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Assessment of Community Participation in Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development in Ethiopia

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Date: June 2026

Addis Ababa, Ethiopi

Abbreviation	Full Description
AU	African Union
CCPR	Committee on Civil and Political Rights
CDP	Corridor Development Project
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CoM	Council of Ministers
DTD	UN Declaration on the Right to Development
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
HRBA	Human Rights-Based Approach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutes
RTD	Right to Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Abstract

This research examines the Addis Ababa City Administration's Corridor Development Project (CDP), officially launched on December 29, 2022, operationalizes community participation, it specifically assesses the extent to which the project operationalized community participation, balanced economic growth with social equity, and the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage assets under a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). The study deconstructs "development" away from purely macroeconomic indicators (such as GNP/GDP aggregates) toward Amartya Sen's "development as freedom" model and the Human Development Index (HDI). Sherry R. Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" is introduced as a primary analytical benchmark, separating meaningful citizen power (partnership, delegated power, control) from mere tokenism (informing, consultation) and non-participation. The study establishes that the right to development and participation is a binding legal obligation under international, regional and Ethiopia's domestic framework. The findings of this research indicate severe socio-economic trade-offs. A total of 88.5% of respondents experienced physical displacement, and 96.3% suffered severe damage to their livelihoods and community networks. Crucially, 66.7% reported receiving absolutely zero consultation, 96.3% stated their views were disregarded, and 88.9% were deemed ineligible for compensation. Eviction notices were brief, with some as short as "half a day". 100% reported severe negative impacts on enterprise survival, noting temporary closures (73.3%) and client losses (66.7%). 93.3% received no financial compensation for asset or revenue loss. 80% rated government communication poorly, indicating a style of communication that fits the lowest rungs ("tokenism" or "non-participation") of Arnstein's ladder. 76.9% of surveyed experts (lawyers, human rights professionals, judges) concluded that the project's execution actively failed to protect the constitutional participation rights enshrined under Article 43 of the FDRE Constitution. This study recommends that future development initiatives adopt meaningful participatory mechanisms, provide adequate notice, ensure fair compensation and to integrate HRBA principles throughout planing and implementation process.

Key words: Human Rights-Based Approach, community participation, right to development, community participation, compensation

1. Introduction

Development initiatives have always been pivotal in driving progress and improving the quality of life in underprivileged communities (Pandey, 2024). However, as Pandey notes, the effectiveness of these initiatives significantly hinges on the involvement and participation of the communities they aim to serve. Community participation is a vital component of development projects, as it enables the determination of the needs and rights of affected communities (Pandey, 2024). It ensures stakeholders exercise influence over public policy decisions, and share control over resources and institutions that affect their lives, thereby providing a check on the actions of government. Ultimately, it enables informed decision-making and acts as an instrumental tool to achieve specific objectives or goals.

Globally, millions of people each year are forcibly displaced by development projects, whether dams, roads, reservoirs or oil, gas and mining projects (Courtland,2003). While such projects can bring enormous benefits to society, they also impose costs, which are often borne by their poorest and most marginalized members (Courtland,2003). A contemporary example of this tension between development initiatives and community impact is the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project (CDP) officially launched on December 29, 2022 by the Addis Ababa City Administration. The Addis Ababa CDP is an extensive infrastructure development initiative aimed at transforming Ethiopia's capital city into a modern and economically vibrant metropolis (Ejigu, 2024). The project is projected to increase Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2% annually, create 50,000 jobs, and reduce traffic congestion by 30% (Ejigu, 2024). However, the contrast between the economic progress and the potential displacement of 10,000 households and the jeopardization of critical cultural heritage sites raises concerns about how economic growth can proceed without undermining the social fabric of communities (Yekatit Insights, 2024).

Despite the growing scale of development initiatives in Ethiopia, there is limited research examining how community participation is operationalized, particularly from the perspective of Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA)

concerning large scale projects such as the Addis Ababa CDP. To address this gap, this study examines community participation in the Addis Ababa CDP using HRBA. This approach integrates the principles and norms of human rights into development, emphasizing several principles, including accountability, participation and inclusivity. By doing so aligning development initiatives with obligations under international human rights instruments like the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (DTD).

2. Research Questions and Objective

Research Question: This study assess how the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project (CDP) align with human rights standards to balance economic development with social and cultural heritage preservation?

Objective: This study explores and analyzes how the Addis Ababa CDP can integrate human rights standards, especially through HRBA, to ensure balanced economic development, social equity and cultural heritage preservation.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1 Concept of Development

The term 'development' has various meanings to different people and can be explained in different contexts (Abuiyada, 2018). Historically, development has often been confused with economic growth as measured solely in terms of annual increases in per-capita income or Gross National Product (GNP), regardless of its distribution and the degree of peoples participation in effective growth (Abuiyada, 2018). However, literature suggests that technical considerations, specifically the use of statistical aggregates to measure national income and its growth have at times obscured the fact that the primary objective of development is to benefit people (UNDP, 1990). There are two key reasons why a purely economic focus is insufficient for assessing development initiatives (UNDP, 1990). Firstly, national income figures do not reveal the composition of income or the real beneficiaries (UNDP, 1990). Secondly, people often value achievements that do not show up at all, or not immediately, in higher measured income or growth figures: better nutrition and

health services, greater access to knowledge, more secure livelihoods, better working conditions, security against crime and physical violence, satisfying leisure hours, and a sense of participating in the economic, cultural and political activities of their communities (UNDP, 1990). As a response to this narrow definition provided for development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its *Human Development Report* (1990), redefined development as a means to obtain the basic objective of creating an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy, and creative lives (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1990).

This paradigm shift is further articulated by Amatrya Sen's perception of development as freedom. Sen argues that growth of GNP or of individual incomes can, of course, be very important as a means to expanding the freedoms enjoyed by the members of the society (Sen, 1999). Instead, development must be viewed as the expansion of substantive freedoms making it the ends that make development important (Sen, 1999).

In the context of urban environments, infrastructure represents the material expression of these substantive freedoms. The satisfactory provision and administration of infrastructure makes economic development possible, creates growth, and enhance competitiveness and productivity (Inter-American Development Bank, 2014). However, while it increases growth for cities, it might come with significant trade-offs. If not governed by human rights principles, these projects can disrupt established social ways of life, erase cultural heritage, or act as a catalyst for the displacement of residents.

For the purpose of this study, development is specifically defined through the synthesis of development as substantive freedom and the enjoyment of fundamental rights. This conceptualization allows for the identification of measurable units that will be used in later analysis of the Addis Ababa CDP.

3.2 Community Participation in Development

Although the definition of participation is a matter on which there is considerable disagreement among development scholars and practitioners, it is

narrowly framed to mean active participation in the realm of political decision making process only or, more broadly, as the exercise of significant control by people over the decisions concerning the organization to which they belong (Paul, 1987).

For the purposes of this study, community participation is defined as an active process by which beneficiary groups influence the direction and execution of a development project to enhance their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish (Paul, 1987).

Expanding on this, Sherry R. Arnstein's perspective provides theoretical depth to this definition. Arnstein argues that citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power; it represents the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future (Arnstein, 1969). It is the strategy by which the marginalized groups join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out (Arnstein, 1969). In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society rather than being displaced by it (Arnstein, 1969).

3.3 Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to Development

Building upon the concept of development as freedom and the necessity of active, free and meaningful community participation, the HRBA to development is a comprehensive framework that integrates the norms, principles, standards and goals of the international human rights system into the plans and processes of development (Boesen & Martin, 2007). By centering on the most marginalized, HRBA seeks to ensure equitable service delivery, encourage participation, deepen local ownership of development processes, and strengthen the accountability of all actors (UNDP, 2006). Its rationale is mutli-faceted, serving not only as a mandate by international human rights treaties, national constitutions and laws, and but also as a practical necessity to realize the complementary and interdependent paradigms of sustainable development

and human rights (UNDP, 2006). Furthermore, it adds value by ensuring universality, indivisibility, equality, non-discrimination, participation and inclusion, accountability and the rule of law in development efforts (UNDP, 2006).

The application of the human rights-based approach favorably influences the development of programming which prioritizes the needs of the poor, marginalized and vulnerable groups (UNDP, 2006). To ensure these outcomes, HRBA is underpinned by five key human rights principles, also known as PANEL: Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination and Equality, Empowerment and Legality (European Network of National Human Rights Institutes [NHRI], n.d.).

- **Participation** – everyone is entitled to active participation in decision-making processes which affect the enjoyment of their rights (European Network of NHRI, n.d.).
- **Accountability** – duty-bearers are held accountable for failing to fulfil their obligations towards rights-holders. There should be effective remedies in place when human rights breaches occur (European Network of NHRI, n.d.).
- **Non-discrimination and equality** – all individuals are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind. All types of discrimination should be prohibited, prevented and eliminated (European Network of NHRI, n.d.).
- **Empowerment** – everyone is entitled to claim and exercise their rights. Individuals and communities need to understand their rights and participate in the development of policies which affect their lives (European Network of NHRI, n.d.).
- **Legality** – approaches should be in line with the legal rights set out in domestic and international laws (European Network of NHRI, n.d.).

4. Legal Framework on Right to Development and Community Participation

4.1 International and Regional Legal Frameworks

The right to development emerged in the 1970's as part of the struggle of developing countries for a new international economic order (Tadeg, 2012). This move culminated in the formal recognition of the existence of a human right to development through the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD) in 1986 (Tadeg, 2012). Since then, efforts to implement the right to development could not achieve the desired result due to the high politicization of the subject (Tadeg,

2012). Academic literature on the right to development has also focused on the conceptual underpinnings of the subject rather than on giving operational substance to the principles of the RTD (Tadeg, 2012). This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing the human rights obligations of states through a right to development paradigm to a specific urban infrastructure project.

The foundational legal instrument, the DRD, establishes in Article 1(1) that the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development (DRD, 1986). Crucially, Article 2 (3) imposes a duty upon states to formulate appropriate national development policies on the basis of the active, free and meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholder (DRD, 1986). This standard was further elevated by the Article 10 of the Vienna Declaration (1993), it laid down an important precedent by stating the RTD as an integral part of human rights and emphasizing the principles of universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interdependence (Vienna, 1993).

The legal requirement for participation is further derived from civil and political rights. Article 25 (a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) guarantees the right to participate to every citizen in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives (ICCPR, 1966). As clarified in CCPR General Comment No. 25 paragraph 5, the conduct of public affairs, referred to in paragraph (a), is a broad concept which relates to the exercise of political power, in particular the exercise of legislative, executive and administrative powers (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 1996). It covers all aspects of public administration, and the formulation and implementation of policy at international, national, regional and local levels (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 1996). Paragraph 8 of the Comment specifies that citizens should also take part in the conduct of public affairs by exerting influence through public debate and dialogue, supported by ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association (United Nations Human Rights Committee, 1996).

Simultaneously, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 1 affirms that all people have the right of self-determination,

allowing people to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development (ICESCR, 1966). In the context of the Addis Ababa CDP, Article 11 is especially significant given that it recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living and housing (ICESCR, 1966). Under the CESCR General Comment No. 7 paragraph 13 mandates that prior to carrying out any evictions, and particularly those involving large groups, that all feasible alternatives are explored in consultation with the affected persons, with a view to avoiding, or at least minimizing, the need to use force (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1997). Legal remedies or procedures should be provided to those who are affected by eviction orders (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1997) . States parties shall also see to it that all the individuals concerned have a right to adequate compensation for any property, both personal and real, which is affected (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1997). Furthermore, Paragraph 15 outlines the procedural protection and due process required in relation to forced evictions, which include:

- Opportunity for genuine consultation with those affected;
- Adequate and reasonable notice for all affected persons prior to the scheduled date of eviction;
- Information on the proposed evictions, and, where applicable, on the alternative
- purpose for which the land or housing is to be used, to be made available in
- reasonable time to all those affected;
- Provision of legal remedies and legal aid to persons who are in need of it to seek redress from the courts (United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1997).

At the regional level, Article 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) recognizes the right to economic, social and cultural development with due regard to freedom and identity and in the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind (Organization of African Unity, 1981). It is only in Africa that this right has been provided for with binding legal force whereas the UN instrument is merely a Declaration of this right (Ouguergouz, 2003). Furthermore, as seen in the jurisprudence of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, in the case of Centre for Minority Rights Development (Kenya) And Minority Rights Group International on behalf of Endorois Welfare Council V. Kenya. The

Commission stated that lack of consultation with the community; the subsequent restrictions on access to the land; and the inadequate involvement in the process of developing the region for use as a tourist game reserve, had violated the community's right to development under the U.N. Declaration on the Right to Development (Centre for Minority Rights Development v. Kenya, 2009). For these violations, the Commission recommended that the government recognize rights of ownership, restitute to the Endorois' their ancestral lands, compensate their losses (Centre for Minority Rights Development v. Kenya, 2009). This precedent underscores that development initiatives such as the Addis Ababa CDP, RTD and community participation are non-negotiable legal requirements.

4.2 Ethiopia's Legal Framework

While international and regional normative frameworks discussed in the previous section serve as the foundation for the RTD, RTD is further domesticated under Article 43 of the 1995 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). Article 43 (1) stipulates that the people of Ethiopia has the right to improved living standards and to sustainable development (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995). Of particularly significance for the assessment of the Addis Ababa CDP is Article 43 (2), which mandates that nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995).

RTD is further strengthened under the FDRE constitution Article 13(2), which explicitly outlines that interpretations of the rights under chapter 3 (a chapter dealing with Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, including the RTD) should be in a manner conforming with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenants on Human Rights and International instruments adopted by Ethiopia (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995). This in effect means that interpretation of Article 43 of the Constitution should be made in light of the authoritative interpretations of the DRD and the Banjul Charter among others.

Beyond the RTD, the FDRE constitution also has provisions that embeds the principle of community participation as enshrined under Article 92 (3), which guarantees people the right to full consultation and to the expression of views-in the planning and implementation of environmental policies and projects that affect them directly (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995).

Furthermore, in the context of the Addis Ababa CDP, Article 91(2) enshrines dual duty towards government and citizens to protect the country's natural endowment, historical sites and objects (Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1995). This shared duty serve as a foundation for assessing the state's obligation, particularly in looking into the effect brought on historically dense areas such as Piassa.

To operationalize these international, regional and constitutionally guarantees in the context of urban transformation, the government has enacted Proclamation No.1161/2019 (Expropriation of Land Holdings for Public Purposes, Payments of Compensation and Resettlement of Displaced People). This proclamation stipulates under Article 4(4), if land is expropriated for public purpose, the procedure shall be transparent, participatory, fair and accountable process (Proclamation No. 1161/2019, 2019). Specifically, Article 8 1(a) requires city or woreda administration to consult land holders who are to be displaced at least one year before they handover their holdings (Proclamation No. 1161/2019, 2019). While the law also allows lesser than one year if the land is required urgently for investment on Article 8 1(b) , the overarching standard provided in Article 4 (2) for compensation and resettlement to sustainably restore and improve the livelihood of displaced people remains a mandatory benchmark for the CDP (Proclamation No. 1161/2019, 2019).

The procedural details of Proclamation No.1161/2019 on consultation are further redefined by the Council of Ministers (CoM) Regulation No. 472/2020 (Regulation to Provide for Expropriation of Land for Public Purposes and Valuation, Compensation, and Resettlement). This regulation provides on Article 4 a detailed consultation procedure that shall follow:

- A written notice shall be sent to all concerned land holders and proof of receipt by such landholders shall be provided (Council of Ministers Regulation No. 472/2020, 2020).
- The consultation shall proceed where three fourth (3/4) or more quorum are present. If that is not possible for the first meeting, a second consultative meeting shall be called and conducted where more than half of the land holders are present. However, if half of the landholders are not present in the consultative meeting called for the second time, a third notice shall be sent out and the consultative meeting shall be conducted finally in the presence of any number of land holders (Council of Ministers Regulation No. 472/2020, 2020).
- The conditions of women, elders, and vulnerable groups shall be taken in to consideration to ensure inclusive participation when conducting consultations. However, to truly attain an inclusive dialogue including a quota can transform the current subjective means of assessing inclusivity into an objective unit of measurement (Council of Ministers Regulation No. 472/2020, 2020).

Finally, it is worth noting the recent Proclamation No.1371/2025 (Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Proclamation) which marks a remarkable evolution for RTD in Ethiopia as unlike its predecessor this new proclamation includes social impact alongside environmental impact. Although, the Addis Ababa CDP commenced before this proclamation entered into force, its explicit inclusion of social impact as the negative or positive impact of a development plan on people's lifestyles, relationships and community organization sets a higher legislative standard for ongoing and future development initiatives (Proclamation No. 1371/2025, 2025). This reinforces the HRBA by demanding to prioritize social-well-being alongside physical infrastructure in development efforts.

5. Methdology, Findings and Analysis

This study delves into the complex realities and perspectives surrounding the Addis Ababa CDP through a qualitative research method. To comprehensively grasp the legal and social landscape that shapes development projects in Ethiopia, the research employs a multifaceted approach, incorporating both doctrinal and non-doctrinal sources. Doctrinal analysis involves a thorough examination of primary and secondary legal sources, including laws, legal commentaries, and scholarly works .

This meticulous assessment is complemented by non-doctrinal research, which utilizes empirical primary data gathered through questionnaire collected from residents, and business owners affected (positively or negatively) directly or indirectly by the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project. The perspective of professionals including lawyers, human rights experts, urban planners, researchers, academicians and architects is also incorporated.

A blend of purposive and snowball sampling is used. Purposive sampling targets experts in developmental projects, legal practitioners, academics, and community affected by the CDP. Snowball sampling expands the participant pool by referrals from initial group that are affected by the project. This entire process is characterized as exploratory analysis, as it aims to uncover patterns and themes within the data, providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

5.1 Residents Directly Affected by the Addis Ababa CDP

This section of the research is conducted by collecting data from 27 residents of Addis Ababa that are directly affected by the Addis Ababa CDP. The data collected has shown a major trade-off between the objective of the development project and the socioeconomic impact on the residents. Demographically, the group that were part of this research represents the most vital segment of the city population (BDEEX, 2026), as 40.7% fall into the 26-35 age and 22.2% represent under 25. These residents are not limited to a single area or sub-city but they come from different areas.

The impact levied by the CDP on these residents is multidimensional. The data collected indicates that:

- 88.5% has been displaced,
- 50% has induced property damage,
- 61.5% has faced transportation hurdles, and
- Respondents also highlighted other shortcomings including scarcity of affordable housing, and disruption to access to education and health.

While the FDRE Constitution, international and regional agreements bestow an obligation towards Ethiopia to create a cohesive environment that allows an active,

meaningful, and free participation of citizens in development efforts. The data collected from residents reveal that 66.7% of residents were not consulted at all, and 96.3% felt that their view were completely disregarded by the relevant authorities. This challenge is further exacerbated by the fact that residents were not given adequate notice, for example one resident revealed notice period as short as “half a day” (Resident Respondent 4, questionnaire response, April 16,2026), practices that directly contradict with the extensive list of engagement mentioned under Proclamation 1161/2019 to consult people that are affected by the development efforts. This finding mirrors Amnesty internationals findings that officials failed to provide sufficient notice (Amnesty International, 2025).

Among the principle of HRBA (accountability, legality) and the legal frameworks discussed in the previous section, compensation and adequate notice play a crucial role in a development initiative. Questions were posed to residents from this angle, as to compensation 88.9% of residents were not eligbile for compensation, and those who were eligible described the compensation as inadequate. This aligns with Amnesty Internationals report that officials failed to conduct adequate consultation with the impacted population, and none of those impacted reported receiving any compensation (Amnesty International, 2025). The scale of forced evictions – the removal of people against their will from their homes without legal protections and other safeguards – resulting from the implementation of the CDP, is unprecedented in Ethiopia (Amnesty International, 2025). The sudden and forced eviction of a large number of people has also left millions of residents in cities where the CDP is currently being implemented living in fear, uncertain if they will be the next to be displaced (Amnesty International, 2025).

Beyond physical loss, the socio-economic consequences have emerged as a common theme (Amnesty International, 2025). For example, beyond the visible demolition of houses, the forced eviction had an impact on people’s livelihoods, children’s education and on social and community networks that many people relied on for support in their day-to-day lives (Amnesty International, 2025). 96.3% of residents stated that the project has brought a negative impact on their livelihood and community tie. The social bonds and informal welfare systems of entire

neighborhoods were severed. The project has undermined the non-material assets that residents rely on for survival.

5.2. Business Owners Directly Affected by the Addis Ababa CDP

The Addis Ababa CDP has introduced a transformative shift in its urban landscape, one that promises cleaner streets, better green spaces, and enhanced infrastructure which has fundamentally altered the commercial landscape of the city (Suleman, 2025). However, the empirical data collected from 15 business owners directly affected by the CDP reveal a gap between the state led development efforts and the right to maintain a livelihood by business owners in Addis Ababa. All the respondents to this research have operated for more than 10 years in that specific area.

The survey indicates that 100% of the respondents reported that the project affected their businesses negatively. More specifically, 73.3% experienced temporary closure, and 66.7% faced a significantly reduction in customers.

Applying Arnstein's Ladder of Participation to these findings, the projects approach to community participation closely aligns with the two bottom rugs (degree of tokenism and non-participation). While 33.3% of business owners stated they were consulted, the 80% responded poorly on the quality of communication by the relevant authority with a score of 1-2 out of 5.

A concerning aspect of this project is the directive mandating businesses to vacate their premises within a short timeframe (Yekatit Insights, 2024). This sudden displacement threatens the survival of small and medium enterprises, which form the backbone of the local economy (Yekatit Insights, 2024). Such forced removals challenge the government's narrative of job creation and economic stability (Yekatit Insights, 2024). As small businesses struggle, rising unemployment could perpetuate a cycle of poverty that contradicts the progress these corridors aim to achieve (Gebre 2024).

Under the PANEL framework, the principles of accountability and legality require duty-bearers to be held accountable for failing to fulfil their obligations

towards rights-holders. Furthermore, the framework enshrines that the approaches should be in line with the legal rights set out in domestic and international laws (European Network of NHRI, n.d.). However, 93.3% of the respondents reported they received no compensation for their losses. Findings indicate significant impacts on businesses enterprises, including financial losses, revenue declines, and high relocation costs (Wudineh & Megento, 2026). Owners reported difficulties accessing resources, disruptions in customer relations, and asset losses, alongside dissatisfaction with compensation (Wudineh & Megento, 2026). Supply chain disruptions led to delays and increased costs, while employee displacement affected morale and productivity (Wudineh & Megento, 2026). Uncertainty surrounding the projects hindered long-term business planning and investment, and regulatory challenges strained stakeholder relationships (Wudineh & Megento, 2026).

5.3 Legal Professionals Perspective

This section analyzes data collected from 13 legal experts, including lawyers (61.5%), human rights experts (15.4%), and a judge (7.7%). The feedback from these legal professionals revealed a significant gap between the project execution and the HRBA standards.

A major inquires of this study is whether the CDP planing and execution stages created a cohesive environment for people to participate, and in particular to be consulted on the project that affects their community. Findings show that 76.9% of experts that responded to this study believe that the project does not adequately protect participation rights under Article 43 of the FDRE Constitution. Respondents emphasized that participatory mechanisms must be strengthened to ensure early, continuous, and inclusive community engagement. This reinforces the centralized structure, where top-down decision making process which often excludes city residents in crucial decisions that affect them.

Respondents also responded to the question if consultation standards are sufficient, and 76.9% experts rated the standards as insufficient. Feedback from respondents can be deduced to three systemic failures:

1. The limited inclusivity in community consultations, lack of timely and accessible information for affected residents.

2. Power imbalances that restrict meaningful participation.

3. Experts argued that government should heed the interests of the community and strike balance between community interests and development needs, where absolutely necessary the displaced should be adequately compensated.

Under the HRBA principles is legality meaning that development efforts should align to a countries domestic or international legal obligations. 69.2% of experts disagree and 23.1% strongly disagree that the current compensation framework is adequate in practice. Experts empathized their concern on the adequacy of notice periods before demolition and whether relocation sites provide comparable access to livelihoods. The limited window for administrative or judicial appeal for those contesting valuation or relocation decisions. Ensuring that the elderly or those with low mobility are not disproportionately affected by the rapid physical changes to the urban environment. Overall, the implementation of the project appears to be inconsistent with the constitutional right to property.

5.4 Urban Planners, Architectures, Academicians and Researchers Perceptive

To evaluate Addis Ababa's CDP through the lenses of sustainable development and cultural sensitivity, data was gathered from 8 specialized professionals, including urban planner (12.5%), academicians (62.5%), researcher (12.5%), and architect (12.5%). This groups insights provide a technical evaluation of whether the project adheres to international urban planning standards and HRBA principles.

The finding from respondents identified a unanimous consensus regarding significant planning weakness, which includes a lack of consideration for residents, lack of transparency, and lack of community participation, which is primarily centered on a top-down approach which affects the long-term sustainability of the project. Experts characterized the project as politically motivated rather than being technically grounded, noting that it doesn't follow basic planning principles which includes community participation. Furthermore, the respondents highlighted that the

implementation practice is full of trial and error as it failed to benchmark best practices from other similar countries urban development efforts.

A core element of HRBA in urban planning is the protection of cultural and historical sites. Only 37.5% of respondents felt heritage considerations were sufficient, while 50% stated heritage preservation was insufficient. Comments given by the experts were more severe, describing the project as heritage destroying which loathes the city's identity by displacing long-time residents to realize a superficial city. Another expert emphasized that similar projects should be executed with calm, far-sighted, and profound engineering insight that considers the well-being of future generations.

As to the sustainability of the corridor development project, 50% of the respondents are unsure, while 37.55 believes its definitely unsustainable. One expert emphasized the lack of participatory planning deteriorates the sense of ownership among Addis Ababa residents. Without the buy in of the community the project risks becoming a political monument rather than a functional urban space.

Conclusion

The Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project (CDP) represents an extensive urban infrastructure initiative designed to modernize the capital city. However, its implementation operates within a centralized, top-down governance model where municipal authorities are directly appointed by the federal executive, driving rapid economic development at the expense of local community input. There exists a distinct tension between targeted macro-economic growth metrics (such as a projected 2% annual GDP growth and job creation) and human-centric micro-impacts, underscored by the forced displacement of thousands of households and the demolition of tangible and intangible cultural assets. In conclusion, conventional economic indicators fail to satisfy the contemporary criteria of inclusive development. A Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) is a mandatory analytical and practical requirement to reconcile necessary urban modernization with the state's binding domestic and international human rights obligations.

Under Article 2(3) of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD) and Article 25(a) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), states have an international law obligation to ensure "active, free, and meaningful participation" in public affairs and policy implementation. Regionally, Article 22 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Banjul Charter) provides this Right to Development (RTD) with binding legal force, as affirmed by the jurisprudence of the African Commission (e.g., *Endorois Welfare Council v. Kenya*), which renders infrastructure development without genuine prior consultation a cognizable human rights violation. In accordance with CESCR General Comment No. 7 (Article 11 of the ICESCR), authorities are legally barred from carrying out large-scale evictions without evaluating all feasible alternatives in direct consultation with affected persons, rendering reasonable notice, legal remedies, and fair compensation non-negotiable legal guarantees. Domestically, the Right to Development, community consultation, and cultural preservation are constitutionally guaranteed under Articles 43, 91(2), and 92(3) of the FDRE Constitution. This constitutional tier is operationalized via Proclamation No. 1161/2019 and CoM Regulation No. 472/2020, which explicitly require transparent, accountable processes, formal written notices, mandatory public quorums (a three-fourths threshold for initial meetings), and up to a one-year notice period prior to the expropriation of land holdings. So community participation is not an administrative courtesy or a policy preference, but a strict, legally binding procedural precondition for the validity of any public-purpose land expropriation and urban renewal project under both Ethiopian and international law.

Empirical data and field reporting (including findings verified by international bodies like Amnesty International) reveal a severe breakdown in legal compliance. In practice, the City Administration bypassed the mandatory procedural safeguards of Regulation No. 472/2020. Residents and business owners were subjected to forced evictions and demolitions without the statutory notice periods, without adequate prior consultation, and without the provision of lawful, timely, or fair compensation frameworks. The top-down execution of the CDP reduced community involvement to the lowest tiers of Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation—specifically "manipulation," "therapy," or at best, unidirectional "informing" (tokenism)—completely failing to reach the legally mandated thresholds of "partnership" or "meaningful consultation".

Furthermore, the demolition of historically dense areas (such as Piassa) directly breached the shared state-citizen statutory duty to protect and preserve cultural heritage under Proclamation No. 209/2000 and Article 91(2) of the Constitution. T he planning and execution phases of the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project stand in direct and systemic violation of the PANEL principles (Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment, and Legality) underpinned by international covenants and domestic expropriation laws.

Based on a holistic review of the thesis chapters, it is the final legal conclusion of this study that the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project (CDP), while valid in its ultimate economic development objectives, is procedurally invalid and unlawful in its execution under the existing constitutional and legislative framework of Ethiopia. By prioritizing rapid infrastructural transformation through an authoritarian, centralized governance model, the Addis Ababa City Administration has systematically ignored the statutory mandates of Article 43(2) of the FDRE Constitution, Proclamation No. 1161/2019, and CoM Regulation No. 472/2020. The total omission of mandatory public quorums, the failure to provide the statutory notice periods, and the lack of an immediate, adequate compensation framework constitute clear violations of due process.

Consequently, to insulate future urban renewal projects from extensive human rights liabilities and regional judicial challenges (under the Banjul Charter), the state must transition its development paradigm from administrative tokenism to a strict Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA). Urban planning must legally embed the PANEL principles, ensuring that affected residents are treated not as passive subjects of economic displacement, but as active, legally protected rights-holders with absolute entitlements to genuine consultation, procedural due process, and equitable compensation.

Recommendation

The study demonstrates a critical legal friction where the implementation of the Addis Ababa CDP relies on top-down, non-participatory dynamics. This approach

actively bypasses domestic statutory protocols (such as Proclamations 1161/2019 and 209/2000) and violates international human rights treaty obligations (ICCPR, ICESCR). To align with the PANEL framework (Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment, Legality), upcoming project iterations must reform urban planning structures. This transformation requires shifting from top-down enforcement to legally binding, early-stage community partnerships, statutory notice periods, and fair, transparent compensation frameworks before any physical execution begins.

The following recommendations utilize a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and adhere strictly to the PANEL framework (Participation, Accountability, Non-discrimination, Empowerment, and Legality) to reconcile the Addis Ababa Corridor Development Project (CDP) with domestic and international legal obligations.

- Align the overriding executive objectives of the Corridor Development Project (CDP)—such as target GDP growth, job creation, and traffic reduction—with quantifiable human rights benchmarks. Transition project indicators from purely statistical and economic aggregates to people-centered matrices. Economic progress metrics must not be permitted to obscure or legally justify socioeconomic displacement. The City Administration must integrate a human-rights impact assessment into the absolute initial phase of infrastructure planning.
- Move urban development execution away from "tokenism" (informing/consultation) or "non-participation" on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, and legally mandate structural mechanisms that ensure "Citizen Power" (partnership/delegated power).
- Operationalize the binding statutory duties under Article 25(a) of the ICCPR (conduct of public affairs), Article 2(3) of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development (active, free, and meaningful participation), and Article 43 of the FDRE Constitution.
- Enforce strict procedural protections established under CESCR General Comment No. 7 (Article 11 of the ICESCR). Before any demolition, the state must demonstrate that all feasible alternatives were explored in genuine consultation with affected groups, provide adequate and reasonable notice, and ensure timely, fair, and adequate compensation for personal and real property.

- Mandate strict adherence to Article 8(1)(a) of Proclamation No. 1161/2019, which requires city or woreda administrations to consult landholders at least *one year* prior to handing over holdings.
- Implement the state's conservation duties under Article 4 and 5(a) of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) by integrating cultural heritages directly into comprehensive city planning. Amend enforcement interpretations of Article 18(1) of Proclamation No. 209/2000 to ensure that state-driven infrastructure development projects do not bypass accountability for heritage preservation under the guise of possession dynamics.
- Rectify systemic failures identified across affected communities and legal/urban planning professionals by introducing legally insulated procedural safeguards.
- Eradicate the illegal practice of providing unconstitutionally short notice periods (e.g., "half a day"), which actively violates Proclamation No. 1161/2019. Enforce a baseline administrative freeze on any eviction lacking a prior completed valuation and formalized compensation payout.
- Halt arbitrary, rapid-vacate directives issued to small and medium enterprises. To prevent catastrophic livelihood disruption and asset losses, create structured, phased relocation schedules with designated alternative commercial spaces that offer equivalent livelihood access.
- Introduce an expedited, independent administrative and judicial appeal framework allowing affected stakeholders to contest land valuation, relocation suitability, or heritage impacts without fear of immediate summary demolition.
- Legally insulate marginalized and vulnerable groups (such as the elderly or low-mobility residents) from suffering disproportionate burdens due to rapid, top-down physical modifications of the city, aligning execution with CESCR General Comment No. 20 (elimination of systemic discrimination).
- Dismantle the centralized, top-down urban planning structure that currently excludes city residents from crucial municipal decisions.
- Mandate that all future iterations of the Corridor Development Project shift away from a politically motivated, "trial-and-error" implementation methodology. Legally integrate the PANEL framework into municipal codes so that transparency, verified public participation, and human rights legality act as mandatory prerequisites before any local infrastructure or corridor project can receive regulatory approval or budget clearance.

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