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Ministry of Federal Affairs

H.E. Dr. Abraham Tekeste, State Minister
Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

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Addis Ababa, 18 March 2014

Subject: DAG Findings and Recommendations on CDP and South Omo

Your Excellencies,

On behalf of the Development Assistance Group (DAG), I am writing to report back to you on the missions DAG members have undertaken to visit the Commune Development Programme (CDP) and relocation in South Omo over the past two years. This letter summarizes our findings and recommendations. We hope it will be helpful to you and your colleagues, and serve as basis for further dialogue between the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and the DAG.

The DAG appreciates the Government of Ethiopia's invitation to independently monitor the CDP and other forms of relocation, and your responses to date to our findings and recommendations. The Government of Ethiopia has stressed its commitment to equitable development throughout Ethiopia, with the objective of the CDP being the improved provision of services to scattered and hard-to-reach communities, with historically lower development outcomes, improved livelihoods and good governance. These are important elements for Ethiopia's development, economic growth and vision of becoming a Middle Income Country.

Since learning about the CDP, in late 2010, the DAG has emphasised the importance of following international good practice on resettlement, from design and consultation through to implementation, monitoring, evaluation, grievance and redress mechanisms. This is important for the protection of people's rights, to ensure the achievement of the intended outcomes, and for the sustainability of wider development efforts, and the reduction in fragilities.

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In reviewing the CDP, the DAG has found that the program is designed to operate under the following provisions:

- Ethiopia's constitutional provisions for voluntary social and economic development activity and compensation in the case of being relocated from the place of residence by economic development programmes.
- Ethiopia's Rural Development Policy and Strategy commitment to voluntary resettlement, settlement in a manner that will promote sustainable natural resource management, retention of user-rights on plots of land in original localities until such time as they become reasonably self-sufficient, and adequate compensation to farmers from whom land is taken.
- Ethiopia's Expropriation Law, which sets out compensation provisions where resettlement is required for economic development purposes.
- The GoE's own 'basic ingredients' for the CDP, which were based on the international good practice principles, including any resettlement being voluntary.

To date, the DAG has visited over 65 villages in Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Somali under the CDP and South Omo where relocation is also taking place. Following a common Terms of Reference, we have met with Government officials at regional and woreda levels, Government staff such as development agents, teachers and health extension workers, and with a wide range of women and men, including those who had moved or were planning to move to both new and existing villages, as well as those choosing to stay in their original villages.

We found that the implementation of the CDP has improved over time, and that the GoE has increasingly provided information to communities about resettlement in terms of timing and objectives. In areas where the program has been in place for some time, the quality of basic services was, even if delayed in many places, found to be the same, as good as or better than it had been where they lived previously, with people often saying that they preferred the new village, even when they had not initially wanted to move. In terms of livelihoods, it was too early to tell if these would improve, but where irrigated land and/or improved extension services were being made available, this potential was there. However, there is a need to ensure that people who are moving to areas with different livelihoods practices get the necessary extension and education services to enable them to take advantage of new livelihoods opportunities.

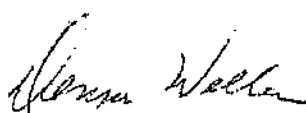
Missions by the DAG to monitor implementation of the CDP did hear some specific complaints which gave them cause for concern, including some respondents in two communities in Benshangul-Gumuz visited in September 2012 who mentioned that the threat of force had been implied by officials if they did not move; and reports of allegations of abuse on our first visit to South Omo in January 2012. However, we did not find reports of systematic or widespread human rights abuses. There were concerns over the quality of consultation, the quality of construction of public services, grievance redress mechanisms and the speed, scale and sequencing of implementation.

Based on our missions, the DAG has 6 key recommendations for how the CDP and any other future relocation/resettlement programmes can be improved in the future. They are:

1. GoE to ensure that regions and woredas have sufficient capacity and knowledge and clear mandates to implement programs which follow international good practices for voluntary movement, including information and consultation at all stages of the decision-making, design and planning for all affected and host communities and the public in concerned regions and woredas.
2. GoE to ensure that all viable options and alternatives are considered first before relocating communities.
3. GoE to ensure the implementation of infrastructure, basic social services and other support services is put in place before populations move from their current place of residence to new sites. Where people have moved in advance of adequate basic services being established, GoE continues with its efforts to ensure an acceptable standard of services to improve, restore, or maintain levels of accessibility.
4. GoE to ensure that the people who move are assisted in their efforts to improve their livelihoods and standards of living or [at least] to restore them, in real terms, to at least pre-movement levels. Possible disruption to existing livelihoods and coping mechanisms must be analysed and measures put in place to ensure these are minimized.
5. Mechanisms for monitoring, safeguards, appeals and redress put in place, including the establishment of clear internal monitoring of the implementation of the best practice guidelines and independent grievance redress mechanisms in all regions.
6. Allegations of abuse in relation to CDP/resettlement are investigated and followed up appropriately.

We would welcome a response to the recommendations outlined in this letter. In particular, we would be grateful for more information on how you have investigated and appropriately followed-up on allegations of abuse in the CDP programme areas and South Omo that have been brought to the attention of regional or federal officials, and any measures identified or implemented to improve the areas where there have been problems to date (quality of consultation, quality of risk assessment and mitigation, readiness or extent of services and livelihood support, availability of independent grievance redress mechanism).

We look forward to hearing from you. Please accept, Your Excellencies, the assurance of our highest consideration.


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