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Globally there has been an increase in concern over the environmental degradation and the need for greater environmental protection and management.

All ecosystems of the world are potentially affected by man's activities, but wetlands are especially fragile and often neglected. Wetlands are neither well understood nor appreciated and have been increasingly under natural and human pressures in all parts of the globe and especially in Africa.

The GIBE III project is one of a series of damming projects that have been undertaken by the Ethiopian government. The Gibe III hydroelectric project on the Omo River is a public-private partnership planned as a 25year national energy master plan of Ethiopia. The planned increase in power generation, however far exceeds domestic needs with the surplus which is estimated at fifty percent being exported to the neighboring countries including Kenya which the Ethiopian Electric Power Company (EEPCo) predicts to export 500MW to.



The Omo River is a trans boundary river that contributes at least 80 percent of the waters of Lake Turkana.

Its terminus is at northern end of Kenya's Lake Turkana, and most of the Omo Delta is in Kenya. A sharp reduction in the Omo's downstream flow volume would cause a significant retreat of Lake Turkana.

An assessment of the overall impact of the proposed Gibe III project on the Lake Turkana, in Kenya must begin with the direct impact of the reduced flow into the lake, since the Omo River is the major source of water for Lake Turkana. Reduction in flow volume from reservoir filling would be the primary impact.

Based on a combination of calculations from satellite imagery, and published flow data, it is reasonable to say that the effect of the flow on the Lake Turkana can be established. Therefore, concluding that over the first five years, there would be a loss of about 53.5km³ of water from the lake, corresponding to a drop of about 7 meters. This should be considered as a conservative estimate: an alternative estimate, based on other available data is 10meters.

Using bathymetric data for Lake Turkana, it is possible to predict that the Omo delta and the northern section of the lake will desiccate, and the shorelines would recede to almost the halfway point, southward along the lake. A salinity increase in the lake is likely to severely affect the aquatic salinity of the lake which is already barely portable. Concentrations of the ions in the lake will. The effect of this is increased concentration on fish populations and on the usefulness of the lake for watering livestock and for

human consumption will need to be determined. In turn the region's livelihood systems-particularly those of the Turkana, Dassanech, Rendille., Samburu and other groups in Kenya would be significantly impacted as they are dependent upon recession cultivation, lakeside livestock grazing and watering at the lake, and fishing.

The Omo Delta and northern shoreline area have long provided habitat for a unique abundance of hippopotamus and Nile crocodile, with extraordinary numbers of water birds. This entire area would be the first part of Lake Turkana to undergo major destruction of habitat and wildlife. Consequently, the unique floral and faunal systems of Lake Turkana would likely be threatened with major destruction. The lake is now internationally recognized, including as a World Heritage Site for its abundance of wildlife, as well as unique floral and fauna species-many of which are barely described or understood, from an ecological perspective.

Friends Of Lake Turkana (FoLT)

FoLT is currently undertaking a campaign to highlight the possible dangers posed on the lake and its eco-system due to the Gibe III damming project being undertaken by the Ethiopian government in its quest for energy development both for domestic consumption and for export to neighboring countries of Djibouti, Sudan and Kenya. FoLT is working to bring attention to the impacts which Gibe III Dam will have on the Lake Turkana region and peoples and to find lasting solutions to this social injustice.

FOLT does not to totally disregard the idea of producing hydroelectric power, but would like to encourage pursuit of alternative forms of energy development that avoid unacceptable trade offs which jeopardizes indigenous economies and destroy the eco-system. For example the formulation of a program of small dams, with fundamental attention on the maintenance of maximum river flow, or a slow in the filling up of the dam to allow for adequate flow of water into Lake Turkana rather than drastic five year filling up plan currently in place. Also see : Original EIA

carried out by the Ethiopian Government: Ethiopia - Gilgel Gibe Hydroelectric (Energy II) Project : environmental impact assessment (Vol. 2) : Main Report Commentary by African Resources Working Group (ARWG): ARWG (2008). Environmental and Social Impacts of the Proposed Gibe III Hydroelectric Project in Ethiopia's Lower Omo River Basin

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