

Title

The dual challenge of implementing security and development programs in East Wallagga Zone, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to examine the political, economic, and social factors that have challenged the implementation of security and development nexus in East Wallagga Zone. An exploratory research design and a qualitative research approach were used for the study. Primary data were collected through key informant interviews with local stakeholders, public servants, and development professionals. Secondary data were gathered from relevant written materials and policy documents. To obtain firsthand reports of the challenges encountered, field observation was also used as a research method. The study found that there have been many challenges in implementing the security-development nexus in the zone. The findings of the study reveal that putting security first by using harsh measures has violated human rights and damaged public confidence in the government and the community, and negatively affected the implementation of security-development nexus. The study also found that insufficient implementation of development programs has made security worse which in turn affected negatively the implementation of development programs. The study recommends balancing security and development interventions to achieve sustainable peace and development. This involves addressing immediate security needs while investing in long-term initiatives like education, healthcare, and infrastructure. For example, building roads in conflict-prone areas can enhance state presence and boost local livelihoods, fostering trust and reducing grievances. For other countries, this integrated approach highlights the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, such as poverty and inequality, while ensuring stability. Striking this balance not only builds local resilience but also mitigates global spillover effects like refugee crises and terrorism, paving the way for lasting peace and prosperity.

Key words

development Security, political barriers, economic barriers, social barriers, East Wallagga Zone, Ethiopia

Key dates

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Introduction

This study Since 1991, the Eastern Wallagga Zone has faced significant challenges in implementing the security-development nexus, a critical framework for fostering stability and growth. This research aims to examine the political, economic, and social barriers hindering effective integration of security and development initiatives in the zone. Employing a qualitative approach, the study utilised key informant interviews, policy analysis, and field observations to gather comprehensive insights into the complexities of the situation. Key issues such as human rights violations, public confidence erosion, protracted ethnic conflicts, and corruption have exacerbated the difficulties in achieving a sustainable balance between security and development. Additionally, leadership commitment, illegal firearm sales, and inadequate infrastructure have further complicated efforts to strike a compromise. The paper explored the interplay between insufficient development implementations and the resulting vicious cycle of insecurity, ultimately outlining strategies for fostering community involvement and adherence to international human rights standards in future initiatives.

Background

Despite the growing recognition of the relationships between security and development, the integration of these two domains is challenging. Security and development were generally seen as two different sectors with competing goals. Essentially, security guarded a state's sovereignty against outside threats, while development sought to encourage economic growth and lessen poverty. Beyond government protection, the idea of security now includes people's personal and communal well-being. This change in focus to human security recognizes that risks could originate from environmental degradation, hunger, inequality, and violations of human rights (Paris, 2019). According to Jett (2021), security and the safety and dignity of people as well as communities are inextricably intertwined. Muggah (2020) argue for a holistic strategy that focuses on safeguarding people from a range of challenges and addressing the underlying causes of insecurity.

Understanding this topic was important for two reasons. First, East Wallagga zone has been experiencing conflicts and instability that directly affect development efforts; second, the successful integration of security and development implementations is crucial for fostering sustainable development and social cohesion. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policymakers and stakeholders about

effective approaches to address these challenges, ultimately leading to enhanced security and development outcomes in East Wallagga zone. It became clear that the following research questions were crucial to answer: What major obstacles had prevented the successful implementation of security and development initiatives in the Eastern Wallagga zone since 1991? What political factors had made it difficult to integrate security and development approaches in the Eastern Wallagga zone? How had socioeconomic conditions affected the integration of security and development initiatives in this particular context? What institutional factors had contributed to the difficulties faced in implementing security and development strategies in Eastern Wallagga zone?

Literature

It became increasingly recognized that lasting peace and stability depended on the convergence of security and development. However, several obstacles hindered the effective implementation of this nexus. First, the conceptual complexity of development and security led to disjointed approaches that failed to address the underlying causes of insecurity, as noted by Aning and Osei-Tutu (2020). Second, policies for security and development were often formulated in isolation, resulting in fragmentation and inconsistent policies that did not align with the overall objectives of either sector (Schraven et al., 2021). Third, a lack of reliable data and indicators made it difficult for policymakers to assess the effectiveness of their initiatives, leading to ineffective measures (Fischer & Lentz, 2021). Muggah (2020) emphasized the need for equitable resource distribution to ensure that development and security goals were met.

Effective integration of security and development required local ownership and engagement; however, many programs were imposed externally with insufficient local input. Höglund and Zanker (2020) highlighted that including local populations in the design and implementation of these projects was essential for building trust and ensuring long-term success. Political will and governance issues further complicated the integration process, as weak governance institutions often fostered corruption and inefficiency. The OECD (2019) identified four key concerns that needed to be addressed for effective integration. First, development initiatives frequently overlooked security-related issues, which could lead to instability and undermine development efforts. Bourguignon et al. (2020) noted that many projects wasted resources by neglecting the security context. Second, the absence of reliable indicators made it challenging to evaluate integrated programs, hindering policymakers' ability to assess effectiveness and make data-driven adjustments (Fischer & Lentz, 2021). Third, the theoretical link

between security and development was often unrecognized, with insecurity impeding development and vice versa (Höglund & Zanker, 2020). This cyclical interdependence necessitated a holistic approach rather than treating the two areas as separate issues.

Ethiopia's political and socioeconomic environment presented significant obstacles to integrating security with development. Development projects often overlooked security dynamics due to a lack of democratic institutions and a centralized power structure, as noted by Mergo (2024) and Mamo and Tadesse (2014). This disconnect risked exacerbating existing conflicts and jeopardizing security initiatives. Gebremariam (2021) argued that insufficient political representation and inclusive governance further alienated marginalized groups, intensifying grievances and disputes. Thus, it became crucial for policies to address both development challenges and security concerns of diverse communities. Assefa and Woldemariam (2019) pointed out that inadequate governance frameworks led to resource mismanagement, worsening security. Additionally, Tsegaye and Hassen (2020) revealed that corruption severely undermined the effectiveness of security initiatives, as funds were often embezzled for personal gain instead of community development and safety, fostering an atmosphere of uncertainty and discontent. In the same way, Zegeye and Gidey (2017) highlighted those political narratives pitting ethnic groups against one another often escalated tensions. They contended that to mitigate security threats stemming from ethnic divisions, development plans should prioritize inclusion and reconciliation. While, Melaku and Hailu (2021) emphasized the need for establishing trust among ethnic groups to provide insights into the security landscape and inform policy decisions, facilitating a more integrated approach to development and security.

Ozaltin (2024) and Belachew (2014) indicated that prioritizing state security had led to the neglect of human security, which is essential for sustainable development. Belachew (2014) argued that the government viewed economic stability as vital for overall security, linking economic development to national security through its securitization. Teshome (2021) noted that despite improvements in economic statistics, issues like poverty, limited access to essential services, and human rights violations continued to undermine the well-being of the population. This neglect of human security risked fueling instability and societal unrest. While Kebede (2022) pointed out that the government's focus on economic progress often overlooked the underlying grievances of marginalized populations, resulting in increased violence and insecurity.

While existing literatures have identified the importance of local ownership and engagement, the degree to which these elements have been effectively incorporated into security and development programs in East Wallagga is underexplored. Moreover, the tendency for development initiatives to overlook the security context has led to misaligned objectives, wasting resources and undermining potential progress. This oversight highlights an urgent need for a more nuanced understanding of how security and development can be implemented in East Wallagga, taking into account the unique socio-political landscape that has evolved since 1991. Hence, this research seeks to bridge the gap in existing studies by investigating the specific challenges to implementing the security and development nexus in East Wallagga zone.

Methods

This study utilized a comprehensive qualitative research methodology to investigate the challenges of implementing a security and development nexus in the East Wallagga zone. It involved 36 in-depth interviews with stakeholders, including 8 community members, 12 law enforcement officials, 8 government representatives, 3 NGO representatives, and 5 experts, ensuring diverse perspectives and data saturation. Field observations complemented the data collection, with ethical measures such as informed consent and anonymity strictly followed. Thematic analysis was used to systematically analyze the data and identify overarching themes, providing a detailed understanding of the challenges in the zone. This process began with familiarizing the researchers with the data through repeated reading. Next, initial codes were generated by labeling key patterns or ideas in the data. These codes were then grouped into potential themes based on their connections and significance. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data, with some being merged, split, or discarded. Finally, the themes were clearly defined and named, and a comprehensive report was produced, supported by data extracts, to present the findings. This structured approach ensured a thorough and nuanced analysis of the challenges in the zone.

Results and Discussion

Challenges to implement the security-development nexus

The majority of informants noted significant challenges in implementing the security-development nexus in the East Wallagga Zone. Informants (W1, W2, W4, W7, CM3, CM6, CM8, KI8, and KI9) recognized the interlink between

security and development, emphasising that addressing one was essential for the other. The security-development nexus referred to the relationship where each element influenced and supported the other. Informants observed that a lack of security undermined development efforts, while inadequate development could exacerbate insecurity. For instance, when communities experience violence or instability, resources that could have been invested in health, education, or infrastructure will be diverted to address immediate security concerns. Conversely, without sufficient development such as economic opportunities and social services, communities became more vulnerable to conflict and unrest.

Mastrorillo et al. (2020) found that investments in security improved economic outcomes, as safe environments encouraged investment and community involvement in development projects. They argued that development initiatives often failed without adequate security, as instability hindered execution and eroded community trust. Similarly, Makki and Tahir (2021) noted that violence diverted resources from essential services like health and education. Conversely, von Uexkull and Buhaug (2021) supported the view that insufficient development exacerbated insecurity. Their research showed that areas with limited social services and economic opportunities were more prone to conflict, as individuals lacking legal avenues for economic growth often turned to violence, with poverty and unemployment serving as breeding grounds. Additionally, a UNDP report (2022) presented case studies indicating that integrated approaches combining development programs with security measures resulted in lower violence rates and improved economic conditions, underscoring the importance of addressing the connections between development and security.

Other informants (FGD4, CM5, CM7, and CM13) noted that they were living in an environment where development implementations were compromised, with security measures taking priority over development concerns. When development activities in a local area were undermined, it negatively affected the prospects for effective security measures. In an environment characterised by low investments, disrupted economic activities, and hindered delivery of basic services, security became a pressing issue. Consequently, the lack of development created fertile ground for various security challenges, such as poverty-driven crime and social unrest.

This perspective aligned with research on the relationship between security and development. Mastrorillo et al. (2020) argued that insecurity hindered development, while stable environments promoted economic growth and community

engagement. They noted that prioritizing security allowed communities to invest more effectively in development projects, creating a positive feedback loop that fostered peace and resilience. Similarly, the UNDP (2022) emphasized the importance of integrated policies that combined development programs with security measures.

This reinforced the idea that security should be part of a broader development strategy that addresses the fundamental conditions necessary for both security and development, rather than being treated in isolation. The informants (CM5, CM6, W2, W6, & FGD4), however, also made clear that the application of security measures frequently entails the use of force, which has led to human rights breaches and further damaged community faith in the government. They were aware that, in some circumstances, preserving security may require the use of force but that these acts must adhere to both international law and human rights norms. In the East Wallagga Zone, breaking these principles has made discontent worse and weakened attempts to build mutual respect and cooperation between the local people and the authorities.

Informants raised concerns about the relationship between security measures and human rights, highlighting an important issue. They noted that the use of force in security operations often led to human rights violations, eroding trust between the government and local communities (CM5, CM6, W2, W6, and FGD4). Research indicates that forceful security operations can result in serious human rights breaches, further diminishing public confidence. For instance, Harris et al. (2021) found that excessive use of force not only fails to enhance security but often exacerbates the situation, creating cycles of violence and mistrust between the public and the government. Their study concluded that communities perceiving security forces as violators of rights tend to become more resentful and resistant, complicating governance efforts.

Sekalala, Williams, and Meier (2022) emphasized the need for compliance with international law and human rights standards in security measures, arguing that respect for human rights is crucial for the legitimacy and effectiveness of security operations. They cited instances where adherence to these principles improved community relations and security outcomes. Supporting this, Marquez (2021) found that militarized policing tactics often increased violence and social discontent, suggesting that oppressive security measures prompted communities to rebel against the government, undermining cooperation and trust. Additionally, a Civilians in Conflict report (2022) highlighted the importance of community involvement in developing security plans that prioritize safety and human rights, noting that engaging local

communities fosters collaboration and leads to more sustainable security solutions.

Competition over land resource

The information provided by the informants highlights the critical role of land competition as a driver of security issues in East Wallagga Zone, Ethiopia. This discussion is supported by broader literature on land tenure, ethnic tensions, and resource conflicts in Ethiopia, which align with the informants' observations.

Land competition and security issues

The informants (W1, W2, W4, W5, and W7) identified land as a highly sought-after resource in East Wallagga due to its productivity for cash crops. This aligns with studies on Ethiopia's land tenure system, which emphasize the centrality of land to livelihoods and the intense competition it generates, particularly in fertile regions. For instance, research on Ethiopia's highlands highlights how population growth and limited arable land exacerbate land scarcity, leading to conflicts over access and control. The influx of Amhara farmers from Gojjam into East Wallagga during the 1970s, as described by the informants, mirrors historical patterns of migration driven by agricultural opportunities. This migration intensified competition, particularly with the indigenous Oromo population, leading to disputes over land ownership and use.

The shift from sharecropping ("qixxee") to land purchases by Amhara settlers reflects broader trends in Ethiopia's agrarian economy. Studies have shown that land tenure insecurity and the lack of formal land markets often lead to informal transactions, which can fuel tensions between communities. The informants' accounts of escalating disputes between Amhara and Oromo communities over agricultural land are consistent with findings that land competition often intersects with ethnic identity, creating volatile situations.

Ethnic tensions and violent conflicts

The informants (CM2, CM4, CM6, and CM7) described several violent incidents, including the Agamsa town massacre, the Haaroo Addisalem slaughters, and the Gute Town massacre, as outcomes of these land-related tensions. These events underscore the devastating consequences of ethnic conflict fueled by resource competition. Literature on Ethiopia's ethnic federalism and land policies suggests that such conflicts are often rooted in historical grievances and the politicization of ethnic identity²¹⁰. For example, the Tigray War (2020–2022) and other regional conflicts have demonstrated how land and resource disputes can escalate into large-scale violence, often exacerbated by ethnic divisions.

The Agamsa town massacre, in particular, exemplifies how localized disputes over land can spiral into broader ethnic violence. This aligns with studies on Ethiopia's land-related conflicts, which highlight the role of historical land dispossession and unequal access to resources in fueling intercommunal violence. The informants' accounts of these massacres also reflect the broader pattern of state failure to address land tenure issues effectively, leading to cycles of violence and displacement.

Broader implications

The informants' observations are consistent with broader literature on Ethiopia's land tenure system and its implications for security and development. For instance, studies have criticized Ethiopia's state-centric land policies for failing to provide tenure security, which discourages investment and exacerbates conflicts. The informants' accounts of land competition and ethnic violence in East Wallagga highlight the urgent need for land reforms that address historical grievances, ensure equitable access to resources, and promote intercommunal reconciliation. With this regard a community member informant said:

"We have been slaughtered on our own land and in our own vicinity. May God spare your generation from such a curse. This tragedy was fueled by our own youth, who were misled about the deeper conflicts over territory and identity that had been brewing for years. The plea for future generations to be spared reflects the deep intergenerational scars left by the conflict, as well as a desperate hope to break the cycle of violence".

Historical grievances

The execution of security in the zone has been significantly impacted by past grievances, as shown by informants CM2 and KI3, who pointed to deep-rooted ethnic conflicts, land disputes, and socio-political marginalization. They explained how past injustices had influenced the relationships between different ethnic groups, especially between the Oromo and non-Oromo populations, through a complicated interaction. According to the informants, access and land ownership were crucial concerns in this situation. They noted that many individuals had a deep feeling of loss in relation to their ancestral lands, which they thought had been acquired or stolen by newcomers. These immigrants frequently came pretending to be sharecroppers, first building connections that let them till the land. But as time went on, they changed from being tenants to landlords, asserting their ownership rights over the territory that had previously belonged to the native people, basically the Oromos.

Informants from the community (CM5, CM6, and CM9) reported that this change signified a deeper

violation of identity and legacy than just a question of land title. The informants described how these old grudges impacted daily life and community dynamics via their own stories. With this context, one community member informant in Gute town states that:

" The Oromo people in the districts of Gidda Ayana, KIRAMU Abe Dongoro, Amuru, and Jarte historically owned the land between the Angar and Abay rivers, protected through the sacrifices of their ancestors. Since the 1970s, Amhara communities, particularly from Gojjam, have occupied this land under the guise of sharecropping. Once lush and green, the area is now becoming desolate due to population growth and economic pressures. This settlement not only undermines Oromo land ownership but also threatens their identity, escalating into a significant security challenge in the region" (CM5).

The International Crisis Group (2017), Cotula et al. (2009), and Alden Wily (2018) indicated that instability surrounding land tenure was a major cause of violence in many African contexts. Their studies demonstrated that historical injustices often left populations feeling powerless, leading to tensions in areas with disputed or unclear land ownership that could escalate into violence. These disputes were intricately linked to identity, belonging, and social cohesion, extending beyond mere land issues. Land confiscation disrupted customary means of subsistence and social institutions, fostering feelings of alienation and bitterness.

Youth unemployment

Regarding the connection between youth unemployment and security issues in the East Wallagga Zone, informants offered two opposing viewpoints. Some informants (CM3, CM8, and CM9) highlighted the beneficial contribution that young people make to their communities. They maintained that youth should be recognized as peacebuilders and peace workers rather than as security threats. For example, CM3 reported on a youth-led project that was effective in arranging community discussions with the goal of resolving local complaints and promoting mutual understanding across various ethnic groups. This program served as a forum for candid dialogue while also reducing tensions that may have escalated into hostilities. Similarly, key informant (KI5) described how young volunteers took part in a community service initiative that cleaned public areas and raised awareness of environmental issues since 2018.

Additionally, informants (W5 and W7) mentioned that many young individuals have been participating in the training conflict resolution methods that taught young leaders how to mediate and negotiate. It has been shown that training participants how to

resolve conflicts within their communities in a positive way has lowered the number of violent episodes and promoted a culture of communication in some areas. One key informant (KI3), on the other hand, presented an alternative viewpoint, arguing that young people do present security challenges. This source brought attention to the growing rates of youth unemployment, emphasising the ways in which economic uncertainty cause youngsters to become frustrated and disillusioned. They voiced fear that some young people would turn to anti-social behaviors or become vulnerable to radicalization if they were not given enough possibilities for job and personal growth. Moreover, an additional key informant (KI3) elucidated this point by citing particular neighborhood occurrences in which disillusioned young had participated in violent protests. The key informant suggests that if there had been more opportunities for young people to make meaningful contributions to society, these circumstances may have been avoided. The informant advocated for focused initiatives that offer education, vocational training, and employment possibilities, emphasising the significance of tackling these underlying issues to stop adolescent dissatisfaction from escalating into larger security difficulties. The informant thought that by doing this, communities might harness the potential and energy of their young people, turning them from possible security risks into important contributors to societal stability.

Researchers such as Bøås and Torvik (2020), Ohmer et al. (2022), Endris et al. (2022), Mastrotillo et al. (2021), and Kosko et al. (2021), supported the key informant's findings on youth unemployment and security challenges. Their research indicated that economically disenfranchised young people experienced dissatisfaction and pessimism, leading to a higher likelihood of engaging in antisocial behavior or radicalization due to a lack of meaningful opportunities for interaction.

Political factors

The East Wallagga Zone's insecurity is caused by a complex web of circumstances, including economic problems, land resource conflicts between the Amhara and Oromo populations, historical grudges, and political instability, according to community member informants (CM2, CM4, CM6, and CM7). Conflicts over land resources, economic difficulties, and historical grudges have all been covered before. In terms of political causes, sources emphasised the Oromo Liberation Army's (OLA) long-standing and continuing conflicts as well as the recent rise in vigilante groups that pose as the Fano militia. The security issues in the area are being exacerbated by these elements more and more.

Furthermore, as CM4 pointed out, the emergence of Fano militias has had a big influence on the security dynamics in the East Wallagga Zone, especially in the districts of Gidda Ayana and KIRAMU. As self-declared defenders of the Amhara people, these militias assert that they are defending against perceived threats from the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA). But their initiatives have frequently exacerbated already-existing tensions within communities by increasing polarization and violence as they indiscriminately threaten the whole Oromo in the area. The uprooting of several families from their homes was one of the Fano militias' most concerning effects. Informants said that fighting between Fano members and government security personnel in Gidda Ayana caused a great deal of panic among the locals, forcing many of them to leave their communities. According to CM4, the violence in KIRAMU district's Gudina Jirenya, Sombo, and Haro kebeles uprooted whole towns, forcing families to seek safety in Ayana Town and other nearby locations, sometimes in cramped conditions with no assistance. In addition to upsetting the lives of those impacted, this mass relocation put a strain on the resources of the communities that took in the displaced people. Research by Mastroiello et al. (2021), which looks at how retaliatory violence can exacerbate conflict and thwart attempts at reconciliation, lends credence to this.

Leadership factors

There was broad agreement among the informants (CM1, CM8, CM10, FGD2, and FGD4) about the need for leadership commitment in tackling security issues. They underlined that encouraging an organisational culture of accountability and proactive actions required strong leadership. The informants stated that a lack of committed leadership frequently led to inadequate resource allocation for security activities as well as a lack of strategic direction. They made the point that when leaders did not put security first, team members became demotivated, and their attempts to put in place the required standards were undermined. The informants also mentioned that if there is a lack of dedication, security measures become reactive rather than proactive, leaving communities open to attack.

The informants had paradox concerning views on the behaviour of leaders at the district, *kebele*, and *goxi* (smallest administrative level in Ethiopia) levels. They said that politicians frequently prioritise their personal interests over the pressing security problems that their communities were facing. They argued that this behaviour undermined effective governance and added to the zone's pre-existing vulnerabilities. The informants underlined that when leaders were focused on their own goals, whether

they were related to personal relationships, political gain, or resource allocation, they often neglected important security issues that required prompt attention. Because of this carelessness, communities are exposed to a range of risks. The informants expressed that this self-serving approach had created a disconnect between leadership and the needs of the populace. It fostered a climate of distrust, where community members felt their concerns were not taken seriously. They emphasised the importance of leaders who were genuinely committed to addressing security challenges, suggesting that a shift in priorities was essential for fostering a safer and more resilient environment.

Various studies confirmed the informants' perspectives. For example, Norris, Ghahremani, and Lemoine (2021) emphasized that effective leadership was crucial for fostering a culture of accountability, noting that leaders who prioritized organizational goals over personal interests enhanced team motivation and performance in security management. Carmen et al. (2022) found that self-serving behaviors among leaders created significant gaps in governance and trust within communities, as a focus on political gains detracted from addressing critical issues, including security, and exacerbated existing vulnerabilities.

The illegal sale of firearms

The illegal sale of firearms under the pretense of self-defense was noted by worker informants (W3, W4, and K5) and community residents (CM9, CM13, and CM15) as another significant element causing insecurity in the area. They said that a serious threat to general security now existed from the unlawful sale of weapons and ammunition in places like Gute town and the Andode Dicho vicinity. For example, the widespread availability of guns in Gute town contributed to a rise in violent crimes, including armed robberies and gang-related activities. This type of extortion not only damaged local economies but also made the community more fearful of one another. Similarly, informants (CM11, CM10, and CM12) in the Andode Dicho kebele area reported that local gangs were given more authority by the illegal sale of guns, which led to turf fights that left casualties and fatalities in their wake. Tensions were raised by the obvious presence of guns during these confrontations, which made it harder for locals to feel safe in their own neighbourhoods. Bøås and Strazzari (2021) noted that environments offering safety or a sense of belonging often facilitated the recruitment of young people into armed groups amid rising violence.

Studies confirmed that weak governance significantly impacted security outcomes in conflict-affected regions. Bøås and Strazzari (2021) highlighted that inadequate political will often led to

ineffective responses to security challenges, with leaders prioritizing personal interests over community safety. Christensen-Salem et al. (2022) identified insufficient resource allocation for security forces as a critical barrier, reporting that many operated with limited budgets, hindering their capacity for operations, equipment maintenance, and training, which left communities vulnerable to violence. The International Crisis Group (2023) noted that a lack of basic infrastructure, such as communication systems and transportation for security personnel, severely limited operational capacity. Additionally, Baroncelli and Irrera (2024) stated that strong governance structures fostered community resilience in managing conflicts, while weak institutions led to increased crime and violence, eroding trust in local authorities and diminishing cooperation with security efforts.

Corruption

In one focus group discussion (FGD3), participants expressed deep concerns about corruption in the area. They emphasised that "corruption is a significant challenge that undermines the implementation of development activities." The informants elaborated on how rampant corruption leads to the misallocation of resources, with funds often diverted away from their intended purposes. This diversion not only compromises the integrity of development projects but also creates a pervasive lack of transparency and accountability. The FGD3 participants also pointed out that these issues make it increasingly difficult to utilize available resources effectively. They noted that when funds are syphoned off or mismanaged, the community suffers, as essential services and infrastructure improvements go unaddressed.

The informants have brought attention to the fact that corruption has been a major impediment to East Wallaga Zone development. The community is eventually left in a condition of discontent and stagnation as a result of this corruption, which also erodes trust in government institutions and causes resource misallocation. One participant in the FGD3s provided an example of how corruption hinders the zone's development efforts by pointing out that money intended for crucial initiatives like building schools and repairing roads is frequently embezzled by authorities. For example, kickbacks resulted in the reduction of a budget meant for Gute Town's local infrastructure improvement, leading to poorly performed projects that fall short of community demands. Residents become irritated since they are still receiving subpar services as a result.

Concerning the unfair allocation of resources, the FGD3 participant elucidated how corruption resulted in partiality in resource distribution.

According to the informant, some communities receive more assistance due to their political connections rather than genuine need. For example, a health clinic was constructed in a politically favoured location, while neighbouring towns that lack even basic medical facilities were overlooked. The informant, however, preferred not to disclose the specific location or name of the health facility. In the same focus group discussion (FGD3), a different participant gave an account of how corruption led to the use of inferior materials for building projects. The Gute Town water supply project was mentioned by the informant, where the usage of subpar pipes resulted in frequent leaks and failures. This not only wastes money but also makes the community's problems with access to water worse, which makes people angry and suspicious of government programs. The informant continues to explain how corruption leads to bureaucratic delays, citing the planned agricultural development program in Gute town that experienced significant delays because of corruption, preventing farmers from timely access to necessary tools and training. Officials in this program demand bribes to expedite approvals and permits.

Corruption and its effects on development received significant attention in scholarly and policy discourse. A Transparency International (2020) report highlighted that corruption undermined public trust in institutions and misallocated resources, leading to stagnation in vital services like healthcare and education, aligning with informants' findings on its negative impact on community well-being. Wong (2023) discussed how corruption challenged effective governance in emerging nations, exacerbating inequities due to a lack of accountability and transparency and hindering marginalized populations' access to essential resources. This supported informants' claims that corruption impeded development initiatives, leaving community needs unmet. Additionally, the World Bank (2021) revealed a link between wasteful government spending and corruption, echoing concerns about its effects on infrastructure and essential services. Kaufmann and Kraay (2023) emphasized the importance of strengthening governance systems to combat corruption.

Ethnic conflicts

Ethnic conflicts in the East Wallaga zone have become increasingly prominent in recent years, significantly affecting social cohesion and economic stability. These conflicts often stem from historical grievances, competition over resources, and political marginalization. The informants (CM10, CM11, CM14, KI2, KI3, FGD3) highlighted how ethnic conflicts have disrupted social and economic activities, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and limited access to basic services. The

zone's diverse ethnic groups, each with its own livelihood strategies and social institutions, contributes to a fluid environment where relationships are constantly evolving. This finding is consistent with and illustrated by several studies. Zelalem (2017) emphasized the complexity of inter-ethnic relations in Ethiopia. Workneh (2023) found that ethnic conflicts caused significant social disruption, particularly in rural areas, leading to family displacement, exacerbated poverty, and reduced access to essential services like healthcare and education. This was evident in Kiram and Gidda Ayana, where informants (CM5, CM7, W4, W7, and W9) noted that ongoing ethnic tensions hindered development efforts and destabilized local economies. An informant (KI3) reported that violence in Sasiga District significantly reduced agricultural productivity. Kassa and Semahegn (2022) examined how ethnic tensions in Oromia impacted the local economy, stating that losses in property and infrastructure directly affected livelihoods. Their study highlighted the long-term effects of these disruptions on community development and resilience. Additionally, a report by the International Crisis Group (2023) indicated that ethnic tensions increasingly hindered access to basic amenities in Ethiopia, with affected communities experiencing decreased government funding and presence, negatively impacting healthcare, education, and other essential services.

analysis revealed that prioritizing security through heavy-handed approaches led to human rights violations, eroding trust between the government and local communities. Informants consistently noted that insufficient development initiatives exacerbated insecurity, creating a vicious cycle that hindered progress. Additionally, entrenched ethnic conflicts, corruption, and inadequate infrastructure complicated efforts to achieve a balance between security and development.

Recommendations

Policymakers should integrate security and development strategies to effectively address challenges in East Wallagga. Security measures must adhere to international human rights standards to rebuild trust with local communities. Engaging these communities in decision-making will foster collaboration and ensure that development programs meet specific needs, particularly in areas of high insecurity and poverty. To combat corruption, transparent resource allocation mechanisms should be implemented to guarantee the effective delivery of development efforts. Additionally, investing in infrastructure is vital for economic growth and stability, while promoting dialogue and conflict resolution can mitigate ethnic tensions and enhance social cohesion. Strengthening local governance will further ensure accountability and responsiveness, fostering community ownership in development initiatives.

Conclusion

The implementation of the security-development nexus in East Wallagga zone since 1991 has faced significant challenges, highlighting the complex interplay between security and development. The

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