

## GUEST EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

# Farmer-Pastoralist Interactions and Resource-Based Conflicts in Africa: Drivers, Actors, and Pathways to Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

Pastoralism makes a significant contribution to food security, especially the availability of milk and meat, across Africa. Estimates suggest that direct outputs from livestock such as meat and milk contribute between 5 and 10 percent of the total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa and 15 to 40 percent of added value in agriculture (de Haan 2016). In spite of its acknowledged benefits, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA 2017) reports that the majority of the ongoing conflicts in parts of Africa are driven by the activities of pastoralists and the practice of pastoralism. However, Saverio Kratli and Camilla Toulmin (2020:7) found that even though the total level of violence has risen in West and Central Africa, there was no evidence that incidents linked with farming and herding or those involving pastoralist populations had grown at a faster rate. They therefore concluded that “looking at the increasing violence in Africa through the lens of ‘farmer-herder’ conflict is overly simplistic.” While resource-based conflicts and contestations over land are rife in Africa, the naming and framing of such conflicts as farmer-herder conflicts could have an effect on how conflict analysis and peacebuilding processes are applied.

The articles in this forum examine different types of conflicts that are typically named and framed as farmer-pastoralist conflicts in the scholarly literature and dominant policy discourses, although they do not all, strictly speaking, belong in that category. The case study from Ethiopia presents an

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analysis of conflicts between pastoralist groups, while that from Uganda shows the intersection between cattle rustling and land conflicts, and the case studies in Ghana and Nigeria focus more precisely on farmer-herder conflicts. The intra-group and inter-group conflicts which have different trajectories of progression in the countries under study have had devastating effects, ranging from the loss of lives, property, and livelihoods to the destruction of settlements and the massive displacement of people. However, the estimated losses have been anecdotal at best, as there is no database that accurately documents lives lost, economic losses, and number of displaced persons, especially those in non-camp situations.

While recent literature (e.g., Setrana & Kyei 2021; Tiekue et al. 2021) is replete with reports and studies of growing conflicts between these groups, primarily over competition for access to land and water, and emerging landscapes of insecurities spanning several regions, this forum seeks to combine an analysis of the drivers of conflicts with the ways social energies are being harnessed in the pursuit of conflict transformation across Africa. Drawing on cases from both West and East Africa, the forum examines the ways in which globalization, climate and environmental change, increased access to small arms and light weapons, contested citizenship rights, governance deficits, and the emergence of community-based associations have impacted inter-group and intra-group relations across many African countries. The forum also brings together scholarship that explores perspectives on conflict prevention and transformation in conflict-affected environments. Rather than focusing merely on the conflicts and the threats they generate, this forum looks into the contexts that shape intra-group and inter-group conflicts as well as the actors and their capacities for and contribution to peacebuilding in Ethiopia, Uganda, Nigeria, and Ghana. This includes examining the role of the state, regional institutions, grassroots farmer and pastoralist organizations, youths, and local and transnational actors and cultures as bearers of social energies that can be deployed in charting new pathways to peacebuilding in Africa.

This forum originated with a panel sponsored by the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) at the 61st African Studies Association Conference, held in Atlanta in 2018. There are common themes that connect the articles in this forum: land and resource-based conflicts; the dynamics of the interactions between farmers and pastoralists on one hand, and between competing pastoralist groups on the other; and the capacities of the political elite and local actors to foster peace. The multidisciplinary background of the authors and the different geographical reach of the studies are an added benefit to this forum, since the cases are drawn from divergent sites in Ethiopia, Uganda, Ghana, and Nigeria. The collection of essays relies heavily on a triangulation of qualitative methods to unravel the complexities of the conflict cases as well as the peacebuilding strategies that have been adopted in these countries. The issues addressed specifically capture the drivers of intra-group and inter-group conflicts and the ways in which such conflicts are

being or can be managed through the instrumentality of state and non-state actors and the agency of the locals, including the youths.

Fekadu Beyene's article, "Pastoralists and Violent Conflict along the Oromia–Somali Border in Eastern Ethiopia: Institutional Options towards Peacebuilding" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.89>], examines the causes and dynamics underpinning violent conflict between pastoralist groups in eastern Ethiopia. The article explores how greed and grievance by political elites in Ethiopia have been the main drivers of violence in this area. In order to build peace among these groups, he argues that "respect for the outcomes of referendums on the disputed territorial units and revitalizing customary systems among others" should be the key. He further suggests a revitalization of customary institutions such as the Xeer of Somali and the Gada system of Oromo to lead the peacebuilding agenda.

In "Cattle Rustling and Competing Land Claims: Understanding Struggles Over Land in Bunambutye, Eastern Uganda" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.93>], Pamela Khanakwa draws on the disputed ownership over Plot 94 in Bunambutye sub-county in Bulambuli district to show how cattle rustling, land conflicts, and peacebuilding intersect. Using a historical approach, Khanakwa argues that the root cause of the escalating land conflicts in Bunambutye can be traced to chronic insecurity arising from the cattle rustling that has been pervasive in this region since the 1960s. At the end of the 1970s, increasing cattle rustling activities by the neighboring Karimojong displaced residents of Bunambutye and separated them from their land. When they sought to return to their land in the early 2000s, they found new claimants on the land that they considered their property. This fueled conflicts between the returning customary owners and the new claimants with title deeds. The case of Bunambutye recognizes the efforts by the affected communities, including appealing to the relevant authorities and providing life histories, to show their historical relationship to the land, vis-à-vis the failures of local political leadership to resolve the tensions.

Patience Adzande argues that in spite of the growing recognition of the agency of youth in volatile societies, youths continue to be an under-utilized resource in conflict management in Nigeria. In "Harnessing the Social Energies of Youths in Farming and Pastoral Communities in Managing Conflicts in Nigeria" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.116>], Adzande examines how youths are contributing to the management of farmer-herder conflicts. This study shows that they are involved in informal policing as community vigilantes, as well as participating in mediation and the enforcement of restorative justice. A new initiative which is yet to be evaluated is the community-based security architecture in which youth can work with other actors to facilitate early warning, prevention, and resolution of conflicts between farmers and herders.

Mary Setrana's article, "Promoting and Managing Farmer-Herder Conflict: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Agogo, Ghana" [<https://doi.org/10.1017/asr.2021.92>], explores the continued clashes between nomadic pastoralists and farmers and how this generates concerns about

the unique capacity of community-based civil society organizations to effectively navigate conflict resolution in the Agogo Traditional Area of Ghana. She argues that, unlike foreign or international civil society organizations, community-based associations are able to play important roles in managing conflict because they often claim to have better cultural understanding. The success of such organizations, however, depends on whether they are perceived as indigenous or non-indigenous. This binary framework often leads to a winner-takes-all attitude, and rarely results in sustainable conflict resolution.


Overall, this forum engages with empirical evidence to demonstrate the multidimensional drivers of resource-based conflicts and how different actors contribute to either fueling the conflicts or building peace between affected groups. While the usual focus in the extant literature has been on inter-group conflicts between farmers and herders, insights from Ethiopia expose intra-group conflicts among pastoralist groups. This is an important dimension that is under-represented in conflict analysis and research on the continent. In addition, Beyene's findings show how the political elite, who should be focused on keeping the peace, instead often get entangled in and perpetuate local conflicts. Khanakwa highlights a different kind of conflict which, even though it may not be classified as farmer-herder conflict, involves cattle rustling and contestations over land. Oftentimes, such conflicts are misconstrued as farmer-herder conflicts, and this affects the capacity of stakeholders to map out appropriate pathways to more peaceful outcomes. We learn from this that the naming and framing of conflicts are crucial steps in the sustainable management of conflicts.

Like the case in Ethiopia, Khanakwa's findings revealed the failures of the political leadership in managing the contestations over land. In Nigeria, Adzande puts the spotlight on the role of youths in managing farmer-herder conflicts. Here, the article acknowledges the potential of the youths, who constitute a significant proportion of the population in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular, to contribute positively to the activities of peacekeeping and peacebuilding in conflict-affected communities. The findings of her article, which could arguably be representative of the current situation in Africa, reveal that the social energies of youths have not been adequately harnessed for conflict transformation in rural communities. Setrana, on the other hand, focuses on the exceptional role of community-based civil society organizations in managing farmer-herder conflict, which is often underestimated. Their knowledge about the causes of the conflict and the cultural context gives them the upper hand in building peace between farmers and herders in Ghana. Her article contributes to the ongoing debate on the involvement of civil society organizations in promoting peace and resource mobilization.

In highlighting the roles of conflict actors in peacebuilding, this forum addresses a gap in research, practice, and policy. This is because research on conflict actors mostly focuses on their roles in facilitating conflicts and not on the ways in which their agency can be positively harnessed for conflict

transformation. Thus, it is imperative to explore the untapped potential of conflict actors with regard to their peacebuilding capabilities in order to improve the outcomes.

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