

COMMENTS ON ILISU DAM PROJECT AND ILISU RAP'S "NOTES FROM DEEP INTERVIEWS WITH THE STAKEHOLDERS"

by Diyarbakır Branch of Immigrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (GÖÇ-DER)

Since 2000, Diyarbakır Branch of Goc-Der has been carrying out research and doing publications on the issues of migration and displacement in the province of Diyarbakır and also in provinces of the South East Anatolia Region of Turkey. There exists no other local association working on displacement and migration issues in the region. Goc-Der is not only the first NGO specifically working and doing research on this subject area, it is still one of the few NGOs doing similar research in the aforementioned regions of Turkey.

Since its establishment, displacement has been a major focus of research for the Goc-Der. Through our fieldwork experiences and research on the subject area, we are convinced that the heavy psychological, social and economic costs of the displacement that will take place due to the construction of the Ilisu Dam cannot be thought as independent from or inferior to the foreseen economic profits invested in the Project. Ilisu Consortium, and particularly their Turkish representative Nurol Company, formulates the Project's general aims as providing for the energy need in Turkey *and* for the improvement of social and economic conditions in the region. However, our research has shown us that the displacements that took place during the previous dam projects or due to the history of social conflict in the region have only added new social problems to the region and the whole country in general, and/or intensified the already existing ones. Displacement has not only destroyed and/or negatively and irreversibly changed the mental, social and economic lives of many families, especially of children and women, in the region, it did so even across many different generations within the same family. To this day, effective social policies on the subject matter still await to be developed and implemented.

With its center located in Diyarbakır, a major point of attraction for both the rural migrants and the displaced for the last 15 years, we had the chance to witness the related adverse social and economic change, the increasing levels of social poverty, and the psychological and social traumas of the new habitants of the city, the displaced, very closely. Another wave of displacement will mean another wave of rural population coming to the nearby provinces or metropolitan cities as forcibly torn apart from their own cultural and economic habitats and means. These people will experience social and psychological difficulties adapting to the new urban living conditions; and in the mid term, they will suffer from social poverty and exclusion, as did the previously displaced. A new wave of the displaced can only worsen the current social and economic situation, regardless of the amount of expropriation rates planned to be paid or of the profit expected to be gained from the project. Thus, as a local NGO working and doing research on the to-be-affected settlements and in the region, we are absolutely against the construction of the Ilisu Dam.

Furthermore, we know that most of the people living in the affected settlements have not been informed or consulted on the proceedings of the Project. During our fieldwork in January-February 2006 in Bismil, we have determined that the villagers were never directly asked whether or not they wanted the dam to be built, and were not informed properly about the resettlement issues so as to include the damage to be done in the area and to the people as well. Neither the public nor local people have been presented with a viable resettlement plan openly denoting clear solutions and choices on the hows and specific destinations of a future

resettlement plan. During the project activities of 2005, local people were consulted merely in order to determine the proper expropriation rates. In other words, once their expropriation rates are paid, the local people living in the affected settlements will be left alone, having to face an unclear and ambiguous future on their own. It is quite likely that the grievances and sufferings that occurred after the construction of the Birecik Dam will re-occur after the construction of Ilisu Dam as well. During the construction of Birecik Dam, only 6500 of the 30,000 affected local people were relocated through a resettlement plan, their ideas or approvals were not sought at any stage of the project, and the ones without land titles were not paid any expropriation rates.

While the text above represents a summary of the Goc-Der's views on the construction of the Ilisu Dam, following was what was presented as our views in the Ilisu Consortium's Resettlement Action Plan (RAP):

"The meeting was held at the association's headquarters in Diyarbakir and lasted for approximately one hour. They talked about the immigration issue resulting from the construction of the dam. They stated that the dam would provide temporary benefits to region's economy. It is recommended that the problems caused by Ataturk should be taken into consideration during project developments and the resettlement sites should be in the rural areas."

(Annex B7, p. 5/8, Notes from Deep Interviews with the Stakeholders)

During our interview with the team from the Encon, we communicated the same ideas presented in the text above. We specifically talked to them about dams and migration, and especially emphasized the psychological, social and economic damages caused by the previous dam projects and related displacements. We never suggested that rural areas should be chosen as resettlement sites or that choosing rural areas as sites for resettlement would solve or decrease the problems related to the displacement. Furthermore, our views were summarized very selectively so that our strong objection to the construction of the dam was not reflected at all in the text. On the contrary, text was written delicately so as to represent our views as if we do somehow support the project. Thus, our views were suppressed and distorted in the Ilisu RAP. We think that this is a very problematic aspect related to the Ilisu RAP, and poses serious questions and doubts on the ethics and methodology of the whole report. Thus, we hope that you will take this letter into account as you discuss the Ilisu RAP.

We also believe that once other alternative energy sources are researched carefully and the current energy loss at the existing dams is properly improved as it should be, there will remain no need for a new dam on Ilisu. We want these other options to be taken into account and re-considered seriously, so that the Ilisu Dam can be stopped forever, and so that we can leave Hasankeyf to the future generations as the cultural and historical heritage of all humanity.

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