

The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Preventing the Recurrence of Violent Armed Conflict in Bawku, Northern Ghana

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ABSTRACT

Although often described as a peaceful country, Ghana experiences some ethno-political conflicts. The Bawku inter-ethnic conflict between the Kusasi and Mamprusi people has been characterized by a recurrence of violence surrounding the chieftaincy. This paper analyzes the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) (Track II) actors in preventing the recurrence of violent armed conflict in Bawku. This paper asks (i) what roles are played by the CSOs, and (ii) what are the opinions of community representatives regarding the roles of the CSOs? This paper applies the idea of Track II actors to analyze the roles played by the CSOs. Field findings show that the CSOs play the roles of peace-building facilitator, capacity builder, and technical backstopper who can facilitate capacity building and sustained and extensive engagements against violent armed conflicts in Bawku. The CSOs' roles augment the efforts of the state agencies and have contributed to preventing the recurrence of armed violence. The CSOs themselves attempt to prevent potential armed violence in Bawku by focusing on capacity building, offering technical and financial assistance, and facilitating early responses to potential armed clashes. According to the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC), the CSOs are regarded as trusted neutral stakeholders, and their roles have contributed to the sustained peace in Bawku.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Ghana has often been labeled as a peace-loving nation, both locally and internationally (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Danso & Osei-Tutu, 2015). Ghana's stability in the African sub-region is said to be admired because of the pivotal role played by civil society organizations (CSOs) in ensuring democratic participation (Arthur,

2008). Conflicts periodically occur in some parts of Ghana because of various reasons, including politics, religion (namely between Christians and Muslims), chieftaincy succession, ethnic identity, and land (Kendie et al., 2014; Bukari, 2013a; Bukari, 2013b). These conflicts have proved difficult for the state and CSOs to resolve (Bukari, 2013b; Tsikata & Seini, 2004). The CSOs have attempted to manage and find a lasting solution to end these conflicts, but so far have been

unsuccessful because of the recurrent armed clashes (Bukari, 2013b; Tsikata & Seini, 2004).

The Bawku inter-ethnic conflict between the Kusasi and Mamprusi people in northern Ghana emerged in the year 1931 (Bombande, 2007; Bukari, 2013b), and since then, there has been a history of violent armed recurrences over the claim for chieftaincy (Awedoba, 2009; Bukari, 2013b; Kendie et al., 2014). Violent armed recurrences were recorded in 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008, and 2009, resulting in deaths and destruction of property (Bukari 2013a; Awedoba, 2009; Kendie et al., 2014). Conflict-resolution attempts were implemented by CSOs such as the West Africa Network for Peace (WANEP) to resolve the conflict (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Bukari, 2013a; Bukari, 2013b). However, the attempts have not been successful in resolving the conflict (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Bukari, 2013a; Bukari, 2013b; Kendie et al., 2014).

Studies have been carried out on the Bawku conflict (Issifu, 2017; Bukari, 2013a; Kendie et al., 2014; Awedoba, 2009), but analyses of the roles played by the CSOs (Track II) actors against recurrence of violent armed conflict have been missing. This paper will study the CSOs roles, such as technical backstopper and peace-building facilitator, and ask: (i) what roles are played by the CSOs (Track II) actors, and (ii) what are the opinions of community representatives such as the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) regarding the roles of the CSOs in preventing recurrence of armed clashes in Bawku? This study asks these questions to show that, first, Ghana is not a popular country in the realm of Conflict Resolution, prevention, or peacebuilding, which means that the Bawku case is not studied by many scholars. However, studying the reality of the important contributions of the role of CSOs (Track II actors), notably WANEP and Belim Wusa Development Agency (BEWDA), whose activities augment that of the state agencies in preventing recurrence of armed clashes with regards to the conflict, make it worth researching.

Second, The Bawku conflict has never been declared over, and such actors as the state agencies National Peace Council (NPC), CSOs (WANEP and BEWDA), and the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) are still making efforts to find amicable ways to resolve

it despite outstanding issues that are still being addressed (Bukari, 2013a; Kendie et al., 2014 and Awedoba, 2009). The organization of this paper consists of seven sections. After the introduction, the second section explains the objective, method, and data collection. The third section briefly describes the profile of Bawku and the history of the chieftaincy conflict between the two sides. The fourth section explains the history of recurrent violent armed clashes in Bawku and attempts made to manage and resolve the conflict. The fifth section examines the roles of the CSOs against recurrence of violent armed conflict based on the author's fieldwork and presents opinions of the BIEPC on the roles of the CSOs. The sixth section analyzes the specific roles played by the CSOs in the Bawku conflict, followed by concluding remarks.

II. SUBJECT AND METHODS

1. Subject

This paper analyzes the specific roles of the CSOs in preventing recurrence of violent armed conflict. The CSOs and the BIEPC will be the stakeholders discussed in this paper. Although prior literature (i.e., Issifu, 2017; Bukari, 2013a; Bukari and Guuroh, 2013; Kendie et al., 2014; Awedoba, 2009) has investigated the root causes and effects of the Bawku conflict, the key novelty of this paper is in introducing the idea of Track II actors (i.e., CSOs) within the realm of "conflict resolution." Since this study is based on field research data, it is expected that all of these arguments will not only contribute to enhancing the general understanding about Conflict Resolution with emphasis on the roles of CSO (Track II) actors' reliability in preventing armed violence in relation to the Bawku conflict, but also provide updated knowledge with respect to cooperation among the actors in this case.

2. Method of Analysis

This study adopts the idea of Track II actors (i.e., CSOs) within the "Conflict Resolution" discipline as conceptualized by Reimann (2004), Miall (2004), and Mitchell (2005). This paper applies the idea to analyze the roles played by the CSOs and the types of measures

they initiated to prevent armed conflicts in Bawku. This study also depicts the various prevention activities initiated by the CSOs against armed clashes. Conflict-resolution efforts, according to Miall (2004: 12), involve “varied actors including state and inter-governmental organizations, development and humanitarian organizations, international and national NGOs in conflict resolution fields and groups/parties to the conflict who all aim to find a lasting peaceful end to the conflict.”

In the discipline of Conflict Resolution actors such as Track I, II, and III actors play roles towards ensuring resolution of a conflict.⁽¹⁾ Informal and unofficial non-governmental actors, ranging from private individuals and professionals to CSOs/NGOs, who engage in process-oriented, non-coercive measures – which involve problem solving, facilitation, and consultation to try to end the conflict – are referred to as “Track II” actors (Reimann, 2004). Some activities related to “Track II” actors are as the following: supporting/sustaining local groups, facilitation, and social movements; building peace; strengthening capacity; and training (Reimann, 2004; Miall, 2004; Mitchell, 2005). A civil society organization comprises “the sphere of ideas, values, institutions, organizations, networks, and individuals located between the family, the state, and the market and operating beyond the confines of national societies, politics, and economies” (Anheier et al., 2001: 17).

A CSO is used as “an umbrella concept that includes NGOs, social movements, and grass-roots organizations” (Anheier et al., 2001: 195). According to Kabia (2015), civil society is increasingly playing active roles in ensuring conflicts are prevented and managed. A wide range of people – including scientists, technical experts, human rights activists, and actors in conflicts – depend on CSOs for their legitimacy and reputation as “providers of objective expertise as neutral third parties whose information and claims can be trusted” (Price, 2005: 368; Seteolu and Okuneye, 2018). CSOs are noted to be engaged in early warning activities and preventive diplomacy through third party intervention (Amao et al., 2014). CSOs also facilitate “interactive peace dialogue workshops, mediation, negotiation, networking, initiatives for cross-cultural understanding, [and] relationship building” (Amao et al., 2014: 80).

Apart from playing roles in conflict prevention, CSOs also play a number of roles in peacebuilding towards constructing a positive relationship between feuding sides, healing wounds, empowering moral agency, and enhancing equity and justice in the society, among others (Issifu, 2017). “Generally CSOs employ a number of strategies to achieve immediate, long-term conflict prevention efforts” (Amao et al., 2014: 82). On the other hand, cooperation between states, CSOs, and private-sector entities is required in conflict prevention (Igarape Institute, 2018: 23). According to Aten and Abazaami (2016), CSOs have been internationally recognized as key actors in conflict prevention. Although the onus of conflict prevention lies in the hands of the individual states, there are stakeholders such as the CSOs who are called upon to contribute to conflict prevention (Aten & Abazaami, 2016). The term, “conflict prevention,” within the realm of Conflict Resolution, in this paper denotes measures to inhibit actions that can lead to deadly violence (Zartman, 2015: 6). The 2002 report on *Prevention of Armed Conflict* posits that the CSOs play an important role by building the capacity with regard to conflict prevention (Annan, 2002).

While Chapter VII, article 33.1, of the UN Charter clearly projects the importance of prevention (Zartman, 2015), conflict prevention has become an important concept in ensuring that violence and destruction, which is mostly associated with conflicts, does not spiral or recur (Ramsbotham et al., 2016). Conflict prevention requires understanding the conflict actors; identifying mechanisms, clues/signals of escalation and structures available, as well as new ones needed to solve specific issues; and thinking creatively about new ways to act (Fisher et al., 2000). CSOs have always been called upon to contribute to conflict prevention and have responded positively with a number of conflict-prevention measures both at national and community levels (Aten & Abazaami, 2016).

3. Data Collection

This paper is based on fieldwork conducted by the author in Ghana and specifically in Bawku from August to October, 2019, with the aid of a research assistant.

In September, 2020, the author conducted telephone interviews to complement the fieldwork. During the period of fieldwork, key respondents were identified within the CSOs through personal contact, and likewise the respondents of the community representatives: the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC). Primary sources of data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The author identified two CSOs at the time of the fieldwork as key stakeholders with regard to the Bawku conflict. The author gathered that the other CSOs had shut down due to lack of funds to undertake or implement activities related to conflict prevention. They also withdrew from engaging with both sides (i.e., Kusasi and Mamprusi people) because of the protracted nature of the conflict and entrenched positions taken by the sides regarding their inability to negotiate on solutions that will end the conflict.

The CSOs identified include (i) the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and (ii) Belim

Wusa Development Agency (BEWDA). In total, 22 key respondents (Table 1) were identified: one senior official each from the CSOs and all of the 20-member BIEPC. The respondents from WANEP and BEWDA were senior officials occupying managerial positions in their respective organizations. The minority ethnic group members gave their accounts; however, their accounts have been echoed by the BIEPC senior members from the two main ethnic groups (i.e., Kusasi and Mamprusi). The senior members are the recognized leadership of the committee, and as such their remarks reflect the entire group they represent.

Secondary sources of information were collected through academic literature such as journals and other published articles. Below is a table containing a list of interviews conducted.

4. Table 1: List of Interviews Conducted

No.	Respondent	Organization	Status	Location	No.	Date
1	NGO	WANEP	Senior official named (A)	Northern region	1	September 23, 2019
2	NGO	BEWDA	Senior official named (S)	Bawku	1	September 23, 2019
3	Community representative	BIEPC	Senior members named (T & I)	Bawku	2	September 19, 2019
4	Community representative	BIEPC	Kusasi ethnic group members	Bawku	5	September 21, 2019
	Community representative	BIEPC	Mamprusi ethnic group members	Bawku	5	September 19, 2019
5	Community representative	BIEPC	Bisa ethnic group members	Bawku	2	September 21, 2019
6	Community representative	BIEPC	Dagomba ethnic group members	Bawku	2	September 21, 2019
7	Community representative	BIEPC	Mossi ethnic group members	Bawku	2	September 21, 2019
8	Community representative	BIEPC	Hausa ethnic group members	Bawku	2	September 21, 2019
9	Total				22	

Source: Author's field findings, August to October 2019

III. PROFILE OF BAWKU AND HISTORY OF THE CHIEFTAINCY CONFLICT

1. Profile of Bawku

Administratively, Bawku is the capital of the Bawku Municipal, Upper-East Region, in northern Ghana (GSS, 2014). According to the Ghana Statistical Service's (GSS) *Population and Housing Census Final Results Report* compiled in 2010, the Upper-East Region has a population of about 1,046,545 (GSS, 2014; GSS, 2012a), representing 4.2% of Ghana's population (GSS, 2012b). The Bawku municipality has a population of about 98,538 inhabitants and a total land area of 247.23720 sq. km (GSS, 2014). Bawku consists of heterogeneous ethnic groups, which include the Kusasi, Mamprusi, Bissa, Hausa, Bimoba, Dagomba, and Mossi people (Acheampong, 2010; GSS, 2010; Kendie et al., 2014). The Kusasi people speak the Kusal language and believe in the *Tendaana* (earth priests), who serve as the intermediary between their people and the gods of their ancestors (Awedoba, 2009). They celebrate the *Samanpiid* festival annually in December, expressing their gratitude to God for a good bumper harvest year (Acheampong, 2010; GSS, 2014). The Mamprusi speak the Mampruli language and most of them believe in smaller gods (Brukum, 2007). However, some of the Mamprusi people also believe in Christianity. They celebrate the *Damba* festival annually between July and August to commemorate the birth of the prophet Mohammed.⁽²⁾

Bawku is noted for its commercial activities through trade in foodstuffs such as sweet potatoes and watermelon, manufactured goods, and livestock (GSS, 2014). Trade is conducted by use of donkey carts traveling to Burkina Faso, Northern Togo, Mali, and Niger on market days, due to the proximity of these neighboring states (GSS, 2014). People grow millet, sorghum, maize, rice, groundnuts, and cash crops such as onions, pepper, tomatoes, and soya beans (GSS, 2014). Livestock and poultry production is common in the area with goats, sheep, donkeys, local poultry birds, pigs, and cattle (GSS, 2014).

Governance in the municipality is represented by both the local government authority and the traditional authority (GSS, 2014). The local government authority

is represented by the Bawku Municipal Assembly (BMA), which provides administration at the local level and is represented by the municipal chief executive (GSS, 2014; Bukari, 2013a). The traditional authority is represented by the Bawku Traditional Council under the leadership of the *Bawku Naba* (Naba Abugrago Azoka II – a Kusasi) with 23 sub-chiefs under his authority (GSS, 2014). His jurisdiction, his authority to rule, covers the entire area of the Bawku Municipal District, and he is also the leader of the Bawku Traditional Council (GSS, 2014).

2. History of the Chieftaincy Conflict

The first *Bawku Naba*, Prince Ali, was the son of the Nayiri (the title name given to the Mamprusi king), who in 1721 was enskinned as chief of Bawku by the Nayiri (Bukari, 2013a; Awedoba, 2009). Prince Ali was tasked by the Nayiri to establish military outposts in six Kusasi localities, namely Bawku, Binduri, Teshie, Sinibaga, Tanga, and Warikambo, to guard the trade routes for the Mamprusi traders in Nalerigu, Tenkudugou in Burkina Faso, and Gambaga towns against Kusasi bandits (Awedoba, 2009).

The British colonial authorities in Ghana practiced indirect rule and needed administrative aides to assist them; hence they appointed the Mamprusi chiefs to these posts in Bawku (Awedoba, 2009). In 1931, the British made the *Bawku Naba*, a Mamprusi who was then chief of Bawku, the paramount chief, thereby elevating the importance of the chiefship in Bawku (Awedoba, 2009). Historical narratives from the Kusasi side have it that the Mamprusi chiefs suppressed the Kusasi people, who took up arms in 1957 to fight for liberation and the right to choose their own *Bawku Naba* (Awedoba, 2009). The Kusasi people believed that a Mamprusi *Bawku Naba* and his sub-chiefs were imposed on them by the colonial authority only for administrative purposes (Awedoba, 2009), and they went ahead to appoint their own *Bawku Naba* (Naba Abugrago Azoka) in the same year (Bombande, 2007).

Disruption ensued immediately in 1957 over the situation of having two people as *Bawku Naba*. This "led to some disturbances and intensified the claim over" the chieftaincy by the Kusasi and Mamprusi

people (Bukari, 2013a: 30). In 1958, the Kusasi people regained the chieftaincy after they contested a divisional-court ruling at the Appeals Court (Bukari, 2013b). After President Kwame Nkrumah was overthrown in a coup in 1966, the Chieftaincy Amendment Decree 112 was implemented by the National Liberation Council (NLC). A Mamprusi became the *Bawku Naba*, who reigned until 1980 (Bombande, 2007). In 1981, the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) overthrew the NLC in a coup and replaced the NLC Decree 112 with PNDC Law 75, namely the Chieftaincy Restoration Law (Awedoba, 2009), which restored a Kusasi to *Bawku Naba*, whose lineage has ruled Bawku to the present time (Bukari, 2013a).

IV. RECURRENCE OF VIOLENT ARMED CONFLICT IN BAWKU, EFFECTS, AND ATTEMPTS BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS TO MANAGE AND RESOLVE THE CONFLICT

1. Recurrence of Armed Clashes in Bawku

The events of 1981, according to Bukari (2013a) and Awedoba (2009), led to armed clashes between the Kusasi and Mamprusi people. In December, 2000, there were violent armed clashes recorded in Bawku, triggered by disagreements over the election results between the Kusasi and Mamprusi people affiliated with the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and New Patriotic Party (NPP), respectively (Bukari, 2013a). The counting of ballots after local elections prompted disagreements over the results between the NDC and NPP followers that increasingly escalated (Lund, 2003). A shoot-out between the Kusasi and Mamprusi resulted in the death of 68 people and 200 houses burnt, with an estimated 2,500 people internally displaced (Lund, 2003).

In 2001, another violent armed clash between the two groups was triggered when a mini-shop belonging to a Mamprusi was burnt down, allegedly by some Kusasi youth, where three people were killed.⁽³⁾ A retaliatory attack by Mamprusi youth on a Kusasi mini-shop took the lives of 18 people, wounded 21, and resulted in over 30 houses being burnt (Kendie et al., 2014). In 2007, the Mamprusi provoked the Kusasi people during

the *Samanpiid* festival. Some Mamprusi youths yelled at the Kusasi people, insinuating that Mamprusi people were the original rulers of Bawku. This incident led to armed clashes, but the number of casualties was never made clear.⁽⁴⁾ In 2008, arguments over the chieftaincy between the Kusasi and Mamprusi triggered violence, resulting in the burning of 104 houses, the injury of 16 people, and the death of eight people. Armed clashes over the chieftaincy continued and in 2008 resulted in 23 houses burnt and three people injured (Kendie et al., 2014). Then armed violence in 2009, also over the chieftaincy, resulted in the death of five people (Kendie et al., 2014).

The preceding literature (i.e., Bukari, 2013a; Kendie et al., 2014 and Awedoba, 2009) has researched the causes, effects, and ethnographic history of the conflict, confirming that conflict-management and resolution approaches were initiated by the CSOs in an attempt to resolve the conflict, though they were largely unsuccessful. Currently the Bawku conflict has not been declared over by the stakeholders as there are still some outstanding issues to resolve (Bukari, 2013a; Kendie et al., 2014 and Awedoba, 2009). The main outstanding issues are: (i) farmland disputes related to some Mamprusi farmers who lost their farms during violence, and (ii) a traditional ceremony where the protagonists reconcile and mark the end of a conflict, known as the Okro stick ceremony. The Okro stick ceremony is a traditional rite of purification and cleansing that is symbolized by burying an Okro stick to signify the end of a conflict. For this symbolic ceremony, the two factions involved must reach an agreement through civilized means, rather than guns, to end a conflict. After the ceremony, anyone, whether Kusasi or Mamprusi, who reignites the conflict will face the wrath of the gods. The Okro ceremony to take place in April 2019 with respect to the chieftaincy in Bawku was canceled. The Mamprusi argued that firstly, they would not participate in the ceremony because it was not in line with their culture. Secondly, according to them, the ceremony functioned rather to settle matters on infidelity in marriage. With half of the protagonists missing, the ceremony was meaningless.⁽⁵⁾

2. Effects of the Bawku Conflict

Bukari (2013a) pointed out that continuous recurrence of violence in Bawku has impacted negatively on socio-economic development, namely in the areas of education, public health, security, commerce, and agriculture. In fact, as a conflict-affected area, it is known to have among the “lowest income (80% living in extreme poverty) and literacy (26.3% of adults functionally literate) rates in the country” (Hughes 2003: 57). The loss of human capital over the years has contributed to a lack of ideas about how to contribute to the development of the town (Bukari, 2013a). The socio-political situation, economic life, and social institutions have been negatively affected by the conflict (Bukari, 2013a).

Educational institutions have been destroyed, and families with young children of school-going age have relocated to neighboring towns to avoid the conflict (Bukari, 2013a). Food barns and farmlands were burnt down, coupled with no economic activity to showcase farm produce after harvesting, leaving the populace to go hungry (Bukari, 2013a). The economic outlook has been affected because most people relocated during the conflict to neighboring towns to ply their trade and have not since returned or still prefer to do business in other nearby towns for fear the conflict could recur (Bukari, 2013a). The livelihoods, socio-economic development, education, commercial activities, agriculture, and all aspects of social activities in the area are lagging behind because of the conflict (Bukari, 2013a).

3. Attempts made by the Civil Society Organizations to Manage and Resolve the Conflict

CSOs including NGOs – for example WANEP, Action Aid Ghana, Advocacy Peace Group, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Council of Ghana, and BEWDA – have attempted to find amicable solutions to end the conflict (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013). They have made various attempts since 2001 to end the conflict through peacebuilding and conflict-resolution mechanisms, such as mediations, and have enabled feuding parties to engage in attempts to resolve issues (Issifu, 2017; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013). The CSOs facilitated and supported the establishment of the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC) in an attempt to resolve the

conflict themselves (Bukari & Guuroh, 2013; Issifu, 2017). In efforts to find ways to solve the conflict, WANEP, Action Aid Ghana, Advocacy Peace Group, Catholic Relief Services, Christian Council of Ghana, and BEWDA implemented peace talks and peacebuilding activities such as sensitization programs, community-based peace-education programs, organization of inter-ethnic games, the signing of peace agreements, and awareness raising (Issifu, 2017; Bukari, 2013b; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013). These peacebuilding activities were aimed at educating the populace about the effects of armed violence (Issifu, 2017; Bukari, 2013b; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013). According to Bukari (2013a), the approaches by WANEP and BEWDA could not resolve the conflict because of the entrenched positions taken by the Kusasi and Mamprusi people. Despite the efforts by the CSOs to find an amicable solution to resolve the conflict, their success still remains to be seen whilst the feuding parties are yet to come to a compromise (Bukari and Guuroh, 2013). The failure to resolve the conflict, as pointed out by Bukari and Guuroh (2013), poses a question regarding the efficacy of the conflict-resolution attempts and peace activities by the CSOs including the NGOs in Bawku. Since the attempts by the CSOs to manage and resolve the conflict have been unsuccessful (Issifu, 2017; Bukari, 2013a; Bukari, 2013b; Bukari & Guuroh, 2013), the next section will explore the roles played by the CSOs against recurrence of violent armed clashes.

V. THE ROLES PLAYED BY WANEP AND BEWDA AGAINST RECURRENCE OF VIOLENT ARMED CLASHES IN BAWKU

1. The Role of WANEP (Track II)

WANEP is a regional NGO network implementing and operationalizing peacebuilding programs, with a presence in 15 countries in the African sub-region including Ghana. WANEP is financed by donors, namely the European Union (EU) and international governments like the Canadian government and Australia government, through direct funding. These donors are advocates for conflict prevention and provide funds for conflict-reso-

lution activities such as prevention. WANEP-Ghana, established around 1998-2000, has a presence in Ghana-Accra (head office) and in the Northern part of Ghana (regional office). The organization is a capacity-based institution that provides and facilitates capacity building and technical guidance in the areas of human security and peacebuilding. WANEP-Ghana specifically plays technical roles in peacebuilding at all levels. WANEP acts as an advisory council that offers technical advice, provides information, and informs stakeholders such as the National Peace Council (NPC),⁽⁶⁾ Belim Wusa Development Agency (BEWDA), and the Bawku Inter-Ethnic Peace Committee (BIEPC). The organization's objective is to facilitate early response to structural and proximate causes of conflicts at all levels, as well as provide technical guidance in governance at the national and regional levels in Ghana. With regard to the Bawku conflict, WANEP plays the role of a (i) a technical backstopper and (ii) a capacity builder. In Bawku, a five-member Community Monitoring Team (CMT) based there relays information to officials at the regional office for bilateral consultations.

1) WANEP as a Technical Backstopper

The technical-backstopper role entails offering guidance and assistance on how to organize peace-and-dialogue workshops and coordinate peacebuilding activities. In 2010, WANEP facilitated the Peace Accords at Kumasi (a town in the Ashanti region of Ghana) for dialogue processes between the Kusasi and Mamprusi to reach a mutual decision that would allow them to resolve the conflict. WANEP held dialogue sessions with about 20 Kusasi and Mamprusi elders, that is, the 20-member BIEPC, and interacted with them. The goal of the dialogue session was to understand the causes of the conflict and encourage the parties to appreciate the need to engage in communication rather than armed violence. The Peace Accords also aimed to ensure the two sides could discuss the specific issues that were contributing to tensions, such as settlement of outstanding farmland issues and celebration of festivals.

WANEP facilitated sustained and extensive engagements aimed at preventing armed clashes. These engagements entail a one-off meeting (during times of

high tensions that could escalate into armed violence) using negotiations conducted among the BIEPC with regard to outstanding issues. The goal of this sustained and extensive engagement is first of all to move the 20-member BIEPC towards formulating new ideas to prevent armed clashes. It is also to encourage the parties to settle any challenges with respect to the performance of the Okro stick ceremony (traditional ceremony to be performed by the two parties) to declare the conflict over. WANEP offered technical guidance in the area of communication skills for the BIEPC to acquire the needed skills to implement some decisions themselves. WANEP official A explained as follows:

WANEP believes in the mutuality of the agreement taken by the two sides, and once that is not done WANEP does not force any decisions on them but provides the environment for implementation. An authority like WANEP will only create a balance in communication so statements are not taken differently. (Interview with WANEP official A on September 22, 2019)

WANEP also conducts "protocol researches" (one-off events) when necessary. This involves undertaking conflict analysis, risk assessments, and scoping to identify the needs of the people as a preventive mechanism to curb armed clashes and improve the living conditions of the people. These researches, according to WANEP official A, are also intended to identify the issues that cause tensions and escalate into potential violence, so engagements with the BIEPC can commence. The respondents for the research are the BIEPC, youth and women representatives, and all relevant groups. WANEP then engages the respondents technically and practically, based on the outcomes of the research for dialogue, education, and sensitization processes to be implemented. In 2010, WANEP, through sustained and extensive engagements, constituted a facilitation team that worked effectively towards preventing armed violence. The facilitation team consisted of the BIEPC and a facilitator from the Mossi minority ethnic group to act as a co-chair. The team was put in a frame to discuss issues, dialogue on preventive measures, and

find solutions to end the conflict.

WANEP facilitated interactions with key influencers and high-profile individuals and included them in the peace processes and to assist in finding solutions to end the conflict. Their inclusion helped change the dynamics and issues of the conflict and prevented potential armed violence. WANEP official A mentioned that, “but for such sustained engagements, the conflict could have been worse.” WANEP also engaged in extensive dialogue with conflict entrepreneurs (those that influence the conflict negatively) to sensitize them on the effects of their utterances and actions that cause a lot of unfavorable situations hindering resolution of the conflict. Commenting further, official A mentioned that “we are engaging some of them [conflict entrepreneurs] one-on-one to play various roles in preventing a recurrence and assist with the peace processes.”

2) WANEP as a Capacity Builder

WANEP facilitated capacity building and offered technical guidance for the BIEPC to ascertain how to dialogue and find amicable ways to end the conflict. The capacity building and technical assistance for the BIEPC centered on (i) dialogue processes, (ii) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), and (iii) mechanisms to respond to proximate causes of armed conflict. The capacity building and technical guidance require technical expertise, which WANEP is noted for, to assist the feuding sides and the BIEPC to realize that violence will not achieve their goals. WANEP also builds capacity for stakeholders such as BEWDA to foster mutual cooperation towards dialogue among the BIEPC. Technical guidance by WANEP is geared toward enhancing opportunities for the BIEPC to execute its mandate and find solutions acceptable to all parties in the conflict. The technical expertise by WANEP entails what one official calls “clouds” to sensitize the feuding sides “and soften their stance on using illegal means to channel their grievances.”

Training aims to equip the BIEPC with the requisite technical capacity and knowledge to resolve all outstanding issues, such as disputes over elections, festivals, outstanding seized farmlands, and the performance of the Okro stick ceremony. The training modules include

election management, focusing on peaceful campaigns before, during, and after elections. The modules have also focused on tolerance, communication, and community-level mechanisms to prevent armed violence. These are all composed in a comprehensive manner towards preventing armed violence. WANEP has facilitated an enabling environment for co-existence among the Kusasi and Mamprusi people through awareness, sensitization, dialogue, and peacebuilding. The enabling environment has encouraged the feuding sides to unite and benefit from trade and the use of agricultural land.

WANEP official A, responding to the question of whether their role in preventing armed violence has contributed to the sustained peace, stated, “I will not mince words on our efforts which have contributed to the peace in Bawku. I know what we [WANEP] have done and the monitoring [implemented] when violence was ongoing in the [past].” The official added that WANEP has played significant roles to manage the situation during the periods of armed clashes in 2000, 2001, 2007, 2008, and 2009. In 2019, WANEP facilitated extensive interactions through peacebuilding activities with the BIEPC and other stakeholders to prevent potential armed violence. In that same year, WANEP implemented monitoring to detect potential sources of armed violence. In 2020, WANEP facilitated the implementation of two significant interventions towards preventing armed violence. First, election-awareness-related intervention through the media house (i.e., radio station) targeted the 20-member BIEPC, political party representatives, people with disabilities, women representatives, and youth representatives to sensitize the community on the need to prevent armed violence before, during, and after the 2020 general presidential/parliamentary elections.

Official A of WANEP explained as follows:

Bawku was chosen because of the conflict dynamics. Any matter or issue can trigger armed violence. The dynamics of the political dispensation of the Kusasi and Mamprusi people is such that candidates of each faction capitalize on the ethnic make-up to whip up support and promise to seek their respective interests to the detriment

of the opposite side. (Interview conducted with WANEP official A on September 23, 2019)

The election awareness was intended to further entreat the youth to engage in issue-based campaigning devoid of insults, thus contributing to an enabling environment to facilitate a successful election in Bawku.

Second, WANEP assisted in facilitating an agricultural-governance program with the assistance of some NGOs, namely Action AID Ghana (AAG) and CARE International-Ghana. The program implemented “was to create an enabling environment and build consensus for agriculture activities and processes to thrive for the people of Bawku to benefit” (Interview with WANEP official on September 23, 2019). Other interventions towards preventing armed violence implemented by WANEP include: (i) early response, (ii) engagements in mini-dialogue, and (iii) building capacity for women representatives and such stakeholders as prominent opinion leaders. These interventions aim to inculcate prevention, peacebuilding practices, and processes in people’s normal daily lives against armed violence. The interventions were also intended “to educate [people] and support structures that can enable the feuding sides [to] share the land space for their co-benefit without armed violence” (Interview with WANEP official A on September 23, 2019).

3) WANEP’s Role in Implementing a Necessary Approach to Prevent Armed Violence

A necessary approach to curb potential armed violence, according to WANEP official A, would be sensitization and education on peace. Such approaches must be sustained to douse tensions and lead toward preventing armed conflict. Extensive bilateral engagements with the BIEPC, youth representatives, and women groups need to be sustained for a solution to be found to resolve all outstanding issues. There should be provision of information to high-profile personalities for bilateral engagements and communication “so that people will begin to think violence is not the option.” The official explained that WANEP would facilitate dialogue with the central and local government (Bawku Municipal Assembly, BMA) to provide resources for

the BIEPC to facilitate negotiations and avoid re-positioning of the factions for potential armed violence.

There would be engagements with the central government to identify the structural causes of the conflict and entreat them to remain neutral in dealing with the issues and also ensure development is spread across all sides for the people to feel a sense of relevance. Regarding the expectations of WANEP for outcomes of their role, official A mentioned that it is their “hope that people will begin to get fatigued with the conflict and come together to seek for benefits for socio-economic growth and development.” It is also expected that the “interventions and prevention measures per the roles of WANEP will continue to yield results for everyone in Bawku.” The official also reported their belief that “people will begin to rethink their positions, their needs, wants – ascend and ascertain whether or not the chieftaincy will shift or not, then accept the outcome and co-exist.” Thus, expectations are that things will normalize, and the prevention efforts will be sustained to avoid a parallel chieftaincy in Bawku.

2. The Role of BEWDA (Track II) as a Peacebuilding Facilitator in Bawku

BEWDA is a local NGO located in Bawku, established around 2000. The organization began as a development agency and was mandated to provide assistance for the welfare of women in Bawku and its environs. BEWDA’s name (Belim Wusa Development Agency) literally means “sustained livelihoods for all.” The organization’s location in Bawku enables it to play a strategic role in preventing the recurrence of armed violence in Bawku. To that end, BEWDA had its strategic direction re-structured, and conflict- and peacebuilding-related issues were included in their thematic areas, so the organization would be engaged in the Bawku conflict.

BEWDA’s peacebuilding activities were incorporated in 2001 to prevent recurrence of armed conflict and find amicable ways to resolve the conflict. A current objective of the organization is to assist the BIEPC to find solutions mutually acceptable to all parties in the Bawku conflict to end the conflict. Funding for conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities is obtained

through proposals, which are submitted to various organizations such as Action-Aid-Ghana among others. Funding is provided based on the proposals submitted, and the donor agencies require reports based on the activities implemented. The organization (BEWDA) is recognized as playing the role of a peacebuilding facilitator.

1) BEWDA as a Peacebuilding Facilitator

As a peacebuilding facilitator, the institution facilitates seminars and workshops on communication skills, and promotes sustained and continuous engagements for the BIEPC to find amicable ways to end the conflict. BEWDA was instrumental in the establishment of the BIEPC and the sub-committees, namely the festival and farmlands sub-committees. In ensuring the BIEPC achieves its prevention targets, BEWDA has two facilitators on the BIEPC to offer technical guidance. In 2009, BEWDA facilitated the inclusion of at least two women on the BIEPC. Their inclusion was necessitated because of the instrumental role women play as peacemakers in the community and home. BEWDA mediated and liaised with the BIEPC and youth representatives to promote dialogue for peacebuilding activities to be implemented. BEWDA facilitated seminars and workshops on communication skills for the BIEPC to be equipped with sufficient knowledge to resolve issues they can handle themselves. The seminars and workshops aimed to build a cultural relationship among the 20 members of BIEPC and facilitate generation of ideas to prevent armed violence. In 2010, BEWDA facilitated community engagements such as peace sensitization among the youth, women, and the Mamprusi representatives to revive the BIEPC after it went dormant due to mistrust cited by the Mamprusi people.

BEWDA organized training sessions for the BIEPC to reach out to the various communities to sensitize them regarding the need for peace. The organization monitors the prevention activities (e.g., dialogue) among the BIEPC and provides financial assistance where necessary. BEWDA as part of its role ensures a strong partnership with the BIEPC, reviews meetings held by the BIEPC, assists the committee in proposal writing to seek funding for peace activities, and conducts train-

ing. BEWDA also offers oversight guidance to resolve long-standing issues such as the outstanding farmland cases and ensuring peaceful celebrations of festivals. The two institutions strategize and formulate peacebuilding and prevention activities together.

BEWDA facilitated sustained and continuous engagements, which entailed periodic dialogue and meetings with the BIEPC and its sub-committees to (i) prevent armed violence and (ii) find amicable ways to end the conflict. Through its own initiatives, BEWDA supported the committee to implement key objectives and offered technical advice (promptly addressing issues without fear or favor) to the sub-committees on farmlands to resolve any remaining issues. In 2020, BEWDA offered guidance to the sub-committee on farmlands to resolve issues surrounding farms being taken over by unidentified people and subsequently reported to the police for investigations to begin. According to official S of BEWDA, “when the people see the BIEPC sub-committee is working, it gives them hope that something can be done to address their concerns and the trust will be imposed on them.” BEWDA ensures peaceful celebration of festivals by guiding the sub-committee on festivals to sensitize the two sides on the dangers, including the effects of insults and provocative songs by the two sides during the respective festivals.

The same official of BEWDA mentioned,

the Damba festival celebrated by the Mamprusi people is seen by some Kusasi people as an affront to the authority of the current *Bawku Naba* because originally the Mamprusi are known to hail from the North Eastern part of Northern Ghana. (Interview with BEWDA official S on September 23, 2019)

That is, the Mamprusi people are perceived as outsiders and their festival reminds some of the original inhabitants that foreign rulers were imposed on the indigenous people by a colonial power.

In the 2020 presidential/parliamentary elections in Ghana, BEWDA implemented sustained engagements together with the media and organized political discussions with political party representatives, the BIEPC,

the ethnic groupings at community levels, youth and women representatives, the Zongo caucuses, representatives of the Electoral Commission of Ghana (EC), and communication officers. These events aimed to carry out BEWDA's role in preventing armed violence before, during, and after the 2020 general elections. BEWDA offered technical support for the BIEPC to liaise with the Regional Coordinating Council (RCC), Regional Security Council (RegSec), and Municipal Security Council (MUSEC) to deepen their cooperation towards preventing armed violence. BEWDA, according to official S, has played significant roles to manage tensions in Bawku through its preventive measures (e.g., sustained and continuous engagements). BEWDA's role has also contributed to the stabilization of the Bawku conflict for the past decade, also according to the official.

In addition, BEWDA facilitated access to social and economic services such as access to markets, health, and educational services to benefit all the ethnic groups. Official S commented as follows:

The civil societies have done a lot of work towards preventing armed violence. The NGOs in particular have [implemented] a lot of efforts, and it has never been easy due to the protracted nature of the conflict and the entrenched positions taken by the two factions. For now, all the peacebuilding activities and prevention measures have contributed to the sustained peace. This has been made possible through the cooperation with the Bawku police who offer constructive advice. (Interview with BEWDA official S on September 23, 2019)

2) BEWDA's Role in Implementing a Necessary Approach to Prevent Armed Violence

BEWDA's role with regard to a necessary approach to curb violence involves facilitating periodic seminars, dialogue, and further engagements, and working closely with the BIEPC to ensure they become a permanent standing body with a secretariat furnished with staff members to tackle issues appropriately and promptly. Sensitizing the two sides to appreciate that the chieftaincy issue extends beyond violence includes the message

that "violence cannot resolve the chieftaincy conflict," according to BEWDA official S. Advocating for the parties to push and employ litigation processes as the focal point or primary focus with regard to addressing the chieftaincy issue is being considered. With regard to the Okro stick ceremony, BEWDA official S said, "the process has started all over again, the Mamprusi still do not trust the process and this makes the resolution process a bit challenging." The official then added that he "will not comment on the ceremony beyond what has been said."

Expectations of BEWDA are that the engagements through dialogue with the BIEPC to find amicable solutions to end the conflict will succeed. BEWDA hopes that the committee will facilitate further engagements with the youth to desist from violence and sensitize them to realize that people can achieve their goals without violence. The BIEPC wants to do more with regard to sensitization and peace activities, but lacks funding, and this has limited their activities. In the words of BEWDA official S, "The BIEPC is committed to peace but the question is, for how long? Since the members are neither being motivated nor receive remuneration."

According to official S, "The municipal assembly needs to give out funds for activities." The official added that "increased funding leads to increased engagements. When dealing with human beings there is a need to constantly engage them for their psyche not to change." The level of cooperation between BIEPC, BEWDA, WANEP, and other stakeholders such as the Bawku Police, political parties, and traditional authorities towards preventing recurrence of armed violence has been outstanding. In the words of one official, "The respect and confidence has been built through consistent cooperation."

3. Opinions of the BIEPC on Roles by WANEP and BEWDA in Preventing Armed Violence

The BIEPC is a local peace initiative established in 2009 by the central government at that time. The committee was tasked to create a serene environment for dialogue and negotiations and seek amicable solutions to not only prevent armed violence, but also resolve

the conflict. The committee is made up of 22 members including two facilitators from BEWDA who offer technical guidance to the BIEPC. The members consist of six representatives each from the Kusasi and Mamprusi side, and two representatives each from the Bisa, Dagomba, Mossi, and Hausa people. The committee works under the auspices of the NPC, but liaises with WANEP and BEWDA towards preventing armed conflict and sustaining peace.

According to senior members T and I, the BIEPC regards WANEP and BEWDA as bigger organizations that share similar goals in preventing armed violence and assisting technically to end the conflict. According to the other members of the committee, the CSOs (WANEP and BEWDA) have been very supportive technically and financially, and their presence has been very significant in curbing armed clashes. According to the committee members, they rely a lot on the CSOs to manage tensions that could threaten the peace in Bawku. According to members of the committee, "in 2009 during the early days of the BIEPC, it adopted a strategy called the 'community entry' thus going to churches and mosques to preach against violence." This kind of engagement was made possible because of the technical and financial assistance from the CSOs.

Commenting further, the same senior members stated that the CSOs through training/workshops taught the BIEPC members how to facilitate negotiations and showed examples of how conflicts in other parts of the world were handled through case-study videos. This gave the committee an understanding of their mandate in preventing armed violence. The knowledge gained from the training in communication skills and capacity building by WANEP and BEWDA has been valuable. Prior to this, there had not been any such engagements for the BIEPC. In 2015, WANEP and BEWDA facilitated training of communication skills and negotiations for the BIEPC, which enhanced the knowledge of the committee, according to senior members T and I and corroborated by the committee members. The roles of WANEP and BEWDA as reported by the committee members have contributed to the peaceful management and celebration of festivals for the past several years. The roles of the CSOs have enabled the commit-

tee and community to manage the issue of the Mamprusi people not paying homage to the *Bawku Naba*, which could have easily escalated into armed violence. Their roles have created an enabling environment for awareness creation, sensitization, and dialogue on the devastating effects of violence on lives and property, thus according to senior members T and I.

Also according to senior members T and I, the BIEPC can now co-exist and unite for a common benefit due to the assistance received from WANEP and BEWDA. They added that through the roles of the CSOs, some farmland issues have been settled out of court. The BIEPC senior members explained that, "a Kusasi had his farm occupied by illegal people and the committee settled the issue themselves instead of the law courts." According to further comments, the community members have some trust in the BIEPC, due to the role of the CSOs. Prevention measures facilitated by WANEP and BEWDA have enhanced the capacity of the committee to know how to convey peace messages among the youth. It has also enabled the BIEPC to take a dynamic approach, implement innovative ideas, and create new experiences to find amicable ways to prevent armed clashes. The roles of WANEP and BEWDA are deemed as an added capacity which will prevent armed conflict, facilitate peace processes, and monitor the changing dynamics of the conflict in order to respond appropriately. Since WANEP and BEWDA know the context and history of the Bawku conflict, they offer the needed guidance, which will go a long way toward resolving the conflict.

Commenting on the role of the state agencies, especially the NPC, against violence conflicts, BIEPC senior members T and I said there have been efforts in the past towards resolution of the conflict (meeting with the two sides separately) by the NPC, but they stated:

We did not see the fruits of their work because we did not know the sort of reports they were sending back whether it favored the peace process or not. At some stage we told him we are not interested in the NPC because we did not see the fruits of their work and the report was sent to the

NPC chairman. That NPC structure was replaced by the current one which is well structured. (Interview with BIEPC officials T and I on September 19, 2019)

Official T commented further regarding the role of the state agencies toward preventing armed clashes in the following statement:

I always say and I maintain that it is the failure of the State security at the initial stages to intervene in the conflict that cause[d] the escalation of the Bawku conflict, because when some people started shooting at a section of the town leaving their houses to be burnt down and items looted, the Security Services (police and military) did not move in to arrest the situation so other communities had to advise themselves early enough and as we say in the local proverb 'when you see your neighbors beard catching fire, you start watering your beard' so we have [to] look for self defense. If people could be shooting and the police will not make arrests then the people have the right to do anything to defend themselves and that is what happened with regards to the armed clashes in 2007. They are now doing well; it was at the initial stages [that] they shed their responsibilities; otherwise people would not have bought weapons to defend themselves. If at the initial stage they had responded dutifully and professionally, the conflict in Bawku would not have escalated. (Interview with BIEPC officials T and I on September 19, 2019)

On whether the BIEPC members are cooperating well among themselves towards preventing a recurrence of armed violence and resolving the conflict, senior members T and I stated:

Some people of the BIEPC are not cooperat[ing] properly; currently we have a challenge with inadequate membership to raise a quorum with half of the members present. It is very crucial for the Mamprusi and Kusasi members to be present

at meetings if there [are] to be any meaningful discussions. We usually have problems [on] the Mamprusi side, and in our last meeting we made it known to them to fill in two vacant membership positions to complement issues, especially after the current Bawku Municipal Chief Executive had to take up her current position. The problem is most of the members are very busy with their professional careers. Currently, there are no fixed times for meetings. When we deem it fit we meet, but initially we were meeting monthly and sometime twice in a month. During the preparation for the burial of the Okro stick, we met frequently to draw out the program as to what items were needed for the ceremony. (Interview with BIEPC officials T and I on September 19, 2019)

BIEPC senior official T added:

There should be full membership in the BIEPC, [a] full complement of its membership, and others who are nominal members were not effective; if you could not attend meetings due to long distance then your membership in the committee is not effective and that affects the Mamprusi membership. I don't know for how long we will last and stay as a committee; if it is not invigorated, it will disintegrate, and when that happens there will not be a central mechanism for addressing grievances. I don't know for how long we will last and stay as a committee if this issue is not invigorated. The committee will disintegrate and when that happens there will not be a central mechanism for addressing grievances. (Interview with BIEPC official T on September 19, 2019)

VI. ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES PLAYED BY WANEP AND BEWDA IN BAWKU

The author's field study found that the role played by WANEP and BEWDA Track II actors in preventing a recurrence of armed violence seems to be perceived positively by the BIEPC. The conclusion on the roles of the Track II actors (CSOs) corroborates the conclusion

by Fisher et al. (2000: 152) that “where civil society organizations and groups are active and effective, the likelihood of social disintegration and public violence as a response to conflict is lower than where there is not a thriving civil society.” BEWDA and WANEP, in relation to their respective roles, fall under the umbrella of CSOs who are professional institutions and dependent on donors, per the definition by Anheier et al. (2001). The donor funds for prevention activities, such as training and sustained engagements implemented by WANEP and BEWDA, corroborate the statement of Anheier et al. (2001) that CSOs depend on funding from donors to implement conflict-resolution activities. The field study found that the roles of WANEP and BEWDA (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator) against armed violence and assisting the BIEPC to find an amicable solution to end the conflict are laudable. This supports the statement by Aten and Abazaami (2016) that CSOs are called upon to contribute to conflict prevention, even though it is ultimately the responsibility of the individual state.

Issifu (2017), on the other hand, asserts that the neutral stance of CSOs in dealing with conflict parties enhances peace and trust from the communities, which gives the CSOs an advantage over the state institutions with respect to achieving a successful resolution of conflicts. From this study’s field findings, the opinions of the BIEPC on the reliability of the roles (technical backstopper, capacity builder and peacebuilding facilitator) of the CSOs, Track II actors, supports the argument by Issifu (2017) regarding the reason for CSOs being seen as a neutral and trusted side. “Civil society has the unique role to accompany communities at various levels to build trust through dialogue because in many situations, governments and politicians are not trusted by the communities” (Bombande, 2005: 35, as cited in Issifu, 2017: 4). In addition to that, Price (2005) mentions that actors in conflicts depend on CSOs for their objective expertise as neutral third parties whose efforts in providing peace, information, and claims can be trusted. WANEP’s and BEWDA’s roles (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator) in preventing armed conflict, by facilitating

peacebuilding and offering technical guidance, among others, represent the informal and non-official efforts by CSOs, Track II actors. This further supports the statement that CSOs are noted to engage in peacebuilding, training, facilitation, strengthening capacity, strengthening local groups (Mitchel, 2005), dialogue workshops, negotiations, networking, initiatives for cross-cultural understanding, and relationship building (Amao et al., 2014). This corroborates the finding of the 2002 report on *Prevention of Armed Conflict* by Annan (2002) that CSOs play an important role by building capacity with regard to conflict prevention.

According to Amao et al., “CSOs employ a number of strategies to achieve immediate and long-term conflict prevention efforts” (2014: 82). The author’s field study found that the role of WANEP and BEWDA (Track II actors) in relation to the resolution of the Bawku conflict includes sustenance of a good relationship with the BIEPC to empower them to build their capacity and find amicable ways themselves to resolve all outstanding issues. The role of the Track II actors (i.e., WANEP and BEWDA) per the author’s field findings augments the efforts of the state agencies such as the NPC. According to Fisher et al. (2000) and Ramsbotham et al. (2016), efforts to avert violence by a trust-building third party are particularly important, which applies to the CSOs. The author’s study revealed that WANEP and BEWDA – Track II actors in their roles of technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator – have maintained their autonomy.

They have adhered to civil rules; have shown mutual respect in dealing with the other stakeholders, namely the BIEPC and traditional authorities; and have exhibited their collective capacity to promote mutual respect towards sustaining the peace in Bawku. These actions by WANEP and BEWDA support the principal characteristics pointed out by Amao et al. (2014) regarding the ability of civil society to maintain (i) absolute autonomy from social interests and the state, (ii) capacity for collective action, and (iii) conveyance of mutual respect.

The role of WANEP and BEWDA (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facil-

iator) in cooperating and providing assistance for the BIEPC to resolve pressing issues that could have escalated into violence supports the conclusions made by Amao et al. (2014); in effect, the level of success of the CSOs can be attributed to their reach and cooperation with the grassroots level. The author's field study found that WANEP and BEWDA (Track II actors) have devised mechanisms through cooperation with the BIEPC to obtain information that can assist them to initiate early prevention responses against armed violence. Also, the cooperation between the community and the CSOs is equally important to achieve the target of preventing violent clashes and most importantly to resolve the conflict. Strikingly, the preceding literature (Bukari, 2013a; Kendie et al., 2014; Awedoba, 2009) did not mention this aspect. It is imperative to reiterate the efforts of CSOs (Track II actors) in supporting/sustaining local groups such as the BIEPC to strengthen their capacity towards prevention. It is important to note that the CSOs' efforts in preventing armed clashes have contributed to the sustained peace in Bawku for the past decade. This study's findings support the conclusion by Aten and Abazaami (2016) that CSOs (Track II actors) have responded positively to "conflict prevention" with a number of measures at the community level.

WANEP and BEWDA as technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator envisage that the extensive and sustained engagements will not only enable a sustained prevention effort towards resolution of the conflict but also foster a sense of cooperation among the parties to sustain the peace due the unpredictable nature of the conflict and outstanding issues that need to be resolved quickly. As the field study has shown, cooperation among the CSOs is one other factor, apart from the roles (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator) of the CSOs, that has contributed to sustenance of peace and in the long term resolving the conflict in Bawku. The findings regarding the stakeholders' (CSOs – Track II actors – and the BIEPC) cooperation support the study's concluding that, in the realm of conflict resolution, the varied actors (Track II) and community involved with the conflict all aim to find a lasting peaceful end to the

conflict (Miall, 2004). This cooperation, especially between the Track II actors (CSOs) and the BIEPC, will be necessary to resolve all outstanding issues.

This corroborates the conclusion that CSOs are abreast of the root causes and the changing dynamics that contribute to tensions that escalate into armed violence (Issifu, 2017). According to Issifu (2017), CSOs not only consider the cultural perspective/needs of the conflicting parties in a conflict, but also address the underlying structural causes of the conflict towards achieving a win-win goal. The field study found that WANEP and BEWDA officials A and S are confident that their role in preventing armed conflict should go a long way toward sustaining the peace and enabling further engagements to resolve all outstanding issues.

The field study found that, per narrations of the CSOs (WANEP official A and BEWDA official S), "the situation in Bawku is better than before, considering the peace which has been sustained for the past years," and the CMT (i.e., Community Monitoring Team) created by WANEP for information purposes has been reliable. Other stakeholders such as the NPC and BEWDA also commended the CMT highly. The involvement of WANEP and BEWDA to prevent armed clashes through prevention activities supports the argument by Reimann (2004) that NGOs (Track II actors) are relevant for engaging in process-oriented measures and building capacity towards preventing violent conflicts. Additionally, the field findings also support the study by Ramsbotham, et al. (2016), which concluded that the involvements of trusted third parties such as NGOs are recommended in "conflict prevention."

In relation to the conclusion by Ramsbotham et al. (2016) that prevention has become important in ensuring that the armed violence and destruction associated with conflicts does not spiral and recur, this study has shown that the prevention activities initiated by WANEP and BEWDA has not only curbed potential armed violence at the early stages, but is being sustained as a long-term strategy towards the resolution of the conflict, especially to finalize the Okro stick ceremony, which will officially declare the conflict over. The authors' field findings indicate that the roles of the CSOs (Track II actors) with regard to training organized for the ben-

efit of the BIEPC have empowered the committee to resolve minor issues, such as the procedures for peaceful celebration of the respective festivals themselves without any disagreements. This goes on to support the conclusions by Reimann (2004) and Miall (2004) that, NGOs (Track II actors) undertake activities such as supporting/sustaining local groups, strengthening or building capacity, and training to benefit the community.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper analyzed the specific roles of CSOs (Track II) actors in preventing recurrence of violent armed conflict. The author's study in the field found that WANEP according to official A played the roles of a technical backstopper and capacity builder. BEWDA according to official S played the role of a peacebuilding facilitator. In the author's study from the field, the CSOs – Track II actors – facilitated capacity building, provided training, and promoted sustained and extensive engagements towards preventing armed violence. BEWDA and WANEP, according to officials A and S, have played significant roles (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator) that have contributed to the absence of armed conflict in Bawku. The roles of WANEP and BEWDA (Track II actors) in preventing armed violence have enabled the BIEPC to be an effective local peace infrastructure that is reliable for the community.

The field study found that, for WANEP and BEWDA to sustain their roles (technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator) towards the long-term resolution of the conflict, the necessary approaches to prevent recurrence of armed violence should be sustained through extensive engagements. Officials A and S indicate that the central government has to support the efforts to prevent armed violence by resourcing the state agency (NPC) with funds to facilitate periodic prevention activities, build capacity of personnel, and implement district peace councils to promote resolution of the conflict. They (officials A and S) further explain that the resources will ensure the NPC is depoliticized and works according to the constitutional act authorizing it. Contrary to claims by

Bukari and Guuroh (2013) that some factions in the Bawku conflict deem the CSO-initiated peacebuilding approaches as biased and ineffective, expectations by officials A and S are that their roles in implementing sustained and extensive communicative engagements will prevent armed violence. They also express the expectation that continuous negotiations with the BIEPC, youth and women representatives, and opinion leaders would enable collective understanding towards ending the conflict.

According to Bukari and Guuroh (2013), despite all the efforts by the CSOs to find a solution to the conflict, their efforts still remain to be seen whilst the feuding parties are yet to come to a compromise. In contrast to that conclusion by Bukari and Guuroh (2013), the field findings in this paper reveal that WANEP and BEWDA have made strides by implementing some prevention measures and have also resolved some of the outstanding issues that could have escalated into violence, namely the peaceful celebration of festivals and settlement of the farmlands cases. This study found that the major issue left to resolve the conflict – that is, the Okro stick ceremony – is being tabled for further dialogue and negotiations by the BIEPC and all stakeholders. Nevertheless, WANEP and BEWDA, Track II actors, in their roles as technical backstopper, capacity builder, and peacebuilding facilitator have been able to curb recurrence of armed violence and sustain the peace. Until the conflict has reached a peaceful resolution, to reiterate, the necessary approach to prevent potential recurrence of armed violence, per field findings from officials A and S, is the sustenance of extensive and continuous engagements in communication.

NOTES

(1) The involvement of high-powered practitioners and international organizations with other influential actors is needed, as they play roles that relate directly to conflict parties. This is described as "Track I" actors. In a similar vein, the roles of officials and other state actors – such as political, military, or representatives of conflict party leaders as mediators – are goal- and outcome-oriented, employing strategies such as arbitration,

mediation, non-coercive measures like facilitation, and negotiation aimed at conflict resolution. "Track III" actors are those at the community level, such as grass-roots organizations. In conflict resolution, these parties ensure that all processes and structure-oriented initiatives undertaken at the grassroots level involve capacity building, human rights work, development, and grass-roots training. To prevent escalation of conflict into armed violence, it is important to consider initiatives that foster a cohesive representation of all the ethnic or clan groups to find ways to deal with the issue.

(2) The information on Prophet Mohammed and the *Damba* festival was obtained from a documentary produced with Chief Zung Lana Mahmoud II of the Nanton Area in the Northern Region of Ghana. Online, <https://youtube.be/-Ynicf8WnE> (Accessed January 12, 2020).

(3) General information from the official website of the media house, GhanaWeb (2001), with the caption, "Interior Minister Briefs Parliament on Bawku conflict." Online, <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Interior-Minister-briefs-Parliament-on-Bawku-conflict-20044>. (Accessed July 1, 2019).

(4) General information from the official website of Zakaria Alhassan-Tamale. "The Bawku Conflict... 1st major conflict erupted in 1983." Online, <https://zakalhassan.blogspot.com/2008/06/bawku-conflict1st-major-conflict.html> Published June 8, 2008. (Accessed June 3, 2019).

(5) General information from the interviews conducted with WANEP senior official A, BEWDA senior official S on September 23, 2019, and BIEPC senior members T and I on September 19, 2019.

(6) The NPC was established in 2009 and was tasked to prevent, manage, and resolve conflicts towards sustainable peace. The NPC started with technical input from WANEP. NPC started in the Northern region as a Northern-region advocacy council. The organization has been involved in the Bawku conflict since 2009 and plays the role of a technical backstopper. The NPC are in the vanguard of preventing recurrence of armed violence with regard to the Bawku conflict. Their role is also to equip the BIEPC with resources for the committee to own the peace process, work for peace, and

sustain it (interview conducted with one NPC officer on September 18, 2019).

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