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**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT  
RESOLUTION AND PROMOTING DEMOCRACY: THE CASE  
OF WAJJARAT COMMUNITY, SOUTHERN TIGRAY**

**BY**

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**ADDIS ABABA**

**JUNE 2011**

*INDIGENOUS COMMUNICATION IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
AND PROMOTING DEMOCRACY: THE CASE OF WAJJARAT  
COMMUNITY, SOUTHERN TIGRAY*

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## Definitions of Local Terms

1. Abat Nebsi: God Father
2. Abo-Selam: Father of peace who settles disputes or reconciles people who are in conflict.
3. A'k'eitot : government nominated or appointed officials
4. Demer: "the general assembly"
5. Dibarte:"females' institution"
6. Gozomo: *a* kind of sharp metal similar to knife but bigger which was used at battle fields in olden times
7. Hayam: a divorced or unmarried woman who makes love with different men usually for her economic needs
8. Idir: a traditional association used for ceremonial of sorrow and happiness.
9. Ikub: A saving and credit association
10. Megabi Sirat: A person who keeps order in the community
11. Melake Selam: the chief of the Debre-selam (place of peace) of the Orthodox Church in the community.

12. Melake Tsehay: the chief of Debre-tsehay (place of peace) of the orthodox church of the community.
13. Tezkar: a feast prepared for the remembrance or commemoration of a dead person.
14. Tsebel: a feast organized in the honor of saints.

## **Abstract**

*This research was carried out to assess the position of indigenous communication in conflict resolution and democratization of the Wajjarat community in the southern part of Tigray. To conduct this study, the researcher employed the qualitative methodology. Focus group discussions, in depth interview and participant observation were used to obtain the necessary data from the sample respondents in three kebelles namely Gonkua, Bahri Tseba and Senale. On top of this, the research observed at various scholarly articles related to the role of indigenous communication in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. The findings of the study showed that conflict prevails in Wajjarat community. The conflicts are mostly caused by Hizaeti (grazing land), farm land and Hayam. The study also revealed that in the traditional conflict resolution, the community mostly employs the win - win approach on which there is neither a loser nor a winner, but issues are compromised for mutual gain. Moreover, it was found that indigenous media seem to be more appropriate than the modern ones or the court in conflict resolution because they are not easily exposed to bribery, are good at bringing sustainable peace, and they are more helpful in time management. Finally, the study showed that although the indigenous media appears to be more appropriate, they do have their own constraints. The limitations are like extravagance, unwise spending of time (although they are still better than the modern ones or the court).*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

#### 1.1.1. The Wajjarat people and their socio-cultural context

To begin with the etymology of the term Wajjarat, it is associated with different ideas .According to Degafi (2001:14), the Wajjarat people were very gorgeous, therefore they were known by the term “moizerat” (literally handsome or good looking). Through time this word was changed into the present name Wajjarat. On the other side, Tarekegn (2005:28) states the etymology of the term as follows:

Some elders associate the etymology of Wejerat with the phrase “ye wajja irat) which literally means “dinner of the Wajja people”. The reason behind the naming, according to an informant ,is that once upon a time guests from the Wajja area (around Alamata town) arrived at the village of Adi-Bati ,in the course of their journey ,and thus they were received with a warm reception and dinner party of the dwellers of that village .In response for their hospitable treatment and dinner party ,the guests coined the name “ye wajja irat “ to the village and in the course of time the name assumed its present name ,“Wejerat”, which is in fact a corrupted version of the former expression.

According to the current administrative arrangement of the Tigray Regional State, Wajjarat lies at Hintalo sub-district in the north, at wereda Raya Azebo in the south, at Afar Regional State in the east and at wereda Amba Alaje in the west(Degafi :18). Currently, sub-district Hintalo and Wajjarat are merged into

wereda Hintalo –Wajjarat. Therefore, in the present time wajjarat is known as a sub-district. The total area of the sub-district is 3600 km square; some 70,000 estimated total numbers of population and 99% of the economic base of the majority people is agriculture and herding (ibid).

With the exception of some plains, majority of the sub-district area is mountainous. The community is homogenous in culture. It has its own dressing style, feeding system, marriage ceremony, funeral ceremony, hair dressing style, etc. According to some elders the community is almost all the follower of the Orthodox Church. The Wajjarat have remained fanatic believers of the Orthodox Church since the introduction of the Christian faith in to the region (Tarekegn 2005:82).

The basic political philosophy of the people was firmly rooted in the principle of *Kanchi*, which literally means “equality” (Tarekegn 2005:61). The community has different sayings that assure its equality. For instance, “*Redaiwa Mahariy qanchi We’om*”, which literally means irrespective of differences in their names, “persons by the names of Redai and Mehari are equal (ibid).”

In addition, the community has widely known indigenous media like “Demer” (is equivalent to “general assembly” according to Tarekegn, 2005:70 ), “Dibarte” (females’ institution) and other various traditional communication systems.

Demers were held at an *amba* level when an issue was highly localized; and at *demer Isra Adi*, the general assembly when it was more of a regional agenda. (Tarekegn, 2005:70). The venue of the general assembly as has been stated above, was at a place known as Gira gerebo which is located along the river Woynat, somewhere between the ambas of Mame’t and Adi-keyih (ibid).

On the other hand, *dibarte* is a traditional women's institution that has existed in the *wajjarat* society since long ago (Tarekegn 2005:83). The institution is not only unique to *Wajjarat*, rather it's also found in the neighbouring societies of *Enderta* and *Raya Azebo* (ibid).

### **1.3. Statement of the Problem**

Rural people have been effectively employing local knowledge and local resources to secure their different needs harmoniously ((Mushengyezi, 2004) cited in Hagos, 2010). This indicates that even though modern media is rapidly growing in this world, folk media has still a great significance in rural areas. Folk media are similar to the original mass media. "They are used primarily for entertainment, but also to promote education values and cultural continuity. They include festivals, plays and puppet shows, dance, song, story telling, poetry, debates ... "(Mundy and J.L Campton (1991:2).

From the authors' view, the researcher understands, folk media has a vast importance. As a result, these need to be given due attention. In other words, indigenous communication needs to be credited as it is not costly in time and money which is similar to what the following text assures:

Indigenous technical knowledge is a new focus in development circles. Growing number of scientists and organizations are recognizing that it offers cheap, locally adapted solutions to development problems, or that it can be melded with scientific knowledge to boost productivity and living standards(ibid:1).

It is indispensable understanding the terms conflict and democracy. Conflicts are sure to happen in our life, because there are divergences of interests, perceptions, ideas, feelings, thoughts and shortage of resources in human beings. Uwazie (2003:9) enlightens this as follows:

Conflicts have been with us from time immemorial and are an inevitable feature in our society because most of the good things we cherish in life like glory, Power, democracy, love, prestige, education and employment are all in scarcity.

The above extract implies that whether we like it or not conflicts are certain to occur in our life or they are part and parcel of our life. In other words, “the existence of conflictual relationship between social groups is a pervasive feature of human society (stroebe, 1988:3).”

The etymology of the word democracy is Greek and derived from two terms, these are ‘demos’ which means people and ‘Kratein’ to mean to govern. Therefore, democracy means” government of the people or government of the majority (Becker, et al, 2008). In other words, it means “the government of the people, by the people and for the people (ibid).”

Although research have been done concerning conflict resolution and promoting democracy in other areas, so far, as far as the researcher is concerned conflict resolution relating with indigenous communication in Wajjarat community has not yet been explored. Besides the researcher believes, this topic is timely, relevant and significant that needs to be researched. The very reason behind this research is to show the traditional communication or cultural ways of conflict resolution and promoting democracy.

## **1.3. Objectives**

### **1.3.1 General Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the indigenous communication to conflict resolution and promoting democracy in Wajjarat community.

### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives**

The specific objectives of this research are:

- To discuss the sources of conflict in Wajjarat community.
- To identify the ways or approaches of communication being used in conflict resolution in the community.
- To investigate various indigenous communication forms in the community.
- To explore the role of indigenous communication in development and democratization.

## **1.4. Research Questions**

Having identified the main objectives of the study, the points below are the principal questions of the research.

1. Is there any prevailing conflict in wajjarat community? If so what is (are) the source(s) of conflict in Wajjarat community?
2. Does Wajjarat community use traditional communication systems? If so what are the most common approaches of indigenous communication being employed for conflict resolution in this community?
3. What are the benefits and limitations of the traditional communication ways of communication in conflict resolution and promoting democracy?

4. What is the role of indigenous communication in development and democratization?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

To the researcher's knowledge, indigenous communication as a way of conflict resolution and promoting democracy in this community has not been explored yet. Therefore, this study shows how indigenous media is very decisive in conflict resolution of this community. In addition, this research can be as a foundation for further study for those who are keen on studying in the same area of research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Next to the organization of the research questions and the aims of the study, it is necessary pointing out varying theoretical underpinnings concerning communication and culture. This part of the study states the review of literature relevant to the role of communication in conflict resolution and promoting democracy.

#### **2.1. Conflict and Conflict Resolution: An Overview**

Different scholars state the term conflict in different ways. Conflict is part of our life .It is sure to happen in our life and perhaps spice of life. As Slaby (1994:20) affirms:

Conflict is a normal part of life, and sometimes it is a necessary part of life. The important issue is how we handle conflict. If we resolve our conflicts by fighting, then conflicts becomes something negative. If we handle it in a positive way, then conflict can help us learn more about ourselves and others.

According to Coser (1956:8) Conflict is “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals”.

Different scholars explain the sources of conflict differently. For instance, According to Desalegn et al (2005:29), the main cause of conflicts in Ethiopia is development or lack of it (underdevelopment) which he further explains as:

- 1) Disagreements between different users over the allocation of waters land rights, or maintenance issues.

- 2) Conflicts between users and the authority responsible for the project over inappropriate design of infrastructure, peasant relocations, water change, or management issues.
- 3) Conflicts between project beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries and,
- 4) Conflict between donor agencies and the recipient country over design, management environmental impact, and financial issues.

In any social structure, conflicts are arisen over different opportunities for an adequate reward. For all these conflicts happen we have conflict resolution methods. Conflict resolution methods may include negotiation, mediation and arbitration. Negotiation is a conflict resolution method by dialogue or discussion between two parties.

Mediation refers to a conflict resolution method on which decisions are not given. "Although it still allows disputing parties considerable flexibility in reaching a resolution, mediation is quite a bit more structured and formalized than general negotiation because it employs a neutral, third-party mediator to assist the parties with reaching a consensual agreement"(Adams,2010).

Whereas, arbitration is a way of setting a conflict on which the third party is involved and gives decisions. "...after reviewing evidence and hearing arguments from all interested parties, are given the power to impose their determination as to how a dispute should be resolved (ibid)."

## **2.2. Interpersonal Communication in Conflict Resolution**

Interpersonal conflict is a conflict between two individuals, groups, organizations etc. Thomas and Kilman (1976:8) identified five basic ways of addressing this type of conflict as follows:

***Accommodation:*** surrender one's own needs and wishes to accommodate the other party.

***Avoidance:*** avoid or postpone conflict by ignoring it, changing the subject, etc. Avoidance can be useful as a temporary measure to buy time or as an expedient means of dealing with very minor, non-recurring conflicts. In more severe cases, According to the writers, conflict avoidance can involve severing a relationship or leaving a group.

***Collaboration:*** Work together to find a mutually beneficial solution. According to the writers, Collaboration can also be time-intensive and inappropriate when there is not enough trust, respect or communication among participants for collaboration to occur.

***Compromise:*** bring the problem into the open and have the third person present. The aim of conflict resolution is to reach agreement and most often this will mean compromise.

***Competition:*** assert one's point at the potential expense of another. It can be useful when achieving one's objectives outweighs one's concern for the relationship.

### **2.3. Review of Related Studies**

There are some papers connected to this study, to mention a few of them Gulilat Membere(2006), Mengistu Gebremedhin(2009), Hagos Nigussie(2010) and Moges Endris(2010). These papers focus on communication and culture.

Gulilat (2006) in his research on trends and communication potential of "Dagu" for HIV/AIDS communication in Afar region found that "Dagu" can be the most

suitable media for HIV/AIDS communication approach on which the people could participate on their own original media. He added that the elder Afar men are the smart information exploiters, while females and children under fifteen do not have the opportunity to use "Dagu" like the others.

Mengistu (2009) cited in Hagos (2010:13) assessment of the appropriateness and application of development communication strategies in Productive Safety Net Programs (PSNP) in Tigray region," found that the program lacks clearly defined communication strategies and limited levels of the community participation in general and identified that the people remained unable to withdraw from the existing dependency of the foreign income".

Hagos's (2010) study about the use of indigenous communication approaches, specifically for HIV/AIDS prevention found that the communicators do not have clearly declared forms of communication strategies that are consistently employed in the intervention programs. He also noted that it seemed difficult to witness whether there is use of folk media channels in the HIV/AIDS prevention.

The study by Moges (2010) concerning the 'Dagu' as a cultural regulator among the Afar people which specifically dealt with the communication aspect found that Dagu is conducted in three phases. He mentioned the first phase as the ritual prologue where the introduction of the participants of the ritual is done. The second phase as the ritual offers for the exchange of the main stream 'Dagu' information, and the third phase involving the ritual conclusion where exchange of blessings, pleasantries and personal chats are done.

#### **2.4. The Essence of Indigenous communication**

According to Mundy, et al (1991) folk media is part of the indigenous communication. Therefore, in this research folk media will be treated under the

category of indigenous communication. However, indigenous communication will be equally treated with traditional media. Bill Grimes (2008) points out that "traditional media as those companies which create, produce and distribute information and entertainment contain and which predate the commercial content businesses of the internet". From this one can perceive traditional media are originated from the people. In addition, they might consist of poetry, speech, sounds, song, drama, jokes, proverbs', etc.

Indigenous communication which is similar to traditional media can have different forms. Mundy (1993) puts down the lists of indigenous communication as follows:

1. *Folk Media*: are the indigenous equivalents of exogenous mass media. They include festivals, plays, puppet shows, dance, song, storytelling and poets. (ibid :) ....
2. *Indigenous Organizations*: - include religious groups, village meetings, irrigation, associations, mother's clubs and loan....
3. *Economic relations and service suppliers* such as traders form input suppliers, and indigenous specialists such as healers and midwives are important....
4. *Deliberate Instruction*: When we are children, our parents, families and peers teach us how to eat, how to behave, how to cook; plough and plant....
5. *Unstructured channels*: Talk at home and at the well, in the fields and on the road, in the tea house and chiefs house and wherever

else people meet and talk. A major part is communication among Kin and peer groups....

Traditional media are existing or available in large communities where modern media are not present or not well-advanced. In other words, indigenous media is abundant in a society where there is dominant illiteracy or there are more illiterate people. Hagos (2010:16) cited in Dissanyake (1997) remarks the media's strength recognizing its credibility, particularly with rural populations, which modern mass media often lack.

## **2.5. The Significance of Indigenous Communications**

Folk media are entertaining; they have a remedial function for a given society's development problems as well. Indigenous media have a considerable significance in transmitting various messages, enjoyments, news and other social exchanges. This is more common in societies where there are more illiterate people. As Hagos (2010:18) citing Pan Ford et al., (2001:2) explains "rural Africa is endowed with rich, popular means of communication, including songs, proverbs, storytelling, drumming and dancing, drama, poetry recital, and arts and crafts. On top of that, Traditional media are very important in making peace or conflict resolution.

Mukhopadhyay (nd) notes the necessity of folk media in society as follows.

Oral tradition is highly effective exercising social control. Moral songs help to control the behavior of the people so that they don't neglect the norms and value systems of their community. These songs described good and evil, righteous acts and scenes merit of good work and punishment for sin. These help to control the behavior of the people so that they don't become a social nuisance.

Furthermore, folk media has also got a wide function in social protest against injustice, exploitation and oppression. When the opponent is strong, the anger and repression get expression through songs, proverbs and plays (Mukhopadhyay, nd). It supports to get rid of the inner tension stemmed from injustice and exploitation and it gives the people the enthusiasm to unite.

To sum up, traditional media are noticeable in rural communities' development. Folk media are significant, especially in conflict resolution, which in turn promotes peace and democracy.

Discussing development communication seems significant in this research. According to Wilkins (2008:1-8), development communication refers to a process of strategic intervention toward social change, initiated and engaged by organizations and communities. Development itself encompasses participatory and intentional strategies designed to benefit the public good, whether in terms of material, political, or social needs (ibid).

As Hagos (2010:12) explains development communication is all about enhancing sustainable development to the target communities. The term is composed of two words, these are development and communication. Jan servaes,(1966) defines development as a "multidimensional process that involves change in social structures, attitudes, institution, economic growth, reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty. For him, development is a "whole change for a better life", While, communication is the exchange of information between or among people. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that development communication is a change in one's life by using the right information at the right time.

One can deduce two things from this. First, there must be communication .Second; the presence of development in a society is noteworthy. However, the

researcher believes development in a community is assisted by communication.

The World Bank Group (2011) indicates that:

Meaningful communication is about getting information out to particular audiences, listening to their feedback, and responding appropriately. Whether discussing a development project or broader economic reforms — from health, education or rural development to private sector development, financial reform or judicial reform — the idea is to build consensus through raising public understanding and generating well-informed dialogue among stakeholders.

One may deduce that in whatever mechanism, in every development, two way of communication has a large role. In other words, it is impossible to deny the great real of fast communication and mutual understanding in a rapid development of a given society.

Mushengyezi (2004:12) cited in Hagos (2010:12) explains that “to rural communities, there is a limited access to communication media especially for those segments living in remote villages. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the traditional media for these communities development.

## **2.6. The Need of Communication for Conflict Resolution**

The need of communication for conflict resolution has a vast importance; communication in conflict resolution encourages or creates healthy relationship between or among individuals and groups.

Elizabeth (2008) notes that

“With most conflicts, it is important to find a resolution. This seems like a statement of the obvious, but many people suppress their anger or just ‘go a long to get along’. They think that by addressing a conflict they are creating one, simply quiet when upset.

Unfortunately, this is not a healthy and long-term strategy” for two reasons. Firstly, if conflicts are not resolved as quickly as possible, they might hurt the interaction. Secondly, unresolved conflict has a detrimental effect on one’s health and life span.

Elizabeth (2008) states certain guidelines below so that conflict resolution be easier.

*Get in touch with your feelings:* An important component of conflict resolution involves only you knowing how you feel and why you feel that way. It may seem your feelings should already be obvious to you, but this isn’t always being the case (ibid). From this, one can perceive that sometimes we don’t feel ok, but we don’t know what the reason is behind. Some other times, we feel the other guy isn’t doing what he/she is expected to do; however we are not really informed, what we need from them. Thus, we can have a better communication with the other guy we need to get in touch with our feelings and thoughts, psychotherapist.

*Hone your listening skills:* When it comes to effective conflict resolution, how effectively we listen is at least as important as how effectively we express ourselves (ibid). The writer also states that, it’s vital to understand the other person’s perspective rather than just our own, if we are to come to a resolution. In other words, sharpening up one’s listening skill is much helpful in conflict

resolution. In other words, good listening is decisive in conflict resolution. The more we are active in listening, the more we become good problem solvers.

***Practice assertive communication:*** communicating your feelings and needs clearly is also an important aspect of conflict resolution. As you probably know, saying the wrong can be like throwing fuel on a fire, and make a conflict worse (ibid).Put other words, telling what's on your mind in a very clear language quickens conflict resolution. Actually, this should not be in a way that offends the other guy.

***Seek a solution:*** Once you understand the other person's perspective, and they understand yours, it's time to find a resolution to the conflict a solution you both can live within (ibid). According to her, sometimes a simple and obvious answer comes up once both parties understand the other person's perspective. It is possible to understand from this that if conflict happened because of a misconception on the other person's idea it can be easily resolved by pardoning and having an open discussion then after. In cases where two people totally disagree on an issue, sometimes it's good to agree to disagree.

***Know when it's not working :***Because of the toll that ongoing conflict can exact from a person sometimes it's advisable to put some distance in the relationship, or cut ties completely(ibid). According to the writer, in cases of abuse, for example, simple conflict resolution techniques can only take so far, and personal safety needs to take priority. In other words, there are two options, here. Firstly, a relationship need to be continued by resolving the conflict occurred. Secondly, the interaction should be off, if it's not helpful.

## 2.7. Approaches of Conflict Resolution

Irrespective of the level of conflict, there are varying approaches in dealing with it. Shepard and Mouton (1994) cited in Fisher (2000) state three general strategies to deal with conflict. These are:

**2.7.1. *The win-lose approach:*** “...forces the other side to capitulate (ibid). “

Sometimes, this is done through socially acceptable mechanisms such as majority vote, the authority of the leader, or the determination of a judge. Sometimes, it involves secret strategies, threat, innuendo – whatever works is acceptable, i.e., the ends justify the means (ibid).

**2.7.2. *The lose-lose strategy:*** is exemplified by smoothing over conflict or by reaching the simplest of compromises. In neither case is the creative potential of productive conflict resolution realized or explored (ibid).

**2.7.3. *The win-win approach:*** is a conscious and systematic attempt to maximize goals of both parties through collaborative problem solving. The conflict is seen as a problem to be solved rather a war to be won (ibid).

The appropriateness of this approaches to this study is that because in one way or another they might occur in the rural communities .conflict parties in this community may follow the win-lose strategy, the lose – lose strategy or the win – win strategy in their different conflicting activities.

## **2.8. Theories and Models Employed in Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution as discipline has developed theoretical insights into the nature and sources of conflict and how conflicts can be resolved through peaceful methods to effectuate durable settlements (Meha Dixit, 2011).

### **2.8.1. Morton Deutsch: cooperative model**

Deutsch's model of conflict is based on his theory of cooperation and competition, which helps us better understand how conflicts develop and how they can be resolved. (Kocie, 1999-2011). The writer explains the model as follows:

- 1) Mentioning Morton Deutsch, Kocie says that a conflict consists of cooperative and competitive motives or else they are the mixture of both negative and positive grounds. . "Negative goals – my success is your failure – lead to competitive relationships. Positive goals – my success is your success too – lead to cooperative relationships." (ibid)
- 2) Obviously, coordination, good communication and positive attitudes are the result of healthy relationships. Whereas, Competitive relationships comprises suspicion and the interest to reduce your opponent's benefit. In addition, it involves ineffective communication . Thus, some one can note that the former, i.e. healthy or cooperative relationship results, in beneficial outcomes, while the latter leads to destructive ones.
- 3) The third important point in Morton Deutsch cooperative model is the significant role of mediators. Kocie states this as follows:

From the perspective of a mediator, it's important to have a good understanding of the conflict and parties involved, and to create a

cooperative relationship between them so that it leads to a win – win outcome. To achieve this it's sometimes important to re-frame the conflict, so that the parties see it as a cooperative one.

The researcher believes this model is appropriate for this study for the following couple reasons. First, it explains the nature and sources of conflict. Second, it gives due focus in resolving the conflicts.

### **2.8.2 .Roger Fisher and William Uri: Principled Negotiation**

This is one of the conflict resolution theories which were primarily developed by Roger Fisher and William Ury . This theory is not a zero sum game approach. In other words, it is a problem solving on which both parties equally benefits. It is also possible to say this theory is a win- win approach.

The four key elements in principled negotiation, according to Fisher, et al (1991), are:

#### ***Separating the people from the problem:***

Effective negotiators should be able to differentiate between issues related to people and the problem itself. People issues involve emotions, different perceptions and poor communication (ibid). For example, according to the writer, if one negotiator is angry then that anger needs to be addressed and should not interfere with solving the negotiation problem. Therefore, .As a negotiator, you may say, madam or sir, it seems that you got angry by this point. In this regard, you are distinguishing the people from the problem.

#### ***Focusing on interests rather than positions:***

According to the writer, Interests allow flexibility and define positions by determining the underlying needs, concerns and motivations of each party. The

writer also states that the more interests that are found, the greater is the potential for developing options for mutual gain.

### *Developing options for mutual gain*

Developing options for mutual gain involves brainstorming ideas before committing to any one option. Brainstorm first, evaluate later (ibid). Fisher explains four main obstacles to the development of options:

a) Premature judgment: in this section imagination is hindered by judgment. Great effort must be done in distinguishing the act of inventing solutions from the act of evaluating.

b) Searching for a single answer:

“There is usually no single answer to a negotiation problem. Rather, there is a set of alternatives that needs to be developed before deciding on the best or most appropriate option for mutual gain. Broaden the options on the table rather than look for a single answer” (ibid).

On this aspect, there is no hard and fast rule in negotiating conflicts. However, we need to look for various options that can have a large role for the mutual gain.

c) Thinking that 'solving their problem is their problem'

Negotiation is a joint problem solving process, and so both parties should try to solve the problem together rather than concentrate only on their own gain or outcome (ibid).

d) Assumption of a fixed pie

“A fixed pie negotiation is where each party sees the situation as either/or: either I lose or I gain. Negotiation does not have to be that way: the more options there are on the table, the greater the potential for mutual gain.”(ibid)

According to Fisher (1991), there are four types of thinking involved in developing options. These are:

- problem identification and clarification
  - analysis of what is wrong
  - generation of ideas about what might be done
  - specific actions for implementation
- 
- Objective criteria

When there is a conflict of interest and a solution is difficult to find, negotiators may be able to research objective criteria. This is an alternative to using individual will as a negotiation tool. The use of individual will as a method leads to the belief that "This is a good outcome because I pressured the other person into agreeing with me. On the other hand, objective criteria lead to a fair agreement as the parties yield to principle not pressure. Examples of objective criteria are industry standards (for example an industry standard salary for a particular position); professional standards (for examples standards of conduct); and a market value and equal treatment (equitable pay rates). (ibid)

*4-insist that the agreement be based on objective criteria*

## **2.9. Participatory communication in conflict resolution and promoting democracy**

As its name indicates participatory communication involves equal participation in a given community development. On this aspect, there is two way of communication between or among the given community members. In other words, there is mutual understanding in the communication. Mefalopulos(2003) makes clear to this as follows:

Participatory communication is a term that denotes the theory and practices of communication used to involve people in the decision-making of the development process. It intends to return to the roots of its meaning, which, similarly to the term community, originate from the Latin word *communis*, i.e. common (Mody, 1991). Therefore, the purpose of communication should be to make something common, or to share...meanings, perceptions, worldviews or knowledge. In this context, sharing implies an equitable division of what is being shared, which is why communication should almost be naturally associated with a balanced, two-way flow of information.

Participatory communication considers communication not as a vertical process of information from the knowledgeable to the less knowledgeable people, who are mostly at the grass root level, ,but rather a horizontal, interactive process of information exchange(Zelalem,2010 cited in Servaes 1991; Getachew 2005). Participatory communication also emphasizes on the importance of cultural identities of local communities, and of democratization and participation at all levels (ibid).

## **2.10. Social networks**

Recent research has identified the existence of social networks as a common and important denominator in cases where different stakeholders have come together to effectively deal with natural resource problems and dilemmas (Bodin, et al, 2009:366-374). It has even been shown that social networks can be more important than the existence of formal institutions for effective enforcement and compliance with environmental regulations (ibid). In this regard, social networks have a considerable role in information conveying in a given society. One of these social networks is religion.

In many parts of the world, religion has a tremendous role in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. According to Smith (nd):

Religion is commonly blamed as the source of violent conflicts around the world .such negative press obscures the positive role that religion frequently plays in conflict transformation and peace building. Religion is a powerful force that can recruit the faithful in support of either violent conflict or peace building.

In this aspect, religion has an incredible contribution in conflict resolution. This is so because religious organizations can reach a large group of people in a specific place and in a short period of time.

## **2.11. Principles of Democracy**

Various principles of democracy are stated by different authors. However, for this study some of the signposts of democracy by Mason (1994:16) are pointed out.

**Citizen Participation** : may take many forms including standing for election , voting in elections ,becoming informed, debating issues, attending community or civic meetings , being members of private voluntary organizations, paying taxes and even protesting....

**Equality:** means that all individuals are valued equally, have equal opportunities, and may not be discriminated against because of their race, religion, ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation....

**Political Tolerance:** means that while the majority of the people rule in a democracy, the rights of the minority must be protected....

**Human Rights:** mean those values that reflect respect for human life and human dignity....

## **2.12. Other Experiences in Conflict Resolution**

The African people have been using indigenous media for several years. This is so because the majority of the African people reside in the rural area .Therefore, indigenous media are more appropriate for the majority people. Because, “the bulk of the rural people are non- literate, poor and have little or no access to modern mass media such as television, radio, film, newspaper, the internet and e-mail (Mushengyezi, 2003:107).Indigenous media and their role in communicating development messages and African societies and communities could be utilized as one of the most respected, trusted and acceptable forms of development communication in Uganda (ibid).Consequently, for their big contribution in development in societies or communities , indigenous media need to be given due focus.

There are many indigenous media which have a very big contribution in conflict resolution. One is Mato-oput in Uganda, According to Nkuttu(nd )"the Acholi people, contrary to the view that they like fighting, are one of the greatest peace lovers in the country. Their culture respects a lot of traditional methods of conflict resolution. They have well detailed rituals of resolving conflicts". The writer adds:

Mato-Oput - means reconciliation among the Acholi. It is a detailed ceremony meant to reconcile conflicting parties. Persons in conflict appear before the council of elders who patiently listen to each party and cross-examine them in order to establish the root causes of the conflict and the guilty party. After a time consuming scrutiny and the guilty party is found, the prescribed therapy must lead to harmony and peace. An animal is sacrificed and the blood sprinkled on the shrine of the God of truth and the reconciler. This is done by an officiating priestly order. These two parties are then required to share their meat and millet bread and eat from the same dish and drink some beer, a symbol of total reconciliation. Mato-Oput is performed in an isolated place or at the bank of the river to chase away hatred and revenge.

The above extract shows the following steps. First, the conflicting parties are listened or heard by the chosen elders for the reconciliation. Second, the elders distinguish who the offender is and let the offender to compensate. Finally, it is the time the persons in conflict eat and drink together assuring that they made peace.

Similarly, the karamajong people are from Uganda. According to Nkuttu(nd), “The Karamajong are known for cattle rustling. This is their way of life. Cattle raids are done when”:

1. A father has lost all or part of his livestock through sickness and needs to replace it.
2. When livestock is needed for marriage.
3. When a young man has not finished paying the agreed number of cattle to the father of the young woman.

To deal with this phenomenon, one needs to understand the culture of the Karamajong. Usually many lives are lost during the raids. However, on returning home after the raid, some ceremonies are performed to amend the loss of lives taken. This shows that they are not pleased with the killings that they have committed, but their way of life demands it. Despite their being known to be warriors, the Karamojong have various ways of resolving conflicts. Their ceremonies involve elders to sit down and listen. The accused speak one at a time, and decisions are made on the basis of the arguments contributed by each person (ibid).

According to the writer, the karamajong are known for cattle rustling in the neighboring tribes in Uganda, Kenya and Sudan.

Likewise, there are other traditional media in Tanzania which has a very good role in conflict resolution. As Hokororo(nd) states Historically the four (the Wamakua, Wamwera, the Wamakande and Wayao)tribes belong to the same blood community and they all crossed River Ruvuma from South Africa into

Tanzania in the latter part of the 19th century after the incursions of Sthehaka Zulu. The writer adds:

The four tribes believe in the existence and effectiveness of the spirits of the dead that is "Mahoka" a name given to people when they die. They believe that these Mahokas are supernatural beings that can intercede for human beings to God and can also punish human beings for their wrongdoing. These tribes believe that God comes first and the Mahoka comes second. The Almighty God himself and the Mahoka keep the countries from plagues and diseases and from being invaded by the enemy. But, if the country is hit by plagues, famines, wars and floods or attacked by marauders, the elders of the Wamwera, Wamakua, Wayao and Wamakonde will meet to assess the situation and devise ways of solving this apparent problem.

To solve their problems, the writer says the elders follow the following steps.

1. First they have to accept the fact that perhaps they have offended the Almighty God and the *Mahoka*.
2. Then the elders decide on steps to be taken like fasting by all adults in the clan.
3. They also organize a ritual ceremony for resolving the conflict with God and the *Mahoka*.

When the researcher comes to the Ethiopian context, there are several indigenous media which have a great contribution in conflict resolution, peace building or development of a given community. Two among others are the *Gada* system in oromia region *and Gereb* both for the Afar region and the Wajjarat community in Tigray region.

### 2.11.1. The *Gada* system

According to Desalegn et,al (nd) *Gadaa*” is a system of social organization based on age-grade classes of the male population that succeed each other every 8 years in assuming economic, political, military and social responsibilities. A complete *gadaa* cycle consists of five or six age-grades, excluding those stages following *luba.*” According to different scholars, the number of age grades may vary. For example, Gumii Bilisummaa Oromiyaa (2000) reports five grades in the whole cycle of the *gadaa* system whereas Constantinos (1999) and Workneh (2001) recognize six grades, regardless of the stages following *luba* (ibid).

According to *Gadaa*, those people who have entered the *Luba* grade (individuals in the expected age range of 40-48) are considered to be elders (Desalegn, et al, 2005) As a result; they are expected to have a good role in the system. They settle disputes among groups and individuals and apply the laws dealing with the distribution of resources, criminal fines and punishment, protection of property, theft, etc (ibid). In the *gadaa* system there are different responsibilities given. The *gadaa* leaders are elected on the basis of wisdom, bravery, health and physical fitness (Workneh, 2001). Desalegn (nd) explains the officials and the duties of the *Gadaa* as follows:

- *Abbaa bokkuu* or *abbaa gadaa* – president.
- *Abbaa bokkuu* I – vice-president.
- *Abbaa bokkuu* II – vice-president.
- *Abbaa caffee* – chairman of the assembly (*caffee*).
- *Abbaa dubbii* – speaker who presents the  
Decision of the presidium to the assembly.
- *Abbaa seeraa* – memorizer of the laws and results of the assembly deliberations.

- *Abbaa alangaa* – judge who executes decisions.
- *Abbaa duulaa* – in charge of the army.
- *Abbaa sa'aa* – in charge of the economy.

### **2.11.2. The Gereb**

As explained above, this is one of the indigenous media which functions pretty well in solving a conflict and flourishing democracy. As Abera (2009) states: “the word “*Gereb*” is a collection of individuals mainly elders who are responsible to regulate conflicts mainly between ethnic groups and rarely among the Wajjarat *Kebeles* community dispute. This *Gereb* has similar job description as the *Gada* system in the Oromo society (Desalegn et.al, 2005 cited in Abera, 2009). The establishment of this institution almost dates back to a century. This is more enlightened as follows:

The Wajjarat Gereb was established 90 years ago to oppose Government suppressions and as a reaction to the existing undemocratic rule and bad governance. It originally came in the form of public struggle towards democracy and self-administration. The boarder districts such as Enderta and Samre also used the Wajjarat Gereb dispute resolution system. The Gereb is a mutually established institution, which functions as an indigenous court and is run by the council of elders from both sides of the ethnic boundary separating the Afar from the Tigrayan communities (Kelemework, 2006)(ibid).

Gereb had its own articles. As Abera (2005) states some of the common articles of Gereb were:

- Women should have equal right as men,

- Don't believe in Emperor Haile Selassie and other Governments as God,
- Stop theft and raid
- Every adult citizen of our locality should be ready to struggle against any external enemy
- The 20 Kebeles (Wejjerat) should be governed by its Gereb
- Gereb is our identity for our next liberty struggle

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Subsequent to the review of literature section, this part deals with the research methodology which is appropriate to the study. In this segment of the study, the research design, data collection tools, study subjects, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations in a research are included.

#### 3.1. Research Design

Cresswell and Clark (2007) cited in Zelalem (2010:36) notes that “choosing carefully an effective research design is a fundamental stage in the very process of conducting a research”. Therefore, the researcher remarks qualitative research is more convenient for this research, for this type of study is about a socio-cultural context of a given society. Deacon (1999:6) cited in Moges (2010:25) also illuminates that as follows:

While studying these issues as social contexts, actions and cultural institutions, it almost will be compulsory to employ qualitative research design for the central in such studies is not with establishing relations of cause and effect but with exploring the ways that people make sense of their social worlds and how they express this understandings through languages, sound, imagery, personal style and social rituals.

The researcher also remarks that to obtain the universal impression of a given society, qualitative research is preferred to quantitative research. This is so, because qualitative research is not a yes or no question, rather it is an open ended

one which enables a given society to express their thoughts and feelings very well. This is supported by Mack (2005:4) cited in Hagos (2010:50) as follows:

One advantage of qualitative methods in exploratory research is that it uses open –ended questions and probing gives participants the opportunity to respond in their own words rather than facing them to choose from fixed resources, as quantitative methods do.

In addition, unlike quantitative research, “in qualitative research the aim of inquiry is to develop a body of knowledge that is unique to the individual being studied, and that can be used to develop hypotheses about the individual” (Abiy 2009:39) .Thus, qualitative study does not describe a knowledge in generalizations, but it tries to provide a detailed information about an individual. This is the other ground that forced the researcher to choose qualitative research than quantitative research.

The researcher believes the best approach for this study is case study. This is because:

Case studies emphasize detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions and their relationships. They are largely descriptive examinations ,usually of a small number of sites .case studies can provide very engaging ,rich explorations of a project or application as it develops in a real world setting (ibid:32).

Therefore, the researcher believes qualitative research is more appropriate for this study.

## **3.2. Research procedures and Data Collection Tools**

In this study, the researcher employed participant observation, in- depth interview and focus group discussion.

Besides, purposive sampling technique was employed. This is so because purposive sampling is “typically used when focusing on a limited number of informants, whom you select strategically so that their in depth information will give optimal insight into an issue about which little is known” (Abiy, 2009).

### **3.2.1. Participant observation**

Flick, 2002:900 cited in Hagos, 2010:51) enlightens that “in the context of field research, participant observation is mainly used.” It is the observation of various socio-cultural contexts of a given people in their natural settings.

According to Mac an Ghail (1994), the participant observer collects data by participating in the daily life of those he or she is being studied. This approach is close to every day interaction, involving conversations to discover participants’ interpretations of situations they are involved in’(Becker 1958:652) .

Therefore, the researcher observed the different societal activities in Wajjarat. Then, the researcher stayed for sometime in the area and participated in varying activities of the community where traditional media are very common. He had an opportunity to participate in the church ceremony. On top of that, he participated in a conflict resolution by mediation.

In this study, the researcher made up his mind to use the overt types of participant observation on which people are aware being observed. The researcher selected overt participant observation for the following two reasons.

For one thing, it is very helpful for the open recording of data. For the other thing, the researcher may not be obliged to act as natives.

### **3.2.2. Focus Group Discussions**

This is the other data collection tool which the researcher used in his study. By focus group discussion, a tremendous data can be collected from many people in a short period of time. They offer the advantage that ' what one individual says may trigger a response from someone else a response the person may not have thought of if interviewed singly' (stone, singletary and Richmond, 1999:341 cited in Moges, 2010:27)

(Hagos 2010: 54 citing Hansen et al, 1998:270) explains "the ideal FGD size is between six and ten." Therefore, each FGD will consist of six to eight participants so that the researcher can manage it easily. Similarly, he will organize six to eight groups in order to gain ample information.

### **3.2.3. Individual in-depth interview**

This is the third data collection that the researcher preferred. In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program or situation (Boyce, et al, 2006:3). In-depth interviews are useful when you want detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviors and want to explore new issues in depth interview (ibid).

Hence, the researcher employed this data to enrich his information or to fill the gap that was not filled by the participant observation and focus group

discussions data collection tools. The researcher chose the interviewee from the focus group discussion participants. The choice was based on the participants who have detailed and ample information about the subject.

### **3.3. Study Subjects**

The study subjects were community members, parish priests and members from traditional media like “Dibarte” (females’ institution), “Demer” (general assembly in the community), etc. In addition, the culture and tourism bureau head or the community experts and administrators were interviewed in this study.

It is difficult to definitely tell age group which should be included in this study, but the age of 20 and above is, in both sexes, are involved in most of the social activities. The focus group discussions and in –depth interviews were conducted in Tigrinya language.

### **3.4. Data Analysis Procedures**

As explained before, the in –depth interview and focus group discussions were conducted in Tigrinya language. Therefore, it was recorded in Tigrinya, and then the researcher translated it into English. This translation was done by sense for sense translation lest meaning variation would be occurred. However, when necessary the researcher tried to put the word of the original language as it is, when putting the word of the original language is preferable.

### **3.5. Ethical Considerations**

In conducting a research, there are some basic principles that a researcher needs to follow. In other words, all research involving human beings need to be guided by ethical principles. “Ethics in social research deals with issues that the behavior

of the social researcher and the potential consequences their research brings to their study subjects (Zelalem, 2010:40 cited in Henn et al, 2006). Thus, the principal principles in conducting a research are:

**Informed consent:** deals with the conception that whether the research respondents are well informed about the objective of the study (Deacon et al 1999:374). It is also a process by which a study participant voluntarily confirms his or her willingness to participate in a particular trial or study (Abiy et al, 2009:105). Therefore, before the researcher commenced conducting the research, he had made conscious his respondents that the goal of the study is not beyond academic purposes. Then, he questioned their willingness to participate in the study.

**Confidentiality:** is a key element of research ethics that the researcher needs to know which types of information can or cannot be shared with a third part with or without consent of the study participant (Abiy et al, 2010:108). In this regard, the information the researcher obtained from the respondents would be confidential. The information would be used for nothing except for academic purposes.

**Anonymity:** According to Deacon et al, (1999:379), anonymity refers to prevent against displaying the sources of confidential information from being identified in any public stages such as lecture, writing or public media. Autonomy or respect for persons requires a commitment to ensuring the autonomy of research participants (Abiy, 2009:103). Hence, the researcher kept the information unnamed or unidentified when necessary.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter deals with the presentation and interpretation of the data gathered from the respondents of the study area. The results and conclusions will be based on what the majority convey.

#### 4.1. The Essence of Conflict

In order to know their level of understanding the researcher questioned several and different informants about the essence of conflict. One of the in depths interviewees informants aged 46 explains to the question, what does conflict mean? The informant responded that “Conflict is a clash of ideas between or among friends, neighbors, family. It can also be among or between people. The source of this conflict might be difference of interests.” Similarly, another respondent aged 68 illuminates conflict as follows:

Although conflict in different areas has varying sources by different people, there is one thing that makes common for all sources, that is the root of many conflicts is benefit. The resources in this world are very limited, however our wants are unlimited. Therefore to fulfill our needs, we human beings want to have better advantage than other people. On the other hand, the other people will not allow to be taken away their resources. So these differences lead to conflict. Then, the conflict can have a devastating role in the socio-economic and cultural context.

This extract implies that although conflict may be caused by various factors, there is one thing that many people may agree, that is the source of many conflicts are taking advantage of other people, divergences of interests or obtaining varying perceptions and thoughts or feelings. The respondents explained the term conflict in the way they understand. However there is one thing that makes common for what the above informants said. That is the sources of many conflict centers at or revolves around benefits or interests. This implies the common understanding about the sources of conflict in general, but the sources and consequences of conflicts in wajjarat community is one important question that the study attempted to answer.

#### **4.1.1. Sources and Consequences of Conflict**

Like in other areas there are also different sources of conflict in wajjarat community. The researcher questioned some informants about, what could be the main sources of conflict in Wajjart community? One informant aged 78 tells as follows:

To me, there are many sources of conflict in wajjarat community. The following are some among others. Firstly, one of the major sources of conflict is *hayam*. 'Hayam' in wajjarat is equivalent to..... This conflict mostly occurs between or among the youngsters. Secondly, farm land can be source of conflict between two neighbors. Thirdly, *hizaeti* (literally means grazing land) is the cause of conflict in Wajjarat community or it can also be the cause of conflict between Wajjarat community and other neighbors like the Afar community.

15. Similarly, another informant from the focus group discussion took place at *Bahiri tseba kebele* said “the main causes of conflict in Wajjarat community are *hayam* (a divorced or unmarried woman who makes love with different men usually for her economic resources) and farm land. Farm land is one of the main causes of the conflict because the question of land is a matter of life and death.”

As determined by the above respondents, it seems the causes of conflict lies in both the economy and power. The farm land and the *Hizaiti* are categorized under the source of economy as they both show scarcity of resources. Similarly, Fisher (2000) states economic conflict involves competing motives to attain scarce resources. The other one that is *hayam* is categorized under the power conflict since both persons in conflict attempts to maintain or maximize the amount of influence that it exerts in the relationship and in the social setting (ibid). However, the natural resources of conflict appear to dominate in the community. As Desalegn (2005) explains, natural resources-based conflicts are part of the fabric of local communities as individuals compete for scarce resources: social groups perceive themselves as having incompatible interests.

According to some informants, interpersonal and role conflict seems common in this community. However inter group conflict are not. This is so, as it is mentioned below by an interviewee:

I can absolutely say inter group conflict in the Wajjarat are not common, because this type of conflict occurs between or among societies where they do have different ethnic group. However the Wajjarat community is from the same ethnic group and the community has similar cultures and alike lifestyles. In fact, there

are cases of inter group conflict between the Wajjarat and the Afar community since both communities are from dissimilar ethnic groups.

One can possibly grasp from the above text that inter group conflict usually occurs in societies where different ethnicity are observed. Fisher (2000) illuminates that inter group conflict Occurs between collections of people such as ethnic or racial groups, departments or levels of decision making in the same organization, and union and management. However, interpersonal can happen in a community with identical norms and backgrounds.

Although many of the conflicts are resolved as quickly as possible, there are conflicts which are delayed in the settlement. One of the interviewees from 'Senale' locality and the person says as follows:

Our community is much known in resolving conflict before it caused damage. The elders have a great position in solving them. However there are some conflicts which are not resolved as quickly as possible. If the conflicts are not resolved as quickly as possible, they might have a shocking position in social, cultural and economical. For instance, this may lead to loses of human lives and property destruction.

To summarize, the major sources of conflict in Wajjarat are *hizaeti* (grazing land), farm land and *hayam*. In this community, inter group conflict is not common, as the society is from similar cultures and one ethnic background. Nevertheless, inter group conflict is very common in communities with different ethnic groups.

Normally, in wajjarat community, conflicts are resolved as quickly as possible, but if they are delayed they main cause damage in human lives and property.

#### **4.2. Approaches of Conflict Resolution Employed in the Community**

As Shepard and Mouton (1994) state, there are three types of approaches to conflict resolution. These are the lose – lose approach, the lose –win approach and the win-win approach. According to one FGD informants, conducted at Gonkua locality, the approach of conflict resolution which is very common in wajjarat community is the win- win approach. He further enlightens it as follows:

In many conflict resolution approaches, when elders solve the conflict, the focal point is not who wins or who loses. However the conflict is resolved in the way that comforts both conflicting parties. This is so because it helps for both parties to live peacefully. However if the conflict is resolved by the court, for sure there are a winner and a loser. Therefore, this may lead them to another quarrel. That is why conflict resolution is preferred by the traditional conflict ways, to the current ones or to the court, as it favors the win- win approach.

Another respondent to the question”, do people prefer to go to the modern court for conflict resolution? She said, “in fact there are happenings that some people prefer the court or the modern ways of conflict resolution to the traditional ones. However, she says going to the court has its own demerits.” One loses his/her precious time, or going to the court may be costly in money. Moreover, the persons in conflict may not create long lasting peace.

To conclude, usually, the elders prefer the win - win approach or the “principled negotiation” as Fisher (2000) explained. The elders do so, since the approach disappoints none of the persons in conflict. Rather, the conflicting parties enjoy it and it builds peace between or among them.

### **4.3. Indigenous Communication Systems in Conflict Resolution and Promoting Democracy**

#### **4.3.1. The Church**

There are many indigenous communication systems in Wajjirat community which are used in conflict resolution and peace building. According to some parish priests the church plays a principal role in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. In the church, the ‘*Abat Nebsi*’ (which is equivalent to the word “God father”) has a great role in conflict resolution. *Melake Tsehay Gebremariam Abera*, a priest, from the first FGD conducted at *Bahiri Tseba* locality, notes that:

The main thing is that the society is in the hand of the priest. If there are any people who are quarreled with each other, a priest tells them to reconcile or to make peace among them. However, if the conflicting parties are not willing to make peace, the priest tells them that he or she or they are not his sons or daughters. If the conflicting parties plan to change their *abat nebsi*, the Abat Nebsi they ask to be their father, he asks why they were dismissed from the other *abat nebsi* .in addition their former *abat nebsi* tells to the other Abat Nebsi that he refused to make peace with his enemy and he refused to give service for the church. . Therefore, the only choice the conflicting parties have is to make peace among them.

This extract shows refusing to make peace is unpopular opinion which leads the individual to isolation or excommunication. This may imply that the church threatens deviant individuals with isolation and which may create intimidation. However, the church does this for the sake of peace. In addition, from the above extract one can notice that the church is the main and the most important indigenous communication way in settling and solving a conflict. In other words, one can perceive how great role the priest or Abat Nebesi has in conflict resolution. *Melake Tsehay* adds that the preaching held in the church helps to the followers to solve conflicts peacefully. Another respondent from focus group discussion conducted at Gonkua kebele supports the above informant idea as explained below:

The church has a principal role in conflict resolution; the people obey to what the *abat nebsi* (literally means God father) says, if the conflict is not so harmful, it is not very common to beg using the church cross. So if the conflicting parties are begged by using the church cross they should immediately say ok for the reconciliation. Nobody opposes for the reconciliation held by using the church cross since the people dies or are sacrificed for their religion. Above the law, above his household, and above everything the Wajjarat people really prefers their religion.

Therefore, from the above extract the researcher can deduce, religion, that is, the Orthodox Church in wajjarat people has got a crucial contribution in conflict resolution, peace building and uniting the people.

To the question, at what time does the church perform the conflict resolution? One interviewee reported, "The conflict resolution by the church is not always

held at any time and at any place. Rather, there is a specific time and a specific place when the reconciliation or making peace performed. The reconciliations are mostly done in the holidays and the usual venue is the church.” According to the respondents, to solve a conflict or to reconcile persons in conflict the elders usually use quotes from the religious books like the Holy Bible. This is so because the communities obey to their religion and to their religious leaders as one respondent said. Another interviewee from *Gonkua* locality makes clear that:

The Orthodox Church reconciles quarreled people in holidays like ‘selassie’ (the holy trinity), Gabriel, Michael, Medhanialem’ (the savior) and other holidays. The reconciliation or Shinglina is performed on Sundays. For the church permits no work to do on Sundays, but it is the day for reconciliation and peace building.

#### **4.3.2. Gereb:**

This is the other customary media which the community uses in settling disputes. As Abera (2009) elucidated *gereb* is the collection of elderly individuals who are believed to have good skill in solving conflicts. The researcher forwarded a question, what the role of the *gereb* could be? One interviewee responded, “The *gereb* has a big role in conflict resolution. It solves conflicts which occur in any social, cultural and economical affairs. For instance, it intervenes in murder cases.” In addition, a question was posed to the interviewee that how the government sees the role of the *gereb* in conflict resolution, on which the interviewee reported, the government sees this as a good way of customary conflict resolution, and it encourages it so that it is consolidated. The researcher also questioned another informant, whether there could be difference between *gereb* and *demer*. The informant responded, “of course, there is a difference between *demer* and *gereb*. *Demer* is the general assembly, while *gereb*

is the collection of individuals, *abo-gerebs*. To make it clear, in modern times, *demer* is like a cabinet, whereas *gereb* is the decision makers in the cabinet.

To summarize, other than the church, the *gereb* has an enormous role in conflict resolution. Understanding this, the government is giving support so that it could be strengthened.

### **4.3.3. Demer:**

A question about the meaning of *demer* was asked. According to one respondent the word *demer* is derived from the term '*demere*' which means to add or to assemble. Therefore, "the term *demer* refers to the sum total of people in a meeting or in modern times it means the cabinet, the respondent replied. As the elders explained, normally the participants of *demer* ("the general assembly") are males. Actually there are some influential females who participate in the general assembly. Likewise, another respondent commented:

In fact, it doesn't discriminate sex or both sexes participate. However, normally the majority participants are males. In addition, some influential females of the community are involved in this general assembly. Although *demer* is not functioning as before, participation of females is being consolidated. By and large, *demer* has a big role in democracy and peace building because it allows the equal participation of all people particularly the involvement of females.

According to the elders, the place where the *demer* takes place is called Gira Gerabo. To the question whether *demer's* role in conflict resolution and promoting democracy is as good as before? Or is it giving service as it did in the earlier times? One respondent answers the question as follows: "Although *demer*

(general assembly) couldn't function as good as the earlier times, we are using it in conflict resolution and promoting democracy between or among different kebelles or villages." Another informant from Gonkua locality adds in demer, we have *sirits*; we use it to solve socio-economic problems such as conflict in *hizaeti'* (grazing land), farm land, etc. between or among localities. This local by law or "*Sirit*" is a rule developed by the community elders themselves (Abera, 2009).

#### **4.3.4. *Dibarte***

According to the elders, other than the church and demer, *dibarte* (females' institution) has a great role in conflict resolution and in the community. In response to the researcher's question about the meaning of '*dibarte*', the elders defined the concepts as:

*Dibarte* is a kind of using it for pursuing peace for a big thing. In *dibarte*, shouting in group helps to give up the bad thing happened, such as murder. *Dibarte* is held both by males and females so that the offended one is afraid of the people. If a big number of people go to the offended person house, the offended household will be afraid of and they give up what they conceived or the revenge.

The researcher also posed the question "is *dibarte* giving service in conflict resolution and democratization as before? There are some controversies among the researcher's informants whether *dibarte* (females' organization or institution) still gives service in conflict resolution and peace building. One respondent asserted that:

Absolutely, *dibarte* is an instrument even at this time; we are employing it if murder happened. First relatives are gathered, and

then both females and males hold the Orthodox Church cross and they shout in a religious way that the offended person household can be afraid of. Having done this, the last target is reconciling the conflicting parties.

Another informant who was asked about the meaning of *dibarte* illuminated:

I don't exactly know the meaning of *dibarte*. However it is linked with objection or begging. . For instance if it is said, the women went out for begging for those who fought each other. On top of that, when the 'isra adi' (literally means the twenty kebelles or localities) declare about something the 'dibarte' used to object or oppose, or if a person is murdered or else if a battle broke out between the wajjarat community and the *akeitot* (is nearly equivalent to government appointed officials).

This informant also argued about the presence of this institution at this time. He said *dibarte* totally stopped, because the participants in *dibarte* institution should have been totally females. In murder cases, *dibarte* plays a big role. For if a father of children is murdered by another man. The *dibarte* members decide that the murderer should bring up the murdered children as his children if he has got.

To sum up, although *dibarte* (females' institution) seems weak, or not as strong as the earlier times, it is possible to conclude that it is still playing an essential role in conflict resolution. It also contributes in promoting democracy and peace building, as it involves females in decision making.

#### **4.3.5 .Wedding and *Tezkar***

The other folk media that functions in conflict resolution is marriage and *tezkar* (literally means a ceremony prepared for the remembrance or commemoration of a dead person). On this topic, one interviewee has the following to say:

If one person plans to perform *tezkar* or wedding, there is one thing that he /she needs to consider, that is he/she needs to excuse his /her enemy if he /she has got. if he/she doesn't do like this, or he/she planned to perform his/her *tezkar* without making peace with his/her enemy it is said the person performed his/her affair violating our culture. Therefore, so that he/she will not be excommunicated or condemned the person need to celebrate with his /her enemy after they made peace.

One can deduce from the above extract that, these two ceremonies, *Tezkar* and wedding, facilitate conflict resolution. Further they promote peace and socialization, because there are many people who are invited to the ceremony. So this is a good media where a large number of friends, relatives, etc meet and it is a venue for creating peace and flourishing democracy. Furthermore, *Tsebel* (is equivalent to some sort of feast prepared in honor of saints like the Holy trinity, Gabriel, Michael, virgin saint Marry, etc), *Ikub* (saving and credit association), and *Idir* have no less part in conflict resolution than the other folk media have.

#### **4.4. Appropriateness of Indigenous Communication Systems in Conflict Resolution and Promoting Democracy**

According to the informants, indigenous media are more preferable to the current media, like the court, in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. As

the informants said the cultural conflict resolution approaches are more appropriate for the following three reasons.

- A. Indigenous communication systems are not costly in time, money and energy.
- B. Conflict resolution by folk media is not exposed to bribery.
- C. Indigenous communication systems have a very good role in making sustainable or everlasting peace.

One respondent aged 86 from *Bahri Tseba* area reported:

We choose the folk media for conflict resolution since the conflict resolution by the court or in the court is not as good as conflict resolution by the traditional media. The indigenous media don't hurt both parties or else they don't disappoint either of them. However, if conflict resolution by the court is happened, the conflicting parties hurt each other. Neither of them is happy. Furthermore, there might be fine which doesn't create everlasting peace.

The researcher also understands that it is also worth mentioning about the appropriateness of the current media and he interviewed some informants from the sub-district court. Ato shambel worku is a lawyer in Wajjarat sub -district. The researcher asked him that whether the current media is more preferable in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. The interviewee replied the question as follows:

'Shimglina' (is equivalent to traditional reconciliation) or conflict resolution through the folk media is more appropriate in the society since conflict resolution by the court may lead to another court. For instance, recently, one person hit another one by *gozomo* (literally a kind of sharp metal bigger than knife which was used at battle fields in olden times). The offended informed to the court that the case should be resolved by shimglina. From this, I understand the community prefers shimglina to the current court. However, such kinds of cases need to be solved by the court. Therefore, there are cases which should be observed by the court or not.

To sum up, as the elders and lawyers attempted to report in the above two extracts, the traditional media or the folk media seem more appropriate in the community. This is supported by Tarekegn (2005:144) as follows:

...sentiments of reprisals, which are deeply rooted in the culture of the society, couldn't easily be redressed merely by established codes of formal laws. Rather, such problems are effectively resolved through customary way of conflict resolving mechanisms because they have strong social acceptance for they are backed by social values and norms.

Because the media use the win - win approach on which no body is a loser but problems are compromised for the sake of mutual or common benefit..However, the lawyer said although the indigenous media are more convenient in conflict resolution to the community, there are some cases which should be observed by the law. The researcher asked some elders in the community and they said

whether a problem is observed by the law or not, it should be settled by the traditional ones for the sake of sustainable peace.

#### **4.5. Indigenous Communication Systems in Democratization and Development of the Community**

Other than in conflict resolution, the folk media have enormous role in democratization and development. This is because the indigenous communication systems belong to the people and they are for the people. Therefore, it seems to support the definitions of democracy, i.e. of the people, by the people for the people. According to the respondents' traditional media like the church, *demer* and *dibarte* appear to be principals in democratization. For instance, *demer* paves a good way for democratization. As one informant said, "I can say *demer* flourishes democracy .For one thing; it is participatory and doesn't single out sex. For the other thing, it is the indigenous communication system on which various ideas are discussed. "

The above extract implies that females can also have a say in this media. This assures females can have a position in decision making and there is equality. This appears to be supported by one of the rules of *gereb* that "women should have equal rights with men "(Abera, 2009). Besides, Mason, et al (1994:16) states that," equality means that all individuals are valued equally ,have equal opportunities ,and may not be discriminated against because of their race ,religion ,ethnic group, gender or sexual orientation." This is helpful for the promotion of democracy, because participation is one important principle of democracy.

Participation is the key role of citizens in democracy. It is not only their right, but it is their duty. Citizen participation may take many forms including standing for election , voting in elections,

becoming informed, debating issues, attending community or civic meetings, being members of private voluntary organizations, paying taxes ,and even protesting. Participation builds a better democracy (ibid).

In this case, it is possible to observe participatory communication. The more the communication is participatory, the more conflicts are resolved easily. The more conflict resolution is quickened in a participatory manner, the better democracy and development are flourished.

The researcher had an opportunity to participate in a conflict resolution. The source of the conflict was land. The persons in conflict are neighbors. The conflict was resolved by mediation. Mediation is a way of conflict resolution on which the mediators have not the mandate to decide but to tell options so that the conflict can be resolved. The mediators were relatives from both sides of the conflicting parties. The relatives were chosen because it was believed that they can run the conflict resolution smoothly.

In fact, the conflict was resolved effectively. The conflicting parties swore in the Ark (Saint Gabriel, Saint Michael, Saint George, or in other saints they believe in) and it was over.

The conflict was solved with the help of the “Abo Selam”. The researcher questioned one informant what the responsibility of *abo selam* is .The informant responded that:

The responsibility of *abo selam* (being the fourth or the fifth of the elders or reconcilers) is to reconcile or to make peace between or

among the persons in conflict. Briefly, the key duty of *abo selam* is settling disputes.

The researcher asked one of the conflicting parties whether there is interpersonal communication in conflict resolution. In other words, the researcher questioned one interviewee if they can solve conflicts without involving a third body that is a mediator or an arbitrator. One interviewee from the conflicting parties has the following to explain:

If the problem is very serious like murder, knifing (to stab or cut somebody with a knife), beating using a stick, etc they are observed by the law. However, if the persons in conflict agree, these cases can also be solved by *shimglina* (reconciliation by the elders) or by negotiation or by interpersonal communication.

The aforementioned text implies that conflicts can be resolved by the modern court and or by the traditional ones. Nevertheless, there is one thing that the elders highlighted. This is whether conflicts are observed by the modern court or not, they should also be solved by the cultural conflict resolution ways for sustainable peace.

#### **4.6. Limitations of the Indigenous communication systems**

So far the researcher has attempted to explain the contributions of the indigenous communication systems in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. Relatively, according to the informants, the folk media are cheaper in money, time and energy. Furthermore, they are not easily exposed to bribery. However, the cultural conflict resolution approaches have their own drawbacks. To begin

with, the church has its own hindrance. One informant from *senale* locality explained:

There are excess of holidays. Therefore, these holidays are obstruction for the industriousness of the people. Moreover, the church discourages the handicrafts and the traditional singers which are locally known as the *Tebib* and the *Wat'a* respectively.

Besides, as enlightened in the earlier topics, the church excommunicates for those who are not willing to make peace with their enemies. As a result, this may create intimidation or psychological fear for the individual. This can be considered another drawback of the church.

The other folk media which has a big role in conflict resolution and peace building is wedding ceremony. For example, it consolidates unity and it is a suitable medium for creating close relationship. However, there is an extravagance in wedding which opens a path to poverty. '*Tsebel*' (literally means some sort of feast prepared in honor of saints like the holy trinity, Gabriel, Michael, virgin saint Marry, etc) has also a big role in peace building. Like wedding and '*Tezkar*' (literally means a ceremony prepared for the remembrance or commemoration of a dead person), in '*Tsebel*' there is unwise spending of money.

As explained before, '*demer*' is another traditional communication system which has a principal contribution in flourishing democracy. Nevertheless, it has its own disadvantages. One interviewee from '*Bahiri Tseba kebele*' emphasized:

If one person is guilty or if he or she is accused of murder and disappeared, his seven generations are responsible for his act. In

other words if the persons parents are alive, they are responsible for the disappearance of their child. If not alive, his brothers and sisters are responsible. If not alive, it goes like this .Nevertheless, if he/she doesn't disappear, nobody is going to be responsible, but he/she. The other drawback of 'demer' is that there is the case of place ownership. For instance, if a certain cattle get lost in 'Imba' 'A' (or locality A), everybody in the 'kebelle' is responsible for the cattle lost.

In contrast, the interviewee responded that he saw no drawbacks in '*Ekub*' (literally means saving and credit association). According to him, this is so for the following couple reasons. For one thing, people save money. For the other thing, it is the medium that consolidates healthy social interact

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1. Summary

The study is about the role of indigenous communication systems in conflict resolution and promoting democracy. To answer the basic research questions, a qualitative research methodology was employed.

The data collection tools used was participant observation, individual in depth interview and focus group discussion. The researcher employed the participant observation personally to observe the social, cultural and economic affairs. Focus group discussion was used to obtain ample information from a good number of people at a time. Other than these, the researcher opted the individual in-depth interview to get detailed data about the subject. The selection of the interviewees was based on their in -depth knowledge. In addition to these, some theoretical underpinnings concerning the role of folk media in conflict resolution and promoting democracy were raised.

#### 5.2. Conclusion

Based on the major findings of the study the researcher has drawn the following conclusion.

1. Conflict prevails in Wajjarat community.
2. According to the majority of the informants, the very common sources of conflict are *Hizaeti* (grazing land), farm land and *Hayam*.
3. As the respondents informed, many elders are very interested in solving conflict before destruction is followed. However, if the conflicts are not

- resolved at the right time, they may have an upsetting role in the social, cultural and economic affairs.
4. As the study shows, approaches of conflict resolution employed is the win-win approach. In fact, some may prefer going to the modern court for solving conflicts and this is the win-lose approach as there is one loser and one winner. For fear of this, they prefer to solve it traditionally. Therefore, it seems the community like using the win-win approach.
  5. There are some folk media which are employed in conflict resolution. These are the church, 'demer', 'dibarte', wedding ceremonies, Tezkar and others like Ikub and Idir. It seems the church plays a crucial role in conflict resolution. This is so, because the religion is everything for the Wajjarat community.
  6. However, the informants depicted that although the indigenous communication systems have strong sides, they have their own limits. In other words, some limitations are observed. For example, it seems the church discourages handicraftsmen (locally *Tebib*) and singers (locally *Wat'a*). The indigenous media like wedding ceremonies and *tezkar* are very appropriate places for socialization, meeting different people and a convenient venue for peace building and promoting democracy. However, extravagances are much observed.
  7. According to the informants the role of the folk media is not only confined to conflict settlement, but it also flourishes democratization. As aforementioned some of the indigenous media allow participatory communication. As a result this seems to be appropriate in the development of the society.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

As the study signifies so far, indigenous communication systems seem an eye in the community's social, cultural and economic affairs, therefore due attention need to be given by the concerned bodies such as the community. The concerned bodies can be the community as a whole, the Wajjarat community modern court workers, especially lawyers, the regional state and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia state as a whole. Considering the indigenous media limitations, the community should use them in its day today activities.

These communication systems have been with the societies since long years and seem fruitful, however there are some constraints. Therefore, both the community as a whole and the community current court members need to discuss on the limitations of the indigenous media. Moreover, some seminars need to be held concerning the benefits and limitations of the traditional conflict resolutions ways and filling the gap. It is also advisable to raise the issues in regional level and discuss their merits and demerits.

By and large, this study has made effort to show the role of indigenous media in conflict resolution and flourishing democracy. Nevertheless, further study can be made by those who are enthusiastic in this area of study.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix-I FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDES**

#### *I) Questions on the essence of conflict, sources of conflict and levels of conflict in the community*

1. How do you define conflict?
2. What are the most common sources of conflict in your community? Why?
3. Which levels of conflict mostly occur in your community? Why?
4. What are the side effects if conflicts are not resolved as quickly as possible?
5. Is there a very severe conflict that you remember so far?
6. How do you deal with these conflicts? Are there any mechanisms to deal with these conflicts?

#### *II) The availability of folk media or traditional communication systems in the community*

1. Would you please list the folk media available in this community?
2. Which of them do you commonly employ for conflict resolution?
3. What makes the use of traditional media suitable for the rural communities? What makes these media more beneficial compared to others?

4. What is these media role in conflict resolution?
5. How do you see their contribution in development and promoting democracy?

*VI) Indigenous communication systems and their appropriateness in conflict resolution and promoting democracy*

1. How do you connect traditional media and conflict resolution intervention communication?
2. What is the role of these media in development and promoting democracy?
3. Do you know any traditional media currently functional in the community?
4. Why do you think the traditional media are appropriate compared to other communication channels?
5. How do you list down the degree of appropriateness of folk media for conflict resolution and promoting democracy?
6. How do you explain the applicability of folk media channels in various socio-economic and cultural aspects of the community?

*VI) The appropriateness of the currently employed communication approaches?*

1. What are the currently employed communication strategies in conflict resolution and promoting democracy in the community?
2. Do you believe that the current strategies are effective in a desired manner?
3. Do you think the communities like the intervention programs? Why? Why not?

4. Do you think there are any communication break downs about the intervention? Programs? Why/why not?
5. Does the intervention communication reach to the community as a whole?

## **Appendix-II- Interview questions guide**

### *Interview Questions Guide for the" Abo-Gereb" ( "Gereb " fathers)*

1. When and where does the" Demer"(general assembly) takes place?
2. Does your organization have any communication strategies for conflict resolution? What is the role of your organization in conflict resolution?
3. What makes your organization more suitable compared to others in conflict resolution?
4. How do you employ your channels to the sparsely populated inhabitants of the rural communities?
5. What sections of the communities do you mostly consider? How do you reach them?
6. Do you think the communities are contented with the communication strategies you are currently employing? Why?
7. Is your organization participatory?
8. Is" demer" equivalent to the court in conflict resolution? Why?
9. To what extent is the participation of females of in this general assembly?

### *Interview Questions Guide for the" Dibarte institution (females' organization)*

1. When and where the “Dibarte” does takes place?
2. What are the segments of the society you mostly consider? Why?
3. To what extent is the contribution of females in conflict resolution?
4. What are the mechanisms you use when you employ your communication strategies to reach the target communities?
5. With regard to conflict resolution, what are the advantages of this folk media compared to others?
5. What is the role of this media in promoting democracy?
6. How do you assess your performances concerning the use of folk media communication channels?

*Interview Questions for the lawyers in the community*

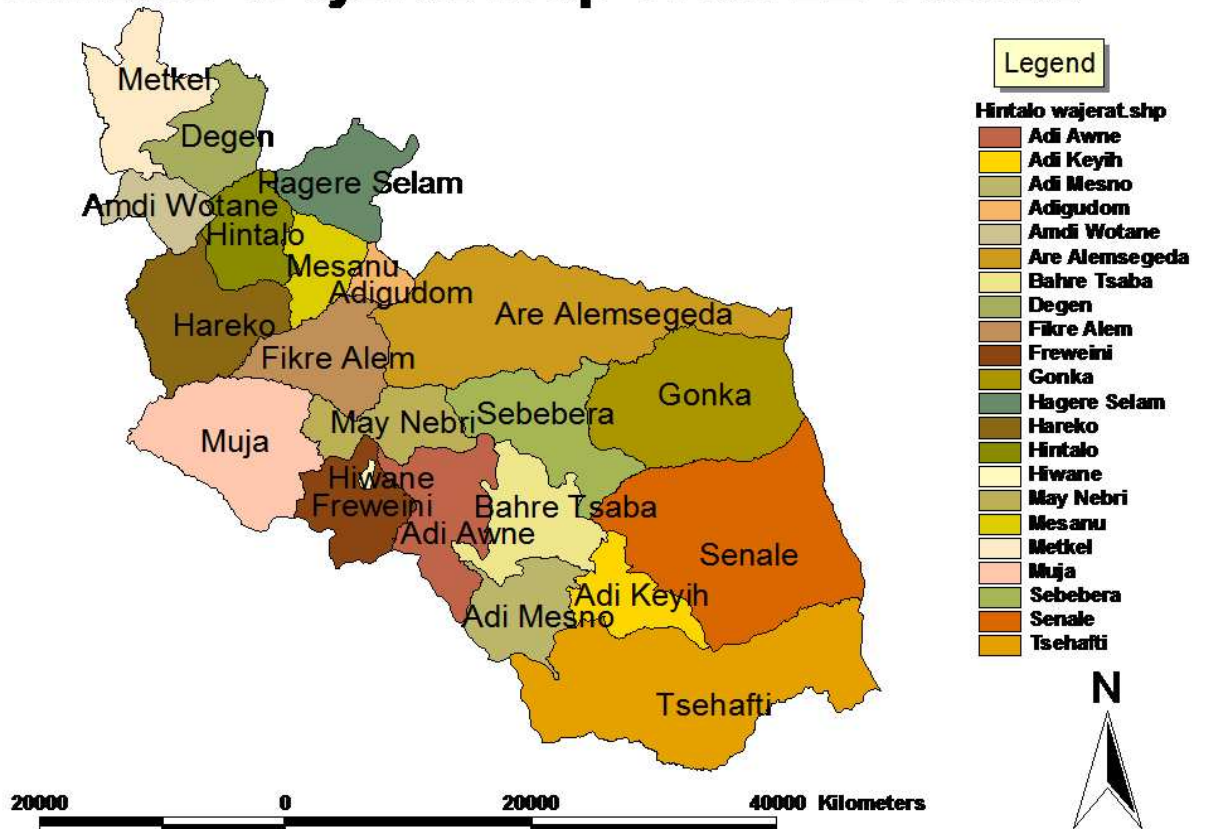
2. How do you see the role of the court in conflict resolution?
3. What is the role of the court in development and promoting democracy?
4. What is the benefit of this media compared to the traditional ones?
5. Do you think these are appropriate to the rural communities? Are the community members contented with this media in conflict resolution?
6. How do you evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your programs?
7. Is your media participatory?

*Interview Questions Guide for the parish priests*

1. What is the contribution of the church in conflict resolution and promoting democracy?
2. How do you communicate among yourselves concerning conflict resolution?
3. How keen are your parish members and the community on the intervention programs you employ?
4. Which occasions are conducive for you to address the conflict resolution messages to the parish members and to the community?
5. What are the channels of communication do you mostly employ?
6. Which segment of the community do you mostly target? Why?
7. What do you suggest the degree of the community participation? What can you propose for the advance of the programs?

### Appendix-III

## Hintalo Wejerat Map With 22 Tabias



Source: office of plan and fin Development plan process team

As you can observe from the given map the Wajjarat sub-district kebelles are Sebebera, Gonkua, Bahri Tseba, Senale, Adikeiyih ,Adi Mesno and Tsehafti. From these, the selected study areas are:

- Bahiri Tseba
- Senale, and
- Gonkua

## **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and all the sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

Name: Gebreselassie Kahsay

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date of submission: June 17, 2011

Place of submission: Addis Ababa University, Graduate School of Journalism and Communication.

