

UNDERSTANDING LAND INVESTMENT DEALS IN AFRICA

IGNORING ABUSE IN ETHIOPIA
DFID AND USAID IN THE LOWER OMO VALLEY

JULY 2013



IGNORING ABUSE IN ETHIOPIA

DFID AND USAID IN THE LOWER OMO VALLEY



The Oakland Institute

Acknowledgments

This report was written by Will Hurd, director of a NGO called Cool Ground. He has lived and worked among the Mursi for eight years and is one of the few Westerners who speak their language. Will Hurd accompanied as translator a USAID/DfID assessment team to South Omo in January 2012.

The author is grateful to David Turton, for his inputs into the report.

The views and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the Oakland Institute alone and do not reflect opinions of the individuals and organizations that have sponsored and supported the work.

Editors: Frederic Mousseau and Melissa Moore

Photo credits: Will Hurd / the Oakland Institute

Cover photo: Bodi and Kwegu weeding a cultivation site, against the government's orders, January 2012

Publisher: The Oakland Institute is a policy think tank dedicated to advancing public participation and fair debate on critical social, economic, and environmental issues.

Design: amymade graphic design, amymade@gmail.com, amymade.com

Copyright © 2013 by The Oakland Institute

The text may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education, and research, provided that the source is acknowledged in full. The copyright holder requests that all such uses be registered with them for impact assessment purposes. For copying in any other circumstances, reuse in other publications, or translation or adaptation, permission must be secured.

Please email info@oaklandinstitute.org

The Oakland Institute
PO Box 18978
Oakland, CA 94619
USA
www.oaklandinstitute.org



Bodi homestead near the Omo River, January 2012

Overview

Southern Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley is one of the most culturally and biologically diverse areas in the world, yet the Ethiopian government is transforming more than 375,000 hectares (1450 sq. miles) of the region into industrial-scale plantations for sugar and other monocrops.¹ A vast resettlement scheme for the local ethnic groups is accompanying these plans, as 260,000 local people from 17 ethnic groups who live in the Lower Omo and around Lake Turkana—whose waters will be taken for plantation irrigation—are being evicted from their farmland and restricted from using the natural resources they have been relying on for their livelihoods.²

The plantations are being installed and ethnic and pastoral communities are being forcibly resettled with the help of the Ethiopian military, which has become a central player in the implementation of the Ethiopian government's development plans. Forced evictions, denial of access to subsistence land, beatings, killings, rapes, imprisonment, intimidation, political coercion, and the denial of government assistance are all being used as tools of forced resettlement.³ Meanwhile, international donors have been accused of supporting the programs connected with the resettlement sites.

In response to these criticisms, a group from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) conducted a joint field investigation in the Lower Omo in January 2012. Although this group heard many credible accounts of abuses connected to the resettlement or "villagisation" program, the official stance of the United Kingdom government has since been to repeatedly insist that the "the Department for International Development was not able to substantiate the allegations of human rights violation it received during its visit to South Omo in January 2012."⁴ Similarly, the US State Department's *Ethiopia 2012 Human Rights Report* released in April 2013 indicates that donors' visits "did not find evidence to support this claim [of human right violations] during visits."⁵ DFID and USAID also reported this unsubstantiation of allegations of human rights abuses to the Development Assistance Group (DAG), which is made up of 26 of the major aid agencies that donate to Ethiopia including the UNDP, IMF, and the World Bank.⁶

This report provides unique insight into the investigation conducted by the donor agencies in January 2012. In stark contrast with the official discourse, testimony from the affected communities shows that egregious human rights



violations have taken place. The author accompanied the assessment team as its translator and has audio recordings of the interviews conducted in several Lower Omo communities. Transcripts of these recordings, made public with this report, leave no room for doubt that the donor agencies were given highly credible first-hand accounts of serious human rights violations during their field investigation and they have chosen to steadfastly ignore these accounts.

Background on Land Investment and Government Plans in South Omo

As the government's plans for industrial plantations in the Lower Omo have taken shape, they accompany an aggressive resettlement program targeting the local populations. The Ethiopian government claims that the plantations and the resettlement are unconnected,⁷ yet it is clear that to establish plantations the local people must first be removed from their land--this is the primary purpose of the resettlement.

Once cleared of inhabitants, state-run plantations, private plantations owned by Indian, Italian, and Malaysian, companies and Ethiopian firms, as well as US-based Ethiopian diaspora-owned plantations are moving into these areas to grow primarily palm oil, sugarcane, grain, and cotton. Of these, the state-run Ethiopian Sugar Corporation

plantations, will impact the people of the Lower Omo most⁸ – especially the 170,000 people from ten ethnic groups who live along or near the Omo River: Dizi, Suri, Bodi, Kwegu, Mursi, Mugudji, Karo, Nyangatom, Murle, and Dassanach.⁹ More than 200 kilometers (125 miles) of primary irrigation canals are planned¹⁰ and an earthen dam to supply water to the plantations has already been built.¹¹ This has stopped the annual flood that all people along the river depend on for agriculture, and in the process inundated cultivation sites of the Bodi and Kwegu people upstream.

A much larger dam, the Gibe III hydroelectric dam, which will be the tallest in Africa at 243 meters (nearly 800 ft.), is being built further upstream. Along with the yet to be built Gibe IV and V dams, this will be the second in a cascade of four dams and one powerhouse (Gibe II). Gibe III will make large-scale irrigation in the Lower basin possible by controlling the flow of the Omo River. Without the dam, the annual flood would wipe out much of the irrigation infrastructure and the low flows in the dry time of the year would be too low to support irrigated agriculture.¹² In the impact assessments for the dam, it was declared that an artificial flood released annually from the dam reservoir would “fully compensate” the downstream population for the loss of the natural flood; this is the main feature of a much trumpeted “downstream mitigation plan.” But the subsequent development of large-scale irrigation infrastructure (not mentioned in the impact assessments) has made the controlled flood a moot point.

BOX 1: IMPACT ON LAKE TURKANA

The Omo River waters will irrigate 375,000 hectares (1450 sq. miles) of sugarcane and commercially-leased plantations and use between 33 and 40 percent of the Omo's annual flow, depending on irrigation efficiency.¹³ Many aspects of this project remain in the dark, as no impact assessment has been released. The Omo River accounts for 90 percent of the inflow to Lake Turkana, the largest desert lake in the world. A 13 to 22 meter (43-72 feet) drop in the level of Lake Turkana is predicted as a result of the plantations, plus a further two meter drop from filling the Gibe III dam's reservoir.¹⁴ This drop in lake level will spell disaster for the 90,000 Rendille, Samburu, Turkana, Elmolo, Dassanach, Ariaal, Gabbra, and other peoples who live along the lakeshore and depend on the lake for fishing, watering livestock, cultivation, and drinking water. Many tens of thousands more who live further away from the lakeshore depend on the lake as well. Experts also warn that the lake could be pushed beyond a tipping point in salinity, which could drastically alter its biology and fisheries. Sadly, many descriptions of the lake's future reference the Aral Sea in Central Asia, which was once one of the largest lakes in the world but is now almost completely dry because of the diversion of water for irrigation.¹⁵ The three national parks in and around Lake Turkana, which were declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1997,¹⁶ will all be negatively affected by a drop in lake level.



In January 2011, the then Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, announced that the government would be taking over 150,000 hectares (580 sq. miles) of land for sugarcane plantations and six sugar factories.¹⁷ According to this plan, almost all the land of the Nyangatom, as well as large parts of the land of the Bodi, Kwegu, Mursi, Karo and Mugudji, will become plantations. In addition, another 200,000 hectares (770 sq. miles) will be devoted to other foreign and Ethiopian private farms. Meles Zenawi claimed that these projects would “benefit the people of this area and hundreds of thousands of other Ethiopians, by creating employment.”¹⁸ But the net effect will be to deprive resident agro-pastoralists of their livelihoods and to move them into resettlement sites where their only option will be work on plantations for a low wage. In his speech, Zenawi said that the government was now bringing sugarcane to South Omo because of the “good result” that had been achieved from sugarcane plantations in the Awash Valley, in the Afar region of Ethiopia.¹⁹ The actual result for the Afar and Karrayuu of the Awash Valley has been that their land was taken without compensation, many have ceased to be pastoralists, and 93 percent are now food insecure.²⁰ In addition, the water resources of the Karrayuu and Afar have been polluted by pesticide and fertilizer use from scores of plantations.²¹

The plantations in the Lower Omo will also have a profound impact on some of the most important protected areas in Ethiopia, including the UNESCO World Heritage Site, and devastate the riverine forest along the Omo River. The Ethiopian Sugar Corporation has taken about a third of the Omo National Park for plantations²² and another 33,000 hectares (125 sq. miles) have been taken out of the neighboring Mago National Park for the “future Mago farm.” Even some parts of a newly gazetted area of the Omo Park, an important breeding ground for wildlife, have been designated for sugarcane, creating disagreement between the regional and federal governments.²³ Furthermore, plantation guards have shot much wildlife as the plantations have taken over the animals’ previous habitat.

In its full-scale pursuit to develop the sensitive areas of the Lower Omo, the Ethiopian government has strategically leveraged the Ethiopian military. Metals & Engineering Corp., or METEC, is an Ethiopian military-run company that was formed as a conglomerate of 15 previous companies and now operates 75 factories. The state-run Ethiopian Sugar Corporation has contracted METEC to build six sugar factories for the Omo-Kuraz sugar plantations.²⁴ This strategy has been a disaster for local people who have seen military force used to implement state-sponsored economic activities on their land.

Unfortunately, the Ethiopian government has so thoroughly repressed any form of open political debate about its policies that the people affected by them have no way to speak out without punishment. On January 13th, 2013, the regional president along with people from the Ministry of Federal Affairs called together all the NGOs, tribal people, missionaries, and government workers in the area and told them not to give any information to foreigners about developments in the Lower Omo. If they did, there would be consequences.²⁵ A de facto gag order exists for journalists also, as Ethiopia has arrested scores of reporters, and more journalists have fled Ethiopia than any other country in the last 10 years.²⁶

Implementation of Development Plans in Bodi, Kwegu, and Mursi

Several major donors, including the World Bank, DFID, and the African Development Bank, have been supporting Ethiopia’s Protection of Basic Services Program (PBS; the name was recently changed to Providing Basic Services), which is described as “expanding access and improving the quality of basic services in education, health, agriculture, water supply and sanitation. . . .”²⁷ However, their support has come under fire on the grounds that PBS funds are being used to plan and implement the Ethiopian government’s “villagisation” program.²⁸ DFID describes its contribution as paying the salaries of health workers and teachers in the resettlement sites.²⁹ The problem is that these services won’t be provided unless the people accept resettlement. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that donors were “paying for the construction of schools, health clinics, roads, and water facilities in the new [resettlement] villages. They are also funding agricultural programs directed towards resettled populations and the salaries of the local government officials who are implementing the policy.”³⁰

Under the “villagisation” program, the Gambella region and Suri territory have experienced extreme violence and brutality in addition to denial of government services; Bodi, Kwegu, and Mursi have not experienced the same level of aggression, primarily because government plans are further along in the former areas.³¹ However, gross human rights violations have undoubtedly occurred in the preliminary stages of plantation development in the Lower Omo.

In Bodi territory, resettlement sites have been drawn up and marked out by GPS. Schools and police stations are being built and some Bodi have built their houses in the 1/2 hectare (1 1/4 acre) plots they have been designated. The Ethiopian government claims the plantations are being implemented with “the full consent of the communities



Kwegu family by the Omo River, January 2012

involved,”³² but accounts from local people contradict this.³³ A Bodi man stated, “Shiferaw Shigute [the SNNPRS Regional President] came to Hana. The Bodi told him they didn’t want the sugarcane plantations and they didn’t want to move into the resettlement sites. So he went back [to Awassa] and sent the head of the southern region’s military who then arrested more than 100 Bodi and Mursi.”³⁴

In the lead up to the plantation establishment, the government held meetings in Hana to obtain consent from local people. A local person reported on October 26, 2011 that “. . . again the government called the Bodi in the Hana area for a meeting. They had a very long meeting and again the Bodi men rejected the project. The government became exhausted of trying to make the Bodi agree. The government called the security forces and the forces came and surrounded the Bodi. Even surrounded, the young men still would not be scared into agreeing to the project, so the security forces caught four young men and put them in prison.”³⁵

Beyond imprisoning those who speak out against the project, another tactic used by the government to push local people into resettlement sites is barring them from cultivating their own fields and destroying crops and grain stores to cause hunger. People are then lured to the sites

with food aid from international agencies. A joint mission of DFID, USAID, UN, and EU to the Gambella region found “internationally funded food aid intended for free distribution for relief is being used to encourage community participation in the [resettlement] programme.”³⁶ The Bodi temporarily thwarted this effort by moving into the resettlement site when the government told them that this was the only way they would receive food aid, then leaving one day after receiving the food.³⁷ Four separate ethnic groups have reported what amounts to government-created hunger. Striped Ox, a Bodi man, reported, “The government said to stay in the grasslands, the government would clear the land [along the Omo]. They said they would bring us grain. But the grain they brought was just enough for a few people. The rest got nothing. ‘Let’s go to the Omo and plant,’ we said. . . . They are not allowing us to come here, ‘Don’t plant at the Omo River, don’t cultivate,’ said the government, but I came here against their orders.”³⁸ According to Pink Bull, a Mursi man, “The soldiers said, ‘We are going to clear the Omo River area. You move out to the grasslands.’ ‘Why?’ we said. ‘This area is my land,’ said the government. ‘You Mursi are few. Now leave this land and stay in the grasslands.’”³⁹ Very similar accounts are reported by the Suri as well as by people of the Gambella region.

In the face of this resistance, the military is imposing the government's development schemes by ever more violent tactics. By January 2012, ten Bodi women had been raped by soldiers, in some cases gang raped.⁴⁰ The Bodi and neighboring tribes were particularly distraught by the gang rape of a young herd boy. "They took a small boy that was herding cattle. They had sex with him for a long time in the forest. He was screaming. The boy couldn't walk afterward. He had to be picked up and carried. Bodi people held his father back; he wanted to shoot the soldiers in Hana. Many Bodi held the father and tied him up," reported Bawa, a Bodi woman.⁴¹

In February 2012, an Ethiopian Sugar Corporation truck ran over a pregnant Bodi woman, the sixth Bodi to be run over by a truck since work on the plantations began less than a year before. In retaliation, the family of the woman's husband shot up the truck, smashed plantation equipment, and had a shoot-out with the military. A few Bodi were injured, but they had to retreat to the other side of the Omo River as they ran out of bullets. Although the altercation was sparked by the accidental killing of this woman, the underlying push for the shoot-out was the frequent meetings the Bodi were having, in secret, to discuss what action they could take against the plantations. The sugarcane plantation manager Tilahun acknowledged that ill feelings toward the plantations was the cause of the fighting that resulted from the accident.⁴² The same thing happened again in October 2012 when two soldiers, two bulldozer drivers, and a highland woman were killed in Hana after fighting broke out over a Bodi man killed by a sugar plantation truck.⁴³ After further reprisals, local people began shooting at the bulldozers. This led to armed soldiers riding as passengers in the bulldozer cabs – a stark image for Ethiopian plantation development. More extensive fighting, leaving many dead on both sides, has occurred between the Suri and government forces.⁴⁴

The Mursi and Bodi had tried to pursue their own development plan. For the last four years, they had repeatedly asked the Ethiopian government, at all levels, to allow them to establish a community wildlife conservation area where they could take care of their wildlife and graze their cattle alongside the zone.⁴⁵ The sugar plantations would have taken a small portion of the community conservation area, but most of the land was too elevated for irrigated plantation development. Allowing the Mursi and Bodi to graze their cattle in the area and produce meat for the growing population around the plantations, as well as to manage wildlife adjacent to the Mago and Omo National Parks, makes economic sense, not least because of the role of the parks as tourist destinations. But an ideology that

would see the pastoral way of life disappear seems to be winning out over social or economic logic.

USAID and DFID in the Lower Omo

On January 24, 2012, the author of this report accompanied representatives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), as a translator for an assessment visit to the Mursi and Bodi of South Omo.

The stated purpose of the trip was to "know more about how government's commune plans are working in South Omo, how people are being moved, whether services are being provided . . . how government's big infrastructure and agricultural ambitions linked to GTP [Growth and Transformation Plan] -- specifically the Gibe dams and land leasing -- are impacting the communities."⁴⁶

The author accompanied a coffee expert from USAID and a USAID intern, two DFID representatives, and two Mursi to help organize meetings and translate the Bodi language, on a trip to a village near the large village of Haile Wuha in Mursi territory. The party proceeded to organize a meeting with approximately 15 Mursi women first, then afterward met with approximately 40 Mursi men. After the interviews in Mursi, the party went to the Bodi area, near Gura. Approximately ten Bodi women and five Bodi men participated. Portions of the meetings in both these places were audio recorded.⁴⁷

Most of the questions from the USAID representative focused on development: "Would the Mursi like to have schools and health centers? If they had schools here how would that impact on their partially nomadic lifestyle?" Later, the USAID representative's questions were about the truth of claims made by Bodi interviewees, such as "how well do you know that person that you said was raped?" It was left to the Mursi and later the Bodi to bring up systematic abuses linked to government policy, such as the denial of access to all their subsistence land on the Omo River and forced evictions.

One Mursi man said, "Now the government has brought its big muscle, its big force, and says that it will take our cattle and take our land. Now, if you go to the . . . cultivation sites along the Omo River will you see any Mursi there? We have left it without any people there and we are staying here in the plains being hit by the sun. The people were beaten away by the government that brought its force."

This has been our ancestors' land, our fathers' land, for ages. ... If my land is taken, I'm going to die fighting for it. ... We are hungry now. Our land has been taken. We've had to abandon our cultivation sites on the Omo River on the orders of the government.

—Mursi man

“This man used to live in the Usso area. In that place one was able to grow a lot of grain. . . . Now the government went in there and chased them away, so he has come here, but this place is not so good. It is dry,” said a Bodi man.

Another big issue raised by the Mursi and Bodi was lack of consultation and coercion by the Ethiopian military.

“Maybe if we could talk with the government, we could weigh these plans and we could agree on things. Maybe that would be good. They just came to take our land by force. There is no way to discuss plans when they act like that,” said Big Spotted Giraffe, a Mursi man.

The government never came here, and we didn't get to discuss about the sugarcane with them. They just went to the bush, without talking to us, and looked at all the land then drove in their trucks and started clearing. We really hate that they did this.

—Mursi man

Later, in the Bodi area of Gura, the second DFID representative asked what the consultation processes were like. A Bodi man answered that in a consultation meeting in Gura, there were so many armed military present that one “couldn't count them all” and they knew if they didn't agree to what they were being told they “would have to answer to” the military.

The Mursi were so adamant about recounting the abuses that they ignored questions about education, development, and health clinics and brought the DFID and USAID representatives back to the subject of abuses. The meeting with the Mursi men became very tense. The Mursi wanted

to make sure they were heard and the USAID representative kept asking to leave at that point. A Mursi man said, “. . . we the people here are tired. The government should come and light us all on fire.” The USAID representative replied, “Maybe we should wrap up. Well should we say that we hope it doesn't come to that. . . .”

The Bodi described being forced out of their cultivation areas by plantation development and also rapes by soldiers around Hana. The subject of rape was frequently brought up by both groups.

“[The soldiers] went all over the place, and they took the wives of the Bodi and raped them, raped them, raped them, raped them. Then they came and they raped our wives, here,” said one Mursi man.



New road cut through the bush for plantation development Mursi territory, January 2012





Mursi sleeping the in cattle camp, January 2012

Now the Ethiopian government is saying they are going to collect us all and put us in a resettlement site in the forest. We are going to have to stay there. What are the cattle going to eat there? They are our cattle, which we live from. They are our ancestor's cattle which we live from. If we stay out there in the forest, what are they going to eat?

—Mursi man

At one point, DFID representative 1 said it was “telling” in terms of the strength of reports of human rights abuses that both the Mursi and the Bodi had brought up the issue of the rape of the Bodi boy by government soldiers “unprompted.”⁴⁸

DFID assured the Mursi and Bodi that they would be raising the issues brought up in the meetings with the Ethiopian government. “. . . [O]bviously we agree that it’s

unacceptable, beatings and rapes and lack of consultation and proper compensation, to discuss plans, is something we will raise. I totally agree with him and would raise very strongly with the government as the wrong way to do this. It just simply is wrong. It simply is wrong. Obviously, we totally agree and it’s worrying to hear about those things,” said DFID representative 1 during the meeting.

We are going to take the things that they say really seriously, and that we do listen and have heard some of the really shocking things that have happened and we’ll take those things forward and speak to the government about those things, raise those strong concerns and hope that this is part of trying to make sure these things don’t happen.

—DFID representative



Donor Agencies Acquiesce to Ethiopian Government, Ignoring Abuses

The audio recordings from this investigation in the Mursi and Bodi areas of South Omo allow us to hear exactly what the USAID/DFID staff heard. Yet, following their trip, these two agencies reported that they were “not able to substantiate” allegations of human rights abuses in the area.⁴⁹ DFID and USAID also reported this unsubstantiation of allegations of human rights abuses to the Development Assistance Group (DAG), which is made up of 26 of the major aid agencies that donate to Ethiopia including the UNDP, IMF, and the World Bank.⁵⁰

According to a high-up official in USAID, the USAID member of the field visit party reported that the accounts of human rights abuses heard in the Omo were all “third-hand.”⁵¹ It is clear from the transcripts, however, that many were first-hand.

Development organizations, including DFID, who “support government initiatives that involve the relocation of individuals and communities” in Ethiopia, laid out resettlement policy guidelines for the Ethiopian government in a document entitled “Good Practice Guidelines and Principles Regarding Resettlement.”⁵² The failure of the Ethiopian government to adhere to this policy was discussed with the USAID/DFID team in Jinka before leaving for Mursi

and Bodi.⁵³ Later, at the British Council in Addis Ababa, the issue of adherence to the guidelines was brought up with another DFID representative. She replied, “None of them are being followed!”⁵⁴

Two Mursi also met with the USAID Mission Director and Deputy Mission Director for Ethiopia in March, 2012. The Mursi reported that they had been prevented from cultivating on the Omo River, that Bodi and Kwegu had had grain stores destroyed and cultivation areas bulldozed, all without consultation and compensation. They also reported rapes by the Ethiopian military.⁵⁵

Nothing was heard publicly from DFID and USAID on these issues in the months that followed.

Britain’s Minister for Overseas Development said in response to a parliamentary question on November 5th, 2012 that “the Department for International Development was not able to substantiate the allegations of human rights violation it received during its visit to South Omo in January 2012, and will be returning to the area to examine these further.”⁵⁶ It was not until after this that DFID finally circulated a report on the January 2012 visit, 11 months later.⁵⁷ No author’s names were attached and its conclusion was the allegations “could not be substantiated by this visit.”



Fishermen Lake Turkana, December 2012

A delegation from DFID, the EU, and Irish Aid visited the sugar plantations in November 2012 but, as yet, requests made to DFID to see a report from this visit have not been successful.⁵⁸ On a visit to Ethiopia in March 2013, Sir Malcolm Bruce, Chair of the British Parliament's International Development Committee, said that the allegations of human rights abuses carried out during the implementation of the villagization program were "unsubstantiated."⁵⁹ He visited only one village, selected for him by the Ethiopian government, near Asossa in Benishangul, a region far from Lower Omo.⁶⁰

In April 2013, the US government released its *Ethiopia 2012 Human Rights Report*, which included the following statement: "Additional Human Rights Watch reporting stated the government harassed, mistreated, and arbitrarily arrested persons in South Omo in order to clear or prepare land for commercial agriculture; development partners did not find evidence to support this claim during visits."⁶¹ On hearing the conclusions of this report one Mursi said, "Haven't these foreigners seen that the Bodi and the government are shooting each other? Don't they have any eyes? The foreigners are f*cking us.⁶² They prefer the government."⁶³

In March 2013, the World Bank Inspection Panel found evidence that the World Bank's PBS program may be supporting the villagisation programs in Ethiopia and has requested an investigation.⁶⁴ The Ethiopian Government

stated in May 2013 it will not cooperate with the Inspection Panel investigation.⁶⁵

Conclusion

The blind eye turned by USAID and DFID to the human rights violations and forced evictions that accompany the so-called development strategy of Ethiopia is shocking. These agencies give virtually unconditional financial, political, and moral support to the Ethiopian government and DFID currently spends a larger proportion of its overseas aid budget on Ethiopia than any other country.⁶⁶

During their investigation, the DFID and USAID representatives were given first-hand accounts of human rights abuses but the agencies have subsequently claimed, and still claim, that these accounts have not been substantiated.

It is difficult not to conclude that DFID and USAID have decided to support the current policy of the Ethiopian government, their strategic ally in the Horn of Africa, despite the major human rights abuses this government is perpetrating in the Lower Omo Valley. By doing so, they are willful accomplices and supporters of a development strategy that will have irreversible devastating impacts on the environment and natural resources and will destroy the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of indigenous people.



El Molo village on an island in Lake Turkana, December 2012

Endnotes

- 1 This number is based on the 200,000 hectares the Oakland Institute reports is being made available for land investment, Oakland Institute, "Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa: Half A Million Lives Threatened By Land Development for Sugar Plantations in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley," September 2011 <http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/land-deal-brief-ethiopia-lower-omo> (accessed May 2013) and the 175,000 ha the Ethiopia government has said it is developing for sugarcane revised from its earlier designation of 245,000 ha for development <http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-06-18/state-sugar-project-harming-ethiopian-tribes-rights-group-says> (accessed May 2013).
- 2 This figure of 260,000 people includes the total population of 170,000 people from the ten ethnic groups along the lower Omo that will be affected by the plantations, the loss of the Omo flood from the Gibe III dam, and resettlement plans. It also includes 90,000 people known to live along the shore of Lake Turkana. Many more live off the lakeshore and use the lake seasonally. These numbers are explained and referenced in the text.
- 3 Oakland Institute, "Understanding Land Investment Deals in Africa: Half A Million Lives Threatened By Land Development for Sugar Plantations in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley," September 2011, <http://www.oaklandinstitute.org/land-deal-brief-ethiopia-lower-omo> (accessed May 2013); Oakland Institute, "Half a Million Lives Threatened by Land Development for Sugar Plantations in Ethiopia's Lower Omo Valley," June 2012; Unnamed Local Person of South Omo Zone 1, emails to the author, July 2011-May, 2012; Tenomeri Olikiwo, interview by the author, May 11, 2012. Because of the threat of persecution by the Ethiopian government for speaking out, the author has been repeatedly asked to leave most local people who are sources unnamed.
- 4 UK Parliament Website, op. cit.
- 5 United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Ethiopia 2012 Human Rights Report," 2013.
- 6 John Graham, Senior Policy and Strategic Analysis Advisor at USAID, Addis Ababa, direct communication, March 2012; see Development Assistance Group Ethiopia, <http://www.dagethiopia.org/> (accessed December 2012).
- 7 UNESCO, "World Heritage Committee Thirty-sixth session," June 2012, <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/2012/whc12-36com-7BAdd-en.pdf> (accessed May 2013).
- 8 International Rivers, "The Downstream Impacts of Ethiopia's Gibe III Dam East Africa's "Aral Sea" in the Making?" January 2013.
- 9 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Population Census Commission, "Summary and Statistical Report of the 2007 Population and Housing Census," December 2008. Reports of numbers of affected people in the Lower Omo have varied greatly. A Sogreah consultants report put the number of people directly dependant on the Omo River at 82,000. David Turton puts the number at 90,000+. A government media report put the number affected in the Omo-Kuraz sugar project area alone at 120,000. Early estimates by the International Rivers and the author put the number at 200,000. In truth there are various problems with processes for acquiring all these numbers (including from the government census) and a firm number has not been presented.
- 10 Cherie Enawgaw, Derbe Deksiios, and Girma Timer, "Existing Challenges: plantation development versus wildlife conservation in the Omo-Tama-Mago Complex," Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, September 2011.
- 11 Meron Tekleberhan, "Irrigation Dam for Sugar Factories Progressing", *2merkato.com*, August 15, 2012, <http://www.2merkato.com/201208151553/irrigation-dam-for-sugar-factories-progressing>, (accessed August 2012).
- 12 Sean Avery, "Lake Turkana & the Lower Omo: hydrological impacts of major dam and irrigation developments," African Studies Centre, the University of Oxford, 2012.
- 13 Sean Avery, op. cit.
- 14 Sean Avery, op. cit.
- 15 International Rivers, op. cit.
- 16 UNESCO, "Lake Turkana National Parks," <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/801> (accessed May 2013).
- 17 Meles Zenawi, 13th Annual Pastoralist Day celebrations in Jinka, South Omo, January 25, 2011. Translation transcribed by this report's author.
- 18 Meles Zenawi, op. cit.
- 19 Meles Zenawi, op. cit.
- 20 Elias. E. and F. Abdi "Putting pastoralists on the policy agenda: Land alienation in southern Ethiopia", Gatekeeper Series, IIED, 2010.
- 21 Kloos, H., W. Legesse, S. McFeeters, and D. Turton "Problems for Pastoralists in the Lowlands: River Basin Development in the Awash and Omo Valleys" in H. Kloos and W. Legesse (Eds.) *Water Resource Management in Ethiopia: Implications for the Nile Basin*. New York: Cambria Press, 2010.
- 22 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Sugar Corporation, "Newly Demarcated and Proposed Development Area of Kuraz Sugar Industry," drawing of the original made by Will Hurd, <http://www.internationalrivers.org/blogs/227/gibe-iii-dam-fuels-land-grabs-in-ethiopia> (accessed May 2013).
- 23 Cherie Enawgaw, Derbe Deksiios and Girma Timer, op. cit.
- 24 William Davidson, "Ethiopian Military-Run Corporation Seeks More Foreign Partners," *Bloomberg*, February 18, 2013, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-02-18/ethiopian-military-run-corporation-seeks-more-foreign-partners.html> (accessed March 2013).
- 25 Unnamed NGO researcher, phone conversation with author, February 17, 2013. NGO researchers and people working in the area have asked that their names not be revealed to avoid conflict with the Ethiopian government.
- 26 William Lloyd-George, Ethiopian Journalists Hope New Council Will Ease Restrictions, *Inter Press Service*, May 10, 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopian-journalists-hope-new-council-will-ease-restrictions> (accessed May 2013).
- 27 Development Assistance Group Ethiopia, PBS, http://www.dagethiopia.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=14&Itemid=16 (accessed May 2013).
- 28 *Human Rights Watch*, op. cit.
- 29 DFID Representative 1, direct communication, January 2012. The author was asked by a DFID officer from the investigation team not to name the DFID/USAID team members.
- 30 *Human Rights Watch*, op. cit.
- 31 Unnamed Local Person of South Omo Zone 1, email to the author, February, 2012; Tenomeri Olikiwo, interview by the author, May 11, 2012; Unnamed local person of Bench Maji Zone, audio recorded interview by the author, March 9, 2013; Human Rights Watch, "Waiting here for Death: Forced Displacement and "Villagization" in Ethiopia's Gambella Region," January 2012; Oakland Institute, "Omo: Local Tribes Under threat, A Field Report from the Omo Valley, Ethiopia," February 2013.
- 32 *Walta Information*, SNNPR plans to benefit a hundred thousand pastoralists, February 27, 2012 http://www.waltainfo.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2076:snnpr-plans-to-benefit-a-hundred-thousand-pastoralists&catid=52:national-news&Itemid=291 (accessed February 2012).
- 33 Through eight years of relationship with local people of the area the author has collected information from trusted sources including direct communications, interviews, emails and phone calls.
- 34 Unnamed local person of South Omo Zone 2, direct communication, April 2012.
- 35 Unnamed local person of South Omo Zone 1, email to author, November 2011.
- 36 DFID, EU, USAID, UNOCHA, UNICEF, "Villagisation" Joint Fact Finding Mission to GambellaRegionalState (sic)," February, 2011.
- 37 Unnamed NGO Researcher, op. cit.
- 38 Striped Ox, video interview by author, January 2012.
- 39 Pink Bull, video interview by author, January 2012.
- 40 Bawa, video interview by author, January 2012.
- 41 Bawa, video interview by author, January 2012.
- 42 Unnamed local person of South Omo Zone 1, email to author, January 2012.
- 43 Unnamed NGO Researcher, op. cit.
- 44 Tenomeri Olikiwo, op. cit.



- 45 Will Hurd, "The Mursi Community Conservation Area," 2011, http://coolground.org/doc/The_Mursi_Community_Conservation_Area.doc, (accessed May 2013).
- 46 DFID Representative 1, email to the author, January 16, 2012.
- 47 Will Hurd, "DFID/USAID Investigation Recordings South Omo, Ethiopia," January 2012.
- 48 DFID Representative 1, direct communication, January 24, 2012.
- 49 DFID and USAID, "Joint DFID/USAID Field Visit: South Omo," January 2012.
- 50 John Graham, Senior Policy and Strategic Analysis Advisor at USAID, Addis Ababa, direct communication, March 2012; see Development Assistance Group Ethiopia, <http://www.dagethiopia.org/> (accessed December 2012).
- 51 USAID officer Addis Ababa, direct communication, March 2012.
- 52 Development Assistance Group, "Good Practice Guidelines and Principles Regarding Resettlement," January 24, 2011.
- 53 Discussion between the USAID/DFID team and the author, January 23, 2012.
- 54 DFID officer Addis Ababa, direct communication, February 2012.
- 55 Meeting between USAID Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, USAID officer and several Mursi and the author, Addis Ababa, March 2012.
- 56 UK Parliament website, November 5, 2012, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm121105/text/121105wooo03.htm>, (accessed May 2013).
- 57 This report has been obtained by the Oakland Institute but seems to have not been officially released at the date of writing. DFID and USAID, "Joint DFID/USAID Field Visit: South Omo," January 2012.
- 58 The Oakland Institute requested the reports from the two South Omo assessments in June 2013.
- 59 William Lloyd George, "World Bank told to investigate links to Ethiopia 'villagisation' project," *Guardian*, March 19, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/mar/19/world-bank-ethiopia-villagisation-project> (accessed March 2013).
- 60 Felix Horne (human rights researcher), email to author, April 2013.
- 61 United States Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, "Ethiopia 2012 Human Rights Report," 2013.
- 62 "*Haranchinya chog ninga hung*." literally means: "These foreigners are having sex with our vaginas." It is an expression which is nearly identical to the English expression used in the text.
- 63 Unnamed Local Person of South Omo Zone 3, personal communication, April 25, 2013.
- 64 William Lloyd George, "World Bank told to investigate links to Ethiopia 'villagisation' project," *Guardian*, March 19th, 2013, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2013/mar/19/world-bank-ethiopia-villagisation-project> (accessed March 2013).
- 65 William Davidson, Ethiopia Refuses to Cooperate With World-Bank-Funding Probe, *Bloomberg*, May 28, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-27/ethiopia-refuses-to-cooperate-with-probe-on-world-bank-funding.html> (accessed May 2013).
- 66 "Ethiopia is Top UK Aid Recipient." VOA, February 28, 2011, <http://www.voanews.com/content/ethiopia-is-top-uk-aid-recipient-117204413/157544.html> (accessed June 29, 2013).

