

“All Ethiopians’ Ears and Eyes are on Gibe III Project”

Gibe III Hydroelectric Project (August 2010, Addis Ababa)



Azeb Asnake and Mebratu Teshome, Gibe III’s Project Manager and Site Coordinator, respectively, giving briefings before paying visiting to the Project Site

Various guests pay visit to the Gibe III Hydroelectric Project Site at different times. On August 14-15, 2010, Abay Tsehay, the National Intelligence Advisor to the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia along with Fikru Dessalegne, State Minister of Capacity Building and EEPCo’s Board Member, visited the activities of the project and expressed their



Visit at the three Diversion Tunnels' inlet area

impression regarding the complexity of the project, its progress, the sacrifice and unrelenting efforts of the project staffs towards realization of the project.

Abay said, “We came here at the earliest stage of the project which would enable us to observe the difficulties and challenges of the work. When the dam is finalized and become ready for operation, it doesn't show the challenge and tiresome processes gone through and the duty seems very simple. But we now understood the tedious and challenging parts of the work. I got the chance to see this project when it is at its early stage. So, I came to understand the unlimited efforts and performances of Ethiopians and non-Ethiopian staff. I am very excited.”

According to the Advisor, the Gibe III Hydroelectric Project is under construction when Ethiopia is at the prime need of electric power. In this regard, there is full commitment of Ethiopian Government to finalize it in accordance with its schedule time of completion, envisaged quality and within the allocated budget.

He further explained, “all Ethiopians’ ears and eyes are on this project anticipating the timely



Visit at the Powerhouse Area

completion of the project as electric energy shortage is very serious in the country. This is evidence that Ethiopians have paid utmost attention towards completion of the project. We recognize that you are (the staff of the project) exerting maximum endeavors to satisfy the needs of Ethiopian population for electric power.”

He also strongly appreciated all the project staff for their day- and- night enduring hardship and sacrifice. “Please go on with your relentless efforts and hard work to see the final goal. Government also stands behind you in all respects. Thank you very much”.

Upon completion of the visit the Minister has given a short interview before his departure. Excerpt:

Q: Would you please tell us about your visit and first impression of the Gibe III Hydroelectric Project?



Abay Tsehay, the National Intelligence Advisor to the PM

A: As you know the Gibe III Hydroelectric project is the biggest project compared to other hydropower projects so far constructed in Ethiopia. I have observed the complexities of the work. Also, I understood that the technology of the dam-Roller compacted Concrete (RCC) - is very unique. The RCC technology has been chosen to make the dam very reliable and economical since the volume of the dam is very huge. Hence, the work process demands high and profound engineering skills and experiences. So, I would like to appreciate the commitment of the experts who are enthusiastically devoted for timely completion of the project.

However, some opponents of the project have created confusions in order to block

the financing of the project in the name of environment. Some NGOs and individuals aspire to keep Ethiopia in a state of darkness and quagmire of poverty. Thus, the work has acquired a lot of political and diplomatic efforts; in this regard, we have achieved a lot so as to continue with the progress of the project. We have also got a good promise in securing the finance. This makes us very happy.

Particularly, the opponents of the project raise frequently unfavorable comments on the project in relation to the downstream communities who are leading a backward way of life with poor infrastructure developments; using their poverty status as hidden agenda, the opponents raise frequently that the project would devastate the livelihoods of the communities. This comment in fact emanates from the interests in seeing the people lead very backward and miserable life forever.

I have seen volumes of studies about the potential impacts of the project on the upstream as well as the downstream communities which have been conducted by well-known international consultants.

The studies indicate that the impact of the **project is very negligible; it doesn't bring any** potential impact; rather it would be very helpful in controlling the destructive flood which has been causing a lot of damages on people and their properties mercilessly.

The volume of the Omo River is not declining following the construction of the project; the fluctuation comes as a result of the natural climate change. As the experts confirmed the volume of the River water will rather increase since it creates additional and regulated waters to the natural course.

Therefore, the position of those NGO's to stop the construction of the Dam is baseless. Their conclusion is based on wrong premises. The project never dislocates a single person. We see some NGOs would like to have starved people so that they can get their incomes from donors presenting pictures of vulnerable people. But if the livelihood of these people improved significantly, they know that they would not possibly get funds from external donors; so, they strongly oppose the project. Nonetheless, we have committed our selves that nobody would enable to make any impediment on

the progress of the project. We will proceed confidently.

Finally, I would like to appreciate the **project's staff once again. It is a lot to me;** they have strong dedications towards achieving the project and see the final output within short period of time. They deserve credit since they are models for other Ethiopian workers.

Q: Some people say that Government has not communicated the project well as the project is very giant . They also say that the opposition has emerged as a result of lack of proper information. What would you say as higher government official?

A: We know that those who raise the question are doing it deliberately; they know very well that the livelihoods of the poor communities unless they give **deaf ears to the issue. We don't believe them that they don't know anything about the** environmental and social impact studies of the project. They know it very well; they simply want to put facts aside and look for creating confusions among the concerned stakeholders. That is a mess to

them.

Of course, we also know that others would hold the agenda because they lack proper information. We have to work relentlessly on these people to bring them to the right track. In all respects, government would engage in providing full package of information to clear the confusions.

Q: To what level has the government of Ethiopia given due emphasis towards assuring the qualities of the project?

A: Quality control and quality assurance are very importance concepts to any project. As far as Gibe III Hydroelectric project is concerned, the well-known French and Italian consultants are working to their level best to assure the qualities of the project. They are very much **concerned to the project. Secondly, we don't** have much tunnels works here in Gibe III unlike Gibe II Hydropower project.

The dam is also being constructed with new type of technology-RCC- for which the consultants have best international skills and experiences. Apart from this, the Ethiopian government has as well paid due emphasis to the project to assure its quality and timely completion.

Q: finally, as you know we would celebrate the Ethiopian New Year after few days. So, what wishes would you convey to the Gibe III Hydroelectric Project and its staff?

A: The coming 2003 Ethiopian New year is the year in which the Government of Ethiopia would launch the National Growth and Transformation Plan due to be implemented in the next five years. The Draft Plan, expected to be rectified by the coming new parliament at the end of September or early October, is now presented for public discussion . Therefore, I think the new year will be a special opportunity for us to increase our steps towards for aggressive developments and significant improvements in living standards of the citizens.

As far as the Gibe III Hydroelectric project is concerned, I wish the construction of the project will be speeded up more than what has been achieved in 2002. I am also sure that the project staff will double their efforts to accomplish more. I wish all of them the best and have a good, prosperous year.

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