



Development Assistance Group ETHIOPIA

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Subject: DAG Visit to Somali Region: September 15-18, 2014

Your Excellencies,

A Development Assistance Group (DAG) mission visited three resettlement villages in Siti (Shinile) Zone between 15 and 18 September 2014 to monitor the government's Commune Development Program being conducted under its Water Centred Development Approach.

The villages visited consisted of predominantly pastoralist families that had been resettled and given irrigated land for growing food and animal fodder crops. The resettled communities voiced their support for this initiative as they no longer saw an exclusively pastoralist lifestyle as a viable livelihood for themselves or their children due to climate change and drought. Whilst farming was seen as a culturally alien concept, the availability of water and proximity to education and health services was seen as advantageous. The resettled families had reportedly been selected in consultation with the communities and chosen due to their high level of vulnerability or poverty. This was confirmed by those that the team spoke to and the DAG team heard no reports of coercion or force being used in the resettlement process. However, the team heard many reports of promises and high expectations created by Government at the beginning of the process and which have not been met, leading to a certain level of frustration and resentment.

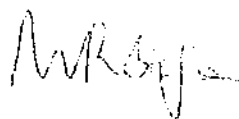
From the village visits, it was obvious that the government has made substantial investments in water and irrigation infrastructure for the new communities. However, the level of functionality and completeness of this infrastructure varied and threatens the success of the programme to graduate people out of hunger and poverty. The DAG team heard that the government is providing education and health services to the new communities although these are not always seen as culturally appropriate. Also the promise of assistance to build housing and provision of adequate food aid whilst farms became established had either not materialised or was inadequate.

Overall, the mission saw evidence of investment by the government to improve people's access to water and to offer and help develop viable alternative livelihoods. However, the success of the programme to graduate communities from poverty and dependency appears to be threatened by the poor level of implementation, linked to insufficient oversight and reporting from village, through woreda and zone to region. We felt that without improved oversight, there is a risk of significant wastage of government resources as infrastructure remains incomplete and not functional.

We recommend, therefore, that the state and federal government employ more rigorous oversight, monitoring and evaluation of the programme, focusing on the quality/effectiveness of implementation rather than just measuring the numerical target of households resettled. Many lessons of good and poor practice should be considered before the scaling up of the programme elsewhere. There is a real need for the government to be clear and realistic in what they promise the families who will be resettled as a failure to deliver will undermine the programme and people's willingness to take part in it. In addition, there is an urgent need to develop a more effective accountability loop and grievance redress mechanism so that the complaints of the villages can be heard and effectively acted upon by those with the power to apply the necessary resources. In many cases simple and small additional investments could make a difference between a village's continual dependence on aid or becoming a successful sustainable farming community. The full recommendations of the group are at the annex below.

It was clear from the visit that if the programme is to achieve its potential of offering a viable alternative lifestyle for those in need of it - bringing greater prosperity to the region - then the regional government, at all levels, needs to take prompt and effective actions to promote success. We encourage the government to sustain their efforts on this project to ensure it achieves its objectives and avoid unintended consequences, which could include significant, and unnecessary, hardship and even local (resource based) conflict.

Please accept, Your Excellencies, the assurance of our highest considerations.



Melanie Robinson
Head of DFID Ethiopia
DAG co-chair

CC:

H.E. Erestu Yereda, State Minister-Millennium Development Goals Project, Ministry of Agriculture, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

H.E. Abdi Mohamoud Abdi, President, Somali Regional State, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Jijiga

Annex 1. Recommendations

Based on our observations and interviews with resettled communities, our recommendations for the Ethiopian Federal Government and the Somali Regional Government are:

- To establish, and make functional, an effective mechanism for follow up on the promises made. Whilst there are structures to allow issues and complaints to be escalated upwards, it was not clear that officials with sufficient authority are able to respond to the complaints effectively and problems appear to be unresolved for many years. As a result the project is at the mercy of small problems, with relatively easy fixes, and could have the opposite effect than intended – despite the substantial investments made and the willingness of the families to adopt a new way of life. If unresolved this could lead to the failure of the project, significant wasted resources and fuel frustration and resentment amongst the communities.
- To ensure that the Woreda/Regional/Federal Government holds contractors to account to ensure that infrastructure is completed in time and to cost as well as functioning adequately. Government needs to increase officials' capacity to understand the value of the investments being made, manage contractors and quality assure the works undertaken to ensure that value for money and the intended social and economic benefits of the project are achieved. Mechanisms should be in place that hold responsible people to account for incomplete or dysfunctional infrastructure. Solutions also should be found to ensure infrastructure is up to standard and fully functional.
- For Government to identify what additional investment/support is required to enable new villages to become established and functional before the withdrawal of other forms of support, such as relief feeding, and before further scaling up of the programme. There is a need for graduation criteria and a process that is closely monitored and accompanied by a flexible, comprehensive and responsive support strategy.
- For Regional Government to monitor the impact of the programme in greater depth using qualitative and quantitative means to better understand its effect (for instance, are people's situations improving or deteriorating?) and to identify lessons learned. Monitoring should adopt participatory techniques and lead to practical solutions and time bound actions agreed with the community.
- Greater transparency and meaningful consultations with local communities on the Djibouti water supply deal are necessary. It is important that local government engages more deeply with communities, ensuring that they have a complete picture of the proposed development informed by the publication of the studies completed, including the environmental impact assessment (e.g. water supply) required by Ethiopian law (under the Environmental Impact Assessment Proclamation no. 299/2002). This will help ensure that the local government has the full buy-in of an informed population, helping to prevent potential contentions about the water supply in the future.