

## The Guardian Losing Credibility!

On January 13<sup>th</sup> The Guardian, published an article\* by one, John Vidal, titled: Ethiopia dam will turn Lake Turkana into 'endless battlefield' based on some poorly researched mish-mash from some outlandish organization called, "International Rivers". A paragraph quoted from this article states: "The downstream impact of the dam is hotly contested. Some hydrologists have predicted that Ethiopia's expansion of water-intensive sugar and cotton plantations on the Omo river,\*\* which the Gibe III dam allows, could reduce flow to Lake Turkana by up to 70%. This would kill ecosystems and greatly reduce the water level of the lake."

The poor standard of the English language alone should have alerted the editor of The Guardian about this flimsy article\*\*, but the article goes on to add: "This, says International Rivers, could make the difference between marginal livelihoods and famine for the tens of thousands of already vulnerable people who depend on the lake for their livelihoods... When told of the possible impact of the project, ethnic groups and communities near the lake predicted widespread conflict, hunger and cultural devastation. "If the Gibe III dam is constructed, the lake will dry up and this will lead to desertification and there will be depletion of resources: there will be no fish, no farming, and low humidity [and less rain]. If that is the case, the community will be finished," said Sylvester Ekariman, chairman of the council of elders in Kakalel pastoral village."

As the last two words in the quote clearly disclose, the people around Lake Turkana are neither farmers, nor fishermen, but pastoralists. So, what is all this hullabaloo and hot air about hunger and cultural devastation? Pastoralists do not depend on the lake, but on their cattle and the grasslands around the lake. And if International Rivers is really concerned about 'the marginal livelihood of thousands of vulnerable people', where was it, and what is its contribution, during the famine that devastated the lives of millions of 'vulnerable' Ethiopians in the 70s and 80s? Now that Ethiopia is building a dam to avert any future famine and cultural devastation, suddenly International Rivers and such shallow organizations with grandiose sounding names like The Oakland Institute, etc., come on the scene pretending to be authorities on vulnerable people in Africa. What a sham, and what a scam? And why is The Guardian without first authenticating these groups, swallowing their trash hook, line, and sinker?

But the absurdity goes on: "...the lake, which could split into two if incoming water is restricted, helps to prevent conflict between communities in Ethiopia and Kenya, and locally between the Turkanas and the Rendille ethnic groups, who live on opposite sides of the lake. If the lake shrinks, conflict is much more likely, says the report... Helen Alogita, a seed seller, told researcher Narissa Allibhai that she feared the people living on the other side of the lake. "They will come and kill us and that will bring about enmity among us as we turn on each other..."

Here is another grammatical mess that does not make sense. What does "...the lake, which could split into two if incoming water is restricted, helps to prevent conflict between communities..." mean? Is it if or of? It is mind boggling to see such poorly written article appearing in the Guardian. How can the restriction of the water flow split the lake? Is there a mountain just under the surface of the water? Ignoring the grammatical and spelling errors, what kind of nonsense is being presented here? The lake is keeping these two tribes apart and, we are told, if the lake shrinks, these two tribes are going to be at each other's throats and it will be an endless battle. So, the implication is: Ethiopia should stop the building of the dam. What utter absurdity!

If indeed, there is any hostility between these named tribes, they should resolve the issue of their enmity some other way than by being kept apart by a lake. In fact, if the lake should shrink, as the article seems to suggest, which is disputed by all Hydrologists who studied and supported the building of the dam, these tribes should be encouraged to come together and trade and barter their goods, play local games together, intermarry, bury the hatchet and forget their hostilities. That is the way to solve the problem, not by stopping the building of the dam. How stupid does one get when blinded by other motives, and not the welfare of these African tribes.

And we have no doubt International Rivers has other motives, and not welfare of Africans. Now, here are some facts on Lake Turkana. A small part of the lake, less than 10% is in Ethiopia, even though the Omo River flows from Ethiopia and provides some 90% or so of the water that flows into the lake. Lake Turkana, much like the famous Dead Sea in Palestine, is a lake which has no outflow. That means throughout the centuries the Omo River, carrying all kinds of minerals and rock salts into the lake, has rendered Lake Turkana to have a very high concentration of salt. However, it is not only salt. According to Mr. Levar Mitchel who commented on the article, "Lake Turkana, this precious "resource" that bleeding heart environmentalists and indigenous rights groups are lamenting over, is high in saline and high fluoride, absolutely dangerous for human consumption. And in fact, many Turkana residents have suffered all kinds of ailments such as brain damage and bone deformities as a result of drinking the water."

Furthermore, the same Guardian, two days earlier, published an article by Martin Plaut: "Two vast underground aquifers seen by satellite technology in Turkana county may provide much-needed water for barren area."\*\*\* So, why this 180<sup>o</sup> turn around to propagate such poorly researched and poorly digested information from the self-appointed saviors of African people? Why not focus on ways to fund a project and drill into the two aquifers to alleviate the thirst of the Turkana people? (One more example of poor spelling: Turkana County, not county.)

We hope The Guardian can rise to a higher standard and be above publishing such low level articles that confuse, confound, and disseminate misinformation. If not, it will turn into just another 'rate-seeking' tabloid like the Enquirer, of which there are far too many to enumerate. As it has been said, "The dog may bark, but the camel keeps on trekking on its journey!" So also, regardless of what some aberrant groups may say or write, Ethiopia is not going to weaver from the journey of development it has started, and from reaching the final goal.

G. E. Gorfu

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**Notes:**

\*[http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/13/ethiopia-gibe-iii-dam-kenya?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/13/ethiopia-gibe-iii-dam-kenya?CMP=share_btn_tw)

\*\*There correct spelling is not Omo river, but Omo River. Learn your spelling, International Rivers, or Mr. John Vidal, or both.

\*\*\* <http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2013/sep/11/kenya-water-discovery-drought-relief>