Threats to Survival: Deterioration of Daily Life and Dignity of Human Beings in North-Eastern Wallagga

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the issues faced by local communities in the North-Eastern Wallagga region of Ethiopia, such as threats to their survival, declining standards of living, and loss of respect. The study is based on a review of existing literature and development organizations reports. The study found that human rights violations, displacement, and insecurity are prevalent due to political instability, social tensions, economic challenges and historical grievances. As a result, many individuals and families are suffering from trauma, fear, and loss of dignity, as well as limited access to basic resources and services. To address these issues, a comprehensive approach is required that prioritizes the needs and preferences of affected communities, promotes sustainable development, social cohesion, and human rights. The study proposes various recommendations, such as encouraging inter-community dialogue, improving governance and the rule of law, addressing economic challenges, supporting humanitarian assistance efforts, and promoting social justice.

Keywords: North-Eastern Wallagga; Human Rights Violations; Political Instability; Social Tensions; Security Concerns; Survival; Peace building

Abbreviations: GDP: Gross Domestic Product; UNDP: United Nations Development Programme; IPI: International Peace Institute; USIP: United States Institute of Peace; EHRC: Ethiopian Human Rights Commission; IDMC: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre; RVI: Rift Valley Institute.

Introduction

Many individuals perceive the world as an insecure place, with numerous threats arising from various sources. The Global Peace Index [1] reveals that the world has become less peaceful for the ninth time in 12 years. The report attributes this trend to increasing levels of conflict, political instability, and social unrest. According to the Institute for Economics and Peace [1]. The average level of global peacefulness deteriorated by 0.07% in 2020, as reported in the GPI 2021. The Institute for Economics and Peace [1] identifies conflicts, political instability, and social unrest as the primary drivers of the decline in peacefulness over the past decade. The report highlights an increase in the number of violent demonstrations in many countries, with some met with violent responses from authorities. Conflicts are also noted as the primary cause of the decline in peacefulness, accounting for over 80% of the deterioration in global peacefulness over the past ten years. Additionally, political instability has increased over the past decade, with more than half of all countries experiencing a decline in this indicator since 2011. The Global Peace Index [1] confirms

that increasing conflict, political instability, and social unrest have contributed to a decline in global peacefulness. The Pew Research Center [2] conducts surveys on public opinion and attitudes worldwide and found that many people in different countries perceive various threats, such as terrorism, cyber attacks, and infectious diseases as serious concerns. The deterioration of daily life and dignity of human beings in Africa is a complex issue that can vary depending on the country, region, or community. The African Development Bank [3] highlights poverty and inequality as significant challenges in many parts of Africa, especially in rural areas. Sub-Saharan Africa has more than 50% of the population living below the poverty line, which limits access to basic necessities like food, water, healthcare, and education, thus undermining the dignity and well-being of individuals and communities.

According to the United Nations [4] conflict and violence pose significant threats to the daily life and dignity of people in various parts of Africa. For instance, the ongoing conflict in South Sudan has resulted in widespread displacement, loss of life, and damage to property, disrupting the security and stability of communities. Additionally, gender-based violence is a pervasive problem in many parts of Africa, as noted by the United Nations Women [5]. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, domestic abuse, and other forms of mistreatment, which can have severe impacts on their physical and mental well-being, as well as their dignity and sense of self-worth. Furthermore, the United Nations Environment Programme [6]. Identifies environmental degradation, such as deforestation, soil erosion, and pollution, as a growing concern in many parts of Africa. Environmental degradation can impede communities' access to natural resources, such as water and land, leading to food insecurity, displacement, and health issues.

Several studies have highlighted the threats to survival in Ethiopia since 2018. The United Nations Refugee Agency's "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2020" report emphasizes that conflict and violence can pose a significant threat to human survival in various ways. They often result in forced migration and displacement, leading to loss of livelihoods, separation from families and communities, and exposure to further risks and vulnerabilities. The report reveals that the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached a record high of 82.4 million at the end of 2020. The World Food Programme [7] argues that conflict and violence can disrupt food systems, damage infrastructure, and limit access to food, leading to food insecurity and malnutrition. A study by the World Food Programme found that conflict is a major driver of food insecurity in many parts of the world, with 60% of the world's food-insecure people residing in conflict-affected countries.

Similarly, the World Health Organization [8] has found that conflict and violence can have severe impacts on physical and mental health, such as injuries, trauma, and exposure to diseases. Conflict and violence are also major contributors to poor health outcomes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Additionally, the World Bank [9] has noted that conflict and violence can have significant economic impacts, including loss of income and assets, damage to infrastructure and property, and disruption to markets and trade. A study by the World Bank reveals that conflict-affected countries face significant economic costs, with an average 15% reduction in gross domestic product (GDP) over a ten-year period.

The East Wallaga zone in Ethiopia has experienced several incidents of communal violence between December 2018 and December 2021, as documented by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission's report published in December 2020. The violence primarily involved the Amhara and Oromo communities, resulting in loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property. The report highlighted that disputes over land and resources, as well as political tensions, were often at the root of the violence. In 2020, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission published multiple reports exposing human rights violations in Ethiopia, which provide further evidence of their findings.

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission's report on communal violence in the East Wallaga zone documented instances of violence between the Amhara and Oromo communities, resulting in loss of life, displacement, and destruction of property. The report highlighted that disputes over land and resources, as well as political tensions, were often the root causes of the violence. Similarly, the EHRC's report on violence in the Oromia region documented human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention, and torture by security forces. The report linked the violence to political tensions and resource disputes and recommended that the government address the root causes and ensure accountability for human rights violations. The EHRC has also called for accountability for human rights violations during the East Wallaga conflict, urging an independent investigation and holding those responsible accountable. These findings provide evidence of the impact of conflicts and violence on human survival, including forced migration and displacement, food insecurity, health risks, and economic impacts.

Peace education and peacebuilding are key factors in promoting sustainable peace and development in East Wallaga. The UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development [10] highlights the importance of peace education in building resilience,

promoting social cohesion, and preventing conflicts and violence. The United Nations Development Programme [11] recognizes the significance of peacebuilding in fostering sustainable development and human security, prioritizing social justice, human rights, and participatory decision-making processes. The International Peace Institute [12] emphasizes the importance of community-led peacebuilding initiatives in promoting sustainable peace and development. It suggests that involving local communities in peacebuilding initiatives can foster ownership, trust, and social cohesion. Additionally, the United States Institute of Peace [13] highlights the significance of education in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution skills. Peace education can facilitate critical thinking, empathy, and communication skills crucial for resolving conflicts peacefully.

In ethnically divided societies like Ethiopia, peace education is a crucial tool for dealing with increasing conflicts. Peace education involves formal and non-formal education and training programs that aim to change negative attitudes and perceptions towards the other side and foster peaceful coexistence, reconciliation, and peace-building between former belligerent parties [14]. The goals of peace education include legitimizing the other side's collective narrative, critically assessing one's group role in the conflict, developing empathy and trust towards another group, and creating grounds for inter-group dialogue and understanding Hizkias [15] suggests that the traditional notion of the state assumes and constructs linguistic, cultural, and political homogeneity. Schooling may contribute to this process by establishing a common culture based on a shared language, history, destiny, and expectations and behaviors rooted in a sense of civic loyalty. The outcome of this process depends on the way schooling is structured and the content of the curriculum, which can result in either assimilation or integration.

The main objective of a study is to evaluate the threats to survival and declining quality of life and dignity of human beings in North-Eastern Wallagga. Specifically, the study aims to document any human rights violations or abuses occurring in the region and assess their impact on the local population. It also seeks to identify the underlying causes of the challenges faced by the local communities, including social, political, and economic factors, and analyze their effects on the human rights situation. Additionally, the study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies, programs, and interventions targeted at addressing the challenges faced by the communities and identify any gaps or areas for improvement.

The study utilized a systematic review of literature as its research method. This involves a comprehensive and structured approach to collecting data, where published studies and other relevant sources are systematically searched to identify and synthesize existing knowledge on a particular research question or topic. The process of conducting a systematic review involves various steps, such as defining the research question, creating a search strategy, screening and selecting studies based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, extracting data, and synthesizing the findings.

Result and Discussion

Many of the humanitarian challenges faced today stem from interconnected and mutually reinforcing factors. To address these challenges, there is a need for greater integration of activities across the United Nations system and in partnership with others. Focusing solely on individual issues is not enough for those living in crisis, experiencing insecurity, and facing extreme poverty. Instead, all forms of insecurities must be tackled comprehensively to ensure individuals feel safe in all aspects of their lives, have access to opportunities that promote well-being, and have their rights and dignity fully respected. There are various methods to detect threats to survival. By utilizing the human security approach, nations can provide support to individuals by strengthening their resilience to changes and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies. This approach also involves addressing the root causes of poverty and supporting the transition from humanitarian crises to long-term sustainable peace and development. Therefore, applying the human security approach can substantially improve the peaceful survival of communities.

The threat to human survival and security highlights the need for an integrated framework for sustainable peace and development, which must include a comprehensive reconciliation and peacebuilding agenda. Emphasizing the importance of the human security approach, there is a call for development strategies that create more resilient societies where individuals are protected from chronic threats such as poverty, hunger, disease, violence, and oppression, as well as sudden disruptions in their daily lives.

The study reveals that conflict and violence, primarily between the Amhara and Oromo communities, have led to internal displacement in the East Wallaga Zone. This displacement has had a significant impact on the affected communities, with many individuals and families having to flee their homes and communities due to the violence. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) also documented incidents of displacement in the area in its report on communal violence, noting that many local communities had been displaced and were living in temporary shelters or with host families. The displacement has resulted in challenges in accessing basic services such as

healthcare, education, and water and sanitation, as many of the displaced individuals and families are living in difficult conditions.

As of December 2020, more than 1.4 million people were internally displaced in Ethiopia due to conflict and violence, according to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). The East Wallaga Zone is among the areas where displacement has occurred. The displacement situation has been a long-standing challenge for local communities, with significant psychological impacts on individuals and families who have experienced trauma and are struggling to cope in temporary shelters or with host families. The affected communities require humanitarian assistance and support, including access to basic services and mental health services. The human rights situation in North-Eastern Wallagga has also been a cause for concern, with reports of violations and abuses against local communities. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) documented instances of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture, which have been attributed to various actors, including security forces and armed groups.

The violations and abuses in the area have had a significant impact on the local population, with many individuals and families experiencing trauma, fear, and displacement. The displacement has resulted in many people living in temporary shelters or with host families, which has affected their access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation. Additionally, the violations and abuses have had a negative effect on freedom of expression and association, with reports of individuals being targeted for their perceived political affiliations or expressions of dissent. The EHRC report noted that the human rights violations had created a climate of fear and intimidation in the area, which has made it difficult for individuals and communities to speak out or report abuses.

The challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallaga are not only due to political factors but are also influenced by social and economic factors. The Rift Valley Institute (RVI) report in 2019 highlighted cultural differences, tensions between ethnic groups, discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization as social factors that have contributed to the challenges faced by local communities. Economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to basic services and resources have also made many communities vulnerable, particularly in rural areas [16].

Report confirmed that environmental degradation, climate change, and other factors have exacerbated these challenges. The poverty rate in the Oromia region, which includes North-Eastern Wallaga, is higher than the national average and access to fundamental services such as education and healthcare is limited, according to the same report.

The challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallaga have been influenced by a combination of social, economic, and environmental factors. The RVI report in 2019 highlighted social factors such as cultural differences, tensions between different ethnic groups, discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization as contributing to the challenges faced by local communities. Economic factors such as poverty, unemployment, and limited access to basic services and resources have also made many communities vulnerable, particularly in rural areas. The World Bank report in 2019 confirmed that environmental degradation, climate change, and other factors have exacerbated these challenges. The same report also revealed that the poverty rate in the Oromia region, which includes North-Eastern Wallaga, is higher than the national average and access to basic services such as education and healthcare is limited.

Historical factors, including the legacy of Drought and famine in Northern in Ethiopia in 1970s, land ownership issues and the marginalization of certain ethnic groups, have also contributed to the challenges faced by local communities. Rift Valley Institute [17] noted that these factors have contributed to a sense of injustice and unequal treatment, and have fueled tensions and conflict in the area. Security factors, including the presence of armed groups and the militarization of certain areas, have also contributed to the challenges faced by local communities. The presence of armed groups has led to human rights violations, displacement, and a climate of fear and insecurity for many local communities. The report by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission [18] noted that armed groups have been responsible for human rights violations in the area, including attacks on civilians and destruction of property. In sum, the challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallaga are complex and interconnected, and require a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the challenges and promotes sustainable development, human rights, and peacebuilding.

The impact of the challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallaga on the human rights situation has been significant. Human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and torture, have contributed to a climate of fear and intimidation in the area. The study by EHRC [19] substantiates this stating that displacement of local communities has also had an impact on access to basic services, including health care, education, and water and sanitation, as many of the displaced individuals and families are living in challenging conditions. Additionally, the violations and abuses have had a chilling effect on freedom of expression and association in the area,

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with reports of individuals being targeted for their perceived political affiliations or expressions of dissent.

Existing policies, programs, and interventions aimed at addressing the challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallaga have had varying levels of effectiveness. The Ethiopian government has launched various initiatives aimed at addressing the root causes of the conflict and promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation in the area, including the establishment of a peace and security committee and the deployment of security forces to the area. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives has been limited by ongoing violence and insecurity in the area, as well as a lack of trust between different ethnic groups and political parties. Humanitarian organizations have also provided assistance to affected communities, including the provision of emergency shelter, food, and water and sanitation facilities. However, the scale of the displacement and the ongoing violence in the area has made it difficult to provide comprehensive support to all affected individuals and families.

Accordingly, there is a need for more effective policies, programs, and interventions that address the root causes of the conflict and promote sustainable development, human rights, and peacebuilding in the area. This includes addressing issues of governance, land ownership, and access to basic services, as well as promoting inter-community dialogue and reconciliation. Additionally, there is a need for greater accountability for human rights violations and abuses, including through the investigation and prosecution of those responsible.

In conclusion, the situation in North-Eastern Wallagga presents significant threats to the survival and well-being of local communities. The deterioration of daily life and dignity of human beings in the area has been caused by a range of factors, including political instability and conflict, social tensions, economic challenges, historical grievances, and security concerns. These factors have contributed to human rights violations, displacement, and a climate of fear and insecurity in the area. The impact of these challenges on the local population has been significant, with many individuals and families experiencing trauma, fear, and displacement, as well as limited access to basic services and resources.

Efforts to address the challenges faced by local communities in North-Eastern Wallagga require a comprehensive approach that addresses the root causes of the conflict and promotes sustainable development, human rights, and peacebuilding. This includes addressing issues of governance, land ownership, and access to basic services, as well as promoting inter-community dialogue and reconciliation. Additionally, there is a need for greater

accountability for human rights violations and abuses, including through the investigation and prosecution of those responsible. It is essential to prioritize the needs and priorities of affected communities in designing and implementing effective policies, programs, and interventions aimed at promoting the survival, dignity, and well-being of all human beings in the area.

Based on the finding, the study recommends:
a) Protect Human Rights: The Ethiopian government, security forces, and armed groups should respect human rights and prevent human rights violations through effective policies and mechanisms.
b) Promote Peace and Reconciliation: There is a need for inter-community dialogue and reconciliation to address historical grievances and promote social cohesion. This can be achieved through community-led peacebuilding initiatives and the establishment of forums for dialogue and reconciliation at the local and national levels.
c) Address Economic Challenges: Addressing economic challenges, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services and resources, is critical for promoting the well-being and dignity of local communities. This includes promoting equitable access to education, healthcare, and water and sanitation services, as well as supporting sustainable livelihoods and addressing environmental degradation.
d) Improve Governance and Rule of Law: Improving governance and the rule of law is crucial for addressing political instability and conflict in the area. This includes strengthening institutions, promoting transparency and accountability, and ensuring that all individuals and communities are represented and heard in decision-making processes.
e) Support Humanitarian Assistance: Humanitarian organizations should continue to provide assistance to affected communities, including emergency shelter, food, and water and sanitation facilities. The scale of displacement and the ongoing violence in the area require a comprehensive response that prioritizes the needs and priorities of affected communities.

In a nutshell, addressing the threats to survival and promoting the well-being and dignity of human beings in North-Eastern Wallagga requires a comprehensive and sustained effort that engages all stakeholders, including local communities, civil society organizations, and the government.

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