

# Conflicts and conflict management mechanisms in selected districts in the Northern Region, Ghana

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## Resumen

The Northern Region is witnessing protracted and relapsed conflicts and attempts at restoring enduring peace, largely, through Western models, particularly, the formal court system, have not been successful. This study analyses conflicts and conflict management mechanisms in the Northern Region of Ghana towards a comprehensive and sustainable management of the conflicts. The study is purely qualitative, employing the multiple case study design. Sixty-two participants were, purposively, selected for the study. Interview guide, focus group discussion guide and observation checklist were the instruments used for data collection. Data were analysed using thematic and cross-site analysis. The study found that each faction constructs a kind of mythical history mingling elements of truth about the olden days. Different versions of the history, while not held by all members of the community, tend to provide a continuing rationale for rejecting pragmatic compromises. Besides, the procedural structure and adversarial nature of the court system produced unsatisfactory outcomes, which do not create opportunities for peacebuilding initiatives. Indigenous mechanisms were, also, reliant on unwritten and flexible precedents, which lead to an abuse of the mechanisms by the traditional leaders. The study concludes, among others, that indigenous processes are currently inconsistent and, sometimes, discriminatory. Nonetheless, the mechanisms have proven to be meaningful, accessible, and affordable. Therefore, Peace Councils should develop a comprehensive programme to incorporate aspects of both the indigenous and Western-centred judicial structures for the purposes of legitimacy.