

PROMOTING COMMUNITY-BASED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT AND
RESOLUTION MECHANISMS IN THE BAWKU
TRADITIONAL AREA OF GHANA

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Individuals and communities in the Bawku Traditional Area of Northern Ghana use different strategies to manage and resolve the conflicts they encounter in pursuit of their livelihoods. Choices include indigenous, exogenous, and endogenous mechanisms. This paper examines these choices and the determinants for choosing one conflict resolution mechanism over others. The basic data for the analysis was gathered from randomly sampled individuals, key informants, and groups in the area. The results showed that about 79 percent of people in the Bawku Traditional Area prefer endogenous mechanisms, known as Community-Based Conflict Management and Resolution Mechanisms (COBCOMREMs), and their reasons for this choice are similar. The paper recommends that stakeholders in the management of these conflicts incorporate the elements of COBCOMREMs in their peacebuilding efforts.

INTRODUCTION

In the last three decades, much of West Africa has been engulfed in intra-state conflicts. Several of these conflicts have degenerated into full-scale wars, as in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire. Unequal distribution and access to resources, economic activities, and power are major causes of these conflicts. Annie Kairaba and Kathryn Firman-Setters, among others, emphasize the economic and political importance of these conflicts.¹ Conflicts in Africa can be deadly if "political entrepreneurs" capitalize on them to further their cause.²

Ghana is often perceived as a peaceful and stable country in a volatile