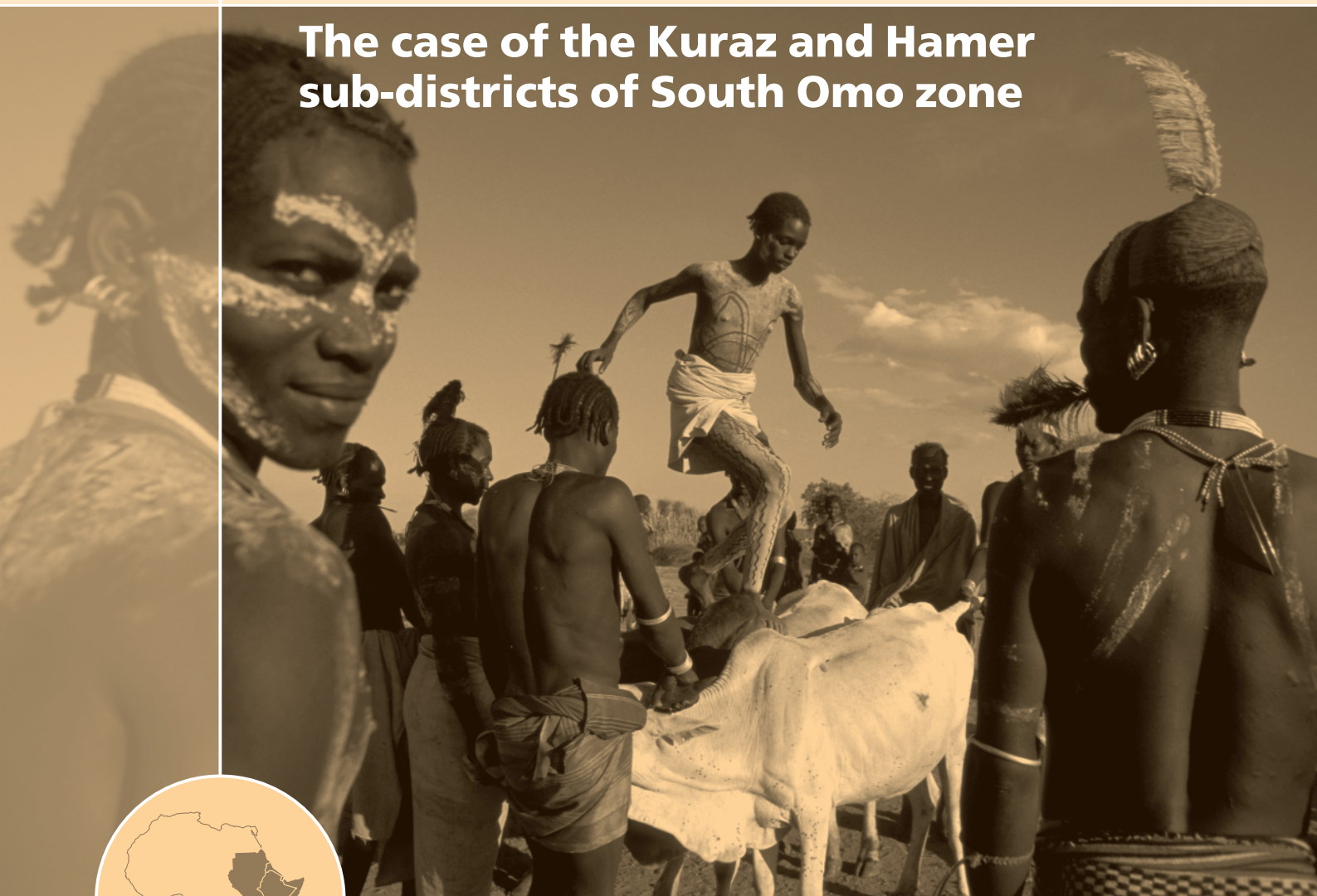# Addressing pastoralist conflict in Ethiopia:

The case of the Kuraz and Hamer sub-districts of South Omo zone

Dr Yohannes Gebre Michael, **Dr Kassaye Hadgu** and **Dr Zerihun Ambaye**

August 2005

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Acknowledgements

Objectives and methodology

The overall aim of the study is to identify the fundamental causes of conflicts, their implications and the range of options for community-led peace-building and conflict-sensitive development interventions in the two study areas of the Kuraz and Hamer districts of South Omo zone in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) of Ethiopia. Both of these districts are cross-border areas. It also aims to recommend ways that national, regional and international processes could support conflict prevention and resolution in the region.

The two districts have seven major ethnic groups, however the present study focuses on only three ethnic groups, namely Hamer from Hamer district and Dasenech and Nyagatom from Kuraz district. The interaction between the Dasenech, Nyagatom and Turkana is considered as an example of cross-border conflict.

The following approaches were used during the process of the study:

- Document and literature review
- Interviews: Individual and group discussions were conducted with key informants (elders, women and youth) from the Nyagatom, Hamer, Karo and Dasenech communities. Moreover, discussions were held with government institutions at the zone (district) and woreda (sub-district) levels (administration, pastoral development, police, teachers and students), civil society (merchants) and NGOs functioning at the grassroots level (see **appendix 1**).
- For a comparison on peaceful coexistence, a visit to the Arbore ethnic groups was undertaken.
- Field observations were made on the use and management of natural resources.

The draft report was presented at a workshop organised in Addis Ababa in August 2004.[1] The meeting brought together 55 participants from the district councils, police commissioners, community elders, young people, women, relevant woreda and regional state officials. In addition, participants from Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian NGOs, media and the Ethiopian Ministry of Federal Affairs attended. The discussions and comments received during the workshop have fed into the report, as well as input received in Jinka (South Omo).

Acronyms

AU	African Union
CEWARN	Conflict Early Warning and Response
EPaRDA	Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association
EU	European Union
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
NGO	non-governmental organisation
SNNPRS	Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional State

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1 The workshop also included discussion of a research report conducted by the Pastoralist Concern Association – Ethiopia, entitled 'The changing face of pastoral conflicts in south-eastern Ethiopia: The case of the Boran and Digodi pastoralists'. This report has been published separately by the Africa Peace Forum, InterAfrica Group and Saferworld. The workshop report 'Conflict prevention and peace-building in Ethiopia. Case studies in pastoral areas in Southern Ethiopia' has also been published by the same organisations.

Executive summary

SOUTH OMO IS A DIVERSE ZONE in terms of people and natural resources. It comprises large populations of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists and a diverse landscape. The climate is erratic with frequent droughts and rivers that periodically flood and dry out completely. Economic opportunities are limited in an environment of poor infrastructure, no or few opportunities for trade and in some cases, poor terms of trade. As the livelihoods of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists depend on key resources such as land, water, forests, minerals, wildlife, livestock and pasture, the environment poses particular challenges to their survival. These resources are diminishing from year to year, intensifying competition over resources and causing violent conflict between the ethnic groups in the case study areas of the Kuraz and Hamer districts of South Omo.

Cattle rustling is also an important cause of violent conflict. Access to material and social assets such as livestock is central to pastoral society, for instance, to be able to pay dowry for getting married. In most of these communities, possession of livestock is the main way of socio-economic advancement, without which a young man cannot become independent. In addition, traditional beliefs and practices, such as the high cultural reward provided to cattle rustlers and warriors, encourage young generations to engage in violent conflict in order to acquire assets.

There is also increasing evidence of the commercialisation of cattle raiding, which now involves local administrations, unemployed individuals and even the police. Conflict can occur when rustled livestock is traded on and the original owners of the livestock regard the transaction as illegitimate.

The causes of the conflicts in the areas are therefore multiple, relating to sharing of natural resources, cattle rustling, revenge attacks and a culture of glorifying conflict acts. Most of the groups highly value their communal identity, partly as a survival strategy. This includes communal responses to individual grievances, such as the loss of cattle or a personal attack. A history of mutual suspicion and communal retaliation has meant that distrust among many of these groups is very high, complicating efforts at peaceful resolution of disputes.

Another characteristic of these conflicts is their cross-border nature. Groups on the Kenyan side of the border are often related to the Ethiopian ones, live similar lifestyles and both sides engage in cross-border trade. Shifting alliances between related groups and between minority and majority groups are typical of conflict dynamics in this area.

The easy availability of small arms and the fact that arms possession is regarded as a necessary measure for community and livelihood protection, greatly contributes to the levels of death and destruction wrought by these conflicts. Some merchants play a role in the conflict by trading weapons, ammunition, commodities and information.

Conflict negatively impacts on these communities, not only through the loss of human lives and livestock, but also by limiting freedom of movement, contributing to the ineffective use of existing water points and pasture and by aggravating land degradation. This often aggravates food shortages and increases dependency on food assistance. The social impacts of conflict include decreasing school attendance, particular targeting of women as the future mothers of 'enemy' group warriors, internal displacement and the abandonment of the pastoralist lifestyle in search of other economic opportunities.

Although some potential conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms exist, these have many constraints. Sub-groups exist within each ethnic group who specialise in peace-making within and between ethnic groups. In some cases, bordering sub-groups with similar languages and cultures also facilitate conflict resolution. However, the challenge with such institutions is that the divides between the new and older genera-tions, as well as between traditional and modern institutions, have been increasing so that it has become difficult to apply traditional rules. The example of the Arbore ethnic group, widely regarded as peace-loving, may offer some principles for peaceful co-existence.

The formal conflict resolution processes – in particular responses from regional or district governmental structures – tend to be activated late, once violent conflict has already broken out. There is no functioning conflict early warning system, which could detect possible conflicts in a timely manner and enable preventive responses before violence erupts. Furthermore, once formal conflict resolution processes are activated, they often only result in an unsustainable cessation of hostilities. The underlying causes of conflict are not dealt with so that 'peace' remains fragile.

Yet communities involved in the study were able to identify many mechanisms for resolving conflict, including intermarriage, economic diversification, trade and good governance. The challenge is to identify these mechanisms and to involve a wide range of actors, including government officials at all levels (eg federal, regional, district), local communities and traditional leaders, international actors and donor agencies, in developing comprehensive strategies for conflict prevention and resolution. Recommendations for addressing these issues more effectively are provided at the end of the report.

1

Introduction

PEACE IS AN IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY PRE-CONDITION for sustainable development. Many countries in Africa are experiencing conflicts that impose tremendous social and economic costs, including human suffering, death and displacement. Armed conflicts severely constrain development endeavours by destroying infrastructure, undermining the provision of services and diverting resources from development.

Poverty generates tensions as people compete for access to limited resources. Conflicts are common in developing countries where there is resource scarcity, widespread poverty and limited participation in economic, political and cultural decision-making. Moreover, in remote rural areas where the government structure is weak, culture can become one of the factors contributing to conflict. Yet such tensions would not necessarily result in violent conflicts if institutions and mechanisms were in place to resolve them peacefully.

A thorough understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflict is essential in order to develop effective strategies and policies for its prevention, management and resolution, and for peace-building and sustainable development in affected areas. The present study aims to contribute to the development of an effective intervention strategy to manage conflicts among pastoral communities in the South Omo zone of Ethiopia.

Insufficient attention is often paid to addressing the root causes of ethnic and multi-ethnic conflicts. Ethnicity itself is frequently considered as problematic, thereby negating the positive aspects of ethnic identity and positive experiences of heterogeneous communities. Many marginalised ethnic groups suffer from poverty and violent conflicts because of a lack of economic opportunities. This crisis has been attributed to the legacy of colonialism and neo-colonialism, but African nations now need to create strong solidarity among them to break this vicious cycle.

Moreover, it is equally important to understand that the absence of violent conflict does not necessarily mean that ethnic accommodation has been achieved. There are patterns of peaceful domination of one group by another, which are prone to breakdown.[2]

In pastoralist areas a major source of conflict has been competition over the use of natural resources (water and pasture), but there are also cases of conflict and violence related to the cultural practices of heroism, livestock raiding and the demand for justice (political, cultural or religious).

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2 UNRISD/UNDP, 'Ethnic violence, conflict resolution and cultural pluralism', Report of the UNRISD/UNDP International Seminar on Ethnic Diversity and Public Policies, 17–19 August 1994, New York.

In the past, there were fewer conflicts, partly because droughts were less frequent. The level of destruction was also minimal as traditional weapons were used. And due to the traditional peace-making mechanisms and a culture of interdependency or reciprocity among the different ethnic groups, the designated elders were able to resolve such conflicts through, for instance, intermarriage and *Jala* (friendship).

Nowadays the situation is entirely different. The frequency and magnitude of conflicts have increased and the causes of conflicts and the actors involved have become more complex. Over time, the shortage of water has become a main cause of conflict as pastoralists are forced to travel farther in search of pasture and water. The use of modern weapons, cattle raiding and the marginalisation of local institutions have further exacerbated the problem. Conflicts now cause high numbers of human deaths, damage to assets, displacement and migration, poverty and greater dependency on food aid.[3]

Recent intra-state conflicts in Ethiopia can be categorised as ethno-nationalist conflicts – conflicts that emerge due to ethnically based federalism – and conflicts over land and water resources.[4] Similarly, the major causes of inter-state conflicts that influence Ethiopia relate to border disputes, proxy warfare, cross-border livestock raiding and cross-border ethnic relations.[5]

The federal system was partly introduced to address ethnic issues, yet it also seems to be at the root of conflicts in some areas, particularly those relating to disputes over land ownership and livestock raiding on the border areas between different adminis- trative areas. Nevertheless, the government has developed some policies to address these issues, such as asserting the constitutional rights of pastoralists not to be displaced and decentralising power to grassroots levels.

Therefore, the Southern Nations Nationalities Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), with its more than 45 ethnic groups, is a good entry point to observe the internal and cross- border conflicts. This study focuses on the Kuraz and Hamer districts, located within the South Omo zone of the SNNPRS on the Kenyan and Sudanese border.

3 Asnake K, 'Conflict and conflict management in Ethiopia: Institutions and practices', Paper presented to cross-border dialogue on security and conflict management: Consultative workshop proceedings, 6 June 2004, Awassa, Ethiopia; Nhema A G (ed), *The quest for peace in Africa: Transformations, democracy and public policy*, (International books, OSSREA, 2004); Tsega E, 'Conflict resolution through cultural tolerance: an analysis of the Michu Institution in Metekel region, Ethiopia', SSRRS, no.25, OSSREA, 2002.

4 ibid, Asnake K.

5 ibid.

2

Profile and dynamics of the study areas

Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS)

THE SNNPRS IS ONE OF THE NINE REGIONAL STATES IN ETHIOPIA. It covers a total area of 113,539 square kilometers. The region represents 10 percent of the total national land surface and is inhabited by estimated 1.3 million people.[6] There are 45 ethnic groups in the region, each with a distinct language and culture. About 80 percent of the population of the SNNPRS live in the highland areas, an area representing 40 percent of the regional land holding, while the remaining 20 percent live in the arid and semi-arid areas that represent about 60 percent of the regional land surface. The highland communities (with a density of 400–600 people per square kilometer) practice subsistence activities that are a mix of agriculture and livestock rearing with about half a hectare of land per household. The livelihood of the pastoral communities, on the other hand, is mainly based on livestock rearing. Livestock is thus the principal source of subsistence for pastoralist communities, providing milk and a cash income to cover family expenses such as food grains and other essential household requirements (mostly consumer goods).

South Omo zone

The South Omo zone covers an area of 22,000 square kilometers, which is relatively large. It is regarded as a typical marginalised region, where infrastructure and social services are very poor or non-existent in most areas. The pastoral part of the South Omo zone is one of the most remote and sparsely populated areas in Ethiopia. The Omo river forms the eastern boundary of the large grass plains of the Omo National Park and then meanders through the arid scrub plains of Kuraz (Geleb) woreda to form the eastern boundary of the territory of the semi-nomadic Nyagatom people.

Livelihood base in South Omo zone

The local economy of the South Omo zone, based on the physical landscape of the area, can be classified into two types, corresponding to two distinct areas in the zone that differ from each other in terms of economic exploitation and altitude. These are:

- Sedentary (settled) farming areas found in highland and middle altitude areas
- Lowland pastoral and agro-pastoral areas

6 Projected from a 1977 Central Statistics Authority estimate.

Map 1 South Omo Zone and SNNPR State

Bako Gazar and Gelila woredas are located in the intensively cultivated highland areas of the zone, while the remaining three woredas, including the two study areas of Hamer and Kuraz, are largely situated in lowland agro-pastoral areas. (See **appendix 4** for a description of land use and livestock populations in Hamer and Kuraz districts).

The intensively cultivated highland areas of Konso woreda and South Omo zone mark the south-western limit of traditional highland ox-plough agriculture in Ethiopia. Outside these settled and primarily cultivated areas are vast semi-arid terrains supporting agro-pastoral groups that are at various stages of transition from nomadic to sedentary livelihoods.

The agricultural cycle in South Omo zone is divided into two seasons coinciding with the bimodal annual rain patterns. Planting of sorghum and maize starts with the onset of the main rainy season (February to June). Staple crops planted in February are harvested in August or September. The secondary agricultural season commences with the onset of the short rainy season that starts in November and ends in December. Supplementary crops produced in the zone during this period, mainly at the higher altitudes, include sorghum, millet, wheat, barley, teff and pulses (beans or peas).

Pastoral and agro-pastoral settings

The lowland areas of South Omo zone support agro-pastoral groups that practise a mixed agriculture (livestock rearing supplemented with crop cultivation). The primary livestock in these areas is cattle, with supplementary flocks of sheep and goats. Despite an increasing trend of crop cultivation by these hitherto nomadic people, government officials and highland communities still regard (even stereotype) agro-pastoralists as seasonally migrating nomads.

In comparison to the wetter highlands, rainfall in the semi-arid lowland areas is both low and erratic, undermining reliable crop cultivation and making the agro-pastoralists vulnerable to famine and drought. This fragile ecosystem is marginally suitable for regular cropping but is ideal for grazing,

Increasing population pressure on the available agricultural land has resulted in the prolonged use of land initially meant for shifting cultivation. Such practices undoubtedly shorten fallow periods and cause loss of soil fertility and environmental degradation. The gap between the rapidly growing population and the deteriorating production base exacerbates the prevailing vulnerability of the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the zone.

Flood-recession agriculture along the banks of the seasonally flooded rivers is certainly more reliable than rain-fed shifting cultivation. However, this system of production is limited in scope and contributes little to the overall subsistence needs of the local agro-pastoral groups.

Herding and opportunistic cultivation are supplemented by honey production, collection of leaves and berries, as well as hunting. These supplementary livelihood practices are carried out as coping mechanisms during lean years, when the already vulnerable agro-pastoralist system fails to sustain or meet the basic needs of the local groups living in disaster-affected lowland areas of South Omo zone. The population of game has reduced drastically in recent years due to unrestrained and uncontrolled hunting, facilitated by the easy access to automatic firearms.

In addition to cyclical drought, periodic outbreaks of epidemics affecting livestock threaten agro-pastoralism in the semi-arid lowland areas. The tsetse fly infestation along the banks of the Omo river adds to the plight of local agro-pastoralists. The river area used to provide grazing pasture to livestock during the dry season when grass and water became scarce elsewhere.

Table 1 Major features of the pastoralist environment in South Omo

Climate	Arid and semi-arid with unreliable rainfall
Multiple borders	Mostly shared with many ethnic groups and cross-border relationships
Communal land use	Watering and pasture with sub-ethnic owned land
Ethnic group composition	Major ethnic group further divided into sub-ethnic groups (historical assimilation)
Polygamy	Very common to have more than three wives (labour, female asset source, strong kinship).
Migration	Low level of migration
Heroism	As a component of retaliation, the culture of killing an enemy as heroism or high status. Traditional proverbs and songs trigger fighting
Livestock raiding	As normal way of restocking during drought, spread of livestock disease and marriage arrangements. Means of income generation (commercialisation)
Livelihood	Subsistence economy: majority based on livestock rearing and a minority on crop production, fishing and beekeeping
Food insecurity	Usually four to five months secured. Food is not easily available to the majority due to drought, famine, conflicts, poor trade opportunities and transport facilities
Trade	Bartering livestock with grain or bullets; also with neighbouring countries, often exploitative terms of exchange (one ox to one quintal grain of maize)
Territorial fluidity and reciprocity	Due to the mobile nature of livelihoods (for pasture, trade and access to water) crossing ethnic and national boundaries for grazing purposes causes conflict when the question of reciprocity comes into play
Infrastructure	Poor physical and social infrastructure
Major problems	Absence of peace and security due to conflicts, shortage of water and pasture, livestock and human disease, food shortage, poor trade opportunities and infrastructure (physical and social)

The ethnic groups in Kuraz and Hamer districts face many risks (as indicated in **table 1**), including food insecurity, unpredictable climatic conditions, the difficulty of a subsistence economy, changing territorial access and mutual understanding between groups with different livelihood strategies. The general local perception is that environmental and socio-economic trends are mainly negative and that problems are worsening (see **table 2**). This may stimulate conflicts unless checked.

Ethnic groups of South Omo zone

Socially, the woefully underdeveloped South Omo zone is one of the most diverse zones in Ethiopia with about fourteen different ethnic groups. This social diversity, together with the existing problems of economic marginalisation, is posing overwhelming obstacles that seriously challenge the processes of democratisation and economic development in the area.

The ethnic groups in the South Omo zone include:

- **The Ari** Predominantly agricultural and live in the fertile Jinka area
- **The Banna** Live in the mountainous region south of Jinka and practice mixed crop/livestock farming (rain-fed agriculture), beekeeping and pastoralism
- **The Hamer** Live in a similar but slightly drier environment than the Banna and are located south of the Banna. Hamer and Banna ethnic groups speak the same language and have predominantly similar lifestyles and culture. The Hamer is the majority ethnic group in the pastoral areas of the zone

Table 2 Pastoralists' perceptions of the use of resources

Indicators	Trend	Factors
Frequency of drought and famine	+	Shortage of rain
Land degradation	+	Due to overgrazing (drought and famine)
Weed encroachments	+	Drought, cross-border livestock movement, and poor soil fertility
Spread of livestock disease	+	Shortage of fodder, livestock movement, health services, and concentration of livestock around water points and rangeland
Spread of human disease	+	Drought and limited health services
Population size	+	Due to economic, social and political values
Opportunistic engagement in farming	+	Drought and loss of livestock assets (causes pastoralists to pursue other livelihood options)
Private land ownership	+	Pastoralists changing livelihood due to drought and conflict
Settlement	+	Pastoralists changing livelihood and influence of development interventions
Economic (wealth) and social inequality	+	Between the majority (livestock owners) and minority (fishing, hunting and crop production)
Dependency on food aid	+	Drought and limited range of options
Pastoralists changing livelihoods	+	Drought and conflicts
Ethnic conflicts	+	Economic, cultural and political factors
Land use conflicts	+	Pasture land, crop land and national parks
Mobility range of livestock	–	Limited space and conflicts
Pasture sources	–	Drought, conflict area, crop land, bush encroachment, firewood gathering and degradation
Water sources (human and livestock)	–	Drought, conflict, limited development
Livestock holding per household	–	Drought, disease, raiding, marriage
Livestock diversity per household	–	Drought, limited pasture, expansion of settlement
Per capita income	–	Drought and population increase
Power of local institutions	–	Replaced by political institutions, divide between old and young generation
Diversification of income sources	–	Poor infrastructure, marketing and security

Note: + (increasing trend), – (decreasing trend)

- **The Dasenech (Geleb)** Live around the Omo Delta on the northern side of Lake Rudolf. They practice flood retreat cultivation, pastoralism and fishing

- **The Nyangatom (Bume)** Predominantly pastoralist, but also practice flood retreat cultivation along the west bank of the Lower Omo

- **The Kara (Karo)** A small ethnic group who live on the eastern bank of the Lower Omo neighbouring Nyangatom. They speak a language almost identical to Banna and Hamer. Their economy is exclusively based on the production of sorghum. Because of the heavy tsetse fly infestation of the area, the Kara ethnic group hardly keep livestock, except ruminants

- **The Kwegu (Mogudji, Yidinit)** Another small group who live at the confluence of the Mago and Omo rivers and have partly intermingled with the Mursi and the Kara. Their livelihood is based entirely on beekeeping, opportunistic farming (rain-fed) and fishing

- **The Mursi** Live in a very inaccessible area between the Mago and the Omo rivers. They are predominantly pastoralists, but also engage in agriculture to a certain extent

- **The Bodi** Live north of the Mursi and have the same lifestyle as the Mursi

- **The Mathe (Male)** Live east of the Ari, partly in South and partly in North Omo. They are predominantly agriculturalist; those at a lower altitude also practice agro-pastoralism

- **The Tsamai** Live in the lowlands along the Woyto river and on the mountains west of the Woyto river. They practise both rain-fed agriculture and flood irrigation in addition to pastoralism

- **The Arbore (Ulde, Marle)** Southern neighbours of the Tsamai; live in the hot plains north of Lake Stephanie (previously referred to as Chew Bahir). They use the waters of the Woito and Sagan rivers for flood irrigation and also engage in pastoralism

- **The Dime** Located in Salamago woreda, occupying the northern tip of South Omo zone

- **The Bacha** Located in Salamago woreda, speak the Mursi language, and make their living from fishing.

This study focuses on three ethnic groups from South Omo: the Hamer from Hamer district and the Dasenech and Nyagatom from Kuraz district. Interactions between the Dasenech and Nyagatom and the Turkana, based in Kenya, provide an example of cross-border conflict.

Map 2 Settlement pattern of ethnic groups in South Omo zone
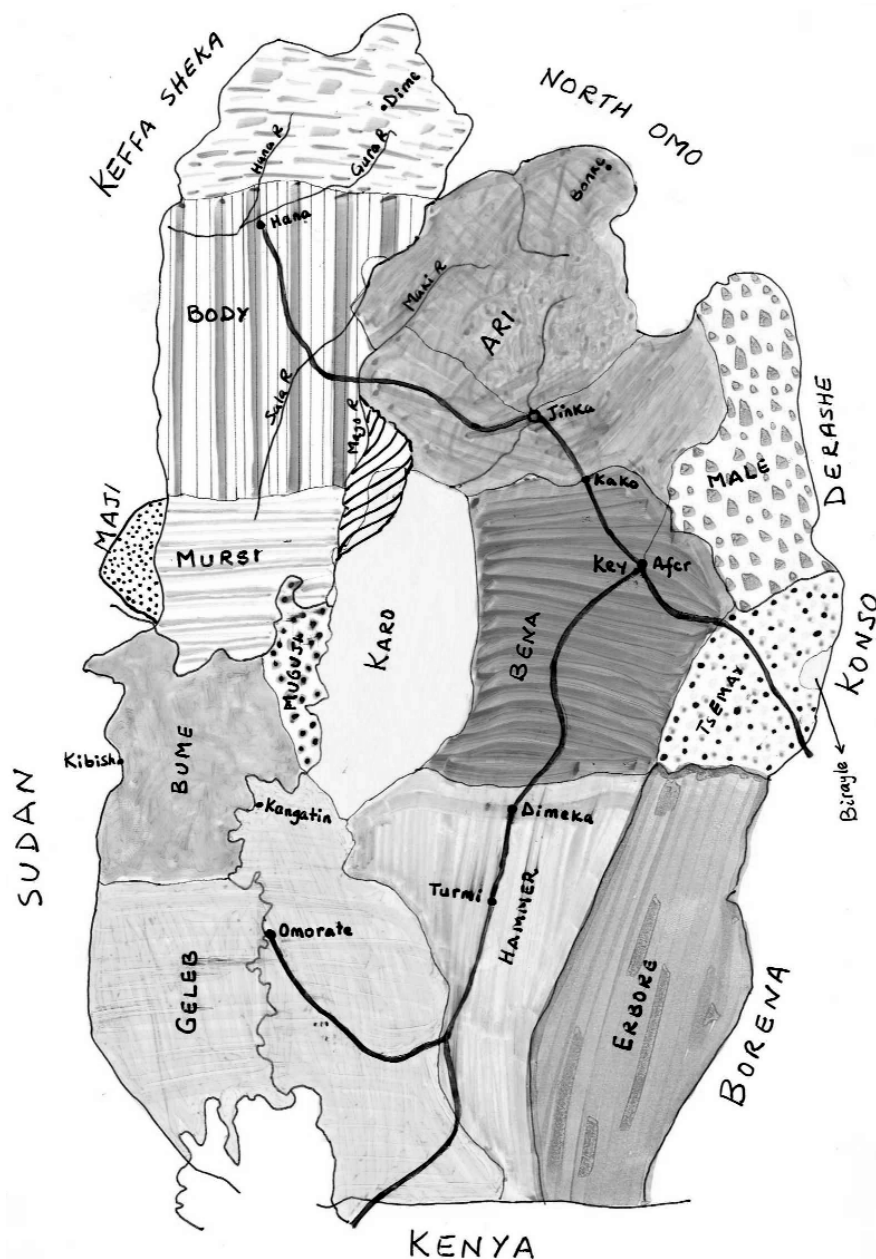
3

Causes of conflict in the study areas

CONFLICTS AMONG ETHNIC GROUPS are triggered by multiple ecological, economic, socio-cultural and political factors rather than single causes (see also **table 3** at the end of this chapter). According to many of the people interviewed, the most frequent conflicts are linked to competition over access to common grazing and water, and livestock raiding. The proliferation of small arms is another aggravating cause of violent conflict in the area.

Resource-based conflicts and cattle raiding

Competition over pasture and water

One of the current causes of conflicts relates to access to grazing pasture and water points. This has been caused by the degradation and reduced carrying capacity of the rangelands (encroachment and little, erratic rain) combined with continued over-grazing by large cattle herds. This results in competition over resources, especially during droughts and dry seasons when the nutritional conditions of livestock are generally compromised. The limitations of the rangeland resources and the subsequent competition often lead to violent conflicts between different ethnic groups in the area. Fighting usually takes place around the common grazing and watering points. Since many natural resources such as rivers and forests or grazing areas serve as boundaries as well as valuable livelihood resources, minorities residing in such geographical locations are always vulnerable.

Access to assets

Cattle rustling triggers or exacerbates violent conflicts between ethnic groups. Cattle rustling is generally considered as an acceptable means to acquire assets, whether in times of retaliatory conflicts or under normal circumstances. The need for cattle is very important for young men who have no assets, especially since their inheritance is often small because it is divided among many siblings. Moreover, cattle rustling has taken on a commercial character, providing income to the youth.

Dowry payments

Dowry (gift) for marriage is paid in kind (cattle or shoats). The amount of cattle and shoats that will be paid during marriage is so high that young men who do not have assets can hardly meet such an expense. As a result of these cultural needs, those who

lack resources resort to other means. Dowry is thus one of the principal causes of cattle rustling amongst pastoral communities in South Omo zone.

Individual social position and community life

Conflicts can also be triggered by individual killings, seen as acts of heroism, which can in turn stimulate ethnic conflicts. Individual ill acts can lead to a much larger ethnic conflict, often between traditional rival groups. For example, a conflict occurred between Hamer and Borena, triggered by a Hamer individual killing three Borena (two women and a man). The Borena ethnic group then retaliated against the Hamer by killing some people and looting cattle. Moreover, some conflicts between the Hamer and the Dasenech, Nyagatom and Karo, Nyagatom and Turkana, and Dasenech and Turkana were generated by individual ill acts. The case of the Nyagatom and the Turkana was initiated by the killing of a Nyagatom by Turkanas. The Nyagatoms retaliated and killed three Turkanas. The situation was still very tense at the time this report was written and both sides were preparing for large-scale operations.

These types of conflicts usually involve ethnic groups or sub-groups, with the youth as the main fighting force. In some situations a bordering ethnic group also supports one of the groups, for instance in recent conflicts between the Hamer and the Nyagatom (Bume), it was reported that the Karo was supporting the Hamer in the fighting. But then there were indications that the Karo were interested in joining the Nyagatom group through the mediation of *Ikumma* (Nyagatom). This implies that some smaller ethnic groups shift alliances depending on the prevailing balance of power between bigger groups.[7]

As a result, every ethnic group in the pastoral communities of the South Omo zone has developed a tradition or culture of fighting enemies communally. According to this research, each ethnic group has its own specific defence mechanism to be employed against enemies, which is deeply rooted in the existing socio-cultural features of each community (see the section on culture below). Individuals in the group are encouraged to effectively act against enemies and recognise allies. The tradition of fighting enemies communally, which is regarded as essential for the survival and well-being of the group, in fact then becomes the basis for ongoing and widespread inter-ethnic conflict in South Omo zone.

The long-standing tradition of classifying other ethnic groups as permanent or potential enemies has a very damaging effect and serves as an important reason for recurrent conflicts. Discussions held with communities in the area indicated that enemies of a particular ethnic group are categorised as primary or secondary. Primary enemies are ethnic groups residing in the immediate neighbourhood while secondary enemies reside in far away localities. To some extent, the perception of who is the enemy is related to individual security. An individual sees any other person outside his own ethnic group with great suspicion and as a potential enemy. Whenever individuals from two different ethnic groups meet by chance, the probability that they will fight is very high. Both assume that one of them, in some way, will try to gain something at the expense of the other.

In addition, some ethnic groups are associated with low social status and are therefore stigmatised, becoming targets of discrimination and frequent harassment. This can become the cause for inter-ethnic conflict. Demographic growth is also an important indicator of possible conflict as ethnic groups with bigger populations often tend to feel that they have the upper hand, a sentiment that can serve as a precursor of potential conflicts.

7 For a graphic depiction of these relationships, see the conflict map presented by Zerihun A, 'Ongoing conflict interventions: Grassroots encounters in South Omo, Ethiopia', Paper presented to cross-border dialogue on security and conflict management: Consultative workshop proceedings, 6 June 2004, Awassa, Ethiopia.

Strategies for conflict prevention and management need to consider the mindset of individuals in the pastoral communities in the South Omo zone. Many individual security matters significantly contribute to the recurrence of inter-ethnic conflicts. It is clear that a vicious conflict cycle exists in the pastoral areas of South Omo zone that has its roots in both individual and communal security matters.

Culture: Prestige and retaliation

Conflicts usually result in the loss of human lives, damage to property and disruption of livelihood activities. The long-standing culture of retaliation has a compounding effect and sustains conflict cycles. Pastoralists in the area feel profoundly humiliated if an attack on a family is not revenged. Retaliatory acts receive positive reactions and are often rewarded by the community. The feeling of humiliation and the subsequent retaliatory measures are usually perceived as collective responsibilities of the entire ethnic group concerned.

The ethnic groups in the study area reward acts of killing and looting and honour the best war actors and heroes. Ritual ceremonies are held for someone who has killed a member of another ethnic group, a cultural practice that provides him with a better position in society and increases his opportunities for marriage. Like in the military, decoration marks are put on parts of the body (on the chest, above the shoulder or on the back) visible to all members of the ethnic group. The level of decoration and level of respect accorded is also a function of the number of people killed. The respect and prestige bestowed on the 'hero' extends to all the members of his family. For instance, his wive(s) will get priority access to water points or special status during ritual or other ceremonies performed by the ethnic group. This cultural practice is accepted by the community, but remains one of the principal factors that triggers inter-ethnic conflicts in the zone. In addition, the 'heroes' are often idolised by different groups of their society, in particular the youth. Because of their fame in the community, girls easily accept 'heroes', a privilege for any young man.

Additionally, myths, beliefs and historical events (both actual and imagined), strongly influence social consciousness and social identity. They play a crucial role in deter- mining the nature and scope of relationships between the various ethnic groups in the South Omo zone. Inter-personal and community level oral histories have very significant roles in shaping relationships between groups. Due to their inherent ability to generate strong feelings, to magnify minor events, to distort events, or to give rise to rumours, oral histories can contribute to the escalation of tensions into violent conflicts. This is particularly true in multi-ethnic pastoral societies.

Small arms proliferation

Increased proliferation of small arms is another aggravating cause of conflict in the area. Because individuals, families or communities live in these cyclical scenarios of conflict, and need to retaliate as a matter of cultural pride, the possession of firearms by large numbers of people is seen as necessary for individual and communal security. All the ethnic groups attach great importance to the ownership of semi-automatic rifles because it is considered as a guarantee to gain power over the counterpart ethnic groups.

The Nyagatom appear to have relatively better types of small arms (like G3s), imported from the Sudanese armed groups, while all the other ethnic groups have Kalashnikovs that were probably obtained locally from small arms dealers or former soldiers from the Derg regime. The increased availability of automatic rifles has increased inter- ethnic conflicts in the areas. Moreover, access to automatic rifles has caused serious

damage to wildlife in the area due to widespread uncontrolled and indiscriminate hunting practices.

Merchants from different ethnic groups are indirectly involved in the conflicts through trading commodities and smuggling arms and ammunition. These groups are often targeted when conflict breaks out as they are assumed to give information to the enemy, except for Arbore merchants, who are considered to be peace-loving.

Cross-border issues

Prior to the demarcation of boundaries between Kenya and Ethiopia, both the Dasenech and Nyagatom groups had smooth relationships with the Turkana. The conflicts between Turkana and Dasenech and Nyagatom were principally caused by competition over water and pasture, livestock raiding, disagreement about boundary demarcations, deforestation, unfair terms of trade (in livestock and grain), and arms smuggling.

Many pastoralists are unhappy about the demarcation of colonial borders because they divide a number of ethnic groups between different countries. They also feel that the administrative boundaries at the federal level do not regulate their access to pasture and water resources fairly.

However, cross-border conflicts and domestic conflicts have similar causes. These include competition over water and pasture, livestock raiding, territorial claims, communal defence, access to arms and ammunition, lack of development opportunities, poor governance, and relations between majority and minority ethnic groups. The implication of this is that domestic problems generally contribute to cross-border problems.

The cross-border nature of the conflicts and the diversity of actors involved further complicates efforts to resolve disputes. In two recent meetings with Nyagatom elders in Kibish and Kangate[8], participants alleged that the raiding of their livestock and the killing of their community members had not only been done by Turkana, but were also supported by the regular army, the police, local militia, the local government administration and some unemployed people. This allegation is supported by increasing reports of the commercialisation of cattle rustling in the Horn. The community at Kibish had produced some evidence of heavy weapons used on the Kenyan side of the border. The Nyagatom participants expressed a strong wish for the Ethiopian Government to become involved at earlier stages of the crisis.

The Nyagatom community suffer from constant food shortages and have to rely heavily on food assistance because they do not have access to markets and trade opportunities. This is caused by the conflict with the Turkana and the difficulty in reaching the region where the Nyagatom are based. The Nyagatom belong to the same set of ethnic groups as the Toposa in Sudan and sometimes join the Sudanese liberation groups for a few months. Then they go back to their region with the latest arms and ammunition.

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8   These meetings were organised by EPaRDA.

Table 3 Causes and exacerbating factors of conflict

Indicators	Factors
Land use conflicts	Competition over using land for different purposes, like crops, pasture, beekeeping and national parks and sanctuaries
Demand for pasture	Accelerated by frequent drought, bush encroachment, land degradation, overgrazing and competition over land use for different purposes (crops, grazing, firewood, national parks)
Demand for water	Accelerated by the frequent drought, silting of natural ponds, combination of livestock (cattle, sheep and goats) with high demand for water and less available water resources
Livestock raiding	Mechanism to gain assets (affected by drought and disease) for socio-economic advancement, marriage (dowry) and commercial trading (eg Turkana)
Strategic location and functions	Multi-boundary areas with several ethnic groups - traditional and political strategic locations like Nyita or Bume are not easily attacked by the enemy. Moreover, the best pastoral areas and rivers serve as natural boundaries between ethnic groups (intra- and inter-state). Claims over their use and ownership result in conflicts
Communal defence mechanism	Cultural values condone strengthening and defending the community by all means and promoting heroism (killing of an enemy is praised and blessed); some proverbs and songs trigger fighting
Majority/minority	Imbalance of power (sub-ethnic population), economic status and competition over resources; the majority and the better-off as livestock rearing and minorities and the poor engaged in fishing and farming; and the inconsistency of alliances between majority and minority groups (usually the minorities shift their alliances based on the balance of power)
Lack of good governance	Local government leadership with poor accountability to the community; local government only active during the conflict (fire fighting approach to conflict), limited effort to prevent conflict; marginalisation of local institutions and indigenous knowledge
Trade	Sometimes unfair cross-border trade triggers conflict. Livestock selling by one group can be considered illegal by another group. Confiscation of livestock and killings may happen on the way back from the market (Turkana/Dasenech). No access to market at all in most cases
Institutions	Conflicts between modern and traditional institutions (different rules and regulations). Conflict prevention and resolution processes diluted due to the differences between the two systems
Access to arms	Access to better weapons and ammunition triggers the sense of superiority and conflict. For example Bume people have access to weapons from the Sudan liberation movement.

4

Conflict cycles and early warning indicators

CONFLICT PREVENTION AND RESOLUTION may be more effective if early indicators of impending conflicts can be identified. According to pastoralists from different ethnic groups, the timing of conflict is usually unpredictable and it is difficult to extract any early warning conflict indicators. Conflicts can be caused by individuals or groups and can occur during the dry or wet seasons. For example, some of the conflicts occur during periods of drought and famine when different groups come to common pasture and water resources, while some occur during marriage and traditional festivals when the demand for livestock raiding and heroism among the community results in killing 'enemies'. Some of the long-distance livestock raiding occurs during the rainy seasons when water is available to travel long distances, while other conflicts take place during the dry season, when travelling through low or dry rivers is preferred. Still other raiding incidents occur in the harvesting season when the 'enemy' is concentrated around the river valleys. It is therefore difficult to predict when conflicts will occur, although some suggested indicators can be highlighted for the areas under discussion:

- **Overflow of the Omo river** The overflow of the Omo river depends on the distribution and intensity of rainfall in the highlands. After the overflow and subsequent retreat of the river to its normal course, some of the pastoralists start farming on opposite sides of the riverbanks. During the period of hoeing and harvesting, individual attacks and killings are conducted as part of a culture of heroism – for example between the Bume and the Hamer on the Omo river – and women are often targeted.

- **Wet season** The main rainy season is from May to August, when the movement of livestock increases to the common grazing lands of the Bume, Dasenech, Hamer and Turkana. For example confrontations on the use of grass and water between the Dasenech and the Bume occur at the foot of the Kuraz Mountain during the wet season. Similarly, most of the livestock raiding occurs during the rainy season when water is easily available for human and livestock consumption. The areas vulnerable to livestock raiding are also known by the pastoralists, for example in Nayto, Bale, Atomokore, Wanech, Gusete and Komo.

- **Dry season** Due to unreliable rainfall, it is often difficult to predict the dry season. However it is clear that when there is drought, there is a tendency to migrate to riverbanks to access grass and water. The community is well aware of the probability of conflicts over resource use during such dry periods. The Turkana move towards Kibesh and the Omo river and similarly the Bume and Dasenech move towards Kenya for pasture.

- **Crop harvesting** Some of the ethnic groups such as the Dasenech harvest sorghum from December to March. This is the time when food is easily available and household income increases by selling crops to the Turkana and other ethnic groups. Moreover, some local ceremonies, which stimulate heroism and conflicts, take place during this season.

- **Hot spots** Some areas are particularly prone to conflict because they offer the best pasture and water sources and form the boundaries between different ethnic groups. For example, the Dasenech frequent Harum, Hereg, Lomena and Hemedega, yet the Turkana also use these areas from the Kenyan side. This creates a chronic threat of conflict between the two groups.

These possible warning indicators can guide analysis of the conflict dynamics in these areas. At the same time, unpredictable environmental and socio-economic dynamics, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, policy changes and the prevalence of a culture of revenge make these situations highly fluid. The fact that conflict can occur between ethnic groups at any time is a serious impediment to development.

5

Implications of conflict

INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS have long-term consequences. Once conflicts erupt, they lead to loss of human lives, destruction or theft of property (eg cattle looting) and forceful trespassing on others' territories for pasture and water access. The relationship between the concerned ethnic groups remains tense, which perpetuates conflicts for generations. It also complicates or undermines the traditional conflict resolution procedures.

The tension between ethnic groups limits free movement or other sorts of inter-actions, and subsequently prevents the effective use of the available resources. Our research indicates that there is a strong desire on the part of the affected communities (especially women) to develop mechanisms that would allow for the resumption of unhindered and safe movement of people and goods across different areas. They suggested that free movement, initiated by women, then followed by men, could be a successful mechanism to bring about peace amongst conflicting groups and eventually foster the safe movement of people and goods.

The internal and cross-border ethnic conflicts can have some or all of the following impacts:

- Human and livestock loss
- Deprivation of valuable pasture and water sources
- Limited access to food (including natural food such as wild fruits), traditional medicine, wood for fuel and drinking water
- Overgrazing and land degradation
- Bush encroachment
- Spread of livestock disease
- Internally displaced persons
- Tension in schools and absenteeism
- Collapse of markets and isolation from trade opportunities
- Increased burden on women as the ones responsible for most agricultural activities; they are also often targeted because of their role as mothers, ensuring the survival of the group
- Food insecurity and dependency on food aid

The study has tried to specify losses incurred by the Dasenech and the Turkana. As indicated in **appendix 5**, the conflicts between the Dasenech and Turkana in 2000 claimed the lives of 50 people and the loss of 24,000 livestock from the Dasenech. The loss on the Turkana side is unknown. Since 2001, the frequency of conflict has been on the increase, but no systematic data is available. For example in late 2003 the conflict between the Nyagatom (Bume) and Hamer has resulted in the death of more than sixty people from both sides.

6

Gender dimensions of conflict

WOMEN IN PASTORAL AREAS play an active role in taking care of the children and family, preparing food and drink, collecting water and firewood, grinding grain, gathering food from the wild, caring for young animals, milking sheep, goats and cattle, processing milk, selling milk products and engaging in some small trade activities.

But socially, women are marginalised and oppressed through different mechanisms. For example, they are given to their husband (and his family) in exchange for livestock (dowry) irrespective of age differences between the bride and groom; livestock is inherited through the male line only; abduction is common; and other violent acts are committed against women, such as the pulling of milk teeth, genital mutilation of girls, rejecting (or killing) of baby girls and whipping women during cattle jumping ceremonies[9]. When conflicts occur, women also suffer other negative consequences, for instance, in the absence of men, they have sole responsibility for sustaining the household, which increases their workload. Many women and young girls also fear going out of their villages, as they are often the targets of attacks, and this makes it difficult for them to fetch water, collect firewood or go to the market. Boys are also vulnerable to attack.

Yet women also have a role in supporting the culture of heroism through proverbs, songs and ceremonies that encourage men to kill their enemy. The wife of a killer is also granted respect and is given a special status within the community. Given the negative impact of conflict on women, they could potentially have an important role to play in peace-making, whereas men seem to benefit more from conflict in terms of gaining assets and respect. Yet the cultural traditions and social status of women are potential complicating factors for them to play this role.

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9 This is a coming-of-age ceremony where an adolescent boy has to jump over a number of cows to become a man. As part of the ceremony, young girls are whipped on their bare backs, drawing blood.

7

Peace-making and conflict resolution

Local initiatives for peace

IN EACH ETHNIC GROUP there are different sub-ethnic groups, for example the Nyagatom include nine sub-ethnic groups and the Dasenech eight (see **appendix 6** for a description of the sub-ethnic groups). Historically the assimilation of the sub-groups was facilitated through intermarriage. Assimilation also occurred according to the shifts in the balance of power between the minorities settled around the Omo river.

The solidarity between sub-ethnic groups is aimed at ensuring sufficient power to protect resources, including fending off attacks and invading other areas. Moreover, a broader alliance of sub-groups assures greater mobility and access to diverse climatic areas and ecosystems. It also enables exchanges of experience as different sub-groups specialise in different economic activities such as fishing, crop cultivation, beekeeping, livestock husbandry and the use of traditional medicines. During conflicts, the bordering sub-groups facilitate conflict resolution. In each ethnic group there are sub-groups that specialise in peace-making and are not involved in conflicts or war, such as the Ikumma of Bume and other ritual leaders (*Kawt*).

Existing conflict prevention mechanisms

In the study area there are two sets of institutions involved in conflict resolution and management. The first is the traditional institutions, led by elders. These institutions are effective in managing conflicts within their own ethnic groups, and they also sometimes play a role in resolving conflict outside their ethnic group.

The second is the set of decentralised government bodies that are organised on the basis of administrative structures and boundaries. In each woreda there is a peace and security committee, which is mandated to prevent and control conflicts in its area. However, its conflict management intervention is often reactive, taking place when tensions have already erupted into violent conflict. This second set of institutions is also hampered by the limited experience and knowledge of staff on conflict resolution, and sometimes by biased attitudes among staff because of ethnic affiliations with the conflicting parties. Moreover, because they are often based far from the areas where the conflicts take place, accurate information about the conflict reaches their offices late.

Peace-making initiatives

Pastoralist living does not have to mean living in conflict, and there are some examples of how conflict can be avoided or resolved peacefully, including:

- **Encouraging a peaceful culture in dealing with issues around territorial fluidity and reciprocity** Due to the risks and uncertainties inherent to pastoralism, reciprocal use of resources across different territories is a foundation of the pastoral system and ensures the survival of pastoralist groups. Whereas this sharing often causes conflicts, peaceful methods of sharing could significantly reduce conflicts.

- **Avoiding potential conflict areas** Prior to migrating with their livestock in search of pasture and water, most pastoralist groups secretly send out some youth to assess the security situation in different areas. This means that the groups can choose to move to an area where conflict is less likely, if such an area exists.

- **Peace as an asset** The traditional pastoralist system considered peace as a pre-requisite and therefore peace-making groups exist in each ethnic group, for example the Ikumma sub-ethnic groups of the Bume, the Narch of the Dasenech and the Ris sub-groups of the Arbore are meant to facilitate peace negotiations among conflicting groups.

- **Culture of tolerance** Under the traditional pastoralist system tolerance is an asset so that all conflicts do not necessarily have to lead to violence. The lead elder and the peace-making groups spend some time investigating the causes of conflicts to understand their origin, eg are they accidental, intentional, individual or group-motivated, and then make suggestions for peaceful resolution of these conflicts.

- **Intermarriage** Conflicting ethnic groups widely practice intermarriage as a means to facilitate social harmony and cement peaceful relationships. For example, the Murle sub-ethnic groups of the Bume are highly intermarried with the Dasenech and are not involved in any conflicts with them. Intermarriage is also more frequent during periods of smooth trading between different groups. For example, some Dasenech respondents indicated that many Turkana women come to purchase sorghum during the harvesting season and some of them eventually marry Dasenech men.

- **Mixed settlements** In the past, there have been examples of different groups exchanging areas to settle in as a peace-building measure. For example, around 1985 a group of Dasenech settled in the Bume area of Kibesh. Although an unfortunate attack occurred against them, the Bume blamed the Toposa from Sudan, and the Dasenech remained peacefully among the Bume.

- **Trade** During times of peace, exchange of commodities among neighbouring ethnic groups serves as a trust-building mechanism. For example, in the past, the Dasenech or Bume and the Turkana have exchanged crops, livestock and industrial products.

- **Education** Some of the conflicting ethnic groups send their children to boarding schools such as in Turmi (Hamer) or in Kenya (particularly the Dasenech and Bume). This trend facilitates harmonisation among conflicting ethnic groups.

- **Compensation** A conflict between the Dasenech and Borena (Kenya) was resolved through the involvement of the Ethiopian Government. Some livestock were paid to the Borena by the government as compensation. Unfortunately this peaceful solution did not prove to be sustainable.

- **Establishment of local militia** The government's support for establishing and strengthening local militia to keep the peace is generally seen as a positive development by most pastoralist communities. However, there needs to be careful consideration of who controls these groups to make sure that they don't become actors in fomenting conflicts rather than solving them.

The example of the Turkana ethnic group provides an interesting illustration of how pastoralist communities possess the potential both for fostering peace and for

fostering conflict. Some of the literature on the Turkana underlines the long history of warfare as well as the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. For example, to prevent any intra-ethnic conflicts, the process of education and socialisation is applied. Kona[10] and Tsega[11] explain how "intra-ethnic emissaries are occasionally sent to the families of those members of society with unbecoming behavior to let them know so that they can deal with them before they disrupt social equilibrium". Tsega also underlines that Turkana children are taught from childhood about the principles of justice, fairness, mutual interdependence and tolerance as a basis for conflict prevention. Yet he also indicates that there are many cases where children are taught warfare tactics against enemies.

10 Kona E S, 'Customary conflict management mechanisms among the Turkana of Kenya. Implications for conflict resolution discourse and practice', Paper presented at the all Africa conference on African principles of conflict resolution and reconciliation, 8–12 November 1999, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

11 *op cit*, Tsega E.

8

Challenges to local peace-making

PEACE-MAKING IN THE PASTORAL AREAS faces many challenges, some of which are outlined below.

- **Young generation** Young people usually do not abide by the traditional rules and regulations and they tend to be more intolerant and impatient than older people. Unemployment and a lack of access to education among the young generation have also contributed to the intensification of conflicts.

- **Individual behaviour** In almost all ethnic groups, heroism and a culture of killing an enemy is highly praised and blessed. Those who killed an enemy are decorated on their chest.[12]

- **Absence of compensation** Under the cultural practices of the South Omo ethnic groups, the culture of compensation for human and asset loss is non-existent, unless forced by outside bodies such as the government. Instead, revenge is regarded as the appropriate and acceptable response.

- **Marginalisation of traditional practices** Many of the modern institutions do not accommodate local rules and regulations or recognise the conflict resolution experience and skills of elders. This is often due to the fact that governmental institutions are not adapted to drawing on elders' skills – for instance, most elders are illiterate.

- **Accountability** District leaders are not generally accountable to the community and are often seen as biased. They also seem to lack experience, and a commitment to prevent and resolve conflicts.

- **Unfair demarcation of boundaries** Most pastoralists are unhappy about the demarcation of colonial borders as these divided many ethnic groups between different countries. They also feel that the existing administrative boundaries do not regulate their access to pasture and water resources fairly. There is therefore a need for them to find solutions that would solve these problems in a way that is beneficial to all the communities involved.

- **Diversity of actors** The introduction of commercial livestock raiding and the use of sophisticated arms has meant that many non-pastoralists, unemployed urban dwellers, regular armies and local administrations are now involved in conflicts in pastoral areas, particularly cattle rustling. This makes peace initiatives more complex and difficult.

12 These marks are known as *Chede* in the Dasenech language.

9

Lessons from the Arbore

THE ARBORE ARE CONSIDERED AS PEACE-LOVING and as having good relationships with many groups. As indicated in **table 4**, they also have sub-groups that specialise in particular activities. A combination of factors has contributed to the peaceful co-existence of the community:

- Strategic location (Hamer, Borena, Dasenech, Tesmay, Wata Wondo etc)
- Governed by the principles of mutual co-operation and peaceful co-existence (resource sharing)
- Experience of making peace among different ethnic groups
- Mutual sharing of their resources with other ethnic groups
- Involved in trading across different ethnic groups
- Culture of denouncing killings
- History of common origin from different ethnic groups
- Highly intermarried with different ethnic groups
- Legend that attacking this group is considered as an evil act
- The sub-clans are specialised in many skills and considered as knowledgeable and powerful
- Speak more than three languages

The Arbore community therefore practices many principles that seem to promote conflict prevention and resolution.

Table 4 Special skills of Arbore sub-ethnic groups

Sub-ethnic group	Remarks
Almoq	A majority sub-ethnic group
Hiruf	A majority sub-ethnic group
Ris	Appeals for justice are made to this group.
Ganguro	Traditional healers specialising in diseases or injuries caused by iron or bullets
Hisante	Healers specialising in communicable diseases
Fureto	They are the backbone of the sub-ethnic groups, known for their ritual ceremonies and highly respected by all of the sub-groups
Hasglech	Similar to the Fureto
Ebro	Specialise in the treatment of fire-related damage
Garora	Specialise in the treatment of snake bites
Fequle	Specialise in the treatment of snake bites
Garle	They are the leadership group

10

Lessons from Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association (EPaRDA)

EPARDA IS A LOCAL NGO that has been working in South Omo since 2001 on integrated pastoral development. Within this framework EPaRDA has conducted a series of peace-making activities first among the Arbore, Hamer and Borena, then among the Mursi, Ari, and Bodi, and finally among the Hamer, Dasenech, Nyagatom, Karo, Muguji, Mursi and Bodi. These processes took some time as they were implemented according to the traditional peace-making procedures. Through these processes, the community established a peace committee that met every month and created a common militia made up of people from each ethnic group. The running costs of these structures were covered by cattle contributions. Today, for the most part, the conflicts among these ethnic groups have been stopped and agreement has been reached over the use of common resources, making development interventions possible.

The successful stories of EPaRDA have been attributed to several factors:

- **Focusing on community priorities** Conflict resolution was identified as the primary priority by the community

- **Working through existing local institutions** The local institutions were empowered to make their own decisions and learned more about conflict resolution by being part of the peace-making process facilitated by EPaRDA

- **Gender and age sensitivity** Both women and youth participated in the peace-making process

- **Capacity-building** The peace-making process was supported by conducting relevant trainings, which served as a platform for exchange of views and provided the means for a phase-out strategy

- **Principles of development for peace** EPaRDA worked on the premise that peace without complementary development interventions was not sustainable

11

Regional policy

SOME OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES have a positive impact in the pastoralist areas. These include:

- The introduction of federalism to address ethnic issues – although this also created other tensions (as referred to above)
- The constitutional right of pastoralists not to be displaced
- The decentralisation of power to the grassroots level
- The establishment of pastoral commissions and other institutions.

The government has both legal and politico-administrative instruments at its disposal for managing intra-state conflict.[13] The constitution provides some principles and procedures for managing disputes over issues of national self-determination and imbues the House of Federation with the power to manage and resolve conflicts between regions. Yet the politico-administrative instruments of conflict management remain ad hoc, disparate and reactive.

The most prominent inter-state conflict management institution within the Horn of Africa is the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and yet its impact is minimal as almost all member countries are experiencing different levels of conflict and tensions.

The conflict resolution experience of the SNNPRS exhibits the following characteristics:[14]

- No response at an early stage of the conflict – so far a fire brigade approach is taken with a short-term perspective
- The regional council and the House of Nationalities have been mandated to resolve conflict but their involvement has been limited
- There is a knowledge gap in resolving conflict
- There is no clear policy and strategy on conflict
- However, there is good co-operation with and support for institutions dealing with conflict resolution, such as EPaRDA
- The region believes in development, capacity-building and the empowerment of local institutions as a foundation to resolve conflicts

In order to address cross-border conflict issues, a cross-border (Ethiopia-Kenya) harmonising committee was established and a series of meetings have been held in the

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13 *op cit*, Asnake K.
14 Belay D, 'An overview of SNNPR policy and attempts on conflict issues', Paper presented to cross-border dialogue on security and conflict management: Consultative workshop proceedings, 6 June 2004, Awassa, Ethiopia.

past few years. However, meetings often do not take place because of logistical problems and the lack of regular budget allocations.

On the side of the community, perceptions of decision-makers at their district level include:

- Minimal transparency between the community and officials
- Slow follow-up and decision-making
- Lack of experience and knowledge on conflict resolution
- No or little interest in learning from traditional practices of conflict resolution
- Government rules and regulations that are not in harmony with traditions
- Biased attitudes of some officials towards their respective ethnic groups.

12

Recommendations

IT IS CLEAR FROM THE RESEARCH that conflicts in the case study areas have multiple causes and that many of these causes are linked to developmental and livelihood issues. Some cultural beliefs and traditions can further fuel these conflicts and contribute to a culture of mistrust between different ethnic groups. Local conflicts also easily take on cross-border dimensions, both internally, in terms of the administrative borders of districts and sub-districts, and externally, in terms of national borders. A multi-layered approach is therefore required, from a range of different actors (different levels of government, from the federal to the local; traditional leaders and community mediators; other civil society organisations; regional inter-state organisations like IGAD and the African Union (AU); international NGOs; international donors), to address the conflicts in a sustainable way.

A number of recommendations for resolving conflict were proposed during consultations with various ethnic groups and organisations working at the grassroots level. These suggestions were further discussed at a workshop held in Jinka, where priorities for community-based and local peace-building were identified (see **appendix 3**). The following recommendations are informed by these discussions held at the grassroots level.

To the Ethiopian government and international donors

Support conflict-sensitive development, economic diversification and livelihood security.

Donors should support conflict-sensitive development interventions designed to improve food security and agricultural productivity and diversify livelihood options for pastoralists. It is crucial that these interventions are designed through dialogue with local communities to ensure that they reflect community needs and priorities and that they do not exacerbate conflict or mistrust between communities by fuelling perceptions of unfair advantage to some groups.

Support capacity-building and training in conflict-sensitive development and conflict prevention for local government authorities and community-based organisations.

Ethiopia's national poverty reduction strategy includes a strong emphasis on administrative decentralisation, civil service reform and capacity-building at the woreda level. This includes efforts to build the administrative capacity of local authorities and to improve transparency, accountability and civil society participation in local government structures. As part of these efforts, donors, including the European Union (EU), should support awareness-raising and training activities for local officials on conflict

prevention and conflict-sensitive development. Donors should also support capacity-building and training for non-governmental and community-based organisations to strengthen their ability to provide input into local government decision-making on conflict resolution and the design of conflict-sensitive development strategies.

Ensure that national and donor development frameworks are conflict-sensitive and integrate conflict and security issues.

National and donor development frameworks, including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the EU Country Strategy Papers (CSP) and bilateral country strategies, should actively take into account conflict issues across all sectors of engagement to ensure that programmes under these frameworks are conflict-sensitive.

Improve dialogue between donors, government and civil society on linking peace and development.

Designing, implementing and evaluating conflict-sensitive development strategies will require improved dialogue between donors, government and civil society. Forums and processes to encourage dialogue and enable civil society to participate in development frameworks such as PRSPs and CSPs at the national, regional and district levels should be established and strengthened.

Support community-based peace-building initiatives.

Donors and government should support local peace-building initiatives, such as awareness-raising activities, mediation and dispute resolution, and peace committees.

Take action to control small arms and light weapons and to improve safety and security.

National and donor development frameworks such as PRSPs and CSPs should integrate small arms control and safety and security issues. These programmes should be developed to address the particular causes of insecurity in border zones such as the study areas and might include small arms reduction programmes that integrate socio-economic issues, improved policing to regulate smuggling of weapons and provide security to citizens in border areas, and cross-border cooperation and joint patrol systems. Small arms control initiatives should be linked to the implementation of international agreements through the United Nations and regional agreements, such as the Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa.

To regional and inter-state institutions and international donors

Strengthen conflict early warning and response systems.

A proactive early warning and response system is needed to identify conflict risks at an early stage and take action to prevent the escalation of tension into violent conflict. Early warning involves a systematic collection of conflict information, analysis and reporting, which should then trigger proactive, early responses. The cross-border nature of conflicts requires regional solutions and strategies through institutions such as IGAD and the regional Conflict Early Warning and Response (CEWARN) mechanism.

Support cross-border structures and processes.

The Ethiopian-Kenyan border harmonisation committee has the potential to start addressing the cross-border dimensions of the conflicts in these areas, but suffers from

a lack of sufficient resources even to meet regularly. Their work should therefore be supported and links should be explored to other cross-border structures or initiatives such as the CEWARN system's information-gathering and analysis processes. Exchange of information between these structures may be mutually beneficial. At the intra-state regional level, IGAD provides a forum for discussing how national governments can support such local cross-border efforts to resolve conflicts.

To local non-governmental and community-based organisations and local government

Build capacity on conflict prevention and conflict-sensitive development.

At the local level, government authorities, NGOs and community-based organisations need to build their capacity to prevent conflict and to design and implement conflict-sensitive development interventions.

Engage in mediation and dispute resolution.

Based on the experience of EPaRDA we can recommend that NGOs play an important role in mediation and dispute resolution in the area. However, NGOs should:

■ Be officially recognised
■ Be a neutral and legitimate third party in order to be trusted by the communities involved
■ Follow dispute resolution methods acceptable to all parties
■ Be skilled in techniques of mediation and use participatory methods
■ Be familiar with the official and customary laws
■ Have a thorough understanding of the local context: knowledge of the local history, social norms and organisation, political institutions, regulatory framework and programmes

Raise awareness of and harmonise modern and traditional processes.

With local government involvement and support, NGOs and community-based organisations should help raise awareness and build capacity of local leaders and pastoralist communities on good governance, laws and regulations as well as constitutional issues – including their constitutional rights as pastoralists. This would encourage dialogue and understanding of the differences between modern and traditional systems and enable communities to be more strategic in addressing their problems. At the same time, the value of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms needs to be acknowledged and steps should be taken to enhance the positive contribution they can make.

Engage communities on cultural practices fuelling conflict.

Non-governmental and community-based organisations should facilitate discussions with communities to discuss cultural practices such as paying dowry and beliefs around heroism that are fuelling conflict and to devise solutions, to raise awareness of the benefits of peace and development for pastoral communities, and to encourage peaceful resource sharing.

Prioritise community needs.

Generally, priority should be given to initiatives or suggestions from local communities, such as the priorities identified by the consultative meeting in Jinka (**appendix 3**). This would ensure that communities are able to identify their own problems and suggest solutions for them.

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Appendix 1   **List of contact persons**

Name	Location	Organisation
Diress Demisse	Addis Ababa	Oxfam-Spain (Intermon)
Beruk Yemane	Addis Ababa	Oxfam Great Britain
W/o Aregash Aberha Mohammed Abu baker	Addis Ababa	Ministry of Education (pastoralist task force)
Dr. Taffese Mesfin	Addis Ababa	FARM Africa
Hon. Wondemagenhu Wondimu	Addis Ababa	Ethiopian pastoralist standing committee
Hon. Konga Loria	Addis Ababa	Dasenech district parliament representative
Dr. Abayenh Leza Seyum Tamire	Kangate (Bume) Kangate (Bume)	Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association (EPaRDA)
Wassie Azashe	Addis	Cordaid
Dr. Danaiel Daro	Awassa	Debube Agricultural Research Institute Awassa (Director)
Mesfin Zewdie	Kangate (Ayba village)	Pastoral Development Department (Development agent)
Dawit Etyo	Kebish (Bume)	Pastoralist Communication Initiative
Desalign Tekle	Omerate/ Kuraz	Rural Development Coordination (Head)
Abebe Mekonen	Omerate/ Kuraz	Pastoralist Development (Veterinary)
Abedisa Echeku	Kangate	EPaRDA (community facilitator)
Basha	Kangate	Guinea Worm Eradication Program
Feleke Seyum	Demika/Hamer	Rural Development Coordination (Head)
Tsegaye Alefa	Demika	Hamer District Administration
Three merchants (grain market, shop owner and hotel owner)	Turmi	Merchants
Muka Ayaro	Turmi	Government school (teacher)
Three policemen	Turmi	Police
Five students (different ethnic groups)	Turmi	Mekanysus boarding school
Three men's groups (Karo) One (guide)	Murli village Murli village	Agro-pastoralists Ethiopian Rift Valley Safari
Five elders' groups Seven youth groups	Borkenish village/Dasenech	Pastoralists
Three women's groups Two elders' groups Five youth groups	Shale village (Katanga)	Pastoralists
Five elders groups (Bume) Three school teachers (groups) Two policemen	Kebish village /Bume Kenya border	Pastoralists (for conflict about 40 elders) School Police
Ten elders' groups Four women's groups Five youth groups	Naragoy Village (Kangate/Bume)	Pastoralists (for conflict big meetings 40)
Seven elders, middle aged people and youth	Albore	Agro-pastoralists
Five men's groups (Tsemay)		Agro-pastoralists

Appendix 2   Definitions

Conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have incompatible goals. Depending on the goals and behaviour conflict was further categorised as no conflict, latent conflict (below the surface), open conflict (deep rooted) and surface conflict (shallow).

Violence consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and/or prevent people from reaching their human potential

Conflict prevention aims to prevent the outbreak of violent conflict

Conflict settlement aims to end violent behaviour by reaching a peace agreement

Conflict management aims to limit and avoid future violence by promoting positive behavioural changes in the parties involved.

Conflict resolution aims to address the causes of conflict and seeks to build new and lasting relationships between hostile groups.

Source: Fisher S, et al, *Working with conflict: skills and strategies for action*, (ZED books, 2000).

Appendix 3   Outcomes of the Jinka workshop

The role of different institutions in conflict resolution and peace-building: Outcomes of the workshop held in Jinka (South Omo) – attended by community, government representatives, NGOs and donors.

Issues	Intervention	Responsible
South Omo		
Peace-building	• Establishment of community security committee	Community + woreda
	• Peace conference	Zone (district) + woreda (sub-district)
	• Awareness on conflict HTP	Zone + NGO
	• Intermarriage	Community
	• Community militia and police force	Community + government
	• Return looted cattle	Community + zone
Development	• Common irrigation scheme	Zone + NGO
	• Common market	Zone + NGO
	• Schools and health service at border	Zone + NGO
	• Livestock health	Zone + NGO
	• Common market	Community + government + NGO
Cross-border (Turkana)		
Peace-building	• Joint bylaws	Community + governments
	• Experience sharing visits	Community + NGO + governments
	• Common market	Governments
	• Regular peace talks	Community + NGOs + governments
	• Regular security force	Governments
	• Arms control	Community + governments
Development	• Common irrigation schemes	Governments + NGOs
	• Basic services at border	Governments + NGOs
	• Common markets	Governments

Source: Beruk Y, 'Brief report on South Omo', *Consultative workshop on peace research findings*, Addis Ababa, 2005.

Appendix 4   **Land use/cover and livestock population of Hamer and Kuraz sub-districts**

Woreda	Land use/cover	Livestock population
Hamer	Area = 630,187 hectares Cultivated = 1% Cultivable = 14% Pastureland = 31% Forest land = 1% Bad land = 35% Others = 18 %	Cattle = 51,418 Sheep = 38,845 Goats = 82,480 Horses = 4,290
Kuraz	Area = 503,453 hectares Cultivated = 1% Cultivable = 50% Pastureland = 2% Forest land = 1% Bad land = – Others = 37%	Cattle = 213,510 Sheep = 235,740 Goats = 250,120 Horses = 30,850

Source: South Omo zone planning office, 2004

Appendix 5

Asset and human losses in the Dasenech community as the result of conflicts with the Turkana and Borena (Kenya)

| Date | | Livestock raiding and human loss (Dasenech) |
Month	Year	
14 January	2000	393 cattle, 1 person died and 3 people wounded
30 January	2000	2,500 cattle and 3,500 donkeys
14 February	2000	30 people died
26 February	2000	4 people wounded
17 March	2000	2 people died and 1 wounded
20 March	2000	3 people died and 1 wounded
24 March	2000	500 goats and sheep and 2 people died
27 March	2000	6 people died
16 May	2000	2,000 donkeys
13 July	2000	200 goats
17 July	2000	1,700 goats and sheep
12 September	2000	12,059 cattle
16 September	2000	4 people died
7 December	2000	660 cattle and 200 goats
20 September	2001	950 goats and 2 people died
28 April	2001	350 cattle
26 May	2001	835 cattle and 6 people died
17 June	2001	2,674 cattle

Source: Kuraz district (Omerate), letter written on 14 September 2002 to the woreda parliament representative at federal level.

Appendix 6 | **Nyagatom and Dasenech sub-ethnic groups**

Nyagatom sub-ethnic groups

Iliko	They originated from the Dasenech area (Glebe) and mostly reside on the river banks, practising fishing, crop farming and rearing small livestock
Ilbomo	They have the biggest population, the most livestock, and specialise in livestock rearing
Ikumma	They reside around the Omo river and combine crop farming and livestock rearing. This group facilitates peace negotiations between Karo and Nyagatom
Inarch/Murle	Their residential area extends from the Gambela area to the Sudanese border. They are a minority group whose language seems to be diminishing. However, they now strongly claim their own identity and leadership. They are in conflict with the Karo
Itokramn	They used to live with the Ikumma around the Omo river. They are known for the beauty of their women and accumulated a lot of livestock through dowries. They now reside around Kibesh
Nikor	They are very small in number and depend on livestock rearing
Nisakol	They are bordering Surma and Mursi and play an important role in peace negotiations within and between these ethnic groups. They have the second highest population in the Nyagatom ethnic group
Koyogo	A minority group who recently joined the Nyagatom. They reside around the Omo river banks
Abune	A minority group residing around the Omo river and dependent on crop cultivation

Dasenech sub-ethnic groups

Sher	They have the highest population and the most livestock. They are relatively rich and known for their heroism in war. Each sub-ethnic group is divided into family groups. For example, Sher has eight family lines, namely *Ferger*, *Tuperyem*, *Torot*, *Shadach*, *Azo*, *Mure*, *Ell* and *Tume*.
Elile	Second highest population and livestock numbers
Oro	Third highest population and livestock numbers
Narch	A combination of different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups and facilitate some peace-making efforts.
Inkurya	They originated from the Sher and the same ethnic group is found in Kenya. The colonial boundaries divided this group into two.
Rendele	Minority group residing around Kuraz. The same ethnic group resides in Kenya. The colonial boundaries also divided this group into two.
Koro	Minority group found in both Ethiopia and Kenya.
Rele	Minority group residing around the Omo river and depend on fishing and farming

Africa Peace Forum (APFO), based in Kenya, contributes to the prevention, resolution and effective management of conflict by engaging state and non-state actors in developing collaborative approaches towards lasting peace and enhanced human security in the Greater Horn of Africa and beyond.

Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association (EPARDA) is an indigenous non-governmental organisation established at the end of 1999. Concerned and interested professionals with diverse backgrounds agreed in establishing EPARDA with the common mission of understanding the root causes of the poverty and chronic vulnerability of pastoralists under the complex and diverse interfaces of ecology, economy and politics. The vision is to empower the pastoralists in decision making on the fate of their livelihoods for a better life and sustainable environment through the improvement of their livelihoods and through the strengthening of local innovative initiatives and introduction of appropriate information and technologies.

InterAfrica Group (IAG) is an independent regional organisation based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which focuses on advancing peace, justice and respect for humanitarian law in the Greater Horn of Africa.

Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works with governments and civil society internationally to research, promote and implement new strategies to increase human security and prevent armed violence.

COVER PHOTO: Young Hamers training for the Bullah or 'jumping over the bull', their most important tribal ceremony. A young man who wants to marry a girl of his choice will have to jump over a line of bulls picked by the girl's family. Failure is considered a bad sign, though he may try again a year later.
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