

PROTECTIVE FRAMEWORKS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMY OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS) IN ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF THE AFAR REGION

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Abstract

The study aims to evaluate the impact of protective frameworks on the socio-economic conditions of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the Ethiopia-Afar Region due to conflict in the northern region. This evaluation will be conducted using national and international instruments such as the Ethiopian Constitution, the Kampala Convention, UN Guiding Principles, and the Great Lakes Protocol. The study employed a qualitative research method, and primary data were collected through key informant interviews, observations, and document reviews. The study's findings show that the government is limited in providing an adequate response. The findings also indicate that the government's ability to provide an appropriate standard of living, including, at the very least, access to enough food, water, decent housing, health care, a foundational education, and opportunities for jobs and livelihoods, is limited. Additionally, none of the IDPs recovered any personal property that was destroyed or left behind at their place of origin as a result of their displacement; one of the study's key findings is that national policy does not adequately protect the rights of IDPs. The study's conclusions recommend developing a national policy framework to protect IDPs both during and after relocation, to provide them with a long-term solution by ensuring adequate living conditions, to find a mechanism by which IDPs can recover their own property and documentation that was lost or destroyed as a result of displacement, or to be compensated for it and to provide a legal remedy for crimes committed against IDPs. Ethiopia must also ratify international agreements such as the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) and establish reliable institutional frameworks. This will compel the Ethiopian government to prioritize and pay attention to IDPs affected by war and other causes.

Keywords

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Afar Region, Tigray, Protective Frameworks, Durable solutions

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1. Introduction

According to the United Nations Guiding Principles (1998), IDPs are “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border.” In a more recent definition, the Kampala Convention (2009) defined Internally Displaced Persons as “persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State.”

Due to the increasing number (estimated 40.3 million worldwide) of global IDPs (Edwards, 2017), IDPs are now considered as important as other issues in the scholarly community. Internal displacement can be caused by international or non-international armed conflicts, circumstances of violence that are not armed conflicts, grave human rights violations, natural or man-made disasters, and so on, according to the definitions above. Several researchers (Lwabukuna, 2011; Terminiski, 2013; Van der Ploeg and Vanclay, 2017; Maru, 2017; IDMC 2018a; IDMC 2018b; Tarrósy 2020) identified conflict as one of the causes of internal displacement. Furthermore, IDPs remain in their own nation and are protected by their own government, even if that government is to blame for or complicit in their relocation (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). At this point, it is important to note that the phrase “in particular” in the Guiding Principles definition implies that the list of displacement factors is not exhaustive. Internal displacement can also be caused by large-scale development projects such as dams that are developed without any attempt by the government to relocate or compensate displaced persons.

Fundamental human rights are severely violated for IDPs. Psychological pain from the loss of family, friends, and property; security dangers and the obligation to protect oneself; and, above all, humanitarian needs and response are among the major issues encountered by IDPs both within and outside camps (Lenshie and Yenda, 2016). In many situations, the living conditions in these camps are deplorable. Food and water are in low supply, insecurity is severe, and livelihood options are scarce in congested and dirty settlements (United Nations Environment Program). This causes social and financial strains on host communities, especially as many IDPs seek refuge among the destitute in metropolitan areas (Vasa et al., 2021).

Ethiopia is riddled with climate-induced displacement caused mainly by drought and floods. Beginning in 2015, Ethiopia faced one of the strongest onsets of El Niño, a periodic heating of the eastern tropical Pacific, which reduced the *kiremt* (summer) rainfall and successively resulted in drought in the Southern and Southeastern parts of the country. This prolonged drought impacted agricultural and pastoralist communities across Ethiopia in 2019 by decreasing crop yields from the main *meher* (winter) harvest, reducing pastures for livestock,

and drying up water resources. Floods are another major cause of climate-induced displacement. While certain areas experienced reduced rainfall, other low-lying areas experienced heavy rainfall and floods during the *Kiremt* rainy season.

In recent years, Ethiopia has been among the top countries with IDPs. According to the report by OCHA (2019), Ethiopia is one of the three countries with the highest number of IDPs in the world, affecting the people's existence and their livelihood. Another report by Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) (2019) also put Ethiopia in the top ranking with regard to severe internal displacement. Around 202,202 IDPs were displaced in October 2019 alone due to several flood incidences in Afar, Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), and Somali regions (IOM Ethiopia National Displacement Report 6, Round 23, Nov 2020).

Adding to the high mobility landscape of Ethiopia is the number and rate of returns. According to the government, 1.8 million IDPs have returned to their origin as of June 2019. This nationwide, government-led return operation has been ongoing since April 2019 (IOM Ethiopia National Displacement Report 6, Round 26, September 2021).

Early in November 2020, the federal government of Ethiopia purportedly launched a military offensive after the regional party of Tigray allegedly attacked the Northern Command of the Ethiopian National Defense Force in Mekelle, Tigray province. Following this, a conflict erupted in the north of Ethiopia, which is thought to be the cause of the displacement of more than two million IDPs. The Afar Region was one of the areas impacted by the fighting, and it is believed that more than 700,000 IDPs from the Afar and Tigray ethnic groups are living there in various camps. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the accessibility and application of IDP protection frameworks and their impact on the socioeconomic situation of IDPs.

2. Research Methodology

A qualitative research design was used to analyze the data collected from primary and secondary sources of information. Focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and field observations were used to gather the primary data from the internally displaced individuals living in two camps (Silsa and Samara camps) and

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from the IDPs who had returned to Ab'ala. The following questions were raised in the focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

1. Do you know the national and international rights of IDPs?
2. How good is this IDP camp for living?
3. Do you get enough food to stay alive?
4. How effective is the regional government in fulfilling your (those returned and those in camps) needs?

The following questions were used to analyze the secondary sources of information, such as the available reports, published statutes, and proclamations.

1. What legal and policy frameworks are in place in Ethiopia to protect the rights and address the needs of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)?
2. How effective have these protective frameworks been in ensuring IDPs' physical security, access to basic services, and socio-economic well-being in the Afar region?
3. What are the key challenges and limitations the Ethiopian government and local authorities face in implementing these protective frameworks for IDPs in the Afar region?
4. How have the existing protective frameworks (or lack thereof) impacted the livelihood strategies, economic activities, and overall socio-economic status of IDPs in the Afar region?
5. To what extent have the protective frameworks considered the unique cultural, social, and economic characteristics of the Afar region and its displaced populations?
6. What roles do regional bodies (such as IGAD and AU) play in supporting or complementing the implementation of protective frameworks for IDPs in Ethiopia?
7. What strategies or policy recommendations can be proposed to strengthen the protective frameworks and enhance the socio-economic outcomes for IDPs in the Afar region of Ethiopia?

3. The IDPs and Challenges

The conflict between the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Federal government has seriously affected the people of Tigray and Afar. According to focus group discussions, the respondents found that they were socially disconnected from their relatives and became economically dependent on the aid of others. The IDPs in different camps in the Afar region have lost their herds, homes, and religious and cultural heritages, besides losing relatives. This result is similar to the findings of Landau and Duponchel (2011), who reported that the IDPs' social and economic connections prior to their displacement are matters in their own right. Moreover, researchers (for example, Baban et al., 2017; Vecchio, 2018; Abbay, 2022; Gebrewahd, 2023) concluded that social disconnections and economic dependency arise from the loss of means of livelihood.

The effect of internal displacement in the region was observed in many ways. According to the observation of the researchers from the camps where the IDPs were staying, there was a lack of access to safe water and poor sanitation, which in turn had an impact on health and led to the death of infants and elderly people. Access to safe water was one of the problems registered in the IDP hosting areas. Internal displacement also affects the host area. For example, price inflation on products and housing was observed in the area and surroundings where the IDPs stayed. This result supports the findings of Alobo and Obaji (2016), which show the IDP's dependency on the basic services of the host area.

4. International Legal and Institutional Frameworks on the Protection of IDP Rights

Those who are internally displaced are persons or a group who require protection from their states. Internally displaced people, like all people, require the fundamental human rights protections currently provided by existing legal frameworks, such as those governing refugees, humanitarian laws, and human rights. Most national states have agreements to provide their citizens with the protections the current regulatory system offers. IDPs must be protected from violations of their fundamental rights. Although there is no enforceable international legal framework to do so, the existing framework protections may play crucial roles in ensuring their safety. The following sections will examine the existing legal and institutional frameworks relevant to protecting IDPs under international law.

5. Protection under Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Instruments

International actors may be called upon to assist in cases where national authorities are unable or unwilling to protect potential or actual victims of enormous atrocities by diplomatic, humanitarian, and/or enforcement activities. Many international legal instruments have provisions that could offer protection and support to IDPs, including international human rights treaties and international humanitarian law treaties. Measures focused on internal displacement compel states to uphold their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law. However, it is crucial to consider what “protection” entails before reviewing the pertinent clauses. Protection for IDPs typically entails fostering an atmosphere that respects human rights, preventing and/or reducing the immediate impacts of a particular pattern of abuse, and re-establishing respectable living conditions through either reparation, restitution, or rehabilitation.

Protection is described as “...all activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the individual's rights in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law” (Doswald-Beck, L. and Sylvain, V. 1999; Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Internally Displaced Persons Protection Policy, 2016).

In conclusion, laws and policies that address the needs of internally displaced people (IDPs) for protection and assistance come from two different areas: first, from the principles of international human rights law and international humanitarian

law, and second, from an expanding body of IDP-specific laws and policies, many of which have been passed and are currently being put into practice by national authorities in nations worldwide. The right to freedom of movement and residence as guaranteed by Articles 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and 12(1) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are two examples of pertinent provisions of international human rights law that, as previously mentioned, can be applied for protecting IDPs (ICCPR, 1966). The UDHR also contains provisions concerning the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of property and possessions (UDHR, 1948), which are regularly violated in internal displacement. Furthermore, the UDHR grants fundamental rights to an adequate standard of living and dignity brought about by socio-economic and cultural rights (UDHR, 1948).

Economic and social rights are listed in Articles 22 to 26 of the UDHR, and they are further developed and set out as binding treaty norms in the ICESCR. These rights provide the conditions necessary for prosperity and well-being. Economic rights refer, for example, to the right to property, the right to work, which one freely chooses or accepts, the right to a fair wage, a reasonable limitation of working hours, and trade union rights. Social rights are necessary for an adequate standard of living, including rights to health, shelter, food, social care, education, and the continuous improvement of living conditions (Articles 6 to 14 of the ICESCR). Access by displaced communities to employment, social security, and property is key to self-reliance (Vida et al., 2020). This allows IDPs to live constructive and dignified lives, reduces their overall vulnerability to protection risks, and enhances the sustainability of durable solutions.

This is supplemented by, for instance, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1990). The latter two instruments underscore the equal rights of women and children, including education (CEDAW, 1979). Under the 1945 UN Charter, UN Member States are empowered to take action to promote fundamental human rights (UN Charter, 1945). International humanitarian law is especially important when armed conflict is the root cause of internal displacement. The 1977 Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and Relating to the Protection of Victims of Non-International Armed Conflicts and Common Article 3 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions are applicable. Likewise, in cases of interstate armed conflict, Part II of the Fourth Geneva Convention may be used to protect people (Geneva Conventions, 1949, Additional Protocol II). Although there are such international legal frameworks, it is frequently challenging to make use of the protection they provide for IDPs. For instance, human rights law does not entirely protect the right to freedom of movement. In particular, Common Article 3 does not protect freedom of movement in the context of internal displacement brought on by armed conflict. Additional Protocol II's Article 17 only protects from arbitrary displacement in this situation. In conclusion, there are two leading causes for the difficulties encountered. First, some nations may not have ratified the pertinent accords or have done so with significant restrictions and/or reservations.

Second, although procedures are widespread in most international law, the mechanisms for their implementation often proven to be ineffective.

6. United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement

IDPs have the same rights as other citizens and long-term residents of their country because they are citizens of their own nation. These rights are expressed in the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, a collection of consolidated, legally non-binding principles that serve as a roadmap for national and international actors in addressing the pressing human rights and humanitarian needs of IDPs. By analogy, they are compared to international human rights law, international law on refugees, and international humanitarian law. Many governments have endorsed the Guiding Principles, which, despite not being a treaty, could be argued to represent or assist in forming customary international law. The Guiding Principles lay the groundwork for an extensive framework on IDP protection, even though they are not legally binding and serve as an example of how international standards apply during displacement.

Ethiopia, a signatory of many international instruments, is not a signatory state of Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; hence, the Ethiopian government needs to be concerned and give attention to the large number of displaced people due to conflict or other reasons.

7. Great Lakes Protocol on the Protection and Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons

The Great Lakes Protocol was endorsed in 2006 by the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region's eleven-member countries. It was the first legally binding multilateral agreement to adopt and implement the UN Guiding Principles (NRC, IDMC and the International Refugee Rights Initiative, 2008). This Protocol provides that Member States shall ratify the present Protocol and enact national legislation to domesticate the Guiding Principles fully and provide a legal framework for their implementation within national legal systems (Great Lakes Protocol, 2006). This Protocol also provides the Guiding Principles with a legal foundation throughout the region and supports adopting national policies to guarantee the minimal level of protection for IDPs as stipulated by the Guiding Principles.

The Great Lakes Property Protocol is also a legally binding instrument and requires state parties to establish, adapt, or amend national laws, procedures, mechanisms and schemes to better protect the right to property of IDPs during displacement, especially in the context of durable solutions. It complements the IDP Protocol, particularly concerning creating conditions for durable solutions. The restoration of property and land rights is one of the key conditions for achieving a solution to internal displacement that is durable and sustainable (Etenesh, 2007). The special protection afforded to communities that are particularly attached to their lands, e.g. pastoralists, through the strong emphasis placed on the principle of permitting their return to their former lands, makes it clear that for such communities, return is the preferred type of durable solution, as it helps to safeguard their traditional lifestyle and livelihoods.

8. The Kampala Convention

The Kampala Convention is the first legally binding, continent-wide instrument dedicated to African internal displacement. It has set five overall objectives aimed at addressing IDP concerns. These are to:

- a. Promote and strengthen regional and national measures to prevent or mitigate, prohibit and eliminate root causes of internal displacement as well as provide for durable solutions;
- b. Establish a legal framework for preventing displacement and protecting and assisting internally displaced persons in Africa;
- c. Establish a legal framework for solidarity, cooperation, promotion of durable solutions and mutual support between the States Parties in order to combat displacement and address its consequences;
- d. Provide for the obligations and responsibilities of State Parties for the prevention of internal displacement and protection of, and assistance to, internally displaced persons;
- e. Provide for the respective obligations, responsibilities and roles of armed groups, nonstate actors and other relevant actors, including civil society organizations, concerning the prevention of internal displacement and protection of, and assistance to, internally displaced persons (Kampala Convention, 2009).

Kampala Convention specifies that states must take measures to protect individual, collective, and cultural property belonging to displaced people, whether it was left behind or is in their possession. States must also establish mechanisms for resolving disputes relating to the property of IDPs. States must take all appropriate measures, whenever possible, to restore the lands of communities with a special dependency and attachment to such lands. More generally, states commit to providing effective remedies to all displaced people, including establishing effective legal frameworks to provide just and fair compensation and other reparations to IDPs for damage incurred due to displacement (Kampala Convention, 2009).

Following the northern conflict, many individuals who had been uprooted from their homes started the difficult journey back to their original communities. This return, however, was bittersweet. While they longed to reconnect with familiar places and loved ones, the scars of the conflict ran deep.

Families found themselves grappling with not just the physical loss of their homes, but also the invisible wounds of trauma, anxiety, and grief. The IDPs returned to their original location after their area is freed from the TPLF fighters. However, this return took place without adequately addressing the psychological, social, and economic damages inflicted by the conflict.

A psychiatrist involved in treating internally displaced persons (IDPs) noted that the individuals required more time to achieve psychological well-being. Additionally, an interviewee highlighted that the number of professionals providing psychological therapy was limited, making it difficult to reach all IDPs.

Before welcoming internally displaced persons (IDPs) back to their original communities after the conflict, it was vital to create a supportive environment for their return. This meant ensuring that essential social services were ready to meet their needs, including access to medical care, education, and housing resources.

Equally important was addressing the psychological wounds many carried from their experiences. The return to familiar places could be a painful reminder of loss and trauma. Without adequate support, the journey home risked becoming overwhelming, leaving many IDPs feeling isolated and vulnerable. By prioritizing these critical services, communities could help facilitate a smoother reintegration, allowing individuals to heal and rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

Prior to resettling the IDPs in their original location, social services must be maintained, and the necessary equipment must be provided, in addition to the psychological harm. According to Abdulkadr and Neszmélyi (2021), several infrastructures were damaged due to the conflict between TPLF and the Federal government of Ethiopia. The religious centres have not been rebuilt, social service facilities have not been adequately provided, and the herd losses have not been reimbursed. The IDPs have various preferences for government and stakeholder intervention. During focus group discussions, youngsters expressed the need for special support to engage in economic activities through new startups. Meanwhile, elderly participants from Afar, interviewed as key informants, expressed a preference for social protection benefits such as the replacement of houses that were burnt as a result of the conflict. It is crucial to note that the residents of neighboring northern Afar areas belong to the Tigray and Afar ethnic groups. Returning internally displaced persons (IDPs), particularly those from the Tigrayan ethnic group, to their original locations without reaching a consensus on the situation will have negative implications for the future of both communities. The Afar IDPs, despite being victims of the conflict themselves, believe that the Tigrayan IDPs support

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the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). This perception can further tensions between the two groups.

9. The Role of IGAD and AU in Addressing IDP Crises in Ethiopia

The internal displacement crisis in Ethiopia is a complex and multifaceted humanitarian challenge, exacerbated by factors like political instability, ethnic tensions, and armed conflicts (UNHCR, 2023). The Ethiopian government has faced limitations in effectively responding to the needs of the displaced populations. In this context, the involvement of regional and continental organizations like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) can be crucial in addressing the crisis (Gebremariam, 2021).

IGAD and the AU can play a constructive role in supporting the Ethiopian government's efforts to address the IDP crisis in several ways:

- *Diplomatic engagement:* These organizations can engage in diplomatic efforts to facilitate dialogue and negotiations between the Ethiopian government, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and other relevant stakeholders (Pellet, 2021). This may aid in finding peaceful resolutions to the underlying conflicts driving the displacement of people.
- *Humanitarian assistance:* IGAD and the AU can mobilize resources and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid, such as food, water, shelter, and medical supplies, to the affected IDP populations (OCHA, 2023), like it happened similarly in other cases in East Africa (Tóth and Topa, 2014). These organizations can work with the Ethiopian government and international organizations to ensure the effective distribution and fair allocation of these resources.
- *Coordination and advocacy:* These regional and continental bodies can facilitate the coordination of efforts among various stakeholders, including the Ethiopian government, international organizations, and civil society groups, to ensure a coherent and effective response to the IDP crisis. They can also advocate for the Ethiopian government to uphold its responsibility to protect its citizens and address the IDP crisis (Habte and Kweon, 2018).
- *Monitoring and accountability:* IGAD and the AU can establish mechanisms to monitor the situation on the ground, document human rights violations, and hold the Ethiopian government accountable for its actions or inactions (Amnesty International, 2023).

It is important to note that the involvement of IGAD and the AU should strike a balance between respecting Ethiopia's sovereignty and providing necessary humanitarian assistance and support. Constructive engagement, transparency, and a commitment to finding lasting solutions that address the root causes of the IDP crisis will be crucial for the success of any regional or continental initiatives (Mabera, 2023).

10. Legal and Institutional Protection of IDPs in Ethiopia

As stated earlier, over the past few years, Ethiopia has seen a sharp rise in the number of internally displaced persons. In a recent scenario review, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies reported that approximately 1.2 million people have been internally displaced since September 2017 due to fighting, primarily along the borders between Somalia and Oromia. Following extensive political, social, and economic reforms undertaken by the Federal government across the nation starting from April 18, 2018, there has been an escalation in tension and unrest in the area. Conflicts between Somali and non-Somali ethnic groups have been occurring in Ethiopia's Somali region since August 4th, 2018. At least 52,000 people have been internally displaced as a result of the hostilities' escalating brutality in Jijiga, Kebri Dehar, and other nearby communities (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 'Emergency Plan of Action (EPoA) Ethiopia: IDP Population Movement, 2018).

Ethiopia is responsible for protecting its citizens from the effects of internal displacement as a sovereign state. As a party to various international human rights treaties and other instruments, Ethiopia must take action to ensure the rights and protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Guiding Principles, which state that it is the national authorities' "principal duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction," also favor this (UN Guiding Principles, 1998). Ethiopia must also devise domestic institutional and legal frameworks that facilitate the implementation of protection measures. However, neither has Ethiopia created a separate agency with the responsibility of protecting IDPs nor implemented a complete policy or legal framework. In light of this, assessing whether the general legal safeguards afforded to everyone under Ethiopian law are sufficient to solve the difficulties IDPs are facing in the nation is essential. It is vital to first review the contents of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) (FDRE Constitution, 1995) as the superior legislative framework applicable across the country. Under the FDRE Constitution, 'any Ethiopian or foreign national lawfully in Ethiopia has, within the national territory, the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his residence, as well as the freedom to leave the country at any time he wishes to' (FDRE Constitution, 1995 Art. 32(1)).

The FDRE Constitution establishes Ethiopia as a Federal State comprising nine regional states (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art. 47(1)), and 'the territorial jurisdiction of Ethiopia shall comprise the territory of the nine members of the Federation and its boundaries shall be as determined by international agreements (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art. 2). However, despite this explicit constitutional safeguard, Ethiopian nationals have frequently been forcibly relocated due to their ethnicity from one region of the nation to another. Unsurprisingly, there have been instances where citizens have purportedly been forcibly relocated based on their ethnicity by government agencies of the Federation's members. This is despite the FDRE Constitution's guarantees that the Federal and State legislative, executive, and judicial institutions

at all levels should protect and uphold citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms (FDRE Constitution, 1995, Art. 44(2)).

The Ethiopian Constitution incorporates various economic, social, and cultural rights. Every Ethiopian has the right to engage in economic activities freely, to choose his/her means of livelihood, occupation, and profession, and equal access to publicly funded services. It further requires the state to allocate ever-increasing resources to provide social services, provide funds for the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, the aged, and children without parents or guardians subject to available means (FDRE Constitution, Art. 41), and to pursue policies aimed at expanding job opportunities for the poor through undertaking programs and public works projects. It also imposes a duty on the state to protect and preserve historic and cultural legacies and to contribute to the promotion of arts and sports. The Constitution also guarantees several socio-economic rights as part of the National Policy Principles and Objectives (FDRE Constitution, Arts. 89-91 Ethiopia currently lacks a comprehensive national policy framework to address internal displacement despite the existence of various scattered laws. Additionally, there is no explicit policy in place to safeguard the socio-economic rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs).

11. Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission was constituted as an independent Federal entity accountable to the House of People's Representatives in accordance with sub-article 14 of article 55 of the FDRE Constitution and Proclamation No. 210/2000. The Commission's primary goal is to ensure that every citizen's rights are upheld, respected, and fully safeguarded while taking the required action when infractions are discovered. However, not all IDP categories clearly fall under the authority of the Commission; therefore, they cannot benefit from the protections offered by the Commission. However, as the Commission's primary responsibility is to deal with rights, it automatically assumes the protection of human rights.

One of the main functions of National Human Rights Institutions is to investigate complaints. They have received many complaints regarding forced evictions (Abdo, 2013). They are not explicitly allowed to file a lawsuit on their own behalf or on behalf of an aggrieved party. This is because there is no clear legal framework that gives them the right to exercise power. Under Article 6 of Proclamation 210/2000, the Commission's duty concerning different forms of IDPs has been made clear in resolving complaints of human rights breaches regardless of their causes. Above all, the Commission may play a key role in ensuring that IDPs, like everyone else in Ethiopia, are protected.

Several efforts have been made to enable the forcibly displaced people in Ethiopia to live their lives. The government acted to relocate displaced people to areas of largely secure living conditions. Additionally, it offered rudimentary services like food and drink. Through the donation of necessities like clothing and other comparable products, several societal groups also play a significant part in helping the displaced. Support from the local and international communities has included,

among other things, cash gifts and assistance in building shelters for IDP relocation. After post-conflict peacebuilding, as planned with stakeholders, it happens occasionally that displaced people are pushed into returning to their homes. This is the case in the Afar Region, where hundreds of thousands were being forcefully returned to their homes without their consent and with no adequate food, water, essential medical services, sanitation, or shelter. Generally, policymakers expect displaced persons to return to their home communities when the conflict ends (Bohnet and Rudolf, 2015). However, conflict situations are often characterized by a time of transition during which violent conflict frequently re-emerges rather than by well-defined borders. In times of ongoing war, the “right to return” is commonly mentioned; however, this puts such returnees at additional risk (Bohnet and Rudolf, 2015). As a result, requests to implement the right to return must only be considered when crucial prerequisites have been met.

12. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study’s findings reveal that the government has limitations in providing an adequate response. It indicates that the government struggles to offer a suitable standard of living, including access to essential needs such as food, water, decent housing, healthcare, education, and job opportunities. Furthermore, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the study did not recover any personal property left behind or destroyed at their place of origin due to their displacement. A key finding is that national policy fails to sufficiently protect the rights of IDPs. Sustainable solutions are necessary to ensure that IDPs no longer require aid and can resume their pre-displacement lives. As the IDPs in the study area come from various ethnic groups, particularly the Tigrayans, reintegration at their place of origin through grassroots solutions and reconciliation is recommended. Moreover, the study’s conclusions recommend developing a national policy framework to protect IDPs both during and after relocation, to provide them with a long-term solution by ensuring adequate living conditions, to find a mechanism by which IDPs can recover their own property and documentation that was lost or destroyed as a result of displacement, or to be compensated for it, and to provide a legal remedy for crimes committed against IDPs. Ethiopia must also ratify international agreements like the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (GPID) and establish reliable institutional frameworks, which force the Ethiopian government to care about and pay attention to IDPs who have been displaced by war and other causes. ✨

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