



Regular Article

The Triple Nexus of Peace, Security, and Disaster Risk Management Actors for Conflict prevention: The case of Ataye, North Shewa, Ethiopia

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Received: 27/02/2025 / Accepted: 17/07/2025 / Published online: 16/10/2025

Abstract This study examines the effectiveness of inter-ethnic conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia, focusing on Ataye town in the North Shewa Administrative Zone of the Amhara National Regional State. It assesses the contributions of ‘traditional’ conflict resolution mechanisms and other more formal and alternative dispute resolution strategies employed by the Government of Ethiopia, including federal institutions such as the House of Federation, the Ministries of Peace, and Justice, as well as the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Council. The DRM Council plays a crucial role in integrating disaster risk reduction with conflict prevention efforts, promoting community resilience, and facilitating dialogue among conflicting parties. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. A total of 380 participants, including 127 women, took part in key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and survey questionnaires. Secondary data sources, particularly relevant policy, administrative, and local security reports, were also reviewed. Qualitative data were thematically coded and analyzed, while quantitative data were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics via SPSS version 20. The findings indicate that ‘traditional’ conflict resolution mechanisms, particularly the Gadaa and Shimgline institutions, were found relatively effective in mitigating and resolving conflicts between the Oromo and Amhara communities in Ataye. However, trust in the conflict resolution capacity of federal government institutions, particularly the House of Federation, is minimal, with nearly 59 percent of respondents doubting its effectiveness. Similarly, a significant number of participants believe that the conflict resolution capacity of the Ministry of Peace at the grassroots level is weak, with limited outreach and communication capacity to engage different community segments in conflict resolution efforts. The study further revealed that the local criminal justice system faces accountability and public trust deficits, indicating a pressing need for future reforms. It emphasizes the necessity for stronger

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institutional collaboration and synergy among ‘traditional’ conflict resolution organizations and formal government institutions, notably the Ministry of Peace and the DRM Council, at regional and district levels.

Keywords: DRM, conflict management, conflict resolution, conflict early warning system, formal institutions, indigenous institution

1. THE CONTEXT

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), adopted in 2015, provides a comprehensive approach to disaster management, emphasizing risk reduction and resilience enhancement. It outlines four key priorities: understanding disaster risk, strengthening governance, investing in resilience, and enhancing preparedness (UNDRR, 2015). This holistic framework addresses not only natural hazards but also the socio-economic factors that contribute to vulnerability, making it a crucial tool in contexts where disaster risk and conflict intersect. Research has established a complex relationship between disasters and conflict, where natural disasters can exacerbate existing tensions and lead to violence, particularly in fragile states (World Bank, 2011). Conversely, ongoing conflicts can hinder disaster response efforts, increasing community vulnerability (Benson & Clay, 2004).

The SFDRR emphasizes community engagement, which fosters social cohesion and trust—essential elements for conflict resolution. By integrating disaster risk reduction into governance and policy, the framework enhances structures capable of mitigating tensions and promoting stability, as highlighted by UNDP (2017). While the SFDRR offers a robust framework for linking disaster risk reduction and conflict resolution, challenges in implementation remain. Coordinated efforts among stakeholders are crucial, and context-specific approaches are necessary to address local histories and power dynamics (Pelling, 2011). Nevertheless, the SFDRR presents an opportunity to enhance resilience and sustainable development, addressing root causes of conflict and fostering peace.

In Ethiopia, disaster risk management is governed by a comprehensive legal and policy framework primarily articulated in the National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management, adopted in 2013. This framework emphasizes a systematic approach to reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience to both natural and conflict-induced disasters by focusing on understanding disaster risks, strengthening governance, and improving preparedness and response mechanisms (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2013). Key components include the establishment of a Disaster Risk Management System, an Early Warning System, and a Disaster Risk Management Council to ensure coordination among stakeholders (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2013). Furthermore, the policy acknowledges the complex interplay between climate change and conflict, recognizing that social tensions and resource scarcity can exacerbate disaster risks.

Ataye, a town in the North Shewa Zone, which once accommodated a diverse population, has become a hotspot for inter-ethnic tensions, particularly between the dominant Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups. These tensions escalated following the dissolution of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), an ethnic federalist political coalition, and the rise of the Prosperity Party since 2018. The political unrest in the area has been fueled by groups using ethnic nationalism as a tool for political manipulation and control over local resources. The violence that erupted in Ataye has resulted in casualties and the displacement of thousands. Despite attempts at conflict resolution by government institutions, significant underlying grievances complicate peace efforts.

In response to these challenges, the Ethiopian government has implemented various conflict resolution mechanisms, utilizing its criminal justice system while promoting alternative dispute resolution (ADR) techniques (Ayalew, 2020). The government has employed legal enforcement bodies, including police, public prosecutors, and courts, to prevent and investigate inter-ethnic violence. However, limitations within this system have become apparent, as it often fails to foster reconciliation and address the root causes of conflict. Some studies emphasize the need for improved community relations and resources to enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution (Ajanaw, 2021; Alemu, Elias, & Kuma, 2023). Traditional conflict resolution practices in Ataye often capitalize on community engagement and dialogue, although biases and a lack of accountability can undermine their effectiveness (Yohannes & Mengistu, 2021).

This study examines the role and effectiveness of various conflict resolution mechanisms used to promote peace and stability in Ataye. It assesses the contributions of different mechanisms, ranging from traditional conflict resolution to ADR and other forms of the criminal justice system. By evaluating how these mechanisms can collaboratively address inter-ethnic conflicts, the goal is to identify pathways for promoting lasting peace among the diverse communities in Ataye, Amhara Region, Ethiopia. Implementing restorative justice within Ethiopia's ethnic federalism presents challenges but offers a valuable means for fostering healing and reconciliation, encouraging empathy and shared responsibility among conflicting parties.

2. METHODS

This study employs a mixed-methods research approach with a sequential exploratory design, integrating both qualitative and quantitative data collection to comprehensively understand inter-ethnic conflict management in Ethiopia. This method aligns with the principles outlined by Creswell (2003) and Kothari (2004), who advocate for using mixed methods to holistically address complex phenomena.

The research gathered data from three categories of sample population: individuals affected by the conflict, peace actors, and security actors, all sharing experiences related to the Ataye conflict. For the qualitative component, purposive sampling was utilized to select

participants for interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), ensuring that those with rich knowledge and diverse perspectives were included. Interviews were conducted with 20 government officials from key institutions, including the House of Federation and the Ministry of Peace. Additionally, FGDs involved ten conflict affected people from the Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups. The sample size for the qualitative component was determined by reaching data saturation, whereby no new insights emerged. Thematic analysis was subsequently applied to identify key themes related to the research objectives.

For the quantitative component, stratified simple random sampling was employed to select respondents for questionnaires, ensuring a representative sample of the broader population, which included community members, security actors, and peace actors. The sample size was calculated using a formula for a single population proportion, resulting in a target of 385 respondents. Four hundred questionnaires were distributed, yielding 380 completed responses. Descriptive statistics (percentages and frequencies) and inferential statistics (correlation) were used to analyze the quantitative data, providing insights into the prevalence of different perspectives and the relationships between variables.

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected through interviews, FGDs, and questionnaires, while secondary data involved reviews of pertinent policy and administrative documents as well as other relevant literature. The questionnaires were initially prepared in English but later translated into Amharic. The validity of the data was confirmed through a literature review and testing with students from the Ethiopian Police University, while reliability was assessed using a Cronbach's alpha test.

The 380 respondents revealed a predominantly male sample (66.6%, $n = 253$) compared to females (33.4%, $n = 127$), highlighting a significant male interest in participating in conflict resolution. The largest age group represented was 18-29 years, making up 56.8% ($n = 216$), suggesting the role of young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Nearly half of the respondents (48.9%, $n = 186$) held a diploma, while 39.2% ($n = 149$) had a certificate or less, and only 11.8% ($n = 45$) possessed a degree or higher, indicating a generally educated or literate respondent base. In terms of their conflict experiences, most identified themselves as victims of the conflict (52.6%, $n = 200$), followed by individuals engaged in peacemaking efforts (26.3%, $n = 100$), with the remainder working for security or law enforcement bodies (21.1%, $n = 80$).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Interest-Based Relational (IBR) Theory and Transformative Mediation Theories were the two most relevant theoretical frameworks used to explain and study the dynamics of conflict resolution mechanisms in Ataye. Developed by Druckman (2001), IBR Theory emphasizes the importance of the underlying interests and motivations of conflicting parties rather than focusing solely on their positions. This approach is relevant for the study of conflict in Ataye as it can enhance dialogue and cooperation between the Amhara and Oromo communities by

separating personal animosities from the issues at hand. By identifying shared interests—such as access to resources and political representation—mediators can foster collaboration and generate mutually beneficial solutions (Fisher & Ury, 1981).

On the other hand, transformative mediation theory complements IBR by focusing on empowerment and recognition, essential for healing strained relationships. In Ataye, mediators can create spaces for both communities to share their narratives, fostering empathy and dismantling stereotypes. Empowerment initiatives, like training local leaders in conflict resolution, encourage community ownership of the mediation process, ensuring sustainable solutions. By prioritizing relationship transformation alongside dispute resolution, transformative mediation can facilitate long-lasting peace (Bush & Folger, 1994).

Therefore, we argue that the combination of the IBR and transformative mediation theories create a comprehensive approach to resolving the Ataye conflict. While IBR provides a framework for understanding interests and developing solutions, the transformative mediation theory addresses emotional and relational aspects, empowering parties to improve their relationships. This integrated approach offers a promising path toward sustainable peace and reconciliation in North Shewa.

4. KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings, focusing on three main conflict resolution approaches: DRM council, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, alternative dispute resolution (ADR) efforts facilitated by the House of Federation and the Ministry of Peace, and restorative justice mediated through the criminal justice system.

4.1 DRM Council

The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Council in Ethiopia is a key institutional framework responsible for implementing the National Policy and Strategy on Disaster Risk Management. It focuses on reducing disaster risks and mitigating potential damages through coordinated efforts among government agencies, NGOs, and community groups. The Council oversees policy execution, mobilizes resources, and facilitates communication to enhance public awareness and preparedness. By fostering a systematic approach to disaster risk management, the DRM Council plays a crucial role in improving the nation's resilience to disasters, particularly in the face of climate change and associated vulnerabilities.

The data in Table 1 reflects varied perceptions of the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Council's effectiveness in addressing inter-ethnic conflicts. Among 380 respondents, only 27.9% agreed and 12.1% strongly agreed that the council effectively contributes to de-escalation, while 45.3% expressed disagreement, indicating significant skepticism and potential dissatisfaction. Neutral responses (14.7%) suggest uncertainty about the council's role. Compared to studies by Gebrehiwot et al. (2020); Yami & Uhlenbrook, (2017), which emphasize local engagement in disaster management, this skepticism highlights a disconnect

between top-down approaches and grassroots involvement. These findings align with (Berhe & Mehari, 2022), who argue that DRM efforts must incorporate local dynamics to be effective. The significant disagreement among respondents signals a need for more inclusive, participatory strategies that build trust and collaboration with local communities, ultimately enhancing the council's responsiveness and efficacy in conflict management.

Table 1. Disaster risk management council responds the conflict effectively

the DRM council provision contribute for deescalated the inter-ethnic conflict				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	84	22.1	22.1	22.1
Disagree	88	23.2	23.2	45.3
Neutral	56	14.7	14.7	60.0
Agree	106	27.9	27.9	87.9
Strongly agree	46	12.1	12.1	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own survey, 2024

Most interview participants emphasized the critical role of Ethiopia's disaster prevention and preparedness committees in disaster response, organized from the federal to the woreda level. These committees coordinate disaster management efforts, assess local risks, develop contingency plans, and mobilize resources, including representatives from government agencies, community-based organizations, civil society groups, and local leaders. They conduct regular risk assessments, establish early warning systems, and engage with local communities to enhance disaster resilience.

Interview participant 8 noted that the National Incident Management System (NIMS), designed ten years ago, establishes uniform processes and procedures for emergency responders at all government levels. NIMS incorporates three interrelated emergency management concepts: Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC), Emergency Coordination Center (ECC), and Incident Command System (ICS). Although police are members of these committees, challenges arose when leaders of various government institutions refused to sign the collaboration rules. Nevertheless, in 2019, the Minister of Peace approved draft NIMS guidelines as part of a reform agenda.

Interview participant 9 highlighted that NIMS is relatively new to the Amhara region. Within this context, the Disaster Management Commission is structured under the Bureau of Agriculture, with disaster prevention and preparedness committees organized at regional, zonal, and woreda levels. The deputy administrator chairs these committees, which include representatives from all administrative sectors, with the disaster management sector acting as the secretariat. A technical committee is tasked with conducting conflict risk profiles.

Further detailing the situation, interview participant 8 mentioned that the North Shewa Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Committee, led by the deputy administrator, organized an impact assessment team for the armed conflict. This team included members from 15 sectors of the zone administration, such as the police department, militia office, public prosecutor, and peace and security administration. The assessment revealed that the OLF Shena had killed 82 people and injured 153, with substantial economic losses amounting to

over 46 million birr in burned homes and additional costs in various sectors. The conflict also displaced 2,409 individuals, including children, pregnant women, the elderly, and disabled persons. Based on this assessment, a humanitarian aid and security response plan was developed collaboratively.

The statements from the interviews indicate that the NIMS concept, particularly the activation of multi-agency coordination, emergency coordination centers, and incident command systems, has not yet been fully implemented in the Amhara region. Moreover, the North Shewa Disaster Prevention and Food Security Office operates under the Agricultural Department, illustrating the nexus between humanitarian and development actors.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants highlighted several challenges facing the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Committee, including limited resources, coordination issues, capacity gaps, community engagement, and governance concerns. Inadequate financial resources, trained personnel, and insufficient training programs hinder the committee's effectiveness in disaster response.

FGD participant 6 noted that NIMS was activated following the state of emergency declaration (Proclamation No. 5/2021). An Emergency Coordination Center was established in Bahir Dar to coordinate information and resources regionally in response to the TPLF forces and OLF Shena. This initiative exemplifies collaboration between peace, security, humanitarian, and development actors. Additionally, an Incident Command System was organized in Debre Birhan, led by the deputy administration head of the North Shewa zone. This ICS comprises six clusters, including food security, health, protection, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and shelter/NFI (non-food items). These clusters provide emergency food assistance, maintain essential health services, address protection risks, and deliver safe drinking water and hygiene supplies to affected communities. The security cluster is also integrated into the command post to monitor armed conflict situations and facilitate the evacuation of internally displaced persons.

The reviewed studies highlight Ethiopia's progress in establishing a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) framework while noting persistent challenges, particularly regarding inter-ethnic conflicts. Tadesse (2016) points to significant institutional advancements and policy integrations for disaster risk reduction, while Berhe (2021) emphasizes the need for a robust legislative framework to enhance local resilience and resource conflict management. Both studies underscore the critical role of governmental structures in effective DRM. Insights from Gebrehiwot et al. (2020) and Yami and Uhlenbrook (2017) stress the importance of community engagement and social capital in mitigating inter-ethnic tensions, showing that strong local networks are vital for addressing resource-related conflicts. This skepticism regarding the DRM Council's effectiveness suggests a need for greater grassroots involvement.

Incorporating community-based approaches aligns with qualitative findings from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), where participants highlighted the role of disaster prevention committees in local risk management. However, challenges like

coordination issues and resource limitations hinder effective participation, indicating that structural improvements are essential for fostering community resilience. Tadesse and Yimer (2021) and Berhe and Mehari (2022) stress the need for an integrated legal and institutional framework that considers socio-political dynamics affecting inter-ethnic relations. FGDs echoed concerns about coordination and resources as barriers to effective DRM. Additionally, Berhe and Mehari's connection of climate change to inter-ethnic tensions calls for DRM policies that include climate adaptation strategies. By integrating governance, community engagement, and climate resilience, Ethiopia can enhance its DRM efforts, leading to better management of inter-ethnic conflicts and improved disaster resilience.

In conclusion, perceptions of the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Council's effectiveness in addressing inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia reveal both challenges and opportunities. While some recognize its role in de-escalation, significant skepticism exists, highlighting a disconnect between top-down initiatives and grassroots involvement. Local disaster prevention committees are vital for fostering community engagement and resilience. Strengthening social capital through these networks is crucial for effective DRM. Additionally, addressing structural challenges like limited resources and coordination issues is essential for creating a more integrated framework that considers community dynamics and climate adaptation. By emphasizing inclusive approaches, Ethiopia can enhance its DRM efforts and improve management of inter-ethnic conflicts.

4.2 The Role of Indigenous Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

It was evident that the Gadaa system of the Oromo and the Shimgline system of the Amhara communities are vital indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in Ethiopia, especially in Ataye where the two communities are living side by side and their cultural resources are tied through inter-marriage affiliations. This section highlights their contributions to resolving inter-ethnic conflicts in Ataye.

Table 2 present responses regarding traditional conflict resolution mechanisms indicate strong support among participants, with 57.9 percent recognizing them as effective for addressing inter-ethnic tensions (46.8% agreeing and 11.1% strongly agreeing). This significant appreciation for culturally rooted approaches suggests they resonate well with the local context, enhancing trust and cooperation among conflicting groups. Traditional mechanisms are often grounded in community customs, encourage participation, and prioritize repairing relationships, leading to more solutions that are durable. Conversely, 28.9% expressed skepticism, with 10.5% strongly disagreeing, possibly due to concerns about effectiveness in addressing deeper grievances or structural inequalities, while 13.2% remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty about these mechanisms. Overall, the findings underscore the perceived importance of traditional conflict resolution in fostering peace and reconciliation amid ongoing inter-ethnic conflicts, while also highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of their limitations and challenges.

Table 2. Appropriateness of ‘Traditional’ conflict resolution mechanisms

Do you think ‘traditional’ conflict resolution mechanisms are relevant and appropriate in the context of the current inter-ethnic conflict in Ataye?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	40	10.5	10.5	10.5
Disagree	70	18.4	18.4	28.9
Neutral	50	13.2	13.2	42.1
Agree	178	46.8	46.8	88.9
Strongly agree	42	11.1	11.1	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own survey, 2024

Participants emphasized the importance of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms and the role of community leadership in fostering peace. A significant forum convened in Ataye was noted as a critical step in building relationships among diverse stakeholders, including representatives from the defense forces, esteemed elders, and community members. One of the participant remarked, "this inclusive gathering brought together various stakeholders, all aiming to address ongoing tensions." The emphasis during this forum was on the need for strong relationships among community leadership figures, as effective collaboration is essential for resolving disputes and preventing future conflicts.

The establishment of the Elder Council emerged as a hopeful development in the conflict resolution landscape. Another participant highlighted its importance, stating, "over the past five years, we have tragically lost many lives due to conflicts in Ataye. This council has begun its work to foster unity between Amhara & Oromo." It was later discovered that the Council operates independently of political parties and focuses on accountability to the local community, which is crucial for rebuilding trust. Participants recognized that achieving peace in Ataye alone does not ensure stability in the surrounding regions. As one participant urged, "I strongly urge the city administration to engage in close collaboration with neighboring districts." This perspective underscores the interconnected nature of community dynamics, where conflicts in neighboring areas can easily spill over into Ataye.

Indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms were frequently highlighted as essential tools in addressing the underlying grievances that fuel inter-ethnic tensions. Participants underscored the effectiveness of these traditional methods, noting that regional Elders' Councils and local elder committees serve as vital platforms for dialogue and reconciliation. The process typically begins with elders convening representatives from conflicting parties to create an atmosphere of trust and openness. Through facilitated discussions, grievances are aired, and each side is encouraged to share their perspectives, fostering mutual understanding. This dialogue often includes storytelling, which helps humanize opposing views and creates empathy among participants. Successful reconciliation efforts in neighboring Kebeles demonstrated that these traditional approaches can effectively address immediate disputes while also promoting long-term healing and rebuilding trust within communities. Participants shared stories of successful peace initiatives that not only resolved specific conflicts but also empowered communities to collaboratively overcome the legacies of past tensions. By engaging in these culturally relevant processes, communities can build a stronger foundation

for peace, illustrating the effectiveness of indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms in fostering sustainable harmony amid inter-ethnic conflicts.

Nonetheless, the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in the Ataye inter-ethnic conflict had encountered some challenges in the past. Key issues include the preconditions set by community members for the release of Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) members from the Ataye prison and the lack of accountability and justice after their release. Study participants expressed frustration over ongoing security concerns in the area, attributing them to the actions of anti-peace forces, particularly the OLF members. One participant noted that the release of suspected individuals without legal oversight hinders the community's ability to restore lasting peace and develop themselves economically. Additionally, the traditional conflict resolution mechanism which often depended on the power of elders need to ensure the engagement of youth and different religious leaders, as their engagement is crucial to heal the gaps among the younger generation and construct the peace bridge for the future. Another challenge which was evident with the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Amhara and Oromo communities in Ataye was the prevalence of a victimhood mentality that hinders constructive dialogue. Many individuals perceive themselves as victims of historical injustices, which foster defensiveness and obstructs open communication. This has been pronounced more with the youth and the younger generations who feel disconnected from their tradition and culture. Furthermore, the limited participation of the youth was found highly risky to resolve the conflict since it reinforces existing grievances and gaps in ethnic relations, making them to be more susceptible to radicalization. Addressing these challenges was found essential for creating inclusive and adaptive strategies that honor cultural practices while fostering meaningful dialogue and lasting peace between the Amhara and Oromo communities.

Participants acknowledged the necessity of 'integrating' traditional conflict resolution methods with more formal or 'modern' institutional and legal frameworks. As a one participant remarked, "the effectiveness of 'traditional' conflict resolution mechanisms methods depends on their ability to adapt to modern institutions." This integration is crucial for fostering sustainable peace, as it allows for culturally sensitive solutions that resonate with community values while addressing contemporary issues.

In conclusion, the study in Ataye revealed a complex landscape of inter-ethnic relations and conflict resolution efforts, where participants emphasize the importance of traditional mechanisms, community leadership, and regional collaboration in fostering peace. However, challenges such as revenge attitudes, a victimhood mentality and the need for youth engagement highlight areas for further improvement in fostering strong conflict resolution mechanism. The shared commitment to collaboration among various community segments, alongside the integration of traditional and modern approaches, provides a hopeful foundation for achieving lasting peace. Notably, most of the respondents expressed confidence in traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, such as the Shimglina and Gadaa systems, which emphasize the use of community involvement as central to their efforts. This underscores the need for a twin approach that combines both the traditional conflict resolution practices and the modern conflict resolution strategies.

4.3 The House of Federation & Conflict Resolution in Ataye

The House of Federation (HoF) in Ethiopia is one of the federal institutions which is mandated to address ethnic diversity and conflict resolution as outlined in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Articles 61, 62, 83, 89, and 91. This section examines the contribution of the HOF to resolve inter-ethnic conflict resolutions in the case of Ataye.

Table 3 resents community's assessment of the House of Federation's effectiveness in conflict resolution. Of the 380 participants, 59 percent of the respondents (43.2% disagreed and 15.8% strongly disagreed) doubted the effectiveness of the House of Federation in Conflict resolution in the area. In contrast, only 24.2% expressed their positive attitudes (10.5% agreed and 13.7% strongly agreed), while 16.8% remained neutral in conflict mitigation role of the House. These findings are consistent with similar challenges faced by the House of Federation in other communities, where it struggled to gain trust among ethnic groups (Fiseha, 2019) and faced systemic issues like delays and perceived bias in conflict mediations (Alemu et al., 2023).

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents Assessment of HoF's in Conflict Resolutions

Did the House of Federation effective in conflict resolution?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	60	15.8	15.8	15.8
Disagree	164	43.2	43.2	58.9
Neutral	64	16.8	16.8	75.8
Agree	40	10.5	10.5	86.3
Strongly agree	52	13.7	13.7	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own survey, 2024

Most interview participants highlighted the constitutional responsibility of the House of Federation (HoF) to resolve conflicts related to identity and administrative boundaries, as outlined in Articles 48 and 62(6) of the FDRE Constitution. To address these issues, the HoF established a conflict resolution office and a standing committee focused on identifying and mitigating conflicts before they escalate. However, participants noted that the HoF primarily operates within an appellate jurisdiction, reviewing cases already adjudicated by regional councils rather than proactively mediating conflicts at grassroots level.

Some participants criticized the HoF for not effectively mediating between conflicting parties or addressing identity and self-determination claims, particularly in the situation of the Ataye inter-ethnic conflict. Delays in action can exacerbate tensions, especially among marginalized communities who felt ignored or neglected. This ill-feeling can lead to the sentiment of disenfranchisement and the use of confrontational approach to defend their rights. The reliance on regional and zonal government bodies for conflict resolution was felt to alienate minority groups as their ethnic-political constituencies often prioritize dominant ethnic communities over the others.

Some study participants also pointed out that the poor channel of communication between the HoF and regional states, along with the absence of joint committees handicaps the effective of conflict prevention. Findings from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) indicated that while participants recognized the HoF's constitutional role, they expressed their reservation and criticized the Federation's late or inadequate response to address identity claims, suggesting a bias towards regional interests over minority rights.

As one of the participant pointed out “the HoF lacks essential mechanisms such as conflict monitoring systems, which are crucial for the Federation to foster proactive conflict management”. The requirement to exhaust regional mechanisms before escalating issues can also lead to delays, allowing conflicts to intensify. Overall, these insights reveal a significant gap between the HoF's mandate and its practical execution, highlighting the urgent need for a more proactive and inclusive approach to conflict resolution, particularly in addressing the needs of minority groups to promote peace and social cohesion in the region.

In this regard, this study revealed the significant skepticism among respondents regarding the effectiveness of the House of Federation (HoF) in addressing ethnic diversity and conflict resolution in the area. About 59% of survey respondents doubt the HoF's ability to promote sustainable peace as particularly felt among married individuals, younger respondents, and conflict victims, with women generally more critical than men. Although the HoF is constitutionally mandated to resolve identity and administrative boundary disputes, the study participants underlined limitations in its direct mediation capacity, as it often relies on jurisdiction and research rather than proactive community led measures. FGDs further expressed their concerns that the HoF has a bias towards regional interests and demonstrated its inability to effectively address identity claims, which exacerbates ethnic tensions notably among Amhara and Oromo ethnic groups in the area.

Overall, the study revealed the limitation of the HoF to mediate active conflicts at grassroots level. This can be a wakeup call for the HoF to enhance its organizational outreach, communication outlets, and grassroots level institutional capabilities to earn the rebuild trust of conflict affected communities and mediate manage Ethiopia's complex ethnic induced landscape, ensuring timely and inclusive conflict resolution approaches conflicts.

4.4 The Ministry of Peace and Its Roles in Conflict Resolution

The Ministry of Peace is one of the federal government institutions which was uniquely established in accordance with the Proclamation No. 1097/2018, specifically under Articles 9(1) and 13(g)(p)(q). Its primary mandates include identifying factors of conflicts analysis and then facilitating the resolution of disputes among communities. In this section, the role of the Ministry of Peace in conflict resolution is analyzed in the context of the conflict in Ataye.

The Ministry of Peace (MoP) plays a multifaceted role in addressing inter-ethnic conflict resolution in Ethiopia, fostering dialogue and reconciliation through inter-communal meetings, workshops, and peace conferences, integrating traditional justice systems for cultural relevance (Ayalew, 2020; Teshome, 2016). The MoP implements early warning

systems to identify and prevent potential conflicts, proactively mitigating devastating consequences (International Crisis Group, 2021). It develops and implements national policies like the National Policy on Inter-Ethnic Conflict Resolution (2021), addressing root causes and promoting peaceful coexistence (Abbink, 2019; De Waal, 2022). The MoP invests in capacity building programs for local peace actors, equipping them with skills and knowledge to mediate conflicts and promote tolerance (Befekadu, 2021; Tronvoll, 2022). It recognizes the need for collaboration and partnerships with government agencies, civil society organizations, international partners, and academic institutions, fostering a more comprehensive and coordinated response to inter-ethnic conflicts.

In the context of Ataye, the Ministry has implemented the above conflict mediation mechanisms and its roles were positively welcomed. Table 3 indicates the opinions of the study participants about the Ministry's role in addressing the root causes of inter-ethnic conflict.

Table 4 reveals responses regarding the Ministry of Peace's effectiveness in addressing inter-ethnic conflict revealed varied perceptions among participants. Out of 380 respondents, 29.5% expressed disagreement with the Ministry's effectiveness, including 11.1% who strongly disagreed and 18.4% who disagreed. Whereas, 47.2% viewed the Ministry's role in conflict resolution positively, with 31.1% agreeing and 16.1% strongly agreeing that it is making effective strides. Additionally, 23.4% of respondents remained neutral, indicating uncertainty or ambivalence, possibly due to a lack of information or differing expectations.

Furthermore, study participants noted that the Ministry of Peace has had active roles in studying the conflict through assessing the situation of conflict from the Amhara Regional Government. It was learned that The Ministry dispatched officers to facilitate structured meetings between conflicting parties. Initial meetings involved leaders from the Ataye city administration and the North Shewa Zone administration, focusing on understanding the underlying causes of the conflict. Subsequent meetings include the Oromo Nationality Zone administrator and the peace council to ensure all relevant viewpoints are considered. Then joint peace & development conference conducted between the Oromo Nationality Zone and the North Shewa Zone administration. The regular monitoring and warning reports were used to craft agenda and facilitate the conferences. It provides crucial data for assessing evolving situations and identifying potential deadlocks. However, the effectiveness of this process depends on trust among parties, the perceived impartiality of the Ministry's representatives, and the resources allocated for conflict resolution. If the Ministry is viewed as biased or lacking authority, it may undermine the legitimacy of the meetings. Therefore, fostering trust, ensuring impartiality, and maintaining ongoing community engagement are essential for success. Effective mediation requires separating people from problems and interests from positions. Peace officers engage conflicting parties by listening to their stories and creating a safe space for dialogue, encouraging participants to focus on underlying interests such as security and economic opportunities. By identifying common interests, peace officers facilitate collaborative brainstorming sessions aimed at win-win outcomes, promoting long-term peace and stability in the Ataye region.

Table 4. The Distribution of respondents view on the roles of the Ministry of Peace in Conflict Resolution

To what extent do you agree on the Ministry of Peace's roles in addressing the root causes of inter-ethnic conflict in Ataye?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	42	11.1	11.1	11.1
Disagree	70	18.4	18.4	29.5
Neutral	89	23.4	23.4	52.9
Agree	118	31.1	31.1	83.9
Strongly agree	61	16.1	16.1	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own survey, 2024

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants underlined the importance of the formation of peace councils at various governmental levels, to serve as a conduit for facilitating representations from different ethnic groups and share their perspectives to address the root causes of conflict. It is believed by the study participants that these councils foster trust and cooperation among communities by enabling open communication and mediating negotiations. They help identify common interests and develop inclusive policies that address immediate grievances and underlying issues related to social cohesion and resource distribution.

In addressing the Amhara-Oromo conflict, FGD participants highlighted the pivotal role of the Peace Council organized at joint zonal levels. They took the peace council seriously since it offered them an alternative dialogue platform for fostering trust and allowing community leaders to express their perspectives. They were able to create opportunities for engaging their traditional and religious leaders who served as bridges to link the divides and enhance the acceptance of the peace initiatives by community members affected by the conflict.

The focus group participants further pointed out that the local peace committees, which were formed by the Ministry of Peace, have played essential roles in resolving the Ataye conflict, facilitating dialogues and negotiations to achieve mutually acceptable solutions. Study participants underlined the Ministry's data collection and structured meetings as well as the establishment of grassroots-based peace councils and local committees as the positive mechanisms for conflict resolutions.

Despite challenges like limited resources and capacity constraints, the MoP's continued efforts to strengthen its role and address these challenges are essential for achieving sustainable peace in Ethiopia.

In sum, the study disclosed the presence of a multifaceted understanding of the Ministry of Peace's effectiveness in addressing inter-ethnic conflict in Ataye. While survey data indicates mixed perceptions, qualitative insights stress the importance of local engagement and clear communication. This implies the need for enhancement of the Ministry's communication and outreach strategies to address diverse community concerns, which are important to foster a more stable and cohesive society in Ataye.

4.5 The Criminal Justice System and Conflict Resolution in Ataye

The criminal justice system constitutes the operation of police, public prosecutors, court and correctional administration to enforce Ethiopia's criminal law. In this section, the contribution of police investigation, and public prosecutors in conflict resolutions particularly in preventing and handling charging of participants' of crimes of armed conflict are discussed.

Table 5 presents the distribution of study participants' views on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in ensuring the rule of law and holding perpetrators of inter-ethnic violence accountable revealed significant concerns among study participants. Accordingly, 51% of respondents expressed disagreement with the notion that the system effectively ensures criminal liability, including 18.4% who strongly disagreed and 32.6% who disagreed. This indicates widespread skepticism about the system's ability to adequately address inter-ethnic violence. In contrast, only 33.2% felt the system is effective, with 22.4% agreeing and 10.8% strongly agreeing, suggesting limited confidence in its role in promoting accountability and justice. Additionally, 15.8% of participants remained neutral, reflecting uncertainty about the system's effectiveness. The qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed significant challenges in the criminal justice system's effectiveness in addressing the Ataye inter-ethnic conflict. These challenges primarily stemmed from conflicting interpretations of jurisdiction and disagreements on the types of crimes committed.

The first major issue identified was the jurisdictional conflict, specifically whether the federal police or the Amhara Regional Police Commission should adjudicate the matter. The study participants emphasized the importance of investigating post-ethnic conflicts to understand the context, build trust, gather evidence, address grievances, ensure fair prosecution, promote accountability, and coordinate conflict resolution efforts. However, opinions on jurisdiction were divided. Most interview participants asserted that the federal police should handle the investigation due to their perceived neutrality. In contrast, some participants contended that the Amhara Regional Police Commission should handle the investigation as the armed conflict occurred within their region.

Table 5. Distribution of study participants views on the criminal justice system in Ataye

Does the criminal justice system ensure criminal liability of perpetrators of inter-ethnic violence?				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly disagree	70	18.4	18.4	18.4
Disagree	124	32.6	32.6	51.1
Neutral	60	15.8	15.8	66.8
Agree	85	22.4	22.4	89.2
Strongly agree	41	10.8	10.8	100.0
Total	380	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own survey, 2024

Several instances highlighted the jurisdictional conflict. For instance, a crime investigation team comprising federal, regional, and zonal police and public prosecutors was unable to reach consensus on the murder of a mosque religious leader, leading to no arrests or

prosecutions. Another case involved the killing of Amhara special police troops, where the investigation was suspended due to war between the TPLF (Tigray People Liberation Front) and the federal government. These cases illustrate the lack of a clear legal framework governing crime investigation jurisdiction among federal, regional, and zonal police, leading to delays, inconsistencies, and a lack of accountability.

The second issue, which was widely discussed among the study participants, was the types of crimes committed by combatants. Interview participants from the federal government classified the crimes as "Armed Rising or Civil War crimes" under Article 240 of the Criminal Code, falling under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. In contrast, participants from the regional government identified the crimes as "aggravated homicide" under Article 538 of the Criminal Code, within their jurisdiction to investigate. Additionally, some participants argued that the situation should be classified as "atrocities, including ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." This disagreement on the types of crimes committed further contributed to the conflict of jurisdiction and hindered effective investigation and prosecution.

The interplay of jurisdictional conflicts and disagreements on criminalization significantly hinders the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in addressing the Ataye inter-ethnic conflict.

The jurisdictional conflicts surrounding the Ataye incident highlight the complexities of Ethiopia's federal system, particularly in inter-ethnic conflict resolution. The tensions between the federal police and the Amhara Regional Police Commission revealed a rift and deeper governance and accountability issues, as overlapping jurisdictions hinder effective investigations and justice.

It was disclosed that despite attempts to form a collaborative crime investigation team among federal and regional public prosecutors and crime investigators, differing perspectives and poor communication among law enforcement agencies resulted in unresolved cases and increased tensions. The inability to uphold the rule of law and execute court orders further complicates accountability. This situation underscores the urgent need for a coherent legal framework governing jurisdictional authority and reflects the broader implications of Ethiopia's ethno-federalism, which has often fueled divisions and violence instead of promoting unity. Addressing these jurisdictional conflicts is essential for achieving sustainable resolutions and rebuilding trust among affected communities.

The qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed significant challenges in the criminal justice system's effectiveness in addressing the Ataye inter-ethnic conflict. These challenges primarily stemmed from conflicting interpretations of jurisdiction, disagreements on the types of crimes committed, and the influence of public policy considerations, often leading to the withdrawal of charges.

Another case was in relation to the killing of Amhara special police troops, where the investigation was suspended due to the TPLF situation. These examples illustrate the lack of

a clear legal framework governing crime investigation jurisdiction among federal, regional, and zonal police, leading to delays, inconsistencies, and a lack of accountability.

The interview and FGD participants emphasized the lack of a clear legal framework governing crime investigation jurisdiction, leading to conflicting interpretations between federal and regional authorities. This aligns with studies by Abebe (2020), Abbink (2019), Befekadu (2021), De Waal (2022), and Tronvoll (2022), which highlight the complexities of overlapping jurisdictions and unclear responsibilities within Ethiopia's federal system.

In light of this, the study participants provided specific examples of jurisdictional conflicts such as the stalled investigations into the murder of a mosque religious leader and the killing of Amhara special police troops. These firsthand accounts add valuable details and nuance to the broader literature on jurisdictional challenges.

On the other hand, study participants from the federal government classified the crimes as "Armed Rising or Civil War crimes" under Article 240 of the Criminal Code, falling under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government. In contrast, participants from the regional government identified the crimes as "aggravated homicide" under Article 538 of the Criminal Code, within their jurisdiction to investigate. Additionally, some participants argued that the situation should be classified as "atrocities, including ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity." This disagreement on the types of crimes committed further contributed to the conflict of jurisdiction and hindered effective investigation and prosecution.

The disagreements on the types of crimes committed by combatants, as reported in the interviews and FGDs, reflect the broader debate with similar studies within the literature on ethnic cleansing and atrocity crimes. Studies by Dahlman & Utz (2005) and Mann (2004) explore the complex dynamics of ethnic violence and the challenges of classifying such crimes. The interview and FGD participants' perspectives on classifying the Ataye conflict as "Armed Rising or Civil War crimes" or "aggravated homicide" align with past study findings the existing literature's diverse interpretations of similar situations. Additionally, the participants' suggestion of classifying the situation as "atrocities, including ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity" highlights the severity of the conflict and the need for comprehensive accountability mechanisms.

An important critical issue which is key to conflict resolution is the way and the conditions under which the withdrawal of charges for public policy reasons were made. Participants indicated that the withdrawal of charges against armed groups for public interest or policy reasons in Ethiopia, often occur without compensation. However, the term "public interest" lacks a uniform definition and is often shaped by the interests of political leaders. Concerns were raised that the withdrawal of charges can perpetuate impunity and undermine the rule of law, setting a dangerous precedent for future violence and dismissing the gravity of the crimes committed. This can erode community confidence in the justice system and hinder genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

The concerns raised by interview and FGD participants regarding the withdrawal of charges for public policy reasons resonate with the findings from studies by Ayalew (2020),

Kidane (2022), International Crisis Group (2021), and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2021). These studies explore the contentious nature of this practice, its potential benefits and drawbacks, and the implications for accountability and the rule of law. The study participants' firsthand accounts of the withdrawal of charges in the Ataye conflict provide further evidence of the challenges associated with this practice. Their concerns about impunity and the erosion of community confidence in the justice system highlight the importance of developing transparent guidelines and ensuring accountability for all parties involved. It highlights the need for a multi-faceted approach that considers the local context, addresses the underlying causes of conflict, and promotes accountability, justice, and sustainable peace.

4.6 The Effect of Conflict Resolution on Conflict Early Warning System

Disaster early warning systems (EWS) are crucial for effective disaster risk management and consist of several key components: risk knowledge, monitoring, communication, and early response. Risk knowledge entails understanding the hazards a community faces, including their likelihood and potential impacts, which informs preparedness strategies (UNDRR, 2015). Continuous monitoring of environmental conditions is essential for timely warnings, utilizing technology and data collection methods to observe changes in hazards (World Meteorological Organization, 2018). Effective communication ensures that warnings are disseminated clearly to at-risk communities, employing multiple channels to reach diverse populations (UNDP, 2017). Finally, early response focuses on the actions taken in response to warnings, including preparedness measures and resource allocation, which are vital for minimizing disaster impacts (Schraven, 2020). Together, these components create a robust early warning system that enhances community resilience. Among these, this study investigates how a conflict resolution of early response affects the effectiveness of Conflict Early Warning Systems (CEWS) in Ethiopia. It aims to identify how robust conflict resolution can strengthen these systems and enhance conflict prevention.

Table 6 presents the model summary from a regression analysis aimed to assess the relationship between conflict resolution and the effectiveness of the conflict early warning system. The model summary indicates a strong correlation ($R = 0.797$) between the predictor (conflict resolution) and the dependent variable (conflict early warning system). The R Square value of 0.635 suggests that approximately 63.5% of the variance in the conflict early warning system can be explained by conflict resolution. The adjusted R Square value of 0.634, which accounts for the number of predictors in the model, is very close to the R Square value, reinforcing the reliability of the model. The standard error of the estimate is 0.36741, indicating the average distance that the observed values fall from the regression line.

Table 6. Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.797 ^a	.635	.634	.36741

a. Predictors: (Constant), conflict resolution

The ANOVA (Table 7) provides further insights into the model's statistical significance. The regression sum of squares (88.848) indicates the variability explained by the model, while the residual sum of squares (51.027) reflects the unexplained variability. The F-statistic of 658.173, along with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, reveals that the overall model is statistically significant. This means that conflict resolution is a significant predictor of the effectiveness of the conflict early warning system at a very high level of confidence ($p < 0.001$).

Table 7. ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	88.848	1	88.848	658.173	.000 ^b
	Residual	51.027	378	.135		
	Total	139.875	379			
a. Dependent Variable: conflict early warning system						
b. Predictors: (Constant), conflict resolution						

The coefficients (Table 8) provides specific insights into the relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. The unstandardized coefficient for the constant is 1.168, suggesting that when conflict resolution is zero, the baseline effectiveness of the conflict early warning system is 1.168. The unstandardized coefficient for conflict resolution is 0.712, indicating that for each one-unit increase in conflict resolution, the effectiveness of the conflict early warning system increases by 0.712 units, holding all other variables constant. The standardized beta coefficient (Beta = 0.797) suggests a strong positive relationship, showing that conflict resolution has a substantial impact on the conflict early warning system. The t-value of 25.655 and the associated significance level of 0.000 confirm that this effect is statistically significant.

Table 8. Coefficient

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.168	.086		13.604	.000
	conflict resolution	.712	.028	.797	25.655	.000

a. Dependent Variable: conflict early warning system

In sum, this study establishes a significant relationship between conflict resolution and the effectiveness of conflict early warning systems (CEWS). The regression analysis reveals a strong correlation ($R = 0.797$) indicating that conflict resolution accounts for approximately 63.5% of the variance in the effectiveness of CEWS. The statistical significance of the model ($p < 0.001$) demonstrates that robust conflict resolution practices are critical in enhancing the functionality of early warning systems. Specifically, for each one-unit increase in conflict resolution, the effectiveness of the CEWS increases by 0.712 units, highlighting the substantial impact of conflict resolution on preventing conflict escalation. These findings underscore the importance of integrating conflict resolution strategies into the framework of CEWS to bolster their overall effectiveness in volatile contexts.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study examined the role of both traditional and alternative formal institutions involved in conflict resolution in Ataye, highlighting the vital contributions of traditional mechanisms, particularly the Gadaa and Shimglina systems, in addressing inter-ethnic conflicts between the Oromo and Amhara communities. While survey data indicates strong support for these practices, skepticism remains among certain groups, notably males and those who have experienced multiple conflict situations. An integrated approach that embraces both traditional and modern conflict resolution strategies is necessary, fostering collaboration among community leaders and government administrators. The House of Federation (HoF) faces challenges in mediating these conflicts, with nearly 59% of respondents doubting its effectiveness, particularly among non-ruling political parties and informal armed groups like OLF and Fano.

The study also revealed mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the Ministry of Peace, with 29.5% of respondents expressing skepticism, particularly among younger and married individuals. Effective communication between the Ministry and the HoF is essential, along with grassroots engagement through local peace committees to address grievances and foster dialogue. Furthermore, the criminal justice system in Ataye struggles with skepticism regarding its ability to hold perpetrators accountable for inter-ethnic violence, with over half of respondents expressing doubts. These challenges emphasize the need for reforms to restore public confidence and enhance conflict resolution, while also highlighting significant gender differences in conflict resolution roles that necessitate empowering women in mediation efforts.

The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Council, as outlined in the Sendai Framework, plays a critical role in enhancing conflict resolution efforts in Ataye. By facilitating coordination among various stakeholders, the DRM Council can help integrate traditional and modern conflict resolution mechanisms, fostering a comprehensive approach to managing inter-ethnic tensions. Implementing the recommendations of this study, alongside the strategic guidance of the DRM Council, can lead to improved conflict resolution outcomes, resilient communities, and contribute to a more stable and harmonious society.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Feleke Tadel, for his invaluable support and guidance throughout the research and writing process of this article, "Enhancing Conflict Resolution for Sustainable Peace in Ethiopia: The Case of Ataye, North Shewa, Amhara National Regional State." His expertise and insights were instrumental in shaping my understanding of the complex dynamics of conflict resolution and sustainable peace. I appreciate his patience, encouragement, and constructive feedback, which motivated me to strive for excellence in my work. This article would not have been possible without his

mentorship and unwavering belief in my abilities. Thank you, Dr. Feleke, for your dedication and support.

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