

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Presenting natures, factors, and security implications of farmland related inter-household conflict in Northern Ethiopian Highlands of Wollo: Evidences from Jamma Woreda**

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The focus of this study is to investigate and analyze the different factors of inter-household conflicts over farmland. The study further sought to assess the human security implications on the community of the study area. It has been found that farmers in the study area are suffering from land-related conflicts and its associated impacts. Descriptive-case study was employed in the study. In-depth interviews with key informants and FGDs were data collection instruments used in the study. Secondary data drawn from archival documents and government reports were also used. The major study finding indicated that inter-household conflicts over farmland occurred with the interface of underlined and risk factors. Boundary encroachment, land eviction, inherited land conflict, contract breaching conflict are among the most common. The divisive land administration institutions, individuals' unproductive competition over farmland, poorly implemented land administration programs, and cultural attachment to land identified as underlined factors for the farmland conflicts have continued to happen. The culture of violence, availability of small arms and light weapons, and prevalence of other forms of social conflicts are also risk factors which have created fragile peace among the members of the community. The conflict has affected the economic, social, political, and psychological wellbeing of the study area residents, as well as human security threats. It was found to be imperative to revise and harmonize land administration laws and even to amend some of the faulty legislated articles. Above all digital land registration and data administration should be considered by governmental organizations and NGOs who are working on land administration sector.

**Key words:** Household, farmland, conflict, human security, Jamma woreda.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Land becomes the object of conflict in a number of overlapping reasons. In Africa, land is considered as an economic asset, as a connection with identity, social

legitimacy and as political territory (Anseeuw and Alden, 2010). Especially land in sub-Saharan Africa, which is available to the households and communities have critical

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value; as source of food production and territoriality (Bob and Bronkhorst, 2010). In addition, land values have risen dramatically because of price boom since 2008. Demand for fertile land in Africa will almost certainly intensify along with rapidly increasing global demand for food (Lapeyre, 2010). These explanations fit the reality in the Highlands of Wollo particularly in Jamma Woreda.

In these contexts Farmlands stretched to the marginal lands; dry land, mountain and arid lowlands. Such kinds of actions provoked conflict over land and further undermined stability and productivity in the area. According to some scholars, the kinds of negative impacts were made worse by poor technology and land management (Deininger and Byerlee, 2011). Farmland related conflict can occur between any number and type of identity groups. Among the common fault lines in land conflict ethnicity, religion, class, gender, generation and households are the major ones. Unlike non-renewable resources, land conflicts can be persistent, and conflict resolution is always complicated and difficult. A particular land dispute may be the expressions of a number of causes, actors, and dynamics that sustain as long as the land exists.

Inter household conflicts over farmland and implications for the human security for Jama Woreda community are not studied yet. Therefore, the study intended to fill a yawning gap by exploring the nature, identifying the factors, and explaining the effects and analyzing security implications of the inter-household conflict over farmland to create more peaceful and secured environment to live. The study will also contribute in uncovering the issue for further research, policy measure and human security intervention measures. More specifically the following research objectives were addressed in the study.

## METHODS

This study is descriptive in its purpose and case study in its methodological approach. The case study is one type of qualitative research approach that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources. Descriptive case study design is employed to explore the issue under study through variety of lenses. Jamma Woreda is selected as a case to study context of IHCOFL. Descriptive case study research design provides the opportunity for intensive analysis of many specific details often overlooked by other methods. This research design produces useful insights about the impacts of inter-household conflict and its human security implications for the Jama Woreda community.

### Data sources

The researcher mainly used primary data because it gives firsthand information and the topic can only deeply investigate by primary source. The primary data sources were farmer informants, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with farmers, Victims of the conflict and Key informants. Secondary data were also collected from different sources like journals, brushers, proclamations, reports from the concerned bodies, court reports/documents, policy documents, and

security offices' documents.

### Tools of data collection

To address the research questions data were collected through in-depth interviews, key informant interviews to generate detailed information from farmer households, victims and key informants by using semi-structured interviews. In addition FGDs were conducted with farmer households by using FGDs guide. Document analysis also employed as a tool of data collection. Document review was also the most important data collection instrument. Different published and unpublished documents, journals, farmland conflict related workshop manuals, Brusher, magazines and other key documents which were necessary and related to the study objectives are reviewed to incorporate and enrich the findings of the study.

### Population, sampling design and sample size

The target population of the study is all farmers households in Jamma Woreda those who have farmland and those who have not. The Woreda has 22 Kebeles including the capital Degollo characterized with two dominant traditional climate Zones. 23% Households of the Woreda reside in *Kolla* and the remaining 77% are living in *Woyna dega*. The sample frame was selected purposively from these *kebeles* based on the criteria of representativeness to the two climate zones of the Woreda, abundance of the case and accessibility for transportation.

From the two climatic zones as explained above, households were stratified as female headed households (*emawora*) that constitute 20% of the Woreda's household and the remaining 80% households are male headed Household (*abawora*) for balancing representation of the population. Female headed and male headed households further stratified as those who have land and those who have not for the purpose of including landless farmers in the study. Finally, the researcher built four strata in total. From each stratum, informants and FGDs participants were selected through purposive judgmental sampling technique. Key informants were taken purposively according to their nearness to the case.

### Method of data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking questions and writing memos throughout the study. The researcher makes detailed description of the setting, followed by the coding, transcribing and organizing the response thematically.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Nature and history of farmland conflict in Northern Ethiopia

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, three land tenure regimes have been practiced under three successive political regimes in Ethiopia. Even though land tenure institutions continuously evolved in response to the political environment, rural demographic dynamics, expansion of markets, natural resource conditions (particularly soil erosion), these three periods marked

important turning points in the development of the prevailing land administration system in the country (Ahmed et al., 2002). Conflict over farmland happened in each regimes by different reasons. Though land tenure system varied from region to region due to the diverse geographical, cultural settings and different socio-political events that occurred in different parts of the country (Dessalegn, 2009),

During the imperial regime the land tenure types refer mainly to the imperial administrative classification which is commonly distinguished between communal (*rist*), grant land (*gult*), freehold, or sometimes referred to as private (*gebbar* tenures), Church (*Samon*), and state (*maderia*, *yemengist*) tenure regimes. This type of land tenure system accommodated by the Ethiopian empire is described as one of the most complex compilations of different land use systems in Africa (Shimels et al., 2009). The security of individual holdings was also protected in this system through honoring of hereditary rights and denying access to 'outsiders' (Dessalegn, 2009). Nevertheless, the possibility of claim at any time to a part of the land that was protected by *rist* was subjected to *rist* holders to varying degrees of insecurity.

With the growing recognition of the land tenure system as a fundamental restraining factor to the country's agricultural development effort, and as an underlying cause of land degradation and unequal income distribution, the need for land reform became the key issue of the time (Dessalegn, 2007). Scholars, development planners, social activists (students) and policy makers expressed the need to institutionalize formal and legal procedures land reform.

The aftermath of the "revolution", *Derg* launched a radical land reform program that covered all parts of the country. The March 1975 decree ended all forms of customary land tenure and landlordism (Holden and Otsuka, 2014). All rural and urban lands declared states' property and redistributed to the tillers, primarily based on family size and quality of the land in an attempt to create equity and fairness in land acquisition. The same decree also banned all kinds of land transactions and wage labor in rural areas to ensure that the tillers remained the beneficiaries of the land. The power and responsibility to allocate and administer land was given to the local Peasant Associations (PAs), the lowest administrative unit of the regime (*Ibid*). The demand for land by the rapidly growing farmer population in rural areas could not be met through land redistribution. Although law banned tenancy and use of hired labor, farmers gradually started to informally lease out their lands to close relatives and friends and temporarily give out part of their holding as gift to their newly married relatives. Since transaction and gift of land restricted by law such practices were done under shadow (Holden and Otsuka, 2014).

As explained above farmland related inter-household conflict is politically and environmentally motivated. As

the tenure regime changed the types and extent of conflict differ. In the same manner the environmental dynamics changed the types of conflict happened in the area. Increasing competition over diminishing renewable resources, environmental degradation, population growth and climate change are cited as a key factor in triggering, escalating or sustaining violent land conflicts.

### Factors of land related conflicts

Land conflict involves multiple stakeholders including communities, private sector actors, civil society organizations, local authorities and national governments. A mixture of underlying factors and immediate events often triggers violence (Schwartz, 1999). To address land-related conflict, it is essential to identify factors that create vulnerability to land conflict, heighten unproductive competition, exacerbates tension, causes of conflict, and other contributing factors.

### Land scarcity

The concept of "resource scarcity" describes a situation where the supply of resources like farmlands is not sufficient to meet the local demand. Increasing scarcity of natural resources needed to sustain livelihoods can increase competition between user groups or between economic sectors. Social responses to rising competition can include immigration, technological innovation, cooperation and violent conflict (Schwartz, 1999). At state level, countries with either low per capita level of farmland were 1.5 times as likely to experience an outbreak of civil conflict during the 1990s (*Ibid*).

Evidence from case studies suggests that shortages of cropland may be more closely associated with civil disturbances in low-income countries (Bruce, 2013). Due to legal constraints on access for land among users, the absolute shortage of land in relation to demand can leave many with little or no land. The associated phenomenon of land scarcity is intense competition for land. Land scarcity can result from very high person to land ratios (Homer-Dixon, 1994). In Africa, there is a contradictory fact of abundance and scarcity. Most of this contradiction because of distributional injustice, where one group has controlled most land leaving it a scarce good for most others (Peters, 2004).

Landlessness is a major problem in Ethiopia. One of the reasons is the high and increasingly growing population. Sahlu (2014) states that as the population grow and the people over-cultivate the scarce land; erosion devastates most of the farmlands. The other issue cited as a cause of scarcity is land grabbing and resettlement. Human rights activists and experts warn about the negative impacts of agricultural investments

and the government's so-called "villagization" program. The program has forcibly displaced thousands of people from their lands (Oakland Institute, 2013). The summation of these causes makes land, in particular rural land, scarce in Ethiopia. This scarcity affects especially younger peasants who were not matured at age during land redistribution, women and re-settlers. Adding to the problem of rural overcrowding, Ethiopian land policies prevent rural-urban mobility, which would keep poor peasants in their village that narrowed option for their livelihood (Lindner, 2014).

### **Insecurity of tenure system**

When land lacks adequate legal, institutional, and customary protection it becomes a commodity, which is easily subjected to manipulation and abuse. Weak tenure systems lead to weak governance. It often deprives individuals and communities' essential rights access to land. It also contributes to poor land and resource management practices. It further degrades the limited resources (Bruce, 2013).

In this kind of environment, land users fear that they may be forced off their land which can generate conflict. It is often purported that insecure property rights over land are an important factor behind social conflict and violence in less advanced economies. Scholars found that farm-households with secure land tenure are less prone to conflicts by reducing the vulnerability of rural major property (Dessalegn, 2011; Deininger et al., 2008).

The Ethiopian land administration system is troubled with a high degree of informality. One of the main causes is the absence of clear legislation as well as confusion about the applicability of legislations according to political commentators on this issue (Lindner, 2014). No single document sets out Ethiopia's land policy. Instead, laws and policies must be inferred from federal laws, together with laws and directives set by regional and municipal governments for long time. Moreover, unpublished administrative directives that often change quickly and without public notice increased some land conflict issues (*Ibid*).

### **Normative dissonance**

Resource rights and related laws determine who can use what resources, for how long, and under what conditions. Unclear, overlapping or poor enforced laws are important causes of land conflict. In many countries, land and renewable natural resources are regulated under a combination of statutory, customary, informal and religious forms of tenure (Schwartz, 1999). Disagreements between these rules and uncertainty over resource rights are often at the heart of conflict. In Africa, the existence of normative dissonance is common. The

bodies of law with different origins are poorly harmonized and they are used as source of contention over land. Similarly, conflict can occur when institutional jurisdictions and mandate are unclear, overlapping or contradictory (Holden and Otsuka, 2014).

### **Poor land governance and corruption**

Land governance is ultimately centered on how people use and interact with land. Establishing the infrastructure necessary to proactively deal with these challenges can require large amounts of resources (Transparency International, 2011). Effective and enforceable land governance provides a necessary framework for development. It is an important defense against many forms of corruption. Nevertheless, land governance sector in Africa faces lack of long-term plan, agreed upon framework, legitimacy of institutions and poor performance (Deininger et al., 2012). Since controlling land is a key determinant of economic and often political power, the land sector is intensely political in many African countries. This all problems create a fertile condition for corruption on the land sector.

Osoha (1996) defines corruption as an antisocial behavior conferring improper benefits contrary to legal and moral norms. It undermines the authority's ability to improve the living condition of the people. It is perceived to be a serious problem in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is ranked 111th out of 177 countries in Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. On the 2013 Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Ethiopia scores 47.9% - lower than the continental average 51.6% (Lindner, 2014). Moreover, surveys also indicate that the situation may be deteriorating.

A number of extensive studies on corruption in land administration in Ethiopia indicate that it is a significant problem. The land sector has also been a key focus area of investigations by the country's Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC). Corruption in the land sector can take a variety of forms, ranging from petty/bureaucratic corruption to state capture (*Ibid*). The common and usual forms of land corruption are grand and bureaucratic corruption. The payment of bribery also occurs in the land sector. Fraud and production of false land claim documentation are common in Ethiopia (Transparency International, 2011). For example, according to the 2010/2011 Global Corruption Barometer, 50% of respondents reported having paid a bribe to land services (Lindner, 2014).

UNEP (2012) found capture of land assets by elites and senior officials; corruption in implementation of land policies and laws, institutionalization of informal fees as a problem in Ethiopia. In the land sector, this means that those in power may illegally transfer lands to themselves or their allies. They may implement land distribution policies and laws in their favor (Transparency International,

2013).

There are a number of elements in Ethiopia's current land administration system that can create potential entry points for corrupt activities to occur. These include lack of clear policies, weak institutions, lack of transparency, and capacity challenges. The above assertion is supported by the work of Lindner. There is a lack of clarity regarding the roles, responsibilities and mandates of institutions in land administration (Lindner, 2014). There is also an absence of a strong national institution that gives clear policy as well as technical and financial guidance for both rural and urban lands in Ethiopia. Some institutions are responsible for both policymaking and implementation. It may expose to conflicts of interest.

Another key issue and driver of corruption in Ethiopia is the lack of transparency and access to information (Transparency International, 2011). For example, some of the policies that govern land administration are determined based on unpublished directives. This creates a system of uncertainty and lack of clarity for those who are involved in land administration. It may increase corruption (Lindner, 2014). The higher level of corruption and institutional incapability in land administration left the people without proper dispute resolution systems on inter-household conflict over farmland. Because of this people may be forced to consider any means of dispute resolution, including violence. This indicates corruption is a potent cause of farmland conflict between households.

### Environmental conditions

Environmental conditions could be a cause for land related conflicts. When we are dealing with environmental conditions as a source of conflict, it is important to make distinction between direct and indirect resource conflict. The distinction is necessary in order to be able to group and analyze the various aspects of environment and conflict. Many have suggested that instead of outright civil war, climate variability is likely to heighten the risk of communal conflict. In particular, erratic rainfall, which reduces the availability of water and arable land, could create incentives for violent attacks against others to secure access to scarce resources (Fjelde and Uexkull, 2012).

Direct environmental conflict refers to conflict over resources [land] that arise because of direct competition between two or more parties for the control and/or access to these [land]. But, indirect environmental conflict refers to conflict that arises when renewable resource become scarce (Froyd, 2010). This kind of scarcity interacts with one or more social-economic factors to elevate friction within or between groups. When indirect resource conflict occurs, environmental factors factor exacerbating and interacting with other social phenomena such as poverty and ethnic tensions (Fjelde and Uexkull, 2012).

Poor environmental conditions are the cause for land conflict as demonstrated in different parts of the world. United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP) 2012 reports highlights that a growing trend in international and intra-national conflict appears to be linked to deteriorating environmental conditions. A review of the scientific literature indicates trends that indirect international or indirect intra-national conflict is commonly caused by resource depletion issues. Deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, flooding and pollution are playing their role for the conflicts occurring in Africa. From the empirical evidence, it appears that the vast majority of environmentally related conflicts occur in developing regions to the place where environment is poorly handled (Froyd, 2010).

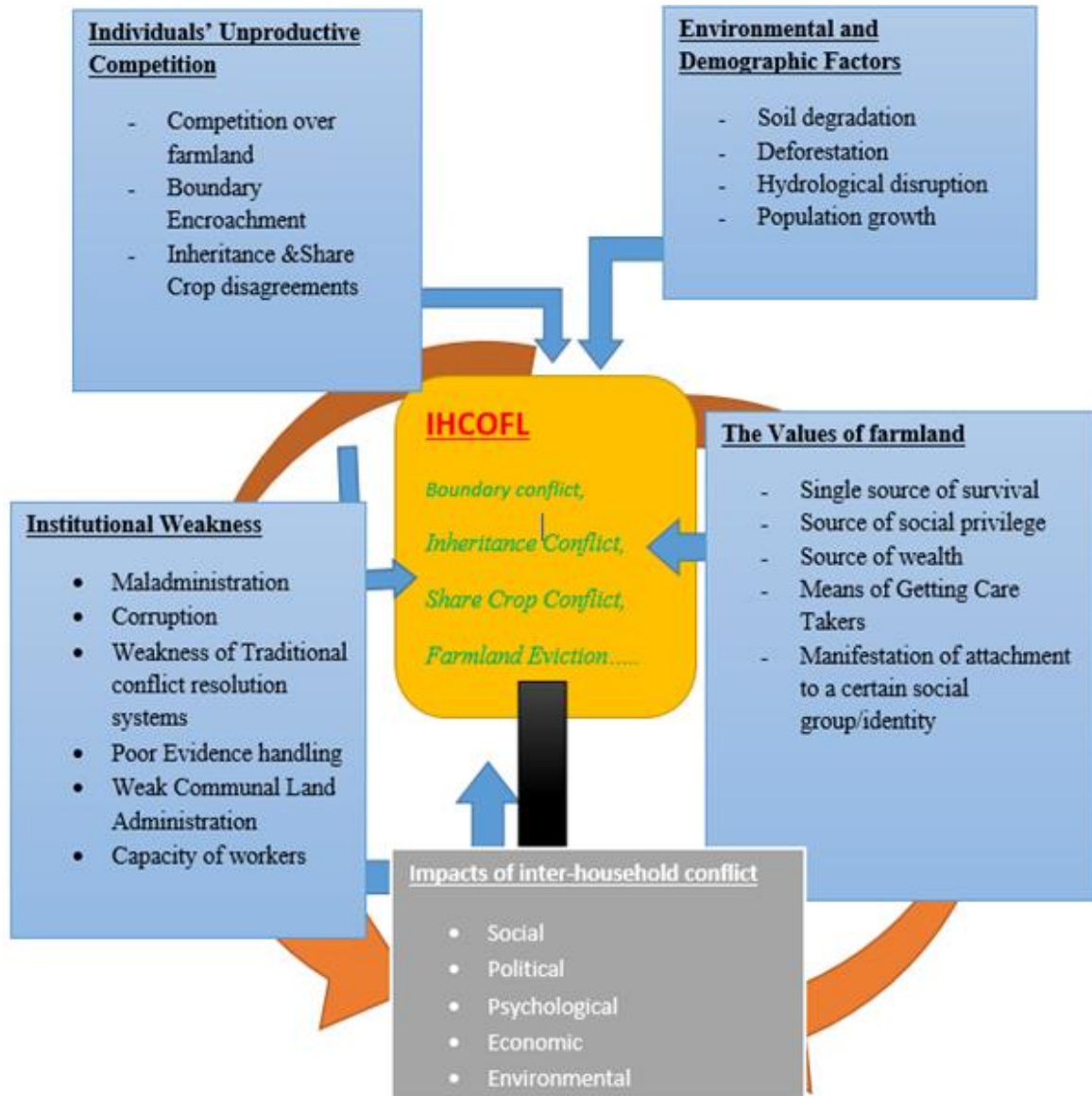
*One of the suggested societal consequences of greater climate variability and more erratic rainfall patterns is an increased risk of armed conflict. Africa is often held to be particularly vulnerable to political instability following climate change, as dependence on rain-fed agriculture and low institutional coping capacity make adaptation more difficult* (Fjelde and Uexkull, 2012: 8).

Figure 1 briefly demonstrates the process of interrelations between environmental factors and social conflicts. The figure summarizes how environmental factors create factors for conflict.

### Global land rush

Food prices rocketed in 2007-2008, promotes countries to secure additional food supplies overseas. The boom led to a "rediscovery" of the agricultural sector by different types of investors. The wave of interest in land acquisitions hits the developing countries. Compared to an average annual expansion of global agricultural land of less than four million hectares before 2008, approximately 56 million hectares worth of large-scale farmland deals were announced even before the end of 2009. More than 70% of such demand has been in Africa (Bruce, 2013).

Indeed demand for farmland is already increasing because of population growth in the World. What makes this recent global land rush different is the rate of interest towards arable land. To assess whether the drive toward land acquisition seen after the 2008 is a temporary deviation or longer-term pattern, scholars review patterns of past land expansion. They also predict the future demand for commodities as well as land. Expansion of cultivated area is not a new phenomenon and is likely to continue, although the regional emphasis may shift slightly over time. Regionally, expansion was pronounced in Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and East Asia (Deininger and Byrlee, 2011). In fact, 70 percent of the increase in crop production between 1961



**Figure 1.** Displaying the nature, factors, types and human security implications of IHCOFL.  
Source: The collected Data (2017).

and 2005 was due to yield increases. 23% of it is to the expansion of arable area and 8% is to the intensification of cropping.

Area growth dominated in Sub-Saharan Africa and though less relevant than yield growth, more than half of total growth. Rising energy prices and public subsidies and mandates, with second-generation bio fuels still at least a decade away, led to rapid increases in the demand for bio-fuel feedstock since 2003 (Deininger and Byrlee, 2011). Experts have long been concerned that, by affecting prices, bio-fuel mandates will have sizable impacts on land use far beyond the countries where they operate (*Ibid*). This rapid rise of interest for farmland has become a debatable for eastern Africans in general and

for Ethiopian in particular. The government of Ethiopia transferred many hectares of land for large-scale investors each year after 2008. The rising demand for arable land creates land scarcity for local farmers and it left farmers with scarcity related conflict. Impacts of IHCOFL

Farmland related to inter-household conflict affects the social, economic, political and psychological wellbeing of a community in the study area. The frequently mentioned impacts of IHCOFL are categorized under violent fight between farmers, wasting time, money and human labor on land dispute, tilling of marginal lands to compensate disputed land, breakdown of social bond between the community and people lost trust in government. For the

purpose of discussion the researcher discussed such impact as economic, social, political, environmental and psychological impacts.

### **Economic impacts of IHCOFL**

In FGDs and in-depth Interviews, it is surfaced that many individuals lost their land because of weak justice and poor land administration system. Losing land is great economic devastation. The robust example for this is data extracted from 2016 South Wollo Zone Good Governance Plan Implementation Campaign. There were 1561 hectares of communal land illegally seized by individuals in the zone. It was planned to return to 626 legitimate owners of land in the campaign. The mentioned data demonstrate that land deprivation problem discriminately affects female farmers. For example from 1561 hectares of communal land scrambling only 608 women were participants. In contrast to this number 3,446 male farmers were participants by evicting other legitimate users of communal holding. It is observed that the trend is the same at *Woreda* level. The data demonstrate that legitimate landholders lost the yields that they would get from the disputed land.

It is not women alone who are evicted from communal land use when we deeply examined the collected data. The powerless farmers tilled too small or no communal lands. Wealthy farmers plough most of the communal lands illegally. As the communal land tilled, the powerless individuals lost their right to use their right to use such lands. In addition, the displaced individuals because of farmland conflict suffered from economic wretchedness as the data indicate. One of the informants complained as follows.

*I was in Garo kolla. Because of homicide problem [farmland related incident] I left my village and settled here [to O15 Kebele]. My aunt gives me a land to build house. My farmland is in Garo Kolla. I myself could not cultivate it in fear of revenge. It is in share crop. Enemies burned my cattle and grains as revenge.*

The scale of the economic impact of the conflict should not be under-estimated. Apart from the direct impact on productivity and family level investment, it has indirect impacts by consuming time and money during land accusation cases. One of the informant from *Woreda* officials stated that negotiation centers, police stations, courts, environmental protection, and land administration office become a place of public gathering to present their petition. In these kinds of conflicts, young adults are active participants. When the researcher interviewed the Jama *Woreda* judges the judges who were participants in the research affirmed that more than two third of their clients' lawsuit is on land conflict. These forced households to waste their time in unproductive activities

which can produce a lot of productive activity if used at the time effectively. The implication is clear on productivity if these important factors of production are wasting their time and money by land related accusation file. Generally, IHCOFL affects productivity by making land not ploughed and making farmer poorly prepared the inputs by wasting time for waiting trails. Farmers who are in conflict could not sow, weeded and harvest in time.

### **Social impacts IHCOFL**

Farmland conflicts among neighbors could also have adverse effects on social values like trust and reciprocity which are important for other domains of life (Dufwenberg and et al., 2013). In FGDs and interviews it is reflected that today there are chains of revenge between farmers. Burial ceremony, weeding, market place and meeting are a dangerous place where everyone fears for death by revenge seekers as the collected and analyzed. Social institutions are alarmingly out of use. Institutions like *Mahiber, Ekubi, Idir, Kire, Debo, Sodeka, Zikir*, Wedding and burial ceremony are continuously threatened by conflict. Farmland conflict obstructs the social relation of the community. Blood feuded is mostly feared by the community which makes social gathering unwanted events. One of the community elder participant for this research remembered a story of his neighbor. The case reflects how farmland conflict affects the social life of the community.

*The boundary's disagreement between my neighbors escalated and they insulted each other. They began fighting. The disputant families joined the fight. Finally one of the boy died. After the death of my neighbor's boy most of the murdered family is displaced by leaving their house. I feel sadness while I saw this. The dead one spent his lifespan under earth. The murderer on the other hand spoiled his golden age in prison. In addition to this, many members of family and relatives entered into fear full life, displaced from their village fear blood feud and abounded participation in social gatherings. Much harm happened. God only count these. The non-pivotal/impermanent boundary markers like stones are easily movable. This exposed farmland boundary for manipulation.*

Many farmers went to Arab countries to escape from conflict before it happened. Some of them went to Arab countries as founding safe heaven after they severely beat their villagers. One of the interviewee narrates what she remembers about a certain boy's story. The following is an example of social ills that happened in the study area. One of the informant narrated her neighbors' story.

*His father marries other woman by abounding six family members together with his mother. He gets four*

additional children from his new wife. After some years, his father wanted to return back to his previous home. But the abounded family disagrees with their father. Their father, together with his new family entered into conflict. The tension highly increased. The two families become enemy. The former family members wanted to kill their father and their half-brothers. Religious fathers and community elders could not handle the issue. Finally one of from the new family member went to Arab country to escape from this conflict. The father burnt his former family's house. By chance he landed while burning the house. The father was thrown to jail for eight years. The other boys went to Arab countries and one by one they migrated to Arab country. The female one also went to Addis Ababa.

According to the informants, drunk and rude individuals are more exposed to farmland related conflict. The story told by the informant from one of the selected *kebeles'* confirms this.

*One of our Kebele residents cut the shoulder of his neighbor with axe for giving false witness about communal land tilling. This individual was advised not to intimidate the witnesses by officials and elders. However, he did not agree. Due to this, many family members were displaced from their homeland.*

### Psychological impacts of IHCOFL

Ato shimelis shewaferaw, who was the panelist on anti-homicide movement conference said that the murderers develop the personality of fearfulness, suspicion, unconfident, hopelessness and cruelty. One of my respondents story fits most of the respondents' idea that experience farmland conflict.

*...My wife continuously told me her nightmare. She did not have peaceful night after she heard the conflict. She did not want to see bloodshed because of this land. He is a drunk as I told you before. When he drinks, he needs to fight with my sons. The consequence would be bad. I am begging the Kebele to do something.*

Most of all, females are the primary victims of psychological impacts. In tradition, women are not favored to inherit land. Due to this norm, males attempt to evict their female kin from parents land. Due to this females are exposed to severe psychological harm. The woman who is in farmland dispute with her brothers faced the same problem. She narrated here story as follows,

*In 1993 my parents died. I have two brothers. The responsibility to care for my two little brothers was on me. I take the land of my parents in the form of redistributed land. But in 2005 land registration, my brothers accused*

*me of giving their father's land as if I take their parents land in the form of inheritance. The Kebele administration gives my land for them without seeing how I get it. I take the case to Woreda EPLAUD. But, they give me deaf ears. I could not get my land back. The debt exposed me to mental illness. I hate everybody. My brothers betrayed me. I was looking after them like a mother. My own brothers denied me. Who is going to be trusted? I feel bad. I took holy water. After that, I got relief. I am suffering for the last ten years from this conflict.*

### Political impacts of IHCOFL

Small-scale land conflicts can escalate into widespread civil strife that may threaten national security. Studies have suggested that land scarcity and land conflicts, mainly between groups, fueled the instability of a state (Mwesigye and Matsumoto, 2013). In all types of data collection participants of the research expressed that farmland related conflict create a cycle of endless conflict. It seems that the situation forced the participants to doubt the ability and/ or willingness of the government to stop it. The public denunciation of land with the context of impartiality false witness and inappropriate procedure is still cause for losing land holding and use right as one of the Woreda official explained. The inevitable consequence is losing of trust and developing grievance on the existing government as explained by participants of the study.

*Amongst the views expressed about frequent murder and severe beatings will force the people to believe as if there is no government. The community will prefer the culture of banditry to protect their life and property unless the Woreda officials and community leaders work together to stop it. The Woreda administrator also admits the severely increased crime and homicide limit the freedom of the Woreda's residents. Most respondents complain about the role of government for not protecting their rights. This is highly congruent to what the researcher said of political impacts of farmland conflict.*

Contrary to the farmer respondents, officials explicitly explain the political impacts of farmland conflict. The officials stated as it would be a ground for the anti-peace forces to be blossomed. Based on the above respondents idea it is possible to say that the frequently happening conflict over land and land deprivation of the vulnerable groups will compromise the legitimacy of government at least by refraining from using government justice institutions. In addition to these the governing party is standing for the interest of the farmers. This government strongly stands against land deprivation of poor farmers. But due to weakness in land administration a symptom of land deprivation is seen. This is a political failure for the government to see its vision is not fulfilled.



## Environmental impacts of IHCOFL

Significant number of respondents state environmental degradation as cause of conflict. In farmland research works, environmental variables discussed and inter-house hold conflict over farmland is not clearly known. Recently researchers suggested that (environmental) variables are likely to heighten the risk of communal conflict (Fjelde and Uexkull, 2012) and the conflict cyclically affect the health of environment. In in-depth interview it is surfaced that farmers drain summer water in the wrong catchment in order not to enter into conflict with their neighbors. Everybody is unwisely exploiting the land. The fertile and loam soil is washed out. To compensate for the exhausted land, communal holding lands (mostly, lands left as no arable land) become a target for crop cultivation. Due to this communal lands exposed for unwise use. Environmental degradation, drying of water source and extinction of medicinal plants are clearly seen in the *Woreda* due to expansion of farmlands to the areas.

Especially rural unemployment heightened the issue of environmental degradation according to the key informants from EPLAUD. Recently, to create job opportunity the *Woreda* administration tried to give land for the young farmers. In addition to institutional distribution of marginal lands by local government, the young farmers till such lands by their own when their parents give land to plough. While the *Kebele* gives such lands for unemployed group for bee farming and hay collection, the youngsters ploughed for crop cultivation to be the permanent user of the land. According to one of the *Kebele* EPLAUD expert, this process resulted in high level of environmental devastations. Apart from bio-diversity lose geological shocks have been evidenced. Redistributing of communal lands resulted in destruction of natural forest, plant species that are used as medicinal plant, and animal's animal species. For example in Shilafaf, Ahiya Wodek, and Goret there were landslides because of deforestation.

Unlike the highlanders, in the *kollama* *Kebeles'* people accept environmental protection advice. If they do not accept the advice the *Kebele* environmental protection and land administration expert brought to social courts and acts accordingly. But in the highland part of the *Woreda*, the soil is alarmingly washed away and yield is continuously decreasing. The farmers blame artificial fertilizer. However, experts believed that soil erosion takes the bigger share. It is surfed during FGDs and particularly one of FGD participant in 014 *kebele* complained poor attention for environmental protection.

*For example one of the water shad which take life during trace construction was given for unemployed league for animal farming. But the league ploughs it. The water shad exposed for sever environmental degradations within a year. Now the place is bare land. Before the land*

*was ploughed the forest were restored. Water was flown out of the forest. The Kebele leaders were bribed to keep silent. After a year the land was taken from the league and reserved from animal and human contact. Some of the member who refused to plough was accused for not participating in the work or conspiring against the league. These end up in disintegration of the league.*

## Conclusion

The highlands of Ethiopia serve as a home for majority of our country residents and a source of GDP. Despite this, land conflict is not well investigated in this area. Farmland related inter-house hold conflicts have been affecting the human security of many farmers in the northern highlands of Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular. Due to the alarming rate of increasing farmland related inter-household conflict many farmers exposed to fierce conflict, homicide, migration, recurrent land related court case, land eviction and insecure livelihood. In addition, the study area population has been suffering from environmental degradation, decreasing land productivity, damaged social relation and emerging deviant form of livelihoods like migration, prostitution and criminality.

The common forms of farmland related inter-household conflict in the study area as indicated by this study are boundary encroachment, farmland eviction and deprivation, water catchment/drainage related conflict, inheritance related conflict and share crop related conflict. Each type of farmland conflict has different causes, impact, and security implication on various segments of the society in the study area. The primary victims of such conflicts were women, children, elders, disables and poorer farmers due to their vulnerability.

Local government especially the *Woreda* and *Kebele* administration tried to reduce farmland related inter-household conflict. Despite the effort made by the responsible organ the conflict disturbed the social, economic, political and psychological wellbeing of Jama *Woreda* residents. The conflict had also a paramount impact on the health of the environment. The efforts made by these local government organs were not well designed and integrated. These institutions lack awareness, commitment, sufficient budget and human resource to tackle the problem.

This study gives two important and unique insights for land conflict researchers; first, *micro* level analysis found important to investigate problems deeply. The second insight is studying *multiple factors* analysis is also necessary to understand the problem in the northern highlands of Ethiopia by take Jama *Woreda* as a case. Risk factors for IHCOFL like; culture of violence, blood feud, drunkenness and other social conflicts are also indirect causes for farmland conflict.

The other important issue that was addressed by

researchers is about how land conflict occurred: About theories of land conflict. Literatures in this topic revolved around the two extreme reasons: Scarcity and abundance. For the advocates of scarcity theorist environmental decline as a result of population growth or human action, there will be environmental decline. On the other hand, the advocates of resource cause theorists to insist that abundance gives the reason for fight.

However, both abundance and scarcity theories of resource conflict thesis take the two opposite extremes. Both situation could create conflict and induce associated threat in different context. It is given that conflict is inevitable because of human nature. In whatever situation man has conflictual nature. Recent conflicts in the world supported this argument. However, what is neglected in literatures is, in both cases conflict causes to environmental decline due to mismanagement and unwise use of land during conflict. The argument is resource conflict is not a liner phenomenon. It was found cyclic that one causes to the other. Empirical data collected in the study area did not support dichotomizing one of the occurrence as a sole cause and the other event as consequence and cause of conflict. Since environment is a source of survival in the rural area, land is a black box of human security. Therefore, both contexts either abundance or scarcity could cause conflict if land is not administered appropriately. In turn the conflict will cause environmental degradation again. Then the cycle will go on. The question of which comes first will remain puzzle.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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