

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Finance and Economic
Development

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Ministry of Federal Affairs

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Addis Ababa

Subject: - Reply to DAG Findings and Recommendations on CDP and South Omo
(DAG/OU/3/2014A, 18 March 2014)

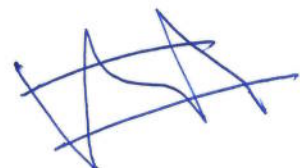
Dears DAG Ethiopia Co-Chairs,

We use this opportunity to extend our deepest appreciation to the DAG Ethiopia for its support to the development endeavours of Ethiopia. We would like to use this opportunity also to reiterate the government's commitment to live up to the expectations of the Constitution, as well as aspiration and vision of our people of becoming a middle income country as espoused in the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP).

On behalf of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, we would like to extend our deepest appreciation to the DAG Ethiopia for presenting the findings of its mission and for the continued constructive engagement in the Commune Development Program of Ethiopia.

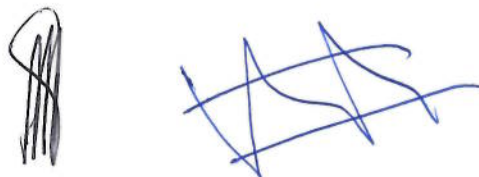
Many of the DAG's findings and recommendations are consistent with how the government assesses the circumstances and with what the government is already doing. However we would like also to clarify and reflect on the following points.

1. The Commune Development Programme (CDP) is planned and executed by respective regions and local authorities. The Government concurs with the DAG's findings that the Program is designed to operate under the provisions of the Ethiopian Constitution and key public policies and strategies as well as good practice guidelines. Key aspects of these provisions concern voluntary movement and consent of people, community participation, provision of information and practice of consultation in the decision making process of the CDP. The Program thus far has been guided by these key principles. Participation in the commune program has been fully voluntary. Regional and local authorities started the process with rounds of consultations informing people about the rationale and objectives of the program as well as the benefits and challenges. This constitutional provision has to be strictly pursued. The decision is then left entirely to the households. People who decide to move to the new sites retain full rights to return to their old places if they desire to do so.



Those who chose not to participate in the commune program face no discrimination in access to services or otherwise.

- 1.1 Communities always participate throughout the decision making process in the planning and implementation of the program, risk assessment and mitigation, selection of sites, delivery of services and facilities, management of some of the facilities like water points. The government has undertaken various assessments including numerous visits to the sites to monitor the observance of these key provisions. The findings show that regions and local authorities have clearly specified their intent to observe these guiding principles in their plans and have exerted their utmost efforts to execute the program in accordance with these guiding provisions.
- 1.2 The Government remains committed to continue ensuring adherence to these principles. One of the challenges encountered in the process of executing the CDP is limited delivery capacity particularly at the local level. A number of measures are being undertaken to ease this problem. The investments in infrastructure, social services, institution building and the participatory process of implementation of the CDP have themselves contributed to improved capacities. Yet the Government recognises that institution and capacity building is a long-term process, and hence agrees to the recommendation to further strengthen the capacities of Regions and Weredas to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Programme. While capacity building remains essentially the responsibility of the Regions and Weredas themselves, the Federal Government has also undergoing programs that support such regional and local initiatives including the technical support coordinated by the Inter-Ministerial Special Development Support Board and the Ministry of Federal Affairs.
2. The CDP is only one among several approaches pursued to improve the livelihoods, expand basic services and build grassroots institutions of communities. This is clearly outlined in Agricultural and Rural Development Policy and Strategy, as well as in the GTP. So communities are given the opportunity to consider any viable options and alternatives including continuing with their existing systems. Accordingly there are communities who chose to stay in their original place without facing any retribution or discrimination in access to services. Households are also given the option to consider participating in the CDP as one feasible means to realise their aspirations for improved livelihoods and better access to services. We consider the CDP as an important means to improved livelihood and provision of better services and not an end in itself. Hence communities are only given the information to consider the significance of participating in the program. And it is only when households voluntarily decide to move that they are relocated to new settlements. The strategic objective of the CDP is to realise the aspirations of these historically disadvantaged communities for equitable and accelerated development as the rest of their fellow compatriots. Thus the

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Government remains committed to continue ensuring that communities are given all viable options and alternatives before they are relocated.

3. The provision of quality basic services and infrastructure to citizens is one of the key objectives of the GTP. This also stands out among our priorities in our development cooperation with the DAG. So it is very essential that we ensure access to services and infrastructure to communities in their new areas of settlement even under very difficult circumstances. The Ethiopian Government wishes to use this opportunity to highlight some of the services and infrastructure delivered in association with CDP over the last three years. In most of the CDP sites the most critical service concerns access to safe drinking water. A total of about 1473 ground water points were drilled for safe drinking water for communities over the last three years. In addition, 459 health centers and 583 elementary schools were constructed in CDP sites. About 150 grain grinding mills are also installed throughout all the CDP sites. Moreover a total of 325 animal health centers and 375 farmers/Pastoralists training centers have been established.
- 3.1 To make these facilities functional, local authorities and regional government have recruited and deployed teachers, health extension workers, and agricultural extension workers. As a result, communities in CDP sites are enjoying better access to basic services of water supply, education and health. These investments have also ensured communities access to facilities like animal health clinics, skill training centers and grain mills that are essential for sustainably improving livelihoods of communities. A number of monitoring and evaluation missions including DAG missions have confirmed the improvements in access to basic services and infrastructure. A study commissioned and published by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) invariably verified the same. The Ethiopian Ombudsman Institution (EOI) has also undertaken field missions to CDP sites in Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and South Omo and confirmed improvements in access to basic services and infrastructure in these areas. Respective regional governments also regularly monitor the progress in service delivery in these areas. Members of Federal Parliament and federal government officials have also undertaken field missions to some of these areas and recognised the progress made in the delivery of basic services and infrastructure.
- 3.2 The government recognises the challenges particularly at the beginning of the program in the delivery of infrastructure and services on time and to the required standard in some of the CDP sites. The challenges mainly arise from the objective circumstances of limited delivery capacity and access to infrastructure in these areas. Consequently as the DAG missions have observed, there was initially a challenge in effectively sequencing and delivering the basic services and other infrastructures emanating from inaccessibility of these areas, and limited delivery capacities particularly in these areas. The regional and local governments as well as the communities have now learnt a lesson from their own experiences. In addition, as a result

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of the interventions delivery capacities of local authorities and the private sector have improved. Where there are gaps, the regional and local governments together with the communities are continuing with their efforts to ensure a better access and standard of services. Thus, the government is now in a better position to ensure better sequencing and delivery of basic services and infrastructure such that access and standard of services and infrastructure will continue to improve in the CDP areas.

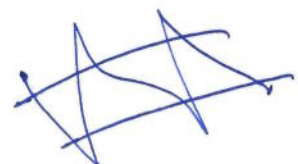
4. The Government fully agrees with the DAG recommendation that livelihoods and standards of living should be improved as a result of the CDP intervention. The overarching objective of the agricultural and rural development policy and indeed the CDP is sustainably improving the livelihood and standard of living of communities. Accordingly, in addition to the delivery of basic social services and infrastructure, the CDP encompasses measures that help improve productivity and sustainable income of communities. For instance, the government has distributed 432,754 different types of agricultural hand tools and 5195 water pump generators to support households increase agricultural production and productivity. To ease their burden and improve the productivity of women, 150 grain mills and 1473 water facilities are installed throughout all the CDP sites. To improve the productivity of livestock and hence also income of pastoralists, a total of 325 animal health centers have been established, while development agents are also deployed to support pastoralists in improving the productivity of their livestock and income. To minimise possible disruptions to existing livelihoods, communities are supported by the 375 farmers training centers and extensions agents deployed throughout the CDP centers. In South Omo, the regional government has established a project office based in Hana town (Selemago Wereda) specifically to support the provision of agriculture and health extension services and coordinate the delivery of social services. The project office is fully financed by the regional government. In addition, the communities in South Omo Zone are also supported by the regional Pastoralist Bureau, which is essentially established to support pastoralists in South Omo and Bench-Maji Zones, Southern Nations Nationalities & Peoples Region. In many CDP sites, communities are trained and supported to engage in small irrigation schemes. In others, household are supported as per their choices to engage in off-farm initiatives, out grower schemes and diverse agricultural practices. As confirmed by various field missions incomes and livelihood of communities have started to improve as a result of the interventions. Of course the government recognises that improving livelihoods and standard of living is a long-term process. Thus the government will ensure that the ongoing efforts are consolidated such that livelihoods and standard of living of communities sustainably improve and transform for the better.
5. Accountability and rule of law are pillars of our good governance program. The government's commitment to ensure accountability and rule of law are also clearly reflected in the GTP and the various measures taken so far to strengthen institutions. In addition, the



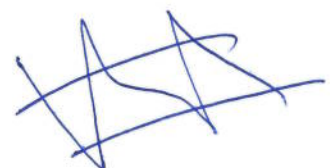
adherence to good practice guidelines is closely monitored at various levels by different institutions. The government recognises that the governance of the implementation of the CDP is as important as the objectives of the program. Thus the government has made it very clear that any deviations from these key principles in the implementation of the program are not acceptable and will trigger measures for ensuring responsibility and accountability.

5.1 These key provisions of the good governance program and the good practice guidelines are supported by putting in place mechanisms for monitoring, safeguards, grievance appeals and redresses. There are several administrative arrangements that monitor and take corrective measures to ensure adherence to good practice guidelines and that serve as grievance appeals and redress institutions. There are steering committees at regional, Zonal and Wereda levels that monitor the program including through field missions and regular consultations with communities. In addition to the Wereda and Zonal officials, these missions and consultations are often also attended by regional presidents and/or vice presidents. It is very important to note also that all government office in the regions have established a system for grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) so that citizens can submit their grievance more easily and quickly before appealing to the EOI. Thus GRMs desks have been established in various offices. As reported in the GTP 2013 Annual Progress Report (APR), the EOI has been strengthening the GRM through systems development and provision of training programs to these GRMs desks. The 2013 GTP APR also describes the EOI work in creating awareness on the significance and available mechanism of GRM among government officials and employees, legislators and communities. The Inter-ministerial Special Development Support Board in collaboration with respective regions has also been closely monitoring the implementation of the program to ensure adherence to good practice guidelines, accountability and rule of law.

5.2 The implementation of the CDP is also regularly and closely monitored by institutions outside the executive organ of the government. The relevant Standing Committees from the House of Peoples Representatives (Parliament) have been monitoring the CDP progress and process against established good practice guidelines. The EHRC, the EOI, and the Social Justice Offices at the community level have all been giving due attention to monitoring the process and progress of the program to ensure the functioning of the appeal and grievance redress mechanisms, and observance of good governance principles including adherence to good practice guidelines. The EOI has for instance established six regional offices including one in Gambella to ensure better access to grievance redress mechanisms. The EOI is being supported through the PBS so as to strengthen further the existing system of independent appeal and grievance redress mechanisms. It is reported that the EOI has undertaken field missions to Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and South Omo CDP sites and consulted with the communities and authorities at all levels as part of its effort to strengthen the mechanisms for independent GRM.




- 5.3 Clearly the establishment of the GRMs is not sufficient to address malpractices. The government recognises that communities should be empowered to actively participate in the process. The EOI and different government organs have been undertaking extensive awareness creation and training programs to communities on citizens' rights and responsibilities, as well as the available mechanism for appeal and grievance redresses including in the CDP areas. The government is implementing a large scale social accountability program throughout the country supporting civil society organizations to mobilise communities to more actively engage in their local governance affairs. Again the government is cognizant of the fact that these all initiatives of grievance redress and accountability mechanisms have to be enhanced further. The government reiterates its commitment to continue with its efforts to strengthen the monitoring, safeguards, appeals and redress mechanisms so as to ensure the enforcement of good practice guidelines and independent GRMs across the country.
6. In addition to establishing the mechanisms and institutional arrangements described above to ensure enforcement of the Constitutional provisions, principles and objectives of public policies including good practice guidelines, the government has been committed to investigate allegations of abuse and accordingly take appropriate actions. The government has been closely monitoring the CDP and engaging communities regularly to investigate for any abuses. Likewise Members of Parliament have been monitoring developments in the CDP very closely for any abuses of human rights. The government has hitherto found no credible evidence on any of the allegations of abuse of human rights of citizens in the CDP areas. The independent organs of the EOI and the EHRC have also been monitoring developments in the CDP areas and have undertaken investigation on reports of allegations. It is recalled that the EOI conducted an investigation on the Gambella CDP last year. The investigation report was shared with DAG Ethiopia. It is reported that the EOI has undertaken field missions to Benishangul-Gumuz, and Gambella CDP sites and consulted with the communities and authorities at all levels. The EOI has undertaken similar field missions in South Omo (Selamago Wereda Mender 1, 2, 3, and Benatsemay Wereda Gishima Mender) and organised consultations with local communities. The government found no reports of human rights abuses from any of the investigation and monitoring reports of the EOI and EHRC.
- 6.1 Some of the investigations by the government and the independent organs have however found some problems associated with readiness, functionality and quality of basic services and livelihood supports in some areas. The regional and local governments took these findings very seriously and are rectifying the problems. How regional and local governments in partnership with communities and the federal government are trying to address these challenges is already described above and is not repeated here.



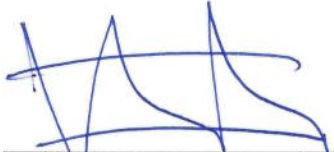
6.2 But the investigations on allegations of the existence of human rights abuse in relation to CDP reveal that these allegations are unfounded. These unfounded allegations of human rights abuses are largely politically motivated to derail Ethiopia's widely recognised achievements in development and good governance, and the strong partnership forged with DAG over the years. The government believes that both the government and DAG have responsibilities to make sure that this strong and exemplary partnership built over the years is not derailed by unfounded and politically motivated allegations. Yet the government remains committed and vigilant to immediately and rigorously investigate reports of abuse of human rights and take appropriate actions.

7. In sum, early indicators of the outcomes of the CDP show encouraging results. The program is strengthening organised local accountability system and is giving more voice to communities in the governance of their local affairs. The programs is creating a more fertile ground for direct community participation, strengthened rule of law, and deepening of good governance and democratization processes. These improvements are of course in addition to the evident gains in access to services, infrastructure, human development and local economic development. These development dynamics have also become triggering factors for subsequent improved quality of services and infrastructures. The investments in basic services and facilities are improving the welfare and productive employment of women. Moreover, extension services of improved agricultural and livestock practices, market links and access to information are improving over time paving the way for sustainably improved livelihoods and standard of living of communities. Peace and stability are enhanced further in the CDP areas. The dividends of peace and stability accrue universally to all people. But children and women are even more noticeably benefiting from these public goods. Still, these encouraging early outcomes would not in any way divert the government's attention away from continuing with its efforts to ensure the observance of the Constitutional provisions, as well as the key principles and objectives of various government policies and strategies in CDP. The government also remains committed to continuing the constructive engagement with DAG Ethiopia with regards to the implementation of the CDP.

Thank you.


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