established at levels of government. However, the system in the study is incomplete and all of the structures of it are not institutionalized for the needed purpose. The mechanism lacks professionals in conflict analysis and interpretation. The conflict early warning information gatherings need to be done by professionals. Using field monitors, conflict data gatherers generate important conflict data for proper analysis and decision making to prevent conflicts before they erupt and further escalation as it is part of the conflict transformation strategies. According to Lederach (1997), to transform the conflicts its structures, contexts and actors should be well studied. Based on findings of a study, state and non-state actors could collaborate with the community in alleviating resource scarcity and promote inter-dependence or resources sharing between communities.

According to key informants, strengthening institutions for Peace and development in the study area lacks the involvement of state and non-state actors. IGAD and USAID are trying to support building the efficiency of the peace architecture at national, regional and Woreda levels. IGAD's CEWARN is also used to collect and analyze early warning information from the area, particularly Dassanech and Nyangatom Woredas and Turkana area. The Ethiopian Peace and Development Centre (PDC) completed a project on "Strengthening Local Cross-Border Conflict Management in Lake Turkana-South Omo Cross Border Area". The purpose of the project is the management of cross border resources-based conflicts. The security situation on the ground makes to run the project in the Ethiopian side. In addition to PDC, PACT Ethiopia is working on the peace of the community in the area But, the number of potential implementing agencies on the Ethiopian side is limited. This indicated, the issue conflict transformation in the study area is not given the emphasis.

5.6 Water Resources Development and Management

According to key informants, the study area has rich ground and river waters, but the problem is development and management for use. To transform water related conflicts, water resources development and management can play a significant role. The Ministry of Water, pastoral affairs, Irrigation and Energy did not do activities for the purpose of conflict transformation. As water is an important and scarce resource in the area, much the conflict and tension within and across borders is on it. At the local level, the presence of development projects such as sugar cane and cotton farms and the Gibe III dam have exacerbated water availability on downstream communities, such as the Dassanech, Erbole and Turkana community but other areas did not have access to water. In this context, water management and development need national and international relations to transform internal and cross border water related conflicts. The states (Ethiopia and Kenya) cooperative interventions help to ensure fair and sustainable access to water sources and strengthen livelihoods and reduce instability and in the long-time frame can transform cross border conflicts. But the governments are negligent or maybe did not pay attention to it.

5.7 Development

Food insecurity because of scarcity of water, and pasture too feed livestock pasture breeds instability and conflicts in the study area. To transform conflict and instability, development projects, and activities are needed. However, the development projects which directly can change the living condition and livelihood of the community are not found in the study area, except the construction of irrigation canals in the study area. The development projects by state agencies eg the construction of sugar industries by the state and private commercial agricultural investments did not contribute to the life of the pastoralist's community. For the transformation of conflict state and non- state actors' engagement in pastoralist livelihoods diversification and alternative livelihood activities. The issue of peace is the primary agenda and

a precondition and an outcome of socio-economic improvement of the community. In other words, the resilience in the socio-economic systems of community directly contributes to the transformation of the resource-based conflict and violence into peace.

5.8 Support Pastoralism Through Rehabilitation of Rangelands

The existence and access to a good rangeland is crucial for a well performing and stable agro-pastoral and pastoral system (IGAD, 2022). Deterioration of rangeland across the study area adds pressure to the livelihood of the community and instigates conflict in the search for pasture, bushes, and water. The cause of rangelands decline is due to the increase in pastoral households and their herd, climate change, withdrawal of rangelands from the pastoral area for commercial agriculture, dams built upstream. This is a threat in Nyangatom and Turkana.

Informal community institutions of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists have knowledge of the rangelands and how to rehabilitate for use. Local knowledge is not promoted by state and non-state actors for rehabilitation of rangeland. In the study area, the experience and lessons could be drawn from the Pastoral Community Development Program. It was working in this area on sustainable livelihood enhancement, and pastoral risk management. PCDPs activities are anchored on range management and supporting pastoral livelihoods, and in situations where there are already established villages it supports the building of water facilities. NGO such as AFD, Farm Africa, VITA, DRSL and RPLR was engaged in rangeland rehabilitation works (Muturi et al., 2014).

5.9 Integrate Commercial Agriculture and Pastoralism and Agro-Pastoralism

Lack of integration of commercial agricultures, the sugar corporation development project is the sources of grievance because the absences compensation for the landowner pastoralist (USID, 2021). Moreover, as informants disclosed, commercial agriculture withdraws important resources from pastoralism and agro pastoralism and reduces pastoralists and agro-pastoralists resilience and coping capacity. However, there is also room for some integration between the two economic activities to reduce conflict and create inter-dependence in which both actors benefit. Creating job opportunities in commercial agriculture areas and creating access to water is the mechanism for integration.

5.10 Education

Strengthening the formal and informal education system is good to change the conflict attitude and behaviors in the pastoralist and agro pastoralist community (USAID, 2020). The provision of formal and informal education contributes to conflict transformation in the community. As youths are actors of peace and conflict, educating them can create peaceful environments as they can contribute to aware the community of the impact of conflict, and coping mechanisms beyond the traditional system of coping. In this regard to Alexios, (2013) stated, providing any form education about peace can change the conflict situation, context, attitudes and behaviors of a community.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the practices of conflict transformation in pastoralist and agro pastoralist community hammer, Dassanech and Nyangatom Woreda of south Omo zone. The Sources of conflict in the community are examined. The activities taken by various actors for conflict transformation are to change the attitude and behaviors of the parties in conflict and are mostly focused on conflict management, resolution and prevention. They tried a little to engage in conflict transformation in the community. The structures, actors, and the issues are not fully transformed. Some changes are observed in the conflict dynamics which is the existing conflict is managed so as to not further escalated and result in destructive violence. The conflict is seasonal, in which there is shortage of pasture and water resources during this time. There are grievances on land claim and fishing rights. These grievances are not getting resolved and transformed. Furthermore, the natural resources-based conflicts particularly water and pasture-based conflicts tried to transform through resilient activities but not as such transformed. However, the initiations are good and need to be appreciated for involvement of future conflict transformation activities in the area to achieve the expected changes. The researchers recommended that the conflict transformation activities described in this study should be strongly practiced by the various actors to change the conflict situation in the study area.

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