



Bringing together local government officers and traditional authorities to discuss natural resource use is crucial for conflict management. Most attendees are men as they generally occupy positions of authority; nevertheless, the project facilitated women representative's active participation.

BRIEFING NOTE 7: PEACE BUILDING AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Life in Borana, whether as a pastoralist or an agro-pastoralist, tends to be a constant struggle. As already described, competition for natural resources is increasing due to a variety of factors – not least the growing numbers of people and cattle; shrinking area of pasture due to land privatization and the spread of invasive woody bushes; increasing frequency of droughts; and erosion of traditional authorities and of community cohesion. Whilst the NRM-Borana project has primarily sought to address this situation through the improved governance of water and pastures, managing conflicts immediately associated with these, it has also taken a wider stance on peace-building and conflict resolution. This was grounded in participatory action research conducted by the project partner PDC, Peace and Development Center, which identified three specific types of conflict and followed up with appropriate action in the form of capacity building. Advisory input was also provided by external experts from Swisspeace and Helvetas.

CONFLICTS IN BORANA

The three main types of conflict in Borana identified by PDC are: cross-border, cross-boundary, and intra-community.

CROSS-BORDER CONFLICTS

“The Gabra-Kenyan and Borana-Ethiopian conflict is the manifestation of Kenyan politics – where money buys votes and the clash of clans are an election campaign – and of Ethiopian instability. There is no territorial claim

between the two groups, but it [the conflict] restricts mobility, pasture and water accesses as well as trade relationships”. A Borana Elder (aged 72), Dillo woreda

Pastoralists belonging to different ethnic groups and clans herded their cattle across the areas now designated as Ethiopia and Kenya long before such borders were made. As a people, the Borana are found in both countries; similarly, the Gabra people, who are also pastoralists, live both sides of the border. Traditionally, they have used the same water sources and pastures – the former being more plentiful on the Borana side, whilst dry season grazing is generally better on the Gabra side within Ethiopia. Conflicts between the two are said to trace back to 2007, when inter-clan conflict between the Gabra and Borana was whipped up as part of Kenyan election campaigning. Whether or not this was the only catalyst, it remains a fact that relations are difficult to this day, with periodic eruptions of violence. Both sides have raided cattle from each other, burned down homes, and committed murder. Although various peace-building attempts have been made, usually facilitated by external agencies, the agreements reached are periodically broken. Each time a member of one side commits an atrocity, renewed conflict is sparked.

CROSS-BOUNDARY CONFLICTS

“Land is our flesh and bone, our valuable asset, source of livelihoods, and an essential part of our culture. We struggle, wound, and die for and on it. That is part of Borana history since long ago.” Jillo Aga, Senior Abba Gada (1976–84)

The cross-boundary conflict occurs in the North-East part of the lands claimed by the Borana. It concerns a territorial dispute between the Borana peoples of Oromia Region and the Garri peoples of the Somali Region of Ethiopia and is said to date back to the Anglo-Italian war of 1931–1936. The invading would-be colonialists incited inter-ethnic conflict as part of their war strategy. The hotspot of the conflict is in the Wayana grazing system (*dheera*), falling within Wachile and Dhas *woredas*. Like the Gabra – Borana conflict, it is one that simmers and sporadically comes to the surface. Most observers consider that it can only be solved by a decision of the National Boundary Commission, but this would need to be done in consultation with community elders from both sides.

INTRA-COMMUNITY CONFLICTS

Intra-community conflicts occur between members of the same or different villages, clusters, *kebeles* or *woredas*. They generally concern disagreements over the use of a specific water source or pasture – especially the enclosure, by a private individual, of pastureland that is considered communal. As described in **Briefing Note 1**, in the past such disputes would have been solved locally, by the elders concerned – or brought to higher levels in the Borana governance system, if necessary. However, the differing understanding of local government authorities and traditional leaders has made this increasingly difficult.

REVITALIZING TRADITIONAL

GOVERNANCE INSTITUTIONS

The primary way in which the NRM-Borana project sought to manage conflict and build peace was through the revitalization of the traditional meetings (*Kora*) for determining natural resource management. The key aspect of this process was bringing together local government officers and traditional authorities to build common understanding. Another important aspect was the project insistence on women's involvement in governance processes, despite their traditional exclusion from such fora. Women's inclusion is critical not only from the perspective of equity, but also of practicality, given that it is women who are primarily responsible for ensuring household water and fodder supplies. **Briefing Note 3** outlines how the equitable management of water resources has been promoted through re-establishing the *Kora Ela* at the Gayo well complex. **Briefing Note 4** discusses the re-establishment of the *Kora Dheeda* governing the movement of livestock to different pastures, as well as the engagement of women in improving fodder supplies.

Further to these processes, and to ensure continued dialogue, the project identified a common need amongst the different protagonists for training in non-violent, peaceful communication.



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Tume Jirma of Gayo *kebele* has participated extensively in project-facilitated planning discussions but worries over the future of the Borana people given the increasing frequency of droughts.

CAPACITY BUILDING IN CONFLICT

SENSITIVE LEADERSHIP

Through the PDC and other local consultants, and in collaboration with the local authorities, the NRM-Borana project organized a variety of training sessions in conflict sensitive leadership. With a target audience of customary leaders, local government officers and other opinion-leaders, including women, these were held at two different levels: zonal, and *woreda*. Included in the participants from the government side were officers from the Peace and Security Administration Office at zonal and *woreda* levels, as well as from the Office for Women and Social Affairs and the general administration. The customary leaders were invited according to their rank and responsibility within the traditional *Gada* system, with their overall numbers being slightly more than those from the government.

The training emphasized the role of the participants in managing resource-based conflict. It included an analysis of the causes and dynamics of conflicts, prevention mechanisms and institutions, and different options and procedures. Participants discussed community dialogue and monitoring, and proactive action in peace building. The training was delivered in two rounds – in both cases, about 76 individuals participated, the majority being men (none of the traditional leaders, and very few of the relevant government officers, being women).



Yitageng Girma is proud to be a woman member of the Dubluk *kebele* Peace Committee.

STRENGTHENING *KEBELE* LEVEL PEACE

COMMITTEES

Government-initiated peace committees at *kebele* level are expected to play an important role in grassroots conflict management – intervening to mediate in disputes, promoting non-violent dialogue, and serving as an early warning in the case of heightened tensions. In many ways, their function mirrors that of the traditional *Gada* governance system from *olla* (village) upwards. However, the peace committee membership is more mixed both in age and gender, although some traditional elders may be included. As most peace committee members have had no formal training in conflict-sensitive communication, the project supported such capacity building in all 16 project *kebeles*. The content of the training was broadly similar to that organized for middle-level managers at *woreda* level but was longer and was delivered in four rounds. Held in the Borana town of Mega, each training session lasted three days and brought together some 116 participants, of whom 40 were women. In addition to peace committee members, participants included staff of local governments and NGOs.

The training adopted an experiential learning approach, whereby the participants each identified conflicts in their locality, shared their experience in managing such situations, analyzed the conflict dynamics, and eventually devised a community action plan that they would implement and monitor. Each participant also received a certificate on completion of the training.


LESSONS LEARNED

- Given the scarcity of natural resources in Borana, it is likely that conflicts will continue to arise. However, equipping both local government staff and customary leaders and other community members, notably women, with skills in conflict-sensitive communication has helped diffuse tension in several recent cases of intra-community conflicts. The local anchoring of such skills should also serve as an important asset for future negotiation of peaceful co-existence at the wider level of cross-boundary and cross-border conflicts.
- Training is most effective when participants can immediately relate the content to their own lived experience. In revealing ground realities, the participatory action research conducted through the project provided a strong base for discussing conflict management and peace-building.
- The project approach of engaging with customary institutions and women representatives as well as local governments has been essential in adopting a systemic approach to conflict management and peacebuilding. Intervening via the local governments alone would have failed to reveal the rich local knowledge and the complexity of the situation on the ground.

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