

# **Stakeholder Analysis of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project**

**By**

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## Executive Summary

The Koga irrigation and watershed management project is anticipated to intensify agricultural production and productivity among smallholder farmers in the Koga River Valley. By so doing, the project is intended to achieve poverty reduction and enhance food security among the targeted farming groups. Being a three-component endeavour, (irrigation, conservation, and capacity building) the scheme aims to mobilize and motivate farmers in upstream localities to engage in extensive watershed management activities, so that farming communities downstream in the project command area will be able to practice irrigation farming in a sustainable manner. In the capacity building component, both upstream and downstream farm households will be provided with the necessary technical and material support, to enable them to successfully implement their respective share of activities in the development.

Stakeholder analysis was deemed necessary to capture the opinions, interests and concerns of different farming communities and government agencies affected by the project. The stakeholders identified for the analysis include farming groups, government sector organizations/institutions and the project implementers. The study was conducted with the aim of deriving findings that would inform and guide decision making processes regarding dam planning and operation, in a manner that minimized environmental and social costs, and accommodated stakeholder interests. The necessary study data were gathered by way of multiple data collection instruments, essentially of a qualitative nature (i.e., in-depth individual interviews, focus group discussions and case studies).

On the basis of how they are affected by the project, it is possible to identify four categories of farmer stakeholders. These are: i) those already displaced and relocated; ii) those waiting to be displaced and resettled; iii) communities expecting to play 'host' to relocatees; and iv) groups inhabiting adjacent to the irrigation scheme, but who may not be directly affected by it. In addition to the four identified groups of farmer stakeholder, the views and perceptions of the members of upstream communities – although not directly affected – have been captured to enrich the analysis. Individuals and organization operating in the watershed management component of the project were consulted to gain an understanding of the views and perspectives of communities in upstream *kebeles*. These stakeholders have conflicting interests and views about the project. The first two groups (i.e., the displaced and would-be displaced) are concerned about being compensated for their losses, the early launch of the project and the kind of reception they will get in the host communities where they will be resettled. For their part, the host communities in the project command area express their misgivings about the start of the scheme, despite the fact that they are supposed to be the primary beneficiaries of the project. Regardless of the expected benefits from the scheme, this group of farmers strongly resent the planned redistribution of land, because they will lose part of their existing plots to the relocatees. Farmers in adjacent *kebeles* support the project because of their anticipation to engage in irrigation-based sharecropping arrangements and benefit from the specialization and diversification that the project is hoped to bring about.

Upstream catchments inhabitants view the project with suspicion, reasoning that the watershed management activities that they are supposed to undertake will only benefit communities located downstream in the irrigation area and not themselves. Consequently, they are reluctant to engage in the environmental conservation program.

Government agencies identified as stakeholder groups for this analysis are: the Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resources, Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development, Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority, Cooperative Promotion Agency, Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project Office in Bahir Dar and Merawi towns, Mecha Wereda administration, and Koga Irrigation Service Cooperative. An overlap of opinions is evident among these stakeholders premised on the belief that the project is ultimately to the benefit of the local communities. They claim that, as a result of the project, farmers will be able to; i) produce two crops a year, ii) increase the size of their income by growing market-oriented crops, iii) access greater farm and off-farm employment opportunities, and iv) acquire improved farm skills and technologies. However, these stakeholders are in agreement that there are also negative impacts arising in the form of: i) property loss and ii) displacement and disconnection from long established institutional networks. They argue nonetheless that the benefits the project offers will in the long-term outbalance the short-term material and social costs.

All the stakeholders agree on another key issue related to dam planning and operation. They all lament that serious errors of judgement were committed in the setting of priorities. They believe that the scheme was initiated without the necessary advanced planning and preparatory work. Thus, while the physical and engineering aspects of the scheme have been dealt with adequately, their perception is that the social and environmental issues have been given minimal attention. As a result, the work undertaken in the areas of stakeholder analysis, property valuation, compensation payments, community mobilization and awareness creation, and environmental monitoring and management has to date been inadequate. Surprisingly, it does not seem that lessons have been learned from past mistakes.

Similarly, the stakeholders maintain that the focus on the watershed management component of the project is poor, despite the fact that this aspect is critical to the sustainability of the irrigation scheme. An indicator of the inadequate attention given, is the allocation of resources that are far below what is needed to implement effective conservation work. Most of the stakeholders believe that efforts and resources to implement effective watershed management, need to be significantly increased. Another vital issue that needs serious consideration is the ownership and takeover of the project upon completion. Many stakeholders are concerned that currently local capacity does not exist for successful community takeover and management of the scheme.

# 1 Introduction

In the past, planning of dams and their operation focused primarily on meeting future demand (i.e., for water, power or irrigation) through identification of the least-cost option. Very often environmental and social aspects were largely ignored. However, in recent years the need to improve water management to maximize benefits and minimize negative environmental and social impacts has been increasingly recognized. This has led to a fundamental re-evaluation of decision-making processes for the planning and operation of dams. It is now widely recognized that to ensure sustainability, consideration must be given to environmental impacts as well as issues of equity and the rights of people who may be adversely affected. This requires consideration of a large number of complex and inter-related subjects, and poses intricate technical and political problems (McCartney and Acreman, 2001). It is essential that the multiple, and often conflicting, objectives of all stakeholders are properly considered.

As part of the Challenge Program for Water and Food (Harrington *et al.*, 2006) a research project is being conducted into the use of decision support systems to improve dam planning and operation (McCartney and Awulachew, 2006). The objective of the project is to increase understanding of the application of innovative tools and methods for improved water resource planning. As part of the project, case studies are being undertaken on the Chara Chara weir and the Koga dam, both of which are located in the Abbay (Blue Nile) River Basin in Ethiopia. This report presents a synthesis of the information gathered in the stakeholder survey conducted for the Koga Dam. A similar report has been produced for the Chara Chara weir stakeholder survey (Ayalew *et al.*, 2007).

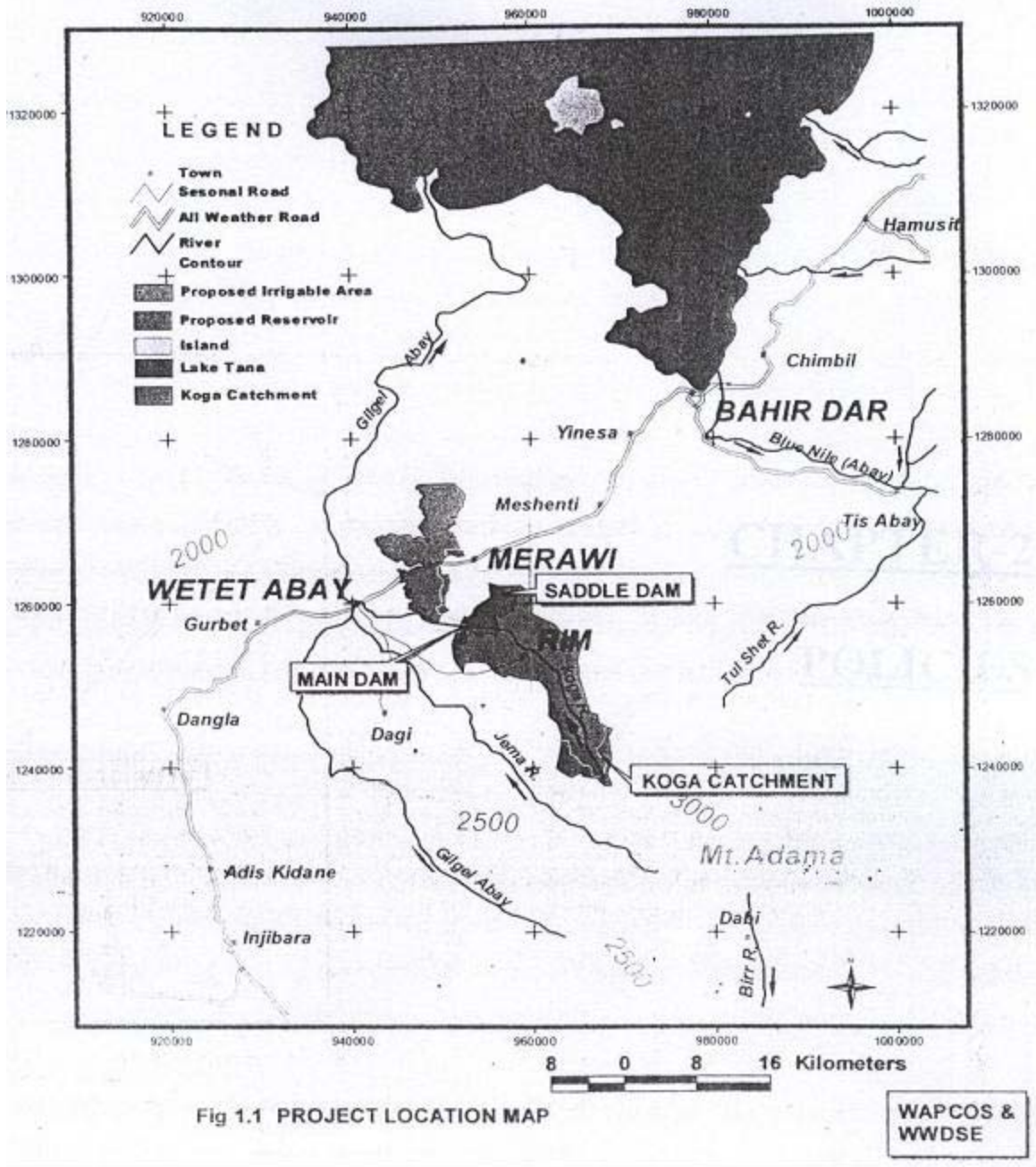
## 1.1 Background

The Koga dam is currently under construction on the Gilgel Abbay River, the main inflow to Lake Tana, which is the source of the Abbay River (Figure 1). The dam is the centre-piece of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project. The water to be stored in the reservoir created will be used for 7,000 ha of smallholder dry season irrigation, with the intention of improving food security and the livelihoods of people living in the area (McCartney and Awulachew, 2007).

The focus of the stakeholder survey was to ascertain the extent to which the dam and modification of the flow regime of the Gilgel Abbay River are likely to affect the livelihoods of people living in the vicinity of both the reservoir and the river. The primary aims of the stakeholder survey, conducted between May and July 2007, were to:

- i) Identify key stakeholders in the future operation of the dam;
- ii) Ascertain the main issues of concern for each stakeholder group;

- iii) Determine potential areas of difference in the way different stakeholders would like the dam to be operated;
- iv) Determine the benefits of the watershed management plan as perceived by both upstream and downstream dwellers and the different institutions involved in the project;
- v) Determine if any measures to mitigate negative environmental and social impacts of the dam were identified in the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and, if so, how they have been implemented.
- vi) Ascertain the intended procedures for decision-making in relation to dam operation and the extent to which different stakeholders will be able to have an input into the decision-making process;
- vii) Determine the intended procedures for dealing with issues of public (and other stakeholders) concern over the dam operation.



**Figure 1:** Location of the Koga dam and irrigation scheme

## 1.2 Methods

Essentially a qualitative study, this stakeholder analysis was conducted by employing the following data gathering instruments:



- Conversational interviews were carried out with systematically selected individual stakeholders representing local communities, groups, and institutions. This technique was particularly employed to capture the views and perspectives of individuals representing different government stakeholder organizations and project implementation offices on particular topics, which they might be reluctant to disclose in group situations.
- Focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted with 4-7 representatives of the farming community groups, affected by the project in different ways.
- Case studies were undertaken with a limited number of individuals representing the various stakeholder groups. The purpose of this technique was to capture the perceptions of informants regarding the project, as reflected in their true to life individual or group experiences

A list of people interviewed and participating in the focus group discussions is presented in Appendix A.

## **2 Data Presentation and Analysis**

To carry out the stakeholder analysis of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project, work started by identifying the relevant key stakeholder groups. Included among the major groups with a stake in the two components of the project (i.e. irrigation and watershed management) are farmers, government sector organizations/institutions and the project implementers. In the first category, four groups of farmers were identified as being substantially affected by the project, namely: (i) farmers displaced and temporarily relocated and who will be moved to the command area upon the launch of the project; (ii) farmers not yet moved, but expecting to be displaced and relocated in the host communities; (iii) farmers in the communities waiting to play ‘host’ to the displaced, and (iv) farmers who live adjacent to the irrigation scheme, but who may not be directly affected by it. The attitudes and reservation of the inhabitants of the upstream catchments areas have been treated and incorporated in the analysis, although they have not been targeted as a study community. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with representatives of all these stakeholder groups.

The second category of stakeholders consisted of the Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resources, Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development, Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority, Cooperative Promotion Agency, Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project Office in Bahir Dar and Merawi towns (both of which are project implementers), Mecha Wereda administration, and Koga Irrigation Service Cooperative. In-depth interviews were held with the relevant representatives of these agencies as key informants of the study. The purpose of the FGDs and in-depth interviews was to capture the perceptions, interests, and concerns of the different stakeholders regarding the project, from the perspectives of their respective institutions.

## **2.1 Farming Groups**

### **2.1.1 Opinions**

#### **2.1.1.1 Koga: Differing Views of Farmers Affected by the Project**

The farming group approached by the research team differed in their views concerning the potential benefits that the project offered and the risks that it posed. Farmers who were displaced because of the construction of the reservoir<sup>1</sup>, in the locality called Sebehatie, stated that they hoped that the project would enable them to harvest highly marketable farm crops twice a year, rather than only once as they do currently. By way of compensation, damages were promised for any loss of farm plots, houses, eucalyptus trees, and the estimated value of the crop produce for three consecutive years. The three years was the anticipated time between the start of the construction project and the launch of the irrigation scheme. According to the FGD participants, payments of compensation would be made for the delay in the completion of construction and the commencement of actual operations. The farmers added that in view of the anticipated benefits and the pledges made for the payment of compensation, they were led to believe that the project was worth sacrificing their homes and possessions for. They had agreed to cooperate with the project so that it had a good chance of success. Nevertheless, it does not seem that the project is going according to plan. Currently, it does not look like it will work out as was anticipated and in the way the communities had been led to believe.

It has been three years since the project began, but little progress is visible in relation to the irrigation scheme actually commencing. As a result, the land which used to provide a rich yield, both for domestic consumption and the market, has been left fallow. Nothing tangible has yet come out of the construction effort in the form of the dam structure, reservoir and the canal system. The only evidence of action is the construction machinery which has seemingly been used to move soil from one place to another. Social services such as water supply, clinic, school, and flourmill were also part of the offers made in compensation for the dislocation and its consequences. Not only have these promises failed to materialize, but even worse the access the local people had to a nearby spring, the only source of water supply available, has been rendered unusable because of the construction work.

The villagers do recognise some benefits from the project. Among other things, it has created job opportunities for some community members in the form of daily labour. Previously, there was theft of livestock and cases of violence, said to be perpetrated by the jobless and idle youngsters. Such incidents are now on the decline, since many who may have been involved in these acts have found work in the project. Others, locals as well as migrants, have taken advantage of the opportunity that the project has provided

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<sup>1</sup> The total number of households displaced as a result of the construction of the reservoir is 602. See the data on Page 10 for the total number of households affected by project.

by engaging in food and beverage production and sale. This helps sustain their livelihoods.

The expressed desire of the FGD participants in Sebehatie *Kebele*, is to practice crop cultivation on their respective farm plots, once construction of the scheme is complete and the actual project becomes operational. If the government authorities insist that the only option they have is to operate on the basis of a producers' cooperative, they will have no alternative but to comply. However, the farmers are not keen to become members of producers' cooperatives, because of bad experiences with such cooperatives during the socialist military regime.

Focus group discussions were also held with the representatives of twenty-one male and female headed farm households (18 male and 3 female) dislocated from the Tieemet parish (or *got*), in anticipation of flooding by the reservoir. These households have been resettled on the outskirts of Merawi Town, the capital of Mecha Woreda. The community was settled on land that the town's municipality granted, and which they named Midre Genet. The FGD participants stated that the project has been discussed ever since the early 1970's. However, for reasons that they do not know, the project only began recently. Various misconceptions circulated around the villages about the motives behind the project. There were stories that the government intended to take the land from the people in the name of the project, and after relocating them somewhere in Wolega Zone, Oromia Region, about 500 km away, handover the area to private investors. These misconceptions have contributed to mistrust and have aroused local resistance that has resulted in the arrest and imprisonment of community members supposedly involved in acts of civil disobedience. The government has implemented measures to convince the population of the genuine intentions behind the project. These include measures to show local elders and religious leaders around similar schemes in Tigray and Oromia regions (i.e. so called experience sharing excursions). Upon return, the participants of the visits persuaded community members to cooperate and lend their support to the initiative, explaining what they saw in other regions and persuading them that the purpose was not as frightening as they assumed. As a result, they gave up their home villages and they agreed to move into settlements in new localities, so that the project could commence.

The FGD participants admitted that, although they had initially assumed that they would not be able to adjust themselves to the new environment, they have nevertheless been able to cope with and get used to the new circumstances over the course of time. Initially, the challenge from the host community in Merawi Town to the arrival of the settlers seemed intractable. The people used to refer to them hatefully with the phrase 'the migrants of China', because a Chinese company is undertaking the dam construction. As the FGD participants stated, the host communities were disdainful and unwelcoming because they did not want the urban land to be given away to the migrants to build their settlements. However, they stated that the objections to their arrival decreased gradually, and over time they were able to come to terms with the strange situation in which they found themselves.

The FGD participants acknowledged several positive outcomes of the relocation. Namely that they now inhabit a locality where malaria does not pose a threat, unlike their home village, which they noted was malaria-infested. Access to health and education facilities in their present settlement, which is peri-urban, is another advantage that the relocation has made possible. As a result, not only can they now send their children to the nearby local school, but the health service is also within reach. Moreover, they have now become owners of urban land on which their homes stand and which they consider to be a valuable asset. They regard this as capital and a symbol of insurance, whose value appreciates and gives them sense of security in the form of the benefits that they can obtain by exchanging it for cash, if necessary.

The same FGD participants went on to say that the above represents their personal opinions about what they view to be the benefits of the project. However, they recognized that the project has been disadvantageous to other farming communities. In this respect, they said:

*Farmers who live in Gonfafela and Afer Bet Kebele peasant associations, risking inundation by the reservoir, are not keen to be dislocated by the project. They wish to stick to their farm lands which are well-watered and fertile. So luxuriant are their grazing areas that their livestock breed frequently and in abundant numbers. Hence, the milk yield from their cows is plentiful. Therefore, they attach themselves to their land so strongly that the dislocation in their case is a matter of imposition and a forcible measure, rather than a result of persuasion and wilful choice. They argue that they have no idea of what the fate of the project is going to be. They have fresh memories of the collapsed initiatives during the military regime which did not work out as proposed and ceased to operate not long after they were launched. The farmers also entertain haunting fears that the Koga River itself may flood and destroy the dam project on which much has been invested in terms of both resources and rhetoric. For this reason, they insist that they strongly object to being dislocated and remain locked up as on an island in the middle of a construction project being undertaken in earnest all around them.*

The above is reinforced by the remarks that farmers in the Gonfafela Kebele Peasant Association made in the expression of their reactions to the project in their own words. Accordingly, the FGD participants in this Kebele stated:

*Our locality is a veritable paradise. It is so fertile that it needs no chemical fertilizer. The Koga River continues to feed and enrich our land with deposits of alluvial soils<sup>2</sup> that it transports here from the highland catchments. Owing to the lush plains we have, composts are made on our land on which the locals in Merawi Town heavily depend. Our cows produce abundant milk for which reason we have been in no*

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<sup>2</sup> The farmers use the descriptions fat or grease as figures of speech to emphasize the fertility of their soils.

*want. In addition, we have separate kitchen gardens for sorghum and guayaa that are always full. Therefore, no other Kebele will lose as much as we do by withdrawing from this rich land. That is why residents, men and women, children and adults, could not help but cry out upon learning news of the dislocation plans. So scared are we of the displacement that we would rather die than live. We prefer to keep what we have than let go of what is in our hands for the sake of what we are not sure will ever come or happen to be true. Hence, we insist we be not told about departure to other areas leaving our land behind.*

In contrast, farmers in adjacent *Kebeles*, not directly affected by the project, have more positive opinions about the project. The FGD participants, who are representative of these communities, stated that they foresee chances of benefiting from the project both directly and indirectly. In the first instance, they foresee the project will provide them an opportunity to engage in irrigation farming on a sharecropping basis. It is hoped that some irrigation farmers will rent them a quarter or one-half of a hectare of land. Secondly, they anticipate that with the advent of irrigation agriculture, specialization will be introduced and greater focus will be given to the production of fruits and vegetables. In their opinion, the emphasis on horticultural crops with a commercial purpose will strengthen market interaction between the irrigation farmers and themselves. Thus, they believe they will be in a position to obtain fruits and vegetables, while they market cereal crops, livestock and dairy products.

#### **2.1.1.2 Koga: Loss of Land and Property**

Loss of land and other property is an experience or anticipation that farmers who have been dislocated, or are expecting to be, continue to vehemently voice. According to the data obtained from the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project Office in Bahir Dar, 602 households have been dislocated as a result of the construction of the reservoir, 125 households because of irrigation canal works in the command area, 73 households due to the construction of the main canal system, and 31 households in connection with the activities of building the main dam. Including the aforementioned, a total of 5,075 households have lost land and property, and received compensations, part of the lost assets involving crops (cereal and fodder), and tree (indigenous and fruit). The total area of land to be covered by the entire project infrastructure is planned to amount to 1,406 hectares of which 908 hectares have so far come under use for which compensation payments have already been made.

Cases abound of project-induced loss of land and property suffered by farmers in the local communities. To illustrate, the following three cases have been chosen for presentation and discussion.

### **Case 1: Admitew Semeneh**

*In the name of making plots of land available for resettling dislocated inhabitants of Sebehatie Kebele Peasant Association, three hectares of land were seized from me. I was then given land meant to substitute for what I have lost. After having cultivated this for a year, someone claiming to be an heir of the deceased owner, brought a lawsuit against me and grabbed the land from me by verdict of a local tribunal. On top that, I was forced to repay the man the value of one-year produce estimated at Birr 1,500. Then, I filed a demand with the project to pay me compensation for the land and the value of the crop produce that I lost. The reply I received was that I had to wait until the project was complete and irrigation land was allocated to me. I am now in dire straits, the project people telling me to wait, although I continue to draw their attention that I have nothing to get me through in the meantime.*

### **Case 2: Reverend Meseret Dagne**

*Having completed church education in Gonder, I was teaching the same to a group of church students until the huts I was giving lessons in were demolished. I had the huts built on my ancestral land by mobilizing my students to help with the work. Nonetheless, I received damages only for my house and perennial crops that I had also lost in the process and not for the huts in which I taught. Thus, not only have I lost part of my property without proper compensation, but I have also not been able to practice what I learned by teaching it to others. Thus, I have been out of teaching.*

### **Case 3: Haimanot Yimer**

*As my husband was out in Merawi Town, they came and set out to cut down the line of eucalyptus trees that we had planted around our house. I raised an argument that they should not be cut down before they were counted and their value assessed. The operation of removing the trees went ahead before the argument was settled. Hence, no count was made of the eucalyptus trees that had been standing before they were uprooted. When no proper assessment and estimation was made, they paid out only Birr 2,500, which sum did not represent the actual size of the loss. The compensation would have been greater if the standing trees had been accurately counted.*

The above are cases of individual local residents. During the field trip to the project area for data collection, the research team also made direct observations of land and property losses caused to the entire community, as a result of the diversion of the course of the

Koga River. The Coordinator for Community Organization and Participation and the research team were met and stopped by a number of farmers from Abiyot Fana Kebele Peasant Association. Enraged by the mess that the operation caused to their way of life, the farmers explained their plight as follows:

*We find ourselves in a difficult position. To undertake the construction of the dam structure, the course of the Koga River has been diverted. The river is thus made to flow into the Burqa Spring that has been a source of drinking water for our livestock and ourselves. No more do the Koga River and the Burqa Spring flow downstream as a result. Instead, diverted out of their natural course, the waters are covering an extensive area of farmland, creating something like a large pond. The problems are: First, lying under a heavy blanket of water, wide areas of coffee, teff, and guayaa fields are doomed to absolute ruin. Secondly, sizable pasture lands and tree sheds have likewise been spoilt. Thirdly, the Burqa Spring, which was once a source of cool, clear, and healthy drinking water, is no more potable, because it has become still water, collects dirt, and produces a bad smell. So we are going without drinking water together with our livestock. Its like the project is going to kill off the inhabitants and livestock even before it starts to operate. Hence, we want none of this project, and we wish it is gone. It is better for us to live in the way we did before. We have made repeated efforts to bring the case to the attention of the authorities, but to no avail. Something needs to be done about it urgently or else the situation can take a dangerous course and serious consequences may result. If no action is going to be taken and rectify the damage done, we demand that we be relocated elsewhere as have other kebele peasant associations been, upon the payment of due compensation.*

## **2.1.2 Interests**

### **2.1.2.1 Due and timely compensation**

The farming communities in the project area generally take the dam construction and related schemes as a *fait accompli*. They view it as a foregone conclusion that operations will not be reversed and the project will be implemented at any cost. Hence, for many it is only a matter of time before they are relocated to give way to the project, as fellow farmers already have been. Forced to accept the consequences of the initiative, the farmers now think about how best to be compensated for the losses and damage caused, and how to cope with life in a strange environment. Farmers relocated from Tieemet parish, to the outskirts of Merawi Town aired their complaints about the compensation process as follows:

*The perennial crops (papaya, avocado, guava, and eucalyptus) were not included in the cost assessment. The pretext was that these were planted in the last two to three years, after the project had already started. Not only did the process fail to take account of the labour, time and resources we had invested on growing the plants, but it was inconsistent because assessment of the same assets is reported to have been made for farmers in other localities. True, we were paid the estimated value of the crop produce that we would have been able to harvest over a period of three years, if the project had not commenced and interfered with farming activities. Nevertheless, the value assessment was made on the basis of crop prices at the market three years ago. Three years on, market prices have soared, for example, from Birr 200 to Birr 500 for a quintal of teff. For this reason the assessment does not represent the value of the produce that we have foregone. We therefore legitimately claim that our interests be duly considered, and that compensation be made on a fair basis.*

Farm households in Gonfafela locality, waiting to be relocated, similarly deplore the way in which the compensation issue is being handled by the project. They stated:

*We were told that, for a start, we would be compensated only for our houses. Compensation for farm produce and perennial crops was to be calculated and processed in the coming year. However, the point we raise is that, having received compensation for our houses and thus being resettled in a new locality, how are we going to survive without being given damages for cereal and perennial crops? Furthermore, the value assessment should include everything that we consider and use as assets, on which we have laboured and into which we have poured our time and resources. These are our granaries, water wells, and permanent trees of various kinds including oak and acacia species. Needless to say, we make money from the sale of parts of these trees as firewood and construction materials to supplement our farm income. Hence, if we are to be smoothly relocated, and wait until the start of the project without serious problems, it is vital that the value of three categories of our assets be assessed and compensation made for our houses, cereal produce and perennial crops. Provided compensation is made at the same time for all these assets, we may take comfort that the redress is fair and that we will be able to cope with the shocks that accompany the displacement, and adjust ourselves to the implementation process.*

#### **2.1.2.2 Timing of the relocation process**

Farm households who are anticipating displacement express the desire that their relocation be undertaken in what they view to be the safest and most appropriate season



of the year. On this issue, FGD participants in the Gonfafela Kebele Peasant Association stated:

*Departure to a strange area in the month of April, at which time they ask us to leave, is too difficult and inconvenient. Being a period of intense farm activity, it is not feasible to set off on journey to another place, and waste a whole production season. Furthermore, the start of the rainy season is only a short time away, which means that it is not the appropriate time to demolish ones dwelling and try to put up a new one in an alien locality. It would be very much better to get started in a different place, if they arranged for us to move in the months of September to December, which period coincides with the slack season. Not considering such interests and problems, the project people insist on telling us to pack up and get going, contrary to the old saying: 'God forbid that your death occurs in the rains or that your exodus takes place on the Sabbath'.*

### **2.1.2.3 Attitudes and expectations of host communities**

Farming communities in the project command area are supposed to play host to the relocatees. These communities tend to view the resettlement operation with deep resentment. A chief reason is that, with the arrival of re-settlers displaced from the dam and reservoir construction sites, land redistribution is inevitable. Although they will be allocated land within the irrigation scheme, in the redistribution process they will lose farm plots in proportion to the size of their existing holdings and the number of arrivals. However, loss of land is not the only consideration. There is also a tendency on the part of the host communities to look upon newcomers with suspicion and distrust. In fact, FGD participants in the host communities said the following, which underscores the reasons for their suspicious and distrustful attitude towards the expected newcomers:

*We care the least if land is redistributed amongst the members of our own community. But we do not feel comfortable sharing land and co-existing with people we have never known before. It is hard for us to trust and get along with outsiders. We also consider it to be unfair to share land with those who are getting a double advantage. We have heard that there are some who have received compensation for property and have at the same time retained their land until they moved here<sup>3</sup>. People who have thus unduly benefited must share part of the extra advantages they have obtained with us, if we are supposed to let them have a section of our land. What aggravates the unfairness of the*

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<sup>3</sup> According to Ato Nibret Ayalew, Coordinator for Community Organization and Participation in the Project Office at Merawi, because of surveying errors, some farmers were given compensation for their property, but were not compelled to leave immediately. In the meantime, the same farmers continue to benefit from the land and other resources, until they are finally asked to move.

*whole exercise is that those who obtained compensation for their property are in a position to benefit too much by using the compensation money in business transactions.*

### **2.1.3 Concerns**

#### **2.1.3.1 Uncertainties stemming from the delayed launch of the project**

Relocatees are concerned about the delay in the start of project implementation, which seems to continue indefinitely. Their anxiety is exacerbated by the fact that they have already collected their compensation payments and moved to other areas. It is not only that they are not engaged in any activity that earns them income, but they are having to survive solely on the money received in the form of damages. This money is not replenished and may be used up entirely before the launch of the project. In this connection, relocatees in the suburbs of Merawi Town stated:

*We have spent a portion of the compensation money on building our settlements. We are now surviving on whatever is left over. Some have completely run out of the money provided to them. The longer the start of the project is delayed, the more serious becomes our uncertainty about our future. How can we manage to keep waiting in a situation where we are not sure of the exact start date and we do not have enough money to comfortably get us through an unknown period of time? We would like to see the project start, and sooner rather than later. We are convinced that the benefits outweigh any possible harm of the project. The greatest disadvantage, however, is that no one can tell for a certainty when exactly the scheme will commence. The sooner it gets started, the better. Even more desirable and to our advantage is finding access to the plots of irrigation land. Should that not happen, early start of the project will still allow us to engage in the sharecropping or wage labour that the development process will make possible. Once the irrigation scheme begins to operate fully, crop production will increase including fruits and vegetables. Prices will fall and the market will be full of supplies. Thus, business activities in the towns will flourish and speed up rather than slow down. In turn, conditions will be favourable for wage labour which gives us the opportunity to find alternative jobs in the form of off-farm activities, and the certainty of becoming self-supporting will increase.*

Relocatees from Sebehatie Kebele Peasant Association drafted into different unaffected host communities had this to say on the same point:

*The period of three years for which we were supposed to spend waiting is now drawing to an end. However, the start of the project is not yet in sight. In the meantime, we are running short of finances, having nearly finished what we collected in the form of compensation for property*

*loss. Of course, we are not simply sitting back, and crossing our fingers. We are doing farming to the extent we can, entering into sharecropping arrangements, hiring land, and trying to obtain access to plots of land by way kinship ties. The biggest concern that we are now faced with is that, if the project does not become operational and land is not redistributed in the command area to embark upon irrigation farming, what is going to happen to us and our children? Our fate is equally uncertain, if they are not going to compensate us more, if the project does not start this year.*

### **2.1.3.2 Uncertainties connected with the apparent reluctance of host communities**

Exiting relocatees, as well as farmers expecting to be displaced, are anxious that communities in the project command area will be welcoming and friendly. Underlying their uncertainty and unease are stories that circulate about the negative attitudes and actions of prospective host communities. The following is a summary of statements and expressions reported to have been made by community members in what are expected to be host localities. These convey the overtones of hostility that many relocatees fear.

*‘They threaten by saying, “Who is going to host those who have already pocketed compensation payments in return for their land and other property. Even if we should allow them in, is it on the condition of getting like compensation or for free?”*  
(reported by a relocated farmer in Midre Genet settlement near Merawi Town).

*“A resident in one of the farming communities in the project area said to me, “I wish the dam waters or the Koga River swept you away, so that you perished before you came over to share our land. If you ever dare to set foot on our land, after collecting your compensation, you will lose your neck from the upper side of your body, and your thighs, from the lower end”.*  
(reported by a former inhabitant of Sebehatie Kebele Peasant Association, now relocated elsewhere).

*“Not even if I have as much as twelve quada<sup>4</sup> would I let you have any share of my plot. I would rather hire a farm labourer to work on it. Many migrate as far away as the Setit Humera semi-desert to find wage labour. I may be kind enough to hire you as a labourer on my land rather than see you migrating to this place to end up contracting malaria and expire. But never hope to share my plot”.*

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<sup>4</sup> *Quada* (*qertie* in other farming communities) is a unit of measurement equivalent to one-quarter of a hectare of land.

(reported by a farmer displaced from Sebehatie Kebele Peasant Association).

*“It surprises me that you are intending without scruple to compete for my ancestral plot of land, when you should persist in demanding of the government to abundantly compensate you, so that you earn enough that lasts you for a long time”.*

(reported by a farmer in Gonfafela Kebele Peasant Association waiting to be dislocated).

Although they appear to be outrageous and extremely inconsiderate, the reactions of host communities to the relocation measures also seem to have a sound basis. This can be deduced from the remarks made by a newlywed young farmer in the project command area. He stated:

*A relocated farmer may, for example, have lost only three quada of the twelve he had. He may hence still be left with the remaining nine, which he continues to retain, work on and benefit from. Regardless of this, and on top of the compensation he received on the three quada, he will be provided with farm plots in a host community in the land redistribution program. But this is far from fair. Such a man already possesses land somewhere, and may be doing business with the compensation money in the form of owning a flourmill or even a car. Would it not be more practical, sensible, and rational to include young and landless people like myself in the irrigation scheme, so that we will get an opportunity to engage in productive activities and become self-supportive?*

## **2.2 Government Organizations**

### **2.2.1 Major Stakeholders Involved in Project Implementation**

#### **2.2.1.1 The Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resources (AR-BWR)**

##### **2.2.1.1.1 Background**

The feasibility study on the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project was started during the military regime, under the auspices of the then Valleys Development Authority. The study also included Bir Sheleqo, a nearby section of the Abbay River Valley in West Gojjm, but, according to Ato Muluken Lakachew, Deputy Bureau Head and in charge of the Watershed Development Sector, the Koga project was found to be more feasible and cost effective. The feasibility study, which included both the

construction of the dam and management of the Koga River watershed, was completed in the late 1980's. Implementation began after the African Development Bank (ADB) expressed interest in the initiative and agreed to grant a loan. However, the ADB stipulated that the original six-year implementation plan should be revised and reduced to a three-year program of action; two years for construction of the dam and reservoir structures, and one year for the irrigation canal system. The project commenced with a plan to develop 7,000 hectares of land in the project command area, in a manner that accommodated farm households displaced by the project, and entitled them to project ownership

#### **2.2.1.1.2 Interest**

The Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resource has a stake in the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project because the construction of big and medium sized dams falls within its mandate. The Head of the Water Resource Bureau is deputy chair of the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which is composed of the representatives of different stakeholder groups and plays a role as the highest decision making body in the implementation process.

#### **2.2.1.1.3 Opinions**

According to the Deputy Bureau Head, the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project represents the first of its kind in the region with a huge financial outlay, amounting to a total of over Birr 400,000,000, and employing a large labour force. The project is intended to meet an intervention target of transforming the traditional smallholder rain-fed peasant agriculture into large-scale irrigated commercial farming. Thus, the major expected benefit of the scheme is the enhancement of farm productivity. The Deputy Bureau Head summarised the following as anticipated important outcomes of the project:

- The creation of employment opportunities for thousands of the rural unemployed and underemployed, as well as urban job seekers.
- The flourishing of parallel business activities such as the production and service of food and beverages around the project site, which has created a source of income for members of the local community, in addition to business owners.
- The provision of capacity building for farmers participating in the project. This includes training in the operation, maintenance and repair of irrigation structures and related machines and tools.
- The availability of new job opportunities for qualified personnel, since the management of the dam, the reservoir and the major canals requires highly trained manpower.

- Employment of low-level local manpower to meet the labour requirements of agro-industrial and processing plants to be established by incoming private investors.
- The development of subsidiary businesses in which intermediaries trade agricultural and agro-industrial goods, and make and sell by-products such as compost and manure.

#### 2.2.1.1.4 Concerns

The Deputy Bureau Head also commented on the challenges and concerns that have to be addressed to improve the chances of the project being successfully implemented. These include:

- It is envisaged that the project will be implemented on the basis of full cost recovery. Accordingly, the expectation is that the farm households involved in the project will benefit from the scheme on a scale that they will eventually be in a position to cover the entire investment cost. The concern is that the current economic capacity of the rural population makes it unlikely that the beneficiary households will attain a level of development to be able to do this. Thus, full cost recovery seems unlikely.
- Limited experience of farming communities in the region in the handling of even medium-sized irrigation schemes raises the concern of how well they will be able to manage large-scale projects of this kind.
- In view of the low capacity of targeted beneficiary communities in the management of irrigation schemes, a question remains about the best institutional arrangements to put in place to ensure project sustainability. The Bureau maintains the position that the establishment of water users associations (WUAs) and building their capacity so that they will takeover the project upon completion will guarantee sustainability. There is a sound basis for choosing this approach over the farmers' cooperative formula, which is also being considered as a possible alternative exit strategy. In the former case, there is a longstanding tradition in other regions in which water users association have successfully been operating with, a '*the father of the well*' in charge of the water management. This has been further reinforced by the issuing a legislation that governs the establishment and operation of such associations, although this is not yet fully translated into action. Hence, the tradition can be duplicated and adapted in this region, based on the stated proclamation, as indigenous capital to ensure a viable takeover of the project.
- Inadequate experience in watershed management, in combination with irrigation development schemes, constitutes another major concern. Not even the federal Ministry of Water Resource possesses sufficient experience in the joint implementation of the two components. As a result, the responsibility for the watershed management aspect of the project was handed over to the Amhara Regional Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (AR-BARD). The time AR-BARD needed to sufficiently acquaint itself with the practice, and the failure

to introduce more appropriate strategies to implement the watershed component meant that about two years elapsed without accomplishing significant activities in this aspect of the project. However, the Deputy Bureau Head spoke in a reassuring way, to tone down the threat posed by the accumulation of sediments, feared to negatively affect the dam and reservoir structures. Not only is the dam and reservoir under construction located on a gentle slope that reduces the amount of silt carried down, but the grassland plains where the reservoir is found, act as filter, holding back the silts. In addition, the dam has been engineered in a way that facilitates technical options to minimize the problem<sup>5</sup>.

- Another serious concern is persuading farmers in the host communities that it is in their interest to welcome and accommodate relocatees. After all, the displaced and the would-be dislocated farmers are forced to leave their land and homes, in order to facilitate irrigation development, to the benefit of farming communities in the command area. Nonetheless, it remains a daunting challenge getting the people in the host communities to appreciate this, and secure their cooperation in letting relocatees have a fair share of farmland.
- Although probably not on a sufficient scale, preliminary assessments were carried out on the social and environmental impacts of the project. In addition, in the run up to the value assessment of crops and other assets and the corresponding compensation measures, efforts have been made to create and raise the awareness of farming communities about the project rationale and anticipated long-term benefits. However, not enough seems to have been achieved in the transformation of the development mentality and consciousness of the farming population in the target localities. Hence, a wide gap continues to exist between the development agenda of the state and the attitudes and views of the local communities that tend to focus more on the immediate material benefits that the scheme offers, rather than on the attainment of long-term development goals.

### **2.2.1.2 The Amhara Region Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (AR-BARD)**

#### **2.2.1.2.1 Interests**

The Amhara Region Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development (AR-BOARD) is one of the stakeholders entrusted with the responsibility of running the watershed management component of the project. Ato Tedla Hadege, Liaison Officer between the Bureau and the Project Management, indicated that the watershed management is being conducted in nine upstream *kebele* peasant associations. This component of the project comprises an extension package consisting of activities such as crop production, livestock development, soil conservation, afforestation, watering point development, and construction of feeder roads and health establishments.

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<sup>5</sup> This refers to the presence of a bottom outlet to enable the flushing of sediment.

#### **2.2.1.2.2 Opinions**

In the opinion of the Liaison Officer of the Bureau, the implementation of the watershed management component of the project is not being conducted in a satisfactory way. He said that, despite the crucial role that the component is expected to play in ensuring the success and sustainability of the irrigation project, the size of funds earmarked and the attention devoted to its implementation are far less than is actually required.

Furthermore, upstream communities see little in the way of delivery of promises in relation to the implementation of planned activities associated with the civil works, such as the construction of roads and health establishments. This has had a big negative impact on the motivation and enthusiasm of people in upstream localities to cooperate in the carrying out of conservation activities.

The Liaison Officer added that conservation structures built in upstream *kebeles* generally lack durability, care and protection. As a result, the tendency is that what has been constructed today is likely to collapse soon or will not be sustainable in the long-term. This is mostly attributed to the inadequate sense of ownership over the work by the population. People in these areas seem to reflect an attitude that they are not the ones meant to directly benefit from the irrigation project, which necessitated the watershed management component. They maintain the view that they are made to labour and toil without being incentivized, only to facilitate the conditions for downstream communities to gain the most from the irrigation project.

#### **2.2.1.2.3 Concerns**

The success and sustainability of watershed management activities hinges upon the allocation of adequate resources. The promises made to communities in the project area of watershed management in the form of infrastructure development should be fulfilled. Without such incentives they are not motivated to participate in the conservation process. Emphasis should be put on ensuring the sustainability of the conservation structures that have been built.

### **2.2.1.3 The Amhara Region Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority (AR-EPLUAA)**

#### **2.2.1.3.1 Background**

The Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project was conceived in the late 1980's, and is the largest ever development investment in the region, according to Ato Bayih Tilahun, policy analyst and Head of the Land Administration Department in the Authority. The watershed management component covers nine upstream kebeles in the Koga River catchment area, while the irrigation project is due to be implemented in 7



downstream localities. The scheme aims to harness the waters of the Koga River (which originates in Mount Wozen) and to develop 7,200 hectares of land in the project command area.

#### **2.2.1.3.2 Interests**

The Amhara Region Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority (AR-EPLUAA) is a key actor in project management and implementation. The chief mandate of the Authority is the facilitation of the relocation process for farm households displaced from the land as a result of the scheme. According to the policy analyst, the scheme affects farmers, from 1,416.5 hectares of land, who will be displaced to make way for the construction of the dam, reservoir, and the irrigation canals. The dislocatees are to be resettled in downstream localities where they will be provided with irrigable land. In the process, host communities will lose 20% of their holdings, which they will lose to the newcomers in proportion to the size of land they hold. The regional land laws allow for land redistribution in the interest of irrigation development. However, tenure security, guaranteed by the process of land certification, requires that when an area of land is needed for development purpose, farmers with use rights are not to be dislocated without due compensation.

In this relation, the mandate of the authority is to:

- survey, redistribute, and administer rural land in the project area.
- count, assess and estimate the value of the property and assets of the farmers on their plots, including perennial crops and houses, and redress the losses caused accordingly.

Because dislocated farmers are forced to stop crop production pending the allocation of irrigable land and the start of the irrigation project, the responsibility of the authority includes an assessment of the crop yields that the farmers would have produced for three years and processing the payment of proportionate compensation.

It is estimated that by the time the compensation process is complete, up to Birr 30,000,000 will have been paid out in damages. This huge task is being handled by a committee on which the farmers are represented by delegates from their ranks, and whose mandate includes value assessment and compensation payments.

#### **2.2.1.3.3 Opinions**

The AR-EPLUAA officials believe that there are always costs to be borne when contemplating the introduction of development ventures such as the Koga project. Still, the benefits it promises outweigh any negative impacts or consequences:

- The project will enable farmers who currently depend on seasonal rain-fed agriculture to produce on a bi-modal basis, rather than only once a year. As a

result, farmlands that used to lie idle in the dry season will be cultivated and put to effective use, leading to an increase in productivity and an increase in the income of farm households.

- Crop production will become market-oriented rather than subsistence-oriented, making it possible to produce cash crops such as fruits, vegetables and flowers that benefit not only individual households, but also the nation by increasing the volume of revenue and foreign exchange earnings.
- Local young people and farmers will be able to find wage labour in carpentry, masonry, and other maintenance trades.
- Commercial agriculture will encourage the emergence and expansion of off-farm activities, and agro-processing investments leading to the creation of a transaction sector that involves the buying, selling, and transfer of locally produced goods and services, and inputs and consumer items from outside the local community.

However, the officials acknowledge that for all its anticipated long-term benefits, the project is also bound to cause adverse effects. In this regard, displacement of households is the biggest negative consequence. Besides material losses, despite compensation measures, there are serious psychological impacts caused by dislocation. These are difficult to quantify in terms of a monetary value. The displacement of households is usually accompanied by the process of massive social disarticulation. It is often the case that people are socially and psychologically attached to the land and physical environment where they have lived for generations. They live and work in cohesive and elaborate social and institutional networks, and enjoy church and neighbourhood affiliations. As social capital, these relationships are difficult to break and very dear to lose. The project-induced dislocation deprives them of these ties and networks with huge psychological impacts that no financial compensation can possibly redress.

To compound the problem, the property assessment and compensation payments do not include the communal grazing area because it is owned and used on group basis, and considerations are not made for land since it is regarded as state domain. Hence, not only will a vast grazing area be lost without compensation, but pasture land available in the command area may not be as extensive. Hence, a decline in livestock production will follow accompanied by a decrease in milk and associated products.

#### **2.2.1.3.4 Concerns**

The neglect of communities in the catchments area by the project puts the implementation process at risk and is therefore a reason for concern. The fact is that community members receive little incentive to motivate them to actively participate in conservation activities. Hence, to date, the work undertaken in the area of land rehabilitation is minimal. To ensure effective watershed management, terracing and afforestation should be carried out in earnest, especially since the area is highly vulnerable to erosion and land degradation. Unless appropriate action is taken soon, the environmental degradation will worsen, hindering implementation of the irrigation project. Land conservation programs are largely undertaken by means of mobilizing

community members through food-for-work arrangements. However, this has not been implemented in the catchment *kebeles* since the area has not been identified as food insecure. It appears that the regional government is not interested in designating the Mecha *woreda* (which covers the catchment *kebeles*) on the list of food insecure communities since this could aggravate the aid dependence syndrome among the population. Summarizing the above, Dr. Zerfu Hailu, former staff of EPLUAA, and currently head of Global Environmental Facility (GEF), and key informant of this study stated:

*Failure to implement proper watershed management constitutes the major concern and risk related to the Koga project. The irrigation scheme can be expected to become successful in a sustainable manner only when carried out in coordination and harmony with the catchment rehabilitation. Hence, there should be no missing the point that relevant work in upstream localities is pivotal to the achievement of project goals and objectives associated with the irrigation scheme. It is unfortunate that practice shows the setting of priorities in this country reverses the logical sequence of the two important and inseparable components. Judging by existing experience with similar projects, the trend is that infrastructural development takes precedence over watershed management. Actually, the amount of investment that the catchment area attracts should not be any less considerable than the resource poured into the building and expansion of infrastructure such as dams and reservoirs.*

Irregularities in the inventory and assessments of the assets of dislocatees and the dispensation of compensation payments are reported to be a tremendous challenge and a serious concern. Although land is officially declared as state property, the law still decrees that farmers be duly compensated in the event of dislocation for development purposes. Unfortunately, this has not been meticulously carried out in the case of the farmers in question. The legal provision is that farmers have the right to negotiate compensation and receive mutually agreed payments before being displaced. In this case, however, the procedure adopted was to deny the farmers the right to negotiate on an equal basis and to displace households before the receipt of compensation money. Complaints are also numerous that property inventory and valuation have not been fairly conducted and, worse, that favouritism and discrimination have been shown on the basis of corrupt dealings. As a result, it is reported that the entire operation was marred by wrangling between farmers and the assessment committee, and the filing of complaints and accusations which have not been properly addressed and settled. All together, the faulty, highly controversial and questionable procedures adopted to handle the compensation issue no doubt threaten the conduct of project activities.

Possible risks to the success and sustainability of the project continue to raise doubts about its future. These concerns are further corroborated by the wider implications of the success or failure of the scheme in relation to the standing of the country in the international arena, particularly vis-à-vis multilateral financiers such as WB, IMF, and

ADB. According to AR-EPLUAA informants, the Koga project is the first large-scale venture that the country is implementing in the Nile Basin. In view of this, the record it sets in relation to achieving implementation targets will be viewed by the international community as an indication of Ethiopia's capacity to handle similar capital-intensive schemes in the future. In fact, the delivery on its responsibilities to effectively carry through the Koga project as envisaged, is regarded by lending organizations as the nation's litmus test to successfully bargain and attract major loans for future investment in the Nile Basin and elsewhere. Furthermore, many share the belief that the country's due share of the water resources in the Nile basin will also be judged by how successfully it manages to deliver on the Koga project.

#### **2.2.1.4 The Amhara Region Cooperatives Promotion Agency**

##### **2.2.1.4.1 Interests**

As a major stakeholder in the implementation of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project, the Amhara Region Cooperatives Promotion Agency is a member of the project Steering Committee with a specific mandate and responsibilities. According to Ato Ayenew Belay, head of the Agency, the following are the interests of the agency in the project:

- The Agency is entrusted with the task of organizing as many as 7,000 farm households in the project command area in irrigation users' service cooperatives, and the facilitation of their final takeover of the project upon its completion
- The organizing of the irrigation users in saving and credit associations, with the aim of promoting the culture of savings, enabling irrigation users to utilize the income from their farming in a thrifty manner, and facilitating access to loans from internal and external sources.
- Awareness creation and enhancement among target farm households that the project is designed to operate on the principles of cost recovery, with the implication that they will ultimately be responsible for covering the cost of investment.

To date, 3,886 household heads have been organized under irrigation users' service cooperatives. Efforts are continuing to persuade thousands more not yet organized to join them. Similarly, saving and credit associations have been established in three of the seven *kebeles* in the project command area, with plans to set up the same in the remaining four. However, the process of cooperativization has not been trouble free. The sceptical attitude of many farmers towards service cooperatives arises from them associating the institutions with the failed producers' cooperatives that were established at the time of the military regime. This scepticism has presented an enormous obstacle. Many farmers also have fears and mistrust, believing that the real motive behind the service cooperatives is to turn them into state farms, which would mean that they would not be the ultimate owners.

As a strategy to meet the challenges, a team of local opinion leaders drawn from elders, religious leaders, teachers, women and youth was made to travel on experience sharing visits to Oromia and Tigray regions, and make observations of irrigation users service cooperatives in action there.

#### **2.2.1.4.2 Opinions**

By its very nature, irrigation agriculture is labour intensive. Hence, a farm household is allocated only as much land as it can manage to develop, optimally between 0.50 – 1.0 hectare. The rationale behind the irrigation scheme, no matter how small the size of land reallocated, is the intensification of agricultural production through the application of modern farming technologies and inputs. Being market-oriented, irrigation agriculture is primarily commercial in its objectives, focusing on the production of cash crops, mainly fruits and vegetables. There are also plans to develop floriculture in conjunction with private investors on a contractual basis. Arrangements will be made to enhance the development of horticulture and floriculture in combination with agro-processing.

The establishment of irrigation users' service cooperatives is essential to the exploration of market outlets for the commercial crops produced, and ensuring the supply of modern farm inputs and technologies. In addition, the cooperatives will play a crucial role in the takeover and management of the irrigation structures. The service cooperatives will be responsible for the management and repair of the tertiary and feeder canals. To facilitate this, water user groups will be established that include all irrigation farmers. Membership of water user groups is compulsory, and entails the payment of water fees. In contrast joining the service cooperatives is a choice made on voluntary basis. Membership guarantees access to services that the institutions offer in the form of market opportunities, agricultural inputs and technologies. Upon project completion, a unit will be set up to takeover the management of the irrigation infrastructure including the dam, reservoir, and primary and secondary irrigation canals, the administration of which currently exceeds the know-how and experience of the farmers.

#### **2.2.1.4.3 Concerns**

Those farmers being dislocated by the project have much to complain about the exercise in which assets are valued and compensation determined. Grievances about not having been fairly compensated for loss and damage are serious, and appear to be causing critical problems that are jeopardizing project implementation. A consequence of this is that many farm households are reluctant to become members of the service cooperatives. Meanwhile, prospective host communities in the command area are developing negative attitudes about the project because of fears that it will result in the loss of a substantial proportion of their farmland. Particularly anxious are households in possession of sizable land plots.

Ato Sintayehu Mengistie, Auditor in the Mecha Woreda Cooperative Promotion office notes:

*Farmers in the local community are in love of land, as it were. Even those households who may possess as much as four hectares, a size of holding too vast for irrigable farming, would rather the plots remained idle than allow others to hold and farm it. They are so dismissive of the idea of abandoning portions of their land to fellow farmers, not even to relocatees displaced from their own land, for the sake of an initiative that is bound to benefit them more.*

Unaddressed, these concerns will obstruct the cooperativization process. They have already begun to affect it. Farmers in the command area are responding to cooperative membership with hesitation and scepticism.

Head of the Cooperatives Promotion Agency, Ato Ayenew, comments that the completion of construction of the dam and reservoir is overdue. The longer the delay, the more impatient dislocated farmer become, running out of the compensation funds they have been paid on the basis of the estimated three-year loss of crop production. With the three-year period coming to an end before the completion of construction work, another round of compensation payments is becoming a pressing demand. At this juncture, dislocated farmers insist on asking the project management when they are going to be resettled and engage in farm production, so long after they have been displaced from their villages.

Sedimentation continues to pose a huge threat to the viability of the Koga project. Intensifying the risk is the persistent failure to accomplish sufficient watershed work in the catchments area. The Head of the Agency insists that it is the responsibility of the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development to ensure that the necessary measures are adopted to undertake satisfactory watershed management activities. As a strategy to get this done on the desired scale, extension packages should be made available to benefit households in the upstream *kebeles*. This would motivate them to actively engage in sustainable conservation works on their private and communal land. If, however, the current trend continues and improvements are not made in carrying out the watershed management exercise the irrigation project will be seriously affected.

## **2.2.1.5 Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project Office - Bahir Dar and Merawi**

### **2.2.1.5.1 Background**

The feasibility study on the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management was completed in 1995. In 2001, the African Development Bank (ADB) expressed an interest to finance the project, and a loan agreement was signed between the Bank and the Ethiopian

Government in July of the same year. The launch of the project took place in 2002. Accordingly, two projects offices were opened to oversee the implementation process in Bahir Dar, the regional capital, and Merawi Town, the capital of Mecha *woreda*, the project site.

Ato Yassin Yimer, Head of the project office in Bahir Dar, said that the project has three major components, namely irrigation development, watershed management, and capacity building. On 8 April 2003, a contract agreement was signed with the companies that won the bid to develop the technical design of the dam and other infrastructure. These are Mott McDonalds, Metaferia Consult Engineering and Water Works Design Enterprise. The development of the design took one year, the contract agreement then being signed with a Chinese engineering company on November 25, 2004 to undertake the construction of the dam within a two-year period. Birr 76 million was earmarked for the purpose of the dam construction. A year later, on June 14, 2005, a contract agreement was entered into with another Chinese company called CWA to construct the irrigation infrastructure at a cost of Birr 201 million. Both companies committed themselves to complete the construction of the dam and irrigation infrastructure within two years from the time of signing the agreement. It is unfortunate, however, that work is not progressing as planned on the construction of either the dam or the irrigation structures. The dam construction is particularly overdue and a delay to completion of nearly one year is anticipated.

Ato Yassin, Head of the project office, complained that the companies won the engineering bid by offering a major discount. However, they were ill-prepared for the task, and did not have the necessary resources to complete the work according to plan. It is feared that the construction work will be delayed by a further two years.

#### **2.2.1.5.2 Opinions**

The head of the project office in Bahir Dar emphasized that the project was designed only with the engineering and the physical aspects being considered in detail. It was a major operational fault that the social and environmental dimensions were underemphasized and under resourced. Thus, issues such as the dispensation of compensation for property loss and the process of relocating displaced households were not considered seriously. At a late stage, terms of reference (ToR) were designed for the conduct of social and environmental assessments. The study was granted to an Indian consultancy firm to be undertaken within a period of three months. However, unable to complete the task within the agreed timeframe, and failing to properly identify and analyze the problem, the firm stopped the task prematurely and submitted a substandard report. In this way, the responsibility for finalising the unfinished business of assessing the social dimensions fell on the project office. As a result, although it is strictly outside the mandate of the project office, the management is deeply involved in collaboration with the Amhara Region Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority (AR-EPLUAA) in conducting the social assessment and a large number of associated activities.

According to Ato Nibret Ayalew, Community Organization and Participation Coordinator and Head of the Project Office at Merawi Town, the socioeconomic survey and payments of compensation should have been carried out prior to the launch of the construction of the dam and irrigation infrastructure. Since this has not been done, construction is being undertaken in the face of interference, controversies, and forced interruptions. The farming communities are constantly filing demands and wrangling with project staff about the problems and hardships that the operation has caused. The failure on the part of the implementing body also includes lack of consideration of awareness creation and community mobilization, required before embarking on the launch of a project of this nature. In the absence of these preparatory activities, it is not surprising the farming communities are resisting the project. This has resulted in them spreading and readily believing various conspiracy theories and misrepresentations concerning the initiative.

Speaking about the benefits that the Koga project offered, Ato Yassin said that the farming communities do have a lot to gain from the irrigation scheme. In fact, if the project was implemented smoothly he believes that there would be no losers. If fully involved in the irrigation development process, the farmers will be able to produce a great deal more and supply to the market agricultural produce of higher quality and quantity, thereby increasing their farm income. Even in the current transitional period his view is that the farming communities have not lost out to the extent that some seem to claim. They have been given compensation, which he believes is fair, based on the inventory and valuation of their assets and the estimation of crop loss. In addition, no fewer than 300 members of the farming communities already earn income in the project as daily labourers and guards. However, the project is obliged to employ skilled and semi-skilled labour force from elsewhere because such manpower is not locally available. Of course, it is not to be denied that the psychological impact on farm households of dislocation, loss of land and property, and having to leave villages and other social capital can be considerable.

Ato Yassin explained the planned safe exit strategy of the Koga project. Part of the strategy is the establishment of the Koga Irrigation Development Administration Office, which will be entrusted with the monitoring, maintenance, and operation of the dam and the primary irrigation infrastructure (i.e. the main and secondary canals). Water user groups will be organized that will be in charge of the management and control of the tertiary, quaternary and field canals. The setting up of irrigation users' service cooperatives is already underway. These are responsible for the assessment of market opportunities for agricultural produce and the supply of farming inputs and technologies.

In addition, the head of the project office in Bahir Dar, noted that the project encompasses a watershed management component which is responsible for the conservation of the natural resource in the upstream catchment. The main focus of this component is to promote environmental protection and conservation in the interest of farming communities in the catchment area. In the opinion of the project office, it should be viewed as a priority for communities in upstream *kebeles* to save their land to ensure higher farm productivity and achieve food self-sufficiency. In an effort to create this



awareness and secure the voluntary participation of the population, comprehensive extension packages encompassing livestock development and crop production, agro-forestry, animal feed supply and control of overgrazing, and soil and water conservation, have been developed. With the objective of overseeing the implementation of the watershed management and the extension package services, the project has deployed a watershed management team to the catchment area. Coupled with the development and conservation of the natural resources in the catchments area, the watershed management component is also intended to deal with the problem of sedimentation. Without such precautionary measures the dam and reservoir are in danger of becoming filled with silt. In accordance with this, the project is planning plant 1,000 hectares of forest in the 22,000 hectares of land located upstream of the irrigation project. It is part of the project plan to reduce the volume of silts carried down from the catchments into the dam by up to fifty percent.

Given that 22,000 hectares constitute a vast area of land on which to carry out effective watershed management activities, the resources allocated for the undertaking are inadequate. An additional problem is that the majority of the resource allocated (already insufficient) is intended for civil works such as the construction of roads and other infrastructure. Thus, efforts are underway to obtain additional funding from ADB. The importance of watershed management as a vital parallel component of the irrigation project is widely acknowledged.

As a very important third component, Birr 14 million has been earmarked for capacity building. Accordingly, professionals drawn from different stakeholder organization were made to undertake postgraduate studies overseas. Some of these have already returned to serve in the implementation of the project. In addition, training was provided to 1,000 farmers in relation to watershed management, both in the upstream and downstream kebeles. Others have taken part in experience sharing visits in the Tigray and Oromia regions, where irrigation project are already being implemented. The target is to train a total of 8,000 farmers in watershed management-related activities.

### **2.2.1.5.3 Concerns**

Currently the watershed management activities are not being carried out properly. This raises a serious concern that silts will pose a threat to the success of the irrigation development. Ato Tilahun Almaw, leader of the watershed management team, emphasized that the guiding principle of the watershed management component is to reduce the income gap between upstream and downstream communities, and meet the needs of farm households in the catchments *kebeles* so that they have no complaints or dissatisfaction with the project implementation. However, he notes challenges have been encountered:

- The project aims to undertake watershed management activities on the basis of voluntary community participation. However, this has not materialized as planned. Covering a wide range of activities, watershed management is too

labour-intensive and physically demanding to have community members fully participate without material incentive. The authorities, of course, argue that buying the labour of the local population to carry out conservation activities that are primarily in their own interests only helps to encourage the sense of dependency. Regardless of the argument or counter-argument involved in this issue, the fact is that work in the watershed management component is lagging behind schedule and not keeping pace with the irrigation project component. This is a source of great concern. Particularly is this the case in the light of soil and water conservation measures proposed in the 'Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan Report' (Vol. 1, 2005). In this document, core environmental conservation activities suggested include: farmers training, preparation of seedlings in nurseries, arable land conservation measures (contour cultivation, diversion drain, soil bunds, and stone bunds); and arable land production measures (crop demonstration, agro-forestry, horticultural development, organic farming and homestead garden and household production)

- The distorted perceptions and attitudes prevalent in upstream communities about watershed management intensify the above concern. They generally subscribe to the mistaken view that the watershed management component is intended to benefit communities in the command area at the expense of the labour and toil of the farming population upstream.
- The non-fulfilment of promises made to upstream kebeles in the form of building infrastructure like roads, clinic, and a school has apparently contributed to the increasing suspicion over the motives behind the watershed management program. The resulting disappointment and distrust further reduces community motivation to participate in the conservation endeavour and increases their suspicion that the authorities are not committed to the pledges they have made about the program bringing benefits to the upstream communities.
- It has been a big challenge to mobilize the local community for watershed management activities. Besides the difficulty of sustaining conservation structures that have been put in place, farm households often strongly resist the loss of land where the structures stand, claiming that they have been targeted to pay the sacrifice in the interest of the whole.
- The creation of synergy between the watershed management team and woreda agriculture and rural development office has often been difficult. This has contributed to the non-achievement of targets in the conservation process. In fact, rather than helping to facilitate the work of the team, the agricultural office has seemed to be more interested in competition over the resources of the project for its own purposes. On the part of the team, there is the feeling that the agricultural office views the presence of the team as a threat rather than a stakeholder in a project of common interest to both parties.

Because of these problems and constraints, the watershed management team is confronted with pressing concerns about a threat that is looming. Considering the magnitude of the watershed management work that has yet to be undertaken, it is a matter of urgency to ask: is it feasible to carry out sufficient conservation activities in time,

before the completion of the dam construction, and make it safe from the risk of silt accumulation?

The head of the project office in Bahir Dar disagrees. He believes that sedimentation is not such a pressing concern. His view is that the comments made along this line are overstating the problem. He said that the reservoir is located on a grassland plain, which is also marshy. The grassland and marshy nature of the plain will prevent heavy deposits and hard substance such as rocks from being swept into the reservoir. Furthermore the dam has been engineered in such a way that it gives its own solution to sedimentation (i.e. a bottom outlet that in theory enables flushing of sediments). Thus, the dam is equipped with a facility that periodically removes any sediment that has gone in. The carrying out of watershed management work up in the catchments simply reduces the threat.

The project office has no organizational structures in the form of administrative units to directly contact farming communities. Rather it has to contact farm households through government structures such as the *kebele* administration and sector ministry offices like the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development. There have been instances where the motives of the project office in seeking to directly reach farm households were doubted and seriously questioned. Hence, lack of autonomy as an implementer is having a negative impact on the efficiency of the process. The involvement of different stakeholders in the implementation (e.g., the Bureau of Water Resource, Agriculture and Rural Development and Environmental Protection Authority) is inadequate. There is no sense that they are pursuing the project with a sense of “ownership”. This tendency makes it appear that the project is running without the stakeholders who consider themselves to be its owners.

It should be noted that communities in the command area will benefit themselves at the expense of farm households dislocated from localities where the dam and reservoir are being constructed. Hence, it is only fair that farmers in the host community share their land with those displaced. Nevertheless, host communities are quick to dismiss these arguments, saying that the government should compensate these farmers by paying them for what they have lost, but that they should not be obliged to abandon parts of their holdings to the relocatees.

The delay in the completion of the construction work is another cause for concern. Worse than falling far behind schedule, if the contractor were to withdraw from the project, because of inability to complete the work within the time set, as the Head of the Project Office in Bahir Dar fears, it would indeed be a crisis of massive proportions for the displaced farm households and the project management team. The displaced farm households have already been waiting a long time for the construction work to be completed. However, contrary to the promises given, the launch of the scheme remains uncertain, and the waiting time seems never-ending. With the delay extending beyond the three-year term for which compensation was paid, the need for another round of payment of damages are becoming increasingly likely. This threatens to inflate further the resources required, beyond the Birr 30 million allocated for this purpose.

A difficult question that needs to be answered, according to the project office head at Merawi, has to do with the takeover and management of the scheme upon its completion. Whether the capacity exists locally to administer the project is an issue of enormous importance. A proposed strategy is to organize the farmers into irrigation users' service cooperatives. However, these are institutions whose members affiliate themselves with them because of coercion (i.e., under the threat of being denied access to farm inputs). The head believes this goes against the principles of voluntarism. Hence, the irrigation users' service cooperatives cannot be relied upon to have the capacity and motivation to takeover and run the project sustainably. Water user groups are supposed to play a similar role in the management of the irrigation structures. However, although an unspecified number of water user groups have been established, none of them are yet functional, implying lack of readiness on their part to play the role anticipated for them.

The existence of a market potential that can readily absorb the produce harvested on 7,000 ha of irrigated land requires careful consideration. If, in the first year of harvest, irrigation users are not able to access market to dispose of their produce, they will be discouraged from pursuing future irrigation practices in earnest. The obligation of cost recovery that weighs heavily on their minds will complicate the situation and exacerbate their uncertainties.

### **2.2.1.6 Koga Irrigation Water Users Service Cooperative**

#### **2.2.1.6.1 Background**

In line with the proposal in the 'Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan (Vol. 1, 2005), the idea of establishing irrigation water users service cooperative was initiated because of the need to facilitate conditions for the farming communities to gain the most out of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project. Thus, government officials from relevant stakeholder organizations visited the farming communities to explain to the farmers the importance of organizing irrigation water users' service cooperatives. The intention is to ensure that the farmers are the real and ultimate beneficiaries of the project. However, as Ato Ayenew Kassie, head of the service cooperative, noted, it took time for the farmers to appreciate and embrace the objectives of cooperativization. Different misconceptions and rumours that were circulating about the entire Koga project made it difficult to effectively communicate the rationale and significance of organizing farmers in cooperatives. After intense discussions between the farmers and the project staff, and field visits to Tigray and Oromia regions by the representatives of the farming communities, some progress was achieved in changing negative attitudes about the project and the purpose of service cooperatives in particular. As a result of the awareness creation and community mobilization activities, it was possible to convince farmers to enrol as members of the service cooperative. In total 706 farmers (609 male and 16 female) joined the Koga Irrigation Water Users Cooperative in 2005. This number has now grown to 4,912 (4,261 male and 651 female).

The leadership of the service cooperative took advantage of various community meetings to provide explanations of the benefits and prospects of membership in the service cooperatives. This has resulted in the recruitment of an increasing number of farmers. The promises, that farmers would be able to produce cash crops twice a year and that they could buy shares on payment of nominal registration fees, served as incentives to members of the farming communities to join the service cooperatives. In relation to governance, the service cooperative encompasses two major administrative units, executive and audit and control committees. Access to irrigation water is nevertheless not conditional on cooperative membership. As long as farmers abide by the rules and regulations of the water users' associations, to which every farmer must belong, they are not obliged to join the cooperatives.

#### **2.2.1.6.2 Concerns**

- A major concern on the part of relocated farmers is the prolonged delay in the completion of the dam and commencement of the irrigation scheme. Displaced from their land and resettled in different communities, waiting too long for the start of the project, with no farming activity, is something that the farmers find difficult to accept.
- The land redistribution process, to enable relocatees find a plot to work on, constitutes a huge task that the project office has yet to accomplish. However, farmers in the host communities continue to strongly resist such an initiative. They reason that, although they are displaced and have lost land, the relocatees have been duly compensated by the government for their loss. Therefore, they do not deserve to be given land for free since they have already got compensation. Furthermore, they conclude that if they have to abandon parts of their plots to the relocatees, they should likewise be paid compensation.
- The grievances and resentments that dislocated farmers hold about the conduct of the inventory and valuation of their lost assets and compensation payment is, without doubt, having a negative impact on the establishment of service cooperatives and the recruitment and enlargement of the membership.
- Lack of coordination and commitment among the different government stakeholder groups comprising the project steering committee (PSC), concerns the leadership of the service cooperatives and is a factor undermining successful project implementation. Although there are numerous bodies in the committee at local and regional levels, hardly any of them take the initiative to play a leading role. None seem to have a sense of ownership, responsibility and urgency.
- What the farming communities also regard as a possible tremendous challenge, once the irrigation project commences, is whether they will have access to professional assistance in the assessment of crop cash value. They are also concerned about the chances of getting access to local, national and international markets.

### **2.2.1.7 The Mecha Wereda administration (Project Woreda)**

The woreda administration facilitates project implementation by providing security and police protection services.

#### **2.2.1.7.1 Opinions**

The Koga project promises benefits, as well as posing risks, as Ato Gedebe Hailu, Administrator of Mecha Woreda, explained. According to him, expected benefits of the project to the farmers involved are the following:

- It enables the farming communities to utilize their labour and capital efficiently.
- It will provide the opportunity for farmers to organize themselves in service cooperatives, whereby they can easily access farm inputs, technologies, and technical assistance.
- It will facilitate the establishment of saving and credit associations, which will make it possible for the farmers to make wise use of the limited financial resources that they possess.
- It offers employment opportunities to the local farmers in the construction of the dam and related infrastructure.

While these are positive aspects of the Koga project, there are also possible associated risks and disadvantages, as indicated below:

- Farmers in the host communities will lose some of their farm land to accommodate the dislocatees. This does not seem to be being implemented smoothly and there is considerable resistance and tension.
- A serious complaint, repeatedly expressed by the affected farm households, is the problems encountered in the valuation of their crops and other assets for the compensation process. Wrangling, disputes, and grievances have resulted, threatening the smooth implementation of the project.
- Needless to say, the dislocation has caused social disarticulation of a large number of people. Farmers have been forced to leave from the place where they have lived a long time. As a result social networks have been disrupted (e.g., kinship ties and church and neighbourhood affiliations to which they have been attached for many years).

#### **2.2.1.7.2 Concerns**

From the point of view of the Mecha Woreda Administrator, the following concerns need to be addressed soon to enable successful implementation of the scheme:

- Displaced farmers are now generally sitting idle, pending the completion of the dam and irrigation infrastructure. It is high time that this aspect of the project was completed and the farmers engaged in meaningful activities.
- Similarly overdue is the land redistribution process in the command area of the project. This also needs to be resolved speedily.
- It is necessary to conduct awareness creation exercises, before the launch of the irrigation project, to reorientate crop production practices. Farmers need to be trained in the cultivation of cash crops rather than focusing merely on subsistence crops.

### **3 Some Reflections on the Resettlement Component of the ‘Environmental Monitoring and Resettlement Plan’**

The ‘Resettlement Plan’ of the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project issued on January 2005 stipulates that the Government of Ethiopia and the financier are responsible to i) duly compensate for the loss of property by resettlers, ii) give the resettlers the opportunity to share in project-created benefits, and iii) determine the resettlement pattern arrangement of villages with host land distribution. (Volume II, 2005: 2-3). This emanates from the spirit of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution (Article 44) which stipulates that all persons displaced due to state programmes are entitled to commensurate monetary or alternative means of compensation. Moreover, Proclamation No. 65/1960 stipulates that expropriation of private property is permissible in the case of projects of public utility and immovable assets.

To its credit, the document states that there should be an open dialogue between the communities and the project office about the implementation of the resettlement scheme. The report also indicates that community consultations were carried out at the sites of the dam and the saddle dam (Volume II, 2005:28). It also mentions the establishment of a committee comprising the project management, local administration, sector bureaus, municipalities, and representatives of the local community to oversee the resettlement and compensation payment process. During field data collection, however, the research team did not observe a multi-sectoral committee processing compensation payments to the resettlers. Instead, EPLUAA alone was actually responsible for estimation and valuation of losses and the payment of compensation. Furthermore, adequate insights could not possibly have been obtained about the project in general and the resettlement plan in particular, on the basis of only two consultations said to have been conducted at the dam sites. This is in contrast with the convictions of authors of the ‘Resettlement Plan’ report about the importance of building “...trustworthy relationship between the Government agencies and the population and enhancing community participation in any project from the onset of the study up to its implementation”. (Volume II, 2005: 5)

The ‘Resettlement Plan’ states that 60% of the relocatees preferred to be compensated in the form of land and 40% in cash (Volume II, 2005:25). It does not, however, specify the procedures for the estimation and handling of compensation payments at the project site.

In short, the plan does not present a well defined compensation strategy. By way of ensuring project-related benefits to the resettlers, the document states the offer of employment opportunities, training in income generating activities, and the provision of different social services such as health, education, and civil works. Still, no clear strategy is stipulated regarding the implementation of each of the recommended measures. They are therefore presented as blanket recommendations, without clear procedures or guidelines in terms of set priorities, implementation criteria and beneficiary profile.

Finally, in the view of the authors of the ‘Resettlement Plan’, the implementation strategy of the resettlement program was expected to be developed ahead of the commencement of construction work. Instead, the resettlement planning began to be undertaken as the construction of the project infrastructure approached, thus overlapping the actual project implementation. As a result, the project management was not adequately informed on matters relating to the handling of social/resettlement aspects, at the launch of the project. This constraint was made mention of by project management staff in Bahir Dar and Merawi, who stated that the social component was not given proper attention before the commencement of the physical aspect. This leads to the conclusion that the resettlement plan was rushed through, and therefore did not provide a sound implementation strategy to guide the execution of the resettlement program. Thus, the resettlement process and ancillary activities such as payments of compensation have been carried out in an irregular, haphazard and perfunctory fashion.

#### **4 Summary of Key Findings**

In line with the Ethiopian Government policy of sustainable environmental and agricultural development, the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Project is intended to contribute to the goal of poverty reduction among smallholder farmers through improvements in food security. The project aims to enhance agricultural production in the Koga River Valley in a sustainable manner. To achieve this, the project encompasses components of irrigation and watershed management, as well as capacity building. The irrigation component is intended to harness 77 million cubic meter of water to irrigate and develop up to 7,000 hectares of land in the project command area. In the watershed management component, effective and efficient conservation farming is planned for an area of 22,000 hectares in the upstream catchment. The presence of numerous stakeholders related to the project, however, means that a wide spectrum of overlapping and conflicting interests and opinions exist. These can influence the implementation process in either a negative or a positive way. This stakeholder analysis was carried out to capture and analyze the existing and widely varying interests, opinions, and concerns.



**Table 1:** *Koga Dam – summary of issues identified/concerns raised by different stakeholders*

Stakeholders	Issues Identified								
	Land redistribution process	Valuation of assets and amount of compensation	Timing of compensation	Health and education facilities	Attitude of host communities	Delay in completion of infrastructure	Local capacity to manage the irrigation scheme and market produce	Implementation of upstream soil conservation measures	Planning before project commenced
Displaced farmers resettled in urban communities	+ ve	+ ve	-ve	+ ve	+ ve	- ve	NC	NC	NC
Displaced farmers resettled in rural areas	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	NC	NC	- ve
Farmers waiting to be displaced	- ve	- ve	NC	NC	- ve	NC	NC	NC	- ve
Host Communities	- ve	NC	NC	- ve	NC	NC	NC	NC	- ve
Farmers in adjacent <i>kebeles</i> not directly affected by the project	NC	NC	NC	NC	NC	-ve	NC	NC	NC
Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resources	NC	NC	NC	NC	-ve	NC	- ve	- ve	-ve
Amhara Region of Agriculture and Rural Development	NC	NC	NC	- ve	NC	NC	NC	-ve	-ve
Amhara Environmental Protection, land use Authority	NC	- ve	- ve	NC	NC	NC	NC	- ve	NC
Amhara Region Cooperatives Promotion Agency	- ve	- ve	NC	NC	- ve	- ve	NC	- ve	NC
Project office	NC	+ ve	NC	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve
Koga Irrigation Development Service Cooperative	-ve	- ve	NC	NC	- ve	- ve	- ve	- ve	NC
Mecha Wereda Administration	- ve	- ve	NC	NC	NC	- ve	+ ve	NC	NC

NC = not an expressed concern

The findings of the study provide insights into the prospects and challenges of the project. They confirm that the stakeholders associated with the implementation maintain divergent values, needs and interests.

## **4.1 Farming Groups**

### **4.1.1 Overlapping Interests and opinions of farming communities**

The stakeholder analysis identified four separate farming groups, namely farmers already displaced from their land and relocated, farmers yet to be displaced and resettled, farmers in the host communities of the project command area, and farmers who inhabit adjacent areas of the irrigation scheme, but whom the project may not directly affect. The views and perspectives of upstream communities, as captured from individuals and organizations involved in the watershed management project component, have also been incorporated in the analysis, although these community members were not primarily included as part of the study community. These groups have different perceptions about the project and the opportunities and threats it poses to their livelihoods. Unsurprisingly many members of the relocated farming group regret the loss of land and property. Nevertheless, some express optimism that in future the irrigation project will enable them to produce twice rather than once in a year. They anticipate that their income will increase as a result of producing marketable crops rather than subsistence cereals. This is also a view shared by those farming groups who live in adjacent communities and not affected by the project.

On the other hand, those inhabiting localities rich in fertile soil and grazing potential, but waiting to be displaced and resettled, view the project with extreme fear and distrust. They regard it as a threat to their existence and way of life. Adding to their negative attitudes about the project are their observations of irregularities in the valuation of property and the dispensation of compensation. The uncertainties surrounding their destinations and fate further aggravate their sense of insecurity and their fears.

Regardless of the fact that they live in the project command area and so, in theory, will gain the most from the irrigation, the host communities are cautious about the project. They fail to see and recognize any potential benefits of the project, focusing their attention entirely on the loss of land due to the redistribution required to accommodate relocatees.

These findings lead to the conclusion that it is almost impossible to note any overlap of interests between the four groups of farmers located in the downstream communities of the project. Despite the wide divergence in interests, the same stakeholders nonetheless hold opinions that largely overlap. In this case, an opinion that is common to at least three of the four farming groups is that they consider the project to be a cause for the loss of land and property, which they generally view as unfortunate.

Even more sceptical about the project are communities found in upstream localities where watershed management activities are undertaken. These are unenthusiastic about the irrigation scheme, claiming that they do not stand to benefit from it, and rather assume that their endeavours will end up serving the interests of only downstream inhabitants. In contrast, the responsible government stakeholders argue that people in the catchments area should realize and appreciate that the conservation program is in their own self interest and so they should get fully involved in its implementation without expecting to be remunerated financially. They argue that one of the beneficial impacts of the watershed management component is that, by reducing environmental degradation, the watershed management activities significantly contribute to saving the livelihoods of the farmers not only downstream but also in the catchment area.

#### **4.1.2 Conflict of Interest**

A sharp conflict of interests is evident between relocated households and their host communities. The latter find it hard to come to terms with the loss of land to the former. They strongly object to the practice which they view as unjust, since it forces them to reward a farming group with a plot of land on the basis of the consideration that they have been displaced from theirs. They maintain that, although they may have lost land and property in the process, they have still been given cash compensation by the government. As they see it, this makes the redistribution unnecessary and unfair. Their objections are further intensified by the possibility that some of the relocatees may still have in their possession the land from which they were displaced and were duly compensated for.

#### **4.1.3 Crosscutting Concerns**

Farming groups associated with the project, perhaps not including those who have not yet been dislocated, are concerned about the delay in the launch of the irrigation project. This concern is particularly strong amongst the displaced, who remain idle, unproductive and impatient. No date has been fixed for the start of the irrigation. This frustrates these groups of farmers, who are worried that the longer the project takes to start, the greater is the risk that they will run out of the compensation money paid to them. They are finding it increasingly difficult to cope.

A second major crosscutting concern, from the point of view farmers who have been displaced, and those who are awaiting the same fate, is the uncertainty about the reception they expect to get in the host communities. The concern is founded on observations and reports of unwelcoming attitudes and actions of host communities that originate in their unwillingness to give away any part of their land to strangers. There are stories, if not incidents, that suggest host communities may be aggressive.

## **4.2 Government Stakeholders**

### **4.2.1 Overlap of opinions**

A close overlap of opinions is observed among government stakeholders in relation to the potential benefits and impacts of the project. Despite the separate and specific mandates that the different government stakeholders maintain, they nonetheless hold a common view on the potential benefits. They all believe that, although there are negative aspects to the scheme, its intended positive outcomes outweigh its undesirable aspects.

The irrigation project will enable the smallholder farmers to harvest crops twice rather than once a year. Besides enabling full exploitation of the existing farm land and full utilization of potential manpower, the project will facilitate the production of market-oriented rather than subsistence-oriented crops. This provides the potential for significant increases in the income that can be generated by the farmers. Another positive outcome of the irrigation project, is that it will create training opportunities for farmers in the maintenance and operation of irrigation structures. The creation of job opportunities for low and middle level rural manpower in the agro-industrial and processing plants to be established by private investors is potentially another important positive aspect of the project. The emergence and growth of rural employed labour and increases in the level of income, coupled with other development, it is anticipated will favour conditions for flourishing off-farm activities.

On the other hand, there are economic, social and psychological impacts that the project poses to segments of the target population that can be considered as undesirable. Chief among these consequences is the loss of land and property that some communities experience to allow for the construction of the dam and the reservoir. As a result, dislocation of households from the land has occurred as a necessary “cost” of the project.

### **4.2.2 Conflict of opinions**

The same stakeholders also maintain and promote opinions that are in conflict. Stakeholders such as the Amhara Region Environmental Protection, Land Use and Administration Authority, Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Cooperative Development Agency argue that sedimentation poses a serious threat to the success of the irrigation project. They consider the watershed management component as essential for the sustainability of the irrigation scheme. Therefore, they insist on drawing attention to the impending dangers that result from failure to accomplish sufficient and effective watershed management interventions. In contrast the Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resource and the Koga Irrigation and Watershed Management Office in Bahir Dar are not too concerned. While not arguing against the importance of proper watershed

management activities, they believe that the irrigation project is safe because of the location of the dam and reservoir structures on marshy grassland plains and the flow of the Koga River down gentle slopes. In their opinion these factors, in conjunction with the capacity of the dam to flush sediment, reduce the probability of significant sedimentation in the reservoir.

Opinion is also divided among government stakeholders on the question of whether there is sufficient local capacity to takeover and run the project upon completion. Some doubt that there is sufficient local capacity in the service cooperatives. Their fears are substantiated by the current lack of preparatory activities. Others are, however, positive that, providing sufficient capacity building is conducted in the form of training and community organization, takeover of the project and running it in a sustainable manner will not be such a daunting a challenge.

#### **4.2.3 Crosscutting concerns**

A major crosscutting issue is that government stakeholders generally believe that the watershed management component of the project is not being fully and properly implemented. They attribute this to the non-allocation of sufficient funds, failure to put into action the needed effort, lack of enthusiasm, and failure to keep the promises made to the catchment communities in relation to infrastructure expansion and development.

Another crosscutting concern is that farmers displaced, or to be displaced, by the project will be cordially accommodated in host communities. It is a recognized challenge to persuade the farmers in the host communities to reconcile themselves to the plan of land redistribution, and the accommodation of relocatees. .

The prolonged delay in the completion of construction work on the dam and associated irrigation infrastructure is also a crosscutting concern. All recognise that the delay has serious implications for the success of the entire initiative. In a situation where the project implementation is already surrounded by controversies and conflicting interests, unwarranted delay in the start of the project complicates the whole process, reducing the motivation of expectant farmers, strengthening the suspicions of those reluctant to cooperate, and incurring additional cost and wastage of resources in the form of additional compensation payments.

The feasibility of cost recovery, the principle on which the project is designed to operate, is also a very important crosscutting issue. Given that the farming population is extremely resource-poor, and that the rapid launch of the irrigation project and the achievement of its intended outcomes are in doubt, nearly all stakeholders seriously question the capacity of the farmers to fully cover the project investment costs as envisaged.

## **5 Concluding Remarks**

The research conducted has highlighted the divergence in values, needs and interests of individuals and different stakeholder groups. It has shown that the implementation of the project has had a significant effect on the social landscape of the Koga catchment. It is clear that the project is currently viewed with distrust by many local people, including those communities who are the intended beneficiaries.

It is apparent that decisions pertaining to the construction of the dam and the associated irrigation infrastructure have been made with little or no public consultation and with insufficient explanation of the intended project outcomes. It is also clear that there have been many irregularities in the handling of compensation. The combination of these factors, in conjunction with the delay in construction, has led to controversies and resulted in wide-spread rumours and speculation about the project and whether or not it will really bring tangible benefits.

The survey has shown that the social complexity of schemes such as this requires that social components should be given as much, or even greater, consideration than technical aspects in project planning. It is clear that to minimize unwarranted social stress, requires that all stakeholders understand the scheme and participate in decision-making from an early stage. Mechanisms that lead to increased cooperation and consensus building between different stakeholders are required.

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## **Annex**

### **List of Interviewees and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants**

#### **Section I. Interviewees of Relevant Offices and Bureaus**

1. Ato Yasin Yimer, Head of the Project Management Unit based in Bahir Dar.
2. Ato Nibret Ayalew, Community Mobilization Agent of the Koga Project, Merawi Town.
3. Ato Muluken Lakachew, Deputy Head of the Amhara Region Bureau of Water Resources.
4. Ato Teshale Hadgo, Head of the Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development
5. Ato Bayih Tiruneh, Head of the Land Use and Administration Unit in the Amhara Region Environmental Protection Land Use and Administration Authority.
6. Ato Ayenew Belay, Head of the Amhara Region Cooperatives Promotion Agency
7. Ato Sintayehu Mengiste, Cooperatives Promotion Agency, Merwai Brach Head
8. Ato Tilahun Almaw, Head of the Watershed Management Team at the Wereda Level, Merawi.
9. Ato Gedebe Hailu, Head of the Mecha Wereda Administration.
10. Ato Ayenew Kassie, Head of the Koga Irrigation Development and Service Cooperative.
11. Dr Zerfu Hailu, Former Director of EPLUAA and AR- Environmental Protection Land Use and Administration Authority and Head of the Global Environmental Fund.

#### **Section II. Participants of Focus Group Discussions**

1. Focus Group Discussion with Farmers displaced and relocated due to the construction of the dam. The FGD participants were Ato Habtamu Chanie, Derese Admas, Amare Demilew and W/ro Haimanot Yimer.
2. Focus Group Discussion with Farmers who are going to be displaced for reservoir construction. The FGD participants were Ato Dessie Yazew, Melaku Seyoum and Chekol Anagaw.
3. Focus Group Discussion with Farmers from host communities with Ato Gedamu Endalew and Ato Getahun Gedamu
4. Focus Group Discussion with Farmers who live in Kebeles adjacent to the irrigation structure. The participants include Mekuriaw Admas, Cherie Takele and Ayele Mehon.