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Identifying The Causes And Implications of Murle Child Abduction
Practice, And It Impacts On Children: A case study on Ethiopia's Gambella
Region and South Sudan bordering communities

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC: The African Children's Rights and Welfare Charter

ARRA: Administration for Refugee and Returnees Affairs

CPA: Comprehensive Peace Agreement

EHRC: Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

ENDF: Ethiopian National Defense Force

FDRE: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

GPAA: Greater Pibor Administrative Area

ICESCR: International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Kebele: The smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia, similar to a ward a Woreda.

NGOs: Non-governmental organizations

OCHA: Office for coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

SALW: Small Army and Light Weapons

SNNPRS: Southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples' Regional State

SPLM/A: Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNSC: United Nations Security Council

Woreda: Ethiopian's third-level administrative division after zones – equivalent to a district.

Zone: A second-level subdivision of Ethiopia, below regions and above woredas or districts.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to investigate the causes and impacts of Murle's cross-border child abduction practice and its impact on children in Ethiopia's Gambella region. In order to achieve the aims of this study, a qualitative method is used based on semi-structured interviews. Altogether, twenty-five people were interviewed, nine of whom were under 20 years old. Of the sample respondents, fifteen were interviewed in the city of Gambella and ten were interviewed outside of Gambella. This was done in order to obtain accurate and reliable primary data from all respondents. The theoretical perspectives of social cubism and of human rights conceptual are applied to analyze the dynamics of child abduction.

The data obtained from interviews show that socio-cultural values and perceptions, poor living conditions, ineffective government, availability of illegal small arms and light weapons, and border permeability are driving factors that have contributed to the increase in cross-border raids. The study also shows that cross-border raiding has led to revenge violence which turned into organized crime and continued frustration in border communities. The study found that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has exacerbated traditional cross-border relations, leading to interethnic conflict, cross-border organized crime, and civilian access to weapons.

Keywords: Child, Border, Rights, Murle, Abduction.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Children are the youngest members of society, born into families with married adults and growing into the next generation. Children are defined as those who have not reached the age of majority, or any person under the age of 18(UNCRC Article 1, Part 1:1989). According to studies, the world's population includes approximately "2.3 billion children," accounting for nearly one-third of the total human population (AI, 2021). There are more than "400 million children" on the African continent alone (Morosini, M., 2022). Ethiopia's population is primarily composed of children, with an "average age of only 17.9 years – approximately 16% of the total population of 96 million" (UNICEF and English, 2021).

When asked what it is about children that one loves, opinions may vary from person to person, family to family, and society to society. Though views on children's love and care may vary, there are still urges that drive adult people's creations – a peaceful prospect for future generations. In every family where a child lives, their developmental process begins and their upbringing can be supported. According to research, children's early experiences have a significant impact on their future development. This development intertwines family roles with those of policy-making agents.

Children's rights are a driving and challenging factor that influences the type of investment for children in today's changing societies. Societal changes have an excessive, and often both positive and negative, impact on children. It is apparent that the evolution of wars, migration, globalization and climate change are all reducing social support in many countries, with serious consequences for children. The consequences of these changes can be especially devastating in times of armed conflict and other emergencies.

Among the emergencies, one of the most fundamental rights for one to begin developing is the "right to have rights" (Freeman, 2007, pp.7-8). Children, like all other people, have the right to safety, support for their growth and development, and full participation in society. Efforts to uphold the dignity of the human child are widely recognized (Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1959). But studies show that children's human rights are "violated every day, around the world. The abduction of children has been classified as a grave violation" of children's rights and is increasingly common in conflict areas (Tremblay & UNSC.1999). The extreme circumstances and

localized "ethnic conflict" have led to a sporadic resurgence of manhunts, particularly in border areas (Gashaw, 2017), where recruitment of children into the social structures of their newly established lineage (Ball & Fayemi, 2004.p.2). Approximately 40% of the notorious ethnic militant recruits in the Horn of Africa are children and adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19" (Botha, A. and ISSAfrica.org, 2014). According to research, this practice originated in transit trafficking, which has since spread beyond the local population. As in other parts of Africa, children in the border regions of Ethiopia and South Sudan are affected by volatile trends of violence perpetrated by human forces. These volatile trends date back to recent decades when Ethiopia's southwestern border was plagued by irregular border crossings.

Irregularities in cross-border imported sentiments of resource conflicts into border communities near Gambella, making them vulnerable to raids by armed ethnic groups (Regassa, 2010). It is alleged that the raids were mostly perpetrated by young men who "live in cattle camps" and do not seem to have much respect for the government or traditional authorities (ibid., 2010). Therefore,this paper examines the causes and consequences of cross-border abductions by the Murle (a South Sudanese ethnic group) as well as how it impacts children living along the border. The Murle is a south Sudanese pastoralist group whose armed elements have been accused of widespread cross-border abductions in Ethiopian Gambella.

1.2. Problem Statement

Ethiopia and South Sudan are neighbouring countries with different histories, but seem to share many "security and human rights issues" and both struggling to maintain order (De Montjoye, C. 2016). Ethiopia, the "oldest independent country in Africa", has benefited from its past challenges and efforts to transition (Ozturk, 2020). According to studies, some fragile events in Ethiopia have contributed to the deepening of internal contradictions as well as inadequate protection resources that affect social institutions. This has made it difficult to meet the protection needs of the population, including the needs of children (UNICEF, 2019). On the other hand, neighbouring South Sudan, as a new African nation, has optimistic prospects with Ethiopia based on the past long Sudanese civil war. Ethiopia's longstanding humanitarian "welcome" policy has evolved from Ethiopian tradition since the country began accepting South Sudanese refugees displaced from their homes by the former Sudanese Islamic regime (Bysiewicz, 2018: p.81).

Until the 1970s, Ethiopia took a "hands-on role and participated in the search for peace" in Sudan (Johnson, D.H.2016: p. 39).

Murle cross-border child abduction has been a long-standing practice along the Ethiopia-South Sudan border. It had risen dramatically in the last nine years, from 2014 to 2022. The practice have repeatedly given birth to the hybrid crisis, but neither the Ethiopian nor South Sudanese governments have taken sufficient measures to put an end to it. In fact, both countries may be aware of the exploitation of children within their shared borders by strangers group called "Murle armed militants" who operate along the borders of the two countries, and can seize children on many occasions (BBC & AlJazeera, 2016). In 2016, Ethiopian authorities expressed their grief over the missing children and repeatedly "urged for their return" (Linares Petrov and Prensa Latina, 2022). This sentiment appeared to be motivated not only by the usual border irregularities, but also by concerns about crimes against the rights of children. It was also decided to "monitor both sides of the border" (Abdi, R. 2017).

Abductions by strangers near the borders of both countries could be a recurring inhumane practice that endangers children in particular and threatens long-term socio-economic upgrading. In this regard, this thesis is focused on the abduction of children by Murle strangers, to further thoroughly investigate the causes and consequences of abductions, as well as the spread of this practice across borders.

1.3. Objective of the study

The objectives of this study are divided into two categories: general and specific objectives:

1.3.1. General objectives

The aim of the study is to investigate the causes and impacts of child abduction practices along the border areas in the Gambella region of Ethiopia and South Sudan and to find solutions to prevent such abductions in the long term.

1.3.2. Specific objectives

First, the identification of causes, actors, impacts and implications associated with cross-border child abductions. Second, to identify sustainable measures that would promote the rights and protection of children living on the border between Ethiopia and South Sudan.

1.4. Research questions/hypothesis

What are the causes of child abduction practices?

What are the impacts of child abduction on children living in border regions?

How are Ethiopia and South Sudan addressing cross-border child abduction?

1.5. Significance of the study

There is a lack of research on Murle's child abduction activities, especially when it comes to children living along the border between Ethiopia and South Sudan. The findings of this study will be of great interest to academics and policymakers working in the field of children's rights. These findings will benefit existing knowledge of child abductions and cross-border communities. Despite the intense and sustained public attention given to child abductions and their consequences, there is a disparity in the literature regarding the distances a perpetrator travels between key crime scenes in a given area. Therefore, this study aims to shed light on the typical distances that offenders travel and the motivations that lead them to cross borders.

1.6. Study Limitations

The study is focused on communities living along the border in Ethiopia's Gambella region and South Sudan's Upper Nile state. The research has focused on the factors that affect children as a result of abduction, and data were collected for research questions from children, including those recently released from captivity, community leaders, concerned parents, government officials and children's rights agencies. It is worth noting that child abductions along the borders of these sister nations may not be limited to these two areas. This research, on the other hand, should be seen as focused on the above-mentioned field of study.

1.7. Literature review

In this section, literature sources related to the causes and consequences of child abduction are reviewed. Emphasis is placed on the analysis of child rights instruments and practices in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Secondary sources of information are mostly used to link the concept to the research problem and the aim of the study. Child abductions have been the subject of much research in different areas of the world. Nevertheless, given the vast scope of the field, researcher focus on a particular area of interest. Gatluak Ruon (2015) investigated "why the Gambella border group

dispute has not been resolved" after examining cross-border demand in Gambella Regional State. The study focused on the effectiveness of conflict resolution methods. His results revealed that the main cause of transboundary issues may be the herding community problem "driven by rivalry for few resources" (ibid., p. 48). The importance of "traditional skills, experience and indigenous knowledge" in conflict resolution is emphasized.

However,indigenous knowledge alone seems insufficient to address the traditional cultivated norm of abduction, which is at odds with modern ideals of child protection. In the course of this study, the impacts of abduction patterns with a mix of inputs from the perspective of children in the study area and explore the experiences that arise as a result of human rights uncertainty are described. In addition, the study will have a significant impact on various aspects, including how and whether child protection interests are taken into account.

1.8. Research methodology

This section describes the steps taken to investigate the issue. The qualitative approach is primarily used in research because it helps to "interpret and better understand the complex reality of a given situation as well as for problems that cannot be easily quantified" (Mack et al. 2011, p. 2). This method aids in providing a true picture of the problem in the study areas where the researcher intends to conduct research. In contrast to quantitative researchers, who "bring things into a laboratory or send an instrument" to solve a problem, qualitative researchers "collect data in the field or in the natural setting where the participants experience the problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 37).

1.8.1. Research design

The researcher used a qualitative case study design. This design was chosen to provide a better understanding of cross-border child abduction in border states. This was done to gain a deeper understanding of the characteristics that define a "specific bound system" and to describe an event or process that takes place within that system (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). Because the cross-border cattle thefts and child abductions along the Ethiopia-South Sudan border date back several years of social insecurity, a qualitative case study was best suited to investigate various components or descriptions of the Murle raids under investigation.

1.8.2. Sample size

The sample size for this academic study is 25 respondents. Of the sample respondents, 15 were interviewed in the city of Gambella and 10 were interviewed outside of Gambella in order to obtain accurate and reliable primary data from all respondents. The main reason for purposively selecting a small number of participants was the hindering aspects in the study areas, such as local politics, security, and environmental conditions (flooding and rainfall) in the districts outside Gambella city at the time the study was conducted.

1.8.3. Study area

The National Regional State of Gambella is one of eleven administrative regions in Ethiopia. It is located in the southwestern part of the country and shares an international border with South Sudan. According to the 2019 projection based on the 2007 census, the total population of the region is estimated at "463,000 people, with a population under 18 years of age of about 181,084" (Zekaria & CSA, 2013; EDHS & UNICEF, 2021). Administratively, the Gambella region is divided into three indigenous zones (named after the three largest ethnic groups) and a special woreda. These zones are Anywaa Zone, Majang Zone, Nuer Zone, and Itang Special Woreda. The only administrative zones that share a border with the southern Sudanese states of Upper Nile and Jonglei are Anywaa and Nuer. These two administrative zones were chosen to study the problem because they are close to the border and serve as cross-border centres for Murle raiders. The study focuses on communities living along the border in Ethiopia's Gambella region and South Sudan's Upper Nile state. It is worth noting that child abductions along the borders of these two sister states may not be limited to these two areas. However, this study focuses on the above-mentioned area.

1.8.4. Research method

This research employed a qualitative method to gather the data necessary for the topic under study. Qualitative research is a situated activity to understand the cross-border raids and its human rights implications. The method is considered appropriate to address the questions that the research seeks to answer. For this reason, the researcher has conducted a systematic data collection from various sources of information based on the mentioned method. Both primary and secondary data sources were used to conduct this research. primary data were collected directly through in-depth interviews and observation. Because the interview is a potential means of "pure information transmission and

collection technique," it helps the researcher to collect original data directly from the respondent (Cohen et al. 2005). In interviews, respondents are asked the same questions throughout the survey Primary sources include community members, children, including those recently released from captivity, community leaders, parents, government officials, and child advocacy organizations. Secondary sources include books, government documents, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), journals, published and unpublished research papers, legal documents, working papers, newspapers, and websites or Internet sources.

1.8.5. Data collection procedure

Once the research instruments and tools were completed, the researcher made priority appointments with each respondent. Once these are reached, a 30- to 45-minute interview can be conducted. Interview schedules and guides are developed to collect the necessary data for the topic under study. Interview questions and topic lists were continually revised and updated to ensure they were understandable to all interview participants. Some research participants were approached at specific locations and asked if they would be willing to participate in this particular study. Once participants gave their consent to participate, the researcher was able to conduct an interview or schedule an interview that was convenient for the participants. Field notes were used when respondents had given consent at the time of data collection. In most cases, however, informants were concerned about their voices being recorded or photographs being taken. The notes were primarily used as the only tool.

1.8.5.1. Interaction by telephone, email, and social media

In some cases, telephone interviews were used to contact more distant respondents. Due to high telephone costs, network issues, and the inaccessibility of most locations, the researcher decided to conduct some email interviews with some identified individuals who had limited internet access. The latter resulted in a delay in answering the questions, but it was at least convenient to share the information with the researcher in confidence. Social media platforms initially seemed useful for engaging in conversation with participants, but the individuals contacted through social media did not provide the outcome desired.

1.8.5.2. Participant observation

In modern field research, observation is the most important technique to collect original data (Gay and Peter, 2000). This is because the information that the researcher obtains from informants may sometimes contradict the real situation. Therefore, observation is better to obtain first-hand information from the original sources. To this end, it can be inferred that the researcher benefited from observation to understand the cross-border impact of Murle and its consequences. In April 2016, I, the researcher, was a student at the University of Gambella. During that time, I witnessed how the residents of Gambella reacted to April 2016 incident and how the authorities dealt with it at the time. Previous reactions or responses by Gambella residents may have influenced the analysis. Their narratives made me feel as if I had been subjected to the same armed attacks as they had. Together with a friend, I visited hospitals where injured children and residents were treated at the time. The horrible conditions I observed saddened me. By interacting with respondents of different backgrounds in Gambella and conducting this survey, I was able to make informed observations.

1.8.6. Data Analysis

The data are analyzed using thematic data analysis, combining and synthesizing the collected data into meaningful patterns and themes is the step that takes place in the research process. This occurred during and after each process of data collection: interview, discussion, and observation. The interviews were conducted in Nuer and English languages, and the necessary translations are made after each day at the same time.

1.9. Outline of the chapters

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter deals with the introduction, background, problem statement, objectives, significance, and research methodology and its components. The second chapter deals with the conceptual and theoretical perspectives. It briefly reviews the literature related to the main topic of the study and presents related empirical studies on child abduction. It examines the origins and evolution of child abduction. The third chapter examines the history and ethnographic practices of the Ethiopian Anywaa and Nuer ethnic groups and the Murle. It also emphasizes the relationship between refugees and host communities. The chapter also addresses the issue of weapons proliferation and disarmament. The fourth chapter examines the causes of Murle's cross-border child abductions and the role of governments. The fifth section

sought to understand the impact and implications of cross-border practices in Gambella. The final section, chapter six, presents the conclusions. This section also addresses the recommendations arising from the objectives of the study.

1.10. Ethical Considerations

The researcher is committed to ensuring the autonomy of the research participants. The dignity of all research participants will be respected. Adherence to this principle ensures that human subjects "are not used simply as a means to achieve research goals" (Mack et al. 2011, pp.31-32). This is achieved by ensuring that the researcher has done his or her best to elicit informed consent from participants. As for the right to privacy, the researcher could withhold the identity of each participant. In most cases, names are kept confidential unless some names such as "one of the high-ranking officials" and "specific respondents" are used in the study.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Clarification, Frameworks Perspective, and Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides conceptual clarifications of terms based on how they are used in this context. It demonstrates the thesis' conceptual perspectives in relation to the essence of the border, child abduction with some past background, and border security. The second section examines the relevant theory that attempts to explain the origins and spread of cross-border raids. The viewpoint is explained to provide information about the Gambella-South Sudan border. One of the theories that fit the reviews on Murle cross-border raiding and child abduction is social cubism.

The third section is about Ethiopian frameworks on children's rights and a brief overview of Ethiopia-south Sudan's bordering features. The fourth section of this chapter includes a review of the literature on the Murle cross-border child abductions in Gambella, and Ethiopia-South Sudan border insecurity from various scholars' published and unpublished materials, reports, and studies. The literature review also identifies gaps in existing academic work and indicates how this particular thesis fits into it.

2.1. Conceptual Clarification

This section focuses on various concepts that appear frequently throughout this thesis. Based on scholars' perspectives, these concepts are more important for understanding the trends of cross-border raids related to different actors and situations. As a result, it demonstrates conceptual perspectives on the essence of the border, cattle raiding, child abduction, and border security.

2.1.1. Border

In this thesis, a border is defined as a line that generally indicates a boundary. According to Okumu (2011, p.2), a border is a "region or area straddling a boundary or the area adjacent to a boundary."

The term boundary is commonly defined as a "line that defines or divides two contiguous territories" that establishes a state's territorial and physical boundaries (Ibid,2011). Boundary systems, according to the study, are classified as "fixed or general." A fixed boundary is one that has been precisely surveyed so that if a marking or beacon is lost, it can be replaced in the same location using precise survey measurements. A general boundary is one in which the precise line of

the legal boundary between adjoining land portions is left undetermined. Hence, an international boundary is mutually agreed upon and jointly owned by the two involved neighbouring countries.

The border area might or might not be exactly on the boundary. Hence, these borders also help to define national identities. All nation-states have borders that unite people and define their lifestyles, and national culture, including language, destiny, and privileges (e.g., the right to vote, enjoy welfare benefits and certain rights that could be denied to non-citizens).

Weber (2012) urged that borders are understood as boundaries between states, in which she differentiates between border features. Weber described "demarcation" as the physical marking of the terrain, whereas "delimitation is the mapping exercise" to describe boundaries along existing or yet-to-be-drawn borders. While demarcation and local acceptance of demarcation may appear to be the main obstacles, because they involve issues of land rights, grassing rights, citizenship, and territory, taking into account the variety of actors with vested interests in borders and boundaries is equally important. This implies that the border is a zone between two independent neighbouring countries.

2.1.2. Border Security

In this thesis, border security is categorized as the assertion of territorial sovereignty through border enforcement and its protection through permanent surveillance. Border enforcement and surveillance also include the systems that enable the state to track the movement and use of goods and data, and especially the actions of people once they are on the state's territory (Okumu, 2011, cited in Daniel, 2007). Border security in this thesis focuses on the border between Ethiopia and South Sudan, specifically the security of the Ethiopian border that was breached by Murle raiders International borders are a security concern for all governments. States are recognized under international law for their ability to maintain their borders, secure their territory, and protect their citizens. A state's primary responsibility is to protect its citizens from both external and internal threats that could deprive them of their rights. It is important to note that a country's strategic location determines the opportunities for illegal activities that exist or may occur in its border areas. It can be concluded that border security involves the stability of countries along their border areas from external influences.

2.1.3. Child Abduction

According to studies, child abduction is the act of taking children away "by force or by fraudulent persuasion." It is considered a violation of rights and is classified as a violent crime against children (Shutt et al., 2004). This practice is also defined as the "unlawful forcible abduction or detention" of children or groups of children in order to extort an economic or political advantage from the victim of the abduction or a third party (Steverson and Wooditch, 2021,). In most cases, this practice is referred to as "child theft" because it is not authorized by the child's parents or guardians. Bromfield et al. (2012) defined child abduction as any form of "physical, psychological, legal, administrative, political, cultural, or socioeconomic coercion, instigation, or inducement" of the birth family that results in forced separation or actual abandonment of their children. The goal of the abduction might be to "do something bad" that later takes on "criminal overtones" (Boudreaux et al.,1999; p.540).

Crimes committed in this manner involve "significant distance and life-threatening circumstances" (Brown, J.2020). Normally, however, the abduction of children is subject to the domestic criminal laws of individual states; however, certain abductions fall under international law. The 1980 Hague Abduction Convention is a multilateral treaty that protects children from the harmful effects of cross-border abduction and provides a procedure for their prompt return. The Convention uses the terms "wrongfully removed or retained outside" the state in which they are habitually resident (Hague Convention, Article 3). The term "habitual residence" refers to the place where the child has actually lived for a sufficiently long period of time to establish procedures for the return of a child abducted against his or her will (Lukken, A.2019).

In some cases, the terms kidnapping and abduction are used interchangeably, conjuring up images of "notorious wrongdoing" whose meaning has drawn public attention (Walak, J. et al., 2016). Kidnapping has been used in the past and is still used in some parts of the world, to obtain opponents and property, particularly by demanding ransom in exchange for the release of those at risk. This type of practice has been identified as a way for terrorist organizations to "obtain funding" (Lichtenwald, T., & Perri, F. (2013).

2.1.3.1. Early cases of child abduction

Previous studies have shown that abductions were part of the human experience long before they acquired their current name. Various ancient documents describe the abductions of adults and children; religious documentaries also claim the abduction of children. One example is given in the Christian story when "Laban complains of Jacob's flight from Aram Naharaim" along with his wives and children (Old Testament, n.d.; Genesis. 31:26-28; Encyclopedia Judaica.2022). This practice appears to be forbidden under Jewish law, based on the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16) as well as the prohibition against kidnapping mentioned above. However, research has found that "American life in the past" is full of kidnapping stories and is comparable to what scholars describe as historical trends in African regions (O'Brien, 2008:p.18).

Over the years, children have been involved in some of the most notorious American abductions. One of the first prominent examples in the history of child abduction had two victims but only one safe return. It was July 1, 1874, when 4-year-old Charles Ross (known as Charlie) was travelling with his 6-year-old brother Walter near Germantown, Pennsylvania. According to Walter, two famous men managed to lure the boy into a carriage and offer to buy fireworks. While Walter was sent to the store to make purchases, Charley disappeared with the men and was never seen again. The family received many ransom demands, but efforts to find Charlie, including high rewards, were unsuccessful. Through a tip, two men were eventually identified as his kidnappers, but they died after being shot during a robbery.

A few months later, Pennsylvania passed a law that helped the case by changing kidnapping from a misdemeanour (a less serious crime) to a felony (a more serious crime) and granting one month of amnesty to anyone who hid a child (Paula S. Fass, 1997). This meant that anyone holding Charlie could bring him up without being punished. Unfortunately, no one brought Charlie to justice. Although the accomplice was convicted and jailed for the planned kidnapping, Charlie's true fate was not discovered(O'Brien,2008:pp.14 -15). The operation has been called the "crime of the century" and is the first large-scale ransom kidnapping in the United States (Paula S. Fass, 1997). It made headlines in the newspapers and in the hearts of Americans. The entire country was forced to rethink how kidnappings should be handled.

The second example is Charles Lindbergh, the first pilot to fly solo across the Atlantic and become an American hero and a world celebrity. Three years after that miraculous flight, he and his wife Anne gave birth to a baby, whom they named Charles Augustus Lindbergh Junior. Charles grew up to be a 20-month-old baby with blue eyes, but unfortunately, he disappeared on the evening of March 1, 1932, after he went to bed. The body, identified as Baby Charles, was found two months later in a forest just a few miles from his family's estate. It was clear that he had not survived long since he had been abducted (Michael Newton, 2002). Early cases of child abduction could not be narrowed down as such, but the two cases that were the first recorded in history had raised concerns about the safety and protection of children.

Because of the spread of this inhumane practice, modern Africa is now said to be "outpacing" other regions (Tabitha Kanogo, 2022). The demand for "unlicensed labour" and the enormous benefits derived from this practice has attracted the trade in vulnerable children, which thrives in the context of various phenomenal circumstances (Ibid.,2022). "The 'trafficking and shipping' of underage women has evolved beyond traditional sanctions" (Hoffman & Abidde, 2021:p.9). The habit of abduction is a "nuanced phenomenon" that hides behind various practices such as child soldiers, arranged or forced marriages, and creates the vexing social problems of the day that affect other areas of collective life (Ibid., p.10).

Essien and Ben (2013) argue that kidnapping in Africa has proven to be primarily the "most lucrative form of violent crime" as well as a threat to democratic governance. Kidnapping and abduction also occurred in many African countries such as Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan, and South Africa, as well as in countries in the Horn of Africa such as Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Ethiopia (Thamm, Strydom, & Strydom, 2001; Bishop & AustrGov, 2014). Similarly, Africa was a source of supplies for centuries, with vendors making requests until it joined the practice. There are reports of children being kidnapped and sold as "fighters or slaves," and the Lord's Resistance Army, a paramilitary rebel group based primarily in Uganda, has also been known as an example (SudanTribune, 2005).

2.1.3.2. Types of child abduction

The term "child abduction" encompasses two legal and social categories that are distinguished by their context of causation: "familial abduction,"which is abduction by members of the child's

family, and "stranger abduction." There are different causes, developmental factors, and motives for each of these forms, as each abduction is committed by different types of perpetrators (Riplee, 2011). The age of the child at the time of abduction varies depending on the type of abduction. "Divorce or custody disputes" are frequently cited as reasons for parental (family) child abduction (Miller, et.al. 2008).

In familial child abduction, a child is taken or retained in violation of a custody order or other "legitimate custody rights" with the intent to permanently deprive a lawful custodian of custodial privileges (Hammer et al. 2002:p.2). Because parents' motivations vary, this type of abduction can occur anywhere, including within the same city, state, country, or even across borders. According to Dabbagh, (2011), parental child abduction is the "most common" type of abduction, which is referred to as "child abuse" (Faulkner, N. (1999)).

On the other hand, "stranger or non-family abduction" occurs when a non-family perpetrator abducts a victim and holds him or her " for at least one hour in a remote location using physical force or threats of bodily harm" without legal authority or permission from the parents (Sedlak, et al.2002:p.4). In essence, a stranger is a person the child or family does not know or whose identity is unknown. This could be different from a "slight acquaintance" which refers to a non-family perpetrator whose name was unknown to the family or child. Or a "new acquaintance" who they have known for less than six months but have seen less than once a month. Most studies of stranger abduction of children have focused on male perpetrators, probably because there is evidence that abductions committed by women differ from those committed by men (Ankrom & Lent, 1995). Women's involvement in stranger abductions is "extremely rare" (Walsh et al., 2016, p. 31).

Stranger abductions of children are conducted for a variety of reasons, including ransom, slavery, sexual exploitation, and rearing. A child kidnapping for ransom refers to an act committed with the intent to "wait for a reward," collect the money and then return the child. Many kidnappers of children for ransom used this technique before the use of written ransom notes became the preferred method (FBI,2012; Barnett T.2022). Kidnapping for slavery has long been practised, and victims can be children as well as adults. the "licensed" kidnapping of children for theatre troupes has been documented (Coughlan, S.,2013). Not only in fantasy, but some of these children were also seized by "force and coercion," held captive, and threatened with flogging (ibid.,). The legality of such

street kidnappings was questioned because theatre owners claimed they had a license to forcibly recruit children.

Moreover, individuals who kidnap minors to "raise" them as their own usually do so in order to educate them (Ibid.,). These individuals are often unable to have children of their own, have failed to bear biological children, and seek to satisfy an unmet psychological need by abducting rather than adopting a child. In the past, some states have conducted child abductions for the purpose of "indoctrination," as a form of punishment for political opponents, or for profit (Sereny, G., 2009). Other abductions have occurred to make children available for adoption by others through "child selling" without the adoptive parents necessarily knowing how the children were actually made available for adoption (Raymond, B. B. 2008).

Another form of child abduction is "pre-birth" abduction. The extent to which the practice occurs does not stop at a child in progress. Instead, babies are among the most dangerous targets of theft among their mothers(Lehrman, S.1997), when the child is defined as a "viable baby" before birth - usually a few months before the typical time of birth - until adulthood (Fischer, J.1999). Furthermore, in reproductive medicine, the misappropriation of "embryos" has been legally interpreted as child abduction (Rogers, K. T.1996). Having established these developmental factors of non-family abductions, the main causal factors could be further investigated to understand the needs, interests and desires of the perpetrator and the reasons for his actions.

2.1.3.3 Other types of abductions

The global collapse in the number of people who do not have sufficient protective rights to obtain the freedoms they need is causing a meltdown of survival thoughts. Social and economic pressures can easily lead to "desperate" decisions and conflicts (Neppl, T. K., 2016) and hinder access to basic social services. Other abduction practices have emerged as a result of socioeconomic insecurity, as described below:

Fake kidnapping: in which the supposed victim stages his or her abduction. In Kenya and Nigeria, there have been some cases of family members "faking" the abduction of their own daughter to incriminate her husband and ex-wife (Adeyiga & Omale, 2020). The kidnapping of the groom/bride: means that a bride/bridegroom is taken to an unknown place "to get married" against the will (consent) of her/his parents(Okoli & Agada,2014). This happens when some male

kidnappers kidnap and/or abduct a girl – regardless of age. Others kidnap and/or abduct to marry off their victims, as is the case in some pastoralist communities and those that practice early and forced marriages. Here, suitable single women or brides are abducted to force them into marriage. This practice is said to be common in Pakistan and India, but also in Kenya among the Turkana, Pokot, and Masai tribes, in Nigeria, and in South Sudan. Among the Latuka people of South Sudan, for example, a man who wants to marry a girl regardless of her age must first kidnap her from her home. He must then return to his family and formally ask for her hand in marriage (Atisu, 2019). In some parts of Indian society, this type of bride kidnapping is known as "pakaduah shaadi." It takes place when organized gangs kidnap girls at gunpoint and force them to marry or threaten their lives and families (Riza,2020).

Tiger kidnapping: in tiger kidnapping, bank or security employees or their families are taken hostage to rob them. By threatening family members and friends, regardless of age, kidnappers can force people to "aid and abet" the crime, otherwise, they will injure or kill the kidnapped person (Campbell, 2008).

Express kidnapping: in which a passenger in a cab is kidnapped by the driver of the cab. It is an opportunistic kidnapping motivated by financial interests in which victims are abducted, usually at gunpoint, to "withdraw" as much money as possible from ATMs (Okoli & Agada, 2014). Virtual kidnapping: this occurs when a kidnapper obtains contact and "personal information about minors" and could then call parents to demand ransom without actually kidnapping the child (Dudley,2011). Fraudsters might call wealthy individuals and name an abducted child to demand thousands of cash in exchange for the return of children they falsely claim to have abducted. The suspects are believed to be becoming increasingly "sophisticated" as they use more and more different tools in their practice (Blankstein, A., & Romero, D. (2019).

Experience has shown, among other things, that different types of abductions can be associated with both conflict and non-conflict situations. While major interstate armed conflicts are on the decline, there are numerous protracted, intractable conflicts within and across borders that may involve a variety of non-state actors. Children are involved in "adverse recruitment," including cross-border acts, for a variety of illicit purposes (Veneman et al.,2009:p.13). These purposes include engaging in "hostility or abuse, theft, information gathering, and indoctrination" (Ibid.,p.23). These abduction practices, regardless of their nature, have long-term "consequences" that transcend geographic

boundaries (Ibid.,p.19). The increased use of proxy forces at border crossings, as well as their motivations, may shift the source of the problem toward other forms of backlash (UNICEF and Machel,2009:p.10).

2.2. Contextual Perspectives

2.2.1. The rights of the child

As per Article 1 of the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights (1948)"all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Each of them is endowed with reason and conscience and should be friendly and caring toward others." In this concept, children's rights are a subset of human rights and are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Member states of the CRC committed to promoting children's rights when they signed up for the Convention. As human beings below the age of 18 years old, the rights of children are defined as the minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be afforded to every citizen regardless of any discrimination types(UNCRC 1989).

UNCRC outlines the civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights of children in four broad categories. The first is the right to "survival, which includes the right to be born, to live in dignity, and to be healthy". Another fundamental component is the "right to protection". The right to be protected from all forms of violence, neglect, physical and sexual abuse, and dangerous drugs. Children's rights to the freedom of expression, association, and information, as well as the right to participate in any decision-making that directly or indirectly involves each child. Finally, there is a category of rights pertaining to development. Children have the right to an education, to learn, to relax, and to play, as well as the right to emotional, mental, and physical development. According to the UN's CRC, these fundamental rights are therefore necessarily applicable irrespective of where ever and however the person is living.

2.2.1.1 Child abduction a human rights violation

Human rights are the liberties of all human beings. In the name of freedom, people can do anything, such as move freely, live freely, speak freely, and more. According to the United Nations (UN), human rights are the rights inherent in every human being, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status. Consequently, we can claim that all humanity deserves rights. However, human rights can be violated by individuals, states, and non-state actors.

Torture, punishment, arbitrary arrest, abduction and detention without trial and others are examples of violations of a person's basic human rights" (Garret, 2021). Other violations of children's rights include the use of children in the military, the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography.

The manner in which children are abducted and the methods used to do so may constitute ill-treatment. For example, transporting an abducted child to another location where he or she will be held captive indefinitely may violate his or her liberty rights. In addition, the procedure may be considered unfair in this sense if it violates custody rights granted under the law of the state where the child was habitually resident immediately before the abduction (Kvisberg, T. E. 2019). These characteristics have implications that could justify child abduction as illegal. This is also because most legal instruments recognize the practice as a criminal offence in the first place.

The practice has been inked into a variety of normative instruments. In the United States, for example, anyone who "removes or attempts to remove a child from the United States or retains a child outside the United States with intent to interfere with the lawful exercise of parental rights" is punishable under the International Parental Kidnapping Crime Act (Blinken, 2021:p.21). Because the most common methods of kidnapping involve two key elements: the wrongful abduction of the victim and a malicious motive, such as obtaining a ransom, the practice has been classified as a crime. The crime is also punishable under the Child Abduction Act 1984 and the Family Law Act in the United Kingdom. This is also true in Australia, where new laws enacted in 2018 ensure that these offences are extended to anyone acting on behalf of a person to whom the provisions apply, and attempting to steal a child is a crime punishable (Hickey, S., & Nedim,2020). Other countries, including those in the Global South, have also criminalized child abduction. In South Africa, for example, abduction is a crime "against the guardian and not the minor," regardless of consent given (Ardenbaum, 2021).

Based on the preceding discussion, it is easy to see how human rights are necessary and useful for every individual around the world – not only to combat discrimination but also to ensure protection and justice for each individual on a personal level with the support of the law. Considering the cruel practice of cross-border child abduction, a child's human rights are important and indispensable.

2.2.2. Social Cubism Theory

This thesis examines and analyzes data using the theory of social cubism as a primary lens. To comprehend the complexities of child abduction by elements claiming to be from armed Murle community members, a social cubism perspective is appropriate. As a theory, social cubism has been used to "identify problems encountered in areas where violence has erupted" and to assess the appropriateness of interventions initiated to address the problem(Byrne and Carter, 1996). Initially, the theory of social cubism was used primarily to analyze territorial conflicts; however, this does not preclude its application to the analysis of small conflicts such as those witnessed due to cross-border violence and child abductions along the Ethiopia-South Sudan border, particularly in the Gambella region. Because it investigates conflicts from historical, demographic, economic, psychological, religious, and political perspectives, this approach is indispensable in understanding cross-border raiding trends. Social cubism's historical and economic aspects are powerful frames for understanding nearly everything about human existence.

Understanding historical and economic factors or events, as aspects of social cubism, helps people understand some of the reasons behind cross-border raiding dynamics and relationships. The application of this theory in the study of cross-border violence along the border ensured that raiding exploration was approached from various frames of analysis. Furthermore, the use of social cubism is relevant to this study because cross-border raids appear to be motivated by a variety of factors. Because of the number of sub-community conflicts, their propensity to linger, the zeal with which some of them are fought, the impact on the participants, and the impact on others in the global community, make this theory capable of examining, analyzing, managing, or resolving international ethnic conflicts have been developed(McKay, 2002,p.3). As a result, the use of social cubism theory in this research allows the researcher to identify specific factors that contribute to cross-border raids, which is especially important for those interested in solving the child abduction problem along the border.

2.3. Overview of Legal Frameworks and Children's rights practice in Ethiopia

2.3.1. Children's rights practice in Ethiopia

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's (FDRE) constitution, which went into effect in 1995, is the country's supreme law (FDRE Constitution, Article 1; 1995). The FDRE Constitution

and subsidiary laws are the main legal framework that embodies children's rights. Furthermore, Ethiopia has ratified international and regional human rights instruments that protect the rights of children. Ethiopia's ratification of the CRC in 1991, demonstrates its dedication to children's rights. The Convention was domesticated via national legislation (Proclamation No 10/1992) and then disseminated in different indigenous languages. Other conventions ratified by the FDRE consist of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ratification proclamation No283/ 2002) and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labor.

The FDRE is also a signatory to various human rights treaties including; the "optional protocol to the convention of the rights of the child on "Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict" (OPAC); optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on "the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography"; and the Convention on the "Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination" (ICERD). It also ratified the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). And it ratified the African Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its related protocols.

The FDRE Constitution of 1995 has devoted one-third of its total provisions(FDRE Constitution, Arti.,13 to 44;1995) to a subject dealing with fundamental rights and freedoms. This constitution provides the legitimate structure for the protection of human rights, including the three traditional generations of rights (political and civil rights, social, economic, and cultural rights) in a single context of human rights. Children, as individuals, benefit from the FDRE constitution's protection rights provisions. Besides, the FDRE constitution dedicated its Article 36 to solely dealing with the rights of children. This provision especially ensures every child: the right to existence(FDRE Constitution, 1995: Article 36 (1a)); the right to a name and nationality (Ibid, Art.36(1b)); the right to be "recognized and cared for" by each parent or legal custodian(Ibid, Art.36 (1c)); right to not to be subjected to unethical activity.

Besides, the FDRE constitution recognizes the important principle of the child's best interests to be considered by the public and private welfare institutions or recommended authorities while undertaking actions concerning children(FDRE Constitution, 1995:Article 36 paragraph 2). This is the attractiveness of the reality that, probably, certain child rights would come "clash with the rights, prerogatives, and responsibilities" of parents or guardians and with those of the state(Mower,

1997;p.24). In such cases, the language of Article 36 (2) of the FDRE Constitution states that the rights of the child should be prioritized. Making children's rights the primary responsibility could provide the adaptability needed to prioritize other interests when circumstances require it, such as in "extreme cases" (Alston, 1992; p. 9).

Moreover, the legal framework for the protection of children's rights in Ethiopia is not confined to the provisions of the FDRE Constitution, as well as international and regional treaties ratified by Ethiopia. For more detailed procedural protections for children, these provisions are supplemented or expressed in subsidiary laws promulgated by the legislative body. The most essential portions of this legislation encompass; the National Children's Policy (2017), Ethiopia National "Strategy for the Protection of Refugee Children 2017-2019" and "Revised Federal Family Law (2018)" which ended "intercountry adoption"(Foster, A.,2018; USCIS,2018). And Legislation on the Prevention & Suppression of Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants, and the code of Conduct on School-Related Gender-Based Violence.

The adopted children's policy of 2017 aimed at enhancing the participation of children and creating a safe and conducive environment for their upbringing, and protecting the rights of vulnerable children, among other objectives(UPR;2019). Children are protected from economic exploitation by labour law (proclamation no.377/2003). In contrast, this proclamation defines young workers as those aged 14 to 18, which is diverting from the fact in the definition of a child. The age set as 14, also contradict Ethiopian law that prohibits child labour.

In Ethiopia, child abduction is a punishable offence under the FDRE instruments. Ethiopian law distinguishes two types of abductions that are addressed in the law: One is abducting or illegally detaining a minor to "deprive his/her guardians of custody. The second type is the centuries-old practice of abducting a female child, in order to make her "a wife". In the second case, the revised penal code increased the maximum sentence from three to seven years. It also removed the provision that cleared the perpetrator if he married the victim. This means that the crime of abduction is prosecuted regardless of whether the abductor and victim are married.

In addition, parental child abduction is a criminal offence in Ethiopia, according to Article 589 (3) of the Ethiopian Criminal Code. This was evident following Ethiopia's reports of illegal practices and child trafficking, which resulted in a swift revision of the Federal Family Law in 2018, which

legally banned international adoption. While the interstate adoption program is no longer in operation, a lasting "legacy of exploitation" continues (Shelley A. 2022). The continuation of uncaring practices for children indicates the need for further actions and transparency that Ethiopia committed itself to within the UNCRC instrument.

2.3.2. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

The Ethiopian government has established a body known as the "Ethiopian Human Rights Commission" to address national human rights concerns (EHRC). It is an independent national human rights institution tasked with advocating for the dignity and fundamental rights of all Ethiopians. The commission has been undergoing reform to reflect its impartial operation as deemed for its core principles process (EHRC,2020). Its policy centre established an agenda for ensuring the promotion, respect, and protection of women's and children's human rights, describing them as disproportionately vulnerable to human rights violations (Ibid..2020).

The EHRC Proclamation was recently amended (Amendment to the Establishment Proclamation No.1224/2020) to ensure compliance with the "Paris Principles." The Paris Principles are a set of international standards that frame and guide the work of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in order to foster greater programmatic coherence while also supporting and promoting good practice. The Paris instrument's scope is intended to influence the behaviour of a wide range of actors, including states and non-state actors, in the protection of fundamental rights (UNICEF, & Paris Principles,2007). While some of these actors have a specific mandate or role with regard to children, all have a role to play and a broad responsibility for the rights and well-being of children associated with armed forces or groups (Ibid.1.11.).Though Ethiopia has been challenged to make this vision a reality, the commitment itself, with little progress, has highlighted the need for practical change.

The key strategic intervention areas as it develops include legal review and research/investigation of systemic violations; monitoring compliance with national and international standards; empowerment and mainstreaming; and fostering partnerships with all stakeholders. However, it should be noted that the body has been struggling to fulfil its mandate. Concerning its response to emergency human rights situations, the EHRC admitted that it lacked the capacity to act quickly in

serious and urgent human rights situations (EHRC,2021;p.2). Internal financial procedures, on the other hand, are rigid and inflexible, making it difficult to act quickly.

In addition to the weaknesses observed, and in order for the EHRC to be consistent with the Paris principles, much relating to issues concerning the use of children requires a thorough review. Although the recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups have been widely condemned, children continue to be involved in adult wars and become disabled or die as a result of disharmony.

The EHRC has increased public accessibility by opening "eight regional branches" offices and government "allocated budgets" to promote its operation for the protection of women's and children's rights (OHCHR,2020; UPR,2020). It has conducted human rights monitoring visits to facilities across the country that are deemed to be violating human rights, such as detention centres and child-friendly justice systems (UPR2020). It primarily handles cases and complaints concerning children's rights. Child rights cases concern education, maintenance, access to justice, property, and health. The EHRC's operation has been criticized due to its ineffective and insufficient investigative capabilities. In the midst of the country's governance and ethnic crisis, the commission has been accused of unfairly representing its investigative reports, which could amount to failing to meet the minimum standard of an independent human rights body with a comprehensive investigation mechanism, as stipulated (Tghat, & Minassie,2021).

On the sale, trafficking and abduction, the Ethiopian government is attempting to demonstrate its commitment to combating "trafficking in person" (TIP). The government demonstrated its commitment by enacting a new law on human trafficking, which included a mechanism for prosecuting those found to be involved. It also detailed the agreements for law enforcement cooperation with neighbouring countries such as Djibouti and Sudan (UPR 2020). Continuous awareness creation efforts using various communication methods, victim rehabilitation, and job creation that addresses root causes were the steps taken to improve the safe passage. As a member of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children and Child Pornography, it successfully incorporated the protocol's main content into its National Child Policy.

During the universal periodic review (UPR,2020), Ethiopia's national report revealed that "2,686 persons have been indicted" at both the federal and regional levels, with "1178 having so far been

convicted" (Ibid., P.40). The implementation of these changes appears to be under scrutiny. This is because it is doubtful that the new anti-trafficking law will provide a comprehensive legal framework and a clear definition for the elements of exploitation, such as child labour and child trafficking. The issue concerning children in armed conflict has been among the priorities. In 2014, Ethiopia ratified the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. This reinforced existing laws that set the minimum age for military recruitment at 18 years. In addition, internal military regulations have established recruitment criteria that are in accordance with international standards(Ibid., P.42). Although the rate of registration remains low, the establishment of a birth registration system in the country, as well as increased societal awareness of the need to register births, help to ensure that children are not recruited into the armed forces or police forces by providing accurate age information. It is unclear whether the aforementioned awareness has reached all rural and less developed regional states in Ethiopia.

2.4. Literature Review

2.4.1 Literature Review on Ethiopia-South Sudan's border features

Ethiopia and South Sudan are two East African countries that share an 874 km (543 miles) border along Ethiopia's Gambella region and Upper Nile and Jonglei states in South Sudan (Pariona, 2018; Crisis Group, 2010). The Akobo and Baro rivers form the natural border, with traditional reasons contributing to some practices of territorial control (Sande Lie & Borchgrevink, 2009: 44). People with the same ethnic background live on both sides of the border, resulting in an identity that would facilitate border relations. The majority of people living along the border are the Nuer, Anywaa, and Murle, who are all Nilotic groups and share similar socio-cultural activities. The Nuer and Murle are nomadic pastoralists who depend on herding and traditionally care for their livestock by moving to new pastures, including across the border, during the dry season. The Anywaa community is agrarian and accustomed to living on the banks of rivers and in dry zones to cultivate their land (Gashaw, 2017).

The Anywaa and Nuer groups make up 80% of the population of the Gambella region, while the same Nuer, Anywaa, and "Murle" ethnic groups live in the South Sudanese states of Jonglei and Upper Nile (Evans-Pritchard, 1940; Ventura, 2018). This means that almost all the bordering tribes of South Sudan are represented on the Ethiopian side of Gambella. In addition to socioeconomic

and cultural similarities, the communities have developed a long-standing connection with each other that has resulted in "extensive cross-border trade" and other activities that benefit from the long-standing interactions (Love, 2009: 7).

The pattern of moving frequently between borders has been practiced for decades as part of "dry season" migration, trade, and even socially generated intermarriage, as well as to mitigate risks and benefit from associated opportunities (Arensen M., 2015). Due to some climatic factors that prevent agricultural activities in South Sudan, the economy of the states bordering Gambella is mainly dependent on goods from Ethiopia. In addition, national identity is not clear among the Nuer and Anywaa living along the border.

Gambella's borders were a major location for refugees fleeing the Sudanese "civil war" during both the first (1955-1972) and second (1983-2005) conflicts (Johnson, D. 2016). It should be recalled that thousands of Sudanese "unaccompanied minors" were among those who crossed the border and sought refuge in the Gambella refugee camps (Lijnders, 2013; p.85). Not only the influx of refugees but also the regional borders with Sudan have been described as hotbeds of "proxy wars" (Assal, M. et al. 2019; p.175) characterized by mutual support of "insurgent movements" (Verhoeven,2014.para.3; Crisis Group, 2010:6). Among insurgency is one of the most recent feared groups, the "Yau Yau Rebels" (Jamestown Foundation & McGregor, 2012), a member of the Murle ethnic minority, hails from Pibor County in Jonglei State on the border with Ethiopia (Mbugua, 2012). As a result, cross-border control has become more difficult over time as its monitoring becomes "hard"(Verjee, A.2017). The deteriorating security situation along Ethiopia's long, porous, and politically volatile borders with South Sudan poses not only a direct security threat to Ethiopia but also a human rights concern.

2.4.2. Literature review on Murle raids in Gambella

The Ethiopian region of Gambella is home to the "five ethnic groups" of Anywaa, Nuer, Majang, Opo and Komo. The first two are majority Nilotic language families that have long "traditionally dominated" decision-making in the Gambella region, while the last three are "Koman" language groups within the Nilo-Saharan language family (Feyissa, 2016; Medhane, 2006).

According to Mossa (2014) and Gashaw (2017), insurgent groups have increasingly displaced villages, burned them down, and killed civilians, resulting in a "social and existential crisis,"

particularly among communities lacking adequate protection. Recent cross-border raids have resulted in desertification of the border areas of Akobo, Kankan, Malou, Burbeiy, Wanthoa, and Makuey, as well as mass displacement in Jikow. According to reports, "an estimated 4,600 people were displaced from the Akobo and Wanthoa woredas (districts), and cattle were looted" (Mossa, 2014).

Mossa (2014) claims that the Murle abduct children, making them the "most feared ethnic group" among all communities in the Gambella-South Sudan border area. The Murle practice of abducting children has been unique for decades, as it is not practiced by other ethnic groups along the border, except for revenge. In this case, the Anywaa and Jikany Nuer and other farming communities in Gambella are insecure. Though the Ethiopian military could likely respond with cross-border military operations alongside the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) to retrieve the children, however, the raids keep persisting(HDP & IRIS, 2016,p.19).

Therefore, these security threats are far more relevant to the community living in remote border areas that are not permanently guarded by the government. The permeability of the border combined with the lack of government security forces at the border makes it easy for Murle armed groups in South Sudan's Jonglei State to raid communities in Gambella, causing high casualties (Mossa, 2014, p. 57).

Chapter 3: Historical Overview and Ethnographic Practice Analysis of Murle and Ethiopia's Anywaa and Nuer Ethnic Groups

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first part represents an evolution of the groups under study's historical and ethnographic identification. The second section attempted to provide an overview of the Ethiopian Anywaa and Nuer communities of the Gambella Region. This includes Gambella's history, which dates back to Sudan and distinguishes it from the rest of Ethiopian territory. The third section discusses the current state of refugees and their relationships with ethnic groups in Gambella. The final section described the proliferation of weapons and disarmament efforts along border communities.

3.1. Historical Background of the Murle and Gambella's bordering Communities

3.1.1 The Murle Community

The origin of the Murle ethnic group has been debated, with some claiming that the majority of their population lives in South Sudan, while others claim that dozens originated in Ethiopia. According to research, the Murle are a "Surmic-speaking" ethnic group(Abbink, Jon. 2006) who primarily live in and around the towns of Pibor and Boma of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (ISS,2015; Todisco, 2015), which is located in the south-eastern part of Jonglei State in South Sudan. With a population of "around 177,000 people" (Jashua Project,2022), the Murle are South Sudan's 11th largest ethnic group. They follow a religion that is a hybrid of African traditional religion and Christianity.

Murle, while one ethnic group, are divided into two groups: an agriculturalist eastern group that lives on the mountainous Boma plateau and a pastoralist western group that lives in Jonglei's wetlands. In the Greater Pibor Administrative Area(GPAA), the Murle live together with the "Anywaa, Jie, and Suri" ethnic groups, but the Murle is the largest of the four (Deng, 2013).

The language they speak is from the Surmic language family -a language spoken primarily in southwest Ethiopia which still bears some Murle descent locally known as Ethiopian Suri. Ethiopia was seen in some of Murle's narratives a moment when they described their origins. The Murle elders could point to the east and say they came from a place called "Jen," which has a symbolic

meaning because it is one of the cardinal directions that means "east"(Arensen,2012.P.25). Besides, there are three other Surmic speaking people groups presently living in South Sudan, includes; the "Didinga, the Longarim and the Tenet"(Ibid,2012). Despite their geographic spread, the Murle remain unified. They speak a common language and maintain close ties.

3.1.2. Pastoralists living in Murle

The Murle have a long history of migrating in a clockwise direction. Their "homeland is Pibor," and the lives they lives have taught them how to negotiate favour with their neighbours (Arensen 1983). Because of their pastoralist lifestyle, neighbouring tribes always allowed them to settle near to them to graze their cattle and grow crops, even when they were at odds with them. occasionally, they may have a common interest in maintaining peace so that their cattle can graze over larger areas.

Like their pastoralists neighbours, the Murle tribe have adopted a culture based on the cattle complex, and in most ways are more similar to their current Nilotic neighbours (Nuer and Dinka) than to their Ethiopian ancestors. Most such pastoralist people have much in common and formed a need to find a "way to respect each other" and live in harmony (Arensen, 2012; Schomerus and Allen, 2010). The Murle have a tradition in which men can only marry after paying a dowry of dozens of cows. According to Arensen(2012), in Murle," stealing" cows from other tribes is the simplest way to secure a bride. In some ways, if cows are scarce, stealing a child takes precedence. Because of such demands for bridewealth, traditionally, the youth of the Murle and neighbouring ethnic groups appear to have endured equal acts of revenge against each other. This was aided by adversity and the inability to find alternative sources of income. However, because civil wars foster chaos, the Murle youths take matters into their norms by forming their militia to carry out abductions across villages as they see fit.

However, motivated by the expansion of their homeland territory and the near absence of government protection, Murle forcibly seize what they consider to be appropriate for them. When there is uncertainty about whether there will be peace, enough water, and grazing rights, survival instincts align with "bride hunger," sometimes driving the young men into risky child abduction and cattle rustling adventures against their larger neighbours (Arensen 1983).

On their political aspects, the murle community has long experienced deep divisions based on political allegiances. During the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005), these ethnic groups were

split between those who supported the former southern main rebels movement; the Sudan People"s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), and those who supported the then locally formed militias; the Pibor Defense Force headed by one of their sons, Sultan Ishmael Konyi who received support from former Sudan government. The aim behind the formation of the murle Local Defense Force was to protect the Murle community from the depredation by the neighbouring largest tribes who dominated the state and national levels makings.

Despite the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 with the North Sudan government, and when their militias leaders joined the south Sudan ruling government, the majority of their militia was integrated into the South Sudan army, but the "split within the Murle" community continued (McCallum, 2017). It noted that the political making at the Jonglei state level, as well as the insufficient attention of the national government toward Murle's representation, made most of the former militias within the murle community unhappy which resulted in the birth of the "Cobra faction"- a rebel movement leads by David Yau Yau that lives almost exclusively in Pibor county, bordering Ethiopia and operated covering the south-east corner of Jonglei state(Small Arms Survey,2013). As his political calls are accepted by Murle, Yau Yau continued to arm youth from his ethnic group and remains a primary source of arms for civilians.

The possessions of modern firearms in the hands of every Murle civilian have shaped the relationship between Murle and their neighbours. Neighbouring ethnic groups could portray Murle as the main "aggressor and as the source of much of the state's instability"(McCallum (2017). Sometimes, stereotypes about Murle people can partially be based on actual experiences, but they can also be manipulated for political purposes. It is through some perpetrator narrative that the government is reasserting and legitimizing its "control over the Murle community", even though Murles are economically and politically marginalized (Laudati, 2011: 21).

Accordingly, the political context in Murle constituencies remains fragile, with continued internal divisions, and little improvement in their relationships with their neighbouring communities. Internal lawlessness becomes a chance for inhuman practices that are blamed at the hands of armed militias, mainly child abduction and violence across borders.

3.1.3. Chieftain and the Age-Set Structure

Murle tribal leadership, like many African tribal authorities, is based on tribal chieftainship. However, Murle's understanding of chiefs has evolved. When referring to Murle chiefs, it is possible to distinguish between Murle's traditional leadership structures (red chiefs) and those designated by colonial authorities (government chiefs). According to research, the colonial government established and appointed the latter as part of the indirect rule system in the past. The majority of Murle chiefs serving in town high courts, for example, are both government and red chiefs.

Historically, red chiefs were in charge of keeping the peace in their communities. They continue to serve in this capacity in areas where the state does not have access, such as villages and cattle camps. Red chiefs' roles in towns and other semi-urban areas have shifted. Murle chiefs have traditionally wielded some power over the age-old system due to their perceived ability to bless and curse. This power is thought to be dwindling in recent years.

Murle society is held together by a highly functional age-set system, which is comprised of well-defined groups of men based on age. The "age-sets or generations (buul)" are groups of men that are loosely based on age and have multiple social functions, to which a man will typically belong his entire life (Da Costa, 2018;p.9). Women typically belong to their father's age set until they marry (or are promised to marry someone), at which point they shift to their husband's age set. Men rise to prominence in age groups due to their popularity and ability. The most important position is that of a talented fighter, whom the Murle refer to as "eet ci oronto," or "man who owns the war" (Deng, 2013).

Males join an age set in their late teens when they are single and stay within that age set for life. As they build a family and acquire livestock, their roles within the age-set change. According to Deng(2013), a new age-set form about once every 10 years, and will rise and fall in prominence depending on its strength and marauding abilities. At times, child abduction and cattle raids are usually conducted by a specific age set from a particular district or village. Two age sets from the Nanaam and Likuangole areas are currently conducting most of the raids: the ruling age set is the "Bototnya", made up of young men in their prime (aged 20-30); the "Titi" is composed of men aged 30-40 years(Ibid, 2013).

The Murle are known for their exceptional fighting skills, resilience in harsh conditions, and ability to loot large numbers of cattle with only a few men. Typically travel in small numbers, making them difficult to detect. The delineation of age sets, comprising various leaders across locations, makes small-scale raiding possible. Once they reach their target, they strike quickly. Youths attack in small, single-file mobile units, and often use hit-and-run, guerrilla-style techniques.

The red chiefs-clan leaders who can connect with spirits governed cattle raiding. Murle age sets are an important institution with significant influence on the politics of Pibor's GPAA constituency. People identifying with different age classes compete and sometimes fight to succeed their immediate elder generation to access marriage rights. Today, Murle youths will "seek blessings" from the nearest red chief, who will then often take a portion of the looted cattle. If there is no red chief in the area, the youths will proceed without a blessing(Todisco, 2015). The youngest age segment is the most active and aggressive assuming the responsibility of defending the tribe from outsiders, and proving themselves through both child abduction and cattle rustling practices. They have a vested interest in acquiring weapons and ammunition from an "external source" for purposes of age-set struggles, raiding, and personal grievances(OCHA, 2014). In addition, age-set competition is a significant factor in "local conflict dynamics", not least because the fighting for dominance that once took place with sticks and spears is now carried out more often with guns(Ibid, 2014).

3.1.4. The Murle's practice on women and Child Abductions

Murle have distinct hunting roles that they employ as a wilderness strategy. According to research, child abductors may develop roles while hunting in the forest. The styles created are accompanied by traditional influence, including responsibilities assigned to genders. Among these, the gender roles in the Murle community have been defined as traditional, where women typically belong to their father's age group or, if they marry, to their husband's age group. Murle women were active members of their community, and their wishes could influence men's actions. The majority of Murle women are brave, and they may actively encourage their sons or husbands to strive to be a man who can contribute to the household's income. Of course, girls are viewed as family resources, and they typically want to marry so that dowries can benefit their parents.

Compounding the problem is the steady inflation of bride prices, which stems from their cattle-based culture. Due to a lack of cows for the bride price, some men may choose to "defer payment during the marriage" (Kircher, 2013). It cannot, however, be postponed indefinitely. The arrival of children is frequently the tipping point. If the marriage is to continue, there is little choice but to engage in cattle raiding to pay the bride's price Otherwise, if no child is born from the marriage, the desire to have a child may drive a man to resort to child abduction. In this regard, there seems a sense that Murle women are heavily involved in dowry sourcing because they are more interested in marriage and seeking bridewealth for their parents.

Studies have shown that stealing a human was historically associated with slave-like barter within Sudanese societies. Multiple instances of slavery-like practices were also substantiated even during Sudan's civil war when northern-allied militias would scams women and children, and take them into forced labour in northern Sudan (Deng, 2013). Furthermore, studies have revealed claims that child abduction is rooted in centuries-old traditions. In South Sudan, some tribes believe in their own genetic makeup and consider children born out of wedlock to be taboo. In this regard, the Murle community defended the practice's origins, claiming that they were "accepting and raising children rejected" by certain societies in order to distribute them to their childless families (Gatdet Dak & Sudan Tribune, 2009). The Murle accused their "Dinka Bor" neighbours in particular of being a party to the origins of the state's child deal, which has now become a human rights issue widely criticized by both the government and other South Sudanese communities(Ibid,2009).

The Murle chiefs claim that the practice began decades ago as a non-commercial free adoption of Dinka Bor children who were rejected by their families, primarily because they were born out of wedlock, and then brought to the Murle community, who accepted them for adoption for childless families. They went on to say that non-commercial adoption gradually devolved into a commercial exchange of "Murle cows for Bor's rejected or stolen children," until it devolved into full-fledged direct stealing and forcible abduction of children from neighbouring communities by the Murle(Ibid,2009). The Dinka Bor community chiefs, on the other hand, have dismissed the Murle community's claim as unsubstantiated.

Due to their comparatively small population and low fertility rates, which were blamed on syphilis "epidemic" in the 1950s and 1960s, the Murle have willingly continued to raise additional children (Small Arms Survey, 2012). Abductions target both vulnerable members of the community and their

property, such as cattle. Children are abducted when groups of people travel in areas where armed Murle members "hide near dense forests, or at night"(UNDP, 2012).

People travelling with cattle, women collecting firewood, and young children left alone at home are all at risk of kidnapping in at-risk villages or emerging settlement locations. Women are also abducted or injured while "seeking water" for their families (Young et al., 2011). Similarly, women and children are increasingly being targeted in raids by rival communities, even when the goal is ostensibly to gain cattle (Reeve, 2012). "Girls can even be booked for marriage while still in the womb," according to a Safer World (2012, p. 6) report. The term "booking" refers to the practice of older men booking young girls as future wives. According to local custom, the Murle receive cattle when their daughters marry, and a man takes as many wives as his cows will allow. Because women available for marriage are in short supply, their abduction has evolved into a point of contention (Ibid, 2012).

Abductions of women and girls are a common occurrence during ethnic conflict, and the fate of those abducted varies. It is frequently followed by forced marriage or assignment to captors, which results in rape or other forms of sexual violence. The kidnapping of children, of course, frequently prompts the victim community to launch "counter and revenge attacks" in order to recover abducted children and cattle (Manyok, 2016). According to the UN Mission in South Sudan, the captors keep "younger male and female" children as their own children. Locals in the affected constituencies perceived Murle abduction practice as "backwards" or "hostile," and they regarded them as having a notorious reputation (UNMISS, 2013).

Murle-raiding age groups are frequently blamed for human rights violations by default. Their reliance on stealing children is hypothesized to be "infertile" (Rands and LeRiche, 2012). Child abduction is also linked to cattle because Murle's abducted children could be used to raid cattle from neighbouring communities if growing up, or become the "heir to the cattle wealth of the childless owner" when he dies (Nyokkur, 2015). with hundreds of women and children being taken in a single raid, children in areas vulnerable to attacks and conflict are more likely to lose parents and caregivers and face displacement,(UNDP, 2012).

3.2. The Ethiopian Anywaa and Nuer Communities of the Gambella Region

The Gambella region and its people have a history that dates back to Sudan, distinguishing it from the rest of Ethiopian territory. This began around 1902 when the British colony ran the Gambella town as an operational port for its Sudanese colony (Bahru Zewde,1976). The region is a peripheral and largely neglected area, which has only been part of the Ethiopian State since the 1930s when the British government negotiated with the then-crowned Emperor Haile Selassie the transfer of power over it from the Anglo-Egyptian condominium to the Ethiopian empire(Writenet, 2004).

The indigenous populations of Gambella is African Nilotic tribes, who are culturally different from the highland nationalities or locally known as "highlanders"(Meckelburg, 2004). The highlanders refer to the highland Abyssinian populations from another part of Ethiopia but used to visit Gambella for mechanizing of goods. The Nilotic ethnic groups who owned Gambella for two centuries became part of modern Ethiopia at the end of the 19th century(Ibid,2004).

Studies indicated that, when Sudan achieved independence in 1956, Gambella inhabitants got themselves officially under the Ethiopian administration as the "Illubabor" region. The region is a lowland tropical zone, which up to then remained a political, economic, and cultural backwater until the 1960s. In 1969, during the first Sudanese civil war (1955 to 1972), a group of separatists from Sudan called the Anya-nya movement was formed, aiming of creating a nation out of all Nilotic people, including Anywaa and Nuer from Gambella. But according to Dereje Feyissa(2016), there was no "local political power" over which to battle. At that time the Emperor decided to use the Anywaa tribesmen as a conduit for weapons destined for the Sudanese Anya-Nya guerrillas to put pressure on the Sudanese government and punish it for helping the secessionist Eritrean guerrillas.

In the next decade, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army(SPLM/A) emerged, replaced the Anya-Nya movement, and immediately it dominated the region. Also, a significant development was the arrival of tens of thousands of settlers, some trucked from north Ethiopia where drought and civil war had led to famine. Many of these highlanders now run restaurants, bars, hotels, taxis, and garages in Gambella town to the almost total exclusion of Nuer and Anywaa business owners.

Political and ethnic problems began to develop in 1983, when the second Sudanese rebellion sent thousands of other Sudanese African tribes, fleeing into the region. As the rebellious influence become dominant, the Ethiopian allied rebels overthrew a national socialist regime in 1991, and a

constitutional system of ethnic-based federalism emerged that protected minorities' culture and language. Yet, although it granted Anywaa and Nuer local political power, the promise of the change remains unfulfilled.

After years of struggle for peace and equality, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011. However, since its independence, competition for dominance between the opposing parties has resulted in a variety of national crises. The crisis significantly increased the flow of refuges, resulting in a significant increase in the number of camps. Furthermore, the greater the number of refugees, the greater the impacts on the host areas.

3.2.1. The Nuer Community

The Nuer are a Nilotic ethnic group who are found in South Sudan's Greater Upper Nile region. They can also be found in the Gambella region of Ethiopia(Evans-Pritchard, 1940). The Nuer refer to themselves as "Naath," which means "human," and speak the Nuer language / Thoknath, which is a member of the Nilo-Saharan language social group. They are pastoralists who earn their living through herding livestock (Hutchinson,1992). Because of their semi-nomadic lifestyle, the Nuer people have been consistently under-counted and avoid government-sponsored population census. They also have a tradition of only counting older members of the family. The Nuer, for example, believe that counting the number of cattle one has can lead to misfortune and prefer to report having fewer children than they do. As a result of this belief, their population was undercounted, causing them to be referred to as the second-largest tribe in South Sudan.

Historically, the Nuer migrated into what is now known as "Bentiu" in South Sudan due to the expansions of Arab groups from North Sudan toward the south, and their subsequent slave raids in the late 1700s. Further slave raids, flooding, and overpopulation caused them to migrate even further out of Bentiu and eastwards all the way into Ethiopia's western outskirts around 1850. The migration displaced some indigenous tribes while also absorbing many members of minority ethnic groups into their membership (Beswick,2004).

Nuer are currently found in Akobo, Bentiu, Fangak, and Nasir in South Sudan. While the majority of Ethiopian Nuer people are members of the Jikany sub-group, which can be found in Ethiopian Akobo Jikow, Makuey, Wanthoa, and parts of Itang districts. According to 1994 Ethiopia's population and housing census, Nuer are considered the largest ethnic group in Gambella.

Previously, British colonial expansion in the region during the nineteenth century significantly slowed the "Nuer's aggressive territorial expansion" against neighbouring tribes (Kelly, 1985). According to Peter Newcomer, hundreds of years of population growth resulted in expansion, which eventually led to "enmity" (Newcomer,1972).

3.2.1.1 Nuer custom toward the child

There are some rites of passage in a Nuer culture that characterize their attitude toward children and women. The entire tribe believes that caring for a woman and a child is a customary responsibility. This responsibility entailed values and adherence to some important norms. Essentially, a woman in childbirth is attended to by another woman, usually a close relative who must be a mother, beginning with birth. People take precautions to keep pregnant women and their husbands out of the house in order to protect the mother and newborn child from some spiritual harm.

Puberty is regarded as the beginning of adulthood among the Nuer. This was a common occurrence for both sexes. The Nuer do not circumcise boys or girls, but they do engage in certain other body modification rituals associated with life transitions. For girls, the first menstruation marks the transition from childhood to adulthood, during which time the mother prepares her for motherhood and home management. There is a complex set of rituals for males that an entire village age set goes through, culminating in ritualized tattooing or scarification across the forehead. Previously, nearly all boys and girls had their four lower incisors removed around the age of eight.

Young children usually assist their parents in their work, gradually learning skills like milking, gardening, herding, spreading cow dung to dry for fuel, and caring for younger siblings. Parents, grandparents, and other relatives all enjoy playing with children. Nuer boys between the ages of 9 and 13 seek permission from their fathers to participate in a manhood initiation ritual. Historically, the boys were much older, ranging from 14 to 16 in the 1930s to 16 to 18 a century ago. They wait until a group of between 5 and 15 boys forms before performing mass initiation. The ritual necessitates extensive food preparation, and the boys must be in good health and well-fed prior to the ritual. Despite their pain, the boys try to remain silent and show courage.

Parents and friends assemble to watch. Following the cutting, the young men remain secluded together in a house while the scars heal, lying on their backs for a time to keep the forehead upward. They can have visitors who are unmarried, nursing mothers, or elderly people, and they have

nothing to do but eat porridge and milk, sleep, and play. When the young men are considered healed (after a few weeks), they are released and lead a procession to the river to bathe. They then return home, declare themselves men, and celebrate with feasting, games, singing, and dancing, as well as their families and guests.

Each initiate's father traditionally presents him with a spear, a fishing spear, and a bull from which he derives his "bull name." Boys can begin to be sexually active, marry, and take on adult work roles after this initiation. Those who were initiated during the same time period have a very special friendship that lasts their entire lives. Under the influence of education and Christianity, some young men today do not want to go through this ritual. Those who do not go through the full manhood initiation are referred to as "bull boys," implying that people recognize them as adults but do not recognize them as fully mature men who have proven their courage and been scarred like other Nuer. Marriage is the next significant transition rite.

The Nuer nations and cultures have faced some social challenges over the years. Some of these setbacks are the result of the ongoing post-war resettlement and reconstruction confronting the Nuer people today. Many people had lost their homes, children, and loved ones, and many others had to flee the fighting by moving to other countries or cities. Some had been kidnapped by hostile neighbouring groups and forced to work or become members of their captors' families.

Others had received military training at a young age, contributing to a culture of hostility and the proliferation of small arms. Others have been mentally scarred by war, and displacement threatens their traditional values. The culture of unjust banditry and other similar activities is replacing the culture that condemns immorality in Nuer's ancestral life. Poverty, illness, and insecurity are daily issues for the Nuer who live in transitional settings.

3.2.2. The Anywaa Community

Anywaa, also known as "Anuak and Anyuak", are a Luo Nilotic ethnic people who live in two countries in East Africa: South Sudan and Ethiopia(McKenna, 2022). Their language is known as Dha-Anywaa spoken in the Gambella Region of western Ethiopia and Pochalla county of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) in South Sudan. The Anywaa are thought to have migrated several centuries ago from lands east of the African Great Lakes, specifically Kenya and Uganda (Perner, 1994).

The governance of the Anyuak Kingdom is monarchical, in which, the top ruler is determined by birth, not merit or ability. The same is true for the status of chiefdoms. Political tokens of the kingdom include precious beads and royal emblems, the possession of which has resulted in horrifying disagreements that have resulted in decentralized governance. According to the Sudan census of 2008, the Anyuak ethnic community inhabitant is estimated to be 165 thousand in South Sudan. Furthermore, the Ethiopian Anywaa ethnic community is thought to number 300,000 people and is found in the woredas of Abobo, Dimma, and Gog(Obongo & SudanTribune, 2016). In contrast to the Nuer and Dinka, who are also members of the Western Nilotic group and are cattle pastoralists, the Anywaa rely primarily on agriculture, fishing, hunting, bee gathering, and raising sheep and goats. While both the Anywaa and Nuer are the indigenous communities of this region of Ethiopia and neighbouring Sudan, their livelihood and leadership models are distinct.

According to Dereje (2016), at the end of the twentieth century, the Anywaa appeared to be on the verge of extinction. They were saved, however, by a technological revolution. The acquisition of firearms through the ivory trade with imperial Ethiopia was the "technological revolution" that "saved" them. The rise of Anywaa power posed a threat to British and Ethiopian state interests in the region, especially because the safety of the commercial enclave could only be ensured through Anywaa cooperation or military defeat. The British were the first to make an attempt to contain the Anywaa.

3.3. The Refugees in Gambella Region

In comparison to other regions in Ethiopia, Gambella's geographical location contributes to a strategic, humanitarian, social, and cultural linkage that has instrumental advantages. The region is home to 98.5% of South Sudanese refugees (UNHCR, 2020). The region has benefited greatly from cross-border kinship and economic ties. However, in terms of development, the region has been designated as one of the country's "emerging regions" (Carver et al., 2020).

The first wave of refugees into what is now the Gambella regional state crossed the border from southern Sudan into Ethiopia in the early 1960s, a few years after the outbreak of the first civil war in Sudan in 1955 (Thomas, 2015:116). When the war ended, many of the refugees returned to Sudan, but some remained and established permanent settlements (Bayissa, 2010:103).

After the second Sudanese civil war began in South-eastern Sudan in 1983, a new wave of refugees arrived. Itang, Dimma, and Pugnido were the first old refugee camps in the region. Because of its proximity to the border with South Sudan, the camps grew in population.

Since then, Itang Camp became an important part of the local political and economic infrastructure, with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) providing some social services, such as health care and education, at the camps. As well, it is to be recalled that, from 1983 to 1991, the Ethiopian Derg regime granted the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) permission to establish bases in Gambella. The purpose of the act was to demean the Khartoum regime, whom they both saw as a common enemy. As a result, Southern Sudanese insurgents enjoyed free rein and established their main training base in Itang(Carver et al., 2020). As the area's population grew, the Gambella administration designated Itang as a special woreda (district) that was distinct from the region's other administration zones in 2010.

Following the outbreak of the civil war in South Sudan, in 2014, all old camps get expanded and new sites were established to accommodate new arrivals. Therefore, the number of new refugees camps in the Gambella region reaches seven, these include Okugo Camp in Dimma; Jewi in Gambella Zuria; Kule, Tierkedi, and Nguenyyiel in Itang, and Pugnido 1 and 2 camps in Pugnido. Each camp is under the jurisdiction of the Itang special woreda, but the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) is in charge of security and critical management.

3.3.1.Refugees compositions in the Gambella camps

Gambella only hosts refugees from South Sudan. In the three refugee camps in Itang, refugees primarily come from Akobo(Lou-Nuer section), and Nasir and Maiwut of Eastern Jikany Nuer section, and are all predominantly Nuer. Cross-border movement among the Nuer at the Ethiopian–Sudan border has created transnational kinship. Ethiopian Nuer and South Sudanese Nuer are related to each other.

Nuer refugees, therefore, have deep and positive connections with the Nuer host community in Itang and are able to easily integrate and assimilate into Ethiopian society. In the past, transnational kinships have muddied the distinction between refugees and citizens. For instance, a large number of South Sudanese refugees were allowed to gain Ethiopian citizenship in the 1990s, only to later

relinquish their newly acquired citizenship when the situation in Sudan had improved enough for them to return(Gebresenbet, 2017).

Anywaa refugees in Pugnido one(1) are from two regions in South Sudan: Pochalla and Akobo. The two groups have a good relationship with each other. To avoid intra-ethnic conflict, refugees make sure power is evenly distributed between the two groups in the organizational structure of the camp. Refugees from the same ethnic group are highly integrated(Vemuru et al., 2020;p.101). In Itang, members of the Nuer host community reportedly visit their relatives at the camp. The same applies to Anywaa host community members, who visit and sometimes live with their relatives in Pugnido one(1). Refugees assimilate easily with the host community in Itang. During some social tensions among refugees camp, some members who feel unsafe could go to live with the host community for a while.

3.3.2.The host community surrounding the camps

In Itang refugee camps, the host community are Anywaa, the Nuer, the Opo, and the Highlanders. While in Pugnido and Dimma refugee Camps, the Anywaa, and to a lesser extent the highlanders, are the host community. The identification of the host community is intrinsically tied to land ownership. Refugees also identify members of the host community by where they reside and whether or not they receive rations. For example, refugees understood that the Anywaa or Nuer who lives in towns such as Lare, Jor, and Gambella or in nearby villages(kebele) are citizens. However, there have been accounts of both Nuer and Anywaa members of the host community posing as refugees. This is not uncommon, as vulnerable and poor members of the host community do so to obtain rations and other services.

There is a distinction between hosts who are indigenous to Gambella and those who are not. In Pugnido, the Anywaa host community members conceptualize highlanders as permanent guests. However, highlanders have heavily influenced the culture of both the Anywaa and Nuer host communities. This is apparent in the proliferation of coffee shops and restaurants serving food associated with the Abyssinian highlands, and the effect it is having in changing the eating and social habits of the indigenous host community.

3.3.3.The relation between the refugee and the host communities

In the initial stages of settlement, refugees had to adapt to Ethiopian society. They cite learning aspects of Ethiopian laws as instrumental in improving their relationship with the host community. Even though refugees and the host community have positive relationships, refugee integration with the host community was not always a given due to the slight differences in culture and in rigorous moments.

The arrival of refugees into Gambella strained local harmony over the country's limited resources. This "changed" the demographics, economic lifestyles, and power balance in already vulnerable communities (Abebe, 2018). Among the pressures is the claim that some long-staying members of refugees are becoming Ethiopian citizens in order to obtain some opportunities, as well as Ethiopian citizens claiming refugee status in order to obtain services that they do not currently have. This was made easier by the difficulties in distinguishing between residents and refugees, especially because of their common language (Feyissa 2013; Carver et al., 2020). The threats and opportunities associated with different national identities over time have driven this fluidity. For instance, the deterioration of the security situation in Gambella's border regions in the mid-to-late-1980s, as well as better access to education and resettlement programs, led to multiple cases of Ethiopian Anywaa and Nuer moving to the camps and claiming refugee status.

Despite the lack of evidence to back up claims of changing nationality due to opportunity, it is therefore claimed that those who expressed a desire to change identities attempted to trade their own firearms. They had sold their guns to the hosts in order to persuade them to reside. These activities had implicated the region's security management, with arms left over from Ethiopian Derg army personnel referred to as "highlanders" and the SPLA resulting in a proliferation of weapons among civilians, opening the door for cross-border raids and complicating the region's security(Tadesse, 2007).

Since then, the relationship between the groups has deteriorated, and it is connected with theft, cattle raiding, rape of women, and environmental destruction (Ibid, 2007). Because of resources, the Ethiopian indigenous Anywaa and Nuer became opponents. Incredibly stressful among refugees and indigenous peoples have also emerged as problems. In that case, Anywaa and Nuer began trading accusations against each other. Small arms proliferation and a cycle of retaliatory incidents have

exacerbated resource competition and environmental degradation caused by displacement. The context has been complicated further by the region's government's acquisition of land for commercial agriculture and projects aimed at "villagization," which run counter to the expectations of host or indigenous Anywaa communities (Meckelburg, 2004; Hammond, 2008).

The prominence of regional politics, as well as the Anywaa's perception that they were under siege from both the Nuer and the highlanders, resulted in an increase in violence between 1994 and 2003. A series of attacks and counterattacks between the Anywaa and the highlanders gripped Gambella, culminating in the region's worst outbreak of violence. On December 13, 2003, five highlander people who worked on villagization projects were attacked by a group presumed to be from Indigenous Ethiopia Anywaa, according to the government. And the contractors' dismembered remains were displayed in the centre of Anywaa's Abuol Town (Tadesse, 2007). This triggered a three-day campaign in which Anywaa villages and neighbourhoods were destroyed by government-affiliated armed soldiers, reportedly killing 400 Anywaa(Gebresenbet, 2017). The Anywaa killing in December 2003 was followed by another cross-border attack in 2006 which prompted ethnic conflict throughout the region's south (Tadesse, 2007). As a result, most villages near the Ethiopian-Sudan border are hesitant to surrender their weapons because they fear future cattle raids.

Throughout the course of living together, modern issues could be experienced. According to the informants during the interviews with respondents in Gambella town, relationships between the two groups influence the internal issues. A notable example given was the 20th January 2016 car incident on two refugees that broke out between the local traders belonging to Ethiopian highlander's members, and the refugees at the Jewi refugees camp that resulted in the death of fourteen traders from the highlander's side. In addition to this, such an event has been committed repeatedly throughout all refugee camps in Gambella regions, where local natives and refugee communities blame one another for a bad relationship.

Often, when such an incident occurred, accordingly, a mass number of highlander's merchants who live in the capital(Gambella) could be seen trying to attack the refugees for revenge but due to the effort made by the local authority, the problem became settled. The informants also added that the refugees live with the local people of the region by violating the laws concerning refugee settlement and management and creating difficulties to identify who is a refugee or not. Furthermore, the youth of the refugees are accused of some incidents relating to crimes and violence, even both outside and

inside the camps. These claims were partly denied by refugees member whom a researcher interviewed. The researcher also observed during the field trip the same mistrust between some host members and the refugees. Member of refugee camp management member who met a researcher narrated about frequent violations reported across different sites belonging to the Gambella region such as at Gambella town, Gambella Zuria, and Itang especial wereda.

Similar suspicion and insufficient harmony around refugees were witnessed in 2016. Due to uneven distribution of services to refugees versus the host community, incidents of violence between refugees and the host community have risen painfully in both the Pugnido and Itang refugee camps. In 2016, the demanding struggle for resources suited the two groups, Nuer and Anywaa, who shared indigenous and refugee identities. The tensions had continued to rise. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)temporarily could suspended operations at all refugee camps(UNHCR Ethiopia, 2019). In response to the crisis, the regional government "removed senior security officials" implicated in the violence(Borkena, 2019). During those times, roads connecting certain villages were closed, and public transportation was suspended at various points.

From 2016 to 2019, movement between districts and villages was disrupted and suspended. Because of the hostile situation, United Nations (UN) agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) restructured their movement in form of the "convoy" when delivering assistance to refugee camps. In that situation, two Action Against Hunger (ACF) staff members were killed in September 2019 while moving with a convoy near the Nguenyyiel refugee camp in Itang, forcing all aid organizations working in the area to suspend operations. Six days later, a member of the Anywaa militia was shot dead in Pugnido town by government-affiliated forces.

According to the respondents' past and recent accounts, ethnic conflict poses a security and human rights challenge in the Gambella region. Both refugee communities claim that when incidents of cross-border raids are reported, the host communities, particularly the Anywaa community, could easily retaliate by killing refugees. This also raises the reality about ethnolinguistic and gender identities which became prominent during times of social tension. South Sudanese refugees reported feeling targeted based on their nationality as well as ethnicity rather than their identity as refugees in separate incidents, both along the borders and with host communities.

3.4. Arms Proliferation and Disarmament among the Murle community

3.4.1.The source of weaponry for cross-border raids

Some countries in the Eastern African region have pastoralists who actually reside in militarized. One of them is the pastoralist communities of South Sudan. Cattle raiding by groups of young warriors is a cultural practice that has existed. However, the availability of small arms and light weapons has increased the lethality of communal disputes. Raids used to be carried out with "spears and arrows", but the proliferation of small arms has changed the entire nature of raiding (Young, 2011).

Rebellions and armed dealers in South Sudan's remote regions continue to thwart efforts to restore security and combat human rights violations. There have been reports of so-called militia providing manpower or weapons to cattle raiding parties in order to gain or maintain community support. The "Yau Yau Rebellion" was a locally small force of militias established in Pibor County, Jonglei (Reeve, 2012). This movement, named after its leader, politician David Yau Yau, has armed and brought much Murle youth into direct conflict with civil rights issues.

Yau Yau, a former "theology student," was defeated in the April 2010 elections (McGregor, 2012). Instead of accepting defeat, Yau Yau gathered discontented youth from the Jonglei-based Murle tribe and launched an attack on Pibor in May 2010, fleeing with ammunition looted from government soldiers he killed. Dissident militias have continued to ambush troops and South Sudan wildlife rangers. Since then, this rebellion has had some success fighting on his own home territory in Pibor County (southwest Jonglei State). Because of their success, armed civilian men joined them and participated in sidesplitting. Despite the presence of a few left-over rifles from previous guerrilla wars between South and North Sudan in the area, the emergency of a new local rebellion has significantly heightened insecurity in Pibor and surrounding counties.

The seeds of communal instability are growing stronger. Every village man, young and old, has open access to firearms and light weapons. Outside the Pibor constituency, the activities of Murle-affiliated rebellions have been perceived locally as endangering the lives of both government troops and civilians. Murle armed elements could overrun villages, ransack them, and withdraw in the form of unknown gunmen. Village youths were outraged, from their own Jonglei state to

neighbouring states. Neighbouring tribes such as the Nuer, Anywaa, and Dinka may form alliances to free their communities from murle abuse.

In late December 2011, murle neighbours banded together to launch "operation ending Murle abductions," with the goal of putting an end to the pattern of Murle child abductions. According to John Young (2010), Nuer, Anywaa, and Dinka operation members were quoted as offering a novel solution to the Murle problem: demanding a sit-down and talk about intermarriage so that conflicts would stop. As the chaos continued, the option of intermarriage fell short of execution. The emergence of armed youth organizations throughout South Sudan coincided with an influx of small arms into the eastern Upper Nile Province in the early 1990s and 1991. members of these organizations are mostly made up of village kids who armed themselves against long-standing regional concerns (John Young,2010).

Despite efforts to bring them under one command or another, the loosely organized communal youth Army was raised from the cattle camps and was never absorbed into the formal hierarchy of any of the groups. One of the issues was the lack of formal or even stable, leadership to co-opt. The Youths Army membership was "informal and based on availability," civilian status, and possession of a modern firearm (Arild Skedsmo, et al.,2003). The alliance of Nuer, Anywaa, and Dinka youths did not prevent the well-armed Murle from abducting children. When combined with the state's lack of action in addressing this lawlessness, the practice has incurred a substantial cost (McCallum and Okech, 2013).

Apart from militia as a primary source of manpower or weapons obtained with the support of the Khartoum regime, this is no longer the main supply route. Other methods are developed locally. Armed groups use "cattle raiding to exact revenge" on rivals (Young,2007). Cows could be looted and later sold across the border. Trading cattle across the border with Ethiopia for weapons, ammunition, and cash has grown into a lucrative business (Rands and LeRiche, 2012).

On the contrary, communities in Gambella have been disarmed, making it difficult for them to defend themselves and their cattle. As a result, armed youth in Jonglei raided unarmed Ethiopian communities (Mossa, 2014). Each ethnic group's involvement in violent conflict in the recent war and in the past largely reflects their social obligations to protect their families and livestock. Community defence and justice provision, in the form of revenge, has long been one of the most

powerful motivators for village youth militia participation. Economic and social incentives, such as the ability to loot and raid cattle, obtain guns and ammunition and gain status and respect, all encourage many young people to engage in wildness (Arensen, 2012). Assaults have recently been carried out by thousands of heavily armed warriors who have undergone militants who have been at war on several occasions. Hundreds of people are killed in a single raid on a regular basis. Hundreds of women and children are abducted, as well as tens of thousands of cattle (Young, 2010).

3.4.2. Civil disarmament and the gun culture

The act of reducing, limiting, or abolishing weapons is known as disarmament. The United Nations General Assembly defined comprehensive Disarmament as the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction (WMD), integrated with a "balanced reduction of armed forces and conventional munitions, based on the principle of undiminished security of the parties with a view to promoting or enhancing stability at a lower level, taking into account the need of all parties to protect their security" (UNGA, 2022). Disarmament became a supportive idea to look into as a process of removing weapons from the hands of members of armed groups, taking these community-affiliated combatants out of their groups, and assisting them to reintegrate as civilians into society.

This could change the perception of South Sudan as an armed camp, and this can also run concurrently with other programs addressing the needs of populations in addition to those of combatants. While there is no reliable data on civilian gun ownership, there is broad consensus that the expansion and circulation of these weapons remain a "source of anxiety"(SAS, 2007). Both warring parties used civilian community arming as a tactical and military strategy, which in turn, ultimately results in animosity between and among various ethnic groups(Lacey, 2013). While these weapons were purchased for self-defence, they are frequently used during inter-ethnic conflicts. These circumstances, as well as the need to improve human security, necessitated civilian disarmament. Only in December 2005 did the South Sudanese Liberation Army (SPLA) begin the process of civilian disarmament. Thousands of weapons were collected during this exercise, but the human cost was high.

Unfortunately, local youth groups in the villages rejected the exercise, citing abuses and then that resulted in "new fatal" clashes (Young, 2010). The Murle militias, as well as non-Murle armed youths, have long viewed disarmament by government forces as another way to punish them, and a

suitable cover for doing so. It should be noted that local communities' lack of support for the initiative contributed to the violent nature of civilian disarmament. According to Young(2010), the approach was "militaristic, poorly planned", and included few security guarantees resulting in one of the bloodiest military actions in South Sudan since the end of the civil war and failed to improve long-term security.

As disagreements arose, "appeals for a ceasefire were echoed in April 2006, which was preceded by an UN-led disarmament" exercise in collaboration with traditional leaders, local nongovernmental organizations, and local government departments (Garfield,2007). Although the exercise was mostly peaceful, only a few weapons were collected, indicating that civilians were not convinced that the government would successfully protect them if they handed over their weapons.

In Ethiopia, ethnic groups living along the border with South Sudan have been disarmed for a long time. For a time, living among villagers reverted to a "spears" lifestyle. Recent conflicts and internal strife, however, have raised concerns about "whether the disarmed Ethiopian civil population is still gun-free." This is a genuine observation that is backed up by a government report indicating the presence of a "significant number of guns" in Ethiopian society (Endeshaw et al., 2020).

There has been a community-wide campaign to prohibit the smuggling of firearms in Ethiopia. Frequently, the government could report the seizure of a large number of automatic guns and rifles in the previous year. This was common in one of the areas most affected by civil tensions. The rifles were suspected to be brought into the country by oil trucks from Sudan and South Sudan (Endeshaw et al., 2020). "Jigjiga in the east, Moyale in the south, Gambella in the west, and Metema@ in the northwest of the country are the main Ethiopian border towns used as a route for illegal firearms (Debalkie, 2018).

 With the previous administration's iron grip loosening, the federal government has struggled to assert its authority and enforce laws across the vast country. According to the Ethiopian Organized Crime Investigation, "the previous penalty against firearms traffickers was a three-month prison term at most, which did not deter traffickers from engaging in the crime" (Debalkie, 2018). However, gun trafficking has not ceased. On the 7th of March, 2019, Ethiopian police reported the arrest of new weapon smugglers in Burayu, on the outskirts of Addis Ababa, with 105 Russian-made Kalashnikov rifles. The weapons were reportedly being transported from the Gambella region

to Addis Abeba via Assosa in an Isuzu truck. According to the police report, The curb of the contraband trade of goods, including arms, complicated the functions.

 To address this issue, the government recently established a separate organ known as the Ethiopian Customs Commission, which reports to the Ministry of Revenue. This Commission has seized tens of millions of dollars in contraband goods and weapons at various border crossings. The Commission has also drafted a new law to address the illegal movement of weapons in Ethiopia. After a surge in regional ethnic tensions faulted on firearms in private hands, Ethiopia's parliament passed legislation restricting gun ownership in January 2020. The new law allows each region to set a legal age for ownership while restricting the number of firearms an individual can own to one. According to the new legislation, violations could result in up to "three years in prison" (Endeshaw et al., 2020). It will also prohibit private trade in weapons and only allow certain government institutions to import firearms. Those found to be involved in arms trafficking face prison sentences ranging from "eight to twenty years" (Ibid., 2020).

Chapter 4: The Causes of Murle Cross-Border Child Abductions

This section is divided into five and discussed the reasons for child abduction. The first section described the geographical location of Anywaa and Nuer Natives Districts in Gambella Region and their vulnerability to cross-border riads. Section two describes abduction incidents and case studies, as well as motivational aspects, including social-cultural aspects. However, significant raid actors are explained in the third section. This part includes respondents' opinions and case studies. The fourth section focused on the causes of abductions, while the fifth section focused on the role of the government and its response to the situation. This role includes abductee repatriation and border cooperation.

4.1. The Anywaa and Nuer Natives Zones Districts in Gambella Region

Anywaa Native Zone is an administrative district in Ethiopia's Gambella Region, bordering South Sudan to the southwest, the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region (SNNP) to the southeast, Majang Zone to the east, Oromia Region to the northeast, and South Sudan and Nuer Zone to the northwest. This zone includes the towns of Gambella, Abobo, Dimma, Gog, and Jor. The terrain is mostly flat, with rivers such as the Baro, Ethiopia's only navigable river, and the Gilo. A notable landmark is the Gambella National Park, which covers a large portion of the Zone south of the Baro. According to the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the population of this Zone is 99,556, with urban residents accounting for 52.8% of the total.

The Nuer Native zone, like the Anywaa zone, is an administrative district in the Gambella Region. Populated by 112,606, of whom 10.89% of the population are urban inhabitants, the zone is bounded on the south, west, and north by South Sudan, and on the east by Anywaa Zone; the Baro defines the border on the north. This administrative Zone is divided into five woredas: Akobo, Jikow, Lare, Makuey, and Wanthoa Wareda (Districts). Except for Lare, other areas are flooded during the rainy season, requiring the people to migrate to the highlands with their cattle until the waters recede(Abraham,2002). People in the Nuer native zone live on raising livestock as the primary source of income. Until 2006, there were no agricultural cooperatives, no documented roads, and little other infrastructure.

Gambella's Anywaa and Nuer native districts are in a strategic location, bordering South Sudan. This neighbourhood makes the area more homogeneous and diverse, but it also makes the border

less secure, and the border may require the Ethiopian government to provide a daily guard. Poverty and insecurity, on the other hand, do not always recognize the kinships that define the relationships between bordering groups. The absence of law enforcement created a security void. These vacuums attract illegal armed men who conduct village-to-village raids in search of children to abduct. This was true during the April 2016 incidents, when previously deployed regional special police were withdrawn due to a change in administration within these forces a few months prior to the incidents. "Neither the Federal Police nor the Ethiopian military has filled this void," one Lare community chief told this researcher.

4.2. Murle Child abduction incidents and cases studies in Gambella

Traditionally, multiple fatal cross-border raids launched by armed militants from South Sudan into Ethiopia's western Gambella Region have been experienced and resulted in devastation and the deaths of dozens of people. Cross-border raids incidents have been reported specifically during the dry season, causing varying scales of chaos in both the Anywaa and Nuer administration districts. The chaos has been blamed on internal insecurity and resource-related tensions in Sudan's south. One example of the spillover of violence into Ethiopia has been associated with the influx of a large group of Sudanese Lou Nuer crossed into Ethiopia in 2009, following clashes with another Sudanese group, the Murle,(TNH,2010). Regardless of being cousins of the Ethiopian Jikany Nuer, the better-armed Sudanese Lou Nuer quickly spread into the Ethiopian Jikany Nuer districts. According to the Gambella regional government, thousands of Ethiopian families have been displaced (Ibid, 2010).

Despite the fact that the raid occurred decades ago, new violations of children's rights at the hands of cross-border militias have been a constant source of discomfort. Too many but random cross-border child abductions have been grimly undergone and documented from 2014 to 2022 alone. The most recent incidents occurred in January and August 2022, with the Kankan and Dimma woreda attacks, respectively. Each attack takes a life, and children are taken away (ESAT, 2017; Standard, 2022). One of the most recent volatile cross-border child abductions occurred in April 2016. Ethiopians of the Nuer ethnic group were destroyed in Jikow, Lare, and Makuey Woreda(Sub-districts), and assailants set fire to approximately thirteen(13) villages and fled with children abducted as well as valuable properties (ESAT,2017). At that time, Ethiopian Premier Hailemariam

Desalegn issues a press statement hours after the village raids, claiming that "208 mothers and children" were killed by Murle tribesmen (Tekle, 2016).

The report was, however, followed by a two-day national mourning period in honour of the hundreds of souls in parishes. Attackers took cattle as plunder and kidnapped children and women. However, survivors are also mystified by the brutality of the attack. The cross-border abduction victims whom a researcher contacted have accounted for different feelings. During an interview with respondents in Gambella town, Chan Wicduel, whose child was abducted in the April 2016 attack, said, *"there was fear. If they came just to take our livestock, why all the killing? Even after they had all the cattle, they kept following people and killing them,"(06 September 2022).*

It's been almost six years since Chan Wicduel's three young children were abducted from Kurthony – his home village near Lare Wareda. Sitting under a tree near a livestock market in Gambella town, the 49-year-old pointed to a shop meters away from where he and a researcher seated, he said: *"They(kids) were sleeping in a hut right away distance of that shop when the attack occurred. "It would have been easier if they(kids) were dead because then I could forget"(06 September 2022).* With tears glowing in his eyes, he bravely said his four-year-old son and five-year-old daughter were likely sold for cattle after being seized by men from the rival Murle tribe. He doubts his two-year-old daughter is still alive. According to him, *"eleven children in all were abducted from this tiny village that day and none has been seen since"*. It is a little-acknowledged misfortune in Gambella's April 2016 child abduction riads. Because of the situation, the authority provided him with support which allow him joined livestock trading.

Like other bereaved parents, Tongyik a 50-years old village elder said, he was hiding nearby when his village witnessed the attack;*"They stole thousands of heads of cattle. They destroyed all the boreholes, eliminating the main source of water here. they targeted men, while others tracked down women and children who had fled into the thick bush" (06 September 2022).* Another respondent who stated that he participated in one of the Murle raids described how the youth advocated for the following as a novel solution to the Murle problem:*"Murle cannot increase their population by abducting Nuer, Anuak and other children. If Murle's women have fertility problems, we could be willing to accept intermarriage. We can have chiefs sit down and talk about intermarrying to assist our Murle brothers to increase their population if their women are not reproducing. The chiefs can decide the number of cattle a Murle man should pay as dowries to marry a Nuer girl"(30*

September 2022). The April 2016 child abduction happened at a time when South Sudan experienced civil wars, and the incursion was seen as also representing a spillover from South Sudan's crisis into Ethiopia.

In March 2017, residents of Anywaa Zone's Dimma Wereda again awoke to the sound of guns clapping violently in the middle of the night. The night attacks killed people and abducted at least 22 children (ESAT,2017). The situation caused widespread displacement and a humanitarian crisis. This crisis has destabilized human child development, putting their welfare and protection at risk. Respondent and Dimma resident who was a Murle child abduction victim (injured) in Bandira Kebele (village) experienced the following: *"The Murle crossed the river toward my farming land, eastward. My wife and two children were taking a bath in the river when I approached them, claiming to save them from the raiders, but I was shot in the shoulder and fell down; similarly, my wife was immediately wounded. Later, the children were kidnapped, and my wife died after being transported by ambulance to Dimma Clinic (28 September 2022)."*

The reasons for this are clearly stated by respondents; it appears that the Murle adopt the abducted children into their families, raise them as their own, and integrate them into their culture. Although some studies show that Murle has relatively low population growth, their areas are among the most marginalized, which can be attributed to a lack of livelihood opportunities(Mossa, 2014). According to one respondent who is a member of the Kebelle community post added: *"From the year 2014, children were frequently vulnerable to cross-border abduction in which gunmen are well organized and equipped to deter themselves from security forces. The militias in our Kebelle are not on standby due to the inefficiency of their instrument and the irrelevant infrastructure up to remote border Kebeles. For instance, at the time of Murle raiding in Udek and Lulwaro Kebelles, three members of the militia were killed in the fighting and two civilians were injured. In the same season. children were abducted, two of them have been returned back to Dimma from Boma Country, South Sudan with Red Cross Association worker's support. Nowadays, the gradual increase in the scale and severity of civil war in South Sudan is directly associated with the ever-worsening cross-border attack and the Murle are profoundly sensitive to child abduction, indeed, it become hard and disturbing (28 September 2022)".*

The prevalence of risk is still felt by both indigenous Gambella and members of the Refugee community. Following a period of relative calm between 2020 and 2021, Murle militiamen attacked

a refugee camp in Anywaa Native Zone's Dimma and Gog woredas (sub-districts) in February 2022. The attack has also disrupted the public transportation network. Passengers were frequently cut off along the roads that connect districts to the Gambella region's capital. Travellers on bicycles and on foot from the Pugnido district to the Tedo locality of Gog Wareda have been obstructed for a time due to the insecurity created by the child thief.

The incident occurred against the backdrop of another cross-border attack in January 2022 by the same armed group in Kankan. a vehicle with people burned inside was reported in Kankan Kebele (village) in the Nuer Native zone's Akobo woreda, where a local authority source stated that "passengers and children disappeared" (Standard, 2022). Kankan was only 15 kilometres from Akobo's Lou-Nuer villages in South Sudan. The raids came one week after Murle villages raided South Sudan's Lou-Nuer villages on the opposite western bank of the Gilo River. These coordinated and repeated attacks that razed vehicles burned huts, and caused death in remote villages administered by both the Anywaa and Nuer Native Zone administrations were constantly reported.

Essentially, the border areas of the Dima Woreda, Akugu refugee camp, and Akobo Tierguol are among the vulnerable locations where children experience a lack of sleep due to safety concerns and possible abduction. Both the Anyuaks and the Nuer bordering residents claim that their appeal to the federal government for protection fell on deaf ears. As a result, they claim, cross-border attacks have been unaddressed. These also demonstrate the level of concern for human rights as well as the inadequacy of local government protection measures.

4.3. Significant Actors and Parties in Cross-Border child abduction

The entire beleaguered community, including the government, is curious about the attackers' origins and where they came from. Border cattle raiders and kidnappings from the border GPAA state of South Sudan have plagued Ethiopia's Gambella People's National Regional State for many years. Despite traditional testimony about cross-border abduction blamed on Murle ethnic group elements, villagers were unaware of the attackers' identities in recent years, until the government collected the evidence. The first Murle appalling attack, according to respondents, occurred in Gambella in 2010 and had never been seen before. Raids on Nuer administration districts have occurred in the Gambella Region's Nuer-inhabited woredas (districts) of Makuey, Akobo-Tierguol, Jikow, and Lare. The cultural features and locations of the affected villages warranted the attackers' direction, with

reports of evidence naming the Murle ethnic group as the main proprietor of the borders (BBC,2016).

Based on his knowledge of border lives, respondents in Gambella said, *"the first dark day occurred on April 15, 2010, when Gambella's Bordering Zones Ethiopia witnessed bad intent in our borders. On that day, our national security captured some raiders and collected attackers' bodies for evidence. This was where we identified the cross-border child abductors as Murle. We have different cultural tattoos with them, it makes it easier to identify who is who(20 September 2022)"*.

The raiders in many incidents were seen armed with high-quality Kalashnikov rifles and plenty of ammunition. They also dressed in "military-style uniforms," with many wearing the same model of *"plastic white shoes and longtime traditional hunting sticks"*(Tekle, 2016). Some attackers bear body tattoos foreknew to be from Murle warrior men. According to the source, attackers sing "war songs in the Murle language" which distinguishes them from other neighbouring ethnic groups(community cul, 2021). However, some witnesses identify the attackers in the Gambella raid as Murle tribesmen. The accounts are supported by the presence of distinct Murle scarification on aggressors killed in the raid(Ibid.,2021).

Some evidence suggested that pastoralist communities in South Sudan are known to frequently position such munitions, and uniforms are not difficult to come by. But the scale of the attack suggests that the attackers were remarkably well-armed. According to a former governor of Gambella interviewed in this study, who asserted kidnapping has long been common in the region, but never on this scale,said,*"We were trying to understand the magnitude of the attack, and we had waited for a while to have the full picture of the raids then, followed by identifications and verification. We verified from the additional source from their government in Southern Sudan(28 August 2022)"*.However, the origin of the weapons used in the attack has yet to be determined. It's to recall that, some armed groups in South Sudan have obtained weapons by capturing them from government forces, while others have obtained weapons from outside actors and rely on weapons left over from previous conflicts.

4.4. The causes/motive for the Murle child abduction practice**s**

Murle's cross-border abduction practice, for example, is amazingly mysterious. According to the extensive interviews conducted, there are numerous causes for the widespread practice of cross-

border child abductions in the study areas. These are divided into two groups: socio-cultural values and perceptions and border proximity issues.

4.4.1. Socio-cultural Values and Perceptions

4.4.1.1. Bridewealth/dowries pressures

A "dowry" is a payment made by the bride's family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage, usually in the form of property or money. While "bride price" or bride service refers to a payment made by the groom or his family to the bride or her family, dowry refers to wealth transferred from the bride or her family to the groom or his family (Goody, 1976; p.8). In a country where livestock rearing is the primary source of income, young girls as young as twelve can be wed or forced to get married in exchange for cattle.

The dowry is often higher in pastoralist communities, but even if a man does not have any cattle as a source of income, he must find a way to acquire something equal to cows to pay a dowry to the father of the girl he wishes or is arranged to marry. In modern African society, there are numerous justifications for dowry payment. Most African countries, including Ethiopia and South Sudan, still accommodate this practice. Dowry payment is a custom among the Nilotic ethnic groups, in which,cows are considered a symbol of both values and resources founded upon the myth and belief that cattle are the source of life(Sadjere, 2011).

The traditional demand for bridewealth among cross-bordering pastoralists has changed the original needs of cattle. The need for cattle pay or marry a wife is associated with most the abduction mission. For a young man, raiding is encouraged as a passage into manhood and in resource scarcity. it has been indicated as one of the driving forces in exacerbating raids. According to the informants, the youth are active Participants in raiding because after the civil war in Great Pibor the "price ranged from 500 cattle to 400" cattle. A key respondent who once grew up in Captivity from Likuangole said *"if you have fewer cattle you cannot marry.* The informant also asserted that,*"Dowry payment for marriage is paid in kind or cattle. The amount of cattle that will be paid during the marriage is so high that young men who do not have assets can hardly meet such an expense. As a result of these cultural needs, those who lack resources resort to other means. Dowry is thus one of the principal causes of cross-border raiding amongst the Murle pastoral community (06 September 2022)"*.

The above statement is supported by different scholars and reports (Safer World, 2012, Small Arms Survey, 2012,). For instance, Safer World (2012), asserts "Under local culture, the Murle receive cattle when their daughters are given in marriage, and a man takes as many wives as his cows will afford." This indicated that the Murle may have engaged in the cross-border child raid to get more cows or money to pay the bride price and for family upkeep. The payment of a bride price has long been "accepted by clan heads and traditional rulers alike" (Sadjere, 2011). Each community determines the amount to be paid, which may vary slightly depending on individual families. Dowry payment, according to African tradition, "creates stability within marriages and thus prevents the lady from running away" from her new home (Sadjere, 2011).

However, the dowry system has emerged as a social problem. The term "dowry" refers to the resources and money brought by the bride to her husband's home during her wedding. Every year, thousands of women are killed as a result of the dowry scheme (McCarthy, 2017). In other cases, women commit suicide after being harassed and abused for the inability of their husbands or herself failing to pay the dowry. In that regard, dowries, among other violations of rights such as discrimination and denial of freedoms, help maintain gender inequality.

It is clear from the pride that comes with this practice that the intention is to trade the children for cattle or to use them for personal gain. During a field trip to Gambella, the researcher spoke with a respondent – a man who grew up as an adopted child in Murle land. The man, now known as Bol Chan, admitted stealing and trafficking children is meant for personal gain; *"In the end, the children will be used for personal gains or traded for cattle. One child, no matter what their age, can sell for 25 cows worth about 5,000 US dollars, he said. Children who aren't sold are kept by families without kids while girls are groomed for marriage(6 September 2022)".*

The dowry system demeans women by treating them as commodities that can be traded (McCarthy, 2017). People in South Sudan are perishing as a result of bridewealth and the process of acquiring cows. Other human rights violations include child abduction, early or forced marriage, and bride prices. Among the border communities, Ethiopia-South Sudan livestock and more especially cattle are a symbol of wealth. The more cattle one has, the richer he is and the more wives he can marry. The competition for wealth and prestige that is associated with cattle can be what encouraged the Murle from the border community to raids. The prestige may have forced some of the men to engage in raids in order to maintain the herds and status they had earned themselves in society.

Gitau (2013) also notes that traditionally, successful raiders are respected. Among Murle, the red-chiefs clan leaders who can connect with spirits governed cattle raiding. Today, Murle youths will seek blessings from the nearest red chief, who will then often take a portion of the looted cattle. If there is no red chief in the area, the youths will proceed without a blessing (Small Arms Survey, 2012).

4.4.1.2. Abduction of a child for adoption and slavery

Child abduction among the murle community is motivated by the expansion of the family and the bared adults. A member of marriage age in Murle communities could have a tradition of refusing to accept life without a child. In this regard, many of them are forced to look for children because they are childless. A family without boys, only girls, or without a child may turn to consult magicians and to child abduction as means of owning more children. Deciding to abduct a child for this kind of abduction begins with two kinds of consultations with local magicians. The first consultation is to ask luck in finding a family to raid, and the second is after a successful raid in which the newly abducted child goes through traditional rituals.

A respondent with knowledge of such practice has explained; *"When youths decided to raid their neighbours' villages, they could boost their hunts and with the fortune-hunting season by consulting local magicians. A magician can be female, male, or bisexual. In Gumruk areas and locally known mountains called "Det Mountain" in Lokurnyang village, magicians (Majmaris, a male magician well known in Murle wide) are honoured for his successful wishes. Depending on the thrown "witchcraft dice," he may have the ability to approve the raid or adjourn the mission when consulted. Men of raiding age have faith in their decisions."*

According to some respondents, in a magical meeting between child abductors and magicians prioritizing abduction missions, abductors could describe the type of luck they want to find. It is fortunate to come across villagers who have more infants, children, young girls, and cows, and who are less resistant; *"abductors are required to pay only one cow to the magician, pay a sheep, and a dog as ritual offers, priority to the start of the mission. And, upon their return from abduction, each abductor could offer a cow in thanks to the magicians. This means that the more abductors there are, the more magicians benefit and gain the title of "wealthiest person."*

In the course of going out, its believe that abductions are afraid of raids in which they could be killed or overpowered by the owners of the raided village. On the day of the raid, witchcraft could cast away government forces, which sometimes came true. Respondents explained three ways that Murle land abductions take place: *"First, children abducted by a childless person. This is done by abductors who are frequently unable to have their own children and seek to satisfy their unsatisfied imagination need by abducting a child to be his/her own. Children are abducted by a person who has his or her own children but wants to use them as his or her own. The third is that children are kidnapped and sold to childless female heads or childless parents. All of these adapted children may be subjected to Murle's cultural branding."*

At the reception of abducted children, the ritual sacrifice could be performed in order to curse away abductees' previous beliefs, experiences, knowledge, information, culture, mindset, and so on. Former names could be replaced with new ones. This is done by the magicians in the presence of the new abductees who have been distributed into new guardians/families. Respondents narrated this; *"When a newly abducted child is brought to the magicians, the magician gives him or her water to drink. Rituals that prevent the child from returning could be performed. "A female Magician known as "Nyandit" is well known for performing reception rituals. A male magician called Majmaris, on the other hand, is a well known for his child abduction raid fortune. From here, a new name can be proposed by the magician. Other rituals that must be strictly followed; the kidnapped child is first exposed to a variety of learning environments. It is common for adolescent boy children to learn how men fight wars and how to hide without being easily discovered. When a girl grows up, she needs to be exposed to attractive culture, dance, and motivating men in order to be brave enough to bring something valuable home one day."*

When asked if an adopted child does have resources in a new family, he responded, *"according to Murle tradition, dedicating some cows and a colorful Bul to an abducted child is a must, depending on the type of family that a child entered. Cultural branding, such as tooth removal and tattoos on the skin, are all designed here. Other tattoos will be applied when the abducted child returns home to his new family and based on the resources (cows, bulls, guns) that have been proven to him".*

Respondents described the type of ritual ceremony held on each occasion to commemorate the successful adoption of newly blessed abducted children. *"During the reception, the bravest murle men who successfully brought children home could be seen getting playful and recklessly releasing*

waste products (faeces and urine) in the middle of crowns. In Murle, it represents bravery, hard work, and dignity. The bravest abductors could smear cow excrement or dung on their entire bodies, including their faces. This bravery is demonstrating to all Murle members that he is the bravest person and has successfully stolen many children from abduction practice."

4.4.1.3. Low Living Conditions/Poverty

Poverty is defined as a circumstance in which a person or community lacks the financial resources and necessities for a basic way of life(Grabowski, 2013). This indicates an income level that is so low that basic human needs cannot be met in that household or community. According to studies, poor living conditions have a negative impact on well-being and may jeopardize community peace. Cross-border raids, as a historical trend, may be regarded as an immediate means of improving livelihood by some pastoralists. The escalation of violence in 2013 had a significant impact on livelihood strategies, forcing many Murle to flee to other areas outside of Pibor County.

A key respondent from the Murle ethnic group stated that "there is no way to improve living conditions in Pibor because of no means.*"If and when displaced Murle are able to return home, restocking and redistribution of livestock will be required if pastoralism is to be restored as a major source of livelihood in Murle land.".*

As a phenomenon, it is likely that some groups could well raid old enemies in order to survive poverty. The interviewees stated; *"The prolonged war inside South Sudan country has affected the living conditions of all families in our community. We were not supported by the South Sudanese government or non-governmental organizations for many years, so every aspect of our lives was dependent on the existence of cattle. Cattle are valuable assets; we have no other means of generating income to survive. In addition to the civil war, tribal armed conflicts have increased, our cattle have been raided, children have been kidnapped, and tools have been razed around Pibor (10 September 2022)."*

Pibor County, like other areas in South Sudan, has widespread poverty due to a lack of government services and development opportunities. Insecurity, a lack of infrastructure, and a lack of market opportunities have all contributed to a broader landscape of deprivation, discrimination, and social process. One aid worker at an Ethiopian child charity organization is skeptical of Murle's economic prospects. People are doubting that the abduction and sale of children will end as long as despair

persists in cross-border communities; *"I don't believe kidnappings will stop. People, there have no resources and no salaries, so they don't work, so they adopt children and trade them for commodities (09 September 2022)."*

Some Murle tribe members interviewees stated that child abduction is not a means of poverty alleviation, but in the absence of a girl in a family, some clans of the community abduct children across the border. For example, Murle natives explained that abducting children "provides indirect economic value after nurturing and assimilation within the community culture" and norms. One interviewee, a Murle refugee student studying at one of Ethiopia's universities, explained how the Murle community copes with various adversities. He contended that "there are no cross-border raids when there is food security and stable government."

Cross-border raids, on the other hand, are exacerbated by an increase in low living conditions. Respondents' or participants' perspectives indicated that, due to declining animal numbers, many Murle pastoralists now rely on smaller livestock assets than ever before. The decline in livestock wealth among pastoral communities has jeopardized human consumption of livestock and other obligations that animals fulfill. For that reason, the widely held belief that poverty is the cause of raids holds that the occurrence of cross-border child abduction for the purpose of improving economic status has increased.

4.4.1.4. Climate change-induced stress

Climate change is defined as "shifts in temperatures and weather patterns" that occur in a specific location. These changes could be natural, such as variations in the solar cycle. However, human activities have been the primary cause of climate change, owing primarily to the use of fossil fuels such as coal, oil, and gas (NASA, 2015). Climate-related conditions, according to the study, influence the likelihood of armed conflict in countries where it causes drought, reduces harvest, destroys critical infrastructure, and displaces communities (Hubbard, 2021). It believes that the link between climate change and conflict poses a disproportionate threat, owing to the reliance on agriculture and livestock.

South Sudan and Ethiopia are among the most vulnerable countries, with increased incidences of floods and drought, sometimes occurring concurrently. In these conditions, crop failure, livestock deaths, and pastoralist migration in search of water and pastures are all on the rise. These trends

have increased conflict over grazing areas among pastoralists and between farmers and pastoralists in recent years (Hill & UNICEF, 2021).

In Ethiopia, household food insecurity is caused by climate extremes and a lack of agricultural inputs, resulting in desertification and a lack of income diversification options(VOA & Hussona, 2021). In some areas, it is simply impossible to make a living due to poor climatic conditions. This is especially true for farmers and pastoralists who live in hot climates, where the lack of rain contributes to significant desertification problems. Because of insufficient rain, residents of these areas will frequently be unable to harvest enough crops to feed their families and livestock. This desertification has an impact on livestock grazing lands. Due to climatic change, communities are forced to relocate to better-off areas. This relocation or migration is often perceived unfavourably by the host, resulting in conflicts(VOA & Hussona, 2021).

4.4.2.The proximity cause to cross-border raids

4.4.2.1. Ineffective Governmental Structure

Ethiopia is thus an ethnic federalist state of governance, with ethnic groups represented and declared free of federal control. In other words, each regional (state) administration handles its own issues, and the federal government only intervenes when there is a request or a national problem (FDRE Constitution, Articles 1 and 47). Stability and safety are expected in the country. Gambella communities, like other regions in Ethiopia, expect their government to bring the country long peace and stability. However, as the country has progressed through different historical layers, there have been numerous political and social movements. Since then, there has been a limited response to local demands. Responding to violations is extremely difficult to accomplish in a timely manner. This causes cross-border communities to suffer by preventing them from being heard or having their problems addressed on time.

The governance challenges that Gambella communities face are also shared by South Sudan. Despite being a very fortunate country with resources, Sudan's long history of war, even before independence, suggests a country with poor governance for a long time. As previously stated, poor governance is one of the underlying causes of cross-border chaos. Aside from the issue of poverty and inter-tribal conflict, the fragmented and tribal-based administration system is incapable of addressing the concerns of the constituency (Manyok, 2016).

Across all constituencies, including Greater Pibor Administrative Area(GPAA), exist a sense of disconnect between people and their government. Anarchy is sometimes directly or indirectly organized. A key respondent (Murle) agreed with this assertion, claiming that: *"Political and military leaders have been poorly organized and incapable of monitoring violations among the communities along the bordering areas. The range of violence which also involves organized gunmen, children kidnapping and other human violations, is taking place around the borders, where the authority of our government is contested, and inexperienced and powerless government officials are unable to impose order on the situation. The concept of a political opposition appears to be missing in the new state, with politicians breaking from the ruling party SPLM and routinely forming armed militias (factions) rather than political parties (10 September 2022)"*.

4.4.2.2 Widespread Availability of Small Army and Light Weapons(SALW)

The "small arms" are weapons intended for personal use(UNODC, 2013). Self-loading pistols, rifles and handguns, assault rifles, and light machine guns are among them. "light weapons" are infantry-portable weapons, such as crew-served kinetic firearms. Medium machine guns, heavy machine guns, rifle grenades, portable anti-tank guns, and recoilless rifles are among them (Ibid., 2013). The illicit flow of these small arms has serious consequences, including violent extremism and transboundary disputes. They play a role in a wide range of human rights violations, including child abductions, maiming rape, and other forms of gender-based violence (Nakamitsu, 2020). Small arms contribute to displacement and food insecurity. Many countries are concerned, including South Sudan and Ethiopia, which are both experiencing a steady influx of weapons and ammunition.

The use of firearms has been confirmed by an interviewee who had previously returned from captivity in Murle land: *"weapons or AK-47s riffle become everywhere, owned by anyone. It is simple to purchase both money and cows. With a gun, it is simple to obtain valuable items that were previously difficult to obtain. However,recently in Pibor areas, if one was caught stealing, a fine of seven cows could be imposed for each cow stolen. This reduced the incentive to raid since if caught, one would lose everything. But now that weapons are available, everything is different."*

Another interviewee added that, due to the nature and porousness of the Ethiopia-South Sudan border area, the civil war in South Sudan has influenced the area and increased access to and use of

more advanced weapon systems like the AK-47 and other automatic weapons. While civilian weapon ownership poses a security risk in Jonglei state, the process of forced disarmament has proven to be equally, if not more, likely to be fatal. Traders transport small arms from other South Sudanese states as well as its neighbours, most notably Ethiopia. These weapons and ammunition are typically purchased in cash.

According to an interviewee with knowledge of border security, *"resistance to disarmament in Pibor-South Sudan is now a source of weapons around the border areas. Even local governments, who have recently featured guns in their stories, are selling guns to youths."*

As a result, these weapons are making their way to Ethiopia's Anywaa and Nuer Native Districts in a variety of ways. Routes from Anywaa's Dimma Wareda go up to Puchalla, the border of Bouy-Lulwaro Kebelle (village). Arms smuggling is common in this area, and guerrilla clashes between Woreda militias and arms dealers are frequently reported. Respondents reiterated that the Ethiopian community had been disarmed for decades and that the current prevalence and spread of weapons along the border poses a threat to human security. A respondent from Anywaa native zones claimed that at the border in front of Puchalla-Bouy, anyone could easily cross the border inside to Lulwaro Kebelle (Dimma): *"Some smugglers of the Bouy sub-district residents had to negotiate with the arms smugglers for cash. However, before conditions become deteriorated, security forces captured the actors and controlled five(5) Kalashnikovs, an F1- Bomb and more than 148"000 South Sudan Pound in April 2018"*.

Another respondent from the Nuer Native districts mentioned Burebiey kebele and Tierguol as routes through which arms dealers cross into Ethiopia from South Sudan. He explained that "bothering routes are numerous because border control is difficult.*" Burebey in Wanthoa Wareda, Tierguol in Akobo, and Pagak in Lare Wareda are all entry points where arms dealers camp. These are significant risks. They are doing this as a result of a hypothesis in which arms were very endearing for self-defence, income generation, and raiding in pastoralist communities near the border."*

Cross-border abductions are now carried out with small arms, resulting in higher levels of injury and death than in the past. Furthermore, because South Sudan has been torn apart by various forms

of ethnic and political violence, the fear of renewed violence is a major reason for people feeling the need to arm themselves. The majority of those interviewed in Gambella described:

"It is a historical practice for the community along the border, but now a culture of raiding has flourished in this border, worsening the leaky border and widespread access to small arms and light weapons across the border. This has been the case between South Sudan's Pibor and/or Puchalla and the border Kebelles in both the woreda of Akobo Tiergoul and the Dimma area. Because the area lacks relevant infrastructure and patrolling services, locals and refugees in Dimma have collaborated with Surma and Murle in smuggling arms. There is also an arms smuggling route from the border to the central part of Ethiopia because they (smugglers) know how expensive small arms and light weapons are in Ethiopia (12 September 2022)."

According to an interviewee from the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) who is knowledgeable about border security, South Sudan-affiliated rebel elements may have access to own and supply internal arms smugglers via various routes along the border extending from Raad-BouyBandira-Gedu-Merkes-Dimma-Koy-Bebeqa of Benchi-Maji (SNNPRS). According to Kamwesiga (2016), guns obtained from Ethiopian "gun runners, nomads, poachers, and business merchants" on the East African coast are used to repel cross-ethnic raids. Arms were also primarily purchased from gun markets in "Maji," in southwestern Ethiopia, and ammunition served as local currency. As a consequence, uncontrolled SALW across the border has shaped the current trend of cross-border violence, as well as socio-political and human rights concerns in the Gambella region's bordering districts.

4.4.2.3. Penetrable Border

The border between Ethiopia and South Sudan is open and porous. Border porosity also makes it difficult to combat illegal trade or security threats because people routinely cross borders without the necessary legal documents or checks. Bordering towns such as Dimma, Akobo, and Wanthoa Woredas (districts) are widely accessible for market or economic activities by members of each border. A respondent from Akobo's Kankan Kebele (village) told the researcher:*"Border porosity, armed rebel faction groups, gangs, and illegal civil migrants, as well as climatic-related seasonal migrations, all contributed to an increase in the range of cross-border mistrust along the border."*

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Border clashes occasionally erupt between the South Sudan government-affiliated army and rebel armed factions, as well as gunmen raiders and local Ethiopian Woreda militias."

Both border authorities have faced difficulties in implementing border policies and controlling illegal migration and arms smuggling. Communities living in the study area are closely related, sharing a common language and culture, complicating the fact that one community member could easily decide to engage in inappropriate behaviour without fear of being identified. For example, the Ngalam (Tama) Murle clan can be found in Gambella, Dimma Woreda, and along the Gedu-kerken Kebelles, and they speak Murle (Manyok, 2016). According to interviewees, "the abductors do hide themselves inside the Ngalam (Tama) people of Ethiopia to abduct children from the Anywaa community;"

In that regard, the suspected abductors could easily exploit this advantage for cross-border raids into Dimma Woreda territory. Therefore, the violations involving those organized raiders for the Ethiopia-South Sudan border may lead to the establishment of terrorist groups along the border. Similarly, the above findings agree with D"Gomba (2017, p. 2), who argues that "The bandits had been terrorizing its neighbours around their territory, attacking and engaging in violence resulting to numerous deaths of innocent people among the certainty social group."

4.5. The role of government in cross-border raids

Cross-border violence, on the other hand, is widespread and often of great pains. Each time an attack has occurred, victims of the attack, particularly villagers, could openly questioned whether the killings were approved by the government. These concerns point to a political motivation for the attacks in the Gambella region. Both Ethiopian and South Sudanese authorities are pressured to act, as the incidents appear to have plunged the two countries into a complicated relationship. The South Sudanese government could publicly express regret at any time for the incursion of suspected Murle fighters into the Gambella region. According to South Sudan's ambassador to Ethiopia, James Morgan, who was consulted in this study the *"government is frequently feel saddened, and then followed by instructions to the concerned governors of these states to find of ceasing these activities"*. According South Sudan authority,their relations with its neighbor *"has no reason to stop"*(Dandessa, 2022). The statement frequently reiterated that the two countries would continue to work together to resolve the problem as usual.

For its part, the Gambella Regional Authority frequently announces incidents as well as the identity of gunmen who carry out attacks at various times. The regional government could use its means of communication to inform the population of the dangers posed by the presence of armed elements in the dense forests surrounding neighborhoods. In response to physical threats, special units of the State of Gambella and local militias have been repeatedly deployed to the area to locate the perpetrators and then rescue the communities. Coordination was established with federal security forces, and ambulances were sent to transport injured people to hospitals (Standard, 2022). Depending on the extent of the abuse, parents could pressure governments to ensure that abducted children are returned by whatever means available to the country's defense forces, even if it means crossing international borders.

4.5.1 Government Response: The Return of Abducted Children

There has been preliminary cooperation between South Sudan and Ethiopia for some time (Verjee, 2017). There has been cooperation in the areas of security, border control, management of inter-communal relations along the border, and trade agreements between the two states (Ibid., 2017). However, this cooperation has been consistently under-implemented by the signatories and violated by the prevalence of unfriendly border activities, such as child abductions. As cross-border crime became more common, a bilateral effort was launched to repatriate the abducted child. The agreement went into effect in June 2012 when the South Sudanese government extradited "fourteen (14) Gambella attackers" to Ethiopia (Tekle and Zehabesha, 2012).

The groups were linked to unidentified attackers who attacked a passenger bus in Gambella in April 2012, killing 19 people and injuring eight others. Other allegations related to a regional attack in which gunmen taunted a business group" (Ibid., 2012). Following the April 2016 raids, the Ethiopian government vowed to pursue the perpetrators into South Sudanese territory. To rescue the abducted children, an army brigade was prepared to pursue the attackers "wherever they may go" (BBC, 2016).

Despite the positive reactions in the region, news of the rescue efforts raises questions about whether and how the pursuers will be able to identify the actual perpetrators, rather than indiscriminately targeting the Murle tribe for retaliation. Operating in an unfamiliar environment, the Ethiopian military was thought to be susceptible to false leads and manipulation that would

draw it into local conflict dynamics and the resolution of disputes between national actors. Because the Murle area is already heavily affected by conflict and has poor roads and communication networks, working with civilians to identify the perpetrators of the Gambella raid becomes even more difficult. In previous conflicts with the South Sudanese Lou Nuer tribe in Jonglei and during the Yau Yau faction of the Murle's war with the South Sudanese army, Murle civilians fled urban areas for rural areas, the wilderness, and the swamps. Many people are still displaced as a result of the recent conflict in the region.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia has expressed a need to work with them. Even though the Ethiopian army is believed to have already advanced on South Sudanese territory, the South Sudanese government has expressed solidarity in this regard. A committee composed of members of the South Sudanese army, the Ministry of Defense, and the GPAA authority was formed to oversee the rescue operations (Standard, 2022).

In the meantime, a joint operation between the armies of the two countries became possible, which was characterized by great cordiality. This heartfelt operation was made possible by the participation of senior figures from both the Murle community and the GPAA region. From 2014 to 2016, the governor of the newly formed GPAA was David Yauyau, the son of a well-known Murle "Red Chief" in the Gumuruk region (Maze & Wel, 2020). From 2010 to 2013, he was the founding leader of a rebellion against the South Sudanese government. Although he was blamed for most of the human rights violations at the time, the Yauyau rebellion also led to the establishment of the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), which earned him recognition in his home region.

As governor of the GPAA, he worked to strengthen his position as a staunch supporter of the South Sudanese government under President Kiir. During his tenure, he is considered the only leader in Murle history to try (to) reconcile the Murle with the rest of the neighboring communities (Ibid., 2020). He has helped to collect "abducted Ethiopian children" from kidnappers and return these children to their birth parents." According to the sources, all these activities of the former rebel Yauyau were a gesture for peace and unity among the communities.

Meanwhile, in May 2016, South Sudan declared that it had managed to rescue some of the abducted children. Thanks to the efforts of the traditional Murle and their local authorities, they managed to rescue "more abducted children" from Ethiopia's Gambella region (Tekle, 2016). They were

reported to be gathered in different places in Pibor district waiting for their transfer. The children are immediately collected and then taken to Pochalla where they are handed over to Ethiopian authorities"(Standard, 2022). Pochalla is a district in GPAA whose inhabitants belong to the South Sudanese Anywaa tribe.

The report on the rescued children was met with positive reactions that recognized the efforts of the two governments to correct what were perceived as "savage" practices that violated the norms of fundamental rights. A report of "100 children rescued" sounds so encouraging. This is an indication that the abducted children are being recovered. The news of the successful operation was another devastating feeling for the parents left behind. Nyakek Gatbel, who lost a child during the raids, told the researcher in Gambella town how she received the news of the rescued children, *"For a month after I lost my son, I could not cope. I had experienced the raid like a night dream. A month later, when I learned that the children had been placed in a place for repatriation, I asked my brothers if they could take me to Murle Land so that I could identify my son myself. I was fortunate that my only son was able to return. He is now back in the village"* (September 20, 2022).

A child who returned from captivity told what he had to go through in the hands of his captors. He said that after crossing into South Sudan, they were locked up in huts for weeks by their captors. As an 11-year-old, he was kidnapped along with his brother and sister, but was the only one rescued, while his siblings remained in the Murle's captivity. According to him, the older boys his age were kept alone in huts, surrounded by heavily armed men, and given only milk to drink. *"I was so small that I looked at them like soldiers. They locked many of the boys in the grassy hut...they brought different kinds of milk to drink. We were separated from each other and sometimes fed separately. I did not realize it was a problem until I saw my mother"* (September 20, 2022).

Due to ongoing relations with the government of South Sudan, nearly thirteen (13) children were returned home in 2020 and another "five children" in April 2021 (Standard, 2022). Locals in Gog Wereda have expressed gratitude for the safe return of the children, despite their constant fear for their lives. In Gambella, the researcher met 13-year-old Diel Omut, one of the returned children, at a government-sponsored orphanage. He was asked to describe his experience as a member of a children's militia that forced him to carry a gun: *"This is a difficult place to start asking questions... Imagine being 9 or 10 years old – I am not sure – and being the catalyst for all these events. You (we) are there without your (our) mother and are being trained to be adults, or should I say, devices*

that are only there to fight. Not a school like the one I have here today. All we learn there is that life will be difficult. I remember walking for miles because there is no car that can move through the jungle like a child" (September 22, 2022).

When asked what duties he was assigned as a member of the children's militia, he responded as follows: *"Some children were chosen to go on raids to the villages, but I think I was lucky because I was able to be in the village where the magicians were because it was the center. But they made me feel like a big man. Whether you are in a raid or not, we do not really sleep in the camp because we are always on guard for an attack. I felt like I had a migraine for five years. It was just living knowing that soon you will die"* (September 25, 2022).

Many of the children who returned from abduction, both boys and girls, 13 and older, were recruited into militias by their captors. They were recruited and given various types of firearms. Indeed, because so many children were involved in such activities, some of them, like Diel Omut, are believed to be alive or to have died. The researcher asked him again about the type of weapons he had used and whether he could remember any childhood friends who had been involved in the practices. *"I only used one gun,"* he replied. *An AK47 that was bigger than me.There were a lot of us. A few survived, but most of the child laborers just disappeared, I still considered myself a soldier until a few months ago. It's extremely difficult to break away from that way of life. My instinct has always been violent, and I still get angry and want to grab my gun and solve my problems that way, but then you go to the battlefields and get shot, and that's it"*(September 22, 2022).

Interviewees described their experiences based on their assigned activities. Nyaluit Hoth, who was abducted in April 2016 and returned in 2021, told a researcher, *"We all had to cook for each other and sleep together, but we were workers, not friends. No one was happy in that place. We all came there because we traveled to an area we did not know about at first because we were told we could go get our parents, but in reality we were recruited by people wearing military uniforms and white sandals"* (September 25, 2022).

Chapter 5: Impacts And Implications Of The Murle Cross-Border Child Abduction

Introduction

Murderous forms of cross-border child abduction are an emotionally charged practice as well as a complex event that can ruin a child's future. This chapter is divided into two sections: impacts and implications. It addressed the consequences and human rights implications of Murle cross-border child abduction. It also describes how border communities and their children face a lack of protection and access to services. It emphasized the consequences of abuse, violence, a shattered economic environment, and diplomatic tensions between neighboring countries.

5.1. Impact of the Murle cross-border raids in the border districts of Gambella

Several of the children's rights listed in national, regional, and international child rights instruments are violated in the case of abduction, including the right to safety, torture, education, health, and survival. The abduction of children by armed groups crossing the border into South Sudan has a variety of social consequences, including civilian casualties among adults and children, livestock losses, and the displacement of villagers in affected areas in both the Anywaa and Nuer administrative regions. Disruption of schooling and economic activities from which children benefit, separation from family, and the effects of climate change all must be dealt with.

Fear is increasing, as are human rights violations. The strain also affects refugee communities in existing camps. All of these risks have weakened the ability of the government and existing institutions to address the problems. In addition, the emergence of transnational organized crime is possible. There is awareness of the impact of the operation by the armed South Sudanese Murle elements, which could jeopardize diplomatic relations.

5.1.1 Social impact of child abduction

The killing of people can be the most painful among the problems of a particular society or region, as well as other social problems such as poverty, displacement, and violence, including the pressing problem of homelessness. According to Jamrozik and Nocella (1998), "most social problems are the result of social inequality and its consequences." The social problems faced by the children and transborder communities of Gambella as a result of the Murle child abductions are, in essence, numerous. The killing and related conditions are two examples.

The death of children is sometimes unavoidable during an attack. According to the Gambella regional government, "a single dry season could result in the loss and displacement of hundreds of households each year." In single incidents, each village could lose at least "five children per month," while in a larger attack, "at least 80" children could be abducted. This was revealed in connection with the most brutal attack on 13 villages in April 2016. This resulted in over 200 deaths in a single day, and more than 100 children were abducted by cross-border child abductors (BBC & Aljazeera2016).

In addition to the killings and abductions, thousands of cattle were looted. Hundreds of livestock, agricultural products, and other items are often destroyed in the Nuer districts of Wanthoa, Nyinenyang, and Kankan, as well as in the dilemma of Anywaa areas of Udek, Lulwaro, and Dembella. Occasional raids in these areas cause damage to facilities that are difficult to repair in the short term. Theft of food prevents children from meeting their basic needs. In other words, even if hunger does not kill a child, severe acute malnutrition at a young age can cause long-term physical and mental damage.

5.1.2 Disruption of schooling for children.

Increasing violence against children threatens their right to education. Child survivors miss school because they spend so much time searching for a stable place to live. This effectively denies children education and safety. Not to mention the children held captive in the hands of kidnappers without return between 2014 and 2016. In addition, educational institutions in Dimma are reportedly empty due to displacement forced by abductions between 2017 and 2022. The scenarios have forced many schools to close indefinitely as increasing insecurity makes areas uninhabitable. Vulnerable children in cattle camps and those crammed into places of worship often fear being attacked and held hostage indefinitely, depending on when governments respond or whether their captors' demands are met.

Children walking on village roads or on their way to school are sometimes attacked and kidnapped to be sold. It is felt that such a situation is sad and no child should go through what the children in Gambella are going through now. The border areas are becoming places where children's education is a matter of life and death. The two countries seem to be failing their respective cross-border children in a terrible way. As displacement has increased, communities have been relocated to

makeshift settlements where there are no educational facilities for children. Instability discourages children of learning age. More than 2.9 million Ethiopian children are projected to be out of school in June 2022 as a result of the conflict (Standard & UNICEF, 2022). Drought, floods, and other natural disasters have further worsened learning conditions for children.

5.1.3 Displacement and separation from family and the impact of climate change

The instability created by child abduction in Ethiopia has triggered a social-cultural crisis. This crisis refers to incidents triggered by disasters that threaten the normal social order and cause a disruption of the social functioning mechanism. Customs, laws, social norms, religious beliefs and traditional values are directly or indirectly affected by the impact.

Respondents made various suggestions about social interactions that had a cultural and historical background before the cross-border child abduction between the Anywaa, Nuer, and Murle communities worsened. Family relationships between communities had developed prior to the exacerbation of child abduction. Respondents in Bandira village in Dimma district noted that "Anywaa and Murle had been married to each other since 1974, but this relationship deteriorated after cross-border child abduction increased." Similarly, there is also a Murle family member in Dimma, in Gedu village. However, the father, who is a Murle by tribe, was displaced and the children continue to live in a village, separated from their father. This situation also affected others and forced a divorce between those who were married to each other in the neighbouring communities. The fact that there is a forced separation also violated the rights that require contradictory separation of the family. The actions demoralised the children and denied them the pleasure of social interactions.

Violence and conflict are the main reasons for cross-border communities to flee. Families risk everything and take long and dangerous journeys in hopes of finding safety and stability. This has had multiple impacts on child development and social interactions in the study area. Security force officials in Akobo-Tierguol wareda (districts) stated that "fear of cross-border attacks has driven many civilians out of Kankan. The same fears were reported from Udek village in Dimma district, where there are fears of a cross-border attack by armed Murle. Most of the civilians who fled are 60% children, which is very worrying indeed."

The villages of Kankan and Udek are located just a few kilometres from the international border with South Sudan but have inadequate infrastructure and social services. By far the most affected group are the children, who are often separated from their parents and lack access to education and health care. In this way, the situation could be even more difficult for the children, as they are forced to become victims of early marriage and child labour. As internally displaced persons, these children are concentrated in some of the most dangerous distressed areas of their country, with conflict and war largely contributing to hunger. When the regional administration did little to protect vulnerable societies, the situation worsened. Combined with the effects of the global pandemic, ongoing conflict, and climate change, food insecurity for families and children continues to grow.

Climate change: weather conditions in Ethiopia and along the border with South Sudan are becoming more extreme, directly impacting children who are distressed and vulnerable. Because the region relies on rain-fed agriculture, parents struggle to feed their children when the rains fail. At the other end of the scale, floods destroy crops and communities and become a breeding ground for disease. Severe droughts and floods are increasingly driving rural families to new villages, towns, and shelters, which can lead to tensions and conflicts with host communities. This suggests that weather conditions are affecting the future of the most vulnerable children. With millions of families relying on agriculture to feed their families and earn an income, no income means no money for school fees, health, rent, or stability.

Child Labour and Human Trafficking: The number of children experiencing physical, emotional, and sexual violence in their unsafe homes will continue to rise. As living in hardship takes a toll on family income, Gambella children fleeing areas, where they have been abducted, are forced to beg on the streets or work instead of going to school just to help their families make ends meet.

5.1.4 The psychological impact on victims of abduction

Abductions can lead to social tension, psychological damage, insecurity, child abuse, neglect, loss of employment or housing, and economic instability in the community. Children are often victims of "physical violence" that can affect their decency, and physical and mental well-being (Hilgeman, 2001). Child abduction is one of the worst forms of violence. It can be harmful to both the victim and the victim's family. According to Alexander and Klein (2009), this practice causes cognitive,

emotional, and behavioural disturbances. Victims often experience fear, shock, and anxiety. Sometimes they also lose hope in life.

In some cases, kidnappers or abductors force their hostages to live in filthy conditions for an extended period of time. Long-term captivity can cause negative emotional states in a child's psyche. According to Gambella orphanage officials, *"after 25 children were released to their families, 13 of them returned to the centre for follow-up treatment."* All of the children suffered from depression, and some even more severe symptoms, such as bad dreams, pessimism, and shame. Reportedly, the rescued children may have additional problems related to social networks, such as loss of interest in friendships, studies and social activities, and stubbornness. Gambella Orphanage Center officials stated, *"Most of the children stay here for almost a month without attending classes, but we do not force them, but stay around them, talk to anyone who is interesting, and assign them friends they like. They do, however, return to class occasionally.*"

One former abductee described the impact he felt growing up in the care of his adoptive family and trying to make friends or socialize in his new community. In an interview for this study, he described how Murle female friends befriended him, but he was sometimes embarrassed by other young Murle men who learned of his background as an adoptee. *"Peers could say negative things about me not being original in Murle society, which discouraged me several times, even though I always reported this to my adjusting mother. This disappointment persisted for a long time until I changed my way of life. Fortunately, I discovered that one of the local girls I used to befriend was originally from Nuer and had been abducted years before me. From here, we were in love until we both had a child, but my adopted mother refused to pay a dowry for this girl's family, thinking I might run away anytime."*

Furthermore, returned children from abduction have a variety of physical disorders that developed during their captivity. victims could experience the inability to receive basic health care during their detention, such as a nutritious diet, comfortable sleep, fresh air, and exercise. Besides that, some victims may grow resilient. Often, rescued children struggle to integrate into society. If a rescued child does not receive appropriate care following the abduction or kidnapping incident, he or she may have conflicts with family and relatives.

In another phase, child abduction can have a significant impact on the victim's family. The "left-behind family" members go through shock and disbelief, unsure when they will see their child again. As life becomes more difficult, some parents reportedly could resort to various coping mechanisms. Some people turn to religion for comfort, while others feel abandoned and blame God for their child's disappearance (Hilgeman, 2001). This was acknowledged when a respondent who had a child rescued in Gambella explained how his family had been copied with losing their two children; "*I cannot remember that date of abduction, it was like 2016. I was totally mad, talking alone. I cannot sleep or eat. I do not feel hunger even. I was only knowing that I am alive and my children were taken. In my family, my wife who was around 47 years old, was lying down sick. At a time, we were advised by church priests to be strong. Then we turned to religious (21 September 2022)*".

According to Gambella Women and Children Affairs officials, "more than 400 children go missing each year. Furthermore, the source claims that the law enforcement department could rescue 40% of abducted children"n in neighbouring districts. These procedures, however, may take a long time. *" Dak Deng, for example, was abducted when he was eleven years old in 2014. After seven years of her abduction report, he was found and reunited with his biological parents in 2021. Nyandiit Par, on the other hand, was kidnapped in 2017 and discovered nine months later. So, there are high levels of stress in these situations.*"

Studies stated that abduction frequently has "physical and emotional consequences" for victims' families and relatives (Alexander & Klein, 2009). the disappearance of loved ones can result in physical or emotional problems. The victim's parents may exhibit aggressive or combative behaviour to alleviate the pain of loss. Also, guardians may have hoped for a long time to reclaim their child. Officials from the Gambella Orphanage Center confirmed this: *"Until they heard the tragic news, Dak Deng's parents had cherished hope of finding their child." Reuniting them with their families is a major concern; some children could not recognize their parents, and some parents could not recognize their children. But, we have traditionally assisted them, alongside their relatives. Recently,we trained families on how to facilitate effective recovery and reunification process."* It is believed that abduction can cause long-term stress and depression in a family, affecting generations.

5.1.5. Rise of Fear and human rights abuses

As experience could recall, from several raids where children get locked alone inside a hut surrounded by heavily armed men and gave them only milk during their captivity, the amount of fear is so much incomprehensible. Cross-border children who settle at the emergency villages or flee could face violence and abuse. At very risky locations roamed by armed elements, sexual violence, abuse and exploitation are worrying: *"accounts of sexual violence, looting, killings, torture and persecution by self-mended checkpoints personals are the daily experience but sometimes unreported",* as explained by one of the Aids workers in Gambella children agency.

Respondents reveal the shocking range of abuses along the fleeing villages or routes to and through the Gambella-South Sudan border. Researcher spoke to at least a number of abductees at the Gambella Orphanage centre, who had experienced displacement before they were abducted from Wanthoa districts, and who were abused by armed abductors; *"It was lots. from being abducted, and sexually abused, to being beaten, exploited or shot at by them. They beat us, even minute after minute. They could ask if we want to be released to our family now, or taken for years without seeing our families".*

Children have described in agonizing detail the thing they were forced to endure in villages, which indicates that, their experiences paint a terrifying picture of the conditions many of those children so desperate to escape. One of the consequences of the unhealthful effect of fear is the tendency to rationalize. People gripped by fear always find a lot of reasons for not doing anything contrary to what they are threatened to do by the abductors in the power position.

A 38-year-old Anywaa woman said she and her older daughter were once captured in the bush in June 2018, as they attempted to flee from their village to Dimma town after their community were raided at night. Armed men with tattoos similar to Murle youths took them and other civilians captive and proceeded to kill some of them; *"They ordered us to sit down and said they were going to slice us like a watermelon, they had tied hands behind their backs and placed her daughter next to her. One of the fighters "put his leg on her head trying to cut her neck with a knife,"* she said. She and her daughter were released when pro-Ethiopian armed youths arrived and started shooting at the men holding them. There is an understood observation that the people in the study area feel threatened by kinds of abrupt operation in their villages and farming areas.

As a result, the Gambella regional authorities recruited and deployed militias distributed to different border points to deter child abduction along the border areas in 2016. The Militias are sometimes assigned to guard women at firewood gatherings and during long-distance travel of the people between villages.

Similarly, civil servants and authorities on the field trip added that, *"investors in agricultural production and public developmental activities such as the Ethiopia Road Authority (ERA) workers in the districts at risk of attacks,* and are been patrolled by security forces because of the fear of cross-border raids and attacks. One of the interviewed victims of the Murle raiders explained: *"I was driving speedily to the camp of the Ethiopian Road Authority (ERA) from Matar to a village near Kankan, 20 kilometres away from Ethiopia-South Sudan. Suddenly, in the mid of the road two young men blocked the way near the bridge in constructing the project. I suspect before when I came without patrol, guard of Federal Police because the area is insecure always. Then, they ordered me something to give them and their language was unclear to me, it may be Arabic, but I understood them by their sign language, and they needed to drop my clothes. Then they looted all my clothes, biscuits, and Samsung mobile (18 October 2022)"*.

Mutual understanding of border communities on patrol coordination, border control, and other systems of political cooperation are non-functional along the border. According to a key source from the Dimma district administration, who described how his administration attempted to address security concerns said, *"In 2017, more than five regular meetings were held among concerned Dimma, Boma, and Puchalla politicians in the border areas of Raad and Bouy-Lulwaro." Though Dimma Woreda's administration has expressed concern about cross-border raids as the primary source of insecurity in the area, the joint security committee has done little to combat the crime. They have so far requested assistance from the federal authority to help put an end to cross-border child abduction activities."* The worst impact of cross-border raids is the development of a cycle of violence and the trend of child abduction in the communities involved.

5.1.6. Disruption of Economic Activities benefiting children

According to research, small adjustments and small matters of habit that occur on a regular basis help promote children's development in the long run (Morgan, 2019). This could be, for example, the economic disparities between families, ethnic groups, communities, societies, as well as nations.

In such countries, ethnic competition between different ethnic groups over who controls or possesses a common resource usually has an impact on people's perceptions. In a nutshell, a country where vulnerable members of society are forcibly looted by people from a specific powerful ethnic group is likely to experience ethnic dissatisfaction, or a sense of ethnic dehumanization.

However, frequent cross-border child abductions by armed elements disrupted major economic activities along the border, particularly trade and agriculture. Over the years, the border region has remained impoverished and underdeveloped. The Akobo River, which was once attractive for modern agricultural irrigation throughout the year, has stopped to be productive. Fears of cross-border raids prevent communities from engaging in any agricultural activities along the River. Economic networks and profits which used to be made in the booming transit trade of cattle, fish, charcoal, and agricultural products have been directly limited.

There is evidence that traditional income coping mechanisms have been hampered in all aspects. Village women in Gambella communities sell firewood for a living. However, as the burdens of agricultural production and income-generating local materials/tools have decreased, the prevalence of vulnerability has placed a strain on children's lives. Food insecurity and a lack of basic necessities have had an impact. Banditry, violence, and the operation of armed abductors frequently impede efficient trade. According to respondents contacted during this research, "the border communities, Murle and Puchalla Anywaa, have limited access to cattle markets in Dimma Woreda due to uncertainty and risks to cross-border raiders in market destinations such as Dimma town and other Kebelles.*" As a result, if they sell cattle, it is most likely through border middlemen. It also significantly distorts markets and lowers incomes for the districts' poorest populations, particularly those involved in cattle trade and agriculture in border Kebelle (villages)."*

The flow of cattle to markets from Nuer areas to major marketplaces in other regions, experiences disruptions. Traders who used to take livestock to market have reverted to staying close to their families in order to protect children from any attacks. This has also had an impact on meat availability in Gambella, as well as in the nearby Oromo region and other places. Similarly, community members in Dimma who rely on crop farming for a living, with few relying on animal husbandry, fishing, or forestry, report low harvest yields. Most of the societies in the Woreda (districts) that used to purchase market consumption and productions from neighbouring regions have come to a halt due to road blockage caused by insecurity.

5.1.7. Revenge Attack on South Sudanese Refugees Camp

A key source from the Gambella refugee camps that host south Sudanese, remarked that the host communities had aimed to conduct attacks on the South Sudanese refugee community in the Gambella refugee camps. This intention of seeking vengeance is experienced at a time there is increased aggressive killing of the members of the family if cross-border raiding is reported. The revenge often targeted the members of the Murle tribe steeled in Dimma's Okugo refugee camp, as well as other south Sudanese ethnic groups in Itang refugee camps. These ethnic groups settled in Ethiopia's land because they fled the civil war that erupted in their country in 2013.

The south Sudanese refugees in their respective Camp has faced multiple threats and direct attack due to the cross-border raiding by their country's members or tribe on the Ethiopian bordering community at the border villages. Although grievances between the communities were widespread, there was significant frustration among the civilians due to the grave consequences of revenge attacks.

According to respondents from the Okugo refugee camp, "nine Murle migrants including children and women have been killed by Anywaa gunmen in response to the attack in Udek and violent cross-border raids in different areas of Dimma Woreda on 25 December 2017". Also in Pugnido, Tierkidi and Kule camps, three women, one child and over five young men were murdered in separate incidents because of cross-border related aggression. The fear for revenge against nationalities and ethnic identities is reportedly fearful along the roads, including public transportation routes, where some identities are dragged out from vehicles for revenge.

According to Ethiopian's ARRA officials who acknowledged that situation, noticed that the physical abuses in the areas around camp settlements have been experienced by refugees deteriorated. Therefore, prompted the deployments of the Federal Police and the Ethiopian National Defense to patrol the refugee camp and surrounding regularly. A refugee Respondent explained that *"it is difficult to go to the Refugees Camp on foot if such incident is reported while outside the camp or in town markets. For the refugee children who share education facilities with children from hosts, bullying and stoning are also reported"*. The way in which the cross-border abduction shaped ordinary as well as political understanding on the border could also affect the responsibility endowed in border Leadership.

Mistrust and confusion among the locals due to the irregularities incidents by ethnic elements could cause the role of credible institutions to be misunderstood. Due to different internal political disputes in each country, the movement and violations caused by child abductors on the border could build political sentiments between the two countries, as well as communities. This is true with many examples. For instance, in June 2017, Ethiopian National Defense Force commanders detained South Sudan military personnel inside the Ethiopian army encampment around 15 kilometres from Dimma town. The detention was perceived as negatively as news reached the nearby Murle refugees in Okugo. The spread of news creates some misunderstandings and later leads to killings, between refugees and Ethiopian host communities. The incidents, as ARRA intervenes and investigates, found the local politicians involved by inciting the issues related to cross-border cattle raiding. Termed the "Okugo massacre", is revenge resulting because of an auspiciousness-related incident brought about by oral miscommunications among the regional administrations, border guards and Federal security commanders.

5.1.8. Disintegration of Government and Traditional Institutions

The increased availability of firearms in civilian hands has undermined the traditional roles of law enforcement agencies as well as legal rules. Traditional norms that used to protect people have been weakened to the point where they can no longer be respected during civil disputes managements. This is commonly seen in the Anywaa, Nuer, Dinka, and Murle pastoralists, whose neighbourhood was characterized by their traditional lifestyles, are been involved in cyclical sub-national conflicts. The majority of these ethnic members have a hand in the proliferation of guns, the commercialization of cattle, and rising bride prices, all of which have shaped their motivations on a daily basis. Customary mechanisms for addressing norms about the importance of children became less effective as governance systems changed and respect for traditional leadership declined (McCallum and Okech, 2013).

Even as the long-term peace process in South Sudan progresses, additional measures to reduce border contention can be implemented. These measures should concentrate on reducing controversy, improving peace and stability, and providing long-term development in border regions. Reforms and support from South Sudan's and Ethiopia's national governments, as well as international partners, will be required (Tasew, 2017).

The Anywaa and Murle communities have their own traditional (experience, skill and indigenous knowledge) and institutional mechanisms to settle social problems. However, these customary refinements are not prioritized to settle cross-border raids. As my informant in Gambella said, "in the past; local chiefs, elders and spiritual leaders were an integral part of local governance among the communities, but now, the frequent and violent cross-border raids have affected the traditional mechanism for dialogue." For instance, the local legal team which is established in Dimma Woreda(district) has no inclusive mechanisms to control cross-border raids and criminalizes." Meanwhile, Gatluak (2014) asserts that the "Murle-alaan ci meeri (red chief), the Anywaa-Nyie (king) and the Nuer-Kuer Muon (Land Master)" are the main traditional mechanisms to solve disputes among the Ethiopia-South Sudan border communities. However, the traditional knowledge in regard to minimizing cross-border communal violence which has seen the exchange of raids children like commodities has become fewer functions.

5.2 The implications of the Murle cross-border child abduction on Ethiopia-South Sudan relations

5.2.1 Diplomatic tensions

Amidst the history of proxy wars and mutual support of armed opposition groups and hydropolitics in the East African region, the presence of ethnic armed forces on the borders between Ethiopia and South Sudan is not easily perceived. Cross-border hostility over child abductions in both countries may also complicate political misunderstandings. The Republic of South Sudan faces a devastating security problem related to "war, unresolved border issues, nomadic and civil movements, and weapons conflicts. Poor infrastructure, misuse of natural resources((Obasanjo, 2015)",and inter-community conflicts in the Greater Upper Nile region are "integral to the security breakdown. Depending on the local and national power structure",ethnic armed conflicts have occasionally erupted, resulting in the deaths of many people and the displacement of even more (Dagne, 2011; Knopf, 2016).

Ethiopia recognized the risks of full-scale regional war and was concerned about destabilization as South Sudanese refugees flocked to the historically volatile Gambella region in western Ethiopia. In its capacity as chair of the Northeast African regional organization; the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Ethiopia made a quick attempt to resolve the conflict in South Sudan in late 2013 and early 2014.

Ethiopia is believed to have invested considerable political and diplomatic capital in attempting to rally the region to a common course of action and convened peace talks within weeks, supporting Dehez's (2008)assertion that Ethiopia can act "as a regional hegemon"

As a regional influence, Ethiopia provided officers and men for both IGAD monitoring and UN peacekeeping forces in South Sudan (Verjee, 2017). Ethiopia used its position to pressure South Sudan's political elites, particularly President Salva Kiir and the leader of the main armed opposition, Riek Machar, to meet, negotiate, and reluctantly agree to several agreements to end the conflict and introduce political reforms (Verjee, 2017). The most important of these agreements were signed in August 2015 and collapsed about a year later amid renewed fighting.

The mass cross-border village raids in which hundreds of children were abducted by armed men from South Sudan's Murle ethnic group in April 2016 have left Ethiopia feeling sad. It was not clear whether Ethiopian rebels were among the kidnappers. After the failure of the peace agreement with South Sudan in July 2016, there was no similar intervention from Addis Ababa as there was during the mediation in 2014 and 2015. Since then, Addis Ababa has struggled to formulate a clear political and diplomatic strategy, apart from the so-far unsuccessful attempt to revive the peace process. Ethiopia's rather hesitant engagement can be explained in part by its inability to prioritise and balance its diverse interests.

The Juba government has exacerbated Addis Ababa's insecurities over two of Ethiopia's most important national interests: the use of Nile waters and South Sudan's related attempts to cultivate positive relations with Ethiopia's archrival Egypt, and South Sudan's cultivation of relations with Ethiopia's other longtime adversary, Eritrea (Endeshaw, 2020). Ethiopia is understandably concerned about both developments. However, for its foreign policy to be coherent and maximize its whole-of-government interests, Addis Ababa must balance the importance of these dimensions against its other bilateral and regional interests with South Sudan.

Water policy remains high on Ethiopia's agenda. The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Blue Nile is the country's hydroelectric power plant, which Ethiopia is investing billions of dollars to build and is expected to become a renewable energy hub for the region. Once the dam is completed, Ethiopia plans to export large amounts of clean and cheap hydroelectric power to its neighbouring countries, other African countries, and even the Middle East and beyond in the near

future. The ambitious plan is part of the Horn of Africa country's efforts to become a middle-income country by 2025. Construction of the power plant is seen by Ethiopians as a critical contribution to transforming the country's economy and alleviating poverty (Endeshaw, 2020)

However, the Ethiopian dam project is perceived as a threat by downstream countries on the Nile, such as South Sudan, Egypt, and Sudan. For Egypt, it is a national threat. The Nile is the lifeline for "about 80% of Egyptians, and the North African desert nation fears that Ethiopia's huge dam project will ultimately diminish its historic water rights."

In 2013, Ethiopia and Egypt were embroiled in a bitter war after Egyptian politicians suggested on-camera acts of sabotage, including an airstrike, to stop the project (Al-Tawy, 2014; Mersie, 2020). However, tensions eased after Cairo and Addis Ababa, along with Sudan, held a series of positive talks that led to a cooperation agreement in Khartoum in March 2015. Ethiopia insists that the dam will not harm the interests of Sudan and Egypt, but rather will bring economic benefits.

Moreover, the South Sudanese position on the Nile water dispute has not been clear in recent years. It was not until 2017 that a report surfaced that South Sudan had forged a new agreement with Egypt, which was later deemed a betrayal of neighbouring Ethiopia. According to the source, an official from South Sudan's Ministry of Irrigation, identified as "Peter Garang Malual, said that the crisis between the countries sharing the Nile waters was caused by Ethiopia. He accused Ethiopia of building its massive dam on the Nile without Egypt's permission" (SudanTribune & Tekle, 2017).

This sentiment comes amid a regional power struggle over Nile water. A representative of the South Sudan Water Authority representing his government told the media, "To be honest, the blame clearly lies with the Ethiopians. They rushed the construction of the dam without consultation or approval from Egypt, which is unacceptable in international delicacy." The statement was followed by information about the South Sudanese president's visit to Cairo, where he reportedly signed a "dirty deal" aimed at preventing Ethiopia from building the Renaissance Dam on the Nile. Unconfirmed reports indicate that South Sudanese President Salva Kiir agreed to allow Ethiopian opposition groups to operate in South Sudan (SudanTribune & Tekle, 2017).

The move of diplomats out of South Sudan was not a good feeling for the Ethiopian government, which has endured some cross-border human rights and humanitarian strains for years in the name of socio-cultural commonalities among bordering communities. The Ethiopian government had

previously warned unnamed Egyptian organizations to support the outlawed Ethiopian rebels to bring instability and regime change in the Horn of Africa country

Several attempts have been made to maintain peace between the two countries, taking into account the facts in history. The relationship between Ethiopia and South Sudan is based on mutual interest, embedded in a history of friendship. John Gai (2022) explains the existing socio-cultural similarities between the two countries. It is expressed that both countries have common problems in the region that they cannot compromise on. Despite the challenges, efforts have focused on declarations that "it is difficult to separate people based on blood, and that relations are not just about equating diplomatic niceties (John Gai, 2022)." Despite the diplomatic easing of tensions, the border violence caused by cross-border cattle rustling and child abductions has given criminals the opportunity for cross-border organized attacks and the smuggling and trafficking of illegal small arms and light weapons. If cross-border Murle child abductions are not fully controlled and eradicated by both countries, war could break out between the two countries at any time, which would not be a surprise.

5.2.2. The emergence of transnational organized crime

Various forms of human trafficking are among the prevalent forms of human exploitation that are "widespread in Ethiopia, as the country is recognized as a country of origin as well as a transit country and a destination market for human trafficking" (ENACT, 2021). The country is relatively aware of the risk of labour exploitation, given its long history of trafficking issues related to labour migration and employment services. Ethiopia is believed to be a "source and transit country for irregular migration"to other countries in Southern Africa, the Middle East, and Europe(Ibid., 2021).

Meanwhile, human trafficking occurs within the country, from rural to urban areas and across borders into and/or out of all neighbouring countries, with "smuggling networks often facilitating" the flow of movements (Neil Walker, 2021). Overland human smuggling from Ethiopia mostly utilizes porous border routes. Since the border crossings between Ethiopia and South Sudan are always easy to cross, Akobo, Dimma, Burebeiy, and Pagak are the entry points. In addition, refugee camps in Ethiopia are suspected of being recruitment areas for organized smuggling networks. Continued cross-border child abduction along this route could be a hotbed of transnational organized crime.

Reportedly, most migrants arriving in Libya and Niger to reach Europe, particularly from Ethiopia and Eritrea, came through South Sudan. In this context, when cross-border conflicts flare up again, there is a risk that children will be sold and trafficked far away. At some point, as Ethiopia no longer automatically tracks people entering its territory, reliance on smuggling networks attempting to enter or transit through Ethiopia may have increased (ENACT, 2021).

In terms of trade, Ethiopia is both a source and transit route for arms trafficking, with weapons flowing freely in and out of Ethiopia across the country's long and porous borders. Despite an improvement in relations in recent years, the ongoing border dispute with Eritrea, and the stability of Somalia, the Ethiopian state is regularly accused of supplying arms to friendly regional and proxy forces (NeilWalker, 2021). In addition, the "armed conflict in South Sudan and the Tigray region" of Ethiopia has led to an escalation in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the country(ENACT, 2021). Apart from these indicators, there has been a spillover of weapons to other parts of the country, where armed elements, including groups that abduct children, are present, especially along the border between Gambella and South Sudan.

Chapter 6: Finding, Recommendations, And Conclusion

Introduction

Presented here are the study's findings, recommendations, and conclusions. Part two of this chapter includes an analysis of the implications of child abductions and proposed solutions, as well as a conclusion in the final section.

6.1. Major Findings of the Study

6.1.1. Determine the frequency of child abductions

Child abductions are one of the most dangerous threats to communities in Ethiopia's Gambella region, as well as in South Sudan's GPAA, Upper Nile, and Jonglei states. Despite the difficulty of studying Murle child abductions in the past and today, the results of the study suggest that traditional perceptions of bride prices, the nature of the border nearby, and the low means of living have made them prime suspects and perpetrators of child abductions. It was also noted that children from one of the neighbouring Murle ethnic groups, including "Dinka Bor, Nuer and Anywaa living in the surrounding districts, were victims of this abuse" (De Tuombuk, 2022). In recent years, such abuse has shifted to Ethiopia, where it occurs primarily during cattle rustling activity or separately from missions initiated by elements of the armed abductors. When these gunmen are unable to locate cattle, they have abducted children in some cases.

The psychological effect of this threat on the local population is significant. It has fostered distrust and hostility toward the people, fueling violent crimes and human rights violations. It is time to work diligently toward the abolition of such practices in order to end the flight and death tolls and to prevent endangering the lives of children. This will ensure that communities coexist peacefully.

6.1.2. The Causes and Nature of Murle Cross-Border Child Abductions

From the studies, poverty, illiteracy, an increase in cultural dowry, border permeability, a humanitarian crisis, ineffective legislation, and a weak government structure were among the causes cited in the studies. These causes were exacerbated by the availability of small arms and light weapons in border communities. Lawlessness and civil wars in South Sudan are another implication factor in the increased cross-border incursions following South Sudan's independence in 2011.

Poverty is a major reason for a child being taken between bordering communities. Because of poverty, armed men from impoverished communities have few options for generating income other than hunting for other people's children to sell. Furthermore, poverty has forced children to work on the streets hawking or doing other menial jobs to earn a meagre living. Besides, the desire for wealth is responsible for the majority of child disappearances. Some migration agencies believe the annual profits from smuggling and abductions are well worth the price. This profit could be even higher by now, which explains why more abductors want to get into the child-hunting business because they see it as a quick way to make money. This is a fact that makes these children easy prey for child abductors. Besides this, poverty is the end result of unemployment, and the high rate of unemployment has forced people to turn to the illegal business of child smuggling for a living.

The second reason for child abuse is widespread illiteracy. Cross-border communities exist on the outskirts of their respective countries. Because they are so far from government centres, they are overlooked and remain unschooled in comparison to those who live in cities and towns. It is to be estimated that, children make up the majority of those living on the periphery of their countries. Staying without education services has could bear unfavourable thoughts. Children with this level of ignorance are enticed into inhumane traps such as prostitution, forced labour, forced marriage, domestic work, and so on.

The third reason is the humanitarian crisis. A humanitarian crisis is an event or series of events that endangers the health and safety of a community. This includes both man-made and natural disasters that have forced people to flee their homes. Children who lose guardians are frequently rendered homeless, parentless, or lost during this humanitarian crisis, providing an opportunity for abductors to lure, exploit, and transport these children. Without the knowledge of governments or communities, these children would perish. Children who lose guardians are frequently rendered homeless, parentless, or lost during this humanitarian crisis, providing an opportunity for abductors to lure, exploit, and transport these children. Without the knowledge of governments or communities, these children would perish.

The emergency situation is exacerbated if there is ineffective legislation governing current affairs. The lack of effective legislation against child abductions, offenders, and prevention measures is a major reason why children have been abused.

6.1.3. The major Implications of Cross-Border Raids on Ethiopia South Sudan

Children have suffered greatly as a result of the villagers' displacement. Ancestral villages have been abandoned. Farms and livelihoods have all but vanished. This has influenced the stresses within families as well as the methods for meeting the needs of children. The violent clashes that occur during cross-border raids demonstrate that the vast majority of raiders are armed and well-equipped to carry out their operations. There are attackers and victims in any cross-border violent raid. When an attack occurs, members of the attacked community frequently respond by planning and carrying out a similar or even worse attack. During the attack preparations, supplies and flow of small arms and light weapons (SALM) to be used in cross-border raids were seen.

As a result of ineffective government protection and the attempted disarmament and gun culture, criminal and militia gangs, as well as rebel armed group factions, now frequently attack civilians and children. This resulted in a much higher rate of crisis than had previously occurred. Crisis of transnational boundaries, which include sectoral, technical, legal, and organizational boundaries as well as cross-jurisdictional crises. Transboundary crises are thus phenomena in this border that call into question the form of organization at the level of government. They defy classification and managing them necessitates collaboration.

6.2. Recommendations and proposed solutions to child abductions

There needs to be a concerted strategy on how to end the practice of child abductions and this would entail thorough analysis, as detailed in this study. Cooperation between the regional governments of Gambella in Ethiopia and those of Jonglei and Upper Nile in South Sudan, as well as the support from respective central governments, could play a significant role along with respect for human rights. It's a reality that a credible fight against child abductions through the respect of rights, would greatly improve both security and human rights situations in the affected states. The question of how to approach this challenge would require collective energy from child rights agencies – especially in Ethiopia and South Sudan. Therefore, mitigation or eradication of cross-border child abuse by the Murle people should proceed as recommended here.

6.2.1. Creating awareness and human rights education

The Government and relevant agencies in both Ethiopia and South Sudan should commission an awareness entity that should enlighten citizens on the issue of Murle child abduction practices.

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Children should be informed about the causes, the techniques used to lure them into abuse, the dangers of this activity, and the punishment of offenders. In addition to raising awareness, government authorities should take measures such as introducing laws prohibiting movement at borders, security at all entry and exit points, monitoring entry and exit, and other relevant measures necessary to curb the growing number of confusions.

Initiating a cross-border awareness initiative against child swindlers should enhance Community involvement and relevant resilient initiatives. The less costly strategy is the involvement of community leaders in both states. Community involvement is crucial to gathering information to find perpetrators and deter them from committing crimes. Community leaders such as chiefs and local elders need to be motivated to understand the benefits and gains resulting from the elimination of child abduction practices. They are the front-line source of information and can provide information on the whereabouts and dangers of perpetrators. For example, community elders need to understand that by allowing child abductors and abducted children to remain in the community, there's a potential for wider reprisals against the community. The gains of too few child abductors cannot be allowed to put the welfare of the communities at risk.

However, forming a specialized task force to deal with child abduction will drive this awareness initiative to success. the main purpose of the task force will be to help protect the rights of children. Members of this commission could include ethnic groups along the border, the government, and civil society organizations both indigenous and international. This task force would coordinate its activities with central government law enforcement agencies and national human rights institutions. It must receive special training on how to investigate gunmen suspected of having engaged in child abductions. It must gather the information that is then analyzed and checked against the records of the affected child.

6.2.2. Enforcement of Laws on bridewealth acquisitions, Forced marriage, and criminalizing child abduction

Legislation relating to child abduction along the Gambella border with South Sudan should be strictly enforced, separate from federal or central authorities, with a focus on specifically dealing with cross-border child abduction practices. Where these Laws are strictly enforced, offenders prosecuted, and heavily sanctioned, the rate of cross-border child abductions will reduce. It is

important that traditional chiefs of every sub-national participate in the enforcement of such policies.

Since ethnic chiefs are well-versed in knowing everyone in their village, introducing asset registrations should be a must. For example, how many cattle one has so that if there were an abrupt increase in cattle in his Kraal, the chief would be notified. Whenever youths are suspected to be involved in kidnappings, the tribal chief should monitor his villages. In villages, and if someone is absent from the village for a period of time, the chief will find out. whenever the disappeared youth returns with anything that raises suspicions such as a new cattle herd or an abducted child, his village chief reports him to the district authority, who will involve the police if necessary. Putting the rules of law in place and addressing cross-border violence legally will reduce the nature of cross-border suspicion.

On the other hand, enforcement of Laws on bridewealth acquisitions, forced marriage, and criminalizing child abduction would minimize the expensive social urge such as slavery lifestyle-like, and dowry pressure among pastoralists. Pastoralist marriages involving dowry payments are among the major drivers of cross-border violence. In most African societies, bride prices served as a means of validating customary marriages. It strengthened new family bonds created by marriage and legitimized children born into marriages. South Sudanese as well as Ethiopian Gambella ethnic groups such as Anywaa and Nuer have undergone major changes to their cultural practices over the past years. Across-border society is being hurt by changes brought on by greed for cows and children in the name of tradition.

In the old days, payment was a family affair things of those wanting a new member at their home, where the dowry rate was below 30 cows, paid by the groom and his family. This Bride price was not gained through violence and the deprivation of rights. But the afford established by chiefs and existing customs respectively. But times have changed and traditions have as well. changed from peaceful, dignified to violent, dowries nowadays looted materials.

Bride price acquisitions have become a more individual warrior practice. Typically, the groom pays for his marriage expenses, though some marriage-age young people, particularly in Murle, may abduct children that are later sold for cows. Numbers of cows for dowries vary, depending on the braveness of men. Although bride price lists may vary among families and ethnic groups in South

Sudan ethnic groups, today most lists include items such as bottles of schnapps, cows, ornaments, bread, clothes, and cash. Among them, a special bull directly brought from rustling and hand over to the father inlaws. In this style, if a man is not fulfilled by his inlaws, he is considered a coward.

Additionally, there are more modern items on the list of demands, which increases the pressure to find a solution to meet those needs. Some families demand firearms as the bride price a groom pays depends on several factors, including the groom's wealth and status, the bride's number of raids, and the bride's abducted children. Therefore, with the help of their respective governments, cross-border communities should consider either reducing the price or ceasing it together, as it seems to be a harmful practice.

6.2.3. Provision of Employment Opportunities

There is a need to initiate cross-border livelihood and climate change risk mitigation projects for the local community. This is an important solution to the issue of Child abductions because the dimensional change in perspective of society has made having a source of income everything. Nowadays, a person simply cannot do anything without money, but when ones are unemployed how will he/she get this money? This situation has driven many people to indulge in child abductions as their means of employment and source of income. To therefore put an end to child abductions, lucrative and legitimate employment opportunities must be availed and accessible to all citizens.

6.2.4. Establishment of rehabilitation centers and orphanages

Rehabilitation centers should be established for survivors of child abductions to help them rebuild their lives and also orphanages should be built to prevent child abductions. In Ethiopia and South Sudan, establishing orphanages will allow children who are orphans, victims of broken families, poverty, and humanitarian crises to be taken off of the dreaded streets, thereby making them safer from exploitation.

6.2.5. Education

Education is another tool that exposes people to other cultures,ideas and other rights practices around the world but most importantly it helps in logic analysis. The rate of illiteracy is still very high in these pastoralist communities, and education should be on top of a priority and actually should be made compulsory for everyone at the school-going age. Government should improve

educational facilities in cross-border districts and pass it into law that all parents must send their children to schools and any parents found violating that law shall face the law. For example, if any child of school-going age is found at home during school hours, the parents should be questioned to answer why their child wasn't in school.

Children are the future of a nation, and when the nation is educated, a lot of what people are experiencing now shall be eliminated. i.e. taking innocent life without any good reason, stealing someone else kid, and selling him/her for cows just because a brave man wants to marry or get rich. By building education facilities and making schooling a priority, there will be responsible youth who shall seek to build the nation. After that, youth be thinking not about how to ambush their neighbours but about new inventions and building the nation. To ensure that all children acquire essential knowledge and education, the government should take measures. Measures like free and compulsory primary and secondary education will be sufficient to drastically reduce the number of illiterates in a country and as such reduce the rate of child abductions.

6.2.6. Formulations, and ratification of legal frameworks related to children's rights

It should be South Sudan's responsibility to enforce the rule of law, and restrain the Murle from kidnapping and attacking civilians across the border. This will ensure human rights are respected. The governments of Ethiopia and South Sudan should take the first steps to protect children from child abductors. First and foremost, they must commit to their respective pledges as members of the United Nations, which was created specifically to ensure peace for all nations. The two nations should also consider inviting the support of the international community if the situation worsens beyond the regional government's capacity to deal with it.

Second, both governments should ratify the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The 1980 Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction at The Hague establishes legal procedures for the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed or retained, and it is the most significant international treaty on the prevention of international child abduction. However, Ethiopia and South Sudan are not a party to the Hague Convention. They should also ratify and fully implement the African Charter for the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the

Child to further combat child abduction practices in the region. The failure of both countries to agree to the children's convention is one of the challenges facing the cessation of child abductions.

Moreover, when world leaders gathered in Egypt for the 27th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP27), they decided to build on the outcomes of COP26 to take action on a broad range of issues critical to addressing the climate emergency (UN, 2022). Therefore,Ethiopia and South Sudan should take advantage of the recent World Climate Summit in Egypt by incorporating its outcomes into their policies to address increasing extreme weather events.

6.3. Conclusion

In general, the problem of cross-border raiding violations remains a major issue along the border between South Sudan and Ethiopia. Cross-border communities have their own internal and external actors who have exacerbated cross-border raids for various reasons. According to the study, Murle abductors,armed youth factions, legal and illegal migrants, arm smugglers, and local political elites are the main actors. The main interests of the groups and the involvement of armed groups are either to obtain income from sold arms for socioeconomic purposes or to abduct children intensively as their traditions encouraged it. It is heartbreaking to see young children with promising futures being auctioned off with livestock, forcibly adopted, forcibly married, sexually abused, and treated as slaves. Furthermore, it is pitiful to see youths who should be contributing to nation-building commit robberies and violence for personal gain, thereby destroying society's image.

The frustration manifested itself in both human rights and security implications. The difficult trends combined with a lack of political commitment, illegal migration, poor communication and, poor socioeconomic, infrastructure, exacerbates the situation and turns it into a breeding ground for hostile forces. This implication has now expanded beyond customary raiding to include criminal networks serving national and regional interests, which has contributed to violent incidents. The flaw contributes to the potential creation of routes for organized crime and radical ideology. To that end, the government and relevant authorities should seriously consider eliminating Murle cross-border raids, reviewing recommended solutions, and implementing other relevant international measures to eliminate child abductions.

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8.0 APPENDICES

Figure1: Map of Gambella Ethiopia and South Sudan(Source:Aljazeera Media Network).

Figure 2: Murle Youths and Warriors Scarification

Fugure2.1: Murle youth members tattooed South Sudan and SPLM/A symbols on their skin (Source:Makak John, Sept. 2022).
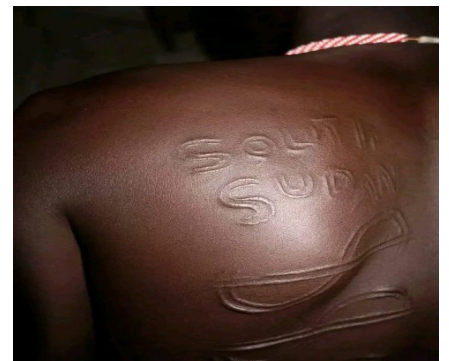

Figure 2.2:Families,Ethiopian army, and the governor of Gambella Region,Mr. Gatluak Tut received abductees in May 2016 (Source: Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation -EBC)