

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



**POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING BY THE INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL OF
ETHIOPIA (IRCE): THE CASE OF AGARO**

By: Tsion Zerayakob

Advisor: Ato Yonas Tariku

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APPROVED BY BOARD OF EXAMINERS

NAME

DIRECTOR OF IPSS

SIGNATURE

DATE

ADVISOR

Yonas Tariku

| 

8 June 2022

INTERNAL EXAMINER

EXTERNAL EXAMINER

Declaration

I, Tsion Zerayakob, hereby declare that the thesis work entitled “**Post-Conflict Peacebuilding By The Inter-Religious Council Of Ethiopia (IRCE): The Case Of Agaro**” submitted by me for the award of the Degree of Master of Arts in Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University, is original work and it hasn’t been presented for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar titles of any other university or institution.

Name

Tsion Zerayakob _____

Advisor

Yonas Tariku

_____ |  _____

8 June 2022

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Abstract

The focus of this research is assessing post-conflict peacebuilding by the Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) in Jimma Zone, Agaro Woreda. It mainly intends to study the role of IRCE in Jimma peacebuilding program, the mechanisms applied, examining its effectiveness and functionality, the challenges and strengths of the peacebuilding program. It also studies the actions undertaken to enhance religious tolerance and to resolve conflicts between Christian and Muslim societies. It explores theoretical developments on peace and conflict as well as religion as a factor of conflict and peace. Furthermore, conceptual frameworks of peacebuilding, faith-based peacebuilding, faith-based civil societies, and mechanisms applied in the process are discussed. It uses qualitative research design, where the selected case study is an exploratory and single instrumental case. Non-probability sampling is selected as a sampling technique where purposive sampling and snow ball sampling are used to determine the sample size. Primary and secondary sources of data are used in the research, where the data collection instruments are Focus Group Discussion and Key Informant Interviews for primary data. The findings from the data analysis are; development of inter-faith organizations such as IRCE, partial restoration of former co-existence, unsatisfactory dialogue platform for victims and youths. Challenges incurred include skepticism of religious leaders, lack of public trust, financial constraints, legal limitations and exclusion of traditional conflict resolution techniques. Whereas, its strength includes local ownership of the post-conflict peacebuilding program, the integration of religious institutions for conflict resolution and a relatively good co-existing condition compared to the damage incurred. In conclusion if it is properly designed and managed post-conflict peace building program plays a significant role for ensuring sustainable peace, tolerance and social co-existence.

[Key words: faith-based peacebuilding, dialogue, faith-based organization, conflict resolution, religious tolerance]

Acronyms

CSO - Civil Society Organizations

EIASC - Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council

EOTC - Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

FBO - Faith-Based Organization

FBCS/O - Faith-Based Civil Society/ Organizations

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

GARAPO - Gomma Agaro Peace and Religious Affairs Office

ICG - International Crisis Group

IRCE - Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia

JZIRC - Jimma Zone Inter-Religious Council

KII - Key Informant Interview

MOP – Ministry of Peace

UN - United Nation

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Ethiopia has a religiously oriented society that practices various religions. Religion makes an integral part of Ethiopia's culture and customs influencing the daily lives of its constituents. Christianity and Islam are the major religions practiced in Ethiopia. The country has an inter-religious interaction that is tolerant of diverse religion. However, this inter-religious interaction has been facing multiple challenges (Getahun, 2019).

In the past years religious conflict and tensions has erupted in different parts of Ethiopia. Among such areas Gondar in 2009, Dessie in 2009, Kemise 2006, (ICG, 2016) Mota in 2019, shashemane in 2020 (Ostebo & Haustien et al, 2022) can be mentioned. These areas show the religious tensions in Ethiopia (Haileyesus, 2012). Large-scale religious violence has also flared in Ethiopia's southwest, i.e., the Jimma conflict in 2006 and 2011, which is a significant theme in this study. Jimma is located in Southwestern Ethiopia, Oromia region divided into 21 *woredas* (Minyahil & Sisay, 2020). The 2007 census by the Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency (CSA) provides that the Jimma zone is estimated to have a 2.4 million population (CSA Census of 2007). The religious demography of Jimma demonstrates that 85.75% of its residents are Muslims, 11.25% of the population is Orthodox Christians, and 3% of the population is Protestants. There are also traditional and other faith adherents (CSA Census of 2007).

The 2006 inter-religious conflict of Jimma occurred in Dembi woreda where the cause of the conflict was the discrepancies that arose between Muslims and Christian adherents on the Meskel holiday (Zelalem, 2010). The location or land where Meskel demera is celebrated was near the Muslim mosque, so upon celebration, the noise of speakers and smoke has caused grievances to the Muslim community. The issue of changing Demera's location was raised, which was not accepted by the orthodox Christians (Abiy, 2017). It eventually ended in commotion where

Christians and Muslim communities were both affected by the deaths of individuals, the burning of houses and churches, and the displacement of residents (Zelalem, 2010).

Months later, another higher conflict incident occurred in Gomma *woreda*, Beshasha *kebele* on a religious holiday celebrated by the orthodox adherents ending in attacks against the church, wounding, killings of individuals, and displacing of community members (Yonas & Alemu, 2017). Conflict among the two adherents was also reported in neighboring areas, including Agaro, which was one of the affected *woredas* by the conflict (Asebe, 2018).

Several efforts such as the formation of religious forum (Solomon, 2012) and the use of socio-cultural institutions or indigenous structures by government were made to re-establish peace and restore the former inter-religious interaction in the Jimma zone (Asebe, 2018). The establishment of the Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) as faith-based civil society was among the efforts made in Jimma zone to enhance inter-religious understanding and cultivating inter-religious peace (ibid, 2018). Faith-based civil societies are establishments that are primarily inspired by faith principles. Some faith-based organizations could be affiliated with particular religion while others can be formed based on collaboration or inter-faith cooperation on common interests of multi-religious groups. The Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) is established to create religious equality and tolerance among member religious institutions which endeavors in preserving the cultures and values of peaceful coexistence among the adherents and institutions (IRCE manual, 2015).

In their institutional capacity, FBCS may engage in peacebuilding programs such as advocacy, intermediation, observation, relief services, education, etc. to transform conditions of society (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). Religious figures can also engage in peacemaking where the efforts by such persons are of paramount importance. Furthermore, religions have values and characteristics related to peace and are essential to conflict prevention and resolution that provides an opportunity for such individuals to participate and apply religious values in conflict resolution techniques or tools (Gopin, 1997).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Religion and peacebuilding are interlinked subjects. It can be seen that religion has a major place in peacebuilding discourse where religious teachings have influenced contemporary peacebuilding concepts and practices. Almost all religious teachings, principles, and values incorporate elements of prevention, reconciliation, and resolution of conflicts to bring harmonious relationships between adversarial parties (Smoke, 2006).

Formerly, secular thoughts considered religion as a divisive factor underpinning differences and inequalities and claimed the diminishing significance of religion in a globalized world (Shannahan & Payne, 2016). Religion and its value were downplayed in the whole process of peacebuilding including policy formulation and peacebuilding efforts at the governmental and institutional levels. It was deemed a source of the problem and not part of the solution. Nevertheless, there was a shift from secular rigidity towards the increasing recognition of the role of religion in peacebuilding and the potential of faith-based organs (Heyward, 2012).

Proponent scholar such as Smoke (2006) noted the contribution of religion to peace using case studies in several countries such as Kashmir, Nigeria, South Sudan, Iraq, Israel, and Palestine. Accordingly, inter-faith organizations and religious leaders' peacemaking potential is acknowledged and religious approaches are exemplified as complementary to secular peacemaking.

According to Thania Paffenholz (2009), the general function of faith-based organization in peacebuilding may include individuals' protection from threats and violence by any parties, monitoring, and watching of human rights violations, engaging in peace and human rights advocacy, establishing social cohesion among adversarial groups and members, overseeing and involving in implementation of peace agreements, dialogue facilitation at the local and national level and service provision in creating a platform for peacebuilding. This has led to the development of peacebuilding actions by faith-based actors that actively or passively engage in peacebuilding to bring and maintain peace before the conflict, during the conflict, and in the post-conflict stage (Dubios, 2008).

Faith-based organizations have credibility in society eyes compared to secular organizations. This credibility stems from their religious background making them favorable in peacebuilding (Abu-Nimer & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2008). The society acceptance gives them leverage in reaching out to members of society and also the government (Bouta et al, 2005). This can be seen from their involvement in conflict resolution and post-conflict settlements.

This thesis studies such types of civil society in particular IRCE. It assesses the contributions of faith-based organizations in peacebuilding and conflict transformation and the effectiveness of the post-conflict program by IRCE which is given little attention. IRCE is engaged in preventive discussions, mediation, and post-conflict projects working toward managing differences and inequalities within a community to bring tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Ethiopia.

Over the past years studies by researchers such as Zelalem, 2010; Solomon, 2012; Yonas & Alemu, 2017; Gemedas & Fekede, 2021 have been made on the Jimma interreligious conflict. In those studies the main area of investigation was on the source of conflict in the affected *woredas*. The studies also explored the inter-religious relation among the religious communities in Jimma and the conflict dynamics. Other research by Abiy (2017) was also written on countering extremism through social capital in Jimma cases of conflict emphasizing on the coming together of religious figures and the establishment of Religious Forum for Peace that contributed to the overcoming of multiple social cases including non-religious and religious associated conflicts.

Though the above mentioned researches discuss about the involvement of religious actors and organs in the conflict however the role of religious leaders, religious institutions, and faith-based organization such as IRCE was not given due consideration. The involvement of these parties and their role in peacebuilding process is hardly discussed. In other words, since previous studies were mainly focused and limited on learning the dynamics of the conflict, its source and the inter-religious relation in Jimma *zone*, the research in relation to peacebuilding notion are inadequate. A little emphasis has been given to study the role of CSOs such as IRCE that emerged at the post-conflict stage. Hence, this study on the IRCE is assumed to contribute to the existing knowledge on peacebuilding by a local faith-based organization such as IRCE regarding Jimma *zone* conflict.

It assess the effectiveness of the post-conflict peacebuilding actions undertaken by IRCE in Jimma zone, Agaro *woreda*; Analyze the function and the role of IRCE in the post-conflict peacebuilding, examine the strengths and major challenges faced by the council in peacebuilding, inspect the mechanisms followed by IRCE in peacebuilding and assess how functional the IRCE is regarding its purpose of establishment.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. General Objectives

The general objective of the study is to assess the role, function, and contribution of IRCE in peacebuilding. It also assesses the challenges posed against the council, its strengths, the mechanisms used, and the effectiveness of the peacebuilding.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

- i. Assess the role and function of the IRCE in post-conflict peacebuilding in Jimma, Agaro town;
- ii. Investigate the mechanisms and instruments applied by the council in the post-conflict peacebuilding process Jimma, Agaro town;
- iii. Examine the challenges incurred by the IRCE and its strengths *vis-à-vis* post-conflict peacebuilding Jimma, Agaro town;
- iv. Assess the effectiveness and functionality of IRCE post-conflict peacebuilding in the case of Jimma;

1.4. Research Questions

- i. How did the IRCE function and undertake its role as an inter-faith based organ in post-conflict peacebuilding in Jimma Zone, Agaro town?
- ii. What conflict resolution mechanisms are applied by IRCE in the post-conflict peacebuilding projects in Jimma Zone, Agaro town?
- iii. What are the challenges posed against the IRCE and its strengths in Jimma post-conflict peacebuilding?
- iv. How effective and functional was the IRCE post-conflict peacebuilding in the case of Jimma?

1.5. Significance of the Study

The significance of this research includes its contribution to society, FBCS, IRCE, and the peace and securities field of study by assessing the role of local faith-based actors in settling a conflict. It particularly examines the effectiveness of the IRCE post-conflict peacebuilding project and how it contributed to bringing peace to the society while resolving the conflict in Jimma, Agaro *Woreda*. It has an empirical contribution that indicates the gaps in the peacebuilding efforts which can be taken as feedback or input for future peacebuilding initiatives by such organs.

The finding of this research also contributes to policymaking. It has identified the challenges and strengths of the IRCE post-conflict peacebuilding in Jimma, Agaro *Woreda*. Therefore, policymakers could use the study findings as an implication to enact a policy that encourages and improves FBCS participation and engagement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the national, regional, and community levels.

Moreover, the study findings contribute to filling the literature gap about the knowledge in understanding the potential of religion and religious institutions and their role in conflict resolution. It could also be used as a base for other research on related issues.

1.6. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to assess the post-conflict peacebuilding by IRCE in Jimma. The Jimma conflict has occurred in different timeline i.e. in 2006 and 2011. This study specifically covers the conflict that occurred in 2006 in Jimma neighboring Illu Ababora *Zone*. The reason to select the 2006 Jimma conflict as a timeline and the Agaro town as a study area was because the 2006 conflict was instigated in Gomma Agaro area and the first formal peacebuilding establishment i.e. Forum of All religions was initiated in Agaro town. It was formed based on the gathering of religious figures both from Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities to reconstruct the social relationship.

The theoretical development of peace, conflict studies and religion's potential as a factor of peace or factor of conflict are also discussed in this study. Correspondingly, it explored concepts of

peacebuilding, faith-based peacebuilding, and mechanisms applied in resolving a conflict. The study considers the IRCE's experience and viewpoints of participants in identifying the challenges and strengths in undertaking post-conflict peacebuilding in Jimma, Agaro *Woreda*. It also includes identifying the tools used by IRCE in peacebuilding and assessing the effectiveness and functionality of the project.

The researcher limited the study to 25 individuals who are members of the society, religious fathers, and experts from IRCE and JZIRC involved in the peacebuilding project. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling for KIIs and FGDs to acquire primary data and gain their point of view. Another limitation includes financial constraints and inadequate referencing materials and studies to review.

1.7. Structure of the Study

The thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter encompasses an introductory part discussing the background. It also incorporates a statement of the problem, research questions, general and specific objectives of the study, significance of the study as well the scope and limitation of the study. The second chapter discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks through the review of works of literature. It mainly explores the concept of peace, religion as a factor of conflict and peace, faith-based civil societies, faith-based peacebuilding, and mechanisms used in such a process. The third chapter comprises the methodology applied in conducting the research. It shows the research design, the sampling used and its techniques, the source of data, and the instrument used. The fourth chapter discusses data presentation and analysis. The last chapter of this study summarizes the findings, conclusion, and recommendation.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

The theme of this study focuses on assessing post-conflict peacebuilding by a faith-based organization and the contributions of such actors in the peacebuilding process. In this chapter, the concept of peace, conflict, and religion are discussed including the notion of faith-based peacebuilding and post-conflict resolution. Moreover, this chapter discusses the mechanisms of faith-based peacebuilding. The study is based on academic literature, such as books, chapters in edited books, journals, articles, working papers, thesis, dissertations, and empirical research publications. Other works of literature include reports, official documents, training manuals, and records.

2.1. Theoretical Framework on Peace, Conflict, and Religion

2.1.1 Theoretical Developments of Peace and Conflict

Peace is a term widely and regularly referred by many for diverse reasons. It is a contested concept, and part of the debate revolves around its meanings (Patomaki, 2001). During the 1960s, attention to peace research, peace theories, and a culture of peace developed. Former to the developments of peace theories, peace was understood as “stability and equilibrium” at an individual and social level, referring to the internal state of an individual, i.e., a person being at peace with himself. It also includes the idea of social order, although social order and peace can only be obtained using the threat of force (Galtung, 1967). Later on, the concept of peace developed, incorporating other peace notions such as peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. Other related concepts, such as hybrid peace, an interface between external peace operations, and local approaches to peace drawing on traditional, indigenous, and customary practices, have also emerged (Hintjens & Žarkov, 2015).

John Galtung (1967) has elaborated the term ‘peace’ by differentiating it into negative peace and positive peace. The first notion of peace is negative peace, which is defined as the mere absence

of war, personal violence, or an absence of organized collective violence, inclusive of the changeover from individual violence to organized group violence (Galtung, 1967). It focuses on eliminating and reducing such direct physical violence or bodily harm to other human beings by taking action (Tsegaye, 2014). Second, we can find positive peace denoting an absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1969), incorporating “social transformation towards a more just society” (Hintjens & Žarkov, 2015). The notion of positive peace refers to sustaining peace at a whole level emphasizing “cooperation and integration between human groups with less emphasis on the absence of violence” (Galtung, 1967). It denotes handling and enhancing all structural and systematic problems related to social and economic aspects of a state and bringing true and sustainable peace. This positive peace definition has a broader scope in defining peace, extending beyond security problems and eliminating physical violence or the absence of war. Positive peace scope includes the subjects related to the enjoyment of justice, equity, equality, democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms (Parver & Wolf, 2008).

Parallel to peace studies, studies on conflict prevention and resolution have also developed. According to conflict studies, conflict is when the “parties to conflict perceive incompatibility in goal,” the parties in conflict may include social categories such as individuals, identity-based groups, communities, nation-states, and regions (Bercovitch et al., 2009). There are two dominant theories on causes of conflict: resource-based explanation and identity-based explanation. In “resource-based explanation,” economic resources are pertinent where war and peace are deemed as the product of the “material relations among economically motivated actors” or “conflict entrepreneurs” (Hintjens & Žarkov, 2015). On the other hand, “identity-based explanation” takes identity as the main factor of conflict, whereas identity politics are taken as motivators of violent conflict (ibid, 2015). Among the leading indicators of “identity-based explanation,” religion can be mentioned.

Similarly, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler (2000) have theorized that conflict could be grievance or greed-based. Grievance-based conflicts are motivated by hatred that could be intrinsic to identity difference and inequality, while greed-based conflicts are conflicts initiated for economic causes.

Religious-based conflict may emerge from a threat to an individual or community based on their belief and convictions posing intimidation to the actual existence of a person or members of a specific community because of identity (Brahm, 2016).

According to Woolf & Hulsizer (2002), religion may not be the sole factor of conflict; other sources may be involved. Multiple conflict variables may arise from group cultural history that facilitates inter-religious conflicts. Factors of division, i.e., ‘us’ and ‘them’ and in-group bias, i.e., certain group members thinking and believing they are highly valued and distinct, results in out-group directed prejudice, discrimination, and violence. The perception of inferiority of religious groups regarding social relationships may promote the formation of interreligious hatred. Other factors may contribute based on the specific situation of the conflict; for instance political and economic variables could also be taken into account among such situational factors (Woolf & Hulsizer, 2002).

2.1.2. Religion as a Factor in Conflict and Peace

Religious studies have portrayed religion in binary terms: Religion as a source of insecurity or religion as a source of peace (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015). Religion has further been understood either as an independent variable causing conflict or peace; or as an intervening variable that shapes the outlooks on the probability of conflict and its violent potential (Abramson, 2013).

Regarding the first proposition, religion as a source of insecurity or conflict, scholars such as Cook (2017) indicated that religion involves moral disagreements and debates over identity and ideology, encompassing great divisiveness and generating critical social problems. Religion is often a contentious factor used and abused to justify violence and war in this proposition (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013). Cook (2017) comes up with different views on characterizing religious-based conflicts. The first view is the conflict between secularist approaches vs. religious world views, propounding the emergence of scientific rationality and the death of religion as a binding social force in influencing all aspects of life at an individual and social level. The second view refers to fundamentalism underscoring the importance of religion to “cure-all modern evils,” resulting in the “weakening of social solidarity, increased crime and moral decline” (Cook,

2017). This view places religion at the center of public and social life. However, it is criticized for using religion to achieve political ends by elites to gain legitimacy and support to attain their hidden goals (Toft, 2007; Abramson, 2013). The third view regards inter-religious tensions as a dimension of inter-cultural divides showing the increase in the importance of the cultural system to public life and its adverse implication for future social relations (Cook, 2017).

Religion is also a social identity having an in-group and out-group evaluation. It has a high potential to mobilize group members, creating a possibility for abuse resulting in violence or conflict. This group favoritism leads to adversarial relations among groups especially if an identity threat is perceived against each group. Eventually, the identity threat will result in mistrust, hostility, and conflict between the groups (Jesse & Williams, 2012). So in such a case, beyond membership or belongingness to a specific religious faction, there will be radicalism followed by conflict manifestation. Therefore, religion can have an impact on societal peace.

Religion could also be used to provoke conflict where there are structural problems or grievances on the social, economic, and political aspects of a country or an absence of positive peace within a state. So, any religious disparity or inequalities can prompt conflict by allowing grievances on such aspects to be revealed. In other words, state fragility can be a root cause of conflict (Shannahan & Payne, 2016), while religious terms which are not the principal cause may be used to express conflicts.

Furthermore, it is argued that for a conflict to be considered religious, a difference in religion by conflicting communities is not adequate. Religion shall be pinned as the agenda or issue of the conflict, at least by one of the conflicting parties. In other words, a religious factor is deemed to be involved in a conflict when “the polarization of parties is underpinned primarily by religious identity and theological perspectives” (Marsh, 2007). Nevertheless, to some peace scholars such as Galtung (2014), the notion of religious conflicts is rejected, as conflicts are understood as multi-dimensional and complex that cannot usually be reduced to only one causal factor. He further argues that religion is often a source of ‘cultural violence’ used to legitimize other forms of violence.

As mentioned earlier in some cases, ‘religion’ can be used to provoke conflict although religious factors may or may not be the principal causes. Conflicts have evolving nature. Therefore, causes of conflict that were at the inception stage may modify. This evolving nature may draw such sources to become melded with secular, economic, and political motivations (Marsh, 2007). This shows the tendency of religious sources to trigger a conflict by allowing other latent grievances on socio-economic aspects, social inequality, and injustices to be manifested, and vice versa. Any source of conflict with political and economic motivation may also evolve and mix with religious factors. Frances Stewart (2016) reaches similar conclusions stating that, overlapping factors such as identity variances with economic and political differences among groups could cause grievance and resentment, leading to violent struggles. In other words, religion, like any other factor, can be part of the picture but cannot, alone, be a cause of conflict (Silvestri & Mayall, 2015).

Contrarily, the second proposition implies that religion can be applied as a source of peace: to prevent or resolve conflicts. The role of religion in peace was less recognized before 9/11 in the western world, where there were more secular apprehensions regarding the notions of conflict resolution and peace. In contrast, religion was marginalized (Abrahamson, 2013). However, the secularists’ apprehension was challenged, and religion has become an element in peacebuilding efforts in different parts of the world.

Countries such as South Africa (Patterson, 2013) and Sierra Leone (Greybill, 2019) are some examples of states that have experienced such a substantial role of religion and the involvement of religious actors and leaders in peacebuilding (Patterson, 2013).

In the Ethiopian history religion also had a constructive role. The Zemene Mesafint beginning at the 18th century was an era that challenged the unity of the state. Power was decentralized and was in the hands of regional lords. It was marked by regionalism and threatened the unity of the state. However religious institution such as the Ethiopian Orthodox church was working to maintain the unity and peaceful cohabitation of the state. Religion was used as a political tool to avert its disintegration through the advocacy of Ethiopia’s unity (Getahun, 2019).

Almost all religions have values related to promoting peace which is essential to the conflict resolution process. This proposition regards religious values as an input for preventing or resolving conflicts. It has allowed faith-based actors and faith leaders to participate in peacebuilding and apply such values in conflict resolution techniques or tools (Gopin, 1997). Because religion is profoundly ingrained in communities, religion and religious organizations have a constructing role. Religion plays a dominant role in the inner and social life of human beings. Its values can transform and improve individuals' behaviors and characters (Gopin, 1997), and religious institutions have the potential to influence and bring social changes through that (Shannahan & Payne, 2016). Religious values and principles touch the private lives of individuals and society life, allowing them to have unique leverage for reconciling adversaries and ending violence (Funk, 2012). Theoretically, such institutions are viewed and characterized as value-driven and supposedly free from politics making them credible in the eyes of the society, enabling them to mobilize a community for a peace process.

In recent times, religious principles and values have become incorporated in the resolution of conflict. In addition religious organ and religious figures are taking some role in facilitating conflict resolution and peacebuilding process. Formerly secularists opposed applying religion and inter-religious dialogue in conflict resolution processes. Religion's contribution to conflict resolution was overlooked or marginalized because it was perceived as a phenomenon that is not measurable and irrational; meanwhile, reasoning and logic prevailed in the eyes of secularists (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013). The secularists further claimed the weakness of religion's influence on all aspects of life in the face of scientific reality. However, it was argued that emphasizing the conflict potential of religion is an overgeneralization and distortion of religion. It is an injustice to religion's peace potential and the many ways religion can serve as a powerful resource for peacemaking (Funk, 2012). The age of modernity has marked the privatization of religion, separating religion from the community and neglecting religion at a national and global level (Dubios, 2008). However, even in states where religion is negated at governmental and institutional levels having lesser manipulating power on the social, political, and economic dimensions, and where secularism has highly surfaced, the appearance of religion has not

disappeared (ibid, 2008). Therefore, the conflict resolution notion has shifted towards using religion and its values in peacebuilding.

Hiskias Assefa (2003), argues that the social science field concerning peacebuilding and conflict resolution is short and inadequate. It claims the only way to understand reality is through rationalism and secular scientism, which downplay other forms of understanding reality (Samuelsson, 2003). So social science should consider other disciplines such as faith and faith values to improve the effectiveness of peacebuilding.

Religion and peace are interlinked in which peace is central to religion and endorsed by religious values and principles. Numerous religious values and principles promote peace and social justice, and religious actors have critical roles in building and sustaining peace (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013). Thus, such religious value needs to be identified in terms of their importance for bringing peace and contributing to conflict resolution theory (Gopin, 1997). Likewise, each religious faction has its particular understanding and teachings of what peace means in spiritual, theological, conceptual, ritual, practical, and relational terms (Funk, 2012). The peace concept is interpreted contextually, making difference in its understanding. In other words, comprehending how peace is construed within different religious institutions helps to piece together an inter-religious understanding and elucidates the foundations for building peace in multi-contexts (Funk, 2012).

Therefore, the total renunciation of religion's capacity to bring peace and accepting it only as a source for conflict is a misrepresentation of religion. Religion and peace are closely related subjects. As mentioned earlier, it is indicated that social science is only bound by reasonableness excluding other social realities and social values that are tangible. Therefore there is a need to integrate social science with social morals and standards from religion and develop a system accommodating religious values in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Furthermore, working together with faith-based organizations can contribute a great deal in keeping and restoring peace through conflict resolution.

2.2. Conceptual Framework on Peacebuilding and Faith-Based Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is a wide-ranging discourse aimed at bringing peace. The peacebuilding discourse has been debated, creating difficulties in describing its components and objectives. The 1992 United Nations (UN) Agenda for peace has defined peacebuilding as inclusive of four main components: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking, Peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Preventive diplomacy implies taking action at an early stage designed to prevent the materialization of conflict or the prevention of manifested dispute from intensifying and cumbering it from spreading. Peacemaking is an action to bring opposing parties to an agreement using peaceful means. Peacekeeping is the deployment of UN military and police personnel in the conflict area with the consent of concerned parties to prevent or settle a conflict. Post-conflict peacebuilding is an action to support structures towards strengthening peace to avoid a relapse into conflict. These actions are designed toward maintaining and reinforcing peace and eliminating any setbacks (ibid, 1992).

Preventive actions, peacemaking, and peacekeeping play a role in creating an opportunity for post-conflict peacebuilding that can avert the recurrence of violence (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). At the post-conflict stage, peacebuilding is anticipated as a relatively short-term response to a security problem and understood in the narrow parameters of preventing violence immediately after conflicts (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006). In other words, in the post-conflict stage, a peacebuilding operation has to be conducted by signing a cease-fire agreement or post to political settlement heading towards the reconciliation stage (David, 1999). Hence, the peacebuilding process will cease at the stage where the post-conflict state can provide security and transition to the settlement phase (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

Peacebuilding can also be broadly defined as preventing the resumption or escalation of violent conflict in conflict-prone societies and establishing a durable and self-sustaining peace. It also aims to address the underlying sources of conflict, building or rebuilding social institutions, governance institutions, and the rule of law (Paris & Richmond, 2009). This definition supposes that peacebuilding efforts should contain features of conflict preventive actions, conflict management, and post-conflict rebuilding (Parver & Wolf, 2008).

Proponent scholar such as John Paul Lederach (1997) broadly labeled peacebuilding as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustain the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relations. This definition propounds all-inclusive actions addressing structural problems aimed at bringing positive peace. Consequently, the range of peacebuilding activities may encompass the dimensions of security, humanitarian assistance, good governance, and the rule of law. It creates room for a broader range of actors, including non-governmental organizations, humanitarian organizations, and commercial entities, in the peace operation activities (Paris & Richmond, 2009).

According to Leaderch (1997), a proper peacebuilding approach includes actors on three levels of leadership. These are the top elite level involving leaders of political, ethnic, religious, and military groups with high visibility; the middle range level which leaders respected in sectors such as religious or ethnic leaders, NGOs humanitarian leaders, and academician/intellectuals; the grass-root level consisting of local communities, local leaders and local health officials. The step taken by the actors involved differs according to their level of engagement. The top-level leaders are minor in number and are limited in taking action due to their position within a particular society. In contrast, the others are closer to conflict-affected communities and conflict experience.

On the other hand, scholars such as Griffiths & O'callaghan (2003) have indicated that peacebuilding deals with building sustainable development process, other than encompassing basic human rights. Peacebuilding scope shall extend to development discourse further than security problems (David, 1999). Peacebuilding efforts shall stretch to deal with “economic, political, social causes of structural violence or social injustices” (Ty, 2012), supposing multi-dimension development. It also has been argued that peacebuilding has been highly influenced by liberal peace theory. In attribution to peacebuilding activity scope and “the emphasis on building institutions based upon market economics and democracy,” contemporary peacebuilding is often described as liberal peacebuilding, which is built on the theoretical foundation of liberal peace (Paris & Richmond, 2009). The notion of liberal peace reflects the idea that “liberally constituted states are more internally peaceful, prosperous and humane and even better environmental managers than non-democracies” (ibid, 2009).

However, such theoretical underpinnings have been counter-argued that peacebuilding activities may become problematic since it comes with promoting liberalist foundations or principles of liberal peacebuilding such as liberal democracy, liberal human rights, market values, and establishing a centralized secular state, integration of society to the globalized world system. The values and approaches used to promote peacebuilding may not be universal. Therefore, the construction of a liberal state may disregard customs, norms, cultures, and traditions of the conflict-affected societies making peacebuilding operations/ projects unsuccessful or unsustainable (Richmond, 2010). Here the social culture factor shall be considered a resource for peacebuilding operations. This view infers that the “greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture” (Lederach, 1997).

In developing a peacebuilding and conflict resolution framework, building a peace constituency within the conflict setting is necessary. The people in such a setting should be taken as input and not only as recipients (Lederach, 1997). Hence, constructing context-driven peacebuilding or local-liberal hybrid implies applying peace strategies beyond the liberal view recognizing the social fabric such as culture, norms, traditions, customs, and values; it also indicates a shift toward post-liberal peace (Richmond, 2010).

2.2.1. Faith-Based Peacebuilding

Faith-Based Peacebuilding is a relatively new development referring to “unofficial informal interaction between members of adversary groups aiming to develop strategies to influence public opinion, organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict” (Montvielle 1991: 162).

It creates an intersecting platform where religion and peacebuilding actions are applied together. The integration of religion with international peacebuilding could combine reconciliation and conflict resolution in an innovative way. In fact faith-Based Peacebuilding not only pursues the conflict resolution but mainly the restoration of a healthy and respectful relationship between the parties (Nicosia, 2017).

The involvement of religious actors and religious resources concerning the elimination of violence and the inspiration of peace is crucial to religious peacebuilding (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013). The faith-based peacebuilding process institutes working within religious frameworks (Dubios, 2008). It allows the engagement of religious communities and institutions in conflict resolution (ibid, 2008). In contrast, other peacebuilding efforts are mainly focused on the material dimension of reconstruction and recovery from violent conflicts, such as rebuilding infrastructure, strengthening the economic potential, and so on, which may not be adequate to address the conflict source and transform it (Brajovic, 2005).

Religious teachings and practices are considered to bring positive change and develop the understanding of what building peace is about. Since religion is found rooted in the community, religious peacebuilding tends to reach community members and institutes community-oriented efforts (Dubios, 2008).

Unlike secular peacebuilding, faith-based peacebuilding incorporates religion-based mechanisms. It is an effort to work on conflict resolution and transformation within a religious context through unique activities and mechanisms. For instance, observation, inter-religious dialogue, mediation, reconciliation, peace education, training, and advocacy can be mentioned (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013).

2.3. Faith-Based Civil Society Organizations (FBCSO)

Faith-based civil societies are independent organizations formed by the meetings of parties with shared interests to engage in voluntary collective actions and non-profitable activities for the public good. They are established at an international or local level in which their purpose of establishment is highly about promoting and facilitating social changes and cohesion using religious means. They may use faith values during the provision of services, limiting them to operate contextually on acceptable norms and values of a specific society. It contributes to rejecting other influences such as westernization (Davis et al, 2011).

Faith-based organizations may be formed grounded on a single religious doctrine or inter-religious understanding of multi-religious institutions. They may exercise faith-based mediation, referring to the coming together of religious leaders or representatives of faith-based civil societies for reconciliation through an assembly. They focus and reflect on their respective faith teachings on conflict resolution, social justice, healing wounds, and forgiveness (Smoke, 2006). Such a type of inter-religious cooperation by different religious institutions allows them to speak and express their shared concerns in one voice since religion is perceived as a base and common ground.

The distinctive feature of FBCSs is that they are formed based on a religious creed that makes them guided by moral standards. FBCS, unlike other CSOs, are not concerned about providing material needs only; instead, they focus on providing religious-based services (Davis et al, 2011). There are instances where they may operate in communities irrespective of their religious activities and affiliation through the provisions of relief service and humanitarian assistance after conflicts. They can involve independently or jointly with governmental and non-governmental organs to address socio-economic problems, this creates an opportunity for other faith-based organizations to encourage the integration of context-driven peacebuilding in governmental policies and institutions program (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009).

In addition, FBCSs may engage in resolving conflicts and facilitating reconciliation. They mainly use non-violent means which is inclusive and more participatory. It is assumed that they make a prominent contribution by eliminating stereotypes, challenging norms and traditions, instigating structural violence, changing attitudes through education, mediating adversaries, and promoting sustained inter-faith dialogue (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). It has been argued that civil societies have no place in peacemaking negotiation. This was because CSOs can engage in advocacy, which is deemed an impediment for such organs to take a role in the peacemaking process. The credibility of CSOs may be challenged since political interests may prevail over their purpose of establishment, impeding the freedom of organizations and constraining them from acting in their total capacity (Sterland & Beauclerk, 2008).

2.4. Faith-Based Peacebuilding and Conflict Resolution Mechanisms

In this section, standard faith-based peacebuilding tools and conflict management approaches are discussed as follows:

Interreligious Dialogue: - Interreligious dialogue is a tool used in religious peacebuilding. It is a dialogue arranged to end conflict or bring parties for reconciliation via the assemblages of religious leaders to discuss collectively as advocates for peace (Report to the United States institute for peace, 2004). It is designed to involve people with different religious backgrounds, meeting to examine and discuss societal issues causing conflict by highlighting the difference and similarities among them and aiming to transform their relationships towards positive coexistence (Dessel & Garlington, 2006). In other words, it consists of a process in which respected actors of different groups or religious communities come together for discussion, identifying the causes that created the disagreement and clarifying misconceptions directing them towards reaching mutual understanding.

Interreligious dialogue also needs to be applied contextually in which its objectives and features are adopted considering the actuality of the specific societies (Brajovic, 2005). It has a unique feature in which it applies spiritual resources of the religious traditions which influence the participants. It not only focuses on resolving a particular conflict but also works to avert the materialization of conflicts that may resume from the previous conflict and prevent any inter-faith tensions that can cause future conflict (Report to United States Institute for peace, 2004). In using such a tool for conflict resolution, the involvement of inter-faith bodies in conflict mediation between opposing parties, the mitigation of hostilities prompted by theological or ideological difference, and the progress of parties as agents of reconciliation is crucial (Report to the United States institute for peace, 2008).

Religious value in such discourse makes participants acknowledge the dignity of all human beings in the whole process. As a result, mutual understandings evolve, parties' relationships change, trust is developed, mutual respect emerges, misconceptions are addressed, disputes are resolved, and societal cohesiveness is achieved (Kadayifci-Orellana, 2013).

Mediation:- “Mediation refers to an approach to conflict management in which a third party, which is not a direct party to the dispute, helps disputants through their negotiations and does so in a non-binding fashion” (Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009). Mediation is recognized and applied contextually in different cultural and religious sets to bring the conflicting parties into agreement. Hence, designing context-driven mediation under religious and traditional values is important (ibid, 2009).

In faith-based mediation the involvement of religious creed and religious institutions play vital role. Religious principles and values such as forgiveness, truth, personal accountability, love, patience, justice, compassion, and mercy are emphasized in faith-based mediation (Beardsely, 2011).

Observation: - Religious actor appears as watchdogs discouraging violence and opposing encroachments of human rights from actions of governmental or non-governmental entity. They may engage actively in monitoring elections and confirming the legitimacy of the election and engage passively in activities such as inquiry, fact-finding research, and investigations (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Nimer, 2005).

Early Warning and Advocacy: - Early warning by FBOs is to alert the government to take action on areas where conflict signs and indicators appear. This enables the government to take preventive measures before worsening the situation. So FBOs can help the government. On the other hand, advocacy is a process where FBOs undertakes activism and influences the government concerning reformation and bringing fairness towards peace. In other words, it is a “*lobbying of government*” in fulfilling and securing societal interests (Browne, 2014).

Peace Education: - other than the above mentioned mechanisms religious actors also play some roles in peacebuilding through the education of their respective members and in ensuring conflict transformation (Hanachor & Echezu, 2021). This is because they have legitimacy in the eyes of the society undertaking peacebuilding action through direct and indirect involvement (ibid, 2021).

2.5. Interreligious Tolerance and Peacebuilding Endeavor in the Ethiopian Context

In the case of Ethiopia, different religions and multi-religious practices exist. The Ethiopian society can be characterized as a heterogeneous society composed of different religion and ethnic identities where adherents are intermarried, forming social hybridity in each generation showing the closeness and the good relation of the members of society co-existing peacefully. This kind of interaction, to some extent, serves as religious tolerance manifestation, exempling peaceful coexistence beyond mere tolerance and inter-religious cooperation among different faith adherents. Nevertheless, there are claims made by religious minorities against the historical tolerance where they characterize the relation as domination by the majority and relegation of minorities portraying religious inequality (Yonas & Alemu, 2017).

The principles of freedom and equality of religions and separation of state and religion are enshrined under the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution, embracing religious pluralism and promising the autonomy of religious institutions and practices (Art 11 & 27, Ethiopian Constitution). This freedom of religion resulting from liberal political philosophy has created conditions for social differentiation where individuals are free to choose to become a member of any social and religious category. The incorporation of the principle of separation of state and religion in the constitution was also a significant step toward redressing minorities' grievances, allowing a religious institution to be free from any political influences and coercion that depict the exclusion of state religion through its endorsement (ICG, 2016). However, its incorporation in the constitution does not guarantee religious equality and freedom from political intrusion.

Such kind of political intrusion in the affairs of religious organization can be witnessed in the case of Ethiopia. For instance following the coming to power of the EPRDF in 1991, the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church's (EOTC) 4th patriarch Abuna Marqorewos was replaced against the canon and the Holy Tradition of the church and exiled from the state resulting in the division of Holy Synod which majorly affected the church. There was clear violation of the constitution regarding non-interference in religious matters (Haustein & Ostebo, 2011).

Other governmental interference was also made on other religious institution such as the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC). The Muslim community claimed that there was an excessive influence by the government over the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) although the government refuted that it was due to concerns about rising extremism (USCIRF, 2017). Unequal treatment and discriminatory practices by governmental bureaus and officials concerning registrations of a religious institution, allocations of worship land, burial sites, and the burning of Churches (International Religious Freedom Report, 2017) were factors for grievances made by Christian denominations of the Orthodox and Protestants. In addition, the passing of permissions regarding the sharing of historical and religious landmarks such as Epiphany/Timket celebration places was and are bases for complaint. There are no liabilities made so far for provoking religious institutions and their adherents through systemic exclusion and stigmatization and no restrictions for claiming shares on and renaming religious and worship sites. In the past decade, religious community relations have turned into a competitive atmosphere where the inter-religious tolerance and coexistence have been challenged and, in some places, deteriorated; where the problem has rolled over to this date and manifesting the early stage of new conflict (Assefa, 2017; Haustein & Ostebo, 2011).

Apart from governmental interference, the misuse of religious freedom can also lead to religious conflict. This misuse can relate to the right to manifest religion. Manifesting of one's belief can be conduct by aiming to change the religious beliefs and identities of others without coercion (Berhane, 2009). It can be seen reflected in the current situation of Ethiopia, where religious communities have no limitation on proselytisms against others. Preaching places such as public squares, bus, and taxi stations, and renting a house in a residential neighborhood can be mentioned (ibid, 2009). In such cases, public order, health, morals, and the right and freedom of others could be violated requiring attention and regulation by the government (Yonas & Alemu, 2017).

In order to prevent the materialization of conflict at a state level, the Ethiopian government has developed some peacebuilding endeavors. Establishments of governmental entities that deal with conflict resolution and peacebuilding could be mentioned among such attempts. The establishment of the Ministry of Peace (MOP) could be taken as an example. It was established based on

proclamation number 1263/2021 under article 41 elaborating the powers and duties of the ministry. It is stipulated under the proclamation that MOP is an actor that initiates ideas for the formulation of peace policies and strategies. It also works with relevant governmental units, cultural and religious institutions, or any other relevant bodies to ensure peace and mutual respect among adherents or other social groups. In other words, in undertaking peacebuilding initiations, MOP has a responsibility to collaborate with social groups and refer to their existing social customs. The ministry also has a particular responsibility to design and implement a strategy to prevent extremism and fanaticism under the cover of religion (Proclamation No. 1263).

Another peacebuilding endeavor the government undertook was the establishment of Reconciliation commission. It was established based on proclamation 1102/2018. The Reconciliation Commission has the objective to maintain peace, justice, national unity, and consensus and also reconciliation among Ethiopian people. Among the powers and duties of the commission is to identify principles and values which will be base for national reconciliation by making discussions with groups of society having different views. Furthermore, it makes examination to identify the basic reasons of disputes and violation of human rights by taking into consideration of political, social, and economic circumstances and the view of victims and offenders. (Proclamation No. 1102/2018).

The establishment of a dialogue commission at a national level is also an endeavor made by the government. The commission was established based on proclamation 1265/2021. The National dialogue commission has the objective of facilitating consultation among different parts of society when there is a difference regarding national issues. It scrutinizes historical and contemporary causes that resulted in conflict manifestation and make recommendations on the resolution. It also works on identifying the root cause of deviation in conflict subject to arranging a platform. CSOs and the inter-religious council are also invited to collaborate in the instituting process in which they are allowed to participate in the selection of commissioner (Proclamation No.1265/2021).

These above mentioned endeavors imply that progress is being made at a national level to resolve conflicts through dialogue instead of physical confrontation and to create an accommodative

system that enables different religious and social groups to get involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

Hence, the implication of this literature review is to outline religion's potential in bringing peace and in peacebuilding by discussing the different arguments of scholars and practitioners. It enables the researcher to evaluate the particular case of IRCE's role in peacebuilding according to the existing knowledge. Furthermore, since the existing literatures on Jimma conflict are more related with studying the dynamics of interreligious relation, identifying and analyzing interreligious conflict causes, or studying social capitals advantages on countering interreligious conflict therefore this paper has implication to fill this literature gap by studying the experience of FBOs particularly IRCE in peacebuilding.

Chapter Three

3. Research Method

3.1 Research Design

This chapter shows the overall research design and methodology: Data collection instruments, sampling techniques, and data analysis. The research design used in this paper is a qualitative case study conducted by exploring the role of the IRCE and the character of faith-based civil society in the peacebuilding process. The rationale for choosing a qualitative case study is that it allows the researcher to build an in-depth understanding of the understudied context or the participants' settings (Creswell, 2007). Accordingly, Jimma, Agaro *woreda* is selected as an understudied setting because it has experienced interreligious conflict twice in 2006 and 2011, and efforts were made to restore peaceful co-existence and tolerance. As mentioned earlier, this research aims to examine the role and function of local faith-based organizations in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Hence, to meet the study's objective, IRCE is selected as an organ to be studied since it is a partaker in Jimma's peacebuilding process.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that qualitative research has a downside of highly depending on the participant's participation and the subjective interpretation of the researcher, which may affect the validity and representativeness of the study (Creswell, 2007). To avoid this problem selecting key informants such as experts representing the council, religious leaders involved in peacebuilding, and residents of Agaro *woreda* for the particular purpose of this research is necessary so that the researcher can triangulate the data gained from the key informants interview, focus group interview, and secondary sources.

Furthermore, an exploratory case study is selected because it allows the researcher to explore or investigate an area and find out about a particular social issue to contribute to a better understanding of the issue where little is known (Kumar, 2018). This study aims to explore and understand the faith-based peacebuilding action undertaken by the Inter-religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) by sharing detailed descriptions of IRCE tasks and engagements in the pursuit of peace and peacebuilding.

In addition, the case study is a single instrumental case study that tries to primarily illustrate and create an in-depth understanding of the issue, i.e., the role of IRCE in peacebuilding and its autonomy in undertaking activities. Using a single instrumental case study design is based upon the assumption that a single case can provide insight into the events and situations prevalent in a group from where the case has been drawn (ibid, 2018).

3.2. Sampling

This research studies the IRCE itself at its national level. The reason for choosing the council at the national level is that the regional sub-councils, including the zonal and woreda level of the council are liable to the national council (Article 30(3), IRCE Memorandum of Association, 2014). From this, we can see the subordination of power. Moreover, Article 3 of the IRCE memorandum of association provides that any regulations ratified by regional councils shall agree with the bylaws of the national council. However, regional sub-councils are given the power to establish their administrative structures and centers. In other words, the national council serves as an umbrella for the administrations of regional, zonal, and *woreda* councils. Therefore, the appropriate amount of data can be extracted from the national council.

3.2.1. Sampling Technique-

The sampling technique applied in this case study is non-probability sampling. “Non-probability sampling designs are used when the number of elements in a population is either unknown or cannot be individually identified” (Kumar, 2018 pp. 187&188). As non-probability sampling, purposive sampling, and snowball sampling are functional for this research. Using the purposive sampling enables the enquirer to “select individuals and sites for his study that purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007).

In purposive sampling, the researcher sampled people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem. Purposive sampling is also helpful in determining whether the sampling is consistent with the information needed in conducting the case study (Creswell et al, 2007). Accordingly, to select cases and gather representative and consistent information for the case study, the researcher selected relevant cases or reports based on his judgments using purposive sampling. Another sampling technique used is snowball sampling. Snowball sampling selects a

sample using a network (Kumar, 2018). Information was collected from key informants, and they identified and directed other individuals and experts for the basis of data collection. The number of key informants was not identified in advance, so the researcher selected key informants until the data saturation point was achieved for the research.

3.3. Sources of Data Collection, Instruments, and Data Analysis

3.3.1. Sources of Data

Primary and secondary sources of data are used in the research. The primary sources or firsthand data are collected by using in-depth interviews with Key Informants from the council working on peacebuilding, religious leaders, and residents of Agaro *woreda*. On the other hand, secondary data are extracted by reviewing works of literature, research studies, and other relevant documents or publications.

3.3.2. Data Collection Instruments

A case study uses a very flexible and open-ended technique of data collection and analysis (Kumar, 2018). For the purpose of this research interview, Focus Group interviews and secondary data sources are applied.

Key Informant Interview (KII): – interview is an instrument in which a researcher can gather in-depth information directly from the respondents. In this case study, interview with key informants is used as a major source of data. The interview enables the researcher to freely prepare relevant questions regarding the research problems. In this case study, the researcher prepared open-ended questions for the semi-structured interview and organized an interview schedule; but the interview was not limited only to those questions. Further relevant questions were asked based on the participants' answers and formulated new questions promptly. A total number of 12 key informants were interviewed. The criterion for selecting these key informants was based on their working and decision-making position and also their participation in the peacebuilding process. The participants were representatives of the IRCE, JZIRC, and religious fathers representing the Church and the Mosque.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD): – FGD is an interview with a group of persons enabling a researcher to explore the views, experiences, and understanding of those people who participated in a common situation relevant to the research study (Kumar, 2018). This data collection tool is suitable when there is limited time to collect data and when participants are doubtful to provide information freely at an individual level. So through the monitoring of the researcher, relevant data are to be acquired (Creswell et al, 2007). Two FGDs were conducted in Agaro town where each focus group discussion contained 6-7 participants, i.e., a total number of 13 individuals. Participants were selected from Muslim and Orthodox Christian community including elders, women, and youth that were affected by the conflict where some of them participated in the dialogue arranged by IRCE. It was conducted by separating the Muslim and Christians Orthodox participants into two, FGD 1 and FGD 2 based on their religious difference so that they will be able to inform the researcher about the problem freely.

The selected participants are Muslim and Orthodox Christian individual members of society, including elders, women, and youth that were affected by the conflict, and some of them were able to participate in the Dialogue.

Secondary Data: – These are inclusive of any documents or any publications, reading materials, studies or researches, articles, periodicals, journals, books, dissertations, reports, government official documents, training manuals, and records.

Tools/Instruments: - During data collection processes for this thesis, data recording tools such as interview schedules, notebooks, and thesis were used for taking notes. Audio recorders such as Mobile phones were also used for audio recording purposes.

3.3.3. Data Analysis

The general process of data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparation, organization, reduction, and representation of data (Creswell et al, 2007). In this research, the data analysis consists of a detailed description of the case and its setting primarily. After transcribing the data, the researcher organizes and categorizes the very significant and less significant information into the data's common characteristics. This helps the researcher manage the data collected from in-

depth interviews, focus group interviews, and documents and conduct thematic analysis. The researcher can also finalize by making generalizations according to his judgments and the relevant works of literature for the case study.

3.4. Ethical Consideration

The study is conducted taking research ethics into account. In primary data collection, the researcher has requested to obtain the free and informed consent of the experts. Further, the researcher also informed key informants regarding their privacy and use of anonymity to keep their identity confidential.

Chapter Four

4. Findings and Data Analysis

As discussed earlier, this paper focuses on examining the role of the inter-faith organization in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution process, where IRCE is the selected organ for data collection. This chapter contains the data presentation and analysis of the study, extracting collected data from Key Informants interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and secondary data gathered. It discusses the description of the conflict and its source, the role and function of IRCE in the overall peacebuilding process, the challenges incurred by the organ, and the mechanisms employed in conflict resolution.

4.1. Sources of Conflict

Most participants of the FGD and KIIs agreed that among the principal source of the conflict and intolerance identified was the involvement of the fundamentalist, i.e., the khawarji, which were the primary perpetrator of conflict against non-Muslims and Sunni-Muslims in Jimma (Interview Dates are presented in Appendix 4). In addition informants emphasized that political elites have also played a role in the overall conflict in which they used the religious disagreement between the Muslims and Christians and the actions of the youth to exacerbate the conflict (FGD-1 & KII- 1, 3, 6).

A Muslim resident in Agaro town stated that elites initiated the conflict deliberately where they used Islam as a tool (FGD-2). However, Christian residents in Agaro claimed that the purpose of the conflict was to attack and kill Christians and expand Islam through stigmatization and displacement of the Christians from affected *woredas* and *kebeles* (FGD-1). Anonymous informant stated that “lots were killed due to the conflict, and it was severe, especially in rural areas where Christians were killed highly. People were not allowed to take the corpses of their families and relatives to bury them” (KII-5).

Similarly the IRCE also identified the emergence of radical groups or fundamentalist as one source of conflict. Injustice, land claims for religious ceremonies and questions on ownership of worship land and cemetery were also identified as a basis of conflict (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). It has eventually resulted in individual's attacks for following their religion, forceful conversion of religion, wounding and killings, internal displacement, and raiding of property (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016).

Similar insights are shared regarding the sources of the conflict from the data gathered in the FGD, KIIs and the IRCE report. Accordingly, fundamentalist actors and political elites were involved in the conflict in which they used religious difference as a means to initiate conflict. As mentioned in literature review, fundamentalism is criticized for using religion as a means of achieving political ends by elites to gain legitimacy and support to attain their hidden goal such as gaining of power and money. Before the 2006 incident Muslim and Christian's communities coexisted peacefully for long years. For several decades Meskel celebration was undertaken at the same place near the mosque's location, which indicates that the conflict was not a sudden incident. The elites used the variables of uneven treatment towards the faith communities, imbalanced representation of adherents, and biased decision making of respective governmental bodies to create social and economic marginalization of religious groups and inequality of religions affecting the tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Moreover, the difference in the perception of the situation by the two communities, for instances where the Christians perceived the conflict as an existential threat has also affected the recovery of the tolerance and coexistence of the two.

4.2. Developments Following the Jimma Conflict

Following the conflict, some peacebuilding establishments were undertaken by gathering religious figures from both Muslim and Christian communities to reconstruct the social relation and the coexistence of religious communities. Different organs and actors were established. For instance, a forum was composed of religious institutions in Agaro town that later was established in other zones and *woredas*. The forum focused mainly on preventing the repetition of such conflict and

focused on the improvement of religious community tolerance (Yonas & Alemu, 2011). It engaged in addressing religious-related concerns of the community that could turn into conflict and worked toward creating a peacefully coexisting society. The forum responsiveness was also towards constructing the outlooks of community members, especially the youth groups. Amongst the actions provided by the forum, arranging platforms for training on inter-religious tolerance could be mentioned. It has also helped to circumvent grievances of religious communities in Jimma by working towards allocating space to the aggrieved parties (Abiy, 2017). It served as a foundation for establishing national, regional, and local inter-faith organizations.

Similar establishments were made in 2010 to bring religious equality and tolerance among multiple religious institutions. The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) was set up; to prevent and resolve means of conflict, arrange post-conflict peacebuilding, work on capacity building, and engage in development actions through the collaboration of religious institutions (IRCE manual, 2015). The IRCE Peacebuilding Department Head stated,

IRCE is an organization by the membership of religious institution. It comprises diverse religious groups with different values, teachings, beliefs, and practices but coming together based on their common concern, i.e. 'Ethiopia' and peace (KII-1).

This includes the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, The Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council, The Ethiopian Catholic Church, The Evangelical Churches Fellowship of Ethiopia, The Ethiopian Seventh Day Adventist Church, and The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus and Ethiopian Kale Hiwot Church (IRCE manual, 2015).

Workshops were conducted from time to time by IRCE that helped increase religious leaders' awareness of the importance of teaching peace education apart from the spiritual preaching every month (Tseegaye, 2014). Furthermore, the council has organized one national, five regional, several zonal, and *woredas* sub councils bringing together participant religious leaders and other faith-based organs technical staff in Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and the Southern Regional State (IRCE Memorandum of Associations, 2014).

4.3. Peacebuilding by IRCE

One of the peacebuilding projects undertaken by IRCE was a three-year project (2013-2016) in the Jimma zone and its *woredas*. The base for establishing this peacebuilding project was the conflict between Muslim and Christian communities. It was designed to enhance IRCE's commitment to building the capacity of religious institutions to handle religious conflicts in their respective areas effectively. It aimed to support governmental organs in addressing claims by religious institutions impartially, trigger peace initiatives with local interfaith councils, strengthen the work relations, develop advocacy and lobbying, and advocate peace and reconciliation (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). The project's objective was also to encourage the involvement of youth, women, and girls in peacebuilding activities and enhance community relations with different religious leaders and local government officials (ibid, 2016).

4.3.1. The Role and Function of IRCE in Peacebuilding

Various roles were assigned to IRCE in the peacebuilding project, where its primary role was to facilitate peace conferences and dialogue. The Head of IRCE's Peacebuilding Department stated that "IRCE primarily conducts preliminary studies in which its findings enable it to facilitate the meetings of conflicting parties in a peace conference" (KII-1). The preliminary study aims to diagnose the conflict's source and dynamics, determine what claims are requested by the parties, and work on conflict transformation. After identifying possible sources of conflict that infringe the rights and freedom of community members, the council initiates a project for peacebuilding.

"In launching a peacebuilding operation, IRCE creates a platform to bring conflicting parties together where they can discuss their problems and come up with a common solution for both parties" (KII-1). This implies that the council is assigned with the responsibility to provide each party a space to express issues causing conflict, the difference and similarities among them, and aiming to transform their relationships towards positive social change (Dessel & Garlington, 2006).

In undertaking a role as facilitator, the IRCE arranges the overall dialogue process, including planning the mode of interaction by the conflicting parties. As indicated in section 2.4, authoritative actors from the different religious communities involved will take advantage of the opportunity to discuss and reach mutual understanding. It can be inferred from this that in organizing and facilitating a dialogue or peace conference, IRCE does not have an authoritative role, and its actions are not directed toward drawing a solution. The council is not designated with a “mandate to dictate” or pass an obligatory decision; rather, it merely “arranges a tribunal.”

The council also has a function of facilitation regarding administrative and governance questions. This question often relates to the allocation of burial sites and churches, and mosques building. “Since the council cannot operate alone and cannot give a solution by itself for community questions, it will expedite the issue by working together with governmental organs and indirectly works to avert the possibility of conflict occurrence” (KII-2). So far, the result regarding such social questions has been successful where IRCE has worked jointly with governmental offices (KII-2).

Another intended role for IRCE in the peacebuilding project was a mediator role. The head of the IRCE Peacebuilding Department stated that “the council also takes a role as a mediator. However, the assessment and resolutions made by the council have non-binding effects” (KII-1). In a mediation platform arrangement, the council applies collaborative and participatory methods in which “affected members of the societies can participate through a selected representative that helps to understand the problem deeply from both sides.” In the mediation process, parties are also encouraged to pursue a win-win result in which both conflicting parties will mutually benefit (KII-1). In the case of IRCE, measures are also taken to sustain the results of mediation in conflict resolution in which the council organizes a nucleus or permanently established committee. “This body of committee is established by the regional, zonal, or *woreda* level of the council. The national council will subsidize through stationaries or immovable assets which prevents the committee from splitting and enables it to sustain its continuity” (KII-1).

The IRCE also have a watchdog role that aims to provide protection to society and its members. As pointed out in 2.4, FBOs can discourage violence and oppose encroachments of human rights from actions of governmental or non-governmental entities by assuming a watchdog role (Bouta, Kadayifci-Orellana, & Nimer, 2005). According to the IRCE Head of Public Relation “the council functions on giving early warning whenever there is community concern arising out of different sources” (KII-2).

The IRCE will make notification or appeal using a press release and make a public statement using religious figures in which “it can depict wrongful actions against public interest through the publication of information” (KII-1). Other than that, when there is action by groups against others, the council publicly states its (religious) standpoint by disapproving and discouraging such actions of violence. It teaches that religion does not support such actions (KII-2).

In summary, it can be inferred that through conducting studies, facilitation of peace conferences, dialogue, and mediation, IRCE works on conflict transformation enabling the conflicting parties to normalize their relation and narrow their difference. Through a conflict transformation design, fundamental sources of conflict will be addressed to bring sustainable peace, change the relationships of the conflicting parties, address interests, and explore the structural and behavioral features of conflict. So it can be inferred that IRCE mainly employs a broader and gradual comprehensive process of addressing and transforming root causes over the long term, inclusive of prevention of any further conflicts, conflict resolution, and management beyond containing conflict.

4.4. Mechanisms Applied By IRCE in the Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

As provided in section 2.4 of this study, several mechanisms could be used in peacebuilding projects. CSOs such as IRCE use soft mechanisms in conflict resolution such as dialogue, mediation, and reconciliation through platform facilitation.

The Head of the IRCE Peacebuilding Department stated that “In the case of Jimma IRCE has mainly used inter-faith dialogue in which conflicting parties could discuss the problem mutually”

(KII-1). The participants of the inter-faith dialogue were mainly the nominee religious leaders from the different religious institutions having a stake in the conflict resolution. The selection criteria of those religious leaders were based on “their experience in mediating role, acceptance by their members, knowledge of their religious principles, self-initiation, commitment, maturity, and deep knowledge of their cultural traditions (Asebe, 2018). In addition, the dialogue was also participatory of government officials strengthening the connection of religious institutions with the government (ibid, 2018).

The lesson learned from the inter-faith dialogue related to the Jimma conflict was that religious leaders were enabled to guide their respective adherents towards peace. A key anonymous informant stated that “the dialogue platform was necessary because it encouraged us to work with the youth not to involve in crime against Christians and cooperate with the fundamentalists and criminals. It also helped identify the real adherents from elites” (KII-6). Similarly, another informant pointed out that “the dialogue platform contributed to settling conflict and stopped it from spreading through the condemnation of crime and unlawful actions. It allowed us to teach and counsel the youth and work towards restoring peace” (KII-7). Conducting the peace dialogue has also contributed to improving the relationship between the Muslim and Christian communities. However, anonymous informant stated that “the day to day social interaction has resumed but the values of peaceful coexistence and tolerance have not been completely restored” (KII-8). It can be inferred that regarding the current state of jimma in terms of peaceful coexistence there are some signs of grievances and these signs indicates that the interaction resembles towards negative peace. In other words although there is the absence of war in Jimma however the absence by itself cannot assure the restoration of peaceful coexistence.

Hence, the inter-faith dialogue carried out by IRCE has partially achieved its intended purpose, as can be seen, indicated in the relationship between members of the two communities. The religious leaders’ initiations and their collaboration to resolve religious issues, the acknowledgment of diversity by members of society, and obedience of adherents to their respective leaders regarding peaceful coexistence could be taken as signs of a conflict transformation process to some level. However, interfaith dialogue encompasses creating a deeper understanding and acknowledging

conflicting parties' interests and grievances, which creates a risk of leaving other conflict factors other than religion or identity, such as political, social, and economic factors, unaddressed. So, as a result, it could negatively affect the outcome of the dialogue.

On the other hand, some members of society were dissatisfied with the dialogue. A Christian resident in Agaro town stated that “the dialogue did not influence solving the problems and bringing peace. The dialogue was mock, only conducted for the sake of acting. Due attention was not paid to the resolution, and it was non-participatory to victims, youth, and other affected members of the society” (FGD-1).

In principle peacebuilding dialogue should engage the divided communities and create a room where the affected actors can express their grievances and discuss their views to reach collective agreement. It should be inclusive of people with different background including the marginalized where they can get response for their needs. If a dialogue is not participatory of those actors then the result will be biased where the neutrality of the peace dialogue is questionable ever since its beginning. As mentioned earlier although the religious leaders were aware and had given importance on interacting with youths however active participation of all stake holders including youths and victims were not indicated. Therefore, the dialogue lacked inclusiveness where the platform was only attended by religious leaders, government officials and elders. It creates a gap in achieving the intended results.

Another approach deliberated by the council was intensive awareness creation and capacity building on matters of peace and reconciliation. It was provided that lots of training on peace and reconciliation were given by IRCE to the community, youth, women, religious fathers, and government employees (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). However, anonymous informant stated that “it was only a dialogue that has been conducted. IRCE provided no training or peace education for the society; instead, the religious institution has taken care of the issue through their specific teachings for their respective adherents” (KII-6). In addition, mediation and reconciliation were given recognition and selected as mechanisms in the peacebuilding process; however, these two mechanisms were not applied. The council has only organized an inter-faith dialogue.

However, both dialogue and mediations are approaches used to prevent or manage conflicts. Their difference lies in their scope of application where dialogue has features of being a platform for wider participation by the different religious leaders and government representative. It can be conducted using single conversation or using initiatives that may extend for longer periods. On the other hand, mediation is focused on resolving a specific conflict among limited numbers of parties in which a third party facilitate it to reach an agreement. Therefore, adapting mediation and other mechanisms in addition to the dialogue in the jimma case would have complemented and strengthened the conflict transformation and peacebuilding process.

4.5. Effectiveness of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding by IRCE

Regarding IRCE's effectiveness with its purpose of establishment, the Head of the Peacebuilding department stated that "IRCE has good results. The meeting of religious leaders has been one change that has not been done formerly. It is after some years ago that they started to communicate and discuss issues wholeheartedly" (KII-1). As pointed out in section 2.1.2 of this study, such kind of interaction by multiple faith leaders and institutions serves as religious tolerance manifestation. It demonstrates that by working on inter-faith cooperation, attempts were made by IRCE to create an environment where diversity is acknowledged and the coexistence of various religions is tolerated. This attempt has succeeded to some level by changing the relationship of members of the two communities using inter-faith dialogue, as indicated in section 4.4. Furthermore, since there were positive changes in the relationship between the two communities, prior shared interaction based on indigenous social associations such as Idir, Ekub, and Debo were reestablished (Asebe, 2018).

Other actions showing the effectiveness of IRCE's project were related to the issues on the allocation of worship places and cemeteries. The IRCE public relations officer stated that "cases regarding the building of religious places and the cemetery issues have been resolved in some areas in which IRCE has played part in bringing the question to the government office and facilitating so that the issue is resolved. We can say that the implementation has been successful" (KII-2). However, anonymous informant stated that, "there are instances where the land under the ownership of the Orthodox Church was looted" (KII-10). Hence, it can be seen that there are

actions taken by IRCE to facilitate the allocation of worship places and cemeteries. Nevertheless, it was not adequate to address the issue.

Another achievement by IRCE was the delegation of project activities to Gomma Agaro Religious Affairs and Peace Affairs Office (GARAPO) and Jimma zone Inter-Religious Council (JZIRC). IRCE's role was mainly about the overall coordination and association with donors. In contrast, the GARAPO and JZIRC were implementing project activities at the local level (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). This allows IRCE to engage and function using its regional religious representatives closer to the events and the societies affected. However, a former officer from Jimma Zone Inter-religious Council stated that although JZIRC has participated in the project "but it did not participate in the project design, which has created a gap on the IRCE's project implementation and its effectiveness" (KII-3).

The structure of IRCE consists of woreda, zonal, regional and national level to address conflict of different magnitude. Depending on the gravity of the conflict, if the regional or zonal council could handle the conflict, then the case will be resolved by the regional or zonal bureau at the grass-root level. The national council will be consulted where the involvement of higher religious leaders such as Pope and Hajjis is deemed necessary, i.e., when the influence from these religious figures is needed (KII-2).

Other achievement was the conducting of Interreligious dialogue. It has allowed the conflicting parties to meet and discuss the conflict cases. It was stated by IRCE peacebuilding Department Head, "The dialogue has created deep understanding between the parties and the societies" (KII-1). However, most of the FGD informants have criticized it stating that it was not open platform. They stated that "there were no third parties involved in the conflict resolution and the platform was not participatory of the youths and victims that bring hesitation on the trustworthiness of the council" (FGD-1). Furthermore, an elder in Agaro Town stated that "some victims have not recovered from their pain since the platform did not include restitution or compensation for the victims" (FGD-1).

As provided in section 4.4, the Jimma inter-faith dialogue has enabled religious leaders to guide their respective adherents toward peace and to prevent the youth from engaging in the actions of fundamentalist and unlawful actions. It also contributed to renewing the relationships between Muslim and Christian communities (KII-7; KII-6).

However, most of the informants in the FGD have agreed, that the resolution or the dialogue was not purposefully prepared. The issues were not deeply investigated as needed, and it was not conducted transparently. Instead it was prepared only for the benefits of politics and not intended to bring sustainable peace to the society. It was also indicated by anonymous informant that “no penalties were given to the instigators. The actors involved in the conflict were temporarily detained and also negligent government officials were not brought before the law for liability” (KII-9). Nevertheless, the response of the IRCE Public relation officer was “the council does not get involved in such points. Deterring those groups and involved actors is the mandate of governmental organs which makes the council exclusive (KII-2)”.

The relationship between the two communities is not the same as before there is still mistrust and doubt. In other words, the condition of coexisting is relatively good, comparing with the damage that was incurred. Informants stated that “the day to day social interaction has resumed but the values of peaceful coexistence and tolerance have not been completely restored” (KII-8) and “there are also certain places where signs of conflict can be seen” (FGD-1 & KII-7). Therefore, it can be inferred that the chance of the conflict recurrence is high and also there is no guarantee of its repetition because there are still grievances in parts of Jimma.

According to the IRCE-USAID project report, it is provided that IRCE has conducted effective trainings on peacebuilding, reconciliation, justice, and peace for youth, women, religious and community leaders, and government sector officials according to their peculiarities. It was also provided that it contributed to mainstreaming peace education among culture bearers particularly in schools, expanded the peace constituency to the security sector through the participation of justice sector and the police; in culture of peace capacity building and contributed to policy development for peacebuilding at local and regional levels (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation

IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). However, as mentioned in section 4.4, the response of the majority of informants in FGD indicates “no training or peace educations were provided by IRCE for the society; instead, it was the religious institutions that have taken care of the issue through their specific teachings” (FGD-2).

IRCE also claimed that the project was successful in building social cohesion and strengthening relationships between the two communities and also with critical actors and stakeholders, which were accomplished principally through rigorous peace education and the promotion of a culture of peace, reconciliation, and justice at the grassroots. However, as indicated in sections 2.2 and 4.6 of this study, IRCE has applied a top-down project design that excluded the middle-range level and the grass-root community, i.e., CSOs such as JZIRC, and GARAPO, youths, and victims (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016).

On the other hand, the strength of the IRCE's peacebuilding program is that it is local peacebuilding action i.e. it is led, owned, and managed locally. Applying a local peacebuilding approach has advantage of making peace efforts separate from liberal policies.

In summary, the effectiveness of IRCE peacebuilding program has both strength and weakness. It has been successful in bringing together of conflicting parties, arranging dialogue platforms for discussion of social wounds to create deep understanding between the two communities, empowering communities to look for shared solutions, and handling issues related to burial site and worship places jointly with responsible local governmental offices. However, among the different conflict resolution schemes IRCE only use a dialogue platform that was not participatory of the youths and victims, the platform lacks transparency, no compensations were made for the victims and mechanisms such as mediation awareness creation and capacity building on matters of peace and reconciliation were given recognition in the peacebuilding process but were not conducted.

4.6. Peacebuilding Challenges by IRCE

4.6.1. Peacebuilding Challenges

This section discusses the challenges faced by IRCE when undertaking a peacebuilding project in Jimma. Among the significant challenges indicated in the KIIs with the representatives of IRCE was the skepticism of religious fathers. Accordingly, IRCE Peacebuilding Department Head stated that

There is the spirit of working together with religious fathers at the national level. However, regarding the regional, zonal, and woreda levels, the case is different. There is high mistrust among the religious leaders and a lack of understanding of the goodwill of each other, so there is no cooperation similar to the national level. In addition, there is competition over power in which religious leaders try to show dominance. The dominance depends on the numerical strength; for instance, in a place where the Muslim majority exists, there is a tendency to pressure the Christian and vice versa (KII-1).

In order to overcome such challenges, dialoguing or transparent discussion of the problem was proposed as a solution. Nevertheless, conflict resolution or peacebuilding process through dialogue could not be a guarantee to the affected parties to believe that resentment will be gone overnight through mere dialogue. However, the fact that multiple religious representatives from different institutes were attending the discussion platform by itself has an effect since the image, and their involvement, to some extent, would influence members of society. Depending on the intensity variation of conflict, community participation and commitment in the peacebuilding program and the dialogue was weak in some *kebeles* and *woredas*.

Another challenge indicated by the Public Relations Head of IRCE in the KIIs was "the lack of public trust towards the council" (KII-2). There are claims made against the neutrality of the council. The council is alleged to be susceptible to influence from the government authorities and officials who are members of certain social and political groups at federal, regional, and woreda levels.

The efficacy of the council has been doubted regarding its impartiality and has been purported to be affected by its close association with the government (ICG, 2016). Anonymous informant pointed out that “the government shall put its hands off religion and religious institutions and must stop using religious domains for political gain. The government shall also deter its officials from using their posts for prejudicial purposes against other religious adherents and religious organs” (KII-11). Other informant has also supported this view by stating that “there are individual representatives of religious institutions involved in governmental affairs for their personal gain and benefits, which negatively affect the peaceful working environment and collaboration of the institutions” (KII-12).

However, IRCE's Public Relations Department Head argued that;

Any religious institution could have the same concern regarding peace, allowing it to work jointly with other bodies on such common values. Other than such joint action with the government, there has been no interference made by the government forcing religious institutions to change their laws or perform contrary to their religious belief. The religious institutions reject this claim. Sometimes the council is seen as contingent on the government and works on the government agendas. Nevertheless, peacebuilding is not only the government's concern but also other social institutions such as religious organizations and civil societies (KII-2).

Another limitation of the peacebuilding process was that there was no contextualization of indigenous practices. Though local peacebuilding should be based on social, moral values, norms, and standards of specific society, IRCE has not used this opportunity to mobilize local capacities to correspond the local needs effectively using indigenous practices (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016).

As indicated in section 2.1.1, hybrid peace, i.e., an interface between external peace operations and local approaches to peace developed on traditional, indigenous, and customary practices, is vital in the peacebuilding process (Hintjens & Žarkov, 2015). The sole transplantation of peacebuilding undertakings without integrating traditional practices may become challenging since it only promotes liberal peacebuilding principles, values, and approaches that are not

universal (Richmond, 2010). Also, as mentioned earlier in section 2.4, inter-religious dialogue or other conflict resolution tools need to be applied contextually. Its objectives and features shall be adopted considering the actuality of the specific societies (Brajovic, 2005).

According to the evaluation of the peacebuilding report, one of the gaps in undertaking the peacebuilding project was that IRCE applied a top-down project design exclusive of local interreligious council such as JZIRC, GARAPO, and the grass-root community (Evaluation of Terminal Evaluation IRCE-USAID project final report, 2016). As provided in section 2.2, it was indicated that a proper peacebuilding approach should be inclusive of the three levels of leadership. These are the top elite level, the middle range level, grass-root level (Lederch, 1992). However, the residents of Agaro *Woreda* pointed out that "the resolution was non-participatory of victims, youth and other important members of the society" (FGD-1). Contrary to the evaluation of the peacebuilding report, the responses from the KIIs with religious leaders, and FGD with Agaro residents; IRCE's representative have responded that "in arranging a platform the council applies collaborative and participatory methods, where affected members of the societies can participate through a selected representative that helps to understand the problem deeply from both sides" (KII-1).

However, how the community perceives the mode of participation in the dialogue and how the council organized the platform was different. The dialogue did not meet the expectation of the community since victims, youths and other members believed that their voice was not heard and they reflected that the dialogue have not addressed the community question or issue which hinders the dialogue to make affected members reach into conflict transformation either at personal level or community level. Here a question should also be asked whether the members of the community elected the so called "selected representative" by the IRCE.

Furthermore, it can be inferred that the successfulness of a peacebuilding program depends on the participation of the grass-root community and the integration of customs, norms, and traditions, which are the foundations of society. The overall process of conflict resolution and peacebuilding program shall also be able to reach actors involved at the three levels. Nevertheless, IRCE was not

able to integrate traditional conflict resolution in the peacebuilding process and has not also addressed and given equivalent responses to the affected community needs, which has challenged its effectiveness.

Another challenge includes that the council was not able to perform its watch dog role. As mentioned in section 4.3. IRCE have a role to undertake the function of observing conflict-related issues threatening the peace and security or wellbeing of the society. It is also expected to keep an eye on the actions of different stakeholders to take different measures to prevent or resolve discords, which the council has failed to do so.

Finally, other IRCE challenge includes financial limitations and financial problems. The former charities and societies proclamation was criticized for setting a limitation on collecting funds from foreign sources. However, the limitation is waived as per the new proclamation on charities and societies no.1113/2019, which stipulates that any civil society organization shall have the right to solicit, receive and utilize funds from any legal source to attain its objective.

The Head of the IRCE peacebuilding Department stated that:

The IRCE receives its funds using two means, i.e., through donations and yearly contributions by the members. Each religious institution or member of IRCE contributes 100,000 birr to the council, i.e., 700,000 birr, and foreign partners such as UNDP, LPI (life and peace institute), and USAID are the permanent donors. Other donors, such as World Vision, support the council but not regularly only on particular events (KII-1).

Although the dialogue and peace conference facilitated by the council are essential tools in conflict prevention and its recurrence, the fact that it drives its budgets mainly from religious institutions limits it from accomplishing its goals.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Summary and Conclusion

Religion could be perceived as an independent or dependent variable causing conflict or peace. It could be taken as a potential source of peace or source of conflict. Religion has values that are more inclined to peace and conflict resolution, which could have inherent components. Elements of peacebuilding could be seen reflected in religion, such as prevention, reconciliation, and resolution of conflict. This has led to the reconsideration of religion in the process of liberal or secular peacebuilding. So building upon the positive impact that religion has on peacebuilding, different countries have experienced the substantial role played by religion and faith-based organs. In order to use religion in peacebuilding, the involvement of sole religious institutions or those affiliated institutions established for different purposes such as peacebuilding, conflict resolution, charity, and so on is necessary.

Ethiopia has a multi-religiously oriented society where its religious tolerance has been challenged in the past years. This has led to the establishment of an organization by the coming together of several religious institutions. As a result, it led to the establishment of IRCE in 2011. The Inter-Religious Council of Ethiopia (IRCE) was set up; to prevent and resolve means of conflict, arrange post-conflict peacebuilding, work on eliminating women's discrimination and use capacity building, engage in development actions through the collaboration of religious institutions, and bring and sustain religious equality and tolerance in areas where religious conflict markers have been traced.

Among conflict-affected areas, the town of Jimma can be mentioned as one. This research uniquely assessed the effectiveness of the post-conflict peacebuilding actions undertaken by IRCE in Jimma zone, Agaro woreda. The link between religion and peacebuilding has also been explored by analyzing the function and role of IRCE in the post-conflict peacebuilding, examining the major challenges faced by the council in peacebuilding, inspecting the mechanism followed, and

assessing the effectiveness of the IRCE in peacebuilding project in relation to its purpose of establishment. The contribution of local faith-based civil societies in the post-conflict peacebuilding process was also examined. Accordingly, major challenges identified in the peacebuilding process includes; the skepticism of religious fathers, lack of public trust towards the council, inability to consider traditional conflict resolution techniques in the peacebuilding process, and financial problem.

A qualitative case study is used as a research design enabling the researcher to build an in-depth understanding of the understudied context or the settings of the participants. The case study employed is a single instrumental case study design. Regarding sampling techniques, non-probability sampling is applied because the number of elements in the population is not identified. In addition, purposive sampling and snowball samplings are selected as non-probability sampling techniques. Both primary and secondary data were used as a source, and an interview was the main data collection instrument. In order to extract relevant and needed amounts of data, the research has focused on the national level of the council since it is an umbrella for the other regional, zonal, and woreda councils.

The findings of the study in assessing the role and function of IRCE in the Jimma zone peacebuilding process include that IRCE is responsible for creating a platform to bring the conflicting parties together where they are able to discuss their problems and come up with a common solution. The project acknowledges and uses religion's influence on peace, and faith-based institutions are taken as an agent for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. The integration of religious institutions opens the possibility of disregarding radicalism and encourages tolerance. It also recognizes that mobilizing local capacities is necessary for effective and sustainable interventions which better correspond to local needs.

It can be concluded that the IRCE peacebuilding project has paved the way for the coming together of conflicting parties and initiated their reconciliation. The results of the project could be replicated in other instances since it has succeeded in opening a platform for conflicting parties to discuss their diverged interests by using dialogue, i.e., using means of resolving conflicts without violence.

The mechanisms instituted by the council use win-win strategies in which parties' interests are attempted to be met without any of the parties losing. It also allows parties to focus on healing instead of remaining with resentments and grievances. Accordingly, the IRCE has enabled the parties to remain on good terms after the dialogue. Furthermore, the project has brought changes in the attitudes, understanding, and behavior of members of society, which positively influenced the coexistence of the two communities. As a result, the diversity tolerance value in the society can be seen re-growing in slow progress, denoting a better relationship between the two in the future.

Moreover, the IRCE project is locally owned, making it autonomous and free from external actors or foreign influences. As a locally established organ, it has credibility in the eyes of the society in which such type of organization works for a common interest, i.e., peace for Ethiopia. This shall be encouraged and imitated by other faith-based organs since local ownership of the peacebuilding initiative is advantageous in terms of instituting existing social and moral values, norms, and standards contributing to its effectiveness. The component of value sensitivity, i.e., sensitivity towards religious and cultural values, makes it preferable to apply such kind of project or peacebuilding initiative for effective peacebuilding and bringing sustainable peace in similar conflict settings.

In addition, the IRCE project also has policy implications in which new policies can be enacted incorporating principles on the use of dialogues and religious/indigenous conflict resolution values to improve the participation of FBOs in peacebuilding.

5.2 Recommendation

The following suggestions are based upon the discoveries from the data analysis, which might give an insight for future and further study. As indicated in section 4.5 of this study, IRCE applied a top-down project design that was exclusive to CSOs such as JZIRC and GARAPO and the grass-roots community. This approach challenges the effectiveness of the peacebuilding process. To effectively address and solve the means or cause of conflict, the peacebuilding approach shall be

inclusive of the three levels of leadership. These are the top elite level, the middle range level, and grass-root level.

It can be inferred that the successfulness of a peacebuilding program depends on the integration of customs, indigenous and customary practices, norms, and traditions which are the foundations of society with the overall process and techniques of conflict resolution and peacebuilding program. Adopting such kind of strategy, i.e., inclusiveness of indigenous institutions could have a major gap-filling role and support. Scheme of restitution or compensation to the affected party could be made according to the common traditions, which helps the dialog to be more than mere talk.

Among the faith-based mechanisms applied in the Jimma peacebuilding program, an inter-faith dialogue was mainly used. Other mechanisms such as mediation and reconciliation were given recognition in the peacebuilding process but were not conducted. Therefore, instead of limiting the peacebuilding process to dialogue, applying such mechanisms of conflict resolution would be advantageous in the peacebuilding process.

Religious leaders can play a vital role through preaching and continuous teaching to their followers, emphasizing the value of peace for creating a harmonious environment and state, which helps in influencing people's attitudes and behavior and play a crucial role in preventing the development of hatred and inter-religious intolerance. In other words, since internal peace has not been achieved, there is no guarantee that similar conflict will not occur again. The conflict has resulted in radicalism, grievances, and tensions, and the chance for its recurrence is high. Therefore it needs a great deal of attention, which is continuous on both regional and local levels, by religious institutions, CSOs and the government.

Furthermore, the reaction of the government and other stakeholders was poor regarding religious tension formerly. The involvement of faith-based civil societies was also weak, where well-balanced efforts or grounded solution to stop attacks on individual citizens and the distraction of property was not made. Therefore, before the occurrence of such disagreements and the materialization of unexpected damage to life and property, the responsible governmental bodies and CSOs should act together to ensure the equal treatment of all religions.

There is also a gap in Local CSOs not being strong in executing their respective undertakings. In other words, there is an implementation gap, so there need to be strategies developed by the CSOs, such as IRCE and other stakeholders such as the government, to enhance them to be more effective in the overall peacebuilding process, to initiate a trust-building program for CSOs to promote stronger connections and collaboration between the conflicting societies, provide capacity building support and encourage the engagement of such type of organizations on other activities aside from conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Although the case of Jimma occurred years ago but the wounds of the victims have not fully recovered. Therefore the actions of the governmental institution and religious institutions should be thoughtful in passing judgments or administrative decisions not to stir new conflict, affecting the currently restored coexistence of the communities and causing more damage to the society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

1. What is the role and function of the IRCE in Peacebuilding?
2. What are the measurements or criteria allowing IRCE to engage in peacebuilding operations?
3. How does the IRCE launch its peacebuilding operation?
4. What areas does the IRCE intervene or undertake its peacebuilding activity?
5. What are the main mechanisms of peacebuilding used by the IRCE in the peacebuilding process?
6. What approaches does the IRCE undertakes to diagnose conflicts and their causes?
7. What are the challenges and constraints posed against the IRCE in undertaking peacebuilding programmes?
8. How functional and effective is the IRCE with respect to its purpose of establishment?
9. What are the strength of IRCE in the peace building program?
10. Any additional Remarks?

Thank You for your collaboration!

Appendix 2: Interview Guide for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

በ2006 እና በ2011 እ.ኤ.አ በጅማና በአካባቢው የነበረውን አለመግባባት ተከትሎ፤ የሃይማኖት ተቋማት ጉባኤን ሚና ለመዳሰስ ለአባባውራሎች፤ ለእናቶችና ለወጣቶች የተዘጋጀ የድገረ ምረቃ ጥናት መጠይቅ

በቅድሚያ መጠይቁን ለመሙላት ፈቃደኛ ስለሆኑ ክልብ እናመሰግናለን።

1. በ2006 እና 2011 እ.ኤ.አ በጅማ እና በአጋሮ ወረዳ ተከሥቶ የነበረውን የሃይማኖት አለመግባባት እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
2. የግጭቱን መንስኤና ዝርዝር ሂደቱን ቢያብራሩልን?
3. በወቅቱ የነበረውን የሃይማኖት አለመግባባት ተከትሎ፤ በሃይማኖት ተቋማት ጉባኤ በተካሄደው የእርቅ ሂደት ውስጥ ተሳትፈዋል? መልሶ አዎ ከሆነ ሚናዎትን ቢገልጹልን?
4. እርስዎ በእርቁ ሂደት ያበረከቱት አስተዋጽኦ ምንድነው?
5. የእርቁ ውይይት (አብሮ የተሰጠም ሥልጠና ካለ) በአካባቢው ሰላምን ለማስፈን ምን አስተዋጽኦ ነበረው? (ለምሳሌ፡- የቀደመ ተቻችሎ የመኖርን እሴት በመመለስ፤ የግጭት መንስኤዎችን ለይቶ በመከላከል እና ግጭቶችን በዘላቂነት በመፍታት ወ.ዘ.ተ)
6. በእርቁ ሂደት በግል እና በማኅበረሰብ ደረጃ ያገኙት ጥቅም ካለ በዝርዝር ቢገልጹልን?
7. የነበረውን የእርቅ ሂደት ተከትሎ ጎደለ የሚሉት ወይም እንደ ክፍተት የሚጠቅሱት ሃሳብ ካለ?
8. ከእርቁ በፊት እና በኋላ ወይም ከግጭቱ በፊትና በኋላ፤ በጅማ፣ በአጋሮ እና በዙሪያው ባሉ ወረዳዎች በሁለቱ የእምነት ተከታዮች (በክርስቲያኑ እና በሙስሊሙ) መካከል ያለውን ግንኙነት እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
9. በመጨረሻም ማንነት የሚፈልጉትና ቀረ የሚሉት ሀሳብ ካለ?

Appendix 3: Interview Guide for Key Informant Interview (KIIs)

በ2006 እና በ2011 እ.ኤ.አ በጅማና በአካባቢው የነበረውን አለመግባባት ተከትሎ፤ የሃይማኖት ተቋማት ጉባኤን ሚና ለመዳሰስ ለሃይማኖት አባቶችና፤ ለጅማ የሃይማኖት ተቋማት ጉባኤ የተዘጋጀ የድገረ ምረቃ ጥናት መጠይቅ

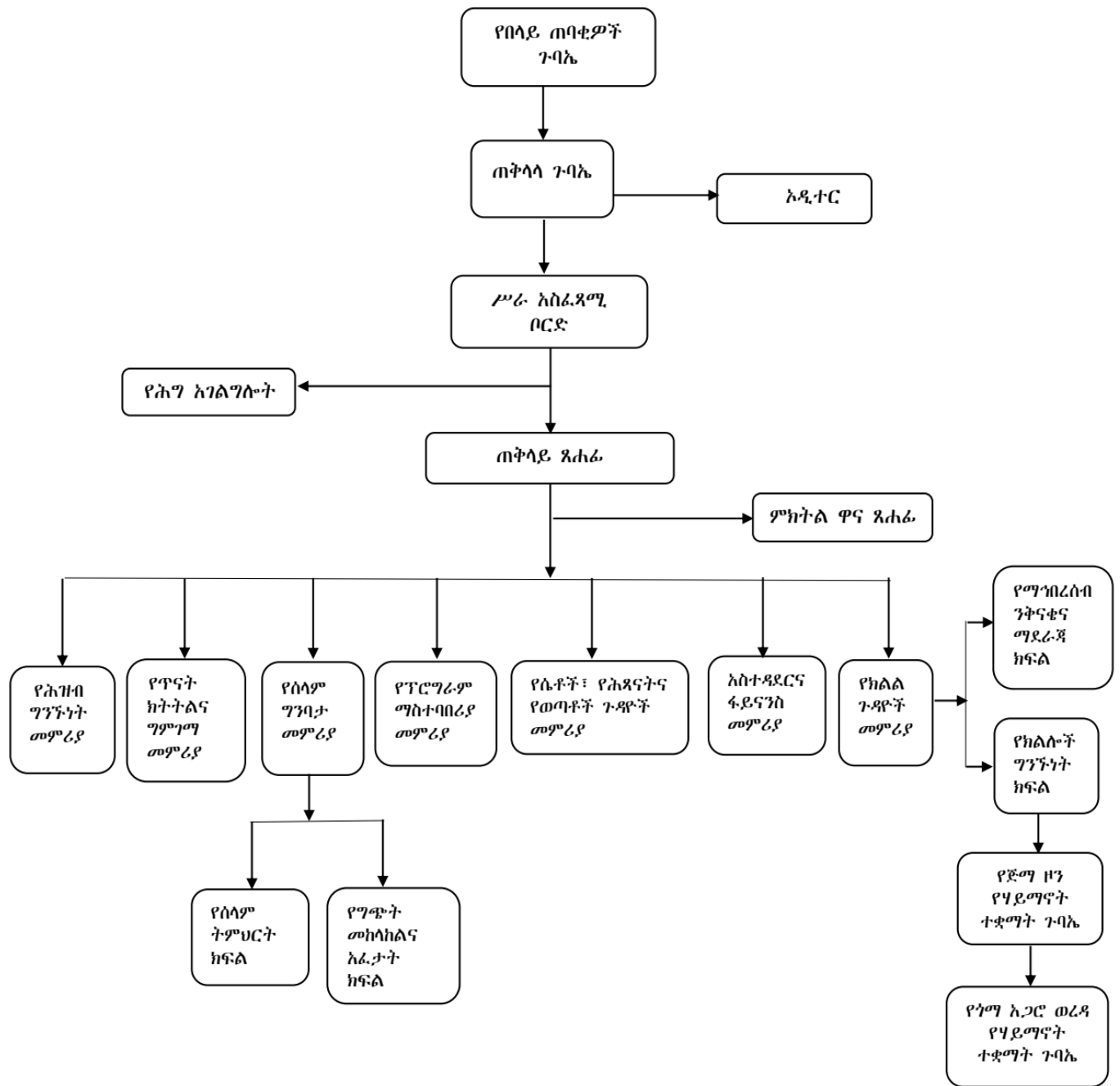
በቅድሚያ መጠይቁን ለመሙላት ፈቃደኛ ስለሆኑ ክልብ እናመሰግናለን። መጠይቅ ሁለት

1. በ2006 እና 2011 እ.ኤ.አ በጅማ እና በአጋሮ ወረዳ ተከሥቶ የነበረውን የሃይማኖት አለመግባባት እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
2. የግጭቱን መንስኤና ዝርዝር ሂደቱን ቢያብራሩልን?
3. በወቅቱ የተከሰተውን አለመግባባት ለመፍታት የኢትዮጵያ ሃይማኖት ተቋማት ጉባኤ ያዘጋጀውን የእርቅና የውይይት መድረክ እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
4. እርስዎ ወክለው የቀረቡት የሃይማኖት ተቋም ስለ እርቅ ሂደት የነበረውን አቋምና ሚና ቢያብራሩልን? በተጨማሪም በእርቅ ሂደቱ ላይ የእርሶስ ሚና ምን ነበር?
5. የእርቅ ሂደት ምን ምን ነገሮችን ያካተተ ነበር? (ለምሳሌ፡- ውይይቶች፣ ሥልጠናዎች፣ ትምህርቶች፣ ሽምግልና ወ.ዘ.ተ)
6. እንደ ሃይማኖት አባት በእርቅ ሂደት ከተካተቱ የተለያዩ መርሃ ግብሮች ያገኙትን ጥቅም ቢያጋሩን?
7. በእርቅ ሂደት እና አተገባበር ላይ ያዩትን አዎንታዊና አሉታዊ ጎኖች/ተግዳሮቶችና ክፍተቶች/ በዝርዝር ቢገልጹልን?
8. የእርቅ ሂደት እና አተገባበር አንደ ሃይማኖት ተቋምና እንደ ማኅበረሰብ ያሳደረው በጎ ተጽእኖ አለ? መልሶ አዎ ከሆነ ቢያብራሩልን?
9. ከእርቅ በፊት እና በኋላ ወይም ከግጭቱ በፊትና በኋላ፤ በጅማ፣ በአጋሮ እና በዙሪያው ባሉ ወረዳዎች በሁለቱ የእምነት ተከታዮች (በክርስቲያኑ እና በሙስሊሙ) መካከል ያለውን ግንኙነት እንዴት ይገልጹታል?
10. በመጨረሻም ማንሣት የሚፈልጉትና ቀረ የሚሉት ሀሳብ ካለ?

Appendix 4: FGDs and KIIs

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	No.	Official Responsibility	Date of Interview	Age Range	Location
KII-1	1	Head/member of IRCE	18/02/2022		Addis Ababa
KII-2	1	Public Relation Head	21/02/2022		Addis Ababa
KII-3 & KII-4	2	JZIRC Officer	7/03/2022		Jimma
KII-5, KII-7, KII - 11	3	Anonymous	9/03/2022	54 -76	Agaro Town
KII-6, KII-8, KII-12	3	Anonymous	9/03/2022	50-69	Agaro Town
KII-9 & KII-10	2	Anonymous	9/03/2022	35-45	Jimma Town
Total	12				
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	No.	Religion	Date of Interview	Age	Location
FGD 1					
Elder	3	Christians	10/05/2022	Above 60	Agaro Town
Women	1	Christians	10/05/2022	43	Agaro Town
Youth	1	Christians	10/05/2022	29	Agaro Town
Men	2	Christians	10/05/2022	40-45	Agaro Town
FGD 2					
Elder	2	Muslims	11/05/2022	Above 60	Agaro Town
Men	3	Muslims	11/05/2022	42-55	Agaro Town
Women	0	Muslims	11/05/2022	-	Agaro Town
Youth	1	Muslims	11/05/2022	28	Agaro Town
Total	13				

Appendix 5: Organizational Structure of IRCE



Appendix 6: Study Area Map



Fig 1. Map of Ethiopia

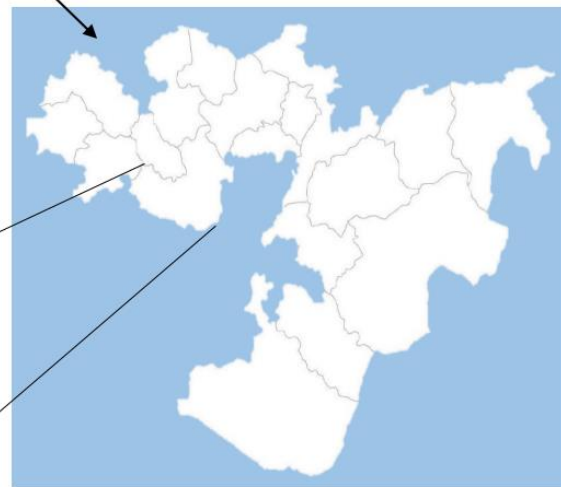


Fig 2. Map of Oromia

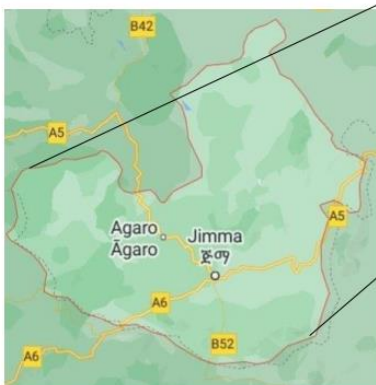


Fig 3. Map of Jimma including Agaro