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MENSCHENRECHTE HUMAN RIGHTS
IN GEMEINDEN AT THE LOCAL AND
UND REGIONEN REGIONAL LEVELS

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Feasibility study

Becoming a human rights city in Ethiopia:
Hawassa city and lessons learned from the
human rights city of Graz

28 April to 28 June 2022

Graz, November 2023

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Supervisors: Prof. Gerd Oberleitner, UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security at the University of Graz and Dr. Klaus Starl, Director, UNESCO Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels

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Acronyms

Art	Article
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CERD	Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSA	Central Statistics Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
ETC	European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic Social Cultural Rights
MUHRC	Municipality Human Rights Council
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NUA	New Urban Agenda
PESTEL	Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal
Proc	Proclamation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNNPR	Southern Nation Nationalities Peoples Region
SNRS	Sidama National Regional State
SWOT	Strength Weakness Opportunities Threat
UDHR	Universal Declaration on Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



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Executive summary

The background of this study was started as a part of the young African scholarship granted to this researcher through the Coimbra Group Programme scholarship. As a member of the Coimbra Group, the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy at the University of Graz (ETC) hosted the writer from 28 April 28 until 28 June 2022. The scholarship mainly aimed at enhancing the research skills and capacity of the researcher in the study that investigated scenarios, experiences, and lessons learnt by taking the Human Rights City Graz as a point of reference.

The study employed a qualitative approach. The primary data were collected from key the informants' interview (KII) with prominent academics, heads of departments of the city administration and members of the Municipal Human Rights Council. Additionally, the researcher also conducted personal observation. The secondary data were collected from books, articles, publications of the ETC, FDRE constitution, international human rights instruments, federal and regional proclamations, web sources and Hawassa City published and unpublished reports and the 10-year development plan of the federal government and the Hawassa City.

The findings indicated that the practice of a human rights-based approach in the city administration by applying principles such as participation, transparency accountability, and non-discrimination contributed towards the observance and enjoyment for the population of the city. It also promoted the efficiency and effective delivery of various services of the municipality for its population, including various vulnerable groups of the community.

Such experiences benefit and improve the effectivity of good governance and promote the observance of human rights at the local level, in case that it will be properly initiated and transformed in the municipality of Hawassa City. To that effect, this writer is convinced that the mayor and the city council of Hawassa could initiate the process of becoming a Human Rights City by nominating for example the municipality human rights city council (MUHRC) composed of dedicated individuals from different sections of the community to provide feasible advice for the mayor and council of the city. In doing so, the council would play a founding role of preparing viable points of actions that guide the process of initiating Human Rights City of Hawassa.



1. Introduction

Hawassa University, the City of Hawassa, the Human Rights City of Graz, and the University of Graz worked on a project proposal together with experts of the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO and the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy at the University of Graz (ETC). This proposal was not awarded with a grant of the EU Call on “Local Authorities: Partnerships for sustainable cities –Human Rights City Twinning Graz – Hawassa” for unknown reasons. Nevertheless, the writer of this report was personally granted a Coimbra Young African Researcher’s Scholarship through the competition for the period of two months from 28 April to 28 June 2022 to conduct a study on the prospects and challenges of Hawassa City becoming a Human Rights City (HRC) by taking the Human Rights City of Graz as a case example.

The overall objective of this study is to analyse scenarios, challenges, and prospects for the City of Hawassa as possible candidate of becoming a Human Rights City. It builds on the experience of the Human Rights City of Graz and discusses evidence-based lessons learnt to initiate such a process. More precisely, the study aims 1) to explore scenarios, experiences, and lessons learnt from the Human Rights City of Graz, 2) to identify the challenges and prospects of becoming a Human Rights City of Hawassa, 3) to identify justifications and driving factors to initiate the Human Rights City Process in Hawassa, and 4) to propose the way forward in this process. In general, the study aims to serve as a starting and reference point for the Hawassa City Administration, funding organisations, all relevant stakeholders, as well as local and international partners who work towards fostering the protection, respect, and realisation of human rights at the local level.

This report comprises four parts. The first part of the report gives a brief introduction to importance of the implementation of human rights particularly at the local governance level. Further, it elaborates on the relevance of the study, it’s objectives and methodology, and presents various national and international human rights laws and instruments. The second part presents a brief history of the City of Hawassa, and the structure of the City Administration. The third part discusses pulling and pushing factors that are the drivers of the City of Hawassa to initiate the process of becoming a Human Rights City. Further, it provides the political, economic, social, technological, and legal (PESTEL), as well as the SWOT analysis of the City of Hawassa. Finally, the fourth part comprises lessons learnt and the way forward in initiating the Human Rights City Process in Hawassa, and implementing a human rights-based approach (HRBA) in the Hawassa Administration.

In sum, the study report provides a clear overview of the conceptual underpinning of a Human Rights City, organisational settings of Hawassa City, the driving forces that



may trigger the process, lessons learnt from the Human Rights City of Graz, the approach to be applied, and the way forward.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research method. To that effect, extensive desk review was conducted. Further, key informant's interviews (KII) were conducted with the experienced former mayor of the City of Graz, the chairwoman of the Municipal Human Rights Council, the head of the City of Graz Municipality, and prominent professors who played a key role during the establishment of the Human Rights City of Graz. Additionally, the author of this study made personal observations.

With regard to secondary data research, a substantial number of literature and research reports of international organisations on the topic of human rights implementation, the official documents, the ten-year development plan of the FDRE and sectoral urban plan, policy, and strategy documents, working papers and legislations that are relevant to the Hawassa City were examined. Extensive desk research was conducted on the FDRE and Sidama regional state constitutions. International human rights instruments ratified by Ethiopia were reviewed. The secondary data also were collected from the ETC library at the Karl Franz University of Graz, the publication series "Human Rights Go Local" jointly edited by the International Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels under the auspices of UNESCO and the UNESCO Chair in Human Rights and Human Security at the University of Graz, and various other books. Other data sources include relevant documents obtained from official websites of the Human Rights City of Graz.

3. State of the art: A need to foster the implementation of human rights at the local level globally and in Ethiopia

3.1. Development of a global trend to strengthen human rights implementation locally

Human rights are fundamental rights. Article 2 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that "[e]veryone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". This means that any person is entitled to human rights simply because she or he is a human being. Further, human rights are inviolable and inalienable by their nature and they are first rights of individuals against public authorities.

With regard to the traditional international human rights-based approach, states have the primary obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights. This means that



human rights responsibilities are still commonly viewed as legal duties of the national government. However, the question of how to implement these rights at the local level has been raised continuously for the last decades¹. Linked to this, there is a famous saying by Eleanor Roosevelt:

“Where do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home – so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Unless rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerted citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”²

Nowadays, there is a growing trend that local governments are requested to comply with their duties stemming from the international human rights obligations of the state. Local governments may achieve this compliance either by taking human rights obligations as constituent elements of their government or by transferring relevant state competences to them³. Currently, there is an increasing tendency that prefers the approach to consider local governments as a constituent element of the national government and tasks delegated to local governments fall under the realm of rights protection⁴. Local governments are perceived as experts on the needs and context of the local population. They are closest to their residents, and expected to respond to the basic demands of its population. Accordingly, local governments are part of a legal, multi-level governance system⁵. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing indicates that state refers to “all public authorities and all levels and branches of government from the local to the national including legislative, judiciary and quasi judiciary”⁶. This understanding paved the way for seeing local authorities, which are often responsible for the delivery of services, as relevant duty bearers that have their own responsibility to uphold human rights obligations⁷. This is of particular relevance since more than half of the world population lives in cities; and these urban settlements inhabited by people from diverse backgrounds are the places where most of the social problems manifest and must be solved.

Because of this growing emphasis on implementing human rights at the local level, cities have increasingly become the centre stage for the realisation of human rights.

¹ Jasmien Deklerck (2022), From Commitment to Responsibility for Human Rights in Cities and Regions, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 3, HRGL Publishing, Graz,

² [Quote by Eleanor Roosevelt: “Where, after all, do universal human rights beg...” \(goodreads.com\)](#)

³ Ibid: After the Vienna conference, the exercises to specify human rights and human rights obligations led to more attention for the role of actors other than the national government in the implementation of human rights, including NGOs, private or semi-public service providers and businesses. After the Vienna conference on HR in 1993, states agreed to draw up national action plans for the promotion and protection of human rights, and to establish national human rights institutions to monitor human rights.

⁴ International Council on Human Rights Policy 2005: 20.

⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council (2015): Role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights: “Local authorities are actually those who are to translate national human rights strategies and policies into practical application.”

⁶ Jasmien Deklerck (2022), From Commitment to Responsibility for Human Rights in Cities and Regions, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 3, HRGL Publishing, Graz, P 6.

⁷ Oomen, Barbara, The promise, and challenges of human rights cities in Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities, (Oomen, etal eds), Cambridge University press, 2016.

The rise of human rights cities all over the world further underlines this development. Therefore, one could safely argue that implementing the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights at the local city level has an essential role: All decisions taken at the local level directly affect the people's exercise of human rights because it is where they conduct their everyday lives. Oomen argued that cities are best places to deliver social justice, and can be considered the 'new kids on the block' in the realisation of human rights⁸. According to her, the rise of human rights is an intensely political process. It involves translating universal and abstract norms into values and indicators that are relevant and tangible at the local level, by renegotiating them in a specific context with its power differentials, and the gains as well as the losses involved. Additionally, the implementation of human rights at the local level also plays a role in providing a standardised framework that protects rights holders, and, at the same time, ensures the accountability of duty bearers by avoiding non-discriminatory application of rights⁹.

Moreover, the New Urban Agenda (NUA) has brought a human rights-based approach to policy-making and service delivery as a path towards inclusive and sustainable urban development. Further, this document acknowledges that local authorities are responsible for protecting, respecting, fulfilling, and promoting the human rights of the inhabitants¹⁰. Prioritizing vulnerable groups including women, girls, and disabled persons serves the purpose of the NUA of "leaving no one behind" and "inclusiveness." This goal also corresponds with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls", and SDG 11 "make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable". Additionally the New Urban Agenda of "sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty" reinforces the implementation of HRBA.

Despite increasingly calling on local governments to assume their role to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights at the local level, the level of awareness on the importance of this obligation remains rather low. There is a widespread 'awareness gap' not only in cities, but also in national administrations¹¹. Although an increasing development of becoming a Human Rights City can be identified in different parts of the globe, a real commitment of local governments would require the adoption of a "human rights-based approach (HRBA) that seeks to analyse inequalities and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020.

¹⁰ Gomez argued that NUA is a political declaration signed by all UN Member States. Please Karina Gomes da Silva, 2018, The new urban agenda and human rights cities: Interconnections between the global and the local, Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights, Vol. 36(4) 290–31.

¹¹ Accardo Andreas, Grimheden Jonas and Starl Klaus, The Case for Human Rights at Local Level: A Clever Option? in: Benedek Wolfgang, Benoit-Rohmer Florence, Karl Wolfram, Nowak Manfred (eds.), European Yearbook on Human Rights 2012.

progress and often result in groups of people being left behind”¹². Furthermore, the implementation of the HRBA principles, namely participation, accountability, non-discrimination, equality, empowerment, and legality, in short PANEL¹³, at the local level, empowers rights holders to know their rights and how to claim them. Simultaneously, it also ensures that duty bearers, such as local politicians or municipal officials, commit to their human rights obligations.

After having established the importance of focusing on the implementation of human rights at the local level, as well as the many hindrances that still remain all over the world, the next chapter focuses on embedding the City of Hawassa, Ethiopia, in this context by giving an overview on the current situation of realising human rights at the local level, and explaining the relevance of the present study.

3.2. Good governance and human rights implementation in Ethiopia

3.2.1. Current situation of human rights implementation

Ensuring good governance at the local level has been a manifesto of the Ethiopian both federal and regional government structure for the last two decades, including the local administrations in cities. In general, good governance calls for a participatory, transparent, accountable, decentralised, and responsive system, reinforced by rule of law, that observes equality, non-discrimination, and related matters. Good governance also requires the improvement of accountability and transparency of public sector agencies, concomitant with the effective fight against corruption¹⁴.

Even though promoting the postulate of good governance, the governance level in Ethiopia is criticised for its poor implementation. By evaluating the practice of good governance in Ethiopia, Zewiddu argued that “there cannot be any reliable evidence other than the government own report that pointed out the absence of good governance in Ethiopia. On every public report, the Ethiopian government has been admitting widespread practice of mal governance”¹⁵. Corruption, bureaucracy, and weak institutional structures are identified as common causes for absence of good governance. To the list, Zewiddu adds non-participatory decision-making, dubious institutional structure, and a wide margin of discretionary power, and unaccountable systems are rampant in Ethiopia.

¹² United Nations, Common Understanding on Human Rights-Based Approaches to Development Cooperation and Programming.

¹³ The principle of PANEL denotes: (Participation, Accountability, Nondiscrimination, Empowerment and Legality). The principle of participation dictates that everyone is entitled to active participation in decision-making processes. Accountability: duty-bearers are held accountable for failing to fulfil their obligations. Nondiscrimination: all individuals are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind. Empowerment: everyone is entitled to claim and exercise their rights. Legality policies are in line with legal rights set out in domestic and international laws.

¹⁴ Getachew Begashaw Good Governance with Checks and Balances in Ethiopia, International Center, Michigan State University, 2019, available at <https://globalafrica.isp.msu.edu/files/3515/5916/4411/GetachewBegashaw.pdf>

¹⁵ Zewiddu, Moges, 2016, The Role of Democracy, Good Governance and Rule of Law to Enhance Sustainable Development: The Ethiopian Experience. Academia.



Further, various indicators show that Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. The country faces enormous challenges both in the urban and rural areas. Additionally, there is a significant dearth of holistic data and studies on the human rights implementation at the local government and administrative level, including also in major cities of the country. Further, the existing studies only focus on the implementation of international human rights systems at the state level. More importantly, a considerable lack of awareness for the importance of local human rights implementation can be identified for both local government politicians and the population. People lack knowledge of how to demand their rights and hold the government accountable in the case of failure to satisfy some basic human needs, such as food, shelter, education, health, and employment which are part of human rights entitlements in many human rights instruments. Consequently, the process of implementing international human rights at the local government level in Ethiopia is at a very low stage, even though the nation is party to basic human rights obligations.

Nonetheless, the country has ratified various human rights laws at the national and international level that provide a fruitful basis for initiating a process of fostering the implementation of human rights at the local level.

3.2.2. Relevant international and national human rights laws in Ethiopia

As already established, international human rights laws require states to take proper and effective measures to protect, promote, and fulfil the rights described under the treaties that states have ratified. In traditional international law, states assume the prime responsibility in devising the necessary mechanisms to conduct the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of human rights within their jurisdiction. However, this trend has been changing during the last decades. Currently, the emergence of the Human Rights Cities Movement is significantly contributing towards holding local governments accountable in their failure to guarantee the realisation of human rights. Some cities have already benefitted from this development, including the City of Graz.

This section highlights some important legal instruments that need attention when aiming at the implementation of international human rights at the city level both in Ethiopia and in the City of Hawassa in particular.

3.2.2.1. The FDRE constitution

The very significance of human rights is recognised in the preamble of the FDRE constitution. It establishes the full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights as foundation for building a political community founded on the rule of law and capable of ensuring a lasting peace guaranteeing a democratic order¹⁶.

¹⁶ The preamble of the 1995, FDRE Constitution.



More importantly, the constitution states that human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of humankind, are inviolable and inalienable¹⁷. Human and democratic rights of citizens and peoples shall be respected without any form of discrimination (Art 10 and 25). In this regard, the sanctity of human rights is stated as one of the five fundamental principles of the constitution¹⁸. These principles establish the idea of inherence, universality, indivisibility, and inviolability of human rights¹⁹. Further, the constitution also imposes a responsibility and duty to respect and enforce fundamental rights and freedoms at all levels of the federal legislative, executive, and judicial bodies (Art 10).

3.2.2.2. International Conventions ratified by Ethiopia

In addition to the FDRE constitution, Ethiopia is subject to the International Bill of Rights (ICCPR, ICESCR, ratified in 1993, and UDHR), except for the two Optional Protocols of ICCPR on an individual complaint mechanism (1996) and on the abolition of the death penalty (1989). Moreover, Ethiopia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the CERD and CEDAW, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1998. Ethiopia also ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in September 2008. It also ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)²⁰.

These international human right treaties are part and parcel of the constitutional framework of the country according to article 9 (4) of the constitution. The constitution has even gone further by stating that the rights under chapter three of the FDRE constitution shall be interpreted in line with the international instruments ratified by Ethiopia²¹. Accordingly, Ethiopia is duty bound in protecting, respecting, and fulfilling international obligations stated in these prominent human rights documents. All state structures ranging from centre to local government, including city administrations and municipalities, are duty bearers and must as such implement these fundamental human rights as enshrined in the constitution and international human rights instruments ratified by Ethiopia.

¹⁷ Art 10 and 25 of the FDRE constitution: In this connection noted that the cumulative effect of the five fundamental principles of constitution is that they create a hospitable environment for a better protection of human rights in Ethiopia. See Regassa, Tsegaye, 2009, Making Legal Sense of Human Rights: The Judicial Role in Protecting Human Rights in Ethiopia, Mizan Law Rev. 3(2).

¹⁸ Article 10 (1) of the constitution

¹⁹ Regassa, Tsegaye, 2009, Making Legal Sense of Human Rights: The Judicial Role in Protecting Human Rights in Ethiopia, Mizan Law Rev. 3(2).

²⁰ Ethiopia joined the ICERD in 1976 but did not make the declaration under article 14 that would allow individuals to submit complaints to the CERD.

²¹ Article 13(2) of the FDRE constitution states that the "fundamental rights and freedoms specified in chapter three shall be interpreted in a manner conforming to the principles of the UDHR, International Covenants on Human Rights and International instruments adopted by Ethiopia".

With regard to the institutional structure and besides the legislature, executive, and judiciary, the fact that the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC)²² and the Institution of the Ombudsman²³ was established, underscores the great attention given to the protection and promotion of human rights.

Nonetheless, this constitutional incorporation of human rights concepts does not mean that they are fully realised. The issue of implementing human rights at the local government level is not well documented and subject to critique.

3.2.2.3. Human Rights under the New Sidama National Regional state

The Sidama National regional state (herein after referred to as the Sidama Region) is the 10th member of the Ethiopian federation established under the FDRE constitution Article 47 (2) through the referendum of Sidama people. As a member of the federation, it is mandated with setting up its own operational local government structure based on the mandate vested in the federal constitution and its socio-economic circumstances²⁴. The Sidama region began its official functioning by enacting a new regional constitution which entered into effect as of July, 2020²⁵. This regional constitution provides for an administrative structure of the region that comprises a regional government, Zones, cities, Woredas, and Kebele administrations²⁶.

The preamble of the new constitution also aspires to make the people the actual beneficiaries from the development by observing human and democratic rights, as well as implementing a transparent and accountable division of power among state organs²⁷. Additionally, it also provides that the conduct of affairs of the regional state shall be transparent, and any public official or elected representative shall be held accountable for any failure in official duties²⁸.

After having established the continuously growing trend of localising the implementation of human rights, in particular because of the Human Rights Cities Movement, and identified the specific Ethiopian context for the implementation of human rights at the local level, the next chapter focuses on the City of Hawassa initiating the process of becoming a Human Rights City.

²² Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) is an independent federal state body set up as per the Federal Constitution and reporting to House of People's Representatives as a national human rights institution with the mandate for promotion and protection of human rights by virtue of Proclamation 210/2000 as amended by Proclamation No 1224/2020.

²³ The institution of Ombudsman was set up to bring good governance through ensuring citizen's rights via Proclamation No, 211/2000 as amended by Proclamation No 1142/2019.

²⁴ Article 50(4) of the Federal Constitution

²⁵ The Sidama National Regional State was set up based on the referendum conducted on Nov 2020.

²⁶ Art 44(1), Proclamation No 1/2020.

²⁷ The preamble of the Sidama Regional State Constitution

²⁸ Art 12(1) & (2) of the SNRS constitution

4. The City of Hawassa on its way to becoming a Human Rights City

4.1. City profile

Hawassa city, founded in 1960 (Kebede & Alemayehu, 1999), is the capital of the Sidama National Regional State, and temporarily also of the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR)²⁹. According to Kebede and Alemayehu, Hawassa has derived its name from Lake "Hawassa," which means "wide" in Sidama language³⁰. Before the establishment of the City, the land along the edge of the lake was known as "Adaare," which refers to a grazing field for cattle³¹.

From a historical perspective, the City was established as envisioned by the-then emperor Haile Selassie for the purpose of creating, among other things, a centre for tourism and agro-processing industries (Kebede & Alemayehu, 1999). The latter was realised with the founding of a commercial state farm on the outskirts of the City. This led to an influx of migrant workers, which on the one hand further diversified the ethnic composition the City; on the other hand, this diversification came at the cost of evicting Sidama semi-pastoralists. The ensuing growth of the City has also attracted large numbers of Amhara, in the form of business owners and employees in the City Administration (Aalen, 2011). At the time of writing, the City Administration has an area of 157.2 square kilometres. It is bordered by the Lake of Hawassa in the west, Oromia Region in the north, and the woredas (districts) of Wondogenet and Shebedino to the east and south, respectively.

According to the current projection of the Central Statistics Authority (CSA) of Ethiopia, Hawassa's population is estimated at 473,774 inhabitants in 2021. The City's population gender breakdown between male and female almost seems proportionate constituting 243,753 (51.4 %) male and 230,021 (48.6%) female). Out of the total number of the population of the City, 321,289 people live in urban areas, while the remaining 152,485 people live in the rural area of the Administration. The City of Hawassa has a significant share of young people. Around 65% of the people are under 25 years, and only about 5.5% of the population is over 50 years. The population of the City lies within the working age cohort and more specifically, between the ages of 15-29. This concentration is linked to the high demand for skilled labour within the most prominent sectors contributing to the economy of the City, i.e. industry, finance, construction, business services, wholesale and retail trade, catering, and accommodation³². The population growth of Hawassa City is connected to internal migration because of the expansion of educational and industrial facilities, such as

²⁹ Hawassa city Socio Economic profile, 2021, Finance and economic development department, Hawassa

³⁰ Kebede and Alemayehu as cited in Beken & Dessalegn, 2018, Urban Government Autonomy and Good Governance in Ethiopia: The Case of Hawassa City, Ethiopian Journal of Federal Studies (EJFS) Vol 4, No 1.

³¹ Ibid

³² Hawassa city Socio Economic profile, 2021, Finance and economic development department, Hawassa

Hawassa industrial parks, banking and insurance institutions, hotels and catering services, and the widening of the City's borders to neighbouring Sidama regional state woredas³³.

4.2. Composition of Hawassa City population

Taking the projected population census into account, no single ethnic group present in the City of Hawassa reaches a majority of over 50%. The Sidama ethnic group accounts for the largest share of the population with 44.4%³⁴. The second largest ethnic group is the Amhara with 14.56%, followed by the Wolayita with 13.76 and the Oromo with 4.92%. The remaining percentage is comprised of the populations of the Guragie, Kembata, Hadiya Tigrie and other ethnic groups. This indicates that about 55.6% of the City population are non-Sidama. Consequently, the City can be characterised as a mosaic of various ethnic groups.

4.3. Institutional framework of Hawassa City

Currently, Hawassa City Administration is set up by the new Sidama Regional State Constitution having its own council and being accountable to the regional council³⁵. The particulars were left to be determined by law. Following this, the reestablishment of the urban city was proclaimed and the determination of its structure was enacted in January 2022. Currently, the new legal framework governing Hawassa and other urban centres in the Sidama region is in place³⁶.

Although the legal framework of the local government of Hawassa City is entrenched in the new regional constitution and seems rigid in its approach, it affirmatively benefits the City in its explicit constitutional provision that the City is accorded with an autonomous council. This implies that any change to be made on the autonomy of the City requires the latter's participation and approval by means of a constitutional amendment³⁷. The new proclamation has borrowed the categorisation of urban centres from the previous proclamation of the SNNPR; and Hawassa is categorised as a "regiopolis" city. Pursuant to Article 5(2) of the proclamation, regiopolis cities are administratively subdivided into sub-cities and kebele; Hawassa City has already been divided in eight sub-cities and 32 kebeles.³⁸

Regarding the accountability of the City, the constitution has already made clear in Article 44 (2) that the city administration is accountable to the regional government.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Art 44(2), Proclamation No 1/2020.

³⁶ Proclamation No. 20/2022: The Sidama National Regional State, Urban reestablishment and determining the structure of Urban city administration. Affinni Negart Gazette. This law automatically outlawed the earlier Proclamation No. 167/2017: The Urban Administration Proclamation No. 167/2017 which was enacted by the old region of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State, Debub Negarit Gazeta, February 2017

³⁷ Article 111 (3) of the Sidaama region Constitution.

³⁸ These sub-cities are Hayek Dare, Menehariya, Tabor, Misrak, Bahile Aderash, Addis Ketema, Hawela Tula and Mehal.

The new urban proclamation also reiterated a similar idea by stating that regiopolis cities administrations are accountable to the regional government.³⁹

4.4. The structure of Hawassa city administration

The following figure provides an overview of the administrative structure of the Hawassa City Administration. The most relevant administrative bodies are explained in the consequent sub-chapters.

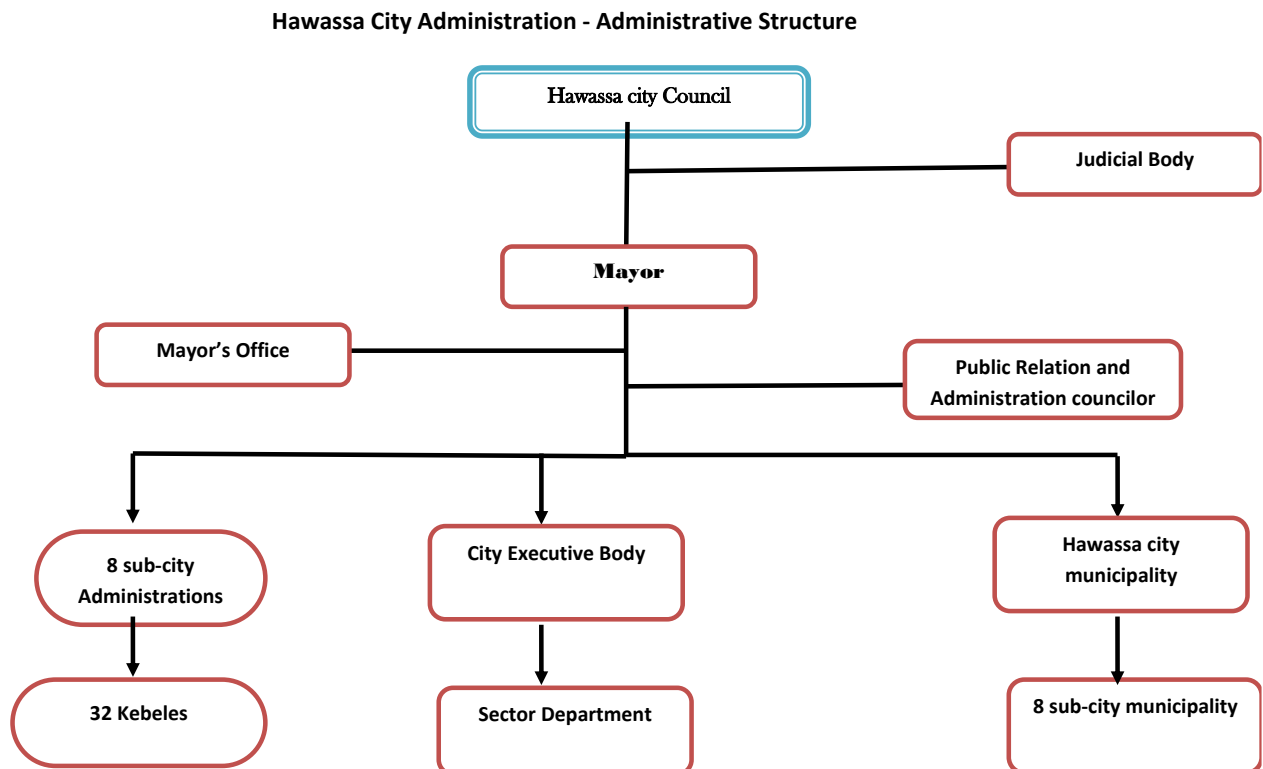


Figure 1: Current structure of Hawassa City Administration, source: Hawassa City socio-economic profile for 2021

4.4.1. The City Council

Hawassa City has an autonomous City Council. Its members are elected every five years following the National Electoral Board rules and regulation. The City Council is accountable to the people who elected it.⁴⁰ Article 12 (2a) of Proclamation No. 20/2022 states that the council shall enact local laws, regulations or directives on the matters which are not covered by the federal laws or implementation directives.⁴¹ To exercise its supervisory mandate and ensure executive accountability, the City Council disposes of several tools. Among others, the power of the City Council includes

³⁹ Article 7(1) of the Urban Proclamation 20/2022

⁴⁰ Article 16(1) of Urban. proclamation No 20/2022

⁴¹ Previously, by using such autonomy the city council has hitherto enacted a handful of regulations some of which are or pertain to: regulation of the establishment of the city bus service; regulating public demonstration in the city; determining the height of buildings in the city; controlling noise pollution; controlling the use, protection and determination of a buffer zone for Lake Hawassa; regulating land possession and determining property tax in the city; and determination of initial lease price in the city.



assigning an auditor; taking measures based on the audit report supports the council's supervisory role. Further, the Council is mandated with the power of recalling the executive, including the mayor. The City Council's mission is to improve the active participation of the community to accelerate social, economic, and political growth by enacting relevant laws and enforcing them, monitoring public authority, supervising and organising committed government bodies, and ensuring ownership, transparency, accountability, and democracy⁴².

According to Barbara, such a mandate of the city council reflects, that cities can be taken as 'democracy's original incubator', and makes a case for 'glocality', a product of integrating bottom-up and top-down approaches and eliminating the dysfunctional middle occupied by regional and national governments⁴³.

4.4.2. The mayor and deputy mayor: duties and responsibilities

The other important organ of the city is the office of the mayor. The mayor of Hawassa is the chief executive of the City. He is elected by the City Council from among its members. The law has endowed the mayor with important powers and responsibilities such as directing the city's security affairs, and selecting the members of the city executive council, namely the mayor's committee (including the deputy mayor). The mayor also nominates the deputy mayor as service delivery manager of the municipality and supervises the latter's work. Further, he/she submits the draft budget to the City Council for approval.

The deputy mayor/municipality head is responsible for municipality services that address social and economic problems, and for satisfying the needs of the urban residents. This includes ensuring that services and activities are in compliance with policies and guidelines set by the city council, and guaranteeing the transparency and accountability of the departments; planning, implementing, and monitoring the urban structure; preparing, and transferring service in land development and management, housing development and management, construction supervision, urban sanitation, and green development; and assessing service delivery standards in municipal human resource development. Currently, the City A dministration comprises around 10,126 permanent employees in its various hierarchies⁴⁴.

4.4.3. The city courts

The region legally established city courts through Proclamation No. 20/2022 Art 40 (1). In fact, the City constitutes regular courts that have a two-level structure, with a court of first instance and a high court. Additionally, according to Article 40 (2) of Proclamation 20/2022, the City can form administrative courts that assume the

⁴² https://www.hawassa.gov.et/en/city_council/overview

⁴³ Oomen, Barbara, The promise and challenges of human rights cities in Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities, (Oomen, etal eds) , Cambridge University press, 2016.

⁴⁴ Hawassa city Socio Economic profile, 2021, Finance and economic development department, Hawassa

jurisdiction over urban matters, such as implementation of the urban land utilisation plan, illegal ownership and construction, environmental sanitation and sound pollution, municipality services, the utilisation of open spaces, and managing and disposing of sewerage.

4.4.4. Other relevant offices in Hawassa City Administration

Hawassa City provides the following relevant departments in its administrative structure that would be very beneficial to initiate a process of becoming a Human Rights City. Among others, departments include:

- Health, Education, Government Communication, Public Service and Human Resource, Attorney General, Culture, Tourism and Sports, Women and Children Affairs, Urban Development and Construction (Municipality Service), Finance and Economic Development, Labour and Social Affairs, Mayor Office and Hawassa City High Court, Police department etc.

However, all of these existing structures and departments do not integrate a human rights-based approach in their service delivery to the residents of the City. The following chapter presents tangible evidence that calls for the importance of implementing such a human rights-based approach in Hawassa City and its Administration.

5. Reflection on the pushing factors in Hawassa City calling for the implementation of a human rights-based approach

5.1. A lack of accommodating diversity

The City Hawassa has been serving as the capital of SNNPR since 1992 and now it is the capital of both the SNRS and the SNNPR states. The SNNPR is using it as its capital on temporary basis. This has led to a change of the City's accountability from SNNPR to the SNRS. Although Hawassa City is composed of more than 54% non-Sidama residents, various studies indicate that the City failed to accommodate diversity that reflects diversification in its Administration channel and service delivery sectors. This has resulted in the absence of many voices in the decision-making process, including people belonging to minority nationalities and socially vulnerable groups. It is equally true that popular participation in planning and budgeting should be ensured through the representation of city residents in the City Council, which is mandated to approve the plan and budget.

However, the reality proves against the principle of equality and non-discrimination as stated both in the federal constitution and international human rights instruments that Ethiopia is a party to⁴⁵. It is also in contradiction with the equality principle as provided

⁴⁵ Both the federal and SNRS constitutions provides that "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons



in the constitution of the SNRS Art 25. In this regard, a study conducted on the local governance level of the City proved that ethnic representation in the City Council is not proportionate, which in turn affects the opportunities for equitable representation⁴⁶. In highlighting the importance of accommodating diversity, the former mayor of Graz stressed that resolving this problem in the city requires listening to all voices and working together ⁴⁷. He explained that bringing together people with different ethnic backgrounds and proving to them that they are a vital part of the city regardless of their ethnic origin is very essential. This could be achieved by means of creating various institutions like a migrants' council. In a migrants' council, the voices of those who cannot legally vote are heard. This is what makes the Human Rights City of Graz a city of people. When the city faces language as a barrier, the mayor suggests telling residents that there are more severe problems to be worked out than language. According to him, diversity is a blessing. Accepting diversity offers many opportunities for a city, and shall be seen as positive rather than a challenge.

Learning that the HRC of Graz “managed to accommodate a population from more than 116 different ethnical backgrounds and 100 religions by implementing the HRBA⁴⁸”, it is safe to say that Hawassa City requires a reform in order to accommodate the diversity of the City with about 54 % of the city’s population being non-Sidama ethnic groups so as to provide for inclusive political participation of the city’s diversified community. The city of Graz also reiterates, that participation and non-discrimination are principles which need to be considered in every decision taken by the council, government, and at administrative level⁴⁹.” Therefore, it is safe to suggest that the HRBA offers a structural fresh start that promotes participation and representation principles and avoids non-discrimination.

5.2. A lack of citizen participation: women, children and PWD

Despite having a legal and policy framework that safeguards fundamental human rights enshrined in the federal and SNRS constitutions and the international human rights conventions ratified by Ethiopia, such as the rights of people with disabilities, the rights of women, the right to water, the right to adequate housing, the access to health facilities, there are several implementation flaws in the City so that these rights are not realised in a non-discriminatory manner for all citizens. In particular, women, children and people with disabilities (PWD) are left behind.

equal and effective protection without discrimination on the grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth, or other status.

⁴⁶ Christoph and Beza argued that this practice leads to planning and budgeting ignoring or downplaying the interests of non-Sidama residents, as well as to neglecting alternative viewpoints on development. They maintain that it would amount to a violation of the good-governance principle of responsiveness in serving all stakeholders; residents included and are likely to be detrimental to the effectiveness of development policies.

⁴⁷ Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Interview with Martin Haidvogl, Director of the Municipal Administration.

The rapid unplanned expansion of peri-urban areas of the City created challenges for the City's provision of infrastructure. Additionally, it did not follow inclusive planning in the provision of municipal infrastructure. This resulted in the violation of the human rights principle of non-discrimination: A failure to provide equal access for certain disadvantaged groups of the society, in particular women, children, and people with disabilities, can be identified. Women and children experience higher risks of violence due to the dense proximity of housing, the absence of streetlights, the long distances that they need to travel to get to work, and the lack of evening transportation. A study⁵⁰ found that female-headed households, divorced, separated, and widowed women, elderly women, and women with disabilities all face severe and acute vulnerabilities with regard to shelter provision, and are among the most vulnerable urban residents in Hawassa. They are most likely to struggle to access both formal and informal shelter due to their below-average income, as well as other forms of bias and discrimination. Despite a range of legal and policy stipulations that support measures to prioritise women's access to shelter, gender norms and roles continue to constrain equal property rights for divorced, separated, and widowed women, who are also the most economically vulnerable.

Additionally, women have a significantly lower access to decision-making, and essential goods and services. The proportion of women in decision-making and administrative roles in Hawassa is extremely low. This explicitly violates basic equality and non-discrimination rights of women as enshrined in FDRE constitution Art 35 (3) and Art 33 (3) of the SNRS constitution. As such, the government fails to comply with its responsibility to create favourable conditions for the participation of women in economic and social development endeavours that are equal to those of men, as stated in the FDRE Constitution Art 35 (1), 89 (7) and the SNRS constitution Art 104 (8).

Moreover, a violation of the rights of people with disabilities can be identified. Buildings in Hawassa lack ramps, proper gates, and restrooms. Even though Ethiopia adopted the CRPD and said that it had relevant laws and policies in place, the PWD's ability to exercise their rights is hindered by the lack of infrastructural accessibility and enforcement of construction codes in Ethiopia. A lack of adequate complaint procedures, procedural safeguards or remedies for discrimination based on a disability further exacerbates this issue. This in turn suggests a violation of their rights.

To conclude, this overall analysis indicates the urgent need to foster the respect, protection, and fulfilment of the rights of these vulnerable groups by integrating the human rights-based approach in the City Administration. Evidence from the Human Rights City of Graz proves that the implementation of this approach can resolve these issues with installing various structures and working procedures. For instance, the "Women's Council fulfilled a wide array of tasks ranging from counselling to lobbying

⁵⁰ Grant, E, Desta, G, Admassie, Y, Hassan, F, Stevens, S and Ayenew, M (2019) In search of shelter: the case of Hawassa, Ethiopia. IIED, London. <https://pubs.iied.org/10875IIED>



and awareness raising, maintaining an independent women's ombud, and bringing together all acknowledged women's organisations in the city"⁵¹. Similarly, 'a Council for Persons with Disabilities established in 2006, succeeded to convince the City Council to independently implement the CRPD at the municipal level'.⁵² In connection to this, the former mayor of Graz stated that the success of a human rights initiative at the city level will depend on how the administration invites all groups of the population, including women, children, youths, and PWD, to participate in local decision-making, and how it empowers them, and creates a community that works for itself⁵³. Additionally, according to the opinion of mister Haidvogel, the humanist vision ensures that human rights are considered in all decision-making processes, especially with regard to vulnerable groups⁵⁴.

Therefore, it could safely be argued that the HRBA assessed in the City of Graz can serve as a good example and starting point to implement this approach in the City of Hawassa to solve the problems related to the full realisation of the right to citizen participation as listed above.

5.3. The inadequate provision of infrastructure

City infrastructures and services are the basis of the City's economy and the quality of life of its citizens. Although the City's socio-economic report of 2021 claims that the provision of basic infrastructure services, such as clean water, sewerage, and roads, is increasing, the same report admits that several deficits and issues in the provision of such services can be identified. From the standpoint of human rights, the government is required to provide essential infrastructure for its citizens, not as a gift. In fact, adequate service provision contributes to the fulfilment of human rights.

5.4. A lack of adequate water supply

Although it is known that water is the most precious resource, Hawassa City Administration does not adequately supply its citizens with clean water. The City Administration repeatedly admits to this issue. The City is characterised by either the absence of regular water supply or a defective maintenance where services are in place. This problem is more severe for people living in informal settlements. The deprivation from the access to an improved water source for slum dwellers effectively equates to a violation of their human rights, discriminatory service delivery, and a lack of transparency. Such practices are against the right to sufficient, safe, acceptable, accessible, and affordable water as indicated in the FDRE constitution and the SNRS

⁵¹ Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020. P 54

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.

⁵⁴ Interview with Martin Haidvogel, Director of the Municipal Administration.



regional state constitution. It is clear that there is a need to foster participatory, transparent, and inclusive processes and institutions responsible for water supply.

It is noteworthy mentioning that Human Rights Cities have succeeded in solving this problem by implementing a human rights-based approach. As Pestova argued, if there is the explicit commitment of the Human Rights City to engage with a HRBA process, it would enhance the implementation of the right and contribute to the strengthening of urban justice⁵⁵.

5.5. The right to adequate housing

‘The city of Hawassa is growing fast, driven by the recent construction of a flagship industrial park which was expected to attract up to 60,000 workers by 2021⁵⁶. However, as the population expands, Hawassa’s shelter needs are becoming ever more acute: existing housing stock and government housing programmes and policies do not match the demand⁵⁷. Hawassa City is characterised by a lack of access to affordable and available housing.

An expansion of informal settlements can be identified to meet the housing needs of migrant workers and other groups. Further, sustainable housing solutions are also urgently needed for other citizens, in particular for the most vulnerable groups of society which are mostly housed in informal settlements, where for example women and children are exposed to sexual violence.

5.6. A lack of decent work and youth employment

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) list full and productive employment and decent work as a target in order to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. Employment is viewed as people’s main route out of poverty. As decent work for all is considered as a key driver for inclusive growth, employment with a focus on youth is a prominent topic within the post-2015 development agenda (Koehler, 2013). However, numerous countries face youth unemployment as a significant challenge; it is also one of the most critical points of the City of Hawassa. According to the socio-economic profile of the City, about 65% of the population is below the age of 25, and there is a high youth unemployment rate and a lack of participation of young people. This may drive conflict and fuel tensions in society. A study shows that a lack of decent work, if experienced at an early age, threatens a person’s future employment prospects, and frequently leads to undesirable labour market outcomes over longer periods. The HRBA serves as a solution. Based on the suggestions of interviewees and literature reviews in the

⁵⁵ Pestova, Natalya, The human right to water in the city context Insights from domestic litigation, in Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities, (Oomen, etal eds), Cambridge University press, 2016, P. 175.

⁵⁶ Grant, E, Desta, G, Admassie, Y, Hassan, F, Stevens, S and Ayenew, M (2019) In search of shelter: the case of Hawassa, Ethiopia. IIED, London. <https://pubs.iied.org/10875IIED>

⁵⁷ Ibid



Human Rights City of Graz, this problem can be solved by introducing promotions for the local economy, like start-up programmes for innovation in green growth.

5.7. Corrupt practices and a lack of accountability

The problem of good governance through corrupt practices such as nepotism in land allocation processes clearly manifests a violation of the principle of accountability. This violation also amounts to a breach of the constitutional guaranteed right to hold the government officials accountable for any failure of conducting government affairs in a transparent manner according to Art 12 of the FDRE constitution. It is also against rule of law principles which serve as a foundation for the good governance principles and HRBA of the PANEL. Thus, this visible and serious problem requires a solution by applying a human rights-based approach. In this regard, the experience of the City of Graz is a practical example. According to the director of the City of Graz administration, the rule of law requires the absence or the fight against corruption, promotion of professionalism, and accountability⁵⁸.

6. Pulling factors for implementing a human rights-based approach in Hawassa City

6.1. The existence of the ten-year plan

The vision of the ten-year plan of the of the federal and city administration provides, among other things, for unconditional access to necessities of life, such as food, shelter, clean water, basic health, and education, and an increase in economic growth of the city through economic, social, and political participation of all citizens without discrimination. The ten-year plan indicates urban development as a focal point of concern. Consequently, it suggests focusing on housing development, and creating financing options to reduce housing shortages and extend integrated infrastructure and services provision. While we are considering why and how the city of Hawassa could initiate the process of becoming a human rights city, it is no surprise that the vision and mission of Hawassa city underline the benefits that individual citizens, civil society, the economy, politicians, government administration, law enforcement, and judicial administration may enjoy. If consistently pursued, all sectors of society will harvest the fruits of a local government's implementation of an effective human rights protection within its local administration. Among other things, it incorporated 'well-being,' 'economic growth,' 'public order argument,' human rights beacon argument,' and 'service argument' to mention the least⁵⁹. Moreover, the following section summarises some important motives that may drive the City to initiate the

⁵⁸ Interview with Martin Haidvogel, Director of the Municipal Administration.

⁵⁹ For ten benefits that emanates from human rights protection at a local, please see, Accardo Andreas, Grimheden Jonas and Starl Klaus, The Case for Human Rights at Local Level: A Clever Option? in: Benedek Wolfgang, Benoît-Rohmer Florence, Karl Wolfram, Nowak Manfred (eds.), European Yearbook on Human Rights 2012,

implementation of a human rights-based approach in its municipal and city administration.

6.1.1. New Urban Agenda and UN Habitat III

Initiating a human rights-based approach in the city can foster international collaboration and networking with the City of Hawassa. Among others, Hawassa has been working with UN Habitat III. To that effect, it recently launched a city solid waste management project together with UN Habitat and the embassy of Japan⁶⁰. Such initiatives improve the quality of life for nearby communities by providing livelihood opportunities in line with the New Urban Agenda as well as the HRBA. In this regard, the experience from the Human Rights City Graz has paramount importance. The key informants of this study clearly elaborated that during the implementation of a HRBA, Graz has gained the interest of UNESCO and other partners⁶¹.

6.1.2. Ensuring sustainable development

According to the ten-year development plan of the City, ensuring fast and sustainable political, social, and economic development is the primary aim of the City of Hawassa⁶². Indeed, this is what sociologist Henry Lefebvre's argued for the 'right to urban life' that constitutes a collective right, and envisages a 'radical restructuring of social, political, and economic relations, both in the city and beyond'⁶³. This assertion has also been confirmed by the former mayor of the HRC of Graz⁶⁴. Moreover, Gomez and Möstl noted that 'the HBRA and inclusion as envisaged in the NUA advances a human-centered approach to the design and implementation of local policies and connects sustainable urban development issues to the human rights framework⁶⁵'. Therefore, by initiating and implementing a human rights-based approach, the City of Hawassa could easily achieve its economic, social, political, and cultural and the right to city objective, and mission as set in its ten-year plan and beyond.

6.1.3. Promotion of coexistence of the city community

The City of Hawassa has been known for the peaceful coexistence of various ethnicities ever since its establishment. In this regard, Hawassa City Administration

⁶⁰ UN-Habitat and the city administration of Hawassa have jointly launched the Hawassa City Structure Plan. Through the Support to the Sustainable Development of the Hawassa City Cluster project, UN-Habitat has provided technical support for revision of the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) for Hawassa. Hawassa, Ethiopia April 15, 2021- <https://unhabitat.org/un-habitat-launches-city-structure-plan-and-solid-waste-management-swm-project-for-hawassa-city>

⁶¹ Interview with Dr. Klaus Starl. Director, UNESCO Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels

⁶² Hawassa City Ten-year plan, (2020-2030), Translation mine, soft copy available with the author.

⁶³ Oomen, Barbara, The promise, and challenges of human rights cities in Global Urban Justice: The Rise of Human Rights Cities, (Oomen, etal eds), Cambridge University press, 2016, P. 6

⁶⁴ Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.

⁶⁵ Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020. P 60.



and some writers associate various attributes to the City. Different reports and Hawassa's print media outlet claim for instance, that Hawassa offers harmonious city life for its citizens. Some even referred to Hawassa as being one of the most glamorous cities in Ethiopia, displaying rich cultural diversity and heritage, well preserved scenery, flavourful city delicacies and magnificent people from different ethnic communities of the country⁶⁶. "Harmony within cities hinges other than that of economic growth and vitality and its attendant benefits, but on three pillars that make harmony possible: equity, good governance and sustainability"⁶⁷. The current reestablishment of the City under the new Sidama Regional State shall also promote social cohesion that existed for more than half a century. Therefore, it is argued that the implementation of a human rights-based approach in the City Administration can advance this historic coexistence of the community, and ensure good governance and sustainability of the City's growth.

6.1.4. Attraction for UNESCO based network

The Fichee-Chambalaalla⁶⁸ is one of the five Ethiopian heritages registered as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and annually hosted in the City of Hawassa. Further, the City of Hawassa is a host for this world heritage as far as the Fichee Chambalaalla festivity is concerned. The Fichee ceremony is the main intangible heritage of the Sidama people. This means that values of the UNESCO such as mutual respect, peace, tolerance, amicability, and human rights apply for this intangible heritage. In this respect, starting a Human Rights City Process and supporting the process in the city that hosts the UNESCO heritage can attract international cooperation and collaboration.

6.1.5. The existence of CSOs and NGOs or 'human rights beacon argument'

Hawassa City is a home for various federal and regional governmental institutions. It also hosts various CSOs and NGOs⁶⁹. Starl et al. argued that 'cities and regions with

⁶⁶ Temesgen, Seleyabna Ethiopia: Hawassa - City of 'Amour' Ethiopian Press Agency (Addis Ababa) 28 September 2012, available at <https://allafrica.com/stories/201210010008.html>

⁶⁷ It is difficult to give a precise idea of what does the city referring itself as a harmonious. But for the purpose of this study, a 'harmonious city is one that promotes unity within diversity.

Harmonious Urbanization State of the World's Cities 2008/9 – World Urban Forum IV, https://mirror.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/5546_12404_HarmoniousUrbanization.pdf

⁶⁸ The cultural and a new year event known as Fichee-Chambalaalla is the key ceremony of New Year among the Sidama which has been celebrated for centuries among all members of the people. The celebration of the ceremony begins first at family and neighborhood level and then, moves to a community level in a cultural square traditionally called Gudumaale. It is a New Year ceremony with the knowledge of Indigenous and traditional calendar, having considerable cultural significance; and an intangible heritage which reflects the major cultural aspects of the Sidama People.

⁶⁹ For instance, FDRE Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, FDRE Ombudsman, Ethiopian Human Rights Council, are good examples. Additionally, the existence of College of Law and Governance and human rights club in Hawassa University could be taken as an asset in HRC initiative. Moreover, their existence performs a variety of service such as, bringing citizen concerns to governments via advocacy and monitor the implementation of government activities through reporting and encourage citizen's participation through various mechanisms.

a focus on human rights implementation/compliance trigger a wide range of civil society activity and NGOs, academia, the knowledge industry and think tanks settle or emerge. The internationality of the respective workforce and the job opportunities in the field are success stories⁷⁰. Further, in the city of Graz, the academic department played a significant role in initiating the Human Rights City Process in Graz. Consequently, Hawassa University School of law could take the lead in the process in Hawassa City. The author strongly believes that assigning the school by the mayor would ease the initiation process easily.

6.1.6. Financial autonomy and economic growth argument

According to the socio-economic profile of 2021, the City Administration has the power to levy, charge, collect, and proper fees and taxes in accordance with the law. The City generates about 85 percent of its revenue and, thus, the largest part of the Hawassa City budget is generated locally. The implementation of a Human Rights City has been one of the driving factors for some cities that implemented it. Thus, the initiation of the HRC will strengthen the financial autonomy of the City and will bring economic growth. In support of this argument, Starl et al. explained that 'human rights implementation contributes to the growth of a city as well as its income from taxation. These factors generate economic and social stability, particularly in times of economic crisis and change'⁷¹.

6.1.7. The 'respectability argument'

As a new region, the SNRS government and its capital city Hawassa claim that they commit themselves to the realisation of human rights enshrined in the FDRE constitution and international human rights instruments. This point can be referred from the preamble of the constitution⁷². Such claims are in line with the respectability argument that a 'strong human rights policy and profile gives politicians credibility and legitimacy by serving a good public relation for politicians and may be used for highly visible and positively connoted public and media appearances'⁷³.

6.1.8. The 'city-diplomacy argument'

Implementing human rights-based activities strengthens the relationship among cities both at national and international level. In this regard, Starl et al. noted that a 'case for human rights provides an opportunity to foster relationships with other cities, countries,

⁷⁰ Accardo Andreas, Grimheden Jonas and Starl Klaus, The Case for Human Rights at Local Level: A Clever Option? in: Benedek Wolfgang, Benoît-Rohmer Florence, Karl Wolfram, Nowak Manfred (eds.), European Yearbook on Human Rights 2012.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² The preamble of the Sidama regional state constitution states it has the objective of making people beneficiary of the development through effective observance of human and democratic rights, implementing transparent and accountable division of power among state organs that ensures accelerated development for the public.'

⁷³ Accardo Andreas, Grimheden Jonas and Starl Klaus, The Case for Human Rights at Local Level: A Clever Option? in: Benedek Wolfgang, Benoît-Rohmer Florence, Karl Wolfram, Nowak Manfred (eds.), European Yearbook on Human Rights 2012



international organisations, while also creating a positive international image. Currently, Hawassa City chairs the Ethiopian cities association (ECA). The association serves as an alliance for 86 Ethiopian cities, and aims to improve the living conditions of the urban population to be prosperous, sustainable, productive, and competitive by 2030⁷⁴. Thus, it is safe to argue that the implementation of the human rights-based approach in Hawassa City can attract various city coalitions both at the national and international level.

7. PESTEL and SWOT Analysis of Hawassa City

7.1. PESTEL Analysis of the City of Hawassa

This part of the study reviewed existing over all situations i.e., a political, economic, social, technological, and legal (PESTEL) by analysing the Ten Years Perspective Development Plan (2021 – 2030) of the FDRE, ten-year development plan of the city of Hawassa, and various research documents and reports by national and international organizations.

Factors	Opportunities	Threats
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expressed political commitment to respect human rights Widening of the political and civic space Increased attention to women and children The ongoing political reform measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discriminatory practices in the city administration Lack of human rights-based approach in political commitment
Economical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New home grown and pro-poor economic policy⁷⁵ Young and productive population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of HRBA to development High unemployment Inflation and price escalation High rural-urban migration Poverty Informal settlement
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access to education and health services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existence of corruption practice Lack of service standard High Rural-urban migration

⁷⁴ The ECA was established in February 2003. The aim of the ECA is to support city administrations in their quest to deliver better services to their citizens. The ECA seeks to facilitate the exchange of information and experiences among cities and between cities and stakeholders, it fosters the dissemination of national and international best practices and encourages policy dialogue on pertinent urban development and city management issues.

⁷⁵ Ethiopia endorsed the new Ethiopian National Development Plan of 2020/21 – 2029/30 of a ten-year perspective development plan envisioning that “Ethiopia: An African Beacon of Prosperity”. Among other things, Urban Development and Construction (UDCo) is one the most important milestone among the eight strategic pillars of the government.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperative culture during time of crisis • Open space for media and civil society • Relative human rights awareness on civil and political rights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor social security scheme • Stigma and societal prejudices against PWD • Lack of customer satisfaction survey • No system in place to monitor in alignment with the SDGs • Increase of street children
Technological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to use ICT in some sector of the city • Digital platforms that the city uses to give information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal use of ICT in service provision procedure • Absence of digitization of services (e-service) • Lack of access to information
Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitutional protection of human rights • Ratification of various human rights instruments • New Sidama region constitution • New urban establishment proclamation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of HRBA in service delivery • Lack of adequate redress & compliant mechanisms for rights violation • Poor access to justice • Lack of a system to monitor the SDG processes
Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleanliness and Beautification of the city • Country wide plantation & environment rehabilitation. • Green initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor factory and industrial park regulation • Lack of environmental impact assessment • Poor disaster management and early warning system.

7.2. SWOT Analysis of Hawassa City

This report reviewed the immediate environment of the city by using Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis from literatures and various report documents of the city.

Strength	Weakness	Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mosaic of various ethnic groups • Existence of autonomous city council • Existence of judiciary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of inclusive citizen participation • Lack of HRBA city structure • Lack of awareness on HRBA among 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspiration of being harmonious city • Intention of local authorities to initiate the HRBA in its service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High unemployment • Frequent structural changes



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial autonomy • Existence of city's ten-year development plan • Existence of tourist's attraction places • Hosting UNESCO heritage Fichee festivity • Existence of Industrial Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • politicians and population at large • Poor women and children participation in city planning • Weak service delivery • Poor infrastructure • Inadequate quality and high inequity in infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of relevant service providing departments • Attraction of tourists • Existence of CSOs and NGOs • Active role of HC in Ethiopian Cities Association/ECA/ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High inflation and economic slow down • Corruption • Lack of accountability • Lack of adequate redress for human rights violation
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8. Way forward – initiating a Human Rights City of Hawassa: Lessons learnt from the Human Rights City of Graz

Initiating a Human Rights City Process in Hawassa City and introducing the human rights-based approach in the City Administration can mitigate the aforementioned challenges faced at the local city level. It can build on the many favourable conditions elaborated in Chapter 6. Based on an extensive analysis of literature, national and international human rights documents, and interviews with local officials of the city of Graz, the following section highlights some important lessons learnt during the two months stay at the Human Rights City of Graz. It proposes the most important first steps Hawassa City shall take to initiate the Human Rights City Process.

8.1. Adopting a Human Rights City Declaration by the City Council

One of the most important steps to initiate the Human Rights City Process is adopting a human rights declaration and a self-commitment to being a Human Rights City by the local government. The review of literature and the interviews conducted in this study indicate that there are at least five important points in the Human Rights City Declaration that would also be fruitful for the City of Hawassa and should be adopted. The initiators of the Human Rights City Process in Graz were guided by the principles of international human rights. They stressed that it is necessary to inform the population, especially the youth on the rights and duties, to reach out to the private sector, to make duty bearers respect and fulfil human rights relevant to daily life, and to cooperate internationally. Consequently, this self-commitment is one of the most effective parts of starting the Human Rights City Process and its effectiveness is also assessed in practice like for instance in Graz. In the words of the former mayor Nagl,



“a Human Rights declaration is like a manual of a certain machine that assists the mayor and administration to operate flawlessly, and its interpretation is a process that will continue being updated as the manual does.”

Thus, the mayor of Hawassa city may take such initiation as a starting point in becoming a Human Rights City. In this regard, one of the key informants stated that “for the good functioning of the local administration in respect to human rights protection and promotion many small things are necessary, but above all that, to guarantee the execution of these small things the attitudes of elected and administrative decision-makers towards democratic principles, the rule of law, a humanist vision of life is relevant”⁷⁶. Additionally, from the legal point of view, the council of the city supports this move since it is the highest body of the city that represents the interests of its residents and is mandated to suggest and declare what is best for its residents per Art 15 (2) (a) of the new urban city establishment proclamation. It is worth to mention the advice of the former mayor of the city Graz stating that “after all, the mind of city government administration is to serve its citizens”⁷⁷.

8.2. Establishing a Municipal Human Rights Council

After self-committing to being a Human Rights City and adopting the relevant Human Rights Declaration by the local government, key informants of this study, like former mayor of Graz, and various evidence in literature clearly indicate that establishing a Human Rights Council (the name of the council may vary, for instance it is Municipal Human Rights Council (MUHRC) in Graz and Round Table Forum in Salzburg) is the second most crucial step when becoming a Human Rights City. The key role of the council would be advising both the mayor and the city council on human rights issues of the city.

Such a body needs to be established permanently and independently of changes in the city government to ensure its proper functioning and to change a top-down into a bottom-up approach to a cooperative implementation model. It will serve as a mutual learning point for the success of the suggested Human Rights City Model⁷⁸. Members of the council may come from but are not limited to fields of local and urban governance, politics, administration, the judiciary, engineering and technology, the executive, the academia, and civil society organisations working in several human rights related areas. Members work on a voluntary basis.

⁷⁶ Interview with Martin Haidvogel, Director of the Municipal Administration.

⁷⁷ Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.

⁷⁸ Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020.



8.3. Conducting a baseline survey

A baseline survey study should be conducted on the prospects and challenges of initiating the Human Rights City Hawassa. This study will show the existing prospects and challenges and help prioritise the problems that require immediate intervention of a HRBA. Such advantages have been practically tested in the case of the City of Graz. The key informants of this study have strongly recommended the undertaking of such baseline study⁷⁹.

8.4. Involving different CSO and NGOs

Strengthening the support of Hawassa University college of law and governance, EHRC, EHRCO, and other CSOs, NGOs, and relevant stakeholders from the outset is a significant and very special step forward. There are several reasons, inter alia: A strong involvement of academia in the Human Rights City Process of Graz was one of the driving factors to achieve the goal of HRC, as stated by key informants of this study. In this regard, it is noted that active civil society, human rights institutions, and an explicit political commitment were fundamental drivers of the Human Rights City Process which made the city of Graz an international reference point for implementing the HRBA at the local level.

8.5. Undertaking a seminar/conference on the Culture of Human Rights Cities

Undertaking a seminar or conference on the Human Rights Cities Culture may bring many stakeholders together and inspire academics, CSOs, NGOs, policy-makers, and city administration. Further, it attracts interested groups, advocates, and media that disseminate the information of initiation from the outset to the public. This serves as a mutual learning argument through which public officials can support a 'human rights climate' in a city by promoting rights awareness through press conferences and remind people of their human rights and relevant obligations⁸⁰. It is also worth mentioning that a seminar on Human Security and Human Rights Education hosted by the European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC Graz), a human rights NGO, in June 2000 was a nucleus for the Human Rights City initiation process⁸¹.

⁷⁹ Interview with Dr. Klaus Starl, Director, UNESCO Centre for the Promotion of Human Rights at the Local and Regional Levels, 15, June 2022, and Chairwoman of the Municipality Human Rights Council (MUHRC) of the city of Graz

⁸⁰ Accardo Andreas, Grimheden Jonas and Starl Klaus, The Case for Human Rights at Local Level: A Clever Option? in: Benedek Wolfgang, Benoît-Rohmer Florence, Karl Wolfram, Nowak Manfred (eds.), European Yearbook on Human Rights 2012,

⁸¹ Oberleitner and Fischer, 2020, The ILA study group on the Role of Cities in International Law City Report: Graz Dec 2020, P.3



8.6. Implementing a Human Rights Education Strategy

Implementing a Human Rights Education Strategy in the city is one of the most important steps that gears the HRC Process. According to the interview conducted with former Mayor of the city of Graz this step has significantly contributed to the success Graz as a Human Rights City. Mayor Nagl stated that investing in education on the human rights-based approach starting from kindergarten is a key strategy that will benefit the city's economy and living quality⁸².

8.7. Devising administrative services by applying a human rights-based approach

Creating platforms and institutions that apply the HRBA in the context of any city is one the important steps that Hawassa city may consider in its approach to become a Human Rights City. It is stated that “the institutionalization of human rights policies is one of the main achievements of the Human Rights City process in Graz to guarantee sustainability, the coverage of a broad range of topics in daily policy-making, the constant availability of relevant expertise, and to a certain extent also accountability through monitoring processes and the direct participation of interest groups”⁸³.

⁸² Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.

⁸³ Karina Gomes and Markus Möstl, Implementing Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the Local Level: Key Issues and Examples, in: Gerd Oberleitner and Klaus Starl (series eds.), Human Rights Go Local Publication Series, Volume 1, HRGL Publishing, Graz, 2020. P 58



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- Interview with Siegfried Nagl, former Mayor of Graz (2003_2021), UNI ETC, Graz, June 9, 2022.
- Interview with Martin Haidvogel, Director of the Municipal Administration.
- Informal discussion with Professor Gerd
- Informal discussion with Professor Wolf Benedick
- Informal discussion with Angelika, chairwoman of municipal human rights city of Graz, June 23rd, 2022

