



**Mr. Obang O. Metho,  
Director of International Advocacy,  
Anuak Justice Council (AJC)**

**Statement to the World Bank, Washington DC.**

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Thank you, Dr. Ishac Diwan, the Bank's Country Director for Ethiopia and Mr. Tim Carrington, Senior Communications Officer, Africa Region, for inviting me to participate in the discussion of a restructured strategy that the World Bank, the United Kingdom, the European Union and other donors are moving forward with in Ethiopia.

First of all, I am not here to defend a political party or position, but I am hopeful that as a defender of human rights and also as someone who has been involved in development in the Gambella region, that I will be able to provide a helpful perspective and vision regarding the needs of the Anuak and others suffering in Ethiopia and by so doing, contribute to your process in planning for future support to Ethiopia.

The World Bank has provided immense financial assistance to Ethiopia over the last years when the EPRDF government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi has had opportunity to use these funds for poverty reduction, improvements to the infrastructure, economic development, improved basic services such as education and health care and for humanitarian needs. Your expectation has been that increased freedom, democracy and good governance would under gird the delivery of such assistance resulting in a more robust and vibrant economy where the benefits would reach further and further to include those previously disenfranchised and marginalized—the poorest of the poor.

The Ethiopian people are deeply grateful to the World Bank and other donors in the international community who have diligently worked to improve the lives of those struggling to survive as they remain close to the bottom of the list in the world on daily per capita income.

You have been doing your part, but regretfully, we contend that the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, has mismanaged a significant portion of these funds, preventing them from reaching to those intended recipients. In fact, we purport that this government is actually antithetically opposed to development, instead nearly exclusively pursuing their own interests. Where development has succeeded, we contend that it has been used as a cosmetic display, an attempt to hide the shallowness of progress that eludes the majority of Ethiopians.

## **Protection of Basic Services, (PBS) Right Plan, but Wrong Country**

The World Bank has an excellent plan, the Protection of Basic Services, (PBS) for empowering countries to help the people needing it the most, yet this plan, unfortunately, may not work in Ethiopia. The right place for the PBS plan would be in a country where there is accountability, participation of the local people at every level, checks and balances and transparency throughout the process. Instead, in Ethiopia, there is no stability. People who voice their political views and call for participation in the process are seen as a threat to the government and reap heavy consequences for speaking up. They may end up harassed, imprisoned, tortured or killed.

In fact, any plan that channels funding through established government institutions, even at the village (kebele) councils, or district (woreda) councils and Regional councils will not offer different results than funneling it directly to the federal level as every government institution within the country is heavily controlled by federal government appointees who must pay total allegiance to their superiors if they want to stay in their jobs. Many of these at the lower levels are illiterate, not gaining these positions due to their skills, but due to their compliance. None of these persons have been legitimately elected by the people, but appointed.

Most outsiders are prevented from seeing the dire failures of development under this regime that is still only taking “baby steps” towards improving the lot of its people after fourteen years of time in power and after billions of dollars have been contributed by donors. A pervasive lack of transparency obstructs the allocation of funds once those funds reach the government, making one wonder who really has benefited from the compassionate international community who is repeatedly given the images of starving Ethiopian children and dead cows.

Therefore, one is led to question whether the donors have more compassion on the children of Ethiopia than do the power holders of this current regime. As you consider this and the following information, you may be convinced that a radically different approach must be taken with countries where this kind of corruption exists. As long as the leaders are more interested in their own self-interests, it may demand an alternate means to ensure that any allocated funds are channeled through more trustworthy, accountable and transparent institutions so as to ensure the proper use of funds.

Funds should not end up going to the black hole of unnecessary humanitarian crises because of lack of planning and the misuse of funds that never invests in sustainable development and furthering economic opportunity leading to an endless “catch-up game.” Worse than that, oppression and control of the people by a government who has been shown to be brutal, has interfered with laws and policies that would provide incentives for investment and enterprise, instead preventing access to clean water, education, health care and other basics of life that result in maintaining a marginalized population.

However, all the specific examples of such integral interference in the lives of the average Ethiopian is highly protected information that if given out by anyone, may result in serious punitive measures to that person. We are hopeful that we might be able to provide information from the grass-roots level to assist the World Bank in better ensuring that the funds you allocate are utilized to enable the Ethiopian people, including those most at risk, to become participants in a more market-driven economy.

## **Why do Ethiopians Remain Amongst the Poorest in the World Despite the Assistance?**

The Ethiopian people have become dependent on the international community for large amounts of humanitarian assistance, yet they are no different from others in the world who are hardworking and

seeking a better future for themselves and their children. The pertinent question may be what are the disincentives preventing them from overcoming the extreme and chronic crises in which they seem to be caught?

We would contend that there are significant government intrusions and abuses that have paralyzed this economy and the lives of the average citizens. Most all of these reflect the lack of good governance. Some of these include widespread crimes against humanity being perpetrated against citizens, imprisonment and detention of thousands of educated leaders, journalists and political opponents, the rigging of elections and placing of government puppets in positions of control from the federal level to the region, district and village, lack of justice as the rule of law is not upheld due to EPRDF controls on the police and the courts, inability to own land, immense bureaucratic red tape, government exploitation of resources, restricted access to financial credit and economic privileges and widespread corruption. Bribery and other “perks” are given to ensure loyalty to the government and to support a system of secrecy where members are given entrance if they “promise not to tell.”

The current government has not invested these dollars in the areas most lacking in basic services and infrastructure, but instead, has made investments primarily that have benefited a few stakeholders of the current government of the EPRDF who then reap the monetary gain from these economic advantages given only to the TPLF elite who are linked to the government. This has left increasing disparity between the government loyalists and others. It is further promoted through the current government’s policy of ethnic federalism. Although the Ethiopian Constitution gives local control to local decision makers and ethnic groups, in actuality, decentralization does not exist within Ethiopia as the central government exercises micro-control over issues at every level of government.

We have specific documentation of this within the Gambella region, but after talking to many others from other areas of Ethiopia, there is strong evidence that it is endemic to the system. Because severe punitive measures are taken against any legitimate complainants, there is pervasive traumatization of the public resulting in silence, depression, anger and fear, all of which result in a population of citizens who are inhibited from contributing to the development and future prosperity of their country. Reports of progress and success come from small pockets of persons and communities where the government has exercised preferential treatment whereas in the more silenced areas of the country where repression has been the greatest, citizens speak of being worse off than they were twenty years ago.

For years, this government was able to speak the romantic language of democracy without upholding it in practice. As a result, many were deceived and funds were misused; however, since the true nature of this government has become more apparent after the last election, it is reasonable that large donors, such as the World Bank, the European Union and the U.K. might be extremely interested in ensuring that funding reaches those most in need and is not misspent by the power holders.

It is difficult to set conditions on the allocation of funding as there is concern that too stringent of conditions may seriously harm the good parts of this fragile economy and the needy people in greatest crisis; while on the other hand, there is a serious concern regarding allowing funds to be given to such a corrupt, abusive and opaque governmental system where the funding may be misused.

The worst scenario may already be happening where funds from generous donors such as the World Bank, may be directed to support the military and security systems who are the main perpetrators of the crimes against humanity directed at the Ethiopian citizens—funds that may also be “propping up” a brutal regime that is exploiting its own people and their resources while leaving them out of the economic picture entirely. In an employment environment where reportedly almost 80 per cent of the people in Addis Ababa are unemployed, it is highly appealing to have a job in the military where one receives a salary. Ethiopia has one of the largest military forces in Africa, yet the average person is impoverished.

Instead, funds have been misused to pay military and police salaries who are then used as the instruments of oppression to the Ethiopian people.

## **An Example of the Anuak of the Gambella Region:**

The Gambella area has historically been a forgotten area with few basic services available. In fact the Upper Nile area where the Anuak have lived for centuries, historically has been largely ignored by the governments of both Sudan and Ethiopia. The economic activities in the region are predominantly agricultural, with livestock being of limited importance. Maize and sorghum are the main crops. The region is abundant with high quality soil, plentiful supplies of water and a climate suitable for ensuring long term food security. Other current means of livelihood, besides agriculture, are minor, and include trade and traditional gold washing in some rivers. There are no major industrial enterprises

According to the Baro-Akobo River Basin Master Plan (TAMS-ULG, 1997) Gambella has an estimated 3 million hectares or approximately 80% of its landmass which are potentially suitable for irrigation, without taking availability of water into account. More than half of this potential is located in the four River Basins that run throughout the region. The net irrigable potential is about 2.9 million hectares (TAMS-ULG, 1997).

Despite the huge arable land resources potential, only 1.2% of the region's total landmass is being utilized for crop cultivation. Only 5,000 hectares of land are under cropping, constituting just 0.2% of this potential arable land (Bureau of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 2000). This means that the remaining 90% of this potential land fall into other land use categories, particularly grazing land. The arable land encompasses both rain-fed and irrigable lands that are agro-ecologically potential suited to the production of a variety of crops.

The literacy rate is about 24%, with most of the rural population being illiterate. Among those aged 10 years and older, literacy reaches only 18%, with urban and rural rates being 51% and 4% respectively. The health status of the Gambella people remains the lowest among Ethiopia's nine regions. Health services are limited and reach only 25% of the population (WHO Strategic Support to Ethiopia, MOH/WHO, 2003). As a result, infant mortality and overall death rates are high. The average life expectancy for the whole population is 42.8 years; the infant mortality rate is 139 deaths per 1000 births, while 3.4 births/individual is the estimated average fertility rate for the entire region.

The educational and medical infrastructure is not advanced. High school grades on national exams are relatively low, partly because of the scarcity of high schools in rural areas. There is no university, but a College of Nursing and Education in Gambella town. The low socio-economic development is associated with poor health services. It is apparent that the high rate of population growth, incidence of HIV/AIDS, and natural and man made calamities, also contribute to the difficulty of establishing high quality health services. The challenges presented by the high prevalence of infectious diseases, AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in particular, cannot be met by existing health facilities.

The census data also show that only 12% of residential houses have toilets, and in the entire region only 11.6% of the population has radios, while only 0.9% of urban households have television sets and 1.6% has a telephone. Gambella has the lowest road density; most of the existing roads need extensive maintenance. It is generally recognized that the development of infrastructure is critical to the economic development of the region and such infrastructure remains grossly underdeveloped. The road population ratio of Gambella is 50km per 100,000 persons (TAMS-ULG, 1997).

Robert Collins, a historian and author who has researched southern Sudanese cultures, indicated that the Anuak might be the most marginalized of ethnic groups in all of Southern Sudan and that those Anuak in Ethiopia are only slightly better off. As a result, I have had a passion to help bring development to the region, but the reason I am here today is because this government stopped the work of development. Their priority is the oil in the region that led to the killing of the Anuak and to the destruction of most of the developmental accomplished over the last years.

Prior to the massacre of the educated Anuak leaders that began on December 13, 2003, I directed a development agency in the Gambella region whose goal was to bring better living conditions to the people of Gambella. In 2001, I realized that the crisis of underdevelopment in Gambella region will not ease unless its people, wherever they are, take more responsibility for and control over their own destiny. Because of this I established Gambella Development Agency (GDA) to connect the people of Gambella region with organizations working towards the same goals of development and prosperity for the region and its people.

The GDA was formed in order to improve the quality of life all the ethnic groups in the Gambella region to attain access to basic services such as health care, education, to improve woman's empowerment, reduce HIV-AIDS and to provide clean water. The main objective of the GDA was: **To facilitate sustainable development initiatives in Gambella, Ethiopia, that improve the quality of life of its population, while respecting the traditional values and customs of the indigenous population.**

The GDA has five key areas it intends to work in, along with two cross-cutting themes that are inherent in all GDA projects and undertakings. The five key areas are basic health care, HIV/AIDS, agriculture/food security, water management, and basic and higher education. The cross-cutting themes are gender empowerment and environmental sustainability. Emphasis is placed on respect for local values as well as self-sustainable, practical solutions. Building self-esteem among the beneficiaries and inclusion of all relevant aspects of people's lives and livelihoods

Compared to most of the rest of Ethiopia, the Gambella region was far behind in terms of these services. One of the major projects that was being launched was between GDA and the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. In early 2003, I explored the possibility of involving University of Saskatchewan Faculty from the College of Medicine in a GDA and University of Saskatchewan initiative to realize the medical component of GDA's mandate. The GDA and University of Saskatchewan partnership was founded to build bridges between the health sectors in Gambella, Ethiopia and University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

The long term goal of the GDA and University of Saskatchewan joint initiative was: **To develop sustainable infrastructure that provides medical education, medical expertise and medical services in the Gambella Region of Ethiopia.**

This initiative resulted in few weeks visit by members GDA and University of Saskatchewan team, financed by the College of Medicine, to Ethiopia in May and June 2003 to assess needs and initiate contacts. The team had expertise in medical research and medical education and infectious diseases, especially AIDS. The project team met Mr. Okello Akway Ochala, President of the Region, four times.

Mr Okello has a M.Sc. in Nursing and had previously held important health posts. He was most supportive, providing ground transportation during the visit, and he offered space to the GDA/U of S team in the new hospital, nearing completion, whose construction he was involved in planning ten years ago. This offer of space shows both great generosity and a wish to achieve a joint purpose. This evident and

whole-hearted commitment by the President of the region will be essential to the realization of our mandate and aspirations.

The project team met administrators and the Head Physician of Gambella Hospital twice; medical individuals at Regional Health Care Centres and Health Clinics. We also visited the Dean, staff and overseas volunteers of the College of Nursing and Education in Gambella city. We had discussions with them regarding their educational mandate and the limitations on its realization. They also provided a detailed curriculum of the nursing courses.

The team also visited rural communities including Itang, Abobo and Gog districts. We were made to feel very welcome in all our interactions, with much evident good will. Most importantly, we felt we could assess what the chief impediments were to achieving sustainable health care, and hence what are the most important needs, including sustained and better medical education for nurses and physicians; development of infrastructure, particularly clean water and basic medical equipment; and, improvement of working conditions, so that nurses and physicians do not become exasperated in trying to realize their aspirations, but find work gratifying, and naturally become committed to working in Gambella.

Discussions with various government officials, community organizations, and indigenous Gambellans gave the team a representative view of the health care sector. It became apparent that certain problems prevent the delivery of effective health care services, including:

- Poor state of health services facilities including lack of reliable water sources, and electricity
- Inadequately trained staff
- Lack of appropriate medication
- Lack of appropriate housing for staff
- Physical immobility due to lack of transport facilities and poor roads which slows referral of patients. Difficulty to reach people in their homes/villages due to remoteness
- Inadequate financial support to allow effective operations
- Lack of indigenous staff, leading to language and cultural problems
- Demoralized staff, unable to realize their idealistic aspirations
- Lack of public awareness on environmental diseases
- Lack of female involvement in decision making and health care delivery
- Harsh weather conditions make people prone to famine and starvation.
- Early marriage and other cultural practices

When we came back to Canada, we requested and were awarded a grant from the Canadian government to start a project where there would be an exchange program between faculty and students in the College of Medicine and students from Gambella with the goal of both benefiting from it. In addition, Gambella would gain an improved medical system to meet the needs of the local people. However, when the killing started, the Canadian government issued a warning that the Gambella area was unsafe. The money had to be returned and the project was temporarily abandoned.



After the massacre, as I read through the list of the four hundred twenty four individuals killed during those initial days. I knew three hundred and seventeen by name, many of whom were key leaders with whom I had met during my site visits who would have helped in the development projects. It became clear that until peace and security were restored to the area, no real progress could be attained. However, worse than that, prior accomplishments were destroyed or impaired. Because of this, I became involved in the work of being a defender of the human rights of the Anuak.

The Anuak Justice Council (AJC) was formed and I became the International Director of Advocacy. The mission of the AJC is to protect the rights of the Anuak wherever they are found. The Anuak are a tiny minority group. Now with the killing of 424 Anuak in three days, made them realize how vulnerable they were to extinction.

## **The Massacre of the Anuak**

On December 13, 2003 Ethiopian Defense troops and some highlander militia groups went home to home in Gambella town in the Gambella region of southwestern Ethiopia, pulling out Anuak men and brutally hacking them with machetes before Ethiopia Defense Troops shot and killed them in front of their families.

They utilized a list compiled with names of educated men from the Anuak ethnic group, who were thought to be leaders and who were thought to be opposed to the government's plan to extract oil from their land without any local involvement in decision making. Approximately four hundred and twenty four persons were brutally massacred in less than three days. Many bodies were never identified and are buried in mass graves.

Many homes and crops were burned. Women were raped and over a thousand others were tortured and imprisoned without charges, most still remaining there today. Similar actions were taken by Ethiopian troops in the rural towns throughout the Gambella region, causing many more victims. This is when thousands of Anuak fled to the bush or to Sudan for refuge, including the governor of the region who is an Anuak. Some of them remain living under horrible conditions; without clean water, adequate food, education for their children and any health services because they still fear that they will be killed by their own government should they return..

The government actions against the Anuak on December 13, 2003, reportedly, originated in September of 2003 in the highest offices in Addis Ababa. Information uncovered by human rights investigators indicated that these crimes were part of a government-instigated plan, Operation Sunny Mountain, with the objective of eliminating any resistance to federal government control over the vast natural resources found on the indigenous tribal land of the Anuak. This includes oil, gas, water, fertile land and gold. Almost simultaneously with the beginning of the human rights abuses, an oil company from China, Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB), contracted by Petronas of Malaysia, who were given the oil rights to this area by the Ethiopian government, began working in the Gambella area to set up extraction of the oil reserves that are purported to be of major size, perhaps even exceeding those in southern Sudan. It is in this backdrop that these atrocities began and continue.

Since the initial genocide, the Ethiopian military has continued to perpetrate these crimes against the Anuak with impunity. Human Rights Watch released a report in March 24, 2005 that documents

systematic and widespread atrocities committed against the Anuak by Ethiopian Defense Forces and some militia groups. In their report, HRW indicates that these acts meet the stringent definition of crimes against humanity. (Please see <http://www.anuakjustice.org> ).

I contend that the policies and actions of the Ethiopian People's Democratic Republic Front (EPRDF) government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi were calculated moves that were part of a larger plan to gain federal control of this resource rich area. As the federal government increasingly marginalized the Anuak and exerted tighter federal control over the region, the Anuak spoke up for self-determination and for the implementation of the rule of law as laid out in the Ethiopian Constitution, but instead of resulting in greater freedoms and opportunity, repression and retaliation became more serious and widespread.

## **Sustainable Development or Government's Self-Interests— What is the Record?**

The EPRDF government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi speaks the “romantic language” of development to western donors that he thinks they want to hear, but examine the record closely before believing it. Once you do, you may surmise that this is a government whose self-interests are diametrically opposed to development and the interests of its own people. Otherwise, why is so much money being utilized to suppress their freedoms, exploit their natural resources and instead to protect the exploiters, such as the petroleum companies, Petronas of Malaysia and Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPAEB) of China, even guaranteeing a payment of millions to them should one worker be killed, rather than protecting their own citizens? Is this the language of development? Is this the language of good governance and participation by the people?

Instead, in exerting this protection for the oil company workers and the potentially huge money-making project of the EPRDF, the Ethiopian Defense Forces left a trail of destruction that has wreaked havoc on the already limited infrastructure of the Anuak community. Many institutions have been destroyed by the troops and all of the necessary equipment has been looted. Many Anuak say it is as if the progress made over the past years by the World Bank, community members, development organizations, churches and other contributors, has essentially disappeared. They are forced to live under conditions reminiscent of life twenty or more years ago.

For example, during the regime of Mengistu, two hundred tractors were available for use in the region; now, only two exist and one needs repair. Previously, thousands of hectares of land were used for planting cotton, maize and other crops; now, most of the land has been left unused. Trees, bushes and grasses now cover the area, now reclaimed by “the bush.”

Roads leading to previous villages, schools and other locations within the region have become footpaths where vehicles can no longer travel. For this reason, many of the inhabitants of these areas, no longer have access to Gambella town, the capital city of the region, or other destinations. This is the case of three of the districts that have no roads where vehicles can travel that connecting them to Gambella and the other districts.

Teachers of the schools no longer want to travel, now by foot, to the schools in these remote areas or to live in such isolated locations, leaving more children uneducated. In addition, in most Anuak districts, freedom of movement out of the districts is restricted by the Ethiopian government to two days per week, on Mondays and Fridays.



For the most part, no electricity exists in the region except in Gambella town where many people only have this service for four hours a day. The only telephone service in the entire region is also found only in Gambella town. In an area so devoid of services, it would be hoped that a government interested in its people, would channel funds to some of the most needy, yet what has happened is that they have actually damaged what previously existed. A prime example is the destruction (overuse) of wells, which provided access to clean water.

Before December 2003, there were 119 water wells in Anuak areas. Currently only five wells are in working condition. Currently, there has been an outbreak of watery diarrhea that has killed at least twenty-seven Anuak several weeks ago. Now, another outbreak has occurred in the Jor district four days ago, on May 19, leaving twenty more people dead. UNICEF and other NGO's would like to go in to help, but there is no way to get there by vehicle.

Previously, there were 136 schools in operation in Anuak areas, now there are 27. The Anuak rates of school attendance in the Gambella region show that fewer than 8% of Anuak boys and 4% of Anuak girls are attending school in two Anuak districts. The attendance rate of children from other ethnic groups in the area is much greater, being 50% for boys and 30% for girls. The government is allegedly punishing the Anuak for those Anuak who are resisting. A report that was completed but not released by a UN entity, warns that an entire generation of Anuak children are going without an education.

A recent visitor to the area viewed some of the vacated Anuak schools. In plain view inside these schools were piles of charred hardware from the desks, tables and chairs that had been used as firewood by Ethiopian troops who had previously occupied the schools, using them for barracks. Nothing of any value was left in these schools, including books and supplies.

Due to ongoing human rights abuses in the rural areas, many of the schools in operation have few or poorly trained teachers, as many of the teachers were targets of the massacre. Of those who lived, a majority either escaped to Sudan following the genocide or since that time, have moved to Gambella town where they are safer and not subject to arbitrary killings and arrests. Gambella, as the largest town in the region, is in the public eye and therefore is safer. The government has deceptively used the relatively better conditions and stability in Gambella as their proof to outsiders of the stability in the area.

Ethiopian defense forces also took over health clinics, again using them as barracks. Previously, 22 health clinics were functioning, now there are only 7 left. Most of the clinics have no supplies, medication or equipment left. The only hospital is in Gambella and has no access to clean water. Malnutrition is a continuing major crisis. The Anuak in three districts have suffered disproportionately in comparison with other district populations. Within the internally displaced Anuak population in the rural, the rate of acute malnutrition earlier in the year has been estimated to be 36.5% and continuing to rise. (Acute malnutrition in children under five years of age is 11% in Ethiopia.) This is astonishing considering that the Anuak have most always been able to support themselves due to their fertile land and hard work.

The rates of malnutrition outside the camps, in the rural communities, may be even higher due to Ethiopian Defense force interference with farmers. Rates of disease, malnutrition and susceptibility to disease, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are extremely serious. According to one medical official, the prevalence of TB amongst the Anuak is eight times what is considered to be an epidemic. There is now a new outbreak of malaria in the refugee camp in Pochalla, Sudan and seven people have already died. There is no road leading from Pochalla, Sudan to the Ethiopian side, limiting access of Anuak to reaching health or other services and other Anuak on the other side.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the Anuak of the Gambella region is over 19%, whereas the rate in Ethiopia is much lower. Due to the widespread incidence of rape of Anuak women, the incidence of HIV/AIDS will certainly increase. In addition, many of the women have untreated sexually transmitted diseases due to the lack of health services in the area.

The impact of the human rights crimes, has destroyed the intellectual leadership of the Anuak. Approximately only ten per cent of the Anuak worldwide currently have a post secondary education. As a result of the massacre, twenty percent of the educated Anuak have been eliminated. Now, a whole generation of children is going without an education. This has caused a great demoralization amongst the people. The educated leaders are now dead, in prison or in exile and they are losing hope that they will ever recover. It has also been estimated that 40 per cent of the women in Gambella are widows or are alone due to their husbands being in prison or in refuge in some other country due to the threatened risk.

In other areas of Ethiopia, similar destruction and lack of development is used purposefully to disempower the people in order to gain access to control of the area. One example, which is similar to Gambella, is in the Ogaden area where the same petroleum companies are geared to exploit the natural resources of the area, eliminating any people who oppose the plan. Gross human rights crimes continue and services are almost non-existent. This includes the fact that most of the children are not going to school.

## **The Crisis of the Anuak Refugees from Gambella living in Pochalla, Sudan**

Approximately four thousand refugees from Gambella call the Alari Refugee Camp of Pochalla, Sudan their home. These educated refugees were the targets in the Anuak massacre of December of 2003. At one time over ten thousand Anuak lived in this camp, but the dire hardship under which they live, has caused many to risk returning home to Gambella, only to be arrested, beaten, killed or to live under the constant threat of such. Many more went to refugee camps in Kenya or deeper into Southern Sudan.

It is difficult to understand why even after two years, the Anuak refugees still live under conditions that are so dismal. We understand that the crisis in Darfur, Sudan, overshadows the needs of the Anuak in Pochalla, Sudan; however, even though the Anuak refugees are far fewer in number, their humanitarian needs are great and they have been largely ignored. It is unfortunate that this already marginalized ethnic group is neglected at their time of great need. However, what is most disturbing is that their plight has been repeatedly brought to the attention of officials of the United Nations Humanitarian Commission of Refugees (UNHCR) with hardly any resulting action.

When the Anuak first arrived in Pochalla, the delivery of humanitarian aid was complicated by the presence of the SPLA who were controlling the area. However, with the peace accord being signed and relative stability returning to the area, this is no longer the problem. Reportedly, various Ethiopian government officials have politically interfered with classifying these Anuak as “true” refugees, leading to technicalities that apparently justify the exclusion of benefits from these people.

As the Ethiopian government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi continues to deny their part in the massacre and what Human Rights Watch has documented to be “crimes against humanity,” in doing so, they have succeeded in undermining the Anuak from receiving what should be provided to refugees who have fled their countries due to human rights abuses.

In fact, we have learned from some UNHCR workers in Nairobi, who did not want their names used, that on many occasions, the Ethiopian government has strongly advocated there to prevent the UNHCR from

raising up the issue of the Anuak refugees in Pochalla as well as in Nairobi. They allegedly were afraid that if the case of the Anuak refugees came out, the world would question them more about the genocide and about instability in Gambella. Our informant indicated that he had reason to strongly believe that bribes were given for this.

EPRDF government officials have also publicly stated that the Anuak refugees should stay in Sudan rather than to return to Ethiopia, something that de-populates the Gambella region of “potential trouble-makers” who might otherwise interfere with the government’s exertion of political and economic (oil) control of the area.

## **Why Allocating Funds to the Local Level is NOT the Right Plan for Ethiopia**

Some have referred to the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi to be based on a philosophy of an “Albanian style of communism,” a worldview incompatible with the development of a free society, good governance and sustainable development. This may be why Ethiopia recently was highest on the list of having more journalists in prison than in any other African country. It may also be the reason why information about this government has been slow to enter the mainstream, making information from the local people, all the more reliable, yet harder to get.

Just as you know your family better than your neighbor, your neighbor better than your community, Ethiopians know their government better than do non-Ethiopians. However, their voices have been silenced by repressive controls that have become the trademark of this regime, but it makes it all the more critical to gather credible information and examples of how this government operates before making a decision on how to allocate any future funding.

For instance, an attempt to give the local people more control over local spending of funds is an excellent goal; however, in Ethiopia, if funds are given to the local governments, there will be no different outcome than if given to the federal government. This is because, as mentioned before, the local officials are not truly elected, but appointed. Many of these appointees to the regional and district offices are illiterate and if you viewed their offices, you would see a desk, chairs and possibly a phone, but no papers or pens. One man reported he had nothing to do. These people operate as “ghost workers”, not accomplishing most anything but picking up their checks. However, some of these appointees are more dangerous to their constituents.

A prime example is the governor of the Gambella Region, Omot Obang Olom, who was appointed via a rigged election. I know him personally. The Anuak know him to be a criminal. It was Governor Omot Obang Olom who betrayed his own people on December 13, 2003 when he colluded with the Ethiopian government in planning and executing the massacre of the educated Anuak leaders.

He provided the list of those to be killed. He is under the control of his superiors in Addis Ababa who are involved in all the decisions at the local level. He will stay in power as long as he is their patsy. Should the World Bank trust such a person? This same scenario is duplicated throughout the levels of local government all the way to the bottom. Should the World Bank work with such people?

Instead, those who would provide true development have been killed, have fled the country or have been imprisoned. Such a choice man is Mr. Okok Ojullu. Mr. Okok studied in the U.K. where he received his Masters in Urban Planning. He returned to Gambella and worked as a pastor. He then was given a position to manage a World Bank program, the Rehabilitation Fund, which was intended to restore the

infrastructure that had been destroyed during the civil war when the communist regime of Mengistu was overthrown.

Mr. Okok used the Rehabilitation Funds to build schools, health clinics and water wells. He worked with all ethnic groups in the region and engaged the local community people as participants in the projects. They cleared the land, poured the cement and worked as integral team members. He brought development to areas where there were no roads and where no previous development had ever taken place. Locals would help carry the supplies themselves to these remote locations where no one else had gone and where no vehicles had access. He was a man of faith and integrity. He maintained high standards of accountability, looking out for the people above his own interests.

As people loved his work, he became very popular and people listened to him. In 2001, he won the most prestigious award given in Ethiopia by the World Bank for his work. He even won a vehicle as a result of receiving this award. However, when the government of the EPRDF realized his emerging popularity and influence, he was arrested in 2002. He remains in prison in Addis Ababa today, still never being charged with a crime. The majority of the schools and clinics he had built are now destroyed or occupied by Ethiopian Defense Forces.

Mr. Okok Ojullu is a clear example of why anyone who is ethical and truly interested in the development of Ethiopia, will not be allowed to continue their work. Instead, as you succeed and gain the support of the people, you will be seen as a threat and thrown into prison or receive other punitive measures directed against you.

## **Possible Solutions**

When twenty-five million Ethiopians went out to vote on May 15, 2005, even though the election was determined to have been rigged in many places, the people voted for a freer Ethiopia as evidenced by their active participation. They indicated their readiness for improvement and change, for decision-making, transparency, accountability and fairness in funding allocations to people at the grass roots level.

Right now, this government is beginning to deepen its friendship with China as China shares a disregard for the human rights of its own people and is strategically positioning itself in Ethiopia and all over Africa to gain first access to its underdeveloped resources.

The World Bank should be careful to not cut its ties with Ethiopia as the Western donor countries did in Zimbabwe with Robert Mugabe. Now, China is also taking advantage of such opportunities throughout the Continent. On the other hand, we believe that the current government will use the donors from the West as long as it is to their advantage, but once the pressure becomes too great, they may realign themselves with the Chinese who hold to similar views.

The World Bank is in a strategic position to affect positive change in a profound way. We wish to reinforce what you already know, that you are in charge of the conditions for those receiving funding and that those conditions will make the difference as to whether the people at the ground level actually benefit from these funds, particularly in regards to sustainable development.

Recently, the World Bank, the United Kingdom and the European Union made a decision to withhold non-humanitarian funding from Ethiopia due to discovering the high level of human rights abuses, learning of the government manipulation of the election and seeing the arrest of the political opposition, human rights activists and journalists.

As this information becomes more apparent to those in the international community, it provides some explanation for why the people of Ethiopia remain amongst the poorest in world despite billions of dollars of aid. Funding from the World Bank and some donor countries has been contingent on the expectation of increasing good governance; however, due to numerous indicators, freedom and democracy in Ethiopia has declined rather than improved. In addition, there is little evidence of improved access to basic services, improved per capita income, or access to education and economic opportunity throughout the country, particularly in the rural areas where human rights abuses abound.

However, we are not suggesting that all funding be withheld from Ethiopians as it could seriously jeopardize those in critical need, but we are suggesting that funding criteria becomes more stringent and that it be channeled through a central institution that is totally separate from the government or through credible NGO's, including faith based organizations, who also are not aligned with the government. Such an institution or NGO's, must be regularly monitored for compliance, effectiveness and fairness. They must be highly accountable, transparent and not exclusionary. There must be enough checks and balances in place to ensure that corruption is eliminated or quickly caught.

Reportedly, the government is already in the process of setting up artificial NGO's that they can control in the same way that they have controlled the local government, other institutions and even some NGO's operating in the country who are in collusion with the government or afraid to disagree with this regime fearing they will be "kicked out," and that people will suffer more greatly as a result.

We would recommend that immediate and substantive steps be taken by the current government to indicate their willingness to empower their citizenry and civic institutions, making government more accountable to the people rather than the other way around. Decentralization would have been the right plan, but today is impossible, yet it is believed that the World Bank can exert substantial financial influence that could bring about change for these people.

We hope that the Board of Directors of the World Bank will thoroughly study the situation before carefully setting conditions and criteria for funding. Many Ethiopians who are very close to the situation may be of immense value to you as informal consultants and monitors of compliance. However, an unimpeded on-the-ground assessment by the World Bank will show that a new approach in Ethiopia is needed to ensure that your generous funds are well-utilized. The Anuak Justice Council and Gambella Development Agency looks forward to working with you as needed to accomplish these goals, particularly when peace and stability return to the country.

## **Proposed Conditions for Funding that Show Steps Taken Towards the Actual Implementation of Good Governance**

1. IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS
2. IMMEDIATE and SUBSTANTIVE relief from human rights abuses, including attacks, persecution, rapes, control of water pumps etc., by ENDF stationed in the Gambella region and other regions throughout Ethiopia.
3. Establishment of an independent, non-government appointed judiciary board to examine the cases of those who are not recognized to be prisoners of conscience but claim to be so. Full access to evidence, charges, documents and defendants should be given to this board and its representatives.

4. IMMEDIATE and SUBSTANTIVE tolerance of the freedom of expression, including allowing the media to be fully re-established and to operate without interference and punitive measures from the government.
5. Initiation of Ethiopian Parliamentary action that leads to legitimate dialogue between the current government and opposition groups.

Thank you.