

GIBE III: THE SURVIVAL FIGURES ARE OBVIOUSLY INCORRECT

Some non-government organizations have raised criticisms and concerns over the Gibe III project, although they are not in possession of adequate information or adequate competences to assess them. On some occasions, this has led to a flow of inappropriate news, assessments and initiatives.

Salini Costruttori feels the need to provide some clarifications on a project concerning the energy, economic and social future of millions of people in Ethiopia and the entire region.

The Gibe III project involves an important 240 metre high dam located at Gilgel Gibe I and II, generating an artificial lake approximately 150 km long.

The basin produced by the dam is of approximately 14 billion cubic metres, and not 216 billion cubic metres, as incorrectly calculated and announced dramatically and alarmingly. In simple terms, the valley storage volume of this type of construction is similar to a frustum of pyramid and not to a parallelepiped, as it has been wrongly assumed. The volume is therefore not the same as the surface area of the lake multiplied by the height of the dam, as the slope of the banks and the river have to be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the storage volume is located in a very narrow valley, below the level considered safe for humans, and therefore there are no homes to be removed from the basin of the dam. Specifically, this volume of water is accumulated by drawing water when the level is at its highest, but the average level of the river does not decrease once this water is stored: **the electrical plant will use exactly the same of water as it produces.**

The filling of the basin will be conducted in a minimum of three seasons, and the impact will imply a reduction in the water level in lake Turkana of less than 50 cm per year for three years. This reduction is negligible for a lake in which the seasonal variations are on average in the order of one metre over the last few years, due to the rainfall varying by several metres, without there having been any human intervention. We are therefore a long way short of the five or even twelve metre fall in water level that have been mentioned by detractors of the dam project.

In addition to the error in calculating the storage volume of the area taken up, all the dramatic repercussions envisaged as a catastrophic consequence of the reduction in water level of the lake are also unreal:

- **the project will not cause drought:** the dam will not block the flow of water to the river indefinitely, but merely redistribute it during the course of the year;
- **the salinity of lake Turkana will not change in any way:** its "drinkability", and therefore its rich marine biodiversity, will remain exactly the same;
- as the salinity of lake Turkana will remain unchanged, **the activities connected to the local fishing trade will not be destroyed**, and therefore, the lives of the Ethiopians and Kenyans living in the area will not change in any way whatever;

- as the water level in lake Turkana will not decrease, **any inter-tribal conflicts** will certainly not be worsened by the construction of the dam, but rather by the **current poverty of these people** as it is proven by the fact that they have been waging war for centuries and there was no dam involved.
- **humid areas will not suffer from particular effects**, also because the creation of artificial floods enables the reproduction of the surrounding natural habitat, avoiding the current disasters and loss of human life;
- **agriculture will be able to benefit from a constant supply of water throughout the year**, enabling richer harvests and the use of more modern farming techniques, making the people living in the area self-sufficient in terms of food and water.

On the contrary, the presence of the dam will imply a number of direct and immediate positive aspects for the local people:

- the regulation of the flow of river water and filtering off of the floods **will avoid the extermination of people** that occurred in the past (the last of which, in 2006, caused hundreds of victims and the loss of thousands of livestock animals).
- during periods when the water level is low, due to consecutive years with a lack of rain, the presence of the dam will mitigate the reduction in water level both by reducing evaporation and by returning part of the volume accumulated in the basin, with an opposite effect in terms of stability to that envisaged by the organizations campaigning against the dam. In other words, **the dam will stabilise the water level in the lake during dry seasons, when it would otherwise reduce drastically**;
- the redistribution of the flow of water throughout the year will also enable **to perform irrigation agriculture during the dry season**, leading to an obvious increase in the capacity of the local people to be self-sufficient; these people today depend on external aid for 60% of their food and water, rather than from the backward systems of local agriculture;
- the availability of **electricity** will enable easier access to drinking water and better sanitary conditions, in addition to the expansion of the local micro-industry, based on fishing, livestock and agriculture, and the obvious **improvement in the average life expectancy** of people in the area, which is currently among the lowest in the world;
- lastly, despite the fact that the project will have a largely positive impact and enable the people living in the area to access sustainable development, the system will also be equipped with whatever is required to make this **development occur gradually**. As some of the people in the area practice flood-retreat agriculture, despite the very low levels of productivity, the dam will have discharges such as to **enable the controlled reproduction of floods when necessary and reproduce the effects of natural floods**, limiting water flow to that necessary for agricultural purposes, avoiding the past destructive effects of overflows. This will enable the local people to have a transitory period of a suitable duration when it is deemed opportune to switch from flood-retreat agriculture to more modern forms of agriculture.

As regards the **administrative aspects**, it should be recalled that all ongoing projects undertaken by Salini Costruttori in Ethiopia have received the approval required from the competent authorities, specifically the **“Non Objection” of the EPA (Environment Protection Agency)** and have been certified to be in full compliance with Ethiopian law. The studies of an environmental and social nature and those concerning consultancies and waterworks have been published on the EEPCo website and those of the Financing Bodies, and details have been added as regards pertinent aspects raised by any competent source.

It can therefore be safely concluded that when the dam is built and operations, Gibe III will produce electricity for all of Ethiopia and for Kenya, contributing towards political stability in the region; it will provide water for agriculture and thus food safety and will improve the environmental and sanitary conditions and reduce the causes of current conflicts.

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