

ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
INSTITUTE FOR PEACE AND SECURITY STUDIES (IPSS)



**DISARMAMENT DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION OF EX-
COMBATANTS IN ETHIOPIA:**
**THE CASE OF GUMUZ PEOPLES DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT (GPDM) ARMED
GROUP**

BY

MEAZA HUSSEN YIMER

ADDIS ABABA
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ABSTRACT

Ethiopia has a long history of numerous armed conflicts that include civil war in different periods. To stabilize the conflict situation, the country introduced several Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program under the contexts of both post-conflict and on-going conflict in different times. This thesis studies the 2021 DDR process of Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) armed group that was implemented in Benishangul Gumuz region of Ethiopia under the context of an on-going conflict situation; this makes it distinct from former researches of Ethiopian DDR experience that were conducted under the context of post-conflict situations. Thus, profile of GPDM armed group and its position for armed struggle, involved actors, negotiation and implementation of the 2021 DDR of GPDM analysed and addressed throughout this thesis. Furthermore, by analyzing the overall DDR process, this thesis identifies the major challenges of the program. A qualitative research design method with case study approach was used during the course of this research. Data collected from both primary and secondary data sources. Accordingly, thirty-seven key informants participated in both in-depth interview and focus group discussions. The finding of the study revealed that, the overall 2021 DDR of GPDM failed to attain its primary goal and led to remobilization and re-introduction of 2022 DDR program of the armed group. All the three phases of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration failed to attain their goal. The program planned to incorporate 4500 ex-combatants, while it targeted and demobilized 3200. Only 2.67% ex-combatants reintegrated from original planned number, while 3.75% ex-combatants reintegrated among those who were actually approached. In addition, the study distinguished several major challenges that contributed to its failure. Those are lack of commitment to the peaceful means, lack of inclusiveness, lack of trust, lack of national and local coordination, conflict entrepreneurs, characteristics of ex-combatants, on-going conflict, and external factors.

Key words: Benishangul Gumuz Region, GPDM, DDR, Ex-Combatant

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ACRONYMS

BG	Benishangul Gumuz
BGR	Benishangul Gumuz Region
BGDP	Benishangul Gumuz Democratic Party
BPLM	Benishangul People's Liberation Movement
BDP	Boro Democratic Party
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
EPRDF	Ethiopia People Revolutionary Democratic Front
ENDF	Ethiopian National Defence Force
GPDM	Gumuz People's Democratic Movement
GPLM	Gumuz People's Liberation Movement
GERD	Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
JTF	Joint Task Force
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PP	Prosperity Party
TPLF	Tigray People's Liberation Fr

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

Different armed conflicts gave birth to several non-state armed groups, which are capable to destabilize the peace and security and developmental initiatives of one country. The existence of this non-state armed group will undermine the government's legitimate monopoly use of violence. As a result, several states undergo Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program to stabilize their country's peace and security. The DDR program helps to enhance maintaining a wide range of security, peacebuilding and development activities through undermining the efforts of armed conflict by disarming their combatants, abolishing their structure and chain of command (OSFU, 2011; Idris, 2016; Walt, 2010). It also helps the ex-combatants to reintegrate with their society and restart their social life through building trust between them and their community (OSFU, 2011). However, due to the DDR program can be affected by several factors like; history, nature of the conflict, geography, culture and ethnic identities; there is no 'one size fits all' DDR model that could apply to all conflict contexts (OSAA, 2007).

Ethiopia has a long history of armed conflict. Border disputes with Sudan and Eritrea, civil war, various conflicts among identity groups, coup and internal border disputes within the country's regional states are the common factors that trigger the history of the country's armed conflict. In order to maintain the country's peace and order, the Ethiopian government together with other stakeholders has undergone DDR programs in different times; these include initiatives in 1991 against Derg, 2017 against OLF, 2018 against Patriotic G-7, 2013 against BPLM and 2021 against GPDM. The Ethiopian government together with the National Regional government of Benishangul Gumuz and other stakeholders conducted DDR program three different times; in 2013, 2021, and 2022. However, the conflict is still ongoing even after the 2021 DDR program.

Benishangul Gumuz is among the Ethiopian regional state that located in the North-Western part of the country bordering with Sudan. As stipulated in Article(3) 2002 of the revised regional constitution of Benishangul Gumuz, the region shares boundaries in the north and northeast with Amhara region, in the east with Oromia region, in the south with Gambella region and in the west with Republic of the Sudan. However, the administrative map of the region does not show when the region shares border with Gambella. According to the 2019

CSA population projection of Ethiopia, the population size of BGR is 1,125,999. It is the home of diversified ethnic groups, beside its indigenous ethnic groups of Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo.

The region is rich with natural resources including fertile land, gold, marble, coal. However, corruption, political instability, the legacy of violent armed conflict and communal conflict together with lack of skilled personnel to use the available resource impede Benishangul Gumuz region to facilitate its development initiatives (Young, 1999). Moreover, since its formation, the region has a long time border conflict with its neighbouring National Regional States of Amhara and Oromia.

In the May 2021 DDR program, the Federal government together with the Regional National government negotiated and signed a peace accord with the Gumuz People's Democratic Movement (GPDM) and was able to demobilize its former combatants (Communication Bureau of Metekel Zone, 18 May 2021). Nonetheless, the conflict recurred and the region's peace and security remain fragile. Several killings, massacres and forced displacements are committed in the region due to the conflict prolonged. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to study the 2021 DDR process of GPDM and to identify its main challenges.

1.2.Statement of the problem

Ethiopia is suffering from different armed conflicts including civil war. In different regions of the country, there are several informal armed groups, which are affecting the government's order and monopoly use of violence. As a result, the country has undergone numerous DDR programs in different time from 1991 to 2022.

Conversely, there is no single DDR model that can fit to all contexts. Rather, the third generation DDR, referred to as the 'next generation', Muggah and O'Donnell (2015), verified that different DDR programs are designed and implemented based on individual contexts grounded in facts. This implies that every DDR programs that was implemented in different contexts need to be studied and well researched to trace the common challenges and difficulties of DDR, which in turn assist to take in to consideration for undertaking other DDR program as well as track its evolution.

Nonetheless, researches on Ethiopia's DDR are at their infancy rate compared to ample of experience on the ground. Several researches have studied the 1991 DDR of Ethiopia that conducted on nearly half a million ex-soldiers of Derg and ex-combatants of EPRDF and

OLF (Yisak, 2002; Mulugeta, 2016; Colletta, Kostner, Wiederhofer, 1996). Colletta, et. Al. (1996) conducted a research on the 1991 Ethiopian DDR experience as one of the case studies and argued that the program was relatively successful. Similarly, Mulugeta (2016) argued the 1991 DDR program were relatively successful by outlining the overall implementation and challenges of the program from his own lived experience. Yisak (2002) studied the socio-economic reintegration of former soldiers of Derg; and revealed that the male ex-soldier's socio-economic reintegration was successful while the reintegration of female combatants has failed. IOM (2019) and Yalemget (2020) respectively studied the 2013 DDR of BPLM and 2018 DDR of Patriotic G-7 former combatants. However, all the aforementioned DDR experiences conducted in post-conflict situations. Although, Ethiopia conducted DDR with an on-going conflict situation on Gumuz Peoples Democratic Movement (GPDM) in 2021 and 2022, none of them are researched yet.

On the other hand, by cooperating with the Federal government of Ethiopia and other stakeholders like International Organization for Migration, Benishangul Gumuz Region (BGR) –where several on-going ethnic and armed conflicts occur –has an experience of conducting DDR program for three different times; 2013, 2021 and 2022. Among those, the 2021 DDR programs were implemented on 3200 former combatants of Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM). However, except for the 120 almost all the ex-combatants were remobilized. The armed conflict of GPDM spillover from Metekel to its neighboring Zone of Kemash, which prolong several killings, massacres, forced displacement and migration. According to Tsega (2021), while 100,000 people were displaced, 7000 fled to Sudan due to the attacks of armed group of '*Gumuz militia*' on the people of Oromo, Amhara, Shinasha, and Awi residents of Metekel. On December 22, 2021, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed together with President of BGR, Ashadli Hassan, hold a discussion with the residents of Metekel on the issue of finding lasting solution to resolve the security crises of the region (FBC, 2020). However, following the visit of the Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, 200 civilians that belong to the ethnic groups of Amhara, Oromo and Shinasha are slaughtered by '*heavily armed men from Gumuz ethnic group*' in the village of Bekoji (Gardner, 2021). The Prime Minister visit of Metekel and the followed attack verified that the security crisis of the region is worsened. In addition, after the 2021 DDR undertaken, 19 civilians including head of the local administration killed by the clash between Special Forces of BGR and combatants of GPDM armed group (Addis Standard, 2022).

This implies that although the National Regional Government of BG together with the Federal government undertook a DDR program, it has not stopped armed conflict causing several killings and atrocities. Rather it followed by conducting another DDR program on GPDM armed group in April 2022. Therefore, studying the 2021 DDR program of GPDM and distinguishing its main challenges is essential to understand why the ex-combatants of the GPDM remobilize by undermining the consolidating peace negotiation and to analyse the 2022 current on-going DDR program of GPDM. The purpose of this research is to study the 2021 DDR process of GPDM and its challenges.

1.3.Objectives and Research Questions of the Study

The research has the subsequent general and specific objectives.

1.3.1. General objective

The general objective of this research was to study the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process of ex-combatants in Ethiopia in case of Gumuz Peoples Democratic Movement (GPDM) armed group and its challenges.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

- To study whom GPDM armed group is and its position for armed struggle.
- To distinguish the involved actors in the DDR process.
- To examine the negotiation and implementation process of the DDR.
- To analyze main hindering factors for the implementation of DDR program.

1.3.3. Research questions

1. Who is GPDM armed group and why it began armed struggle?
2. Who are the actors involved in the DDR program?
3. How was the DDR process of the GPDM negotiated and implemented?
4. What are the main factors that hinder the success of the DDR program?

1.4. Significance of the study

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on areas of DDR in general and Ethiopia's DDR experience in particular. It can serve as a bench-mark for 2022 DDR program of GPDM and other researches on the same area of DDR. It refines and shows the potential challenges of DDR on an on-going conflict that goes with robust peace operation. Furthermore, it has contributions to make government officials, civil societies and other

stakeholders aware of lessons that can be learned and drawn from the program especially while undergoing the DDR on an on-going conflict situation involving several non-state armed groups in Ethiopia.

1.5. Scope of the study

There are numerous discourses about DDR program in the academic literature. This research is limited to study the DDR process of ex-combatants in Ethiopia. However, Ethiopia has undergone several DDR programs in different times. Therefore, this research is limited to the 2021 DDR program of GPDM and its challenges in the region of Benishangul Gumuz, Ethiopia. As a result, the 2022 on-going DDR program of GPDM is not incorporated in this study.

1.6. Limitation of the study

While undertaking this study the researcher faced different challenges. First and for most, the region BG, Metekel in particular, is a very volatile area where an on-going armed conflict occurred and different parties have interest on it. The hostile security situation of Metekel was major challenge during data collection due to the accessible transportation was only with convoy. As a result, the researcher was unable to visit Metekel Zone where the DDR program conducted. However, besides Addis Ababa, the researcher went to Assosa and gathered data through conducting in-depth interview and focus group discussions with key informants that resides in Assosa as well as Metekel and Kemash residents, who were displaced from their home and at the time residing in Assosa due to the on-going conflict. Furthermore, the researcher collected data from key informants who were in Metekel by conducting in-depth interview through telephone. Second, the researcher is unable to reach further key participants from Benishangul Gumuz National Regional Government due to the overlapping schedule of the researcher data collection in Assosa with the high officials meeting in Addis Ababa. Lastly, an individual that co-found GPDM party did not volunteer to give information about the program due to fear of encountering conflict of interest. Since the person is currently, a member of Prosperity Party and gained higher official position in the regional government structure and the conflict is an on-going.

1.7. Organization of the research

The research organized in five chapters. Chapter one deals with the introductory part that includes background, statement of the problem, objectives, significance, scope and limitation of the study. Chapter two contains related literatures reviews, conceptual and theoretical framework. Chapter three presents the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter

four provides data presentation and analysis on GPDM profile, involved actors, negotiation, implementation and challenges of the DDR program. Lastly, chapter five presents conclusion of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Under this chapter, firstly, the practice and challenges of DDR in Africa, the overview of Ethiopia's experience on conducting DDR in-general, and conflict and DDR experience of Benishangul Gumuz Region (BGR) in particular are discussed. Lastly, the conceptual understanding of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), evolution of DDR and determinants for measuring the success of DDR is presented.

2.1.Practice and Challenges of DDR in Africa

Africa is the known continent with several armed conflicts. Most of African countries undertake DDR program to stabilize their country. Effective and well-conceptualized DDR program could lead to stabilization that helps to create convenience environment for further peace-building initiations. Whereas, poorly planned and ineffective implementation of DDR can also lead to further destruction and insecurity by re-emerging the armed conflict that will undermine all the stabilization and peace initiatives. For instance, after cold war, the failure of DDR either directly or indirectly contributed 60% for the outbreak of the armed conflict, which leads to the recurring of conflict in several African states (UN/OSAA, 2007). The DDR may fail through different challenges, which are listed as follows.

Lack of local ownership is the major challenge mainly for post-conflict and fragile African countries (OSFU, 2011). In Africa most peace-building initiatives like DDR and SSR are led by the external actors due to the lack of human resources with adequate knowledge of the program and financial constraint. The program which is initiated and led by donors (external actors) is failed to incorporate the local context of the country. It also fails to give full commitment as the program require. Therefore, the starter and leaders of the DDR and SSR programs have to be the local actors, while the donors or external actors should assist and support its implementation by providing financial fund and capacity building trainings. The Liberia DDR program can be a good example of this.

Lack of political will or commitment is also the other major challenge for the DDR practice (UN/OSAA, 2007; Stibbe, 2012; OFSU, 2011). The political agreement plays the key role in designing the DDR program as well as implementing it based on the designed framework. Beside the political will, there is a lack of dedicated commitment in the mandated organizations like AU, UN and ECOWAS while the program needs long term commitment. For instance, in Somaliland, the former combatants abandon the DDR program and back to

their fight due to they had been held in cantonment for half a year without any training or reintegration scheme (Stibbe, 2012).

The other major challenge is lack of funding (OFSU, 2011; Stibbe, 2012). Due to multilateral donors including bank are not directly involved in the SSR program, implementing DDR and SSR successfully will be highly unlikely. While the program needs higher budget, the number of ex-combatant is also the other factor that may determine the required budget to carry out the program. For instance, the major challenge for the Serra Leone DDR process was related to budget constraint. In Serra Leone, the DDR process was conducted for 70,000 ex-combatants. While the DD phase –disarmament and demobilization –is succeed, the R phase (reintegration) is failed, due to the lack of economical capacity in both military and community to absorb the ex-combatants. Similarly, though Ethiopia has arguably relative successful DDR experience, it has the challenge of economical reintegration in both the 1991 and 2018 DDR of ex-soldiers of Derg and Patriotic G-7 respectively (Colletta et. al., 1996; Yisak, 2002; Yalemget, 2020).

Critically planning and implementing the ‘Reintegration’ (R) phase is also the other challenge to DDR (OFSU, 2011). Beside the Disarmament and Demobilization (DD) phase, the Reintegration phase is the key point that determines whether the DDR program is successful or not. Building trust among the ex-combatants and the existing security personnel or the community is the critical point, which needs more effort. Therefore, the R (reintegration) phase should be well planned and implemented accordingly. Otherwise, though the DD phase succeeded, ex-combatants may engage in to remobilization. The DDR process of Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) can be an example of this. When DRC conduct a DDR program, reintegrating the ex-combatants with the national army unit was the challenge of the program. One of the ex-combatant units broke away and resumed fighting in Eastern Congo, due to the rising tension between the reintegrated ex-combatants and the existing army units.

In some cases, cultural and/or religious norms are also the other factors that hinder the DDR process mainly in reintegration phase through providing justification for the communities that make them to stigmatise the ex-combatants (Stibbe, 2012). In the case of Uganda, the former Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) fighters were stigmatised for bringing bad luck to the local community (Borzello, 2007). Because the local community believed that the former combatants are living with their sin and vengeful spirits of the dead peoples that were killed by the combatants in their former combat. In addition, the local community stigmatized and

attacked ex-combatants of LRA by claiming that former fighters are awarded by the government for being rebel; since the DDR targeted former fighters and provide different packages including skill training, in-cash and in-kind incentives for them (Ibid). Besides the community's discrimination, the former combatant's psychological fear to reintegrate to the local community is the other challenge for reintegration phase (OFSU, 2011). For instance, in Sierra Leone, the ex-combatant's psychological fear of reprisals for what they did to the community during their former struggle was also the other factor that contributes for the failure of the reintegration process.

Moreover, integrating poorly trained ex-combatants may undermine the quality and professionalism of security sectors (OFSU, 2011). In case of South Sudan, the Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) and other combatants integrate several ex-combatants aiming to build a professional army. However, those ex-combatants did not have any prior knowledge or training about civilian law enforcement, which in turn make them to face difficulties in managing internal security issues.

Nonetheless, Idris (2016) outlined the key lessons from the DDR programs. These are need for national ownership and political will, funding mechanism, careful assessment and preparation, transparency, monitoring and evaluation, widen scope and address specific needs of different groups of participants, notably women and children, ensure communities benefit, strengthen reintegration phase, linkages to wider reforms and development, and coordination among donors and national partners.

2.2.The Practice of DDR in Ethiopia

Though researches conducted on DDR Program of Ethiopia are at the infancy rate, modern DDR process in Ethiopia is began to implement since 1991 when the Ethiopian Popular Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) control power through defeating Derg regime (Yisak, 2002; Mulugeta, 2016; Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer, 1996). After the 1991 DDR, the country was also able to conduct several DDR programs. Following the Ethio-Eretria civil war, Ethiopia conducted DDR on its former fighters of 148,000 in between 2000-2003 (IOM, 2019). In 2013, the Federal government of Ethiopia together with the National Regional Government of Benishangul Gumuz, the country conducted DDR on the former combatants of Benishangul People's Liberation Front (Ibid). Furthermore, in 2018, the Federal government of Ethiopia together with the National Regional Government of Amahara undergoes DDR program on the former combatants of Patriotic G-7 (Yalemget, 2020). Therefore, among Ethiopia's several DDR programs, the 1991 of Derg discussed as follows.

2.1.1. The 1991 DDR Program

Since Emperor Haile Selassie introduced a paid regular army as Ethiopian defence force, it continued to serve in the Derg regime without major resizing of the army (Yisak, 2002). When EPRDF defeated Derg, Derg was able to build half a million soldiers –the largest army in Africa –while EPRDF had 90,000 soldiers (Ibid). However, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) –which is established by EPRDF –decided to conduct DDR in the former Derg’s defence force members (Colletta et al., 1996). Therefore, in between 1991-1997 DDR programs, Ethiopia was able to demobilize nearly half-a-million former soldiers of Derg and fighters of OLF and EPRDF.

Rationales for the DDR of Derg Army

The TGE provided security, political and economic rationale for conducting DDR of the former Derg defence force as well as claimed that the processes was initiated based on the will and consent of the ex-soldiers (Yisak, 2002; Colletta et al., 1996; Mulugeta, 2016).

Consent: EPRDF claimed that several ex-soldiers of the Derg wanted to demobilize and back to their civilian life since they were recruited and forced to join former Derg army during the period of Derg regime (Colletta et al., 1996; Yisak, 2002). Therefore, EPRDF claimed that it is necessary to conduct DDR to fulfil the will of the ex-soldiers who want to back to their civilian life. However, this is open for contestation since ‘willingness to demobilize’ is not something verified by a third party. Furthermore, the ex-soldiers of Derg forced to join the national army does not necessarily mean they want to demobilized.

Security: TGE claimed that former soldiers of the Derg defence force are the major security threat for the civilian as well as macro-and micro-security of the country, since the brutal nature of the Derg regime has an impact on its soldiers (Ibid). When EPRDF take over the country, large number of Derg soldiers had fled to the neighbouring countries. Nonetheless, TGE claimed that this massive number of Derg soldiers who were in the neighbouring countries, especially 51,000 in the Sudan, are security threat that have a potential to destabilize both Ethiopia and Horn of Africa (Colletta et al., 1996; Mulugeta, 2016). Furthermore, TGE claimed that Ethiopia does not need to build large number of military army since the country does not have both external and internal security threat (Colletta et al., 1996).

Politically: the newly formed transitional government of Ethiopia believed that the defeated army of Derg is structurally unfit for the newly formed political arrangement of the country, due to it is not trained to be a professional army rather to suppress internal dissent and commit several atrocities against its own citizen on ‘red terror’ (Mulugeta, 2016). However, this is open for contestation since the DDR program did not demobilize all the ex-soldiers of the Derg army, rather EPRDF incorporated 6000 Derg soldiers to the newly established national defence force (Dercon and Ayalew, 1998).

Moreover, EPRDF wants to build democracy throughout the country, which enables the government to resolve internal and external disputes through peaceful means (Yisak, 2002; Mulugeta, 2016). As a result, TGE claimed that to have a democratic country and peaceful co-existence with its neighbouring countries, large number of defence force is not needed (Ibid). Nonetheless, though it seems sound in principle; in practice TGE had several challenges in resolving internal and external disputes in a peaceful manner. In 1992, TGE had a political difference with OLF on the issue of declaring Oromia as a free nation (Colletta et al., 1996). Their disputes escalated and changed in-to a violent confrontation, which resulted to the seized of 21,200 OLF fighters. The DDR program was extended to include the 21,200 former OLF fighters (Colletta et al., 1996; Yisak, 2002). Furthermore, in 1998, when the newly established government of Eritrean Peoples Liberation Front (EPLF) declared a war against Ethiopia, beside the newly formed defence force, several civilian were recruited and demobilised former Derg soldiers were also remobilised to join the Ethiopian army and fight against EPLF (Yisak, 2002). This implies that, the country was facing both internal and external security threat that contradicts with the security rational of EPRDF.

All the aforementioned fact makes the security and political rationals of EPRDF contradictory. The EPRDF calling and remobilization of former Derg soldiers to join the defence force together with the incorporation of 6000 Derg soldiers to the new national army will contradict to its prior claim, which designate the Derg soldiers as unprofessional and unfit to the new political arrangement. Similarly, both internal and external cases verified that the other political claim of EPRDF –to resolve disputes in a peaceful manner –to conduct DDR on the former Derg soldiers is highly unlikely.

Economically: EPRDF believed that a nation should build large number of military army when there is a need or when the nation has the capacity to sustain such a large army. Accordingly, it claimed that both cases do not exist in Ethiopia, due to the country was

economically devastating with high foreign debt, which cannot sustain large number of army (Mulugeta, 2016). Therefore, EPRDF decided to conduct DDR in order to establish professional and competent small size national army.

Beside its multidimensional advantages, as Yisak (2002) outlined, military is economically harmful in three different ways –its unproductive nature, destructive of wealth, and high consumer of scarce resources. Its militarised characteristics of the government together with the on-going intensified civil war forced the Derg regime to allocate huge amount of resource to the defence sector (Dercon and Ayalew, 1998). This implies the economical rational of the EPRDF to reduce the size of the military is sound.

Implementation of the DDR program

In the 1991 DDR program, Ethiopia was arguably conducted relatively successful reintegration on nearly half-a-million former soldiers of Derg, OLF and EPRDF fighters. In order to undertake the DDR process, TGE established an autonomous institution known as ‘the Commission for the Rehabilitation of Members of the Former Army and Disabled War Veterans (CRMFAWV)’ or commonly called Tehadisso in June 14, 1991 (Yisak, 2002; Colletta et al., 1996). The commission has its own objectives and mandates given by the TGE. In order to undergo its task –DDR program –the commission established 36 branch offices across the country and two war disabled rehabilitation centres at Debrezeit and Adigrat (Yisak, 2002). The Debrezeit centre, which was primarily established by the Derg regime in 1978, was served as the rehabilitation and training centre for injured ex-combatants of the Derg army, while the Adigrat centre was used for the EPRDF, mainly TPLF injured ex-fighters (Ibid). Furthermore, 21,200 former OLF and 50,000 EPRDF former fighters were also included to the DDR program during the period of 1992-1994 (Mulugeta, 2016). This implies that the commission was also dealing with the non-Derg soldiers – EPRDF and OLF former fighters.

Based on the socioeconomic information gathered at the demobilization phase, the commission designed one *general strategy* and four *category-specific strategies*, which helped to provide need-based economic reintegration (Colletta et al., 1996). According to these strategies the reintegration of rural settlers, urban settlers, disabled ex-combatants, and war veterans (pension scheme) designed and implemented.

Moreover, several external organizations were engaged on the Ethiopian DDR program of 1991. In 1992, GTZ joined the DDR program and provide special reintegration program for former Derg soldiers and support the demobilization, reinsertion, and reintegration program of former OLF combatants through funding (Ibid). Although, GTZ conducted its support through collaborating with the commission, its reintegration program was managed separately (Ibid). *Catholic Relief Services* (CRS) also collaborated with the commission, until mid-1994, on facilitating the urban reintegration through proving small-scale credit scheme for ex-combatants, which could assist them in their micro-enterprise activities (Ibid). In 1992, World Bank also assists the DDR program through providing the social fund known as *Ethiopian Social Rehabilitation Fund* (ESRF) (Ibid). Furthermore, the US Department of Defense, provide 4 million *meals ready-to-eat*, which assist the DDR program through supplying food for the former soldiers while they are in the temporary, transit, and demobilisation centres (Mulugeta, 2016). The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also assists the program through transportation service (Ibid).

Challenges of the Program

Due to the primary initiation of conducting DDR program is derived from the winning party of EPRDF, the 1991 DDR of Ethiopia did not have the challenge of ownership and political will. Since the program initiated by the government, the goal and objective of conducting DDR program was clearly known and stated by the commission. This helps commission to reject the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) and International Labour Organization (ILO) donor's design of DDR, which did not align with the primary objective of the commission to conduct DDR (Ibid). This in turn enables the commission to get its ownership of the program. Furthermore, the government of EPRDF gave a prior focus to the DDR program as a major political project (Ibid). This helped the program to get the political will of the government, which is essential for the success of one DDR program. The Ethiopian DDR experience also proved that an inclusive political process helped the nation to transit from war to peace besides conducting successful DDR program (Ibid).

However, as the 1990's DDR program of Ethiopia is conducted through the military war defeat of Derg regime, the program began rapidly without any political agreement by the interest and will of EPRDF. This reality forced the program to have unbalance resource distribution. As Dercon and Ayalew (1998) found out, although only two-third of the participants were only able to get in cash or in kind support from the overall DDR program,

the amount of support varies from individual to individual due to ineffective targeting of the program. This implies the unbalanced treatment of the ex-soldiers of the Derg witnessed that the overall program was not balanced and fair.

As Mulugeta (2016, P. 149), who was the head of the program, outlined that “*the measure of its success would not be the levels of support that the beneficiaries received, but rather the degree to which they were psychologically prepared for peaceful civilian life*”. Rather, reintegrating financially was impossible due to the national economy couldnot afford it (Ibid). This implies the program gave primary focus to the demobilization phase in which working on the psychological preparedness of the ex-soldiers to be ready for the peaceful civilian life. This objective of the DDR program is open for argument since it did not give primary focus to the economic reintegration, which play huge role in restarting the ex-soldiers future life. Dercon and Ayalew (1998) argued that, the reintegration process was successful; however, though ex-soldiers are better educated than non-soldiers, they have lower assets than the non-soldiers. This implies that, the DDR program failed to empower demobilized ex-soldiers in economical aspect, rather it focused on the social reintegration only.

Moreover, as Mulugeta (2016) stated, the psychological preparedness training includes the rationale behind the political decision of demobilization, overall image about the political blueprint of the upcoming change such as; the transfer of power through popular elections, a federal structure of government and a market-led economy. This fact shows that the wining party of EPRDF promoted its political ideology using the DDR program to secure its regime by instilling its ideology shaping the attitude of the Derg ex-soldiers. Hence, this trend of the EPRDF got an objection form the donors, opposition political parties and elite of the Derg regime (Ibid).

2.3.Conflict and DDR in Benishangul Gumuz Region

2.3.1. Conflict in Benishangul Gumuz Region

Benishangul was incorporated with the contemporary Federal Democratic and Republic of Ethiopia by the period of Emperor Menelik II after defeating Italian forces in 1896 at Adwa (Young, 1999). Similarly, Mohamed (2019) also argued that Benishangul was not part of Ethiopia before it incorporated to the current Ethiopia through the 1902 agreement of Addis Ababa signed between Menelik II and Parsons Adar, who was an official representing British. Though it is the borderland that distinguishes Ethiopia from Sudan with having rich

natural resources, the political leaders of both Addis Ababa and Khartoum did not give attention to it. This makes Benishangul to be ignored by the central politicians, development agencies and analysts. Nonetheless, it has suffered from several armed conflict that mainly emanates from political instability and ethnic tension since the Derg regime.

Benishangul has a legacy of political instability and violence since 1970, before its regionalization period. An opposition begun by predominantly Berta ethnic group and small individuals from Gumuz ethnic group with no other ethnic representation from the indigenous; however, the Derg regime was able to quickly eliminate the opposition (Young, 1999; Adegehe, 2009). The Benishangul Nationalism Front (BNF) that later changed its name to Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM) (Mohamed, 2019), was the first opposition party established with the help of Sudan. Political violence begun to rise from unstructured political opposition to structured small-scale guerrilla warfare. Nonetheless, since BPLM was a small faction with the lack of clear political goal, its operation failed to attain valuable impact against the central government of Derg (Ibid). This enforces BPLM to search for international and domestic alliance that can support it through logistics, military trainings and operations. As a result, it was able to ally itself with OLF and EPRDF in different times, though it lately engaged in combat with each of them due to different issues.

Benishangul Gumuz region has experienced six different violent armed conflicts. Firstly, Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) combats with Derg and was able to control the region, however, EPLF handed-over the territory to OLF by assuming that the local people had support and ethnic affinity to OLF (Young, 1999; Mohamed, 2019). Secondly, after two months Derg re-took the region through defeating OLF with armed conflict (Young, 1999; Adegehe, 2009). Nonetheless, before it retreated, OLF committed several atrocities and damages to the region mainly the capital, Assosa. For instance Young (1999) outlined that, when OLF retreated, it burned the newly constructed hospital in Assosa, loot ETB 1.8 million from bank, massacred nearly 300 innocent peoples mostly Amaharas, and terrorised non-Oromo residents of the territory.

Thirdly, another armed conflict emerged in the region between OLF and BPLM which completed with the defeat of BPLM (Young, 1999; Adegehe, 2009). After EPRDF take control the country by defeating Derg, Benishangul was again handed-over to OLF for the second time by the decision of EPRDF. Then OLF began to construct Oromos' hegemony in the territory, which includes establishing independent Republic of Oromia that incorporates

Benishangul by claiming the territory as the home of 'black Oromos' (Young, 1999; Adegehe, 2009; Mohamed, 2019). BPLM refused to accept this act of OLF and began another armed conflict. Therefore, the act of OLF denies the identity of Benishangul peoples as well as their interest of self-administration which leads to the third armed conflict of the region.

Fourthly, in January 1992, the region again served as stage for the armed conflict held between EPRDF and OLF, which completed by the defeat of OLF (Ibid). Though OLF was the ally of TPLF as well as the member of Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), their strategic alliance ended in 1986 when TPLF tried to dominate OLF and deteriorated 1990 when TPLF established a new ethnic Oromo based political party known as Oromo People's Democratic Organization(OPDO) (Aalen, 2002). After OLF defeated BPLM, the indigenous people request EPRDF to intervene and liberate them from OLF (Young, 1999). As a result, the deteriorated strategic alliance together with the public request leads TPLF/ EPRDF to fight with OLF and the defeat of OLF led BPLM to be the dominant political player of the region.

The emerged ethnic federalism of EPRDF gave birth to the current territory of Benishangul Gumuz region and the constitutional right of granting regions to have self-determination right up to secession makes BPLM to be ruling party that administers the region. However, BPLM began to suffer from rivalries and internal division among its political and military leaders due to different reasons like lack of experience in leadership, competition over political offices, and ideological differences. As a result, it divided in-to three factions. First the group and followers within it divided in to two based on their top leaders. Accordingly, those who are with Khidir Ahmed and Atom Mustafa labeled as original Benishangul while the others who are with Yousif Hamid and Ustaz Jafer Zeruk refered as non-Benishangul Sudanese that played under the name of BPLM. Though faction with Khidir Ahmed and Atom Mustafa acquired acceptance by EPRDF, it again divided in two as Ethiopia Berta people democratic organization (EBPDO) and New Power Party. While Khidir Ahmed and others detained, Atom Mustafa was a leader of New Power Party (Mohamed, 2019).

The Yousif Hamid and Ustaz Jafer Zeruk faction of BPLM condemned by EPRDF because of its association with Sudanese Islamists known as National Islamic Front (NIF) and suspicion on the attempt of Mubarak killing in Addis Ababa (Young, 1999; Mohamed, 2019). EPRDF began to accused and detained some of the political and military top leaders of this faction

while it deportee the others to Sudan. Then, Jafer Zeruk and his exiled followers re-established the second phase BPLM in Sudan and began military training by their commander Abdul Wahab Mahadi to combat with the EPRDF again (Mohamed, 2019). As a result, the fifth armed conflict between EPRDF and second phase faction of BPLM emerged in the region (Adegehe, 2009; Mohamed, 2019). BPLM combatants had a base first in Sudan and later in Eritrea. The armed conflict was mainly guerilla warfare; nonetheless, hundreds were killed during the battle from both sides of the government and BPLM (Mohamed, 2019). In 2012, though the Ethiopian government signed a peace accord with BPLM that aims to end the armed conflict, the armed conflict relapsed and continued to the present date.

The sixth armed on-going conflict in BGR is among the recently emerged ethno-nationalist political group known as Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) and the Ethiopian government since 2019. However, the government does not acknowledge them as GPDM; rather it calls them as '*unidentified armed group*', '*anti-peace group*', and '*bandits*'. This on-going armed conflict resulted to several destructions, mass killings, forced internal displacements, and human right violations. For instance, in between July 2020 and January 2021, more than 500 civilian killed, 180,000 were forcefully displaced, among those, 1300 are sheltered in Sudan's Blue Nile State (USAID, 2021). In addition, more than 4,400 houses have been burned in three Woreda; 4,169 in Bullen, 184 in Wombera and 76 in Dibate (OCHA, 2021). The humanitarian intervention also challenged by the on-going conflict.

In one hand, inter-communal conflict in BGR is not a new phenomenon. There is a historical violent conflict among the 'black skin' Gumuz and 'red skin' Amahara, Agaw and Oromo due to slave raids. The Gumuz were enslaved by the state and neighbouring highlanders of Agaws communities until 1960s (Alemayehu, 2015), and Oromo communities until 1993 (Young, 1999). As a result, the Gumuz battled with Amaharas in Metekel and Oromos in Kemashi (Ibid). Nonetheless, inter-communal conflict persisted in the region even after 1991 due to different reasons. Among those one is the current regional boundary of BGR, which is controversial that in turn trigger a communal conflict. Arguably, the neighbouring regions of Amahara and Oromia together with different ethnic Amhara and Oromo based non-state armed groups and activists have a land ownership quest on BGR. Their interest triggers a conflict among the highlanders and indigenous peoples notably the Gumuz. Furthermore, as stated in the aforementioned, OLF combated with BPLM over the ownership of Benishangul territory in the transitional period (Young, 1999). However, the 2018 Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed invitation of exiled armed groups repatriated OLF, which in turn leads to the

recurrence of border conflict mainly between OLF and Gumuz over the land and resource of Kemashi Zone of BG (Gardner, 2021).

The 2002 revised regional constitution of BG, which changed the relationship of peoples that lives in the region as ‘outsider’ or ‘settler’ and ‘indigenous’ or ‘native’ through designating the five indigenous ethnic groups (Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo) as the owner of the region, is also the other reason that contributed to the persistence of inter-communal conflict. Article 2(2002) of the revised regional constitution of BG grant the right of ownership for the marginalized groups of the so called indigenous ethnic groups, while it restricts the right of non-indigenous ethnic groups of Amahara, Oromo, Tigrayan and Agaw. The regional government of BG grants ownership right to natives for correcting the past injustice that occurred in them; however, the taken measure by itself is discriminatory. This creates grievance towards the settlers since it marginalized them from land ownership right which was granted to all Ethiopians by the Federal constitution.

This aggravated the existing inter-communal conflict of the region. For instance, in 2017, inter-communal conflict between Gumuz and Oromo resulted to 75,000 forced displacement of civilian mainly Oromos from Assosa, Kemash, East and West Wellega Zones. Similarly, in 2018, conflict between Gumuz and Amahara communities leads to the displacement of 21,000 civilian mainly Amaharas from Metekel Zone (OCHA, 2021; Maria, 2021). In 2018, several Gumuzs were killed in which armed Amahara men were reported to be the perpetrators (Mistir, 2021). On September 26, 2018, ambush raid committed on the vehicle carrying Kemashi higher officials in West Wellega Zone, Boji Dirmaji *Woreda* alleged by the Oromo militias (Ermias and Solomon, 2018). Moreover, the Oromo militia raided eight villages in Belo Jegonfoy, Yaso, Kamashi and Agalo *woredas*. The Gumuz reacted for tit-for-tat and killed Oromos by slaughtering, attacked their properties in six *kebeles* and burned at least 20 houses by crossing to Oromia. However, More than 40 Gumuz and Berta killed in East Wollega which alleged by Oromo militias (William and Mistir, 2018). This implies, inter-communal conflict of the region persisted among the indigenous notably Gumuz and its neighbouring highlanders which resulted to the killing of civilians, destruction of properties and forced displacement by the action of the tit-for-tat from all sides.

When the conflict situation becomes more deteriorated, in January 21, 2021, the Ethiopian government declared a state of emergence in Metekel Zone, where the conflict was taking place (USAID, 2021). The government also established Joint Task Force (JTF) in the region,

particularly in Metekel Zone, aiming to tackle the armed conflict of GPDM. However, the violence continued even after the state of emergency declared. Beside the ENDF, several regional security forces from Amahara, Sidama and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's (SNNPR) regions were also engaged in the armed conflict to assist ENDF in its combat with GPDM (OCHA, 2021). Moreover, the security instability and the imposed state of emergency leads National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to suspend national election in the region, which was planned to undergo in June 24, 2021 (NEBE, 1 June 2021).

2.3.2. Armed Groups and DDR in Benishangul Gumuz Region

Evidently, there is a proliferation of armed groups in the region of Benishangul Gumuz. Among those, Benishangul People Liberation Movement (BPLM), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF/shene), Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM), and an Amhara ethnic group based militants commonly known as FANO can be listed. Though their interest is different, all the armed groups that operate on the BGR have their own interest on the region. Besides the experience of armed conflict which are discussed in the aforementioned, BGR has also the experience of conducting DDR in different times (2013 of BPLM, 2021 of GPDM and 2022 of GPDM). Although the region was able to conduct several DDR to transform the region from armed conflict to peace and development, it is difficult to conclude all the conducted DDR programmes were successful since the armed conflict relapsed and the structure of armed groups are not fully dissolved yet. On the other side, even though the region is able to conduct DDR at three different times, researches on the region's experience of DDR is almost at negligible stage.

The 2013 DDR program of Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), which was took place in BGR, is aDDR processes that received some publicity. After EPRDF control power, BPLM was able to sign a peace accord with the Ethiopian government in two different times. First, it signed peace agreement in 2005, however, it remobilize and resumed its armed struggle a year after the agreement. Second, it signed peace accord on August 15, 2012 after two years of extensive negotiation (OCHA, 2012; IOM, 2019). Combatants of BPLM were demobilized after a year of the signed peace accord on June 8, 2013 (Sudan Tribune, 2022).

Following the implementation of the peace accord, the Federal government of Ethiopia together with the National Regional Government of Benishangul Gumuz and other stakeholders (donors) repatriated 1800 former combatants, dependents and 300 sympathizers

of BPLM from Sudan by the initiation of Ethiopian government (IOM, 2019). After their repatriation, the reinsertion and reintegration program was conducted that includes registration and medical screening of the ex-combatants. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns, informational sessions and communication materials were conducted on the local community to prepare them for the return of ex-combatants which helps to facilitate the reintegration phase. IOM (2019) argued that the program was relatively successful with its own limitation; economic reintegration of former combatants of BPLM was challenged by different factors like limited possibilities for sustainable livelihoods, limited employment opportunities and a rise in malnutrition rates. However, the armed structure of BPLM did not fully dissolved yet; rather some faction of it resumed its armed struggle. On November 2021, BPLM was among the nine Ethiopian opposition rebel groups including TPLF and OLA – which designated as terrorist by the Ethiopian House of People Representatives (HPR) – that create an alliance and established United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces (UFEFC) (Mohamed, 2021). However, the BPLM alliance on forming UFEFC was not that significant in attaining its aim, which was overthrowing Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government either by force or by negotiation.

In general, Ethiopia's DDR experience shows that, the country has a good experience on conducting arguably relative successful DDR program, particularly in a social reintegration phase. Local ownership, strong political will together with decentralized approach was the key point that helps Ethiopia to have arguably relative successful social reintegration. Nonetheless, both the 1991 and 2013 DDR experiences of Ethiopia proved that the country has a challenge of economic reintegration. Moreover, the 2013 DDR of BPLM also proved that the country has a challenge of neutralizing the armed structure of the non-state armed groups.

However, though Ethiopia has different DDR experience on an on-going conflict situation, none of them are researched. This implies the studies on the study area of Ethiopian DDR experiences are at the infancy rate compared to its plenty of experience. On the other side, each DDR experience needs to be studied to identify and trace the common challenges, which help to improve the next DDR program that will undergo in the country, since Ethiopia has proliferated non-state armed groups in its different regions. Therefore, this research is conducted to study one of the DDR experiences of Ethiopia targeting GPDM fighters on 2021 after the recurrence of the armed conflict in the Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State of Ethiopia.

2.4.The Concept of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)

DDR is key program that initiate security and stability in a society that exist in a post- or on-going conflict situation, which is required for development (OSFU, 2011; Idirs, 2016; Walt, 2010). In a conflict experiencing society, the existence of non-state actors like; war lords, militias and armed opposition groups with massive arms and ammunition is inevitable. Their existence will impose a threat to both government and development by destabilizing its monopoly of use of power and undermining the development initiatives respectively. It is necessary to unarm these non-state actors and return the government's legitimate use of power that helps to create a convenient environment for development and stability. This core problem will be addressed by implementing the DDR which helps to create stability through unarming and reintegrating the former combatants. Therefore, DDR in a conflict affected society can serve as a bridge for security, stability and development transition through addressing the recurrence of the conflict (OSFU, 2011; Walt, 2010). Correspondingly, the United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (2007) also defined DDR as a political process that can reverse the war situation to peace which helps to enhance stability, peace, human security and development through transforming the role of armed combatants to productive civilians. DDR program has three major components, which are disarmament, demobilization and reintegration.

I. Disarmament

Disarmament is one of the comprehensive components of DDR program which incorporates different activities that includes preparing weapon storage, gathering all the armed combatants and their small arms, ammunitions, explosives and light and heavy weapons, and disposing them properly (UN/OSAA, 2007; Douglas et al., 2004). Disarmament is the main objective of demobilization which is essential tool for building confidence towards the warring parties and the civilian as a result of its assistance to increase stability through the collection of weapons (Douglas et al., 2004). Besides physical disarming process, the phase of disarmament should focus on disarming the mind-set of participants regardless with their type –whether the participants are standing armed forces, guerrilla groups, paramilitary or militia forces or civilians (Ibid).

All the conflicting parties, which are included in the peace agreement, should agree and decide the time and scope of post-conflict disarmament and incorporating it in the peace accord is politically sensitive and critical point whether to undergo disarmament or not

(UNDP, 2005; Lenisse, 2007). Disarming ex-combatants while implementing the signed peace accord in the DDR program is the preferable way compared to disarming them after the formal DDR program takes place. In order to conduct the disarmament phase without challenge, the issue of disarming the combatants and the actor that is responsible to demilitarize must be included in the peace agreement. Otherwise, combatants may have a fear to disarm themselves, if they have lack of trust for their safety. If the peace accord doesn't include the issue of disarmament, the DDR program will omit the disarmament phase, which may trigger the recurrence of conflict by destructing the peace process.

Implementing the disarmament phase properly will help to facilitate the overall DDR program and peace accord by creating a convenient environment for weapon management. However, unless the phase of disarmament is implemented properly and successfully, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SLAW), ammunition and explosives will remain at the hand of civilian, ex-combatants and criminals. This will result the recurrence of armed conflict and violence, lawlessness through undermining law and order, which in turn undermines the public security of the population. Furthermore, it also undermines the peace consolidation process through threatening the reintegration process and security of host communities (UNDP, 2005).

After collecting all the SLAWs, destroying them is the best practice to manage the gathered SLAWs (Ibid). The principle of automatic destruction of all collected weapons will facilitate the peace consolidation process by convincing all the participants. Furthermore, the government action of destroying all the collected weapons rather than using them for its legitimate security sectors will prove the government's neutrality to the former combatants, which will help them to develop trust (Ibid).

II. Demobilization

Demobilization usually follows after disarmament takes place which involves in disabling the military structure of armed group and transforming the ex-combatants to civilian life (UN/OSAA, 2007; Walt, 2010). However, it requires the decision to demobilize them after the integrated force undertakes identification of combatants. Demobilization usually consists of registration, documentation, health screening if there is any ex-combatant with a serious illness, pre-discharge orientation and training, which will help them to overcome their challenges in transforming from military to civilian life (Idris, 2016).

In general, demobilization process has four key elements; legal, psychological, health and economic (UNDP, 2005). In the legal aspect, former soldiers/combatants have to get a civilian status and identity card. Different trainings related to the legal issue like; possession of weapons, breaking the laws and use of violence should be provided to the former combatants which will assist them to obey the law in their civilian life. In the psychological aspect, trainings will be provided to the ex-combatants to breakdown their formal tie with the military chain of command and encourage them to focus on their future civilian life. This is the basic element of the demobilization process that assists the peace process by disarming and separating the ex-combatants from their former military chain mentally, which is necessary to reduce their remobilization. In the health aspect, ex-combatants should have an access to both physical and mental health screening before they reintegrate to their host community. Finally, in the economic aspect, ex-combatants should be aware the reinsertion and economic reintegration package of both in-cash and in-kind, the potential opportunities as well as the expected limitations (Ibid).

III. Reintegration

Reintegration is the last phase of the DDR program that aims to reintegrate the former combatants to their community, which helps them to resume their social, political and economic activities. The main objective of reintegration is to rebuild the national and community security, which was fragile during the armed conflict, through supporting ex-combatants in their efforts of civil life (UNDP, 2005). It is essential for successful outcome and more challenging part of the DDR program for the reason that; it is a long-term process and requires different packages that are necessary to undergoes several activities like; cash, in-kind compensations and trainings which helps them to involve in income generating jobs (UN/OSAA, 2007; Walt, 2010).

2.5.Evolution of DDR

The nature of armed conflict is becoming more complex that able to create different armed non-state actors. The developing nature of armed conflict, changing situations and continuous emerging challenges enforce the DDR program to evolve from time to time for the past decades (Idris, 2016; Breitung et al., 2021). Furthermore, Muggah and Donnell (2015) also stated that the expanded expectation that has to be achieved through conducting DDR enforces the program to evolve. Besides restricting the DDR program in peace-keeping missions of post conflict society, now it is expanded to the on-going conflicts, several peace-

building activities, counter-insurgency and stability operations (Ibid). Therefore, the aforementioned factors transform DDR program from discrete, sequenced activities that works in post-conflict society after the establishment of peace agreement to a flexible, context-dependent, and wide range of security and development activities that includes negotiation and implementation of peace agreement in an on-going conflict situation. Therefore, DDR program has evolved to three different generations; the first, second and the up-coming (next) generations, which we can naturally refer to as third generation.

First-generation DDR: also known as Traditional DDR is conducted when there is a trusted and inclusive peace agreement, willingness of the parties to engage in the DDR process and minimum guarantee of security (IOM, 2019). It was mostly designed and implemented in the wake of prolonged civil wars through following the sequence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration respectively (Muggah and Donnell, 2015; Idris, 2016). Under this DDR program, there is always one party's victory or internationally mandated peace operation was put in place (IOM, 2019). Traditional DDR program was relatively straightforward to implement with the aim of breaking the former armed groups command and control (Muggah and Donnell, 2015; Idris, 2016).

However, the need to add the development dimension and community-centred reintegration process through increasing civic engagement together with the need of DDR intervention without the fulfilment of its preconditions where there is a complex security and political environment in which security remains fragile led to the emergence of second-generation DDR programs (IOM, 2019). Therefore, the changing natures of peace and security operations in return changed the nature of DDR programs.

Second-generation DDR: According to Idris (2016), unlike the first generation, the second-generation DDR program is conducted in an on-going conflict with fragile peace accord, multiple armed groups and combatants, blurred line among civilian and combatants. Following the Brahimi's report on DDR, the UN Inter- Agency Working Group on DDR developed an Integrated DDR Standards (IDDRS) that provides guidance to address different dimension of post-conflict society and implement DDR program (DCAF, n.d.). However, due to it focuses on building peace and development in society, which is in a state of on-going conflict where difficult to differentiate civilian from combatant, it opens a door for the third party such as; state or multilateral agencies like UN, to participate in establishing peace agreement and implementing DDR process. Nonetheless, in the context of peace agreement,

more often the government institutions and service become weak. This makes the population to prefer the criminal network service rather than the government (Ibid).

Furthermore, while the first generation focuses only on the ex-combatants, the second generation incorporates both the community and other peace-building activities (Idris, 2016). This makes the second generation to be more human centred approach. It may not follow the sequence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; rather it draws its activity based on the situations on the ground. The DDR program in Haiti is a good example for second generation. Though the second-generation DDR can able to shift the program from more strict to a more flexible model, its standards make it to be seen as too formulaic that couldn't consider the different contexts. As a result, the third generation DDR program emerged to address this issue.

Next-generation DDR: The third generation which is known as next generation of DDR is introduced by Muggah and Donnell. Both first and second generations work under voluntary of the ex-combatants to engage in DDR program, however, under the next generation the voluntary nature of DDR is compromised due to the introduction of more forceful UN military interventions against non-state armed groups (Muggah and Donnell, 2015). Its coinciding engagement with the forceful military intervention makes it to follow a new sequence known as '*stick then carrot*' (Ibid). This had been practiced in Haiti, Somalia, Libya, and Mali.

As compared to the past two DDR generations, this DDR generation is all-encompassing that can even implement before the peace agreement is in place (Ibid). Also, it includes a sociological dimension that support and encourage the former combatants to have more positive and forward-looking identities.

Unlike its predecessors, the next generation considers DDR as the dynamic political process rather than a standalone activity (Muggah and Donnell, 2015; DCAF). This makes the DDR process to be context dependent phenomena that highly connected with the local conditions on the ground. Therefore, under this generation, DDR program is linked with several activities like; robust peace operations, peace negotiations, justice and security sector reform, and peace- and state-building (Ibid).

However, there are also different critics towards this DDR program. Among those are in the next generation DDR program, the reintegration phase is mostly weakend, and targeting combatants and their family might be challenging. In addition, it disconnects DDR from

developmental initiatives, which would benefit the traumatised host community as a result of funding problems (Idirs, 2016). The on-going conflict enforces developmental agencies to step back from funding.

2.6.DDR as Part of Peace Process

DDR is one of an integrated set of processes that arises from maintaining positive peace, which could have positive or negative consequence towards it (Walt, 2010). A successful DDR will contribute to peace through abolishing violent armed conflict, provide stability and build confidence and strong communication among former combatants and communities, which are necessary for further security, peace-building and development activities. Whereas, unsuccessful DDR program might undermine all the peace processes and activities through triggering further recurrence of the armed conflict which will worsen the situation.

According to UN/OSAA (2007), the circumstance that leads to the peace process and its dynamics will determine the range, scope and resource distribution of the DDR process. UN/OSAA (2007) outlined three different scenarios for conducting DDR as a peace process. First, when conflicting parties negotiated and secured peace as a result of external pressure. In this scenario, the DDR decisions will postponed until the election of post-war government. DDR process in Zambia (1979), Namibia (1988) and South Africa (1990s) can be an example for this scenario. Second, when one party settle peace through defeating the other in a military war. In this scenario, the DDR process will be rapid, coercive and biased resource distribution which mostly tends to the winner party. Example; Ethiopia (1990s), Angola (2003), Rwanda (1994) and Uganda (1986). Third, when there is a peace agreement due to external intervention. In this scenario, the conflict is at ripe moment that all conflicting parties are in a mutually hurting stalemate situation and the DDR process will be dominantly led by the external intervening actor. For instance; Angola (1988) and Mozambique (1990s).

2.7.Security Sector Reform (SSR) and DDR

In a post-conflict society, conducting security sector reform (SSR) will resolve the core problem of illegitimate use of force through returning the government power of legitimate use of force (OSFU, 2011). In some cases, the practice of DDR may require to conduct SSR or the reverse is also true. However, their nexus is determined by the government policy document and strategy that stipulate the role, size and composition of the new security force (AUC, 2014). This will help to design the DDR through determining the number of the security members that needs to leave the military force and back to their civilian life. In this

case, when the SSR is implemented, the DDR program will also be conducted on the retired former security members. This is the first nexus of DDR and SSR.

On the other hand, in conducting DDR program, the ex-combatants may integrate to existing security sectors; this might require conducting SSR program, which is another nexus between DDR with SSR. Though they are interdependent, in some cases the success of SSR may determine the success of DDR. If the practice of SSR fails to integrate the ex-combatants successfully, they may abandon the program and remobilise, which enforces the DDR to fail as well (AUC, 2014; McFate, 2010).

Ethiopia has also the experience of conducting DDR with SSR. For instance, coming to the context of 2021 DDR program of GPDM, the regional government of Benishangul Gumuz promised to integrate some of the armed ex-combatants to different regional security sectors in the written peace accord (Communication Bureau of Metekel Zone, 18 May 2021). This implies that the DDR program in turn triggers to undertake SSR. Therefore, the researcher plans to study the integration of the GPDM former combatants to the regional's security sectors by considering the theory of SSR.

2.8.Determinants for measuring the success of DDR

There is no standard DDR program that works for all conflict affected societies across the world, due to its context dependent phenomena that can be affected by different factors (UN/OSAA, 2007). These factors include; historical, socio-economic, geographic, cultural, ethnic, nature of the conflict, manner of the conflict cessation. Introducing transitional justice (TJ) may also require in some cases of the DDR (Ibid). The DDR program has to be designed very carefully for every context. For the reason that, DDR by itself cannot bring or guarantee security or development since it is the initiative that facilitates the transition from conflict to stability and helps to create a convenient environment for further peace-building and development programmes (OSFU, 2011). However, unless it is designed based on the existing context, implemented based on the design, and other works are done that could facilitate the peace process; it cannot solely guarantee the resolution of conflict or violence.

The absence of standards enforces the DDR program not to have a single constant variable that helps to measure the success rate of one program. Rather different scholars provide different determinant factors that help to increase the success rate of the program by extracting them from different DDR practices. For instance, United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Africa (2007) outlined the willingness of the society as the major

determinant for the success or failure of the DDR program, whether to forgive or not the ex-combatants for their former violent acts while they were in struggle. The society willingness will play the major role on transforming ex-combatants from the life of war to civilian (Ibid). If the society is not willing to forgive them, they will be discriminated by the society. This, in turn, will create psychological impact on the ex-combatants and it may serve as a driving factor for their remobilization. Therefore, if the host society forgives them, reintegrating with the society will be easy for the ex-combatants since, they will develop the sense of being civilian and member of the society. For instance, arguably Ethiopia could undertake a successful social reintegration on close to half-million Derg ex-soldiers with their host community that includes sharing their low living standards (Dercon and Daniel, 1998). The society's forgiveness played key role for the successful social reintegration of the ex-soldiers. Similarly, Eritrea, Angola and Uganda are able to conduct successful DDR program, while Sudan and Somalia failed.

Furthermore, by taking the case of Ethiopia, Namibia, and Uganda, Colletta et al. (1996) stated political stability and security, strong government commitment and cooperation from the army as the determinants for conducting successful DDR program. Whereas, Lenisse (2007) outlined, three basic lessons for conducting successful DDR program; first, all the detail of DDR process must be agreed by the warring parties and incorporated in the peace accord; second, there should be strong political will by the government, and all the warring parties should have a commitment to implement the peace accord; third, the DDR program and peace accord should have support from the International Community. Similarly, Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP) final report (2010) also outlined three indicator for measuring the outcome of the DDR; general conflict and stability trend, taking MDRP as a regional framework while conducting DDR program, and results on national programs and regional activities. However, its criteria of taking MDRP as a regional framework failed to acknowledge the main characteristics of DDR –context dependent phenomena.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This chapter briefly explains the methods and designs of how the study was undertaken. Kothari (2005) defines research design as the blue print, which briefly explain the planning of how the study is adopted including; the techniques of the approaches, relevant data gathering and data analysis. Therefore, in this chapter necessary research design techniques, sampling techniques, methods of data collection and analysis approach that have been used to undertake this study is discussed along with the justifications of selection.

3.1.1. Research Design Techniques

It is known that researches have been carried out through quantitative or qualitative or mixed research design methods. Although all methods have their own strength and limitations, there is always an appropriate time to use those three methods with related to the research title.

Qualitative methods are commonly associated with the evaluation of social dimensions that provide rich and detailed results (MacDonald et al., 2015). This method can help the researchers to magnify their data analysis and interpretation by describing and explaining their sample, the overall data collection and recording procedures that they have used for the study (Creswell et al., 2018). In contrast with other methods, it enables the researcher to add his/her own comments on their role and self-reflection while he/she is performing the study (Ibid). Therefore, the researcher used qualitative research design with taking the epistemological position that knowledge is contextual for undertaking this study.

3.1.2. Explanatory Research Design

As Kothari (2005) described, in order to engage explanatory research design in the study, the research design must be flexible enough to help the researcher to have an opportunity for considering different types of problems in the study, which assists the researcher to convey and enable the collection of ideas insights and perceptions.

Therefore, the researcher used explanatory research design while undertaking this study. Since the flexible nature of explanatory research design helped the researcher to generate several open-ended research questions on studying the 2021DDR process of GPDM ex-combatants in Ethiopia. Moreover, this method also helped the researcher to use non-

probability sampling design (Kothari, 2005), which in turn enabled the researcher to gather information from those who participated in the process and/or have cognitive knowledge in the study issue and area.

3.1.3. Case Study Approach

Kumar (2011) has argued that, to have an in-depth understanding, exploration and interactional dynamics about the research issue within the unit of study area, a case study approach is appropriate to use. Correspondingly, as Grinnell (as cited in Kumar, 2011) also claim that a case study approach enables the researcher to be flexible and conduct an open-ended technique of data collection and analysis. Therefore, the researcher used case study approach to conduct this study.

Benishangul Gumuz Region (BGR) is among the Ethiopian region suffering from the prolonged on-going armed conflict. Though the region has an experience of conducting DDR in 2013, it is still suffering from an on-going armed conflict that in turn make the region to undergo other DDR processes on the ex-combatants of Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) in 2021 and 2022. Nonetheless, even after the 2021 DDR conducted several studies revealed that killings and atrocities are continueing in the BGR that leads to the second DDR of 2022 (Tom, 2021; Tsega, 2021).

The Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) is located at Metekel, BGR, where the violent armed conflict mostly takes place. Tsega (2021) argue that, local, regional, national and, foreign interests are the major factors that contributed to the region's violence. He also stated that, beside the local factors, the regional actors like Sudan and Egypt –which have interest in the GERD –are playing the main role in prolonging the regions instability in order to prevent/delay Ethiopia from filling the dam. Therefore, the researcher believes that, the regions instability might be the security threat for the GERD, which is one of the huge projects of Ethiopia.

On one hand, the region is homeland of several ethnic groups; on the other hand, the violence in the region incorporates ethnic conflict. Other regions like Amahara are also participating in the conflict. As a result, the federal government established a joint-task-force (JTF) in Metekel Zone to address the conflict. Therefore, the researcher believes that, unless the conflict in BGR addressed quickly, it has the potential tendency to spillover to the other neighboring regions of the country.

Moreover, the failure of the 2021 DDR of GPDM leads to the re-introduction of the second DDR of 2022. Studying the 2021 DDR of GPDM and identifying its challenges is necessary to understand the second DDR of 2022 as well as the potential DDR, which is currently undergoing in Ethiopia, since the country has several non-state armed groups. Therefore, based on the aforementioned reasons, the researcher believed that the 2021 GPDM DDR program is the unique-case study to assess the DDR process and its main challenges.

3.2.Methodology

This research is aimed to study the case of 2021 DDR process of GPDM conducted in the region of Benishangul Gumuz National Regional State, Ethiopia. The methodology of sampling design, methods of data collection and methods for data analysis are briefly explained as follows.

3.2.1. Sampling Design

The researcher used non-probability sampling with judgemental/purposive, expert and snowball samplings techniques for selecting participants who have experience or cognitive knowledge in the study area. As Getu and Tegbar (2006) argues purposive sampling helps the researcher to provide an in-depth information from several informants, including individuals and organizations, that have been selected strategically based on their knowledge about the study issue as well as the area. Since, the profound cognitive knowledge about study issue is limited to some individuals and organizations, the researcher purposefully selected the respondents based on their participation on the DDR program as well as their access to the required information.

The researcher also used expert sampling to encompass some participants who have expertise in the study area. The researcher used judgemental and expert samplings, since both are useful to describe a phenomenon or develop something about the issue, which is slightly known (Kumar, 2011). Furthermore, snowball sampling, which helps to select participants using networks, is used in this study (Kumar, 2011). The study gathered information from several key informants including ex-combatants of GPDM and members of displaced host community by using snowball sampling.

3.2.2. Methods of Data Collection

In this study, both primary and secondary sources are engaged. Primary data collected from thirty-seven participants. In-depth interviews conducted for twenty-five participants, while twelve participants are engaged in two focus group discussions. All the in-depth interviews

and focus group discussions were conducted with the help of guiding questions related to the study area in Amaharic language, while one focus group discussion was conducted in Gumuz language with the support of translator. Then, all the recorded and collected data are transcribed to English. Furthermore, press releases were also used as primary data.

As a result, primary data is collected from individuals and governmental offices that participated on the DDR process. These includes; ex-combatants of the GPDM, Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Ministry of Peace, Regional Peace and Security Bureau of BGR, Ministry of Justice, National Disaster Risk Management Commission of BGR, regional and Zonal officials of BGR, and academics from Assosa University. The researcher also gathered data from the host community of the former combatants that includes both the Gumuz and non-Gumuz residents of the region. Moreover, secondary data was gathered and used for analysis.

3.2.3. Method of Data Analysis

After gathering all the required data through the aforementioned data collection methods, a thematic analysis task, which involves with critical thinking, engaged. Conducting thematic analysis is helpful to identify, analyse, organize, describe and draw conclusion based on the provided data set (Braun & Clarke, as cited in Nowell et al. 2017). Correspondingly, it is also useful to generate unanticipated insight and reached at clear and organized conclusion by examining different perspectives of participants, highlighting their differences and similarities (Nowell et al., 2017). Furthermore, as Kumar (2011) pointed out, narrative can be developed to describe the current situation on the study area. All data's that had been collected from the in-depth interview mapped and processed to capture the core perspectives of the participants, which assisted to produce a detailed description and conclusion.

3.3.Ethical Considerations

In conducting the study, the researcher took into consideration ethical aspects that are expected from every researcher. The researcher asked the participant's consent and if they agree, the researcher clearly described the purpose of the research and their right to reflect on all the questions or few or refuse. The researcher was also asking the consent of the participant to be recorded or not while they are giving the interview. Accordingly, some in-depth interviews were conducted without recording by taking hand written notes of the participant during interviews. For the reason that, the participants were afraid for their personal security concern to be record due to the conflict is still an on-going. The researcher

respected the participant's right of not to respond to any question to the extent of rejecting the whole interview. As a result the researcher fully accepted the participant's interest of not to respond on the issue. Furthermore, the researcher also kept the confidentiality of all participants' identity by mentioning the informant positions and organization throughout the whole study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, data presentation and analysis of the research presented. This chapter divided in to five sections. In the first section, the profile of GPDM armed group that includes its composition, position, how it organized and started its attack presented. In addition, the pull and push factors that make the Gumuz community to join GPDM armed group also discussed. In the second section, the main actors that involved in the DDR process are listed with their main responsibilities and challenges while undertaking their role. In the third section, the negotiation process of the DDR presented. Under this section, the prenegotiation process, conflicting parties rational for engaging in the peace negotiation, on-negotiation process and challenging issue during the negotiation process are briefly discussed. Section four goes with the implementation process of the 2021 DDR process of GPDM armed group. Under this section, the implementation of targeting, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration are briefly discussed. Lastly, main challenges of the DDR program analysed and presented.

4.1.Profile of GPDM armed group

Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), which was formerly known as Benishangul Nationalism Front (BNF), that established in 1988 in Sudan is the first political organization in BGR (Mohamed, 2019). Though it encompasses different *indigenous* ethnic groups of the region including Gumuz, it was dominated by Berta peoples. However, in 1992, its members leave Berta dominated BPLM and established their own ethnic based political organization (Adegehe, 2009). Gumuz People's Liberation Movement (GPLM) is among those political organizations founded by the former Gumuz members of BPLM (Ibid).

In 2009, Chairman Gagn Gudeta and other Gumuz elites mainly from Metekel and Kemash established another ethno-nationalist political organization, which is known as Gumuz People's Democratic Movement (GPDM) in Assosa (NISS Staff, Personal Communication, April 6, 2022). This implies GPDM is the second Gumuz-nationalist political organization that established after the formation of GPLM. The main goal of GPDM party is liberating Gumuz peoples from all the injustice and marginalization they are facing (Higher official in BGR, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). Accordingly, it participated on the 2015 election. Though the outcome of the election result triggered questions on the reliability of the process, NEBE declared Benishangul Gumuz Peoples Democratic Party (BGDP) as the winner. However, the GPDM did not accept the election outcome rather it claimed that

GPDM was the winner of the 2015 election. Violence erupted and several members and leaders of GPDM party arrested. A year after it participated in 2015 election, GPDM was banned from the party list (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication, March 30, 2022). After its banning, it started armed struggle by organizing its own military wing.

The GPDM labelled as armed group in 2019. However, there is contestation towards its name. While the GPDM combatants perceive themselves as GPDM combatants that fight to liberate the Gumuz community, the government and Gumuz community who did not joined GPDM failed to acknowledge it. For instance; former middle level leader of GPDM armed group (Personal Communication, April 18, 2022) stated that;

They –government –are calling us Junta and Bandit; also, they are saying that we are operating for Sudan's and Egypt's mission in which we are not. We –GPDM combatants –are not Junta or Bandit; we do not operate for Sudan or Egypt. We are asking right question of our people –Gumuz. We fight for Gumuz community's right.

In this speech, we can understand that he is considering himself as warrior of GPDM armed group and freedom fighter of Gumuz community. However, the Federal and regional government together with Gumuz community see GPDM combatants as *unnamed armed group, bandits and anti-peace armed group*. For instance; on May 22 and 23, 2022 Benishangul Gumuz prosperity party official page posted that;

ለአሸባሪ ቡድኖች የሚላላኩ ሽፍቶች መደምሰሳቸውን የመተከል ኮማንዶ ፖስት የተቀናጀ ግብረ-ኃይል አስታወቀ። (meaning: Joint Task Force of Metekel Command Post announced that bandits that work for terrorist groups have been destroyed.) (23 May 2022 at 7:45pm)

የመተከል ዞን ነዋሪዎችን ከጸረ-ሰላም ሃይሎች ነጻ ለማውጣት አስፈላጊውን ስልጠና ወስደው በህግ ማስከበር ተግባር ላይ መሆናቸውን የጉሙዝ ተወላጅ የሚሊሻ አባላት ተናገሩ። (meaning: members of the Gumuz militia stated that, after completing the necessary training they are working in law enforcement to free the residents of the Metekel zone from anti-peace forces.) (22 May 2022 at 5:53 pm)

In this two different news posted by Benishangul Gumuz Prosperity Party official page verify that the regional government did not acknowledge GPDM combatants as an organized political group seeking recognition. Rather it labelled them as *bandit and anti-peace armed groups*. Similarly, member of the Gumuz community that participated in the focus group discussion and interview stated;

We call them bandit, since the government said so, and their actions are also the characteristics of bandit. (Male IDPs and Gumuz civil servants in Metekel, Personal Communication, 13 April 2022)

How do we know the bandit? We do not know who they are. Rather we were concealing from the bandit even after we went to the forest, the bandits were attacking and slaughtering displaced people if they capture them in the forest. (Female IDPs and Gumuz residents of kemashi, Personal Communication, 13 April 2022)

My brother-in-law is militia. He was captured by the bandit. My husband paid 10,000 birr for the bandits in order to free him. (Ibid)

The Gumuz community does not support the bandits because; the Gumuz community is also one of the victims. They are displaced from their village and forced to live in forest (Gumuz civil servant in Assosa, Personal Communication, April 14, 2022).

The aforementioned speeches of the Gumuz community members can verify that most of the Gumuz community does not acknowledge GPDM combatants as they see themselves. Rather, just like the government, they labelled them as bandits that undermine the GPDM combatant's claimed identity of freedom fighter. However, the regional government recognizes GPDM armed group on the second peace agreement that signed in 19 October 2022 (Communication Bureau of Benishangul Gumuz Regional State, 2022).

Therefore, under the profile of GPDM armed group, its composition, position, how it organizes and starts its attack, and the pull and push factors that make the Gumuz community to join the armed group are discussed as follows.

4.1.1. How GPDM armed group was organized and started its attack

As several participants argued, the current violent conflict erupted at Ayicika *Kebele* from the disagreement on bus transportation tariff in April 2019. Following this, the GPDM armed group first recruitment and training begun in 2019. According to different participants, the members of armed group were 16 while taking training in neighbouring country of Sudan (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication March 30, 2022; UNHCR Staff in Assosa, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). The training was facilitated and provided by the Sudanese group known as 'felata' who are pastoralist with military background. After six months of the training and organization, they killed 300 individuals at Hepar, Metekel Zone Bulen *woreda*, for the first time (Ibid). However, it is not clear if the 16 mobilized other additional force or they use heavy weapon to kill 300 civilian.

Although the region had an experience of violent conflicts, the former conflicts were not organized in such a way. Most participants stated that the regional government commitment towards taking action was limited, though it has information when GPDM combatants were

organizing themselves. For instance, a UNHCR Staff in Assosa (Personal Communication, April 12, 2022) stated that,

In Almehal, several young Gumuz were recruited by the investors and send to Sudan border for the military training under the pretext of labour. The investors were paying remittance for the family of recruited young Gumuzs. However, one Young Gumuz escaped from the training and back to his family. He told his family that he did not have a job; rather he was taking a military training. Then, his father went to the government bodies and told them what is going on. Unfortunately, the father was told to 'keep quite'.

This implies that, the regional government did not willing to take action against GPDM combatants and/or some officials of the regional government wanted the existence of Gumuz ethnic based organized armed group. The regional government silence assists the armed group to have time in organizing itself. After their organization, the conflict nature transformed from ethnic-centred to politics (Higher official in BGR, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). After July 2020, Gumuz community also becomes victim of the GPDM combatants. The combatants began to gather resource, hard currency and armaments; loot properties including livestock; enforce young Gumuzs to join their struggle; slaughter and kill all individuals including the Gumuz peoples, who are not the member of GPDM party. On the other hand, since the combatants target the member or follower of Prosperity Party including the current political leadership, the officials are unable to go to the conflict areas of Metekel Zone and discuss with the community. If they go, they will be killed. Furthermore, the combatants began to kill every highlander ('red-skin' colour peoples) regardless to their ethnic background due to their fear of losing their land of Metekel.

Geopolitics is the other factor that prolongs the conflict and assist GPDM armed group to organize itself. Since BGR particularly Metekel Zone is the place where GERD is located, GPDM armed groups does not face challenge to search for ally. The neighbourhood countries of Egypt and Sudan are playing its own role on militarizing GPDM combatants in order to impose security challenge on Ethiopia, which in turn assists them by delaying the construction and water filling of GERD (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication, March 30, 2022). Furthermore, the availability of non-state armed groups in the region assist GPDM not to face a challenge of searching for ally. For instance, GPDM armed groups are alleged to ally themselves with TPLF, since they have a shared ideology of multi-ethnic federalism and both of them are in conflict with the Federal government. Ashadli Hassan, President of BG National Regional State, also stated that the GPDM armed group, what he calls them as "anti-peace armed groups", is working with TPLF to destabilize the

region (Addis Standard, 15 December 2020). A Member of the Cabinet and High-level leader in NDRMC of BG (Personal Communication, April 12, 2022) stated that,

They –GPDM combatants –are alleged to be indirectly fighting TPLF’s war in BGR. They were directly saying that, unless war in Tigray stops they will proceed fighting in the region too. There is evidence showing the relation between GPDM armed group and TPLF.

4.1.2. Composition of GPDM Armed Group

GPDM armed group composed of two different wings; the political and the military wing. The political wing led by GPDM party members, while the military wing led by some demobilized individuals from ENDF and Federal police. Different participants raised different individuals as the top leader of GPDM armed group, which makes tracing the GPDM’s structure difficult. However, most participants stated Gragn Gudeta as the top leader of GPDM party; while Atahir Tigre¹, who was the founder and military leader of former GPLM party, as the top leader of GPDM armed group (Personal Communications with Higher official in BGR, Higher official in Ministry of Justice, and Higher official in Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, 2022).

Atahir Tigre had a military background from ENDF and lived in Blue Nile, Sudan. Besides leading the GPDM armed group, his main role was searching an ally and coordinating the group’s alliance of Sudan, Egypt and TPLF. However, in May 2022, he died in Sudan through health problems. Shaban Kabas and Shabal Mansur represent him as a top leader of the military wing after his death (Personal Communications with member of the Cabinet and High-level leader in NDRMC of BG, and Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel, April 12-13, 2022). Bekur Gnaro, who is former soldiers of ENDF, is the military leader of GPDM combatants in Guba Woreda, Metekel. Amsaleqa Almeri Gudeta, who was commander in ENDF, is the other leader that provides military training to GPDM combatants in Ethio-Sudan boarder (Middle level leader, Regional Peace and Security of BG, Personal Communication, April 11, 2022). Furthermore, Abebe Goshu and Gudeta G/Menfes are also other military leaders of GPDM combatants in Kemash (Ibid).

On the other hand, Gragn Gudeta was co-founder and Chairman of the political wing of GPDM armed group structure. Whereas, Deregu Ferenj and Teferi Lencho were the former Deputy Chairman and Public relation head of the GPDM political wing respectively. However, after undergoing a reform Chefe Andegna become the current Chairman of the

¹ Others also write it as Tahir Tigre.

group. Geneti Quja and Lemessa Niero are the current Deputy Chairman and Public relation head of political wing respectively. However, none of the aforementioned leaders was included in the 2021 DDR process (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication, March 30, 2022).

4.1.3. Position of GPDM Armed Group

There is a division within the group of GPDM combatants on their position. The first group raises the issue of political and economic marginalization, land grabbing, resettlement process for Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) construction, lack of good governance, and legitimacy of the ruling party as their position. They are more dominant group among the GPDM combatants. Whereas, the second group of GPDM armed group raise the issue of secession. For this research purpose, based on their position, the researcher name the first group as non-secessionist and the second group as secessionist group of GPDM armed group.

I. Non-Secessionist group of GPDM Armed Group

This section of GPDM armed group raised the issue of political marginalization, economic marginalization, land grabbing, resettlement process for GERD construction, lack of good governance, lack of legitimacy of the ruling party and opposition of Prosperity Party as their position for their armed struggle.

Political Marginalization: in Ethiopia, besides its farthest distance from the centre, there is a historical marginalization of Benishangul Gumuz. The region did not have a political role in the centre until 2018. Though EPRDF tried to answer the issue of self-administration, which was one of the questions throughout Derg regime, it was not equally granted to all ethnic groups of the country when it comes to the centre politics. EPRDF was able to answer BG people's quest of self-administration. However, in the regime of EPRDF, BGR was one of its ally parties. This limited self-determination right of the region still prohibits it from administrating the country rather than its region. This implies that, the region was marginalized from the centre political participation and decision-making process of the country. The current newly formed Prosperity Party act of merging ally parties with member parties of EPRDF were able to make BGR a decision maker in the central politics. However, the security instability of the region constrains it from operationalizing its new political right, since the national election was not fully undertaken throughout the region.

The non-secessionist GPDM armed group claim that, Gumuz community is facing political marginalization within the marginalized region of BG. Article 39 of the regional constitution of BG stipulates the right of native ethnic groups, which it recognized as the owner of the region. Although it is facing challenge from the highlanders, the revised constitution of the region grant the right of self-administration up to secession for only the native ethnic groups of the region. In addition, the regional government adapted a new quota system that will be applied for every ethnic group of the region starting from 2005. Accordingly, the regional assembly will have 100 seats; Berta 40, Gumuz 35, Shinasha 11, Mao and Komo 5, and the rest 9 seats given for settlers. Furthermore, representation on the federal House of People Representative will be Berta 4, Gumuz 3, Shinasha 1, Mao and Komo 1 (Adegehe, 2009). The highlanders are grieved by the new quota system, since it is imbalanced with their population size and it limits their political participation.

The main goal of the regional government act of adopting a new quota system that limits the political participation of the highlanders was to empower the natives and protect their rights of self-administration on their own geographical region. This implies that, the Gumuz granted full right of political participation at both regional and federal level. Based on the new adopted quota system, the Gumuz have 35 seats at regional assembly and 3 seats at the federal House of People Representative. The Gumuz has fair representation compared to its population size of 163,781 (2007 Population and Housing Census of BGR). However, as several participants stated, the Gumuz communities are still grived for not exercising their full right of self-administration granted by both the federal and regional constitution. They claimed that, the Gumuz are predominantly administered by non-Gumuz like the Berta, Shinasha and highlanders. This implies that, though the political participation right of the Gumuz is approved by the law, there is an absence of proper administration mechanisms of self-determination in the region.

Besides lack of self-administration, the GPDM combatants claimed that the Gumuz lacks key power representation in regional, Zonal and Woredal level (Personal Communications with former middle level leader and Ex-combatant of GPDM armed group, and Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel, April 13-18, 2022). Though different individuals from Gumuz community are holding different positions including the deputy assembly head and deputy President of the region, the combatants demand to hold key positions like the Presidential position of BGR, bureau of peace and security, and police commission (Ibid). The current

President of BGR, Ashadli Hassan, is from the group of Berta peoples, in which GPDM combatants refused to accept it. On the other hand, the GPDM combatants also quest the loyalty of current Gumuz officials. The former GPDM combatant (Personal communication, April 13, 2022) claimed that, Gumuz officials do not work for the Gumuz communities; rather, they focussed to accumulate resource for themselves.

However, some claims GPDM armed group's claim of political marginalization and question of power does not have any legitimacy; while others claim their quest contradict with their action. There are individuals from the Gumuz community holding key power position including deputy president of the region. The region's Presidential position was controlled by the Gumuz peoples for three consecutive election periods since the region established. Besides the Gumuz, there are also other four native ethnic groups which equally granted the ownership of the region by the 2002 revised regional constitution. This implies the Gumuz claim of Presidential position does not look rational. Furthermore, the combatants are killing the family and relatives of civil servant Gumuzs, who are working in the governmental structure, by considering them as the member of prosperity party (Member of non-Gumuz community, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). While their quest is having job opportunity and political position, they are still killing the family of Gumuz civil servants.

Economic Marginalization: the last population and housing census of Ethiopia was undertaken in 2007. Though the federal constitution stated that the population and housing census should undertake in every 10 years, it has been 15 years since the last census undertaken (2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, 2012). The absence of recent population census resulted to the lack of knowing exact population figure of the regions, since the population projection cannot show the exact figure. Lack of exact population figure has its own impact on the proportion of population size of one region with allocated budget. Just like any other regions of Ethiopia, BGR cannot escape from this challenge.

In addition to this, although BGR has different resources including fertile agricultural land, Gold, Marble and Coal, its infrastructure is at the infancy rate compared to other regions of Ethiopia. The region is marginalized from developmental and infrastructural initiatives from other regional states of Ethiopia. In 2015-2016, people living below the national poverty line in Ethiopia are 23.5%, while it is 26.5% in BGR (Unicef, n.d). This implies that poverty in BGR is more entrenched than the national level. Therefore, just like any other regions,

allocating annual budget through formula is not enough for BGR, because the region needs additional affirmative action until it reaches to other regions' development level.

Besides the economic marginalization of the region, the non-secessionist GPDM armed group claim the existence of unbalanced resource distribution among the Zones and Special Woredas of the region. Assosa has comparatively better infrastructure than the rest of two Zones and special Woredas of Mao and Komo. The non-secessionist GPDM armed group also claims that, most of the resources are allocated to Assosa Zone, where Berta communities are dominantly lives by side-lining the rest two Zones (Personal Communications with former middle leader of GPDM armed group, and male IDPs of Gumuz civil servants in Metekel, April 13-18, 2022). The infrastructure in Kemash and Metekel Zones, where Gumuz peoples dominantly live, is at the infancy rate. Most of the region's community, which includes the Gumuz and non-Gumuz community that the researcher interviewed, shares the GPDM armed group's sentiment of economic marginalization of Gumuz. For instance, there is no road that directly connects the Zonal capitals of both Metekel and Kemash to the region's capital, Assosa (Adegehe, 2009). Rather, the Gumuz people need to pass through Amahara and Oromia regions to reach to their regional capital of Assosa. The member of Gumuz community displaced from Sedal Woreda (Personal Communication, April 13, 2022) stated that,

Though there are schools up to college level, there is no other infrastructure like road, water and electricity in Kemash Zone. Most of the time the government plans to build different infrastructure, however, nothing has been implemented yet. We are still drinking water from the river.

Moreover, non-secessionist GPDM armed group claim that Gumuz are deliberately marginalized from accessing job opportunity. The absence of adequate schools, particularly at highschool and college level, at Metekel and Kemash makes the Gumuz to have lower literacy rate (Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel, Personal Communication, April, 13, 2022). The highlanders and other natives, notably Shinasha and Berta, are relatively educated than Gumuz. The government failure to provide affirmative action for the Gumuz within the region worsened the situation for them. It, in turn, makes Gumuz to face difficulties in accessing job opportunities even in the limited available positions. This create grievance towards Gumuz communities and GPDM armed group. For instance, former middle level leader of GPDM armed group (Personal Communication, April 18, 2022) stated that,

The local authorities were deliberately marginalizing the Gumuz community not to upgrade ourselves in all aspects including education and investment. They were not supporting us to be developed just like other developed regional states; rather they were mistreating and torturing us. We are not accessing job. If there is any Gumuz who raise question, he/she will be detained. I am one of them.

However, there are some participants that stand against the Gumuz's claim of being intentionally marginalized from accessing job opportunity (Personal communications with former leader of PP in Metekel, and middle level leader in Regional Peace and Security of BG, April 11-13, 2022). Rather, they raised the low literacy rate of Gumuz as the main reason behind their lack of job opportunity. A Gumuz former leader of prosperity party in Metekel (Personal communication, April 13, 2022) stated that;

Most youth Gumuzs are unemployed. The available schools at kebele are up to 5th grade only. To continue their school, the community need to move their child to the neighbourhood Woredas that require financial capacity for fulfilling house rent, food, and transport cost. However, most of the community cannot afford it. As a result, most youth Gumuzs stopped their education at grade 10 while others have diploma from the private colleges, the majority of them are not able to access job.

Similarly, a non-Gumuz Assosa branch administrator head of Immigration Nationality and Vital events Agency (Personal communication, April 12, 2022) stated that;

The literacy rate of Gumuz communities is at the infancy rate, which enforces them to have less educated person. Yet, they want to hold power through qouta regardless with their educational background. Last month, I recruited employees for cleaner and security Guard. I posted the vacancy; examined and interviewed the registered candidates. Though there were also candidates from Gumuz community, they were unable to pass the provided exam. Then, what can I do to recruit them?

The Federal government together with the regional government of BG is either unable or unwilling to deliver different infrastructures for the two Zones of Metekel and Kemash and Special Woredas of Mao Komo. Regardless with who controlled the regional Presidential position –whether it is controlled by Gumuz or Berta –infrastructure in the two Zones is inadequate while they are resource enriched areas. The government failure to provide different infrastructure and developmental initiatives forced Gumuz community to base their life on a daily life rather than sustainable income (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). Therefore, Gumuz community is economically marginalized community within the marginalized region of BG.

Land Grabbing: after EPRDF control political power through ousting the Derg in 1991, the ownership of land remains in the hand of state and all Ethiopian people's together. Nonetheless, some argue that the EPRDF land policy, which empowered state over the

control of land, is serving as instrument for state sponsored land commercialization, promote corruption, unfair access to land, and mistrust between the government and the society (Teshome, 2022). Similarly, an academic from Assosa University (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) stated that such thing is also occurring in BGR, since the regional government officials retail several lands under the name of investment. Conversely, another academic from Assosa University (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) stated that, there is ‘a systematic land grabbing’ in BGR where most highlanders come and grab the community’s resource in the name of investment, since the region has alluvial land and resources that attract individuals, notably highlanders. A key informant from the Amhara ethnic group that forced to displaced from Metekel by the on-going conflict (Personal communication, April 14, 2022) stated that,

እኔ በኢንቨስትመንት መሬት ሳገኝ፣ ምክትል ሊቀ-መንበሩ ‘መሬቱ ለቀዩ ማህበረሰብ ብቻ እየተሰጠ ነው፤ የእኛ ልጆች ነገ ወዴት ሊወድቁ ነው?’ አለኝ። (Meaning: When I got land through investment, the vice-chairman said, ‘the land is being given to the red-skinned community only; where are our children going to live tomorrow?’)

The Gumuz community becomes an employee for the investors on their own land as a result of losing their land. Through there are some Gumuz who request land for investment in the urban areas of Metekel by fulfilling the necessary legal document, they are not able to access it. Recently, most individuals from the Shinasha ethnic group are only accessing land for investment.

Another participant of Gumuz that forced to displace form Dangur by the on-going conflict (Personal communication, April 14, 2022) also stated that;

I served 17 years at ENDF before my demobilization in May 1/2021. I was able to get service charge and retirement of 72,000 and 2000 birr respectively. By grouping with two other individuals, we organize and established ‘Kitil Yersha Lmat Mahber’ by aiming to work on rural agricultural development. Nonetheless, though we fulfilled all the necessary documents including bank statement; we are not able to access the land still now.

The revised constitution of BG (2002) designates Berta, Gumuz, Shinasha, Mao and Komo as the owner of the region. However, the Gumuz communities are still grieved for being dispossessed from their constitutionally defined territory. The non-secessionist GPDM armed group claimed that the Gumuz are pushed away from their land, particularly from the urban areas, under the name of investment. Since most of the Gumuz communities inhabited at the rural areas of Metekel and Kemash Zones, they claim that the Gumuz are prohibited from living in the urban areas (Former leader of PP in Metekel, Personal Communication, April, 13, 2022).

Furthermore, from post-2018, the quest of Metekel Zone by the Amahara activists arguably becomes more intensified by claiming that Metekel was forcefully added to BGR in 1991 (Tsega, 2021). There is an established group known as ‘*Metekel Asmelash committee*’ that works to re-take Metekel Zone from BGR to Amahara region. These reinforce the GPDM armed group’s claim of dispossession and create fear of losing their land of Metekel.

Resettlement Process for Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) construction: the construction of GERD and its water filling require resettling population who were living in the altitude of less than 645 meter to the higher altitude areas (Vaughan and Mesfin, 2020). The Federal GERD Project Office together with regional government of BG planned to resettle approximately 20,000 peoples from 14 locations in six Woredas to 17 new villages (Ibid). As a result, different peoples were forced to displace from their village by the government resettlement program for the GERD construction.

Yarenger was among those selected areas of resettlement with having an altitude of below 500-525 meters (Ibid). In 2017, for first round water filling of GERD, the government displaced several peoples, who were living in Yarenja Kebele, and resettled them in dispersed areas like Mankush, Almehal and Sedal. However, the GPDM combatants claimed that the government failed to pay proper compensation to the displaced persons, who were dominantly Gumuz peoples, and provide necessary infrastructure, like school, drinking water, road and hospitals after their resettlement (Middle level leader, Regional Peace and Security of BG, Personal Communication, April 11, 2022). As a result, most persons of the combatants and their top leaders like Atahir Tigre, Abdilahi Ousman have originated from the Yarenger kebele, Guba Woreda (Middle level leader, Regional Peace and Security of BG, Personal Communication, April 11, 2022). For instance, former residents of Giadiya kebele community (as cited in Vaughan and Mesfin, 2020) who resettled to Kong resettlement centre stated that,

Although we have come to the Kong [resettlement] centre, I do not think you can really say that it was the government that brought us here. We have done everything ourselves. There was no one to help us. When we came here there was no health post, or anything. This is not good for us. When they made the meeting with us in Wembera, they did not neglect anything [that they were planning to provide for us]. But when we came they just put us here with nothing. (Vaughan and Mesfin, 2020; p.15)

Correspondingly, Bameza and Fongosu Kebele residents of Gumuz community were displaced from their village for the GERD construction and resettled to the place known as Assosa Megenteya. However, they are unable to access appropriate compensation and

infrastructures. The process of paying compensation was not inclusive, fair and enough since it lacks clear standard and criteria. Even after their resettlement, the communities are not accessing basic needs and infrastructures like home, school, electricity, water and hospitals. A former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel (Personal communication, April 13, 2022) stated that;

The local authority was in rush while undergoing the compensation process. I tried to ask the local authorities about the compensation process; they told me that they paid in percentage on average of 60,000 to 70,000 ETB for an individual. However, the process was not inclusive and fair, since they were in rush and failed to properly fill statics. The local authorities did not consider measuring the size of land and the type of house, whether it is made up of grass or iron plate (Amharic: ቅርቅር), which each individual possess. Also, some individuals are able to get the compensation money, while the others are not.

I had a chance to visit the Mankush, around Assosa Megenteya settlers. I was shocked, when I see them living with making homes through 'shera'. There was not any infrastructure like water, home, and electricity. The GPDM combatants claim that, just like the Jawi sugar corporation settlers, the government need to build the necessary infrastructure before displacing the Gumuz community and resettling to other areas.

Legitimacy of the Ruling Party BGDG: Arriola and Lyons (2016) argue that the 2015 national election of Ethiopia, where EPRDF together with its ally parties won 100 percent of parliamentary seats, send a message to the potential rebels to figure out other way since political participation is restricted to the ruling party of EPRDF and its allies. Ethiopian election board declared Benishangul Gumuz Democratic Party (BGDP), which was among the ally parties of EPRDF, as the winner of 2015 election in BGR.

Nonetheless, the GPDM combatants claimed GPDM party was the winner of 2015 election of the region; however, the BGDP took power and rule the region through election fraud (Personal Communications with higher official in Ministry of Justice, and former middle leader of GPDM armed group, 2022). This implies GPDM armed group questions the legitimacy of the region's ruling party, BGDP. A former middle level military leader of GPDM (Personal communication, April 18, 2022) stated that,

In 2015 election, the local authority claim as we are the loser. However, we were the winner of that election. We had requested our grievance in a formal way. Nonetheless, they began to hunt and afflict us. I also detained for thirty-five times by claiming that I am mobilizing Gumuz community. I prefer to be dead rather than accumulating wealth and money under the name of Gumuz population.

Having their quest on the legitimacy of the ruling party in mind, in 2016, the GPDM party cancelled from the list of legal parties by the court decision and the leaders of GPDM were

also under arrest. (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication, March 30, 2022). This restricts GPDM party from any rights that one party can have including running for an election. Moreover, though the Federal constitution delimit the period of election in five years, there has not been any election held at the region after 2015 due to Covid-19 and security concern. The absence of national and regional election in the region of BG complement the existing claim of GPDM –the ruling party BGDG has no any legitimacy to administer the region. As a result, GPDM party members began to establish GPDM’s military wing and start their armed struggle.

Opposition of the Post-2018 Reform Processes and the Prosperity Party: In a democratic state, different political parties could have different ideology and could still compete in the political arena. However, a participant who is member of Boro Democratic Party (BDP) (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) stated that, the political ecosystem in BGR is not conducive.

In the beginning of the political reform, the Prime Minister and chairperson of EPRDF, Abiy Ahmed, want to establish Prosperity Party (PP) by dissolving member and ally parties of EPRDF. However, Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) was the only one that refused and deviated from the newly formed PP. In 2019, TPLF established ‘Ethiopian Collation of Federalist force’ (የኢትዮጵያ ፌዴራላዊት ሀይሎች ጥምረት), which contains twenty-four members that consider themselves as Federalist Force, in Mekelle, capital of Tigray (Borkena, 25 June 2020).

Since then, besides its members, different individuals and groups were invited by the TPLF led collation in Mekelle city, to discuss on the issue of federalism. The second forum was conducted in Mekelle with the slogan of ‘rescuing the constitution and multi-ethnic Federal System’ (Borkena, 3 December 2019). GPDM, who has the ideology of ethnic federalism, was also among the invited groups and individuals who consider themselves as the rescuer of the federalist structure. A member of BDP (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) stated that,

I know that GPDM leaders were going to Mekelle for participating in the forum. Since they have shared political ideology, they collaborate with TPLF and other Federalist Forces. I was also invited by Assosa University and participated on the Mekelle forum. However, when I get back to Assosa, the regional authorities detained me for three months.

While the prosperity party calls for the national consensus, the GPDM armed group perceived as it failed to consider ethnic identity. As GPDM claimed, the ideology of prosperity party is to establish a unitary system, which undermines self-administration of the regions, since it questions the federal structure of the country (Higher official in Ministry of Justice, Personal Communication, March 30, 2022). As explained in the aforementioned, the banning of GPDM party together with their difference with the ruling party of PP in government structural arrangement leads GPDM to figure out other way of struggle, armed struggle. Then after they began their armed struggle, they started to kill members and supporters of PP. Higher official in Ministry of Justice (Personal Communication, March 30, 2022) stated that,

Since GPDM combatants do not accept the ruling prosperity party, they (the local authorities) were harassing and committing different atrocities on the member of prosperity party and even in the member of Gumuz community believed to be members or supporters of prosperity party. On the other side, they were also some Gumuz peoples who saved different individuals live, especially on the 'Hipar atrocity' facilitating the way out for their escapement.

Lack of Good Governance: Ethiopia is among the African countries with low governance rating. According to Ibrahim Index of African Governance Country Rankings and Scores of 2015, Ethiopia ranks 31 out of 54 African countries. Ibrahim Index of African Governance considers four factors for the overall governance. These are safety & rule of law, participation & human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development. Based on these factors; the overall governance rate of Ethiopia from 2010 up to 2019 is listed below.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Overall Governance	39.9	40.6	40.9	41.6	43.2	43.7	43.8	42.5	44.9	46.6

Table 1: Ethiopian overall governance (IIAG, 2022)

The maximum overall governance of Africa is Mauritius's 79.9 while the average is 49.9 (IIAG, 2022). Though Ethiopia is improving its own rate from 2010 to 2019 by 6.7, it is still below the Africa's average index. The Ibrahim Index of African Governance verifies that there is poor governance in Ethiopia.

On the other side, Benishangul Gumuz region is a periphery and marginalized region of Ethiopia. This implies governance in BGR is also poor. From the beginning of its formation, BGR is facing challenges from lack of experience in self-administration, lack of educated man power, corruption, and ruling party discipline (Adegehe, 2009), which in turn

undermines the region's good governance. For instance, an Accademic from Assosa University (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) stated that, due to the lack of educated labor in the region, individuals may hold power through *qouta* without fulfilling the required educational status. Based on his experience, he stated that,

In Metekel, when one 8th grade student misbehaves in the classroom, the teacher tried to advise him. However, the student replied that; do n't advise me, I can be a leader from now on.

This implies that there are other individuals that hold power or administrative position with 8th grade certification only, which leads to the formation of generalized perception to hold power without fulfilling the necessary precondition like educational status. The Gumuz community has grievance for lack of good governance. Similarly, ex-combatant and middle level leader in GPDM armed group (Personal communication, April 18, 2022) claim that, Gumuz community is suffering from lack of good governance. Even the Gumuz officials are not respecting their own Gumuz community and provide good leadership. For instance,

The local authorities do not respect the community, they disrespect Gumuz. They just accumulate their wealth. However, they report to the Federal government as they are serving the community with kindness and commitment. (Ibid)

II. Secessionist group of GPDM armed group

This group of GPDM combatants raised the issue of secession as their primary goal. However, they are relatively small in number compared to the non-secessionist group of GPDM. This quest of GPDM is begun to emerge recently in 2021 after some combatants of GPDM ally themselves with BPLM armed group, who are predominantly Berta peoples with a quest of secession (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). Berta peoples are among the indigenous ethnic groups of BGR as well as a divided community who lives in both Sudan and Ethiopia. The leader of this secessionists group are predominantly from BPLM leaders and some group of GPDM combatants.

The claimed rational ground for the quest of secession is the sociocultural-ground of Benishangul Gumuz is relatively close to Blue Nile than Ethiopia, which is part of Sudan (Ibid). As a result, this group of GPDM together with BPLM and other allies wants to establish the state of real black peoples known as '*free and sovereign state of Fugn*' (Amaharic; ገና ሉዓላዊ የፋኝ ግዛት) by liberating and uniting the two Ethiopian regions of Benishangul Gumuz and Gambella, with Blue Nile state of Sudan (Personal communications with middle level leader of NISS, and higher official of Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, 2022). As higher official of regional Police and crime investigation bureau (Personal

communication, April 12, 2022), stated the secessionist group of GPDM and BPLM claims that;

Benishangul Gumuz region is forcefully taken to Ethiopia from Sudan. Our culture, religion, language are not symmetrical to Habesha (Ethiopians) rather Bule Nile. Therefore, we have to liberate the region and merge it with Blue Nile.

Moreover, as several participants alleged Sudan in supporting the secessionist group of BPLM and secessionist groups of GPDM. In recently, besides with those secessionists armed group, Sudan also began to claim the ownership of BGR. Sudanese Foreign Ministry stated that, Benishangul was transferred from Sudan to Ethiopia in 1902 in accordance with the colonial border treaty of 1902 that demarcates the two countries boundary (Asharq Al-Awsat, 2 May 2021). However, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) strongly condemns the Sudanese's claim of BGR. Besides the disagreement on GERD, if Sudan began to claim BGR, the chance of backing the secessionist armed group is highly likely.

4.1.4. Pull and Push Factors that Makes the Gumuz Community to Join GPDM Armed Group

GPDM armed group mobilize Gumuz community, particularly youth Gumuzs, to join the armed group and engage in armed struggle. As a result, the communities both willingly or forcefully join them and engage in the battle. There is several push and pull factors that makes the Gumuz community to join the GPDM armed group. Among them problems on 'routine' reintegrating former soldiers of ENDF, grievance, fear of losing Metekel Zone, losing hope in government, for re-gaining power and to be saved from the attack can be listed.

Problems on 'routine' reintegrating former soldiers of ENDF: in the ENDF, retirement takes place all the time. The government failure to properly reintegrate the retired and resign ex-soldiers of ENDF is serving as major pushing factor for Gumuz community to join the armed group. As mentioned in the previous section of GPDM armed group composition, most leaders of GPDM's military wing like; Shabel Abas Bekur Gnaro, Amsaleqa Almeri Gudeta, Abebe Goshu and Gudeta G/Menfes are the demobilized ex-soldiers of ENDF. This verifies that the government's demobilization process of ENDF soldiers was problematic.

According to Middle level leader of ENDF (Personal communication, May 30, 2022), ENDF did not undergo formal and organized DDR in recent years; rather after the reform, several soldiers of ENDF resign by their willingness when it starts to undergo institutional reform. TPLF –under its regime of EPRDF –has a desire to control the area, due to BGR is fertile and

resource rich area (Ibid). Due to this reason, TPLF were deliberately organizing military trained Gumuzs for mobilizing and using them in its critical moment. During the EPRDF regime, youth Gumuzs were deliberately recruited by the government and join to ENDF and Federal Police aiming to provide them a military training with the government's budget and structure (member of ENDF, Personal communication, May 28, 2022). After they completed their military training, they resign from ENDF without serving their duty of seven years and acquiring any reinsertion and reintegration package. Based on the rules and regulations of ENDF; when one soldier resign from ENDF without completing its duty of seven year, the organization search him/her, give an appropriate penalty and make them to finish their duty. However, ENDF would not take any measurement on Gumuz soldiers, which had been undertaken on another non-Gumuz member of ENDF, or it does not undergo DDR program – which assist them to resume civilian life. As a result, there are several Gumuzs with a military background without accessing money or land or proper training. Participants in ENDF stated that;

After they –Gumuz ex-soldiers –retire from ENDF, no-one will check them as we do in other soldiers of ENDF. Also, you don't even get them on resuming their civilian life. Most of the time they will join armed groups. Both their joining and leaving of ENDF is done deliberately under the interest of TPLF. (Middle level leader of ENDF, Personal communication, May 30, 2022)

The violent conflict of GPDM armed group erupted after TPLF resigns from the central politics. Also, the secession quest of GPDM armed group started to emerge after TPLF resigning. The Tigrayan investors, who were living in the region, were also sponsoring and recruiting the insurgent group. (Member of ENDF, Personal communication, May 28, 2022)

As mentioned in the above, after Ex-soldiers of Gumuz retired of demobilized, they were not able to access land, enough money or job, which would help them to acquire sustainable income and resume their civilian life. A Gumuz former soldier of ENDF (Personal communication, April 14, 2022) stated that,

In May 1/2020, I reduced from ENDF after serving seventeen years. I acquired 72,000 of service fee and 2000 birr retention payment. After I reduced, I applied to different jobs. However, none of them are willing to recruit me. Also, I requested to acquire rural agricultural land, but they (local authority) rejected me. Currently, I am working as a security guard with 1300 birr salary and labor work for living and paying house rent of 700 birr.

In the above case, though the reduced former member of ENDF was able to get service fee with retention payment, the government failure to provide trainings like psychological and

entrepreneurship expose him to face challenges to improve his living standard. This implies the government failed to properly reintegrate the ex-soldier after it reduced them. This, in turn, results to the failure of providing job opportunity, land and short-term trainings of entrepreneurship, which can assist the ex-soldiers to acquire another profession and participate in an income generating jobs. Though the ex-soldier able to acquire reinsertion package, he failed to change his money of service charge in to an income generating work due to lack of training. This former soldier does not back to civilian life, rather he is still holding gun by being a private security guard; since he does not have other profession rather than being soldier. With having all challenges of living and back to civilian life, the ex-soldiers are vulnerable to be easily recruited by GPDM armed group and elites. For instance; a middle level leader in GPDM armed group (Personal communication, April 18, 2022) stated that;

I was a soldier in ENDF before I was reduced. After my reduction, when I see all the directions, there is a complete darkness. There is no any option for resolving our quest in a peaceful manner rather than armed struggle. I couldn't afford to see the oppression of Gumuz community. That is why I joined the armed struggle.

This speech of the combatant verifies that, reduced ex-soldiers are vulnerable to be easily mobilized by the political wing of the armed group and join the armed struggle. The former soldiers were not mentally disarmed while they reduced; they began to serve the insurgent group with their profession of holding arms, warring with guns, and providing military trainings for other youth combatants without military background. Besides fighting, they also participate by recruiting youth Gumuzs.

Grievance: the government failure to provide infrastructure for the community serves as one factor to mobilize the some youth Gumuz community. Failure to provide education and job opportunity leads to the proliferation of unemployed youth Gumuzs. The unemployed Gumuzs will be frustrate and easily persuaded by the combatants. The GPDM combatants used this failure of the government to transform the community from peaceful in to a grievance state. Then, the grieved community easily mobilized and began to join or support the armed group with their capacity. A former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel (Personal communication, April 13, 2022), stated that,

When the GPDM combatants mobilize the Gumuz community by raising the challenges that they are facing like; lack of education, infrastructure and job opportunity, the community began to support them. While some support the group by

money, others join the armed struggle or give their youth child for the struggle. Some women also join the struggle and support the armed group by cooking food.

Moreover, GPDM armed group create its own cell structure structure which is important for communication channel (Higher official, Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, Personal communication, April 12, 2022). Forming clan structure has an advantage for mobilizing the whole Gumuz community through communicating with their clan leaders. As a result, the top leaders will communicate with the clan leaders, while the clan leaders mobilize the grievied community by transferring the top leaders claim. There is also militarization culture in the Gumuz community especially spears, since they used it for hunting. The militarization culture together with their grievance led to be easily mobilized and join the battlefield. A member of Boro Democratic-Party (Personal communication, April 15, 2022) who has a contact with the Chairman Gagn Gudeta also stated that,

They –Gumuz community –have their own communication channels. They respect their leader and accept order from the party leaders –GPDM. For instance, Chairman Gagn Gudeta told me that, ‘የጉሙዝ ወጣት ፈሽካ ብቻ ነው የሚጠብቀው ወደ ጦርነት ለመግባት’ (meaning: Youth Gumuzs are waiting for whistle to engage in war).

Fear of losing Metekel Zone: the insurgents also used the issue of land as another mobilizing tool, due to there are some Amahara’s who claims the ownership of Metekel Zone. Metekel was the part of Gojjam Kifle Hager –which is currently located in Amahara region –before the 1991 multi-ethnic federalism adopted by EPRDF. There is a group known as *Metekel Asmelash Committee* who works to bring-back Metekel by claiming Metekel is forcefully taken from Amahara and given to BGR in 1991 by EPRDF. On the other side, GPDM combatants mobilize the community by outlining that the highlanders, particularly the Amaharas, are going to take their land. As a result, the communities develop a fear of losing the area and join the insurgent group. For instance, a displaced non-Gumuz Metekel resident (Personal communication, April 14, 2022) stated that,

The bandits mobilize youth Gumuzs by claiming ‘the Amaharas are going to take your land, so you need to withdraw the highlanders from Metekel; Fano’s are going to kill you; the government deceived us, we are not accessing any land or infrastructure. So we need to fight.’

Losing Hope in Government: GPDM armed group use influential persons for Gumuz community to delegitimize the government towards the community. The role of recruited influential individuals is to divert the agenda in while the government conducts community discussions (Higher official, Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, Personal communication, April 12, 2022). In order to divert the agenda, they provide suggestions that

implicate the government's failure to protect and secure the community from violence conflicts when the local authority is undertaking community discussion about the on-going conflict. Since the individuals are influential, the community will be persuaded by their argument and began to question its trust towards the government.

Since there are some individuals that reflect the government failure to protect its citizen, undertaking community discussion becomes difficult. They always divert the agenda. However, we –local authority –know that they are working with GPDM armed group. For instance, we detained one of these individuals, since we caught him while providing medicine for the combatants at night. Nonetheless, the community was objecting us because they do not know what he is doing. (Ibid)

For Re-gaining power: The professionals and politicians join the armed struggle when they are unable to acquire their working allowance or lose their position in different reasons including lack of potential (Higher official in BGR, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). After they join, the government re-appoint them for higher official position, due to they will have combatant's patronage. This implies the retired Gumuz officials are using the conflict for re-gaining their power.

To be Saved from the Attack: some of the Gumuz community also forced to join the struggle in order to be saved from the imposed attack on them. Due to the GPDM armed group are fighting with both the government and the highlanders, Gumuz community is vulnerable to be victim by both of them. The dividing line between the combatants and the civilian is blurred. As a result, civilian Gumuzs are also victim by both the 'red-skin' highlanders that dominantly live in the urban areas, GPDM armed groups and the government.

Most of the Gumuz community displaced to the forest. The government faces difficulties to differentiate the civilian from the combatant while undertaking the law enforcement measure towards the GPDM armed group (Personal Communications with Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel; Higher official in Police and Crime Investigation Bureau of BGR, April 12-13, 2022). The blurred dividing line between the combatants and the civilian exposed the displaced Gumuz communities to be attacked by the government forces.

In most cases, an armed group may attack its own community when it has weak structure and lack source of income, since it faces challenge to survive. Particularly, the armed group might raid its community when the community is not supporting it. For instance, the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) was raiding its people by cutting off their hands, lips, noses and ears (Borzello, 2007). Similarly, GPDM combatants raid Gumuz community if they refused to

join their armed struggle and if it suspects them for providing information for the government. Mistir (2021) also stated that the GPDM combatants force youth Gumuzs without their family consent and raid that refused to join. The armed group was also killing the community elders that tried to resolve the conflict in a peaceful manner (Ibid). Displaced Gumuz residents of Kemash that participated on the focus group discussion (13 April 2022) also stated that, “GPDM combatants forced us –the community –to join them; however, if we refused to accept, they began to attack us.”

Moreover, the ‘red-skin’ highlanders might also attack Gumuz civilian to take a revenge for what the combatants did to them –tit-for-tat action of the GPDM attack. Mistir (2021) also outlined that, Gumuz civilians were raided by the ‘light-skinned’ peoples who were victims by the rebels of GPDM armed group and responded to their revenge. Therefore, the Gumuz community will be forced to join the GPDM armed group to save themselves from all the attack. For instance, a former combatant of GPDM armed group (Personal communication, April 13, 2022) stated that,

I had been working in road construction with Chinese company. However, when the bandits attack our organization, the Chinese withdraw from the area. Then, if I had stayed in the area, the combatants will kill me by considering me as the government’s agent who collect information and inform the government about their movement. If I travelled to the urban areas, the highlanders will kill me by considering me as Gumuz combatant. I did not have other choice but to join the combatants in the forest. Therefore, I joined with them.

4.2. Actors involved in the process

DDR is a multidimensional process that comprises different stakeholders at national, international and civil societies (Idris, 2016). Although the challenge of most DDR processes in Africa is the issue of ownership (OSFU, 2011; Idris, 2016); the 2021 Ethiopia’s DDR on GPDM armed group had other more serious challenges. The process was nationally owned by Ethiopian government in both involved institutions and funding. The Federal government funded 80 million birr for the DDR program. Besides JTF, Ministry of Peace (MoP), community and clan elders, regional and local authorities of the BG, ex-combatants were also involved in the DDR Program. Regional Peace and Security of Amahara had a supportive role the program.

Joint Task Force (JTF): it was established in the region with being responsible for undertaking law-enforcement operation to restore region’s peace and security. It was also responsible to undertake and led the DDR process by conducting peace call for the GPDM

combatants. It contains different governmental institutions including; Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Federal Police, Regional Peace and Security of Benishangul Gumuz. ENDF was the coordinator of JTF as well as the DDR program.

After conducting several discussions that relay on the status of the region, JTF divide responsibilities by establishing Operational, Developmental and Political teams (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). The operational team was responsible for protecting the security of the region and safeguarding the emerging peace process from any challenge. The development team was responsible for resuming different developmental initiatives, which started before, and reconstruction. The political team was mainly responsible for working on the attitude of the community that aims to correct their perception towards the new political reform led by the Prosperity party. Furthermore, it had the responsibility of rebuilding the social cohesion, which is weakened by the conflict, aiming to build the attitude of safeguarding one another from any external threat imposed on the community. To undertake its role, different conferences and discussions with the local community was held. Moreover, based on the community critics, some governmental officials had been replaced by others, investigated and also detained.

National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS): The main role of NISS which is given by the proclamation 804/2013 is to gather information and provide reliable intelligence for the intelligence consumers. In this program, since NISS is part of the joint-task force, it participates from preparation stage to its implementation. Among several tasks its main role were providing reliable intelligence for the operational team, targeting of combatants, providing ‘*tehadiso*’ training for both the ex-combatants and the region’s security forces, facilitating the reintegration package (Ibid).

Minister of Justice: Minister of Justice did not have direct engagement on the DDR. Rather its role was conducting investigation on the committed crimes by being together with Federal Police in a parallel processes to the DDR, in a processes somehow contradictory to the terms of the peace agreement on amnesty. The investigation does not only focus on the GPDM combatants. Rather it is focused on the overall crimes and atrocities committed; the opened cases contain GPDM combatants, other combatants and non-combatants suspects. According to higher official from Minister of Justice (Personal communication, March 30, 2022), the investigation focuses on; what kind of crime was committed? Who are the perpetrators that

committed and voluntarily participated on the crime? Based on this 18 cases are opened, however, the courts reached a verdict on only one while the other 17 cases are still pending. From 240 up to 3 individuals are suspected on the case (Ibid). The cases are opened with or without the presence of suspects. There is an opened case on Shabal Mensur and Shabal Kabas, who are the leaders of the armed group, without their presence.

Moreover, Minister of Justice has also conducted discussions with the community that aims to create awareness. The primary responsibility of the Minister of Justice is to maintain rule of law through creating awareness about criminal activities. However, when crimes are committed, undergoing appropriate investigation, opening cases and making perpetrators accountable for what they did are also among its mandates.

According to higher official in Ministry of Justice (Personal Communication, March 30, 2022), there were five major challenges while undertaking investigation and legal trial. First, gathering evidence during on-going conflict is very challenging. On one hand the conflict is active. On the other hand, evidences have to be gathered immediately, otherwise, it may disappear. This situation offers a challenge for the investigators. As, a result, some individuals are released by lack of evidence. For instance, the investigation groups were also participating on funerals, since the conflict was on-going.

Second, finding the victims was difficult, since the community displaced from their village. In most cases the witness are also the victims. Third, due to the conflict is prolonged; the witnesses are not willing to testify the truth in order to secure themselves. Even if they agreed to testify, they do not want to testify the whole truth, since they frighten recurrence of the conflict. Fourth, there is a problem with getting the case started, making an appointment and getting the case resolved. This will slow down the person being questioned and delay the trial. Lastly, there is lack of commitment towards the political leaders of the region to undergo the investigation in a consistent manner. For instance,

They –local authorities –were not fully cooperative due to they are also involved in the case. During this investigation several leaders including Minister and the Vice President of the region were detained. (Ibid)

Ministry of Peace: it was responsible for reintegration phase through working on the developmental initiatives and infrastructures. This includes constructing road, water, electric power, and creating job opportunities. The budget for this project was half billion birr; however, since the areas are not stable, the projects were not realized (NISS Staff, Personal

communication, April 6, 2022). Moreover, it also works on providing humanitarian intervention for the Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) through collaborating with National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) and other international and domestic organizations who focuses on this area (Middle level leader, Ministry of Peace, Personal communication, March 27, 2022). However, the on-going conflict obstructs the organization from undertaking its responsibilities.

Regional Peace and Security of BG: it is responsible to restore region's peace and security by collaborating with other security sectors. Also, it participates on undertaking investigation with cooperating Minister of Justice and Federal Police (Higher official, Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, Personal communication, April 12, 2022).

Local Elders and Religious leaders: both local and religious leaders had a mediating role during pre-negotiation phase. They were serving as a mediator by transferring message among the JTF and the combatants while they are in a bush (Personal communications with Gumuz community elders, and member of Peace-building committee in Metekel, April 14-15, 2022). This implies the community elders had an effort on identifying the need of the armed group which is necessary for negotiation and signing peace agreement.

Ex-combatants: ex-combatants are the other key stakeholder in the DDR program. In most DDR programs, the focus is on male ex-combatants; nonetheless, beside the male ex-combatants, the program should also consider women and child ex-combatants as well as their supportive and dependants. Kuehnast (2020) argues that the resolution needs to adapt an inclusive analytical framework considering "both the biological sex of victims and armed actors as well as the socio-cultural roles men and women play in their society". This implies in order to successfully resolve the conflict; concept of gender has to be considered in every armed conflict analysis, due to besides men women may also engage in the conflict as a combatant or supporter by preparing food for the combatants. Therefore, considering only men combatants in undergoing DDR will undermine its success rate.

The other main issue in the concept of inclusiveness is incorporating the top leaders of the armed group. However, the main problem here is finding the top leader of the armed group and reaching a peace agreement with them. If the top leaders are not included in the peace process, the emerging peace processes are likely to be ruined and the conflict might relapse, since they could remobilize the former combatants. According to personal interviewed data,

the DDR program was not able to include all the top leaders, which discussed on the section of composition of the armed group, and combatants of the armed group.

4.3.Negotiation Process of the DDR Program

Negotiation is the heart for resolving an armed conflict in a peaceful manner. However, it is not as such simple to conduct. Besides the substance or agenda of the peace proposal and inclusiveness, the time where the conflicting parties agreed to conduct negotiation is the other critical point that can determine the success or failure of ending the armed conflict through peace negotiation. Zartman (2001) argued that, the perfect ripe moment for undertaking peace negotiation is when all the conflicting parties are at Mutually Hurting Stalemate (MHS) point. This implies if the conflicting parties are not in MHS state, the emerged peace initiation will be ruined or its chance of failure is highly likely. Moreover, different scholars (Zartman, 1989; Schiff, 2008) breakdown the peace negotiation process in to three main phases; pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-negotiation (implementation phase).

Coming to the case study, as several personal interviews revealed, the peace agreement began to negotiate when the region's peace and security is becoming more fragile, which results to different killings, ambush, and internal displacement of several civilians including the Gumuz community (Personal Communications with middle level leaders of NISS and Regional Peace and Security of BG, 2022). This implies both conflicting parties were at the point of MHS. When the region peace and stability becomes fragile, the Federal government established Joint-Task-Force (JTF), which incorporates both the Federal and the regional government and institutions. The JTF has two main tasks; first, neutralizing the structure of GPDM armed group with military means; second, calling those combatants, which joined the armed group with wrong promises and enforcements, in order to give them second chance of living through peace negotiation and DDR (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). This implies that, force or the threat of force was used as a major mechanism used by the government for bringing the combatants to peace negotiation that leads to the introduction of DDR.

4.3.1. Prenegotiation Process

As several scholars (Schiff, 2011; Doyle and Hegele, 2020; Zartman, 1989) stated, prenegotiation –which also known as ‘*talks before talks*’ –is discreet interaction among the conflicting parties in order to come to the table and start an official negotiation. It begins

when one party considers negotiation as conflict resolution method and shares its initiation to the other party in a concealed way without anyone knowing. However, it ends when the conflicting parties agree to conduct official negotiation by ending the violent armed conflict or when one party rejects the negotiation quest raised by the other party (Zartman, 1989).

As aforementioned, the GPDM armed group accepted the peace negotiation initiated by the government. The community elders were playing key role in the prenegotiation process that serve as a bridge through creating the discreet interaction between the government and the combatants. The community elders were able to identify the key questions of the GPDM armed group and persuade the combatants to accept the negotiation request of the government and come to the negotiation table (Personal Communications with Gumuz community elders and member of Peace-building committee in Metekel, April 14-15, 2022).

However, when the power balance stoops towards the government following its strong military measure, several GPDM combatants began to accept the JTF's quest of peace negotiation through letters by claiming that they were enforced to join the armed struggle (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). The peace negotiation question was first accepted from *Dangur*, *Bulen* and *Beguji* Woredas respectively (Ibid). Finally, other combatants from the Guba *Woreda* also began to accept peace negotiation. This implies, in this case, the parties' agreement to conduct formal negotiation leads to the closer of prenegotiation phase and start of negotiation phase.

4.3.2. Rational for Engaging in the Peace Negotiation

Besides agreeing to undertake peace talks, the parties should be genuine and sincere to resolve the conflict in a peaceful means through negotiation when they come to the negotiation table. The party rational for requesting or accepting negotiation is key factor that contribute to the success and failure of the negotiation process because conflicting parties might use the negotiation to buy time until they organize and militarize themselves.

Coming to the case, the governments' rational for undertaking negotiation is different from the armed groups rational. The characteristics of the insurgent group's struggle enforced the government to engage in the peace negotiation (Ibid). GPDM combatants are fighting guerrilla warfare. Most of the time, they are using traditional spears. However, spears are available in most Gumuz's house, since it is also used for hunting. On one side, most young Gumuzs join the GPDM combatants to fight with spears without taking military training. On

the other side, several Gumuz communities also use spears and are displaced to the forest, where the government and combatants are battling. The blurred line among the combatants and civilian together with the topography of the region, which is covered by forest, makes the government law enforcement mission difficult to differentiate the combatants from the civilian, since the combatants are using the community to protect themselves. Furthermore, although the on-going conflict results different atrocities from both the government and the combatants side, the combatants of GPDM are also its own citizen since it is intrastate conflict. Therefore, resolving intrastate conflict in a peaceful means is more advantageous than armed struggle.

On the other side, except the former combatants of GPDM, almost all participants stated that, the goal GPDM armed group for engaging in the peace negotiation is time buying. Before GPDM accepts the negotiation, their position for coming to the negotiation table were releasing the leaders of GPDM prisoners, withdrawing national defence force and withdrawing the highlanders from Metekel. However, the government refused their pre-condition, particularly on withdrawal the highlanders from Metekel, for negotiation. This situation worsened the conflict leading to maximize the combatant's activities for looting, killing and displacing while the government intensifies its law enforcement action. Nonetheless, when the government military action is serious and the GPDM are losing their forest –in which they were using it for hiding during battling –through wildfire, as per key informants quoted below, the negotiation is used as means to buy time. Whereas, when the government military action becomes weak while they are in negotiation, they remobilized and began their armed struggle. This implies GPDM armed group were not sincere about the negotiation. A former leader of Prosperity party in Metekel (Personal communication, 13 April 2022) stated that;

The combatants used the negotiation for time paying until the summer season comeback and they reorganize themselves, due to the forests are burned by wildfire. I am telling the truth. If I need to take side, I would side for them because I am Gumuz. They –combatants –clearly know that the war between the Federal government and TPLF will continue.

4.3.3. Negotiation

The government and GPDM armed group officially conducted the peace negotiation process in between 9 government officials and 14 leaders of the combatants for three consecutive months starting from March up to May 2021. The negotiation was signed between the

region's President Ashadli Hassen, from the Government side, and Mr. Jegnamaw Mangwa, representing the rebel groups, in May 18, 2021 at Gilgel Beles (Metekel Zone Communication Bureau, 2021). However, the GPDM top leaders, particularly leaders of the military wing, who were in Sudan, did not participate in the negotiation process. After signing the peace agreement, President Ashadli Hassan promised that the signed peace accord would be implemented without any delayance based on the legal framework and potential of the regional government. Moreover, the President called demobilized members of the armed group as '*Ambassador of Peace*' and asked them to make an effort in calling the active combatants of the group that refused to demobilize (Ibid).

The community elders' role in the negotiation process was limited. Rather they had a role of facilitating that aims to create convenient environment for the negotiation (Personal communications with Gumuz community elders, April 14-15, 2022). According to personal communications with several participants and the written peace agreement, the negotiation points in both the government and the armed group sides are presented as follows.

On the Regional Government Side

The government agreed to implement seven major points. First, to release all the imprisoned members and leaders of GPDM, who were detained at both regional and Federal level. Second, to grant amnesty for combatants and leaders of GPDM, who accepted the government call of peace, for all the crime they committed while they were in struggle. Third, to appoint former combatants and their leaders in a leadership position ranging from regional up to *Woreda* government structure based on their competence and interest without violating other populations, who lives in the region, right of representation. Accordingly, two positions in regional, three positions in Zonal, and four positions in each six *Woredas* of Metekel were reserved to the ex-combatants and their leaders. Fourth, in addition to the government appointment, every combatant who has different profession like agriculture, teaching, special force of the region, police, health will be employed without any prerequisite.

Five, provide special support for former combatants who wants to access agricultural land in individual or organized in association way. For instance, the government will provide generator for irrigation, farm tractor, and modern beehive to the ex-combatants. The government will provide five hectares rural agricultural land at individual level for those ex-combatants who did not have it before. However, those ex-combatants organized in association will access the rural agricultural land based on their members' size.

Six, provide advance and assistance for those ex-combatants who want to organize themselves and engage in a small business. Lastly, provide residential land for former combatants, who do not have one before, at their place of birth with undertaking appropriate verification. Former top leaders of the combatant in each of six *Woredas* –six leaders –to acquire 300 square (each) residential lands in central Metekel. Each of eight former group leaders of the combatant to acquire 400 square urban residential lands in their own *Woreda*. Former combatants or members of GPDM expected to acquire not less than 500 square residential lands in their *Kebele*; however, an individual cannot acquire two or more urban residential land.

Position of the combatants in GPDM	Number	Size of residential land at individual level (square meter)	Place of land	Total (square meter)
Top leaders	6	300	Central Metekel	1800
Group leader	8	400	<i>Woreda</i>	3200
Combatant	unknown	>=500	<i>Kebele</i>	Unknown

Table: residential land distribution plan of negotiation (illustrated by the researcher)

On the GPDM armed group side

The GPDM armed group also agreed on six main points. First, to disarm itself. Second, to demobilize and properly follow ‘*tehadiso*’ training provided by the government at the demobilization centre. Third, after the training accomplishment, the combatants are expected to engage in a productive work according to their contract with government. Fourth, to stop its former act of killing and displacing peoples, who lives in all *Woredas* of Metekel, based on their skin colour and identity. Fifth, to live in harmony through accepting diversity since Metekel is the home of different peoples with different ethnic background and identity. Lastly, respect and enforce both the regional and Federal constitutions.

4.3.4. Challenging issues during the negotiation process

The conflicting parties easily agreed up on the issues of job creation, urban resident lands, and power. Though they easily agreed on the power sharing, there was a challenge on the number and type of power. The combatants were seeking more power especially at the regional level. For instance, a member of regional cabinet in BGR (Personal Communication, April 12, 2022) stated that,

They –the combatants –were claiming that, ‘since we are the majorities among the indigenous ethnic groups, we have to led the regional state. We need more key powers at the regional level.’ However, it was difficult to do.

While the regional government had a challenge in releasing prisoners because some of the detainees are suspect on committing grave crimes like mass killings, the issue of disarmament was also a challenge to easily agree on the combatant’s side. For instance, former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel (Personal communication, 13 April 2022), who participated on the negotiation process, stated that;

I was opposing on the issue of releasing prisoners; it is still my position. I believe that releasing the prisoners is being irresponsible. I told them not to agree on it; however, they –regional government officials –did not want to listen to me.

Furthermore, during the negotiation process, GPDM armed group had raised the issue of re-registering GPDM party and opening its office at regional, Zonal and *Woredal* level as one of the negotiation agendas. However, the regional government rejected its request. As a result, it failed to incorporate it in the negotiation agendas.

4.4.Implementation Process of the DDR Program

4.4.1. Targeting

In DDR program, targeting implies an identification of combatants by using integrated forces before their demobilization takes place. As stated in the previous section, GPDM armed group has its own structure. The leaders of GPDM, who participated on the negotiation, together with the JTF able to identify the combatant based on their clan and *Woreda*. Moreover, since the combatants originated from the Gumuz community, they have family member from the community, which makes them easy to trace (Personal Communications with middle level leader in NISS and higher official in Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, 2022). Therefore, their family member, name and address used to identify them.

Accordingly, though the government planned to demobilize 4500 combatants, only 3300 identified and organized based on their original place (Ibid). By using this technique, several combatants from Wenbera, Dbate, Bulen and Dangur *Weredas* were easily identified and able to demobilized; however, some combatants mainly from Wenbera and Guba *Weredas* choose to prolong their armed struggle and failed to demobilize (Ibid).

4.4.2. Disarmament

Different scholars outlined that all conflicting parties who participate in the peace negotiation should have a common consensus on the time and scope of disarmament, and incorporate it in the peace accord (Lenisse, 2007; UNDP, 2005). As aforementioned, there was a challenge to

agree on the issue of disarmament since the combatants resisted it. However, the representatives of GPDM agreed to disarm itself and incorporated the issue of disarmament in the peace accord.

Nonetheless, all participants stated that, the GPDM armed group refused to disarm itself at the implementation phase of disarmament. They refused to disarm before they come to the demobilization centre. Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel Zone (Personal communication, 13 April 2022) stated that,

They –GPDM combatants –refused to disarm themselves at Woreda level and promised to disarm at Zone. The government allows them to do by claiming 'ለሰላም ሲባል መንግሥት ሆደሰፊ መሆን አለበት' –meaning: the government has to be tolerant for the sake of peace.

However, even after they came to the demobilization centre, they refused to disarm by claiming that they had to protect themselves from the government. Again, the government and the GPDM armed group began to re-negotiate in the demobilization centre aiming to resolve their disagreement on the timing of disarmament. As most participants stated, both parties agreed to assemble the combatant's weapons in one office in a way that GPDM can control it. Accordingly, the combatants collected their weapons, organized it in *Woreda*, and locked it in one room, while they are in training. However, the key for the room were in the hand of the combatants. For instance, member of the Cabinet of the BG regional government (April 12, 2022) stated that,

They –GPDM combatants –gather their weapons and locked it in room. Besides the key, they also have their own program for safeguarding the room. According to the program, two combatants will guard the room while the others are in training.

This implies, though the government had a leading role in the negotiation process, the GPDM armed group began to lead in the implementation phase of disarmament phase. In one hand, it shows the government weakness to prolong its leading role in the implementation phase of the peace accord. The government failure to properly implement the peace accord and disarm the ex-combatants before they come to the *Woredas* enforces it to transfer its leading role and agree on GPDM's proposal. Because, all the conflicting parties are armed at the demobilization centre of urban area where different civilians live. On the other hand, the GPDM actions of assigning guard for their collected weapons verified their lack of trust on the government as well as the peace accord, since the negotiation was not based on trust rather fear of the governments intensified force. This may lead to spoil the peace consolidation process and threaten the host community security during implementing reintegration phase.

4.4.3. Demobilization

While the implementation phase of disarmament role is to disarm the ex-combatants physically, demobilization role is to transform them to civilian life that includes mental disarmament which in turn helps to disable the armed group structure (UN/OSAA, 2007; Walt, 2010). Though government and the GPDM had agreed to demobilize and properly follow ‘tehadiso’ training, the specific place of demobilization centre and the round of demobilization were not stated in the peace accord. As several participants stated, the combatants resist demobilizing all their members in one round and the selected demobilization centre of ‘Pawi Training Center’, where the regional government planned to undergo the tehadiso training (Personal Communications with higher official of Police and crime investigation bureau of BGR, former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel, and middle level leader in NISS, 2022). The claimed reason for their resistance on Pawi Training Center is historical trauma of mass killing (Ibid). In 1980s, beating and mass killings was committed on civilians, mainly settlers, by the Derge government in Pawi during its implementation of forced resettlement program that aimed to overcome the famine (An Africa Watch Report, 1991). Because of the outbreak drought and famine, peoples from draught affected areas mainly Wollo and Tigray told by the government to receive card for food rations and supplies in different places including Pawi. Accordingly, when peoples gathered in Pawi, they encircled by the armed forces and forced to be in truck for resettlement program, and beaten and killed those who refused to do (Ibid). This history of mass killing created truma on the GPDM combatants to gather in Pawi again.

Again the government and GPDM began to re-negotiate for the third time to resolve their disagreement on the selection of demobilization centre and round of the training. As a result, the government agreed on the GPDM’s proposal of conducting demobilization in three rounds and select ‘The Teachers Training Center’ as a demobilization centre, though it had invested more than 200,000 birr for maintaining Pawi Training Center. A former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel (Personal communication, April 13, 2022) that directly engaged in the negotiation and implementation process of the DDR stated that,

First, they –combatants –were proposing to take the tehadiso in each of their own Woredas by claiming to protect their villages and themselves. When we –government officials –refuse it, they provide another proposal to take the training at The Teachers Training Center at Metekel in three rounds.

This implies, similar to the disarmament phase, the GPDM armed group was leading the implementation of demobilization phase. In addition, the GPDM resistance on Pawi Training

Center and round of demobilization verified their lack of trust on the government as well as the peace accord. Even though the history of mass killing has happened, Ethiopia has undergone different political and governmental changes after the claimed mass killing year. The ex-combatants refused to demobilize its entire cell, which assist them to have some active combatants in the forest for their protection. This implies that the remobilization of ex-combatants is highly likely since they have no trust on the peace accord that aimed to resolve the conflict peacefully. In addition, it will hinder the act of disabling the armed group structure.

According to their revised agreement of conducting tehadiso training in three rounds at Teachers Training Center, the regional government transferred student who were in the Training Center to Pawi Training Center, and began to demobilize ex-combatants of GPDM. Registration and documentation of the ex-combatant's profile conducted after their demobilization. Among the targeted 3200 ex-combatants, 2140 are able to take one-month tehadiso training in two different rounds (Personal Communications with middle level leader in NISS, member of the BG regional Cabinet, and former leader of PP in Metekel, 2022). The training includes; Federalism, entrepreneurship, ideology of Prosperity Party, equality, psychology, psychotherapy, criminal law, ethics and discipline, national consensus and national interest, current situations of BGR that focuses on development. There was also a self-reflection sessions conducted by the ex-combatants on issues like how they are felt after they take the training, if they could connect the training to their real life, and their next interest. A middle level leader in NISS (Personal Communication, March 23, 2022) that participated on providing training for the ex-combatants stated that,

From the ex-combatants reflection, I can see that most of them are positive, however, they need more effort to change. Nonetheless, the training was delivered by the highlanders, rather than their own peoples. This offers them not to have a sense of belongingness. It does not touch their heart.

This opinion of the participant shows that the provided training was not sufficient to transform the former combatants to a civilian life. This implies that, they are not ready to reintegrate with their host society and resume their civilian life, which will maximize their likelihood of remobilization. Besides the insufficient training, it was not provided based on the plan. Though the plan was providing training in three rounds, only two rounds were conducted. In addition, most of the combatants remobilize without completing the tehadiso training from the demobilization cantonment (Ibid).

Demobilization phases need to have four key elements, which are legal, psychological, health and economic (UNDP, 2005). Accordingly, the demobilization phase of GPDM ex-combatants relatively fulfilled three elements, which are legal, psychological and economic. However, there was not physical and mental health screening program. In the legal aspect, though trainings related to law delivered and their profile recorded while they are moved to the training cantonment, any kind of identity card was not issued for them. Though trainings related to psychology were delivered, its primary aim of disarming and separating the ex-combatants from their former military chain mentally was unsuccessful due to several reasons. First, the ex-combatants are not physically disarmed, since the weapons are still under their control; an individual cannot be mentally disarmed with holding a gun in physical. Second, the leaders of the ex-combatants were not at the cantonment while taking the training. Rather, they were at hotels, reserved by the government, with their own ex-combatant guards. However, this will preserve the structure of the GPDM rather than diminishing it and also it shows the presence of distrust among the government and GPDM. Third, the ex-combatants had a communication with the rest cell of GPDM active combatants who are in the forest. The government failure to cut-off their communication leads them to conduct on criminal activities, to share intelligence about the on-going training, as well as the law enforcement situation taken by the government. This will quest the demobilization of ex-combatants from the very beginning, since their mentality is still considered as active member in the GPDM armed group structure. A key informant (Personal communication, March 23, 2022) who participated on the training stated that,

There were also some ex-combatants that cooperate with the active combatants by facilitating criminal activities, sharing intelligence, while they are still taking the tehadiso training. They commit by themselves or make sure for its completeness of the crime, since they can easily move in and out with holding their gun –while they go out from the cantonment.

Finally, in the economic aspect, urban residential land distributed for some ex-combatants in each *Woreda* and Zone, however, the government failed to fully distribute as it promised in the peace accord. In addition, the government shares its power for the ex-combatants' two positions, (i.e., finance directorate, and vice head of culture and tourism bureau at regional level); three positions, (i.e., department head of Communication, department head of environmental protection, department head of urban trade and industry at the Zonal level) and five position in each *Woredas* of Metekel. Moreover, the former combatants were accessing weekly pocket money of 200birr and 1000 birr when they complete the training and leave the

cantonment (Former leader of PP in Metekel, Personal Communication, April, 13, 2022). This implies that, the reinsertion package is much limited which might hinder the reintegration phase. The government re-promised ex-combatants other development related issues to deliver after their reintegration; however, it failed to keep its promises.

4.4.4. Reintegration

Reintegration phase is the critical and most challenging phase of DDR that might play its own role on the success or failure of one DDR program. Accordingly, the reintegration phase of GPDM armed group DDR program can be considered as unsuccessful. Incorporating 4500 ex-combatants in the DDR program were planned, while 3200 are targeted and demobilized, only 2140 are participated the *tehadiso* training. However, only less than 120 ex-combatants were reintegrated while the rest of 3080 including those who were expected to take the training in the third round, remobilized to their former struggle. While some of the ex-combatants remobilized by abandoning their *tehadiso* training, the rest are remobilized without even taking *tehadiso* at all. This implies, only 3.75 % ex-combatants are reintegrated among the targeted, while 2.67 % ex-combatants reintegrated from the planned.

4.5. Did the DDR Succeed?

The 2021 DDR program of Ethiopia against GPDM armed group failed in all of its phases: disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Although it was challenging issue to reach at agreement, GPDM armed group agreed to disarm itself and disarmament was incorporated in the written peace accord. However, the implementation phase of disarmament failed since none of the demobilized former combatants of GPDM was not disarmed throughout the whole process. Literatures shows that disarming ex-combatants while implementing the signed peace accord is the preferable way compared to disarming them after the formal DDR program takes place (UNDP, 2005; Lenisse, 2007). Similarly, the case of 2021 GPDM DDR also verified this argument, since it totally failed to enforce the phase of disarmament. This in turn results to the spoiling of consolidated peace through compromising the government to take-over its leading power to the ex-combatants, and failing to neutralize the GPDM armed group structure.

The demobilization phase looked successful at its initial phase. Because the implementation phase of demobilization relatively fulfilled three key elements of legal, psychological and economic, while it failed to undergo physical and mental health screening program. Furthermore, it was able to provide *tehadiso* training for 2140 from the targeted 3200 ex-combatants. However, the primary goal of demobilization phase was to disarm the mentality

of ex-combatants and transform them to a civilian life. The GPDM armed group remobilized almost all of its demobilized ex-combatants including those who completed the *tehadso* training. What is the significance of providing the *tahadso* training if the ex-combatants that completed the training remobilized with others who did not take the training? This implies that demobilization phase failed to attain its goal since its outcome verified its failure.

Lastly, the reintegration phase also failed since only 3.75 % ex-combatants are reintegrated among the targeted, while the others remobilized and join their former struggle. Therefore, the 2021 DDR of GPDM failed in all of its phases. Rather the conflict relapsed and widespread to the neighbouring Zone of Kemash which results to different atrocities and displacements. After the implementation of DDR program, there are still several killing, kidnapping, forced internal displacement, attacking governmental offices, military attacks that concentrated on the security sectors and ambush. The community of the region is unable to resume its social life without any fear in a peaceful manner. Moreover, in April 2022 another DDR program is re-introduced in Metekel and Kemash, which verifies the failure of the first DDR program.

However, the preliminary data collection shows that, the on-going 2022 DDR did not introduce new written peace accord rather the conflicting parties agreed to implement the former peace agreement of 2021. Accordingly, the DDR program is implementing in both Metekel and Kemash without evaluating the former program. It looks like there is still challenge on the implementation of disarmament phase. For instance, in Kemash, ex-combatants of GPDM demobilized to the city of Kemash with holding their guns. Even after they arrived in the city, they refused to disarm. In order to minimize the confrontation and potential violent conflict at the urban areas, the government forces stopped moving in the city and stayed in their cantonment. The community is massively displaced from their home by frightening the free movement of armed ex-combatants of GPDM. Similarly, in Metekel, the ex-combatants of GPDM are agreed to disarm before their demobilization. However, they provide only small arms by hiding their smart and heavy weapons at the forest. Therefore, although it needs further research, the preliminary data shows that the successful likelihood of 2022 DDR of GPDM is highly unlikely.

4.6.Challenges of the DDR Program

The 2021 DDR program of GPDM armed group had several challenges that contributed to its failure. Lack of commitment to the peaceful means, lack of inclusiveness, lack of trust, lack of national and local coordination, conflict entrepreneurs, characteristics of ex-combatants,

on-going conflict, and effect of other internal and external conflicts are among the challenges of the program. These challenges are briefly explained as follows.

Lack of Commitment to the Peaceful Means: in all involved actors, lack of commitment to resolve the conflict in a peaceful means was the main challenge that hindered the program success. First, though the government tried to implement some of the promises like power and urban residential land distribution, it lacks full commitment to keep its promises. The government promised to release the imprisoned members of GPDM leaderships, to forgive combatants and leaders of GPDM for what they did, create different job opportunity, to provide farm tractors, to offer civil servant job for educated ex-combatants, to integrate the ex-combatants with security sectors like regional police and special force of BG. Nonetheless, none of them had been implemented. Moreover, though it was not incorporated in the peace accord, the government promised to construct social services. For example, the Ministry of Peace has promised to bring five projects in Metekel, which includes project for displaced people by GERD and Jawi sugar factory, trans-boundary development between Sudan and Ethiopia. These five projects were announced in public; nonetheless, most of them were not delivered. A member of the regional Cabinet of BG (Personal Communication, April 12, 2022) stated that,

Some of the promises made during the negotiation process were a little bit overstretched. It was unnecessary to promise what we –government –cannot realize.

Second, some institutions that represent the Federal government had a gap of continuity while undertaking their responsibilities. For instance, Federal Police was absent on the second round training of the ex-combatants (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022). Due to their absence, the second round ex-combatants were unable to take the training which was delivered by the Federal police. As a result, the Federal Police lack of proper planning and execution from the perspective of project implementation enforces the program to be inconsistent.

Third, most of the participants stated that the regional government was not committed to resolve the conflict due to several reasons. The on-going conflict creates internal division among the politicians of Benishangul Gumuz Prosperity Party. This hindered the regional government's commitment and initiatives for peace and law enforcement operations against GPDM armed group, which in turn contribute to the failure of the DDR and prolonging of the armed struggle. On one hand, Most of the officials at the regional government of BGR have

blood relationship with combatants of different armed groups including GPDM (Personal Communications with higher officials in BGR, middle level leader in Regional Peace and Security of BG, April 11-12, 2022). Since they have a contact with their family and relative members, they have a contact with the armed group of GPDM. This kind of officials considers the combatants as the guardian, who can protect their position, and as their second choice (Ibid). On the other hand, some members of the Gumuz who are working on the government structure also share some sentiments of the GPDM insurgent group's questions. For instance, they share the GPDM's claim of holding key power in the regional government, fully exercising self-determination right of Gumuz, and ensuring the land ownership of Metekel zone of the region from the potential threat of land claiming from armed groups of the neighbouring Amhara region and land grabbing. As a result, they do not want to neutralize structure of the insurgent group, since some of the officials desire the rebel group to prolong its struggle. Rather, they were backing the insurgent group by providing different logistics like medicine and weapon. In addition, most participants stated that some local authorities provide operational information and decisions of the Joint Task Force for the combatants (Personal Communications with Academic in Assosa University, and middle level leader in NISS, 2022). For example, a middle level leader in Regional Peace and Security of BG (Personal Communication, April 11, 2022) stated that,

Some authorities sponsor the insurgents in a concealed way. However, when they are asked about their action, they replied that 'they are blackmailed to do it since they are PP.' so, what can we do? Most of their families and relatives are among active combatants.

This implies that, the line that divides the officials from the armed group is blurred. The blurred line affects the DDR program due to they lack commitment towards resolving the conflict in peaceful means. Some of these regional government officials, which share the armed group's claim, desire to resolve their concealed interest in creating tension to the government by using the armed struggle and GPDM armed group as an instrument. This contributed to the failure of the DDR program. However, another participant also stated that the officials had no choice without supporting the rebel groups to save their family members, who live in the conflicting area of Metekel (Ibid).

According to most of the federal and regional government officials, the government's law enforcement action affected the program in both positive and negative way. Although, the on-going law enforcement measures plays a huge role to voluntarily bring the rebels for

negotiation –positive impact –its lack of consistency make them not to lose hope in their armed struggle –negative impact. They also claim that the government failure to take serious and consistent measure as one factor for prolonging the conflict and exposed the security sector for several ambush by the armed group. For instance, former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel (Personal Communication, April 13, 2022) stated that,

They –GPDM combatants –accept the government call for peace while the law-enforcement measure becomes stronger; however, when the law-enforcement weakens, they remobilize. The government forces are not willing to take serious measures towards them due to the fear of being blamed for killing civilian and over sympathy to the rebels.

This claim of the federal and regional government officials verified that they are not committed to resolve the conflict in a peaceful means, since they are argue that the actions of the JTF should have consistently continued throughout the DDR. Rather than working to build trust in between the government and ex-combatants, the government officials still want to resolve the conflict using force and deterrence. It undermined the success of the program since it entrenched the existed lack of trust.

On the other hand, some members of Gumuzs who are working on the government structure also share some sentiments of the GPDM combatant. For instance, they share the GPDM quest of empowering Gumuz and fear of losing Metekel by the Amaharas (Higher official in BGR, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). This creates a division among the unity of regional government officials. As a result, they sponsored the insurgent group in a concealed way, while they are in the government structure, or join the armed struggle by abandoning their job. Mistir (2021) also stated that some of regional Special Forces and Police force members are allegedly join the GPDM rebel groups and provide weapon support for the insurgent group. Moreover, some participants stated that,

When the joint task forces planned to take a military measure on them –GPDM armed group –some officials of the local authority will inform the combatants through phone call about government forces movement before they –government force –reach to the place. (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022)

They –some governmental officials who work with the group –transfer weapons of the government to the GPDM armed group. When they caught, they respond as they did not have the choice, since they are forced to do it. (Higher official in BGR, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022)

There was also lack of commitment on former combatants. The former combatant's lack of commitment to resolve the armed conflict in a peaceful means was the other major challenge

that hindered the program successfulness. The government intensive peace operation together with their suffering by natural disaster and lack of food enforce ex-combatants to accept the government call for peace, aiming to save and reorganize themselves. Their rationality for accepting negotiation exposed them not to be committed on implementing the program.

Moreover, based on the peace accord, middle leaders of the GPDM armed group access power at the Zonal and *Woredal* level. However, after the former combatants came to power, they are not committed to coordinate the demobilization process of the rest active combatants (Ibid). Rather, while some of them support the armed group by holding power, the rest has lost their influential power from the armed group since the combatants considered them as they side-lined them after fulfilling their individual interest of power. For this reason, they even could not stop their own cell from remobilization.

Lack of Inclusiveness: the failure of participating all the involved actors mainly the leaders and combatants of GPDM was the other major challenge that affect the program negatively. On one side, the group has several top leaders in political and military wings, as stated in the previous section of the GPDM profile; however, none of them were participated on the program. During the time of negotiation, Gragn Gudeta was in prison, while the others were in Sudan. Though the government was agreed to free the imprisoned leaders and members of the GPDM armed group, it failed to implement it. As a result, Gragn Gudeta, who was the co-founder and chairperson of GPDM political party, failed to participate in the DDR program. On the other side, six top leaders and eight group leaders of ex-combatant were participated in the program. This verified that the targeting process of the leaders is problematic which failed to incorporate all the leaders of the armed group as well as the combatants. The sidelined top leaders have the potential to easily undermine the peace initiation by remobilizing the combatants.

Lack of Trust: building trust is key factor in undertaking DDR program especially to implement disarmament phase. However, the DDR program was introduced because of the government forceful peace operation. The GPDM would not agree to engage in the DDR if it was not threatened by the government force operation. Since the program emerged without sincere consent of the GPDM combatants to resolve the conflict in peaceful means, lack of trust was still there in enforcing the whole program until they remobilized. Though disarmament was among the challenging issues to agree up on during the negotiation phase, the conflicting parties were agreed and incorporated it in the peace accord. However, former

GPDM combatants lack of trust on the government together with their violence culture contribute to the failure of disarmament phase, which was incorporated on the peace accord. The combatants' fear of disarming themselves as well as changing the selected demobilization centre emanates from their lack of trust on the government.

Lack of National and Local Coordination: as several participants stated in the personal communication, there was a problem of coordination on the side of the government offices (Personal Communications with middle level leader in Ministry of Peace, and middle level leader in NISS, March 23-27, 2022). The actors who participated on the program evaluate each actor's task whether it was implemented or not. However, they were accusing one another for the failure of the program. While the regional government accused the Federal government for lack of commitment to the overall program as well as to keep its promises, the federal government was also accusing the regional government commitment. Their disagreement to be accountable for what they did verified that there was a lack of coordination between the Federal and regional government. Moreover, the government was not playing its leading role during the implementation phase of the peace accord.

In addition, on one hand, the Ministry of Justice opened a case on the committed crimes while the GPDM combatants are one of the suspect perpetrators accused by different charge cases. On the other side, the regional government agreed to give amnesty for the GPDM combatants in the signed peace agreement. However, the Ministry of Justice is a federal institution and was not part of the DDR program, while the peace accord was signed by the regional government. The investigation was resumed side-by-side with the DDR program. The lack of coordination between the federal government and regional government led to the failure of keeping its promise of releasing the armed group top leaders and combatants. Other active combatants of GPDM, who participated and committed crime during their fighting period, were scared not to be detained by the opened investigation and abstain from demobilizing with their friends. Furthermore, several demobilized former combatants also remobilized by scaring the opened investigation. This implies that, lack of coordination between the national and local actors hindered the successful implementation of the program and contributed to its failure.

Conflict Entrepreneurs: since the initiation of conducting DDR, involved actors, and funding are all derived from the government of Ethiopia, the 2021 GPDM DDR program does not have a challenge of national ownership. However, though national ownership is

significant that contribute for implementing successful DDR program, it may face a challenge of corruption by the local actors. Almost all participants including officials in the regional government strongly accused most of the local actors for using the conflict as a means of wealth accumulation. Since the program is fully nationally owned by the Ethiopian government, the Federal government allocated more than ETB 80 million for the DDR program. The regional government's official earns working allowance in addition to their salary for running the program. Furthermore, other participant accused some individuals who are a member of JTF, particularly ENDF, for prolonging the conflict to stay in the region due to they are using the conflict as means of wealth accumulation (Personal Communications with Community elder, middle level leader in Regional Peace and Security of BG, and former leader of PP in Metekel, April 11-14, 2022). These participants suspect some individuals – who are a member of ENDF –for conducting fraud while undertaking bid of vehicles for convoy. Furthermore, others also accuse individuals who are a member of security sectors, particularly militias, for being unprofessional and participating in wealth accumulation criminal activities like looting (Personal Communications with Gumuz community elders, and higher official in BGR, April 12-15, 2022).

On the other hand, almost all participants accused Sudan and Egypt for being conflict entrepreneur. Since BGR is the area where GERD is located, the security instability of the region undermines the effective construction of the dam by delaying its construction and water filling duration period. This is directly in line with the desire of Sudan and Egypt. Moreover, Sudan share border with BGR that enables the combatants to be in Sudan territory and reorganize themselves. Therefore, although Sudan and Egypt did not involve in the DDR, most participants alleged them for prolonging the conflict and making the region fragile by supporting the armed groups not to lose hope in its armed struggle.

Though the methods and dimensions are different, the aforementioned actors are benefited from the continuation of the armed conflict rather than resolving it in a peaceful means. Therefore, the existence of such conflict entrepreneurs undermined the DDR program and contributed to its failure.

Characteristics of Ex-combatants: the characteristics of ex-combatants were the other challenge that affects the program negatively. On one hand, their dynamic characteristics was hindering the implementation of the peace accord, since they were bringing frequent and changing preconditions even after negotiation results (agreements) were announced. On the

other hand, the former combatants did not want to stay long on contained place like cantonment. They were not interested on taking the training or striving to change; rather they focus on material that the government promised to them, and reintegrate with their society within a short period of time (Middle level leader, NISS, Personal Communication, March 23, 2022).

On-going Conflict: since the DDR program was introduced with fragile peace accord and robust peace operation, the on-going conflict affects the program negatively. On one hand, the robust peace operation created sorrowfulness towards the demobilized ex-combatants, who were in the demobilization centre. The former combatants felt sadness for losing their friends in the battle-field by the government action of law enforcement, since they are not mentally separated from their battle friends and had an active communication with them through telephone. On the other side, these active combatants, who are in battle with the government, were persuading the ex-combatants to stopover it and rejoin them in their struggle. These factors enforce the former combatants to be in unrest situation. This implies that, their psychological mentality is in struggle with their respective friends. As a result, most of them remobilized, while the others began to co-ordinate different criminal activities by being in the training center, which take place in different places of the region.

The on-going conflict was major challenge that hinders the implementation of developmental initiatives announced by the government. For example, several road constructions, which includes road connecting Bambasi to Mao Komo, Asosa to Yaso to Chagni, Nekemt to Harolimu, Arjo to Sogee, were approved and announced to the community. However, due to the impact of the on-going conflict, among all the approved projects, Arjo to Sogee is the only effectively progressing road project.

Moreover, it enforces the community to be internally displaced. For instance, 107,000 members of Gumuz community displaced to the forest in order to escape from the combat (Member of the regional cabinet of BG, Personal Communication, April 12, 2022). Members of Gumuz community that participants in the focus group discussion (Personal Communication, 13 April 2022) stated that,

We –member of Gumuz community –displaced to the forest, when the bandits –GPDM combatants –started to combat with the government to save ourselves. Several peoples injured and died in the battle while they try to escape.

Effect of other Internal and External Conflicts: the BG region's geographical location enforces it be a centre of foreign actors' interest in addition to domestic actors. Different actors, which are currently in a state of conflict with Ethiopia, could support the GPDM armed group in order to create political unrest and security instability that puts Ethiopia under tension. All most all the participants alleged the domestic actors of TPLF and OLF/Shene together with the foreign actors like Sudan and Egypt for supporting the rebel groups through logistics, training and weapon providing. Specially most of the participant strongly accused TPLF for prolonging the armed conflict of GPDM. Conversely, Ashadli Hassan –President of the BGR –members of the Benishangul Gumuz Regional State Prosperity Party Women's League, Gizachew Muluneh –Amhara regional state spokesperson – as well as National Movement of Amhara (NAMA) accused TPLF for backing the rebel groups and fuelling violent conflict in the region, particularly in Metekel (Siyanne, 2020).

On the other hand, Ethiopia Insight also stated that it has a witness that Sudan is assisting GPDM rebel groups by providing training, technical assistance, and monetary (Mistir, 2021). The rising of GPDM's logistic capacity mainly in advanced weapons and war tactics verified that they are backed by external forces. Furthermore, the proliferation of armed group in the BGR serve as an opportunity that eases the difficulties of GPDM to ally itself. These external factors, which are not part of the program, may serve as reinforcing factors for the rebel groups to believe in their armed struggle rather than peace negotiation.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION: A DDR OF THE PAST GENERATIONS?

Ethiopia has numerous experiences on conducting DDR program. The 1991 DDR introduced by the winning party of EPRDF over Derg regime, while the 2000 DDR of mobilized former fighters during Ethio-Eritrea war emerged as a result of termination of the civil war. The 2013 DDR of BPLM conducted by the Ethiopian government initiation with having peace accord in place. The 2018 DDR against Patriotic G-7 and other Eritrea based armed groups were introduced as result of political transition. All the aforementioned DDR are conducted under post-conflict context. Whereas, the 2021 DDR against GPDM armed group emerged as a result of intensive peace operation conducted by the government on an on-going conflict situation.

The 2021 DDR program of GPDM armed group trigger a quest on the past DDR generations since it have different characteristics from all the three generations. First, similar to the first generation, it was not community-centered approach; rather, it more focused on the combatants only. Although different developmental initiatives announced to the community, it did not primarily incorporated in the peace agreement and it did not implemented at all. However, unlike the first generation, it conducted in the context of on-going conflict situation with a fragile peace accord. Second, alike to second generation, the DDR program implemented in an on-going conflict situation, blurred line among the combatants of GPDM and civilian for the government peace operation undertaken by JTF with fragile peace accord. Nonetheless, unlike the second generation, the GPDM combatants did not demobilized voluntarily; rather the JTF robust peace operation threatened and forced them to accept the government peace call. This implies the combatants were not genuinely and voluntarily accept the peace call. The program was also fully undertaken by the Ethiopian government. Third, alike the third generation, it conducted in an on-going conflict context with robust peace support operation with a fragile peace accord. However, unlike the third generation, both the peace support operation and the program was fully conducted by the Ethiopian government without the involvement of third party like UN force or other state. In addition, unlike the second and third generation, the program was combatant centered. Therefore, the 2021 DDR of GPDM armed group does not fit to one of the past DDR generations, which triggers a question on the past generations.

Gumuz People Democratic Movement (GPDM) established in 2009 in Assosa, capital of BGR, aimed to liberate Gumuz peoples from all the injustice and marginalization they are facing. However, it designated as armed group in 2019 following its banning from party lists. After GPDM engaged in armed conflict with the government, it organized itself in two main chambers –military wing and political wing –with different leaders. However, the GPDM armed group is facing struggle in lack of recognition from the government and community. Although the combatants perceive themselves as the freedom fighter of Gumuz people, Federal government of Ethiopia, regional government of Benishangul Gumuz and most community of Gumuz consider GPDM combatants as unnamed armed group, anti-peace force, bandit, and traitors. This implies that the government does not believe that the armed group has a serious and constant identity, and it also does not want to recognize the GPDM armed group as it calls itself. Nonetheless, it negotiated with this armed group.

Based on their position, GPDM armed groups are divided into two; non-secessionist and secessionist groups. Political and economic marginalization, resettlement process for GERD construction, land grabbing, lack of good governance, lack of legitimacy of the ruling party and opposition of Prosperity Party are the claimed positions raised by the non-secessionist group of GPDM armed groups. On the other hand, the secessionist group raised secession of BGR as their position. This group wants to establish '*Free and Sovereign State of Fugn*' that incorporates Benishangul Gumuz and Gambela people's regions of Ethiopia and Blue Nile state of Sudan.

Armed and communal conflict is not a new phenomenon for the BGR. However, organized and coordinated attacks and forced displacements which are mostly perpetrated by GPDM armed groups and others is a new phenomenon for its population. GPDM began its first recruitment and military training at the beginning of 2019 with small members at the border of Sudan. Nonetheless, the regional government's response towards diminishing the military training and movement of GPDM were insignificant while it has information at hand. After 2019, GPDM is able to maximize its organization through logistics and human resources. Several youth Gumuzs were joined GPDM and engaged in the armed struggle due to several pull and push factors. These are problems on 'reoutine' reintegrating former soldiers of ENDF, grievance, fear of losing Metekel Zone, losing hope in government and to be saved from the attack.

The government of Ethiopia funded 80 million ETB for the DDR program. The Joint Task Force (JTF) –that incorporates multidimensional governmental organizations like Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF), National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS), Federal Police, Regional Peace and Security of Benishangul Gumuz –Ministry of Peace, community and clan elders, regional and local authorities of the Benishangul Gumuz, ex-combatants, and Regional Peace and Security of Amahara were among the involved actors in the DDR Program. ENDF was the coordinator of JTF as well as the DDR program.

Though the peace talk was initiated by the government, the combatants were holding the peace-talk issue until the government conducted robust peace operation and the community elder contact them. The community elders of Gumuz were the key actors in the prenegotiation process of the DDR that facilitates talks-before-talks among the conflicting parties of GPDM armed group and the government. They were serving as a messenger though identifying the main positions of the GPDM combatants and the government pre-condition for the peace negotiation. Though the pre-condition for their negotiation was bilateral ceasefire which would be implemented by both the GPDM armed group and government, the government resumed its law-enforcement action on those GPDM combatants who refused to demobilize.

Later on, the government and GPDM armed group come to the peace table with having different rationales. Though the government was sincere about the peace negotiation, its commitment towards implementing the negotiation was problematic. Whereas, the GPDM armed group rationality for engaging in the peace talks was not sincere rather it was for time buying. The strong peace operation of the government together with the hot temperature of the region's climate condition together with their lack of food enforce them to accept the peace call of the government which enables them for survival and time buying.

The peace negotiation was conducted among 9 government officials and 14 leaders of the combatants for three consecutive months starting from March up to May 2021. The agreed issues of the negotiation by the government side are providing amnesty for all members including the imprisoned, appointing former combatants and leaders in a leadership position from regional up to Woredal government structure, creating job opportunity for the combatants, providing advance, special assistance, residential and agricultural land for former combatants.

Disarming themselves, demobilizing and properly follow '*tehadiso*' training provided by the government in the demobilization centre, engaging in a productive work after DDR program conducted, stopping their former criminal activities, living in harmony by accepting diversity, and respecting the constitutional order are the agreed and signed points of negotiation that are expected from the GPDM armed group side. However, all the aforementioned agreed points verified that the armed group is focussing on attaining their own interests. All the agreed points are concentrated on providing different advantages and opportunities for the leaders and combatants of GPDM armed group rather than the Gumuz society. Whereas, GPDM act on the negotiation contradict with its primary aim which was to liberate Gumuz community from all the injustice it was suffering.

The conflicting parties were easily agreed up on the issues of job creation, urban resident lands, and power sharing. However, number and type of power was not easy to agree. On the other side, agreeing to release prisoners was challenging for the government; while disarming itself was challenging for the GPDM armed group. Though re-registering GPDM party and re-opening its office in different places was raised by GPDM armed group as the negotiation point, it failed to incorporate in the peace accord since the government disagrees on it. Nonetheless, this negotiation was not lasting negotiation; rather conflicting parties additionally re-negotiate in two different times.

The government targets the combatants with the help of demobilized leaders of the armed group that participated on the negotiation process and based on the clan, *Woreda* and family member of the combatants. Accordingly, though the government planned to demobilize 4500 combatants, only 3200 were targeted and demobilized from Wenbera, Dbate, Bulen and Dangur *Weredas*. However, some combatants mainly from Wenbera and Guba *Weredas* refused the government's peace call and extend their armed struggle.

Though disarmament was incorporated in the peace accord with difficult challenges, it failed to be implemented, since the GPDM combatants refused to disarm themselves. The claimed reason for their refusal is to safeguard themselves from the government, which verified their lack of trust on the government and peace accord. As a result, the combatants demobilized from forest to the demobilization cantonment with holding their arms. Following re-negotiation held at the demobilization cantonment, the combatants gathered their weapons based on their *Woreda* and locked in one room. However, the key of the room was in the hand of combatants. Furthermore, they prepare their own guarding program that will

safeguard the locked room of the weapons while the others are in the training room. The GPDM combatants takeover the leading role of government on the implementation phase of disarmament.

Implementation phase of demobilization is relatively successful though it has its own constraints. The government re-negotiates with the GPDM for the third times, since the combatants refused to demobilize at once and conduct the *tehadiso* training in *Pawi Training Center*. As a result, the government agreed by the GPDM's proposal of conducting *tehadiso* training in three different rounds at *Teachers Training Center*. However, among 3200 targeted combatants, only 2140 are able to take one-month *tehadiso* training in two different rounds. Federalism, entrepreneurship, ideology of Prosperity Party, equality, psychology, psychotherapy, criminal law, ethics and discipline, national consensus and national interest, current situations of BGR that focuses on development were included in the *tehadiso* training. Implementation of demobilization fulfilled the three components, which are legal, psychological and economic, of demobilization while it failed to fulfil the health aspect.

Implementation of reintegration phase can be considered as failed. Among 3800 identified combatants, only less than 120 ex-combatants were reintegrated. The rest of 3080 former combatants remobilized to their combat including those who were expected to take the training in the third round, which implies that 3.75 % ex-combatants are reintegrated among the targeted, while 2.67 % ex-combatants reintegrated from the planned.

In general, the 2021 DDR program of GPDM is a failed experience of Ethiopia, which contradicts, with its former experience of conducting relatively successful DDR programs. The program failed in all of its phases; i.e., disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. The demobilized ex-combatants of GPDM did not disarm themselves throughout the program. The demobilization phase seems to have relative success in its initial stage since it relatively fulfilled the three elements of legal, psychological and economic. However, if the demobilization phase could not able to change the mentality of former combatants and transform them to a civilian life, how can it be considered as successful? If the trained and non-trained combatants remobilized together, what is the difference of providing *tehadiso* training? This verified that, the implementation of demobilization phase failed to attain its primary goal of disarming the combatants mentally and transform them to civilian life. Similarly, the reintegration phase failed, since almost all of the former combatants remobilized.

The failure of 2021 DDR resulted to the recurring of violent conflict. Again, it followed by widespread of the conflict from Metekel to the neighbouring Zone of Kemash and some parts of Assosa, which results to different atrocities and displacements. After the implementation of DDR program, there are still several killing, kidnapping, forced internal displacement, attacking governmental offices, military attacks that concentrated on the security sectors and ambush. The community of the region is unable to resume its social life without any fear in a peaceful manner. And lastly, it followed by the introduction of another DDR program of GPDM in April 2022 in Metekel and Kemash, which inturn verifies the failure of the first DDR program. However, the on-going DDR is also conducted without any evaluation of the former program and incorporating any basic difference from the previous peace negotiation.

The research found several challenges that contributed to the failure of 2021 DDR. Lack of commitment to the peaceful means, lack of inclusiveness, lack of trust, lack of national and local coordination, conflict entrepreneurs, characteristics of ex-combatants, on-going conflict, and effects of other internal and external conflicts are among the challenges of the program.

Recommendation

By taking lessons learned from the 2021 DDR program of GPDM armed group, the researcher provides five recommendations for the next DDR programs. First, when DDR is conducted in an on-going conflict situation, there should be a political commitment in both the federal and regional governments to resolve the conflict in a peaceful means. This, in turn, assists to attain national and local coordination. Second, although national ownership is necessary for every DDR program, developing accountability and evaluation for every implemented task is essential. This assists to protect corruption and conflict intereprenures that existed within governmental structure. Third, there should be trust between the armed group and the government (the two conflicting parties). The government should work to building trust on the armed group, which in turn assists the armed group to disarm itself and handover its weapons to the government. Fourth, designing strong peace accord that incorporates detail things is essential. Peace agreement should includes the time and scope of disarmament as well as the round, time duration, and place of demobilization. This assists for successful implementation of the peace accord by minimizing the potential disagreement during the implementation phase. Lastly, seccessful implementation of disarmament before demobilization is a key for successful accomplishment of the overall program. This also helps

to demilitarize the ex-combatants' mentality as well as it assist to minimize the remobilization of the ex-combatants.

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Annex: 1
List of key informants

S.N	Position/organization	Sampling method	Date and place of interview
1	Academic in Assosa University	expert	15 April 2022, Assosa
2	Academic in Assosa University and Member of Boro Democratic-Party	expert	15 April 2022, Assosa
3	Middle level leader in National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)	Purposive	23 March 2022, Addis Ababa
4	Higher official in Ministry of Justice	Purposive	30 March 2022 Addis Ababa
5	UNHCR staff in Assosa	Snowball	12April 2022 Assosa
6	Middle level leader in Ministry of Peace	Purposive	27 March 2022 Addis Ababa
7	Middle level leader in Regional Peace and Security of BG	Purposive	11 April 2022 Assosa
8	Member of the regional cabinet and high level leader in of BG on the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) of BG	Snowball	12 April 2022 Assosa
9	Higher official in BGR	Purposive	12 April 2022 Assosa
10	Former leader of Prosperity Party in Metekel Zone/Academician	Snowball	13 April 2022 Assosa
11	Member of non-Gumuz community, member of ethnic Oromo civil servant of Assosa resident	Snowball	12 April 2022 Assosa
12	Ex-combatant of GPDM armed group	Snowball	13 April 2022 Phone interview
13	Member of the displaced non-Gumuz community from Metekel, member of ethnic Amhara	Snowball	14 April 2022 Assosa
14	Member of displaced Gumuz community from Metekel/ Former member of ENDF	Snowball	14 April 2022 Assosa
15	Member of Gumuz community, civil servant in Assosa	Snowball	12 April 2022 Assosa
16	Gumuz community elders	Purposive	15 April 2022 Phone interview
17	Middle level leader in National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)	Purposive	23 March 2022 Addis Ababa
18	Former middle leader of GPDM armed group	Snowball	18 April 2022 Phone interview
19	Middle level leader in National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)	Snowball	20 March 2022 Addis Ababa
20	Higher official regional Police and Crime Investigation Bureau	Purposive	12 April 2022 Assosa
21	Member of Gumuz community/ Metekel resident	Snowball	13 April2022 Assosa

22	Middle level leadership in ENDF	Purposive	30 May 2022 Addis Ababa
23	Member of ENDF	Snowball	28 May 2022 Addis Ababa
24	Staff in National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS)	Snowball	6 April 2022 Addis Ababa
25	Community elder, member of Peace-building committee in Metekel	Snowball	14 April 2022 Phone interview

Annex: 2

List of participants in Focus Group Discussion

S.N	Code Name	No. of participants	Status of the participant	Date and place of interview
1	FG1	6	Male IDPs and Gumuz civil servants in Metekel	13 April 2022 Assosa
2	FG2	6	Female IDPs and Gumuzs residents of kemashi	13 April 2022 Assosa

Annex: 3

Interview Guide Questions

I. List of guiding questions for the personal interview

1. Profile of the GPDM armed group

- 1.1. How do you describe GPDM combatants?
- 1.2. What is the goal/question of GPDM combatants?
- 1.3. Why does the GPDM armed group prefer armed struggle than other peaceful methods?
- 1.4. What are the pull and push factors that make members of Gumuz community to join armed group?
- 1.5. What is the cause that pushes the GPDM combatants to join the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program?

2. How was the DDR process of the GPDM armed group negotiated?

- 2.1. How was the pre-negotiation look like? What are the actions taken to conduct negotiation? Was there any mediator or not?
- 2.2. What are the points (agendas) for negotiation?
- 2.3. In which points they were easily agreed?

- 2.4. Which points were hard for agreement?
 - 2.5. What are the final negotiated points where all parties agreed?
 - 2.6. In which points they failed to agree up on?
 - 2.7. Does the peace agreement include DDR?
3. What are the rationalities behind conducting DDR on the GPDM combatants towards the government side?
4. Who was leading or coordinating the process?
5. Who was funding the program?
6. Who are the key actors (state and non-state) involved in the DDR process?
 - 6.1. Was it inclusive?
 - 6.2. What was their role?
 - 6.3. How did they divide responsibilities? Was there a clear guideline for cooperation?
 - 6.4. What was their challenge while undertaking their duty?
7. Disarmament
 - 7.1. How were the combatants identified?
 - 7.2. How many arms were disarmed? What type?
 - 7.3. Was there any resistance for disarmament?
8. Demobilization
 - 8.1. How many combatants were demobilized?
 - 8.2. Was there health checking? What type? (both psychological and physical)
 - 8.3. Was there an ID card which is prepared for the combatants?
 - 8.4. What type of training they were accessing?
 - 8.5. Was there legal, investigation and transitional justice program?
 - 8.6. What were the challenges for the demobilization?
9. Reinsertion
 - 9.1. What was the reinsertion package? Economic (in-cash and in-kind)
 - 9.2. How long the support sustained?
 - 9.3. What were the challenges faced at this stage?
10. Reintegration

10.1. Are the numbers of the disarmed and reintegrated the same?

10.2. What were the challenges faced at this stage?

11. Remobilization

11.1. Why do ex-combatants of GPDM armed group remobilize?

11.2. What was its impact on the DDR program?

12. Do you think the GPDM DDR process is successful or failed?

12.1. What makes the program to be successful/ failed?

12.2. What is the current status of the region and the GPDM combatants?

II. List of guiding questions for the focused group discussion.

1. What kind of challenges are you facing due to the on-going conflict of GPDM?

2. What is the cause of your displacement?

3. Profile of GPDM armed group

i. How do you describe GPDM Combatants?

ii. Do you know GPDM combatants?

iii. What is the goal of GPDM combatants?

iv. Why are some members of the Gumuz community joining the armed group?

4. 2021 DDR program of GPDM armed group

i. Are you aware of the 2021 DDR program of GPDM armed group?

ii. How do you evaluate the GPDM DDR process?

iii. Did you participate on the program?

iv. If yes, in your opinion, what were the major challenges during the DDR process?

5. What are the major reasons for the remobilization of GPDM combatants?

Declaration

The undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree at any other University, and that all sources of material used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Meaza Hussen

Signature: _____

Date: _____

This thesis is submitted for examination with my approval as an advisor of the candidate.

Mercy Fekadu (PhD)

Signature: _____

Date: _____