



Conflicts and Disputes

in Osobey Golbo Rangeland Management Unit, Filtu, Ethiopia

Osobey Golbo community members discussing local land use conflicts Credit

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In collaboration with partners, the International Livestock Research Institute conducted participatory livestock route mapping activities as a part of the developmental intervention activities in pastoral areas in the **HEAL project districts (Miyo, Moyale, and Filtu)** in the **Oromia** and **Somali Regions**.

After completing the mapping and validation activities successfully, the dissemination workshop was organized on October 23, 2023, in Hawassa Town with federal governmental offices at different levels, universities, research centers, pastoral community elders, developmental partners, and professional associations in the targeted districts in the southern part of Ethiopia, particularly Miyo, Moyale, and Filtu districts in the Oromia and Somali regions.

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Patron: Professor Peter C Doherty AC, FAA, FRS -
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About HEAL

The Arid and Semi-arid areas of the Greater Horn of Africa are among the areas in Eastern Africa frequently affected by natural and man-made disasters. These areas are therefore vulnerable to recurrent drought and other emergencies such as outbreak of infectious diseases. They are characterized by inadequate access to basic services, inadequate infrastructure, and increased competition for resources. The HEAL project is based on the assertion that, despite the huge challenges that have hit the Horn of Africa in recent years, its people, livestock and natural resource base provides a firm foundation upon which to improve livelihoods and increase resilience. Pastoralist communities depend on the close interlinkages between rangeland, livestock and human health. This insight and understanding provide an ideal basis to apply a One Health approach to tackle one of the key bottlenecks for pastoralists which is access to necessary services and inputs.

The HEAL project is building on this foundation by supporting a bottom-up approach that is participatory, context-specific, coordinated and integrated to reshape service delivery in the form of One Health Units (OHUs). These units will facilitate a combination of services from different disciplines in a meaningful way and will thus facilitate interactions and coordination between governmental departments, private service providers and communities. Their aim is to sustainably strengthen human, livestock and rangeland health services and support communities to develop sustainable strategies to cope with changing environments and threats related to climate change.

The HEAL project focuses on selected pastoral areas of Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya, which share some common characteristics in terms of climate, culture, population dynamics and challenges related to these. These countries have strong cross-border dynamics and are also linked in their historical context.

Consortium Partners

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières Suisse (VSF-Suisse) : Lead
African Medical and Research Foundation, (Amref)
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

Countries of Implementation

Ethiopia | Kenya | Somalia

Amref Sites:

- ▶ Filtu woreda (Ethiopia),
- ▶ Marsabit and Isiolo counties (Kenya)

VSF-Suisse Sites:

- ▶ Moyale woreda of the Somali region (Ethiopia)
- ▶ Miyo and Moyale woredas of Oromia region (Ethiopia)
- ▶ Beled Xaawo and Dollow districts of Gedo Region (Somalia).

ILRI: in all project sites in the three countries

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Introduction

This report provides an overview of land use conflicts in the Osobey-Golbo Rangeland Management Unit. It examines the causes, types, actors, negotiators, impacts and the present status of the conflicts.

The report draws upon information gathered from kebele officials, Filtu Woreda Agricultural Office experts, the Filtu Woreda Administration and Security Office, and the author's decades-long experience working in the region, including insights gained from living within a pastoralist community and knowledge of Somali culture.

The Osobey-Golbo Rangeland Management Unit

The Osobey-Golbo Rangeland Management Unit is in Filtu Woreda, one of seven woredas in the Liben Zone. With a population of 129,086, 90% of Filtu Woreda's residents live in rural areas, primarily engaged in livestock rearing and rain-fed agriculture (primarily maize and bean cultivation). Due to the proximity of the Ganale and Dawa rivers, some small-scale irrigation practices are also practiced. Given that over 80% of their income is earned from livestock and livestock products, the residents of Filtu Woreda can be considered as pastoralists.

The rangeland unit encompasses five kebeles: Osobey (25 km), Arasame (18 km), Harabali (40 km), Golbo (70 km), and Wilo (90 km), all in Filtu Woreda. Infrastructure within the unit includes four health posts, four veterinary posts, and schools. Golbo has a Farmers Training Centre and a Development Agent. Osobey, Arasame and Harabali have three Community Animal Health Workers. Water sources include three ponds in Osobey, Arasame and Harabali, while Golbo and Wilo have access to the Dawa River.

The livestock population within the unit is significant, with 64,875 goats, 45,329 camels, 38,293 cattle, 13,59 sheep, and 2,483 donkeys, totalling 152,339 animals. Poultry production is also common.

Several major livestock migration routes cross the Osobey-Golbo Rangeland Unit. The Bandhere-Wilo route connects Afder Zone through Liben Zone to Kenya, while the Filtu-Golbo route connects Filtu Woreda to Dawa Zone. Additionally, the Nagele-Dolo route connects the Nagele market to Filtu through Dolo.

Traditional, social and political structure

The management unit is composed of five main kebeles and 23 sub-kebeles.

The governance structure within each mirrors that of the woreda, except for the finance and development representative.

As the unit is largely inhabited by the Somali Digodiya community, specifically the Fay, Jibrael, and Massare subclans, traditional leaders known as “ugass” have significant influence. Ugass play a crucial role in resolving conflicts within the area and other Digodiya settlements.

A traditional institution actively governs and manages the rangelands within the Osobey-Golbo unit. A rangeland council comprised of traditional leaders, community elders and kebele leaders operates at the unit level and coordinates the efforts of kebele-level rangeland management committees. Committees at the subrangeland management unit or the kebele level are responsible for managing and governing subunits, including developing and implementing grazing plans. While all three bodies (council, kebele committees and ugass) contribute to conflict resolution, the ugass typically hold the final decision-making authority.

Types and causes of conflicts

Causes of conflicts

Most conflicts in the Osobey-Golbo rangeland management unit are caused by land grabbing for private enclosures for farming and residential purposes and cover an extensive area. When the community explained the private enclosures, they said, “A rain that showers at once on an individual land without crossing its border.” Residential enclosures are close to the main village and Filtu Town. Areas of 100 to 500 hectares are enclosed without legal procedures.

When individuals enclose large areas, this hinders livestock movements and increases the distance of movement between kebeles and villages as well as distances to water points used for livestock and human consumption. Some people break down fences and pass through these enclosures to access water or shorten their travel distances, often leading to conflicts. When there is a drought and the availability of pasture is reduced, livestock herders put their herds in enclosures and this also leads to conflict.

The second type of land grabbing is land grabbing for settlements. This is a political division that creates a sub-kebele for a sub-clan to get their own representative in the kebele and woreda. These representatives can go all the way to zone and regional parliamentary representation and cabinet level. This makes it possible for the kebele and the woreda to claim a larger share funds for social infrastructure development like school, health and veterinarian posts and relief funds. When a new settlement is formed as a sub-kebele, it reduces the available grazing land, hinders livestock movements and disrupts grazing plans.

It also causes problems for herders taking livestock to markets, for example, from Kenya to Liben Zone, then to Afder Zone, and also from Dawa Zone to Filtu and Nagele Borena livestock market.

Types of conflict

There are two types of conflict directly related to land grabbing issues.

■ Conflicts between enclosure owners and livestock keepers.

These conflicts are related to the livestock movements. The initial cause is livestock entering the enclosures, leading to conflicts between herders and enclosure owners. Owners will physically attack the herders, and then the herders' family members or relatives will get involved. The conflict escalates to the sub-clan and clan level if the two families are from different clans. The herders are mostly youths of both genders. The fighting, which began as disputes between young individuals, escalates to conflicts between families and clans and can lead to serious property damage and even loss of lives.

■ Conflicts arising from sub-kebele formation.

Since all sub-kebeles are permanent settlements, a community intending to establish its own sub-kebele must find a suitable location for settlement. Clans will typically be at odds with one another when choosing new settlement sites because most sub-kebele formation is sub-clan based, which leads to conflict as existing kebeles or new communities move to the newly established sub-kebele. There will be resource competition, resource division and land grabbing during the informal boundary demarcation of each sub-kebele and for the main kebeles during this separation and formation of the new sub-kebeles.

Magnitude and status of the conflicts in the last five years

Based on the information gathered from woreda and local kebele officials, land grabbing is the root cause of both types of disputes. The growing number of livestock and the shrinking in size of grazing land due to the increasing number of private enclosure and farmland, which governments have been encouraging, exacerbates the tensions between enclosure owners and livestock keepers. However, since the government began to discourage establishing new sub-kebeles, sub-kebele formation conflicts have declined.

Table 1. Statues and frequency of conflicts in the last 5 years

Type of dispute	Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Individual land grabbing	3	5	7	7	8
Sub-kebele establishment	1	1	0	0	0

Dispute actors

Youths start most disputes as they are usually the livestock keepers.

Of the 30 cases over the last five years, 18 were caused by enclosure or farm owners beating livestock keepers.

Arguments over ownership start with the attitude, “This land belongs to me!”

Culturally, there is a way of owning land known locally as laan-gooyin, which means “branch cutting.” An individual uses tree branches to demarcate an area and has another individual witness the process. Once someone has done this, the community usually acknowledges that person as the landowner. However, people are becoming less respectful of the laan-gooyin ritual and this is causing disputes. Two of the 12 conflicts caused by such disputes resulted in loss of life.

In cases of Individual land grabbing, the actors involved in sub-kebele formation disputes are often elders or young and middle-aged educated men. By establishing a sub-kebele, they hope to gain economic and development benefits for their clan.

Dispute and conflict-resolving bodies and mechanisms

Conflict resolution mechanisms

There are three primary bodies in Osobey Golbo Rangeland Management Unit involved in resolving disputes and conflicts:

- **Governance rules and systems of authority.** Government institutions play a role in conflict resolution, although they often defer to traditional authorities. Thus, all the conflicts arising from the sub-kebele formation are resolved through this mechanism.
- **Traditional clan leaders (ugass).** The ugass play a crucial role in resolving conflicts through traditional mechanisms like “dhaxdhaxaadin” (reconciliation) and “sabeen xir” (offering a sacrificial ewe as an apology).
- **Customary institutions.** The rangeland council and rangeland management committees support the ugass by providing information and recommendations for conflict resolution.

Conflict resolution process:

- **Initial resolution:** Most conflicts are initially addressed by traditional leaders (the ugass).
- **Escalation:** If the ugass cannot resolve the conflict, it may be referred to government authorities.

- **Government intervention:** Government authorities may intervene in cases where traditional mechanisms fail to resolve the conflict or when serious crimes, such as loss of life, have occurred. Traditional reconciliation even works for loss of life as there is a bylaw among all clans in the area.
- **Traditional penalties** may include fines (e.g., livestock) and restitution.

Case Study: Osobey-Golbo Rangeland Unit

An example of a successful conflict resolution occurred in Osobey Golbo Rangeland Unit, where a conflict resulting in loss of life led to the dismantling of several private enclosures by the subrangeland management committee. This incident highlights the importance of Participatory Rangeland Management approaches and the role of local institutions in resolving land-related conflicts. Details of this case study are available from <https://www.oh4heal.org/2024/05/21/conflict-resolution-through-participatory-rangeland-management/>



CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future.

The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock provides research-based solutions to help smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists transition to sustainable, resilient livelihoods and to productive enterprises that will help feed future generations. It aims to increase the productivity and profitability of livestock agri-food systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and eggs more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together five core partners: the International **Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)** with a mandate on livestock; the International **Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT)**, which works on forages; the International **Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)**, which works on small ruminants and dryland systems; the **Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU)** with expertise particularly in animal health and genetics and the **Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)** which connects research into development and innovation and scaling processes.

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