

**COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**

**A HISTORY OF RESETTLEMENT AND VILLAGIZATION IN ABOBO
WORÄDA (DISTRICT) OF GAMBELLA REGION, 1984 -2000**

BY

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A HISTORY OF RESETTLEMENT AND VILLAGIZATION IN ABOBO
WORÄDA (DISTRICT) OF GAMBELLA REGION, 1984-2000

By

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COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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KEY TO THE TRANSLITERATION SYSTEM

The study adopted the transliteration system of *Encyclopedia Aethiopic*

1 st order	2 nd order	3 rd order	4 th order	5 th order	6 th order	7 th order
ሀ <i>ba</i>	ሁ <i>bu</i>	ሂ <i>bi</i>	ሃ <i>ba</i>	ሄ <i>be</i>	ህ <i>ba</i>	ሆ <i>bo</i>
ለ <i>lä</i>	ሉ <i>lu</i>	ሊ <i>li</i>	ላ <i>la</i>	ሌ <i>le</i>	ል <i>la</i>	ሎ <i>lo</i>
ሐ <i>ba</i>	ሑ <i>bu</i>	ሒ <i>bi</i>	ሓ <i>ba</i>	ሔ <i>be</i>	ሕ <i>ba</i>	ሖ <i>bo</i>
መ <i>mä</i>	ሙ <i>mu</i>	ሚ <i>mi</i>	ማ <i>ma</i>	ሜ <i>me</i>	ም <i>ma</i>	ሞ <i>mo</i>
ሠ <i>sä</i>	ሡ <i>su</i>	ሢ <i>si</i>	ሣ <i>sa</i>	ሤ <i>se</i>	ሥ <i>sa</i>	ሦ <i>so</i>
ረ <i>rä</i>	ሩ <i>ru</i>	ሪ <i>ri</i>	ራ <i>ra</i>	ራ <i>re</i>	ር <i>ra</i>	ሮ <i>ro</i>
ሰ <i>sä</i>	ሱ <i>su</i>	ሲ <i>si</i>	ሳ <i>sa</i>	ሴ <i>se</i>	ሰ <i>sa</i>	ሶ <i>so</i>
ሸ <i>šä</i>	ሹ <i>šu</i>	ሺ <i>ši</i>	ሻ <i>ša</i>	ሼ <i>še</i>	ሽ <i>ša</i>	ሾ <i>šo</i>
ቀ <i>qä</i>	ቁ <i>qu</i>	ቂ <i>qi</i>	ቃ <i>qa</i>	ቄ <i>qe</i>	ቅ <i>qa</i>	ቆ <i>qo</i>
ቸ <i>qä</i>	ቹ <i>qu</i>	ቺ <i>qi</i>	ቻ <i>qa</i>	ቼ <i>qe</i>	ች <i>qa</i>	ቸ <i>qo</i>
በ <i>bä</i>	ቡ <i>bu</i>	ቢ <i>bi</i>	ባ <i>ba</i>	ቤ <i>be</i>	ብ <i>ba</i>	ቦ <i>bo</i>
ተ <i>tä</i>	ቱ <i>tu</i>	ቲ <i>ti</i>	ታ <i>ta</i>	ቲ <i>te</i>	ት <i>ta</i>	ቶ <i>to</i>
ቸ <i>čä</i>	ቹ <i>ču</i>	ቺ <i>či</i>	ቻ <i>ča</i>	ቼ <i>če</i>	ች <i>ča</i>	ቸ <i>čo</i>
ኀ <i>ḥa</i>	ኁ <i>ḥu</i>	ኂ <i>ḥi</i>	ኃ <i>ḥa</i>	ኄ <i>ḥe</i>	ኅ <i>ḥa</i>	ኆ <i>ḥo</i>
ነ <i>nä</i>	ኑ <i>nu</i>	ኒ <i>ni</i>	ና <i>na</i>	ኔ <i>ne</i>	ነ <i>na</i>	ኖ <i>no</i>
ኘ <i>nä</i>	ኙ <i>ñu</i>	ኚ <i>ñi</i>	ኛ <i>ña</i>	ኜ <i>ñe</i>	ኝ <i>ña</i>	ኞ <i>ño</i>
አ <i>ʾa</i>	ሁ <i>ʾu</i>	ሂ <i>ʾi</i>	ላ <i>ʾa</i>	ሌ <i>ʾe</i>	ለ <i>ʾa</i>	ሎ <i>ʾo</i>
ከ <i>kä</i>	ከ <i>ku</i>	ከ <i>ki</i>	ካ <i>ka</i>	ኬ <i>ke</i>	ክ <i>ka</i>	ኮ <i>ko</i>
ኸ <i>kä</i>	ኹ <i>ku</i>	ኺ <i>ki</i>	ኻ <i>ka</i>	ኼ <i>ke</i>	ኽ <i>ka</i>	ኾ <i>ko</i>
ወ <i>wä</i>	ወ <i>wu</i>	ወ <i>wi</i>	ወ <i>wa</i>	ወ <i>we</i>	ወ <i>wa</i>	ወ <i>wo</i>
ዐ <i>ʿa</i>	ዑ <i>ʿu</i>	ዒ <i>ʿi</i>	ዓ <i>ʿa</i>	ዔ <i>ʿe</i>	ዐ <i>ʿa</i>	ዑ <i>ʿo</i>
ዘ <i>zä</i>	ዘ <i>zu</i>	ዘ <i>zi</i>	ዘ <i>za</i>	ዘ <i>ze</i>	ዘ <i>za</i>	ዘ <i>zo</i>
ዠ <i>žä</i>	ዡ <i>žu</i>	ዢ <i>ži</i>	ዣ <i>ža</i>	ዤ <i>že</i>	ዥ <i>ža</i>	ዦ <i>žo</i>
የ <i>yä</i>	የ <i>yu</i>	የ <i>yi</i>	ያ <i>ya</i>	ይ <i>ye</i>	የ <i>ya</i>	ዮ <i>yo</i>
ደ <i>dä</i>	ደ <i>du</i>	ደ <i>di</i>	ደ <i>da</i>	ደ <i>de</i>	ደ <i>da</i>	ደ <i>do</i>
ጀ <i>gä</i>	ጀ <i>gu</i>	ጀ <i>gi</i>	ጀ <i>ga</i>	ጀ <i>ge</i>	ጀ <i>ga</i>	ጀ <i>go</i>
ገ <i>gä</i>	ገ <i>gu</i>	ገ <i>gi</i>	ገ <i>ga</i>	ገ <i>ge</i>	ገ <i>ga</i>	ገ <i>go</i>

1 st order	2 nd order	3 rd order	4 th order	5 th order	6 th order	7 th order
ᄁ tā	ᄂ tu	ᄃ ti	ᄄ ta	ᄅ te	ᄆ ta	ᄇ to
ᄈ čä	ᄉ ču	ᄊ čī	ᄋ ča	ᄌ če	ᄍ čə	ᄎ čo
ᄏ pä	ᄐ pu	ᄑ pī	ᄒ pa	ᄓ pe	ᄔ pə	ᄕ po
ᄒ šä	ᄓ šu	ᄔ šī	ᄕ ša	ᄖ še	ᄗ šə	ᄘ šo
ᄙ šä	ᄚ šu	ᄛ šī	ᄜ ša	ᄝ še	ᄞ šə	ᄟ šo
ᄠ fä	ᄡ fu	ᄢ fi	ᄣ fa	ᄤ fe	ᄥ fə	ᄦ fo
ᄧ pä	ᄨ pu	ᄩ pi	ᄪ pa	ᄫ pe	ᄬ pə	ᄭ po
ᄮ vā	ᄯ vu	ᄰ vi	ᄱ va	ᄲ ve	ᄳ və	ᄴ vo

Labiovelars*:

ᄁ q ^v ä	ᄂ q ^v i	ᄃ q ^v a	ᄄ q ^v e	ᄅ q ^v ə
ᄆ b ^v ä	ᄇ b ^v i	ᄈ b ^v a	ᄉ b ^v e	ᄊ b ^v ə
ᄋ k ^v ä	ᄌ k ^v i	ᄍ k ^v a	ᄎ k ^v e	ᄏ k ^v ə
ᄐ g ^v ä	ᄑ g ^v i	ᄒ g ^v a	ᄓ g ^v e	ᄔ g ^v ə
ᄕ k ^v ä	ᄖ k ^v i	ᄗ k ^v a	ᄘ k ^v e	ᄙ k ^v ə
ᄚ q ^v ä	ᄛ q ^v i	ᄜ q ^v a	ᄝ q ^v e	ᄞ q ^v ə

* Consonant symbols with the additional _v underneath (e.g., ᄂ, l^va, ᄉ, b^va, ᄑ, r^va etc.) or ^v above (e.g., ᄋ, m^va, ᄕ, r^va, ᄛ, f^va etc.) stand for the respective consonant phonemes followed by -^va.

ACRONYMS

ARRA	Administration of Refugees and Returnees' Affairs
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
E.C	Ethiopian Calendar
EFDR	Ethiopian Federal Democratic Republic
EPRDF	Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front
FSP	Food Security Program
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GFDRE	Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GLF	Gambella Liberation Front
GNUM/A	Gambella Nilots United Movement (Army)
GPDM	Gambella Peoples' Democratic Movement
GPLM	Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement
GPLM/F	Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement (Force)
GPNRS	Gambella Peoples' National Regional States
GPUDF	Gambella Peoples' United Democratic Front
LRP	Land Reform Proclamation
MARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
NCFS	New Coalition for Food Security
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NVCC	National Villagization Coordinating Committees
PLC	Private Limited Company
RA	Resettlement Authority
RFSDP	Regional Food Security and Development Program
RRC	Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
SENPIIM	Southwest Ethiopia Nilo-Saharan Peoples' Independent Movement
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region
SSAD	Saudi Star Agricultural Development
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WW I	First World War

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the history of resettlement and villagization in Abobo Woräda (district) of Gambella Region from 1984-2000. The study focuses on the history of state-sponsored population relocation schemes in the contemporary Gambella Regional State in general and the Abobo Woräda in particular. From 1984-2000, population relocation program was considered as one of the development strategies in the country. Abobo Woräda in Gambella People's Regional State became one of the areas in which population relocation program was undertaken to improve the living conditions of both the resettlers and the host communities. The study begins with the historical study of the development of population relocation schemes in Africa in general and Ethiopia in particular. In the study Woräda considerable state-leading population relocation scheme was implemented in deferent times. Hence, this thesis focuses on studying the history of state-sponsored population relocation programs in the study area, Abobo Woräda of Gambella Regional State. Besides, the study points out the results of the population relocation schemes in the study Woräda. Moreover, it has tried to assess changes and developments that the Woräda has undergone throughout the military up to the current government of the country in relation with the implementation of this state-leading population relocation schemes.

PREFACE

The main aim of this thesis is to reconstruct the history of resettlement and villagization in Abobo *Woräda* (district) of Gambella Region from 1984-2000.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter deals with the etymological definitions and origins of the terms: resettlement and villagization. Additionally, this chapter tries to look at the development of these two concepts throughout Africa in general and our country in particular; it gives us a wide range of explanation about the study area. It also tries to look at the factors that pushed forward the Ethiopian leaders to adopt population relocation policy in the country.

The second chapter concentrates on describing the history of the *Därg* regime's population resettlement scheme in Abobo *Woräda* of Gambella Regional State. In addition to this; it briefly analyzes the settlement sites with their geographical features. It also discusses the settlement patterns of both the settler households and the native ethnic groups of the *Woräda* under study.

Chapter three attempts to portrait the socio-cultural, economic and political aftermath of the *Därg* regime population resettlement schemes in Gambella Regional State in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular. Moreover, this chapter focuses on describing the relationship between the settler households and the host communities of the *Woräda*. It also uncovers and describes the social background of the settler households of the *Woräda* under consideration.

The last chapter also tries to look at different concepts. This chapter concerns with analyzing the villagization scheme of the EPRDF government in Abobo *Woräda*. It also endeavors to typify the state-sponsored population relocation schemes implemented in Abobo *Woräda* of Anywaa zone since 2000. The EPRDF government population relocation scheme brought tremendous impacts on the social, political and economic activities of Abobo *Woräda* of Anywaa zone. Additionally, the aftermath of this state-leading population relocation program on the environment of the study area has been investigated. It also concerns with analyzing the similarities and differences between the *Därg's* and the EPRDF's population relocation schemes in the study area.

Regarding to the sources and methodologies of the study, the thesis has been compiled using different types of sources and methods. The sources are basically oral sources as well as written materials. Majority of archival materials that could support the study has been, however, destroyed

due to several problems. So the study as a result, depended largely on oral sources which were gathered from the district from October 2019 to April 2019. To write this thesis, efforts have been made in order to crosscheck the oral information with written literature. Moreover, to avoid problems in the use of oral sources significant measures have been taken: selecting knowledgeable informants and proper validation of collected data have been undertaken.

Finally, inclusive study on the history of population relocation scheme in Abobo *Woräda* has not yet been studied. The works by a few geographers and historians reveal lack of inclusiveness in scope. Therefore, as stated above, the aim of this study is to fill the prevailing gap by reconstructing the history of resettlement and villagization in Abobo *Woräda* of Gambella Region from 1984-2000. Despite this fact, the work is far from being complete by itself, I hope that it can provoke and provide stimulus for other historians, who may be interested to conduct further research on the *Woräda*.

CHAPTER ONE

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

1.1. Gambella Peoples Regional State

From 1896 to 1907, Emperor Menelik II directed Ethiopia's expansion into southern and western regions. During this time, the imperial force launched a consecutive territorial push into these regions. Henceforth, the contemporary Gambella Regional State and its peoples became part of the Ethiopian empire only in the beginning of the 20th c. According to the 1902 boundary agreement between the British colonial government in Sudan and Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, the territory was officially become into part of Ethiopian Empire.¹

Following the introduction of federal form of government in 1991, the region is recognized as one of the nine regions of the country encompassing its own administrative sub-units. Administratively, this region is classified into zones and districts (hereafter *Worädas*). Currently the region is divided into three zones along the three major or indigenous ethnic groups. The zones are: Anywaa zone, Nuer zone and Mäjang zone. These three zones are further divided into 12 *Worädas*; five under Anywaa zone, two under Mäjang zone, four under Nuer zone and one special *Woräda* (namely known as Itang) that is directly accountable to the regional state council.²

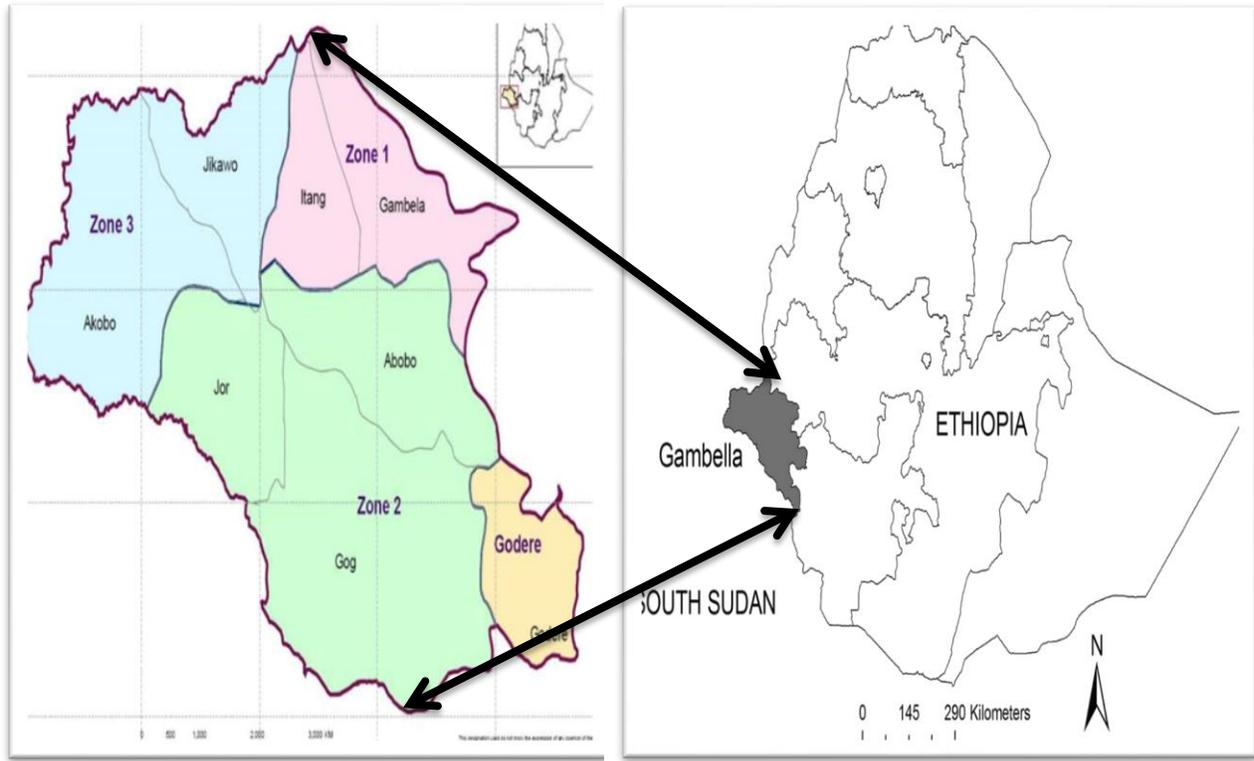
Geographically, the region is located in southwestern peripheries of Ethiopian lowlands surrounded by Oromia region in the north, northeast and east, by Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' region in the south and southeast and by the Republic of South Sudan in the southwest, west and northwest parts of the country. According to Harold G. Marcus's argumentative study, this geographical location as well as the hospitable environment made the region important

¹Harold G. Marcus, *A History of Ethiopia* (Los Angeles, University of California Press, Ltd. 1994), p.104; Bahru Zewde, "an Overview and Assessment of Gambella Trade (1904-1935)," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 20, No.1, (1987), pp.75-94.

²Abrham Gebreselassie, "Assessment on the Implementation of Woreda Decentralization in Gambella People's National Regional State, Ethiopia: the case of Abobo and Lare Woredas", (MA thesis, AAU, Development Studies, 2011), pp.33-35; See also Appendix, D.

to implement state-sponsored development projects and population relocation schemes basically from 1983/4 to 2000.³

Map: 1. *The Political Map of Gambella Regional State and Ethiopia*



Source:-Anita Milman, et.al, “Climate adaptation and development: Contradictions for human security in Gambella, Ethiopia”, Global Environmental Change, No 29 (Addis Ababa University, 2014) p.351.

1.1.1. Resettlement and Villagization Programs from 1983/4 to 2000

There are many reasons why resettlement and villagization schemes have become essential around the world. Because of rapid economic growth, population pressure and the degradation of natural resources, the relocation of population to new locations has become a dominant development discourse in many parts of the world since the second half of 19th century.⁴ Different scholars use deferent terms for the process of population distribution or redistribution to new location.

³Robert O. Collins, *Shadows in the Grass: Britain in the Southern Sudan, 1918-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), pp.132-35; See also Map, 1.

⁴Bisrat Worku, “Impact of Resettlement on the Livelihood of Settler Population in Abobo Woreda, Gambella People’s Regional State,” (MA Thesis, AAU, Population Studies, 2011), p.7.

According to a number of primary sources, resettlement, land settlement, or transmigration all refers to the phenomenon of population redistribution schemes.⁵

For example according to Kassahun Berhanu, the etymological definition of resettlement and villagization programs is the movement of people from areas where there do not avail factors that are suitable for smooth maintenance of life to areas supposed to be endowed with possibilities that could provide opportunities for the same end. According to the same source, the destination of resettlement and villagization schemes is to areas with underutilized agricultural potentials, and movement could take place either as a result of unspontaneous, or spontaneously.⁶

However, a few scholars defined population relocation schemes in deferent circumstances. For example according to Robert Chambers, resettlement and villagization schemes are the processes of planned and controlled transfer of people from one area to another. Besides, this writer tried to outline the trigger factors for the gradual developments of these two types of population relocation schemes throughout the world. According to this source, resettlement and villagization schemes are becoming all attractive as a way out of pressing problems caused by food shortage, land fragmentation, population pressure, rampant unemployment, eccentricity of land and decline in productivity. Generally, population resettlement and villagization programs are the processes of transferring people from natural mishap prone areas to the relatively conducive areas where there are accessibilities of essential natural livelihood sources.⁷

A history of resettlement and villagization program in Africa goes back to the second half of the 19th century. For example, African countries like Tanzania, Rwanda, and Mozambique all have a historical population relocation experiences. One of the most mentioned resettlement and villagization program is Joseph Nyerere's Ujamaa that was implemented shortly after Tanzania's political independence. In 1967, Nyerere's government executed the Ujamaa resettlement and

⁵Dessalegn Rahmato, "Resettlement in Ethiopia: The Tragedy of Population Relocation in the 1980s," *Forum for Social Studies*, FSS Discussion Paper, No.11 (Addis Ababa: 2003), p.1.

⁶Kassahun Berhanu, "Resettlement: A Strategy, for Vulnerable Group," in Zena-Work Tadesse (ed.), *Proceedings of Workshop of Forum for Social Studies*, FSS (Addis Ababa, 2000), pp.123-151.

⁷Robert Chambers, *Settlement Schemes in Tropical Africa: A study of Organizations and Developments*, (London, Rout ledge, et.al, 1969), p.11.

villagization program. The Ujamaa was socialized and based on self-improving of the peasants in a communal form.⁸

In Rwanda, a resettlement and villagization program named Imidugudu was started in 1997. Approximately 2.5 million refugee returnees arrived home after a period of war followed by the nefarious Rwandan genocide in 1994. After the civil war came to an end, the government of the country implemented this population relocation program in cooperation with the international donors. The aim of the Imidugudu resettlement and villagization program was to congregate all scattered communities into settlement villages.⁹

In addition to the above three African countries, Ethiopia has aged-old population relocation experience. Population resettlement and villagization program in Ethiopia has taken place at different times for many generations. It was caused by various reasons and some among which are drought induced famines, demographic pressures on land in the traditional settlement areas, ethnic and tribal quarrels, and political developments in different Ethiopian regions.¹⁰

For centuries Ethiopia was a monarchical state ruled by emperors who managed to keep European imperialist out of its territory and thus became the only African country that was never colonized. The last of these emperors is also the most renowned in the westerners, Emperor Haile-Selassie I, who took the throne in 1930. During his reign, the emperor ordered a series of population relocation campaigns and other development projects were also implemented in Gambella region starting in 1958.¹¹

However, in 1974 Haile-Selassie was deposed and arrested by a committee of armed forces, later known as the *Därg*, who quickly filled the power vacuum; then this new government so as to get

⁸Helge Kjekshus, "The Tanzanian Villagization Policy: Implementation Lessons and Ecological Dimensions", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, V. 11, No.2 (1977), p. 276.

⁹Mathijs Van Leeuwen, "Rwanda's Imidugudu Programme and Earlier Experiences with Villagization and Resettlement in East Africa", *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, V.39, No.4 (2001), p. 624.

¹⁰Gerum Taye, "Assessing the Rural Resettlement Programme in Ethiopia in meeting the Livelihood of the people: A Case Study of Mätäma Yohanes Resettlement Scheme, in the Amhara National Regional State" (The Hague, the Netherlands, 2010), pp.15-16.

¹¹Ojot Miru, *Large-scale land Acquisitions and Minorities/Indigenous Peoples' Rights under Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: A Case Study of Gambella Regional State*, (PhD Dissertation, University of Bradford, Peace Studies, 2013), p. 264; Gérard Prunier, "The Ethiopian Revolution and the *Därg* Regime," in *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*, by Éloi Ficquet and Gérard Prunier, 209-231 (London: C. Hurst and Co., 2015), p.210.

popular support and to strengthen his firm control over the political arena took several measures. Among these measures implementing extensive mechanized farming activities and population relocation programs in the south and southwest regions of the country were the most important among others.¹²

However, starting from the scratch the ground was not that much fertile to the new government. Towards the end of the 1980s, several crises, including famine, economic collapse, and military hindrances in the northern parts of the country, confronted the *Därg*.¹³ The government's inability to deal with the 1983-85 famine, economic collapse, and military hindrances provoked the *Därg* government to take decisive measures so as to meet with the socialist state socio-economic and political objectives. The combined effects of famine and military hindrances in the northern parts of the country had by then put the nation's economy into a state of collapse. The primary government response to the above national problems was the decision to uproot large numbers of peasants who lived in the pretentious areas in the north and to resettle them in the south and southwest parts of the country. This is because in these areas there were large portions of unoccupied and fertile land. This state-sponsored resettlement programs were, therefore, mostly carried out in Wolläga, Mätäkäl zone of Benishangul and Gambella Regional States.¹⁴

As discussed in the above paragraph, extensive population relocation scheme is not a new phenomenon in Gambella region. This region has a long history of receiving settler households from both the neighboring countries, especially from Sudan, and the highland regions of our country, whether through spontaneous or unspontaneous population relocation scheme. However, the first official or unspontaneous population relocation program in the region under study was in 1979 when the indigenous people were ejected from the banks of the Baro (hereafter Opeeno) River in order to make way for irrigated commercial and state owned farming activities. This population resettlement scheme was implemented along the panels of the river Opeeno, Kir, Thatha, Alwero and other aquatic areas of the region, especially in the study *Woräda*. As we will see it in the coming consecutive chapters of this paper, the existence of the abundant natural

¹²Ojot.p.264; See also Appendix, E.

¹³Richard Pankhurst, "The Ethiopian Famine: Cultural Survival's New Report," *Anthropology Today*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1986), pp. 4-5.

¹⁴*Ibid.*pp.205-207; Gambella Peoples National Regional State, "Villagization and Resettlement Program Report," (2013), pp.5-7 and (2003-2005), pp.3-6; See also Table, 1, and Appendix, J.

woodland resources made the region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular the preferable place to execute an extensive agricultural activities and resettlement and villagization programs.¹⁵

However, most of the highlander settler households in the region were resettled by the *Därg* regime from 1983 to 1985. Therefore, it is simple to recognize that the most prominent resettlement and villagization program in the region took place from 1983 when the *Därg* government brought in more than 60,000 settlers from the drought-affected northern and southern regions of the country. Due to the large number of settlers that were brought into the region, the indigenous people were relocated from their farms and villages to provide more space either for the Ethiopian highlander settlers or for various state-owned farming projects. In addition to the imperialist and the military regimes, the current government of the country also launched a series of population relocation programs throughout the region under study. To have a clear understanding about the population relocation experience of the region let as scrutinize it by classifying it into two periods.¹⁶

1.1.1.1. The *Därg* Population Relocation Program between 1983 and 1985

Gambella is richly endowed with high fertile soils, widespread forest cover, sparse population density and other natural resources. Above all this region is endowed with woodland natural resources.¹⁷ Woodland resource in the region comprised major woodland products like timber, firewood and other minor woodland products such as honey, grasses and so on. Wood is a significant source of energy in both developing and developed countries. It is estimated that about 45 percent of the wood consumed in the world is used for home heating and cooking. It is also true in Ethiopia in general and the study region in particular. In Gambella region, the existence of these natural resources had made the region a preferable and conducive for both spontaneous and unspontaneous population resettlement scheme.¹⁸

¹⁵Ojot, p.281; John M. Cohen and Nils-Ivar Isakson, "Villagization in Ethiopia's Arsi Region," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* (1987), p, 443.

¹⁶Wondwosen Michago, *The Nuer Pastoralists–Between Large Scale Agriculture and Villagization: A case study of the Lare District in the Gambella Region of Ethiopia* (UK Ltd, The Nordic Africa Institute,2017), p.39.

¹⁷Human Rights Watch, *Forced Displacement and "Villagization" In Ethiopia's Gambella Region* (USA, 2012), p.15.

¹⁸Zemenu Awoke, Bogale Teferi, et.al, "Impacts of Resettlement on Woodland Degradation in Abobo Woräda, Gambella, Ethiopia," *An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, Vol. 41 (Gambella University, 2016), pp.68-9.

Because of the above reasons, for a long period of time Gambella served as a main spot of population relocation scheme in the country. In other words, as mentioned in above paragraphs, this region has a long history of receiving the settler households since the time of the imperial governments of Ethiopia. However, the most well-known, all inclusive and acknowledged population relocation scheme in the region was the one bring about by the *Därg* regime right after the 1974 revolution as part of its grand land reform policy, followed by the second phase in the 1980s where the term resettlement and villagization was actually employed in the country. In Gambella most of these resettlement programs were carried out throughout Anywaa heritable land particularly in the contemporary Abobo *Woräda*. As stated on the ‘table: 2’, this state-sponsored population resettlement has caused long lasting effects on the natural resources and demographic features of the study area. In addition to the demographic aftermath of these resettlement programs of the *Därg* government, it has also caused long lasting impacts on the socio-cultural, political and economic activities of both the settler households and the host communities of the study *Woräda*.¹⁹

1.1.1.1.1. Factors Favored Resettlement and Villagization in Gambella Region

Gambella has historically been viewed as an important source of resources for development in the country; as it is one of the water and land endowed regions of Ethiopia. The weather condition of this region is very conducive to carryout extensive population resettlement and state-owned development projects. On average, precipitation in Gambella is 1000-2000 mm per year, compared to 100-500 mm across the highland regions of Ethiopia. The Opeeno-Akobo and their tributaries like the Kir, the Alwero and the Thatha Rivers, one of the country’s three tributaries to the Nile and a contributor of approximately twenty percent of the Nile’s entire annual flow begin and flow through Gambella region. It is also a potential source for hydropower and for irrigation-based agricultural activities. Moreover, Gambella has a low population density of nine persons per square kilometer, compared with 100-200 in the highland regions of our country, Ethiopia. Consequently, as we tried to show it earlier, the existence of these abundant natural resources

¹⁹Ojot, p.60-61; Bogale Teferi and Teferi Mekonen, “Impacts of Resettlement on Woodland Resource Utilization in Abobo Woreda, Gambella, Ethiopia,” *An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, Vol.41 (Gambella University, 2018), p.68.

made the region preferable for an extensive state-owned farming activities and population relocation programs.²⁰ Anita Milman and Yacob Arsano describe the conditions as follows:

...due to the relatively high availability of water and land, agricultural development in Gambella has been promoted as key for alleviating food insecurity nation-wide, through the large state farms and resettlement [population resettlement] of over-crowded highland population during the *Därg* military regime (1974-1987), especially during the drought in the 1980s, and via the commercial agricultural farms being incentivized today...²¹

In addition to the above essences, this region has a potential in forestry, fishery, manufacturing, mining and tourism sectors. Therefore, all these and other factors forced the Ethiopian governments to give much attention to the region and its peoples especially since 1979 to 2000. Throughout this time, many state-sponsored socio-cultural, economic and political measures were taken to alleviate the nefarious nation-wide socio-cultural, economic and political problems.²²

In fact the socio-political and economic changes in the region that took place following the 1974 revolution were immense. After the revolution, the *Därg* government infiltrated into Gambella and shuffled the existing socio-political and economic institutions of Gambella people. The government implemented a number of socialist state policies in the reign. Among these policies, population relocation programs, and promoting socialist socio-cultural, economic and political ideology were the most important in the history of the region.²³ In general, the existing abundant natural resources made the region conducive to implement large-scale state-sponsored developmental projects. Therefore, in Gambella an extensive and planned population relocation schemes for socio-cultural, economic and political reasons began in 1979 when the government set up irrigation schemes on the Opeeno River and other aquatic areas of the region, with Tigray, Amhara, Hadiya and Kämbata settlers brought from the highland regions to farm the schemes.²⁴

²⁰Anita Milman, “Climate adaptation and development: Contradictions for human security in Gambella, Ethiopia”, *Global Environmental Change*, No. 29 (AAU, 2014), p.351.

²¹*Ibid.*

²²Bahru, (1987), pp.75-94; Ojot, pp.116-123; Informants: Egəgayähu Yəhuniè and Ojulu Agwa.

²³Ojot, p. 263.

²⁴*Ibid*, p. 264; Wondwosen, p.39; Human Rights Watch, (2012), p.13; See also: Table, 1.

1.1.1.2. The Villagization Program since 2000

Between 2000 and 2003, food insecurity problem was the main trigger factor that pushed forward the current Ethiopian government to initiate population relocation programs throughout the country. Following the ousting of the *Därg* regime in 1991, with the exception of a few isolated attempts to relocate people, it seemed that planned population relocation scheme was indefinitely suspended for some years.²⁵

Recently, however, the Government of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (GFDRE) has felt the need of launching planned and intra-regional villagization schemes, primarily to tackle the chronic food insecurity problems of some regions of the country. This government sponsored villagization scheme is viewed as a major and essential constituent of accomplishments aimed at addressing the serious problem of food insecurity in Ethiopia.²⁶ Therefore, since this time, the current government implemented a continuous population regrouping programs called the New Coalition for Food Security (NCFS). The coalition involved both government and nongovernmental actors. The program sought to attain food security for five million chronically food insecure people, and significantly improve the food security of an additional ten million people who are increasingly vulnerable to shocks and subject to acute food insecurity in times of drought. The program included productive safety nets as a major component of a strategy that also comprised villagization programs.²⁷

Thus, it is simple to comprehend that the implementation of villagization program in this time was to meet the governmental policy of getting control of food insecurity problem at the national level. Anita Milman and Yacob Arsano, and Pankhurst describe the gesticulations of the government as “...the Ethiopian federal government has often portrayed villagization as a mechanism for addressing drought and increasing agricultural productivity by relieving population pressure in drought-prone environmentally degraded areas...” This federal government policy of population

²⁵Laura Hammond, “Strategies of Invisibilization: how Ethiopia’s Resettlement Programme Hides the Poorest of the poor”, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.518-521.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

relocation program was executed to improve the living standard of the people who live in the lowland areas of the country by regrouping the scattered communities in villages.²⁸

As the next paragraph shows, the goals of the villagization programs in Gambella region is somehow similar to the goals of the villagization programs implemented in other regions of the country. Anita Milman and Yacob Arsano describe the goals of the Gambella Regional State's villagization program as follows:

...stated goals of the Gambella Villagization Program include: socio-economic development to reduce underlying vulnerabilities by transforming livelihoods and improving food security; flood protection to reduce the loss of crops, assets, livestock, drowning, and water borne disease; stabilizing the population, to reduce mobility induced environmental degradation and to facilitate the provision of services and access to the population; and security or protection from cross-border cattle raiding and internal violence...²⁹

In line with these objectives, the Gambella regional government planned to build different types of infrastructures throughout the villagization areas of the region. According to the plan, 25 health care centers, 19 primary schools, 51 water schemes, 18 veterinary clinics, 41 grinding mills, 49 storage facilities, and 195 km of rural roads were planned to be constructed. Additionally, at the end of the program all the rural communities of Gambella region will be regrouped into villages and towns of 500 to 600 households, each farming three to four hectares of land. However, according to Ojot Miru, the plan failed to maintain critical issues such as access to water, school, electrification, and fishing sites and cultural and environmental safeguards for local communities. In case, these conditions paved the way so as to become the popular affiliation or support to the program lesser and lesser through time. Then, the program failed to bring the expected objectives to the peoples of the region in general and the study *Woräda* of Anywaa zone in particular.³⁰

²⁸Anita, p.353; Alula Pankhurst, *Resettlement and Famine in Ethiopia: The Villagers' Experience*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992), p.15.

²⁹Anita, p.353.

³⁰Ojot, p. 266.

1.2. Anywaa Zone of Gambella Peoples' Regional State

Gambella Regional State is located about 780 kilometers from the central capital, Addis Ababa. The aforementioned region current land size covers 159,787 square kilometers, consisting of twelve *Worädas*.³¹ Prior to its establishment as a regional state, the region was part of the then Ilubabor district up until the EPRDF ousted the *Därg* regime and took of the state power on 28 May 1991. This condition forced the indigenous ethnic groups to be governed in the well of the local governors who were assigned directly by the central government to govern the province. However, following the downfall of the *Därg* government in 1991, and the adoption of a new constitution in 1995 the old socio-political and economic structures of the country completely rehabilitated; replaced with federal system of government.³²

The inauguration of federal system of government has caused division of the country into nine regional states. The circumstance paved the way for the emergence of Gambella Regional State with the new name Gambella Peoples' National Regional State (GPNRS). The constitution allowed the peoples of this region to develop their own socio-cultural, economic and political rights.³³

Administratively, as stated in the preceding paragraphs, the region is structured into three zones along the three major ethnic groups, Anywaa zone, Nuer zone, and Mäjang zone. Among the three zonal administrative territorial entities constructed mainly along ethnic lines as the subunits of the region, Anywaa zone is one and it is renown in its socio-cultural, political and economic activities of both the native ethnic groups and highlander settler households.³⁴

Geographically, this zone is bordered on the southwest by Republic of South Sudan, on the southeast by the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State, on the east Mäjang zone of Gambella Peoples' National Regional State. Additionally, it shares the common

³¹Dereje Feyissa, *Land and the Politics of Identity. The Case of Anywaa and Nuer Relations in the Gambella Region, in Competing Jurisdiction: Settling Land Claim in Africa*, ed. Sandra Evers, Marja Spieren Burg, et-al, Vol.6 (Boston, 2005), p. 55.

³²Eisei Kurimoto, "People of the River: Subsistence Economy of the Anywaa of Western Ethiopia: Essays in Northeast African Studies", *Senri Ethnological Studies*, No.43 (1996), p.29.

³³Dereje Feyissa, *The Experience of the Gambella Regional State, in Ethnic Federalism: The Ethiopian Experience in Comparative Perspective* (Oxford University, 2006), pp. 244–245.

³⁴The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: *Results for Gambella* (Addis Ababa, August, 2010), pp. 243-260; Dereje (2006), pp. 243-260; Bogale Teferi, p.68.

boundaries with Oromia regional state; the mountains to east and the north which mark the border with Illubabor and Wolläga, respectively.³⁵

Anywaa zone is by far the largest of the zones of Gambella region and also includes the administrative capital of Gambella region, Gambella town. The topography of this zone is mostly flat at elevations between 400-550 meters above sea level but with the eastern peripheries of the zone going up to an elevation of approximately 2000 meters. Thus, these topographical features made the zone a number one preferable area for implementation of state-sponsored population resettlement and villagization schemes, and other development projects.³⁶

In terms of demographic features, in addition to the Anywaa people, in this zone there are both natives and other ethnic groups who were resettled in different times. Therefore, this zone can be pronounced as melting pot of a number of ethnic groups. The Anywaa, Mäjang, Oromo, Wolayta, Tigraway, Amhara, Kämbata, Hadiya, and many other ethnic groups live in the area for the past several years almost in peaceful manner. The last four ethnic groups arrived during the 1983/4 resettlement programs of the *Därg* regime that was implemented in Gambella region in general and the study area in particular following the outbreak of the horrible famine in northern Ethiopia particularly in Wollo and Tigray, and in some areas of southwest regions of the country in 1983. The zone embraces the four language families of Ethiopia including Semitic (Amhara and Tigraway), Cushitic (Oromo and Hadiya), Omotic (Kämbata and Wolayta) and Nilo-Saharan (Anywaa and Mäjang).³⁷

The general history of the Anywaa zone of Gambella Regional State is highly related to the history of the largest and indigenous ethnic groups of the area. This zone is established along the kinship line of the indigenous ethnic groups, especially the Anywaa. Studies so far made indicate that the Anywaa people in Gambella have occupied most of the central, western and eastern parts of the region.³⁸

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶Kurimoto (1996), p.32.

³⁷Informants: Ato Obang Didumo and Ato Ojulu Ojulu; Human Rights Watch, (U.S.A, 2012), p.12.

³⁸Informants: Adugna Abära, Mäläsä Rägasa and Charles Opek; Regasa Baysa, *War and Peace in the Sudan and its Impact on Ethiopia: the Case of Gambella (1955-2008)*, (AAU, 2010), pp.208-209

According to the 1994 housing and population census, the majority of the Anywaa people settled at the rural areas in the region. The following table illustrates the settlement pattern of the Anywaa people and their share out of the total population size of Gambella region.

Table: 1. The Settlement Pattern of the Anywaa People

Percentile share out of the total population of the Region					
Urban		Rural		Total	Percent
Total	Percent	Total	Percent	44581	27.5
9831	26 percent	34750	36 percent		

Source: Housing and Population Census, 1994, V.II, p.35.

However, following the implementation of the EPRDF’s villagization scheme majority of the Anywaa people became urban dwellers. According to Regassa Bayisa and the 2007 population and housing census conducted by Central Statistical Agency, the Anywaa zone has a total population of 99556, of whom 50722 were males and 48834 females. Out of the total population of the zone, 52561 or 52.8 percent are urban inhabitants.³⁹

The settlement pattern of the Anywaa people in the zone is somehow scattered; an area to the west escarpment of Ethiopia-Sudan border up to the eastern border area where Gambella region shares common borderline with Oromia Regional State called Baro Qäla, currently occupied by the Anywaa people.⁴⁰

The same source further tells us that the present day Nuer-dominated areas including Larè and Itang, were Anywaa-occupied areas until these aboriginals were pushed to southward, especially to the banks of Alwero, Opeeno and Thatha rivers. For this development several factors are responsible. As elsewhere in the tropics, the Ethiopian lowlands are characterized by high

³⁹The 2007 Population and Housing Census of *Ethiopia: Results for Gambella* (Addis Ababa, 2010), pp. 243-260; Regassa, pp.208-209.

⁴⁰Abobo *Woräda* Cultural and Tourism Bureau, Anywaa people Cultural Settlement Pattern Broacher, (Gambella, 2016), pp.1-3; Kurimoto, (1996), p.29.

temperature, erratic rainfall, prevalence of different tropical diseases that affect both human and livestock population. It is to these aquatic and hottest geographic areas that the Anywaa were pushed by the Nuer refugees, government-sponsored farming companies, and highlander households who resettled from 1979 to 1983/4 resettlement programs of the *Därg* regime. However, the Anywaa people didn't remain passive; they reacted in many ways to get control of this highlanders and Nuer population mass inflict into their land.⁴¹

As recently as 1980, Gambella Anywaa population was by far the largest ethnic group in the region and a majority of total population. This began to change very quickly in the mid-1980s. Beginning in 1983, the *Därg's* forced resettlement program generated massive influxes of highlanders to the region. All of the resettlement villages were located in the land that the Anywaa people claimed as their own land.⁴² At almost the same time, refugees from the Sudanese civil war began fleeing into Gambella in general and Anywaa zone in particular. In addition to these mass and large scale of influxes, longstanding pattern of eastward migration among the Sudanese Nuer have led to a steady increase in Gambella's Nuer population over the course of the past century. The pace of Nuer immigration into Gambella has been dramatically accelerated by the civil war in southern Sudan and by the success many Nuer refugees have had in claiming Ethiopian citizenship and settling permanently in Gambella. The result has been that the Anywaa are now a minority in what they regard as their own acreage and restricted only in the five *Worädas* (Abobo, Dimma, Gambella Zuria *Woräda*, Gog and Jor) of the zone under discussion.⁴³

Most of the Anywaa people's localities are very conducive for mechanized agricultural activities. Accordingly, since 1983/4, the *Därg* government has launched large-scale agricultural development schemes in the zone. Therefore, the Anywaa were forced to leave their areas of settlements and the same situation continued to exist up to now. This is expressed in terms of government-sponsored resettlement and villagization program, and mechanized agricultural activities. Among the governmental mechanized agricultural activities, the irrigation dam (that is now locally known as *Gadab*) and the government-owned farming organization (locally known as *Mängöst Ersha*) are very important examples among others. *Gadab* was constructed by the Russian

⁴¹Dereje Feyissa, "A National Perspective on the Conflict in Gambella," *In Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by Svein Ege, Harald Aspen, et-al (Trondheim, 2009), p.641.

⁴²Regasa, p.211.

⁴³*Ibid*, p.220; See also Map, 1.

experts during the *Därg* regime in the rural area of Perbongo. The dam is constructed on the Alwero River in 1988. However, due to the political crisis in the country, the construction process was delayed until 1996.⁴⁴

Figure: 1. The Alwero Dam Constructed in Abobo Worüda of Anywaa zone from 1980-1988 E.c (1987-1995)



Source: (Photo by the Researcher. December, 29, 2019)

The Alwero dam was constructed for mechanized agricultural activities. However, the project initially has caused environmental destruction and massive displacement of both the indigenous and the settler households. When the dammed water started overflowing the upstream areas of the dam, especially the place called Yädurow Abobo, the residents of this area forced to move into another rural area called Chobo. As a result, this new area began to be occupied by these displaced aboriginal households, government officials, Russian masons and deferent business communities of Yädurow Abobo. Thus, this historical event has led to the change in name of the new settlement

⁴⁴Informants: Adugna, Charles, Hailè Gamo, Abäbä Gäsäsä, and Däräsä Ali; See also Figure, 1.

site and its surroundings from Chobo to Abobo. Above all, the event has caused Abobo to grow from a small rural village to town since 1988.⁴⁵

Because of implementation of extensive population relocation schemes in different times, the Abobo *Woräda* in general and Abobo town in particular becomes a melting pot of different ethnic groups. In addition to Abobo, Gambella and Fugnido are the other most important towns in Anywaa zone of Gambella Regional State.⁴⁶ Initially, the political center of the Anywaa zone (formerly known as zone one) was situated in Fugnido town since 1993. However, after Gambella Peoples' Democratic Movement (GPDM) won most of the seats of the state council in the national election of 2000, the political center moved from Fugnido to Abobo town in 2001. According to my key informants, the prevailing political unrest of the Fugnido town and its surroundings forced the regional administration to move the administrative center of the Anywaa zone to Abobo town. Today, as revealed in the previous subtitles, the Anywaa zone is consisted of five *Worädas*: Abobo, Dimma, Gambella Zuria *Woräda*, Gog and Jor. Abobo town is not only the administrative head quarter of the Anywaa zone but also it is the political center of the Abobo *Woräda* administration. It is about 45 kilometers from the political center of Gambella region, Gambella town.⁴⁷

Economically, the basic source of the livelihood of the people of this zone is subsistence and intensive farming activities. In terms of infrastructure also, this administrative zone is so underprivileged. For example, the estimated road-network density is reported to be between 5.1 and 10 kilometers per 1000 square kilometers. According to my key sources, most of the infrastructures of the zone under discussion have been constructed during the *Därg* regime so as to realize socialist socio-cultural, economic and political programs in the study area since 1993/4.⁴⁸

Anywaa zone is considerably suitable for mechanized agricultural activities. The land and the environment have characteristics of marsh land, rich savannah forest and grassland with annual rainfall of about 800 mm. However, the people are predominantly subsistence agriculturalists

⁴⁵*Ibid*; Mengistu Wube, "Effects of Resettlement schemes on Biophysical and Human Environments: The case of Gambella Region, Ethiopia," (Boca Raton, Florida, Universal Publishers, 2005), p.55-56.

⁴⁶Bogale Teferi, p.68; Informants: Adugna, Charles, Hailè, and Däräsä.

⁴⁷Informants: Mäläsä, Adugna, Charles, and Abäbä; Dereje (2006), pp.223-4; See also Map, 2.

⁴⁸Informants: Adugna, Hailè, Abäbä and Däräsä; Ethiopian Mapping Authority, *National Atlas of Ethiopia*, First Edition (Addis Ababa, Berhan Ena-Sälam Printing Press, 1988),p.30.

growing maize, potato, and tobacco. Additionally, the people raise cattle, goats and fowl or chicken which are used for trade, barnyard and other activities. In general, animal husbandry, crop farming, hunting, fishery are the main economic activities of the residents of the zone.⁴⁹ Economically, the indigenous people of the Anywaa zone in general and the Abobo *Woräda* in particular are different in some degree from the other residents of the area. Unlike the other ethnic groups, as highlanders, the economic activities of the Anywaa and the Mäjang people is based on shifting cultivation system along the main aquatic areas like Alwero, Opeeno, Kir and others.⁵⁰

Among the five *Worädas* of the Anywaa zone, Abobo *Woräda* is renowned in its woodland resources and aquatic areas in Gambella Regional State. As we will see it in the coming chapters, these woodland natural resources made the *Woräda* preferable for implementation of extensive population relocation programs, and both state-owned and private farming activities since the time of the *Därg* regime up to present.⁵¹

1.3. Abobo Woräda of Anywaa Zone

The 1991 transitional government of Ethiopia became a base in order to adopt constitutional federalism which laid down the foundation for ethno-national federalism in Ethiopia. Likewise, regional states and nation, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia are demarcated based on their settlement pattern, identity, cultural integration and consent of the people. Accordingly, Gambella Regional State in general and the study *Woräda* in particular were established based on the ethnic affinities of the local peoples. Following the adoption of a new constitution in 1995, the local people of the *Woräda* have had the opportunity to administer themselves.⁵²

Abobo *Woräda* is the one among the five *Worädas* of Anywaa zone found in Gambella People's Regional State. The administration center of this *Woräda* is Abobo town. It is located 813 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa and 45 kilometers south of the administrative center of the region.⁵³

⁴⁹Abobo *Woräda* Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau, "Agricultural Extension Work Procurements Annual Report" (August, 2018), pp.3-5; Kurimoto (1996), pp.32-33.

⁵⁰Kurimoto, (1996), pp.29-57; Informants: Ariat Ojulu and Asrat Alämayähu.

⁵¹*Ibid*; See also Figure, 1.

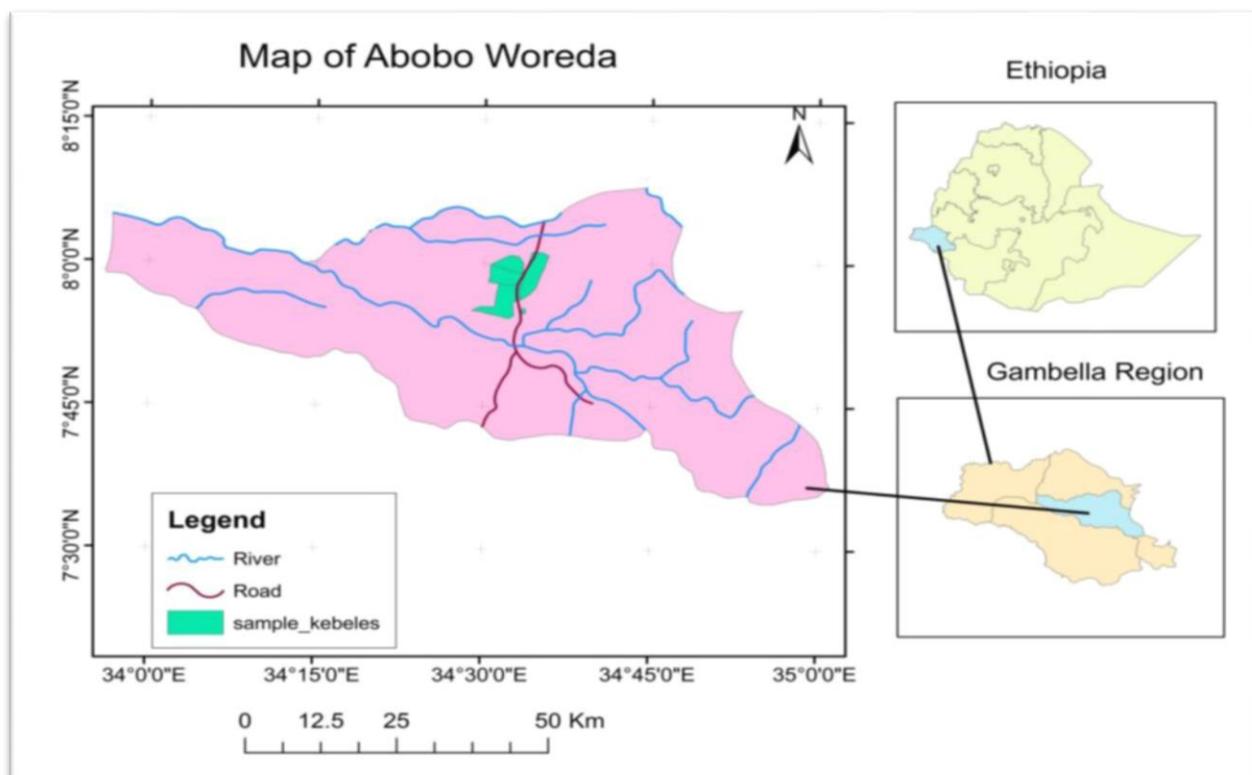
⁵²Bogale Teferi, p.68; Dereje, (2006), pp.223-4.

⁵³*Ibid*.

As described earlier, the *Woräda* is renowned in its wood land natural resources. Twelve years ago the forest coverage of this *Woräda* was 10,966 ha, but this natural resource of the area has diminished in size owing to rapid expansion of the large scale farms by investors and continuous clearing of forests for shifting cultivation by the local communities. However, in 1991 and some years thereafter the two main drivers for deforestation were fuel wood extraction and shifting cultivation.⁵⁴

Geographically, the *Woräda* lies between 07°45'00"- 08°00'00" north latitudes and 34°30'00"- 34°45'00" east longitudes. The *Woräda* bordered with Gambella Zuriya *Woräda* in the north, Etang special *Woräda* in the northwest, Gog *Woräda* to the south, Jikawo and Jor *Worädas* in the west, Mängäshi *Woräda* and Oromia Regional State to the east. In terms of its landmass it covers a total area of 361324.58 Km².⁵⁵

Map: 2. Map of Abobo Woräda



Source: Abobo Woräda Land Administration Office (soft copy)

⁵⁴*Ibid.*

⁵⁵*Ibid*; See also Map, 2.

The administrative structure of the *Woräda* has been set up along settlement patterns of the dweller ethnic groups. Accordingly, the *Woräda* is organized into sixteen rural *Käbäle* administrations and one urban administrative center, namely known as Abobo. Currently, Abobo town serves as both the administrative center of Anywaa zone and the *Woräda* under study. In other words, the *Woräda* is organized into seventeen administrative units or *Käbäles*. Among these *Käbäles*, the six are organized comprising the highlander settler households. The rest administrative units are predominantly occupied by the indigenous peoples, Anywaa and Mäjang.⁵⁶

Before 1991 in this *Woräda* there were about twenty-five settlement sites or villages that were established by the *Därg* government since 1983/4. These settlement villages are listed as: *Mändär* 7, *Mändär* 8, *Mändär* 9, *Mändär* 10, *Mändär* 11, *Mändär* 12, *Mändär* 13, *Mändär* 14, *Mändär* 15, *Mändär*, 16, *Mändär* 17 (*Gädäb*), *Mändär* 18, *Mändär* 19, *Mändär* 20, *Mändär* 21, *Mändär* 22, *Mändär* 23, *Mändär* 24, *Mändär* 25, and so on.⁵⁷

However, as we will see in the coming consecutive chapters, because of several reasons, the number of settlement villages gradually reduced into six villages. Currently, these villages are organized as an administrative *Käbäles* of the highlander settler households.⁵⁸ In the study *Woräda* the administrative *Käbäles* of the highlander settler households are namely known as *Chobo Mändär* (Village) 7, *Chobo Mändär* 8 and 9 (as a single *Käbäle*), *Chobo Mändär* 11 and 12 (as a single *Käbäle*), *Chobo Mändär* 13, *Chobo Mändär* 14, *Mändär* 17 (*Gädäb*). In these administrative subunits there are a large number of settler households.⁵⁹ The terrain of the *Woräda* can be mostly characterized by vast flat landscape and slightly plateau to the east. This *Woräda* is rich in water resources; it is the source of the famous rivers and lakes. The major water bodies in this *Woräda* include river Kir, Alwero, and Lake Alwero (artificial).⁶⁰

The *Woräda* has two agro climatic zones. These are *Woynadäga* or temperate (covers 10 percent) and *Kolla* or arid (covers 90 percent). Accordingly, the mean annual minimum and maximum temperature of the *Woräda* ranges between 18° C and 39° C, respectively. In this area the temperature experiences very hot during the months of February and March and it reaches to 45-

⁵⁶*Ibid.*

⁵⁷Informants: Aäbäbä, Däräsä and Mäläsä; *Ibid.*

⁵⁸*Ibid*

⁵⁹*Ibid.*

⁶⁰Bogale Teferi, p.68; See also Figure, 1.

47°C. The average annual rainfall ranges between 900-920 mm; and the main rainy season in the *Woräda* is from mid-April to October. Therefore, these environmental features made the *Woräda* conducive to carryout different development projects.⁶¹

The major economic activity of the people in Abobo *Woräda* is agriculture, i.e. engaged in cash crop cultivation and herding of domestic animals. Around eighty-five percent of the people are mainly dependent on agricultural activities. In addition to agriculture, trade is also another key source of livelihood; it plays a pivotal role in the history of the people of the *Woräda* in general and Abobo town in particular. Most of the dwellers of this town are simply small and medium scale traders. In other words, the expansion of trade and trading activities accelerated the expansion and development of urban centers throughout the *Woräda*.⁶²

According to my primary sources, unlike the native ethnic groups namely: Anywaa and Mäjang, the highlander settlers who established their livelihood predominantly in the lowland areas of the *Woräda* have been self-sufficient in their economy. This may be related to their better economic activities in their settlement areas; proportionally, these settler households have well-organized agricultural activities.⁶³ Regarding socio-cultural practice is concerned, in Abobo *Woräda*, there are different religious activities. The large number of both the settler households and the host community believe in Protestant-Christianity, which accounts for seventy one percent of the total population of the study *Woräda*, whereas eighteen percent follow Islam and the rest eleven percent are followers of traditional beliefs and Orthodox Christianity.⁶⁴

In terms of ethnic composition, the *Woräda* has been diversified. It is inhabited by various ethnic groups, such as the Anywaa, Mäjang, Amhara, Kämbata, Wolayta, Oromo, and so on. However, numerically, this *Woräda* is predominantly occupied by the Anywaa people. According to the 1994 national census, the *Woräda's* population was reported to be 13973.⁶⁵

⁶¹*Ibid.*

⁶²Abobo *Woräda* Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau Archive, Folder No 18, File No. A/13. "Annual Report of 2014, (Abobo, 13 August, 2014), pp.3-4; *Ibid.*, pp.68-70.

⁶³Abobo *Woräda* Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau, (Abobo, 13 August, 2014), pp.5-7.

⁶⁴Informants: Mäläsä, Däräsä, Aläbachäw Akalu, and Wolacho Wonwalo.

⁶⁵The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: *Results for Gambella Region*, V1 (Addis Ababa, 1995), pp. 203-215.

The following table illustrates the major ethnic groups and their share out of the total number of the population of the *Woräda* under study.

Table: 2. The Major Ethnic Groups of the Study *Woräda*

The Name of the Ethnic Groups	Percentage of the Number of Each Ethnic Group
Anywaa	(44.05%)
Kämbata	(20.1%)
Amhara	(12.57%)
Oromo	(6.31%)
Mäjang	(5.99%)
Others	10.98 %

Source: 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Gambella Region V.1, p.35.

According to the information of the above table, the ethnic composition in Abobo *Woräda* is so diversified. This is in one way or another related to the implementation of considerable population relocation programs since 1983/4.⁶⁶

Despite their long period of comprehensive interactions, these different ethnic groups have their own socio-cultural, political and economic backgrounds and practices in the study *Woräda*.⁶⁷ For example, according to Pritchard Evans, long before the arrival and settlement of other ethnic groups, the current area of Abobo *Woräda* was occupied only by the Anywaa and Mäjang peoples. The Anywaa are believed to have come to the present area from the so called “Cradle land of the Nilots” or from further southeast near Lake Victoria in Kenya and Uganda, and speak the language which belongs to Nilo-Saharan super language family. In addition to the study area, the Anywaa

⁶⁶Christopher Clapham, “The era of Haile Selassie”, in *Understanding Contemporary Ethiopia: Monarchy, Revolution and the Legacy of Meles Zenawi*, by Éloi Ficquet & Gérard Prunier, 183-207 (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2015).p.205; *1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Gambella Region V.1, p.35.*

⁶⁷Informants: Mäläsä, Wolacho and Alämu Söntayähu.

people live throughout the lowlands of the region from the northern direction along the Ethiopia-South Sudan Republic international border areas. Locally, this people have a strong and harmonious interaction with the diversified ethnic groups of the *Woräda*.⁶⁸

Generally, Abobo *Woräda* has endowed with natural woodland resources. According to my primary sources, the existence of these natural resources has made the *Woräda* an appropriate place in order to implement extensive population relocation schemes.⁶⁹ However, even though an extensive population relocation schemes were implemented in various localities of the *Woräda* under study, still the Anywaa people are the largest ethnic group in the study area.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Pritchard Evans, *The Political System of the Anuak [Anywaa]*, (London, Lund and Humphries Publishers, 1940), pp.55-56.

⁶⁹Gambella Peoples National Regional State, “*Villagization and Resettlement Program Report*,” (2013), pp.4-7 and (2003-2005), pp.3-6.

⁷⁰Richard Pankhurst, *The Ethiopian Borderlands. Essays on Regional History from Ancient Times to the End of the 18th century* (Asmara, Lawrenceville, The Red Sea Press, 1997), pp.4-5.

CHAPTER TWO

2. RESETTLEMENT IN ABOBO WORÄDA (DISTRICT) SINCE 1983/4

2.1. The Implementation Processes of the Resettlement Program

Before the implementation of the government-sponsored population resettlement programs in the study area, the number of highlander Ethiopians in Gambella region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular was not that much considerable. As described in chapter one, the history of interaction among the Anywaa people, central government and the highlander Ethiopians extends back as early as the 19th century. According to Harold G. Marcus, Emperor Menelik II directed Ethiopia's push into southern and southwestern regions abandoned in the seventeenth century and into areas never before under its political suzerainty.⁷¹

Hence, the contemporary Gambella regional state in general the study *Woräda* and its peoples in particular became part of the then Ethiopian empire only in the beginning of the 20th century. According to the 1902 boundary agreement between the British colonial government in Sudan and Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, the territory was officially incorporated into Ethiopian Empire. However, up until the acclamation and the coming of the military government into power in 1974, the imperial administration in the region is not that much steady.⁷²

However, the relation between this peripheral territory and the central government began reviving following the coming of Emperor Haile-Selassie I to power in 1930. During this time, the central government recruited resettlers from among the ex-soldiers, family heads whose children were many in number and farmers whose inhabitants were affected by drought and famine. These recruited resettlers were resettled in Shäwa, Sodo in Sidamo and in other southwestern territories like Gambella where large size state farms had existed. However, the resettlement scheme during this time in Gambella was limited only along the drainage system of Opeeno River (now a day around Gambella town).⁷³

⁷¹G.Marcus, p.104.

⁷²Bahru, (1987) pp.75-94.

⁷³Adinew Abtew, "Political and Socio-Economic History of Asossa *Wäräda*, 1941-1991", (MA thesis, AAU, History, June 2011), p.39.

The highlanders began resettling in Gambella when the imperial government began implementing the first state-sponsored resettlement program since 1958 in the area. This state-sponsored resettlement scheme was implemented basically in Anywaa inhabited areas. In this program, the indigenous people of Gambella were dispossessed from the bank of the Opeeno River in order to make way for irrigated commercial agriculture. Then the government brought in settlers from the highland parts of Ethiopia to farm those irrigation schemes.⁷⁴

However, following the coming of the *Därg* to power in 1974, the wide contact between the highlanders and the native ethnic groups of Gambella region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular was witnessed; because since 1979 the *Därg* government implemented an ambitious population relocation program throughout the region. This relationship gradually became intact following the implementation of the second phase of population relocation program of the *Därg* government from 1983/4 to 1985. The bilateral relationship between the host communities and the settler households are extensive in Abobo *Woräda*. This is because; according to Ojot Miru most of the state-sponsored resettlement programs of this time were implemented throughout this *Woräda*. The resettlement program which was sponsored by the *Därg* government brought about profound and extensive contact and later social and cultural interactions between the host communities and the highlander resettlers. Therefore, it is simple to recognize that the most prominent resettlement and villagization program in the study *Woräda* took place from 1983/4 when the *Därg* brought in more than 60,000 resettlers from the drought-affected highland areas of Tigray, Amhara, and Southern regions of the country. According to my primary sources, this resettlement program was implemented to get rid of food insecurity problems of the country.⁷⁵

In Gambella, most of the settlement sites of the *Därg* government were established in Abobo *Woräda* of Anywaa zone. According to my key secondary and primary sources, there are different possible causes or reasons for the resettlement schemes implemented throughout the *Woräda* under study.⁷⁶ The first reason is associated with the economic potentials and the strategic values of the *Woräda*. The *Därg* government viewed Anywaa zone in general and Abobo *Woräda* and its surroundings in particular as economically very useful with its virgin land and its strategic

⁷⁴Ojot, p. 264.

⁷⁵*Ibid*, p. 264; See also Appendix, H and F.

⁷⁶Informants: Egəgayähu, Tariku Chämäda and Asrat; Alula Pankhurst (1992), pp.55-57.

importance to counter balance the Sudanese government encroachment activities in western parts of Ethiopia and to secure the southwestern borderland areas of the country. However, as we will see it in the coming consecutive chapters, this state-sponsored resettlement program adversely affected the environment of the *Woräda*.⁷⁷

Abobo *Woräda* and its surroundings were endowed with natural resources that are essential to lead life at organized household level. According to my key informants, before the occurrence of the *Därg's* resettlement program, almost all parts of this *Woräda* were covered by woodland resources.⁷⁸

Additionally, the terrain of the *Woräda* can be mostly characterized by vast flat landscape and slightly plateau. Above all, in this area there are a number of both natural and artificial water bodies. The major water bodies in this *Woräda* those are very suitable for integrated-agricultural activities include river Alwero and Lake Alwero (artificial) and Kir. Generally, these all natural essences made the *Woräda* preferable for a state-sponsored population relocation program and state-owned farming activities.⁷⁹

The second reason is related to the climatic values of the area. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the *Woräda* has two agro-climatic zones: these are *Woynadäga* (10 percent) and *Kolla* (90 percent). Consequently, the mean annual minimum and maximum temperature of the *Woräda* ranges between 18° C and 39° C, respectively. Additionally, the average annual rainfall ranges between 900-920 mm; and the main rainy season in the *Woräda* is from mid-April to October. Therefore, these kinds of environmental essences are somehow very important to resettle a large number of households from the north, south and southwestern famine-prone regions of the country. However, above all, the environment of the *Woräda* under study is quite suitable for mechanized agricultural activities.⁸⁰

The third factor that allowed the *Därg* government to launch an extensive resettlement schemes in Abobo *Woräda* is related to the geographical proximity of the *Woräda* to the Gambella town, the regional administrative center. In addition to the above mentioned pushing factors, the

⁷⁷*Ibid.*

⁷⁸Bogale Teferi, p.68.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

geographical proximity of the *Woräda* to the regional administrative center also attracted the central government to resettle the highlanders as well as to implement large-scale mechanized agricultural activities. For example according to Ojot Miru, the *Woräda* most affected by the villagization and resettlement programs of the *Därg* regime in the Gambella region is Abobo *Woräda*, located only 45 Km from the regional administrative center. According to the same author, its geographical proximity to the regional administrative center made the study *Woräda* the main recipient of the settler households from the famine-prone regions of the country. Generally, the *Woräda*'s abundant natural resources, climatic values and its proximity to the political center of the region made it a better place for the execution of population relocation schemes and mechanized farming activities.⁸¹

The *Därg* government before attempting to resettle and villagize a large number of households in the given area accomplished a number of preliminary works. The government introduced instructions that contained the criteria for the selection of resettlement sites and establishment of villages. These preliminary works were run by the governmental body known as National Villagization Coordinating Committees (NVCC), and this governmental body was also established at the *Woräda* level to carry out the program. Accordingly, the guidelines gave due attention to make sure the availabilities of the essential natural resources and infrastructure for preferred resettlement village sites. To satisfy the needs of the settler population, then the guidelines for selection of new settlement sites ordered the settlement village sites to have closeness to public service facilities like roads, health care centers, schools, markets centers, religious institutions and so on. Therefore, these all were copious in the study *Woräda*: villages have nearness to roads, water supply and fertile land, and different public service facilities.⁸²

⁸¹Ojot, p.269; Dereje, (2006), pp.223-224; *Ibid*.

⁸²Informants: Sa'eda Zäinu, Mäskäräm Ersino, and Omer Ibrahim; See also Figure, 2.

Figure: 2. The Road Constructed by the Därg Government in 1984



Source: - (Photo by the researcher, February, 18-6-2018)

The Road connects the Ukunna Kijang and Chobo rural areas with the administrative center of the Woräda.

After all these preliminary works, the resettlement sites were selected and the process of implementation was begun in 1983. In that year, a number of resettlement villages were established to allow the settler households who basically came from the northern regions, and from some parts of the contemporary Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPR) of the country.⁸³

As discussed in chapter one, the *Därg* government established more than twenty five resettlement sites or villages. These settlement sites were occupied by different settler ethnic groups; the settlers were basically come from Amhara, Tigray, Kämäbata, Hadiya, Halaba and so on in 1983.⁸⁴

Since its beginning, the resettlement program faced a serious resistance from both settler peasants and from the host communities of settlement areas of the *Woräda* under study. Masses of peasants strongly resisted the program and refused to leave their former settlement areas where they had

⁸³Informants: Egägayähu, Ariat and Asrat; Ojot, pp.263-264.

⁸⁴Informants: Mohammad Yämär and Ansha Mohammad; Zemenu Awoke, pp.68-69.

inhabited and lived for a long period of time, but were unable to standstill the pressures basically came from NVCC and other governmental bodies. Consequently, officials following their failure to convince peasants to evacuate their former places peacefully, they took harsher measures against the civilians. According to my key informants, the measures taken were reprehensible actions; houses were demolished, household materials of peasants become rubbish. Despite, the objection of the peasants to leave their original settlement areas, the government coordination unit of this population relocation scheme and peasant associations, selected the settlement sites and used them to resettle the highlander settlers without the consent and the interest of both the settlers and the host communities. Hence, it aggravated the peasants to resist the program. And at the same time, this population relocation program caused for the eruption of bloody clashes between the resettlers and the native ethnic groups in the study *Woräda*. The clashes between the host communities and the settler households later created social hostility in the area.⁸⁵

Relocating people from their former settlements to the new sites had its own socio-cultural, political and economic effects on both the relocated and the host communities. Due to this population resettlement program, the study area became so crowded; settler peasants were forced to accustom the new and the harsher environmental conditions and the customs of people where they were settled. Even though, the host communities of the *Woräda* might be affected by transmitted diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, dracunculiasis and other pestilences, the problem was highly serious on the newly arrived settler households who had no experience to live in a very hot climate with epidemic diseases. As a result, significant number of settlers lost their lives and their family members. Because of these and other reasons, the number of the residences of some villages decreased considerably.⁸⁶

In addition to the above problem, the problem that is associated with the types of soil composition in the settlement areas of the study *Woräda* is another series problem for newly arrived peasant resettlers. The soil type is predominantly similar throughout the *Woräda*; it is mostly red clay. Red clay type of soil which is suitable only for limited kinds of cash-crops, it was difficult to produce

⁸⁵Informants: Mohammad, Amarä Alämayähu and Fatima Ismael.

⁸⁶Abobo Woräda Health Bureau, “Annual Report on the Program Accomplishment of the 2015 Budget Year,” (Abobo, 2015), pp.4-8; Informants: Däsälägn Däresa and Ariat.

the types of serials that the settlers know before. As a result, the peasantry could produce certain types of crops and cereals only to satisfy their household food needs.⁸⁷

As we will see it in the coming consecutive chapters, in addition to the impacts on the settler households, the *Därg*'s population relocation program had caused tremendous impact on the host communities of the *Woräda*. Basically, this state-sponsored population relocation program caused long lasting effects on the demographic and environmental features of the Abobo *Woräda*.⁸⁸

As stated in the preceding chapter, the population relocation program of 1983/4 had its own objectives. According to Shumete Gizaw, the resettlement and villagization programs that were implemented throughout the country were to ensure and assist people to develop their socio-economic potentials in order to improve their incomes and living standards that are not worse off than they would have been without resettlement.⁸⁹

Additionally, according to Alula Yohannes, the major objectives of these population relocation programs were to introduce favorable situations in the effective use of resources endowed by nature, safeguard the northern Ethiopia peasants from the prevailing famine, creating a homogenous lifestyle between rural and urban dwellers via providing social services to the societies nearer to their village; growing the agricultural productivity; and to increase village security and protection.⁹⁰

However, some writers basically Ojot Miru doesn't accept these rationales for resettlement and villagization in Gambella in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular outlined by the government. Ojot argues that the new villages became the sources of forced labor for the government's grand socialist projects, such as state-owned large-scale commercial farms, road constructions and other infrastructure development projects.⁹¹

⁸⁷*Ibid.*

⁸⁸Gambella Peoples Regional State, Villagization and Resettlement Program Report, (2013), pp.4-7 and (2003-2005), pp.3-6.

⁸⁹Shumete Gizaw, "The Post-Resettlement Assessment in Biftu Jalala Resettlement Site," *EJBE*, Vol.3, No. 1 (Dilla University, 2013), p.23.

⁹⁰Alula Yohannes, "A History of Dämbächa Wäräda to 1991," (MA Thesis, AAU, History, 2011), p. 117.

⁹¹Ojot, pp.260.

Generally, the existence of the abundant woodland natural resources made the Anywaa rural localities a preferable area for state-sponsored socio-cultural, political and economic activities. The establishment of economic institutions and the implementation of state-sponsored resettlement scheme later on provoked other Ethiopian highlanders to come and settle in the study *Woräda* spontaneously. After 1986 many new comer highlanders fled into the settlement areas of the study *Woräda* basically for sake of daily labor opportunities.⁹²

2.2. Types of the Resettlement Schemes

With reference to the type of the Abobo *Woräda* population resettlement program, voluminous essayists have endeavored to categorize it into different groups depending on various approaches. For example, Mesay and Bekure have classified population resettlement program into three main groupings depending on the causes of the population relocation program. These are: conflict instigated resettlement program, ecological instigated resettlement program and development instigated resettlement program. Based on the above classification, the state-sponsored population resettlement program of Abobo *Woräda* can be characterized under ecological caused resettlement scheme. This is because, as repeatedly discussed in the preceding chapter, most of the population resettlement programs of the *Därg* regime in the study *Woräda* were executed following the outburst of the nefarious drought and famine in the northern region as well as in some areas of the southern region of the country since 1980s.⁹³

Another author has also classified resettlement based on the will and interests of both the resettlers and the host communities of the settler recipient areas. Accordingly, population resettlement is classified into two groups: Voluntary and Involuntary. When the population relocation course is conducted based on the interests of both the host communities and the settler households, the system is designated as voluntary population resettlement program. While, when the relocation program is conducted through forceful measures via the intrusion of the governmental agents, the program can be designated as involuntary population resettlement program.⁹⁴

⁹²Informants: Hailè, Getachäw Bäkälä and Shəshai Nəgusu.

⁹³Messay Mulugeta and Bekure Wolde Semayat, “The Impact of Resettlement Scheme on Land Used/Land Cover Changes in Ethiopia: A case study Nanno Resettlement Site, Central Ethiopia”, *Journal of Sustainable development in Africa*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Clarian University, 2011), p.270.

⁹⁴Wolde Selassie, “Gumuz and Highland Resettlers: Differing strategies of livelihood and ethnic relation in Metekel, Northwestern Ethiopia”, (PhD Dissertation, University of Gottingen, Anthropology, 2002), p41.

Therefore, according to the authors' discussion, the population resettlement program of Gambella region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular had been conducted involuntarily without the interests of the entire host communities and settler households. Thus this illustration is therefore attested by my key informants. According to these informants, the state-sponsored population resettlement program was implemented without the curiosity and consensus of both the settler households and the host communities of the *Woräda* under study. In other words the state-sponsored population resettlement program of the *Woräda* was conducted through involuntary approach of population relocation program.⁹⁵

Another author who paid much attention to the typologies of the population relocation schemes that were implemented throughout Gambella region is Mengistu Wube. In addition to the above essayists, Mengistu has also categorized population resettlement programs into two major classifications: Planned (unspontaneous) and Unplanned (spontaneous). He also further classified the unspontaneous population resettlement program into two: voluntary and involuntary population resettlement; the unplanned one is divided again into emergency or forced and spontaneous resettlement.⁹⁶

Therefore, according to my informants, the implementation of the Abobo *Woräda* resettlement program was strongly related with the disastrous nationwide drought and famine of the 1980s, and then the declaration of the state of emergency of the *Därg* government. In other words the Abobo *Woräda* population relocation program was part of the emergency population resettlement program of the *Därg* government.⁹⁷

Apart from the above perspectives, the Abobo *Woräda* population resettlement program could be also typified in terms of the types of settlement pattern. At a national level, there were two types of peasant relocation patterns: Conventional and Integrated. In western parts of Ethiopia these patterns of resettlement were institutionalized. Conventional patterns of population relocation sites were mostly located in the southwestern lowland parts of the country where there was a large portion of unutilized land. These conventional settlement sites were basically located in Gambella,

⁹⁵Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä and Mohammad.

⁹⁶Mengistu Wube, "Effects of Resettlement Scheme on the Biophysical and Human Environment: the case of Gambella Region, Ethiopia" (Boca Raton, Florida, 2005), p.25.

⁹⁷Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä and Mohammad.

Wolläga, Assosa and Mätäkäl. The Integrated population resettlement sites were also mostly built in the regions that have 1500 meters latitude above sea level; these regions were Sidamo and Käffa.⁹⁸

The first resettlement pattern was linked to the villagization project which was supported by mechanized agriculture as well as high medical and educational logistic, while the second pattern rather implemented in the sparsely populated areas and was suggested to be integrated with the local socio-economic activities.⁹⁹ In Abobo *Woräda* of Gambella region the conventional type of population relocation pattern was implemented in most parts of the resettlement sites. This was due to the existence of unutilized woodland natural resource in large amount. The total land mass of the *Woräda* that covers about 361324.42 hectares is covered with a large portion of unexploited woodland, forestland, grassland, wetland, farmland and bare land resources. Generally, such a large amount of natural resources has made the *Woräda* a better place for grand agricultural projects as well as a conventional population resettlement pattern.¹⁰⁰

In general, the types of the Abobo *Woräda* population resettlement program could be examined through the above four classification practicalities: classification of resettlement based on the causes, classification of resettlement based on the interests of both the host communities and the settler households, classification of resettlement based on the approaches used by the government to resettle peasant households, and classification of resettlement based on settlement patterns. More particularly, the types of the Abobo *Woräda* population resettlement scheme manifest basically the following features. These are: ecological instigated population resettlement, involuntary population resettlement and emergency population resettlement scheme.

2.3. The Settler Households and the Host Communities of the *Woräda*

At the inception of the resettlement program in 1983, the host communities of the Abobo *Woräda* were indifferent about the coming of the settler households into their localities; in fact in some

⁹⁸Shiferaw Beqqele, "An Empirical Account of Resettlement in Ethiopia (1975-1985)," *In the Proceedings of the 9th International Congress of Ethiopia Studies* (Moscow: Nauka Publishers,1988), p.141; Alula Pankhurst, "When the Centre Relocates the Periphery: Resettlement during the *Derg*," *in Ethiopia in a Broader Perspective. Papers of the 13th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Vol. II (University of Kyoto Press, 1997), pp.540-546;

⁹⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰Brhane Meles and Zemenu Awoke, "Impacts of Resettlement on Land Use Land Cover Changes and Natural Vegetation Conservation Practices of Resettlers in Abobo Woreda, Gambella, Ethiopia," *An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, Vol.40 (Gambella University,2018),p.21.

settlement areas the host communities participated in constructing temporary shelters for highlander settler households. According to my key informants, the native ethnic groups welcomed the resettlers and there were no open ethnic-based squabbles revealed so far due to the arrival of the settler households.¹⁰¹

However, gradually social tensions have arisen between the host communities and the settler households due to the increment of the settler households in number and competition over utilization of natural resources like farmlands and woodlands. This was because woodland resources are everything among the Anywaa and Mäjang communities; it is the source of their livelihood. But following the implementation of this state-sponsored resettlement program in their rural locales mentioned so far, the former woodlots, grazing land, and farmland of the host communities was appropriated by the central government to accommodate the newly arrived settler households in a relaxed manner. In addition to that the host communities seemed unhappy for more attention of the central government given to settler households than the host communities. Thus, this and other conditions relinquished the harmonious relationship between the host communities and the settler households, and caused the new settlement site environment to be affected in terms of loss of natural resources basically after the *Därg* government ousted from power in 1991.¹⁰²

However, most of the time the tensions between the resettlers and the host communities have never gone beyond temporal quarrels. The Anywaa community have well-pronounced dispute resolution mechanism; the elders played a decisive role in easing any eventual social tensions among the dwellers of the study *Woräda*.¹⁰³

Generally, according to my key informants, this traditional dispute resolution mechanism of the Anywaa people seems has helped to strengthen the enter-ethnic interaction in the Abobo *Woräda* basically up until 1991.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹Informants: Thatha Adiheng, Ojulu Ojulu, Däräsä, Abäbä, and Obang.

¹⁰²Informants: Asrat, Thatha, Ojulu Ojulu, Wolacho, and Obang.

¹⁰³Ethiopian Heritage Study and Management Authority, *The Recognized Intangible Heritages of the Indigenous Ethnic Groups of Gambella Region*, (Addis Ababa, 2013), pp.166-210.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

2.4. Population Resettlement Pattern

In Abobo *Woräda* continuous population relocation programs were implemented since a long period of time. As we have discussed it in the preceding paragraphs, even though the implementation of state-sponsored resettlement programs in the Anywaa-occupied areas started before 1974, the most considerable and massive resettlement programs were implemented since 1983/4, during the time of the *Därg* regime. The resettlement programs which were sponsored by the government brought about deep and extensive contact and later social and cultural interactions between the settler households and the host communities of the study *Woräda*. Even though, a small number of Mäjang people live in some areas, the study *Woräda* is fundamentally occupied by the Anywaa people. This condition, therefore, helped the Anywaa people so as to establish a strong relationship with the settler ethnic groups of the study *Woräda*.¹⁰⁵

In other words, this intact relationship between the host communities and the settler households enabled the people of the *Woräda* at large to develop common socio-cultural and economic practices. However, according to my key informants, there are some differences between the settlement patterns of the settler households and the host communities of the study *Woräda*.¹⁰⁶

As stated earlier, unlike to the other native ethnic groups of Gambella region, the Anywaa people of the study *Woräda* has a strong relationship with the highlander settler households as most of the unspontaneous resettlement programs were implemented in and around their localities. In case, the Anywaa are similar to the rest of the people in many cultural practices, but their traditional settlement patterns are quite different from the settler highlanders of the study *Woräda*. The Anywaa people's resettlement patterns are basically concentrated along the aquatic areas of the contemporary Anywaa zone of the region under study. Eisei Kurimoto describes the actualities as follows:

¹⁰⁵Ojot, pp. 263-264; Informants: Kasäch Mäkonän, Hailè and Mäläsä.

¹⁰⁶Informants: Kasäch, Hailè, Mäläsä, and Obang.

...the settlement patterns of this community are located along five major river basins: the Opeeno, Akobo, Giilo (Gila) and Oboth, and a tributaries of the Opeeno and Alwero rivers... the Anywaa people prefer aquatic areas to settle. This is because the aquatic areas are the main sources of livelihood among the Anywaa people...¹⁰⁷

However, unlike the host communities of the *Woräda*, the resettlement patterns of the highlander settler households were established based on the availability of essential infrastructure and natural resources. In case, the settlement patterns of the settler communities concentrated basically along the main road networks and around the major urban centers of the Anywaa zone in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular. As a result, the location of the settlement patterns of the highlander settlers helped them to dominate the economic, political and social undertakings of the *Woräda* up until very recent time paradoxically. In addition to the above actualities, the settlement patterns of the highlander settler households in this *Woräda* were established based on the ethnic affinities of the settlers. Distance in settlement of the settler ethnic groups increases as distance in kinship increases.¹⁰⁸

In Abobo *Woräda*, the implementation of resettlement patterns based on the kinship lines was to provide a residential village for those settlers who came from the same highland areas and even without changing the name of their previous localities. Nevertheless, according to my informants, sometimes this way of resettling the peasants failed to be implemented. This was because, as described in the preceding paragraphs, placement of people was sometimes carried out based on the availableness of essential natural resources and sequencing of the arrival of the transportation trucks in the resettlement areas. After arrival, each household has been given a plot of land to construct a house and develop homesteads so as to enable the settlers to lead their life without a sense of dependency.¹⁰⁹

In the Anywaa localities in general and the Abobo *Woräda* in particular the highlander settler households occupied similar patterns of housing placement. They have formed villages with clustered houses, which have similar characteristics with the settlement patterns of their original

¹⁰⁷Eisei Kurimoto, "Natives and Outsiders: the Historical Experience of Anywaa of Western Ethiopia," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Tokyo, 1992), p.4; Ojot, p. 108.

¹⁰⁸Ojot, pp. 134-135; Informants: Ojulu Ojulu, Ansha, Hailè, and Yəmār Adām.

¹⁰⁹Informants: Ojulu Ojulu, Aläbachäw, Wolacho, and Məhərätè Endalamaw.

areas. In other words, villages in the study *Woräda* were established in clustered settlement patterns so as to enable the members of each village to establish a strong relationship and to provide essential governmental services easily.¹¹⁰

Generally, the groups of both resettlers and the native ethnic groups collectively formed their separate *Käbäle* administrative units in the study *Woräda*. In this *Woräda*, most of the resettlement sites of the *Därg* regime were established in different rural localities. Among these rural resettlement localities: Ukunna Kijang, Chobo and Perbongo are the most important among others. These rural locales now a day are in the administrative domain of the study *Woräda*, Abobo. In these rural resettlement locales there is a closer relationship between the resettlers and the host communities.¹¹¹ Consequently, this strong inter-ethnic relationship in return helped the dwellers of the *Woräda* at large to develop common socio-cultural, economic and political practices. In addition to the preceding governments, the current government also implemented a series of an ambitious population relocation programs since 2000.¹¹²

2.5. The Resettlement and Responses of the Host Communities

As we have seen in the last consecutive paragraphs, the country's heavy dependence on agriculture and agricultural products, rural land resettlement scheme in Ethiopia has become more and more important tool for both policy makers and planners for overcoming a whole range of problems associated with the socio-economic life of the population at large. The champions of this policy considered population relocation program as a decisive means of addressing such problems as food insecurity, rural unemployment, and land fragmentation and downgrading.¹¹³

Even though Ethiopian population relocation scheme experience was started during the time of the imperial government of the country in 1958, the most and proportionally well-planned population relocation scheme was executed right after 1974 revolution; following the coming of the *Därg* government to power. Shortly after the 1974 revolution, the government of the time took consecutive socio-political and economic reforms to win popular support, specially the tenants.

¹¹⁰Informants: Gatuluak Pol, Ambëssa Mäkonän, Omod Obuti, and Zämānay Ejägu.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²Melisachew Fentie, "Impact of Resettlement on Woody Plant Species: The Case of Jawie, Awie Zone, Amhara Region", (MA thesis, Addis Ababa, Geography, 2009), p.18; Informants: Ojulu Ojulu, Obang, Charles, and Mäläsä.

¹¹³Gerum, p.17; Bisra, p.2.

Among the government's socio-economic reforms, the policy of land using and owning strategy was the most important among others. As part of policy of land reform it became a tool to accelerate resettlement scheme throughout the country.¹¹⁴

The 1975 land reform gave unlimited authority to the *Därg* government to inaugurate extensive population relocation policy throughout the country aiming at gating control of the prevailing socio-economic problems. For example, article 18 of the 1975 Land Reform Proclamation (LRP) states that:

...the government shall have the responsibility to resettle peasant households or to establish cottage industries to accommodate those who have food insecurity problem, as a result of distribution of land . . . remain with little or no land...¹¹⁵

Even though this program faced a serious criticism from both the Ethiopian elites and the international community, the *Därg* government clearly outlined and identified the importance and the factors that initiated this population relocation program in the country. The population of Ethiopia, especially those in the northern and southern part had lived with sever and persistent famines for generation. This condition makes resettlement a very attractive, reasonable and visible response to famine and drought in the northern and some areas of southern regions of the country. A number of essayists tried to find out the factors that pushed forward the *Därg* government to implement the population relocation programs throughout the country. Among these essayists, Estifanos Läma elucidated the factors that initiated the *Därg* to carry out the program as follows:

...usually the factors that initiate the resettlement of the people: Sevier pressure on land due to overcrowding, rehabilitation of famine victims, and the accommodation of the rural land less and the urban unemployed...¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Prunier, p.31; Francesca Agneta et al, "The Dynamics of Social and Economic Adaption during Resettlement: The Case of the Beles Valley in Ethiopia" *In Anthropological Approaches to Resettlement* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 252.

¹¹⁵Theodore M.Vestal, "Food, Famine and Development", *Journal of Africa Today*, Vol.32, No 4 (Indiana University Press, 1985), pp.7-28.

¹¹⁶Estifanos Lemma, "Land use land cover Dynamics in Post-Resettlement Areas using Cellular Automata model: The Case of Gubalafto Woräda", (MA thesis, A.A.U, Environmental Science, 2010), pp.5-6.

Generally, as discussed in chapter one, getting control of these and other socio-economic and political problems were the final objectives of the *Därg* government's resettlement and villagization program. Hence, it is simple to recognize that the outbreak of the 1983/4 famine was the immediate factor for the commencement of the second phase of the *Därg* resettlement program in October 1984, involving one and a half million people from Tigray, Amhara and from some areas of the southern region of the country being relocated in Wolläga, Käffa and Gambella.¹¹⁷ As a result of this program, for a few years, the government of the time successfully reduced the vulnerability to famine in the highland areas by reducing the population pressure and improving the hurtled environment.¹¹⁸

Since 1958 Gambella was the most important receiver of settler households in the county. Since this time up to 2000 a series of population relocation programs were implemented in the country in general and Gambella region in particular. However, as we have stated on the above paragraphs, the most prominent resettlement program in Abobo *Woräda* took place from 1983/4 when the *Därg* government brought in 60,000 settlers from the drought-affected highland areas of the country.¹¹⁹

Among the *Worädas* of Anywaa zone of Gambella Regional State, Abobo *Woräda* is considerably populous. This was because of both spontaneous and unspontaneous population relocation schemes were implemented since three centuries ago. The Anywaa land with its richly gifted and vast fertile soil in the lowland areas of the *Woräda* had made it eligible as a host area for highlander settler households since the time of the *Därg* government. Thus, these essences initiated the *Därg* government to favor the *Woräda* for an extensive resettlement scheme. After the first batch of settlers were dispatched from some areas of northern and southern highland regions of the country in 1883/4 with initiation of the government, a large number of households inflicted spontaneously into the *Woräda* under study for the sake of job opportunities. According to my key informants, during this time the government-sponsored population resettlement program in the

¹¹⁷Ethiopian Mapping Authority, p.26.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹¹⁹Ojot, p.263.

Woräda concentrated basically in three rural resettlement locales. These rural resettlement locales are Ukunna Kijang, Chobo, and Perbongo.¹²⁰

The *Därg* population resettlement program in the study *Woräda* was implemented without the consent of both the settler households and the host communities. The sites for resettlement were randomly selected by President Mengistu Haile-Mariam and his inner circle advisors without any consultation with concerned government departments or experts in relevant fields, such as ecology, economics, anthropology, history and others.¹²¹ Since the inception of the resettlement program, the settler households faced harsh conditions in their new settlement localities. The lack of proper consent of the host communities about the number and the background of the settler households paved the way for beginning of discontents between the settler households and the host communities in the *Woräda* under study basically after 1991.¹²²

But according to Ojot Miru and other writers, the objection of the local people was suppressed with exaggerated force that was recruited from the coordinated forces of the settler peasants and the central government. The responses of both the *Därg* regime and its successor of power, the EPRDF government, in the subsequent revolts of the Anywaa people were outright; the security forces committed extrajudicial executions, arbitrary detention, and destruction of property belonging to those who showed resistance to the program especially in the Abobo *Woräda* where there were a large number of highlander settler households.¹²³

However, as discussed in the previous chapter, that the grievances of the host communities in Gambella region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular provoked when the *Därg* government allowed the Sudanese Nuer refugees to lead their lives in the Anywaa-occupied areas without any restrictions. The pace of Nuer immigration into Gambella has been dramatically

¹²⁰Teshome Yitbarek, “Characterization and Classification of Soils of Abobo Area, Western Ethiopia”, *Applied and Environmental Soil Science* (Hindawi Publishing Corporation, 2016), p.2; Informants: Abäbä and Däsalägn.

¹²¹Ojot, pp.261-262; Alexander Mecklenburg, “Changing Ethnic Relations. A Preliminary Investigation of Gambella, Southwest Ethiopia”, *Asien-Afrika-Institut*, V.1 (Universität Hamburg, 2004), p.12; Wondwosen, p.39; Gebru Tereke, *The Ethiopian Revolution: War in the Horn of Africa* (Yale University, 2009), pp. 150-5.

¹²²*Ibid.*

¹²³*Ibid.*

accelerated by the success many Nuer refugees have had in claiming Ethiopian citizenship and settling permanently in what the Anywaa people claimed as their own land.¹²⁴

In addition to the effects of the mass influx of the Ethiopian highlander settlers into the land that the Anywaa regard as their own, the coming of the Sudanese Nuer population in large number into the study area directed many Anywaa elites to fear the erosion of their political power and some believed that the very survival of Anywaa culture is at risk. As a result the struggle of the host communities escalated from unorganized peasant-based struggle into proportionally well-organized struggle strategy that was led by Anywaa elites. Because of the above perceptions towards the settler households, many Anywaa elites bitterly resented the arrival of both Sudanese Nuer refugees, and the Ethiopian highlander settler households brought into the study *Woräda* in particular.¹²⁵

Thus, the *Därg's* resettlement and villagization program and policy of refugees that was against the will of the host ethnic-groups unleashed the formation of armed opposition and rebel groups such as the Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement (GPLM) up until 1993.¹²⁶

The formation of this and other armed rebel groups completely hurtled the coexistence of the residents of the Abobo *Woräda*. These armed groups attempted to raid the refugee camps and the resettlement sites of the Ethiopian highlanders in different rural settlement locales especially in Ukunna Kijang before and after 1991.¹²⁷

Among the rural resettlement areas of the *Woräda* under consideration, the rural resettlement area that is known as Ukunna Kijang was significantly populous. This was because of the resettlement sites or villages (formally known as *Mändär* in the *Woräda*) of the Ethiopian highlanders were established in this rural resettlement locale.¹²⁸ In this rural area there were more than ten resettlement villages of highlander settler households. At present, however, except a few members of the host community, there is no any highlander settler household in this rural resettlement site.

¹²⁴Regasa, p.220.

¹²⁵Informants: Abäbä, Mulatu Jämbär and Thatha; Mecklenburg, p.7.

¹²⁶Yonas Adaye, "Conflict Complexity in Ethiopia: Case Study of Gambella Regional State," (PhD Dissertation, University of Bradford, 2014), pp.271-275.

¹²⁷Informants: Däräsä, Abdu Taräkägn, Wolacho, and Thatha.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

Because of the intermittent raids of GPLM and other similar armed groups, settlers forced to evacuate from their villages, and inflicted into the neighboring resettlement areas; basically into Chobo rural resettlement locale.¹²⁹

During the political crisis of the country that followed the downfall of the *Därg* government in 1991, things have worsened in Abobo *Woräda*. Successively, during the transitional period of the country from the military regime to the EPRDF government (1991-1995), groups of Anywaa militant men attacked openly the highlander settler households who had been living alongside them in the contemporary Abobo *Woräda*. This was because, traditionally the Anywaa people see themselves as the first settlers and the hosts in the region and feel a lot of pressure arising from the arrival of the different ethnic groups from different directions.¹³⁰

As was indicated in the previous paragraphs, there were numerous socio-political factors that pushed the Anywaa elites to react against the population relocation programs in their localities. According to my key primary and secondary sources, this Anywaa elites' anti-population relocation program movement was something movement of protecting their socio-cultural values from domination and complete overwhelming of the new arrival socio-cultural, economic and cultural practices.¹³¹

For example, according to Alexander Mecklenburg, the implementation of the *Därg* resettlement program ruined the indigenous socio-cultural, political and subsistence economy of the Anywaa people. At expense of the existing socio-cultural practices, the government forced Anywaa men, women and youths to be organized into peasant associations. The introduction of these and other new socialist state socio-cultural and economic formations into the area under consideration completely uninhabited the aged-old Anywaa subsistent socio-cultural and economic practices.¹³²

In addition to the socio-cultural issues, environmental issues were also the basic pushing factor for the different Anywaa militant groups to react against population relocation programs in Gambella in general and the study *Woräda* in particular. For example according to Kurimoto:

¹²⁹*Ibid*; Informants: Mohammad, Thatha and Esubaläw Məhərät.

¹³⁰Informants: Alämnäsh Ezəq'el, Sämayət Alaməräw and Wolacho; Mecklenburg, p.7.

¹³¹*Ibid*; Mecklenburg, pp.11-12.

¹³²Mecklenburg, pp.11-12.

...environmentally, Anywaa localities fell prey to the extensive needs of the highlander settlers and Sudanese civil war refugees concerning food and fire-wood; the need for meat was satisfied by the killing of wild animals, one of the Anywaa's major source of dietary fiber. Thus these all challenged the patience of the Anywaa elites...¹³³

In general, this maladapted government-sponsored population resettlement and villagization program, that was against the will of the local population, was the basic pushing factor for the emergence of armed opposition and rebel groups such as the Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement (GPLM) until 1993.¹³⁴

However, after 1991, in addition to GPLM, a number of political parties were incubated in response to the EPRDF's new political rearrangements in Gambella region in 1992 and the villagization program of 2000, and the land lease agreement signed between the Ethiopian government and different farming commercial companies since 2005.¹³⁵

For example among the political parties that were established after 1991 to be 'voice' for the indigenous peoples of the region in general and the study *Woräda* where there was a large number of settler households in particular were: Gambella Nilots United Movement/Army (GNUM/A), Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement/Force (GPLM/F), Gambella Peoples' United Democratic Front (GPUDF), and Southwest Ethiopia Nilo-Saharan Peoples' Independent Movement (SENPIM) were the most important among others.¹³⁶

These political parties maintain that the resettlement and the villagization programs of both the *Därg* and the EPRDF governments, and the land lease deal signed between the recent Ethiopian government and the commercial companies led to forced displacement without free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous communities. Thus, these political parties had the fundamental objective of bringing 'freedom' to the indigenous peoples from all forms of political, economic

¹³³Eisei Kurimoto, "Multidimensional Impact of Refugees and Settlers in the Gambella Region Western Ethiopia" *In Displacement Risks in Africa* (Kyoto University Press, 2005), p.8

¹³⁴Yonas, pp.271-275.

¹³⁵*Ibid*; See also Appendix, K.

¹³⁶*Ibid*.

and social discrimination and oppression, then waged war against settler households indiscriminately in Abobo *Woräda* basically following the fall of the *Därg* government in 1991.¹³⁷

The response of these armed and rebelled groups [political parties] targeted any socio-cultural, political and economic activities that were said to be the belongings of the settler ethnic groups. In addition to attacking the settlement sites, the armed groups began ambushing government officials and other influential personages in the study *Woräda*.¹³⁸

On 17 November 2003, five private highlander contractors working on a road rehabilitation project outside of Abobo town were ambushed and killed; and on 13 December 2003, a group of eight highlander employees of the Administration of Refugees and Returnees' Affairs (ARRA), a state agency working with the UNHCR in the region, went to investigate the death of the innocent civilians on 17 November 2003, at the same place of the 17 November 2003 incident they were ambushed and all of them were killed. Horrified by what they heard, the highlanders began counter attacking on the Anywaa onlookers of the killing indiscriminately and went on a riot through the Anywaa neighborhoods. This ethnic based conflict caused for the death and displacement of many Anywaa civilians.¹³⁹

Such types of conflicts are common features of the study area up until very recent years. For example in 2012 the same militant groups attacked one of the foreign farming companies that were established by the Saudi investors in Abobo *Woräda* in 2005. Yonas Adaye describes the event as follows:

...in April 2012, these groups attacked employees that used to work for Saudi Star in Gambella killing four Ethiopians and one Pakistani, which was confirmed by the Ethiopian media and the project manager of the Saudi Star Agricultural Development (SSAD), plc....¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷*Ibid.*

¹³⁸Informants: Alämnäsh, Sänayət and Ruqäya Hassan; Ojot, p. 136.

¹³⁹Yonas, pp. 211-212; Ministry of Federal Affairs, "Report to the House of Peoples Representatives on the 2004 conflict in Gambella Regional State" (Addis Ababa, March, 2004), p.5.

¹⁴⁰Yonas, pp. 271-272.

In addition to the highlander settler households, in this *Woräda* there are a number of both governmental and private farming companies that were established following the implementation of the *Därg* regime's population resettlement program in 1983/4, and the EPRDF's population regrouping program of 2000 and its land utilization policies in the region. As a result, basically after 1991, the study *Woräda* then became a center of ethnic based conflicts fundamentally between the host communities and the highlander Ethiopian settler households.¹⁴¹

Generally, even though the aims of the *Därg* government's resettlement and villagization program in Gambella were resettling famine-affected highlanders to the fertile grounds in the study *Woräda* and to strengthen and eventually transform the modes of food production among the indigenous communities of the contemporary Gambella Regional State at large, the systems or the approaches that were used by the government in order to realize the socialist state socio-cultural, economic and political policies in the region, resented the host communities in general and the schooled Anywaa elites in particular. Here what we can comprehend is that, the responses of the local people encompassed all the schooled and unschooled classes of the commonalities of the region under consideration. The magnitude of the ethnic-based conflict in the study *Woräda* became multidimensional following the implementation of the EPRDF's population regrouping program of 2000 and its land utilization policies of 2005. Therefore, following the implementation of the population resettlement schemes from 1983/4-2000, the study *Woräda* became an arena of ethnic based conflicts fundamentally between the host communities and the highlander settler households.¹⁴²

2.6. Inter-ethnic Conflicts and their Impacts on the Resettlement Areas

The Ethiopian history of involuntary and voluntary population resettlement and villagization program is multifaceted and reaches far back in time; neither spontaneous nor unspontaneous population resettlements are new components in Ethiopian history. However, the state-sponsored resettlement and villagization program fully started after the 1974 Ethiopian revolution; before that, attempts of population resettlement and villagization schemes had been rather disorganized and spontaneous.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹Teshome Yitbarek, p.2; Informants: Wolacho, Abäbä and Däsälägn.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*

¹⁴³Agneta, p.252.

During the time of the *Därg* government, an extensive state-sponsored population relocation programs were implemented in the northwest, south and southwest regions of the country. Among the areas of the southwest region of the country, Gambella was the most important destination area of the settler households. However, the dissemination of the resettlers in this region is not an even; there are some differences from *Woräda* to *Woräda*. Among the *Worädas* of this region, Abobo *Woräda* was the most important recipient of the settler households and state-owned farming projects. As described in the preceding paragraphs, the existence of plentiful woodland natural resources made the *Woräda* a number one preferable area in order to implement state-run grand socio-cultural, economic and political programs. The background of the settler households of the *Woräda* is diversified; they were basically from Tigray, Amhara, and from different areas of the present South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State like Kämbata, Hadiya and Halaba.¹⁴⁴

In these areas of the country there were chronic shortage of rain fall, flooding, large household size and shortage of arable land. Consequently, these problems later escalated into a full scale famine in 1980s; then this nefarious famine initiated the *Därg* government to launch an extensive population resettlement programs throughout Gambella region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular.¹⁴⁵

According to Alula Pankhurst, Gambella region was considered by the government as a target of socialist economic development plans. Because the area was renown in its medium growing season, good vegetation cover, huge water resource, relatively low population density and fertile and arable land.¹⁴⁶

As we stated earlier, apart from its economic importance, the geographical and political values of Gambella region forced the *Därg* government to pay special concern for Gambella region and its surroundings. According to my key primary and secondary sources, because of these factors the government established more than twenty settlement sites throughout Gambella region especially in the study *Woräda*. These resettlement sites of the Abobo *Woräda* were located basically in three

¹⁴⁴Jody Henderson, "Ethnicity and 'Development' In Gambella Region, Western Ethiopia," (MA thesis, University of London, 2004), pp.1- 4; Ojot, p. 264; Kumar, pp.51-54.

¹⁴⁵Richard Pankhurst (1997), pp. 540-542.

¹⁴⁶Alula Pankhurst (1992), pp.55-57.

rural settlement locales: Ukunna Kijang, Chobo, and Perbongo. Before the implementation of the state-sponsored population relocation scheme of 1983/4, these three rural locales had their own socio-cultural, political and economic autonomous under their own customary or traditional rulers respectively.¹⁴⁷

However, following the implementation of the *Därg* population relocation schemes in these rural areas of the *Woräda*, the indigenous socio-cultural, political and economic activities were overwhelmingly swallowed by the new socio-cultural, economic and political practices of the socialist state. This in return had caused that the Anywaa elites to fear the survival of Anywaa culture is at jeopardy. Then many schooled Anywaa elites attempted to react against the population relocation programs of the government in different ways. In addition to reacting against the government leading sociocultural and economic activities, many armed groups tried to raid the settlement villages of the Ethiopian highlander settler households.¹⁴⁸

Geographically, the resettlement rural locales of the Abobo *Woräda* are located 813 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa and forty-seven kilometers south of Gambella town. Therefore, the geographical proximity of these rural locales to the regional capital pushed forward the *Därg* government in order to establish most of the resettlement sites throughout these rural areas of the *Woräda* under study.¹⁴⁹

As outlined in the preceding chapter, among the three rural settlement locales of the *Woräda*, the rural locale that is known as Ukunna Kijang was significantly populous. This was because most of the settlement sites (formally known as *Mändär* in the *Woräda*) were established in this rural locale. Among the settlement sites in this rural locale include *Mändär 15, Mändär, 16, Mändär 18, Mändär 19, Mändär 20, Mändär 21, Mändär 22, Mändär 23, Mändär 24, and Mändär 25* were the most important among others.¹⁵⁰

As the resettlement and villagization program began, these settlement sites were crowded with settler households who came from different highland areas of the country. At present, however, except a few members of the host community, there are no any highlander households in the

¹⁴⁷Kurimoto (2005), p.8; Bogale Teferi, p.68; Informants: Charles, Abäbä and Däräsä.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹Bogale Teferi, p.68; Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä and Charles.

¹⁵⁰Informants: Däräsä, Inspector Abdu, Abäbä, and Thatha.

settlement sites. This was because settlers evacuated from these settlement sites and inflicting into the neighboring villages of other rural settlement locales where there was proportionally peace and stability.¹⁵¹

The *Därg* government resettlement program was mainly carried out without the consent either of the people being resettled or host communities. Thus, it was fated to fail. Since then, some of the members of the host community who were unhappy with the government's resettlement program in their localities have reacted in various methods.¹⁵²

The political crisis that took place during the Transitional Period (1991-1995) of the country created fertile ground for different militant groups to pursue anti-settler households who were leading their lives in deferent settlement sites in the *Woräda*. Because in this time there was no strong governmental structure to maintain peace and order in the study *Woräda* in general and Ukunna Kijang rural resettlement locale in particular.¹⁵³

As was stated earlier, the implementation of the socialist state development grand projects and the implementation of the 1983/4 population resettlement program of the *Därg* government in the different Anywaa-occupied rural locales of the *Woräda* dissatisfied the Anywaa elites. Therefor a number of armed groups incubated here and there in the study *Woräda*. Since these militant groups were organized deliberately to attack the settlement sites, the existing political unrest of the country, therefore, initiated them to provoke ruthless military campaign against the settler households throughout the *Woräda* in general and more particularly in Ukunna Kijang rural settlement locale where there were a large number of highlander settler households since 20 May, 1991.¹⁵⁴ Alexander Mecklenburg describes the conditions of the *Woräda* as follows:

...it was only after the demise of the *Därg*, that a sense of ethnicity and territoriality began to take hold of the minds of the *Anywaa*-elites and violence openly broke out against the highlanders [settlers]. This was the case in Ukuuna [Ukunna Kijang], where Anywaa militia men and peasants killed 200 settlers in 1991...¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹Informants: Mohammad, Thatha and Esubaläw.

¹⁵²Mecklenburg, p.12; Wondwosen, p.39.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

Consequently, the highlander resettlers in this resettlement rural area have been forced to flee into the neighboring rural resettlement locale where there was a relative peace and stability. Most of the displaced settler households fled into the neighboring villages that were established in nearby rural resettlement locale called Chobo. In general, the series military raids that were carried out by different armed groups had caused the complete disappearance of the highlander Ethiopian resettlement villages in Ukunna Kijang rural locale.¹⁵⁶

The second most populous rural resettlement locale in the *Woräda* is Chobo. In this rural resettlement locale, the *Därg* government established a large number of resettlement sites or villages since 1983/4. The villages in this rural locale includes: *Mändär 7*, *Mändär 8*, *Mändär 9*, *Mändär 10*, *Mändär 11*, *Mändär 12*, *Mändär 13*, and *Mändär 14*.¹⁵⁷

Despite frequent raiding attempts were performed from different militant groups since 1991, except *Mändär 10*, most of villages in Chobo rural locale survived up until today. Now a day, in these settlement villages there are a large number of settler households who came from different social and ethnical backgrounds since 1983/4.¹⁵⁸

According to the 1994 CSA statistical analysis, in Chobo rural resettlement locale, there is a large number of settler households. CSA presents the demographical features of the Chobo rural resettlement locale as follows:

Table: 3. The Demographic Feature of the Chobo Rural Settlement Locale

Resettlement sites or <i>Käbälès</i> .	Males	Females	Total number of resettlers.	Total number of households
<i>Chobo Mändär 7</i>	446	385	831	188
<i>Chobo Mändär 8</i>	553	512	1065	260
<i>Chobo Mändär 13</i>	402	391	793	257

¹⁵⁶Informants: Mohammad, Endähafti Gäbrä-Ŝadiq and Thatha; *Ibid*, pp.12-13.

¹⁵⁷Informants: Däräsä, Abäbä, Hailè, and Wolacho.

¹⁵⁸Informants: Hailè, Mohammad, Endähafti, and Thatha.

<i>Chobo Mändär</i> 9	192	173	365	92
<i>Chobo Mändär</i> 11	247	227	474	143
<i>Chobo Mändär</i> 12	236	209	445	144
<i>Chobo Mändär</i> 14	549	431	980	332
Total	2625	2328	4953	1416

Source: 1994 CSA Population and Housing census of Ethiopia Results for Gambella, V.1, p.24.

According to my key informants, different factors contributed significant roles for the survival of settlement villages in Chobo rural locale. Geographically, as this rural locale is located at the heartland of the study *Woräda*, there was relatively considerable governmental security force and better administration system. Additionally, in Chobo rural resettlement locale, there were better road networks and other types of communication infrastructures. Thus, these and other factors helped the local administrative bodies to save the settler households from any eventual attacks in and around this rural resettlement locale of the *Woräda* under study.¹⁵⁹

However, this ethnic-based conflict was not resolved up until 2004. As the Anywaa militant men continued anti-highlander military insurrection, the settler highlanders began taking self-defense measures. In this attack and counterattack turmoil many Anywaa civilians were killed by settler highlanders in Gambella region in general and the contemporary Abobo *Woräda* in particular on 3, April, 2004. The counter attacks of the settler households highlighted the social hostilities between the host communities and the highlander settler households.¹⁶⁰

On the other hand, among the rural resettlement locales in the *Woräda*, the list-populous rural settlement locale is Perbongo. The *Därg* government didn't favor this rural locale for an extensive resettlement and villagization scheme. This was because, according to my key informants, the area was reserved to construct irrigation dam on the river known as Alwero for mechanized agricultural activities. The availability of a large portion of irrigable land and rivers made this rural area

¹⁵⁹Informants: Thatha, Endähafti, Mohammad, Hailè, and Wolacho; See also Figure, 2.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*

suitable for mechanized agricultural activities rather than launching state-sponsored population resettlement schemes.¹⁶¹

Therefore, it is simple to recognize that the availability of large portion of irrigable land and rivers was the basic reason for the *Därg* government to construct the Alwero dam in 1988 spending a large amount of financial resources for the construction process in Perbongo rural locale. This irrigation dam was constructed by the Russian experts. However, apart from constructing the Alwero dam, the *Därg* government established only one resettlement village, which is now a day known as *Mändär* 17. However, this administrative unit of the *Woräda* is formally known as *Gədəb* or ‘Dam’ in English.¹⁶²

During the *Därg* government the security issue in the resettlement areas was critical. Additionally, the government worked hard to fulfill infrastructure demands of the settler households. In terms of public service facilities, both the native ethnic groups and the settler households of the *Woräda* share a kind of health service facility: a clinic or dispensary and other social services like road, elementary school together without any murmuring. As a result, initially the settlers enjoyed unlimited habits of establishing a closer social interaction among their brethren in and out of their settlement sites in the above three rural locales. But, as we will see it in the approaching consecutive chapters, the 1983/4 population resettlement scheme completely changed the administration system of the *Woräda* under study.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä and Däsälägn; See also Figure, 1.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³Informants: Amarä, Fatima and Mohammad; See also the Figure, 2 and 3.

Figure: 3. Village 14 Elementary School.



Source: (Photo taken by the researcher. February, 25-6-2018)

One of the Schools constructed during the time of the Därg regime's Resettlement program in Abobo Woräda to fulfill the infrastructural needs of both the settlers and the host communities in 1985.

Even though the *Därg* government resettled a large number of households from different highland areas of the country, Anywaa people are still the largest ethnic group in the study *Woräda*. In the council of the *Woräda*, the sets are appropriated by the Anywaa people representatives, with minor representation of Tigraway, Amhara, Kambata and other smaller ethnic groups. Thus, this indicates that even though Amharic is a medium of communication in the *Woräda*, the majority ethnic group is Dha.Anywaa speaker. To accommodate the settler ethnic groups in the governmental administration system, Amharic adopted to be a working language in Anywaa zone in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular. This is in one way or another related with the presence of a large number of settler households in the study area up until today. After a long bloody inter-ethnic conflict, the settler households and the host ethnic groups of the *Woräda* are now living in peace.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴The 1994 *Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Results for Gambella Region*, V1 (Addis Ababa, 1995), pp. 203–215; Informants: Yömär and Ojulu Agwa; See also table, 5.

Generally, in Abobo *Woräda* the settler households of the above three resettlement rural locales are dependent upon land as the basis of socio-economic subsistence which derives its livelihood from agriculture and associated activities. Crop production in the form of cereals, pulses, oil seeds, fibers and root crops, and animal husbandry are the major agricultural activities in the *Woräda*. However, to some extent, the presence of the settler highlanders and the establishment of different governmental grand farming organizations improved the agricultural activities of the study *Woräda*.¹⁶⁵

Although this *Woräda* is renowned for its various water resources especially due to its proximity to Alwero and Opeeno rivers, and irrigable land potentials, the majority of both resettlers and indigenous peasants pursue rain fed agriculture throughout the above three resettlement rural locales. In addition to the agricultural practices, the roadside villages' resident families tend to take advantage of commercial opportunities presented by pedestrians by establishing small merchandise kiosks, tea and coffee houses and other income-generating activities.¹⁶⁶

In addition to the above elucidation about the economic outcomes of the 1983/4 population resettlement scheme, throughout the coming chapters the socio-cultural, economic and political aftermaths of the total state-sponsored population relocation programs in the study *Woräda* will be discussed in detail.

¹⁶⁵Bogale Teferi, pp. 68-70.

¹⁶⁶Informants: Mohammad and Getachäw; *Ibid*, p.68.

CHAPTER THREE

3. AFTERMATH OF THE DÄRG RESETTLEMENT SCHEMES

3.1. Aftermaths in Abobo Woräda

In the processes of resettlement what are always thought are the consequences. According to Kassahun Berhanu, the large scale population resettlement program of the *Därg* government has been criticized for a number of problems. First, consultation among policy makers, implementers, the resettlers as well as the host communities was minimal. Second, high handedness in implementing plans entailed resettlements often quelled through coercive methods, which thus undermined possibilities for commitment of the resettled communities. Third, the resource and socio-economic support necessary for bolstering the chances of meeting the stated targets were not optimally rallied and disorganization and confusion was the result. Generally, according to the same author, the aftermaths or the consequences of population resettlement could be classified into three major categories: socio-cultural, economic and environmental aftermaths.¹⁶⁷

3.1.1. Socio-cultural Aftermath

As stated earlier, population relocation scheme (which is usually referred as resettlement and villagization program) could be executed using either voluntary or involuntary approaches. Apart from approaches of execution, technically also, population relocation scheme refers to a planned (unspontaneous) or unplanned (spontaneous) movement of large number of people from original settlement to another one which is a new settlement, and this movement is not without aftermaths.¹⁶⁸

Most of the time, planned population relocation scheme is state-leading. In history, planned population resettlement and villagization programs have been promoted as national policies and been implemented by a top-down approaches. This means that officials on the ground have

¹⁶⁷Kassahun Berhanu, “Resettlement and Quest for Food Security in Ethiopia: The Challenge of Resettlement”, No.1, Vol.3, *Medrek Forum for Social Studies* (Addis Ababa, 2003), pp.2-7.

¹⁶⁸Alula Pankhurst (1997), pp.540-558; Ogaboh Agba, et.al,“Socio-economic and Cultural Impacts of Resettlement on Bakassi People of Cross River State, Nigeria,” *Studies in Sociology of Science*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2010), pp. 50-62.

followed the strategies set out at the top political level and there has almost never been much decisions making power to the target group of the program.¹⁶⁹

This description seems to be the more appropriate to the Ethiopian context as it elucidates the commitment of the state in relocating the people to the resource-endowed regions of the country other than their own localities since 1958.¹⁷⁰ In history of the population relocation scheme of our country, the political figures were the most important titleholders in initiating the people to resettle in less-populated regions. Therefore, the leaders of the country take responsibility for any socio-cultural changes that took place after the implementation of the resettlement and villagization programs in the country since the time of the imperial governments up to 2000.¹⁷¹

It is the spontaneous or planned movement of people from their original settlement sites to resettle in a new one where they have to adapt to the biophysical, social and administrative system of the new environment. In addition to the relocated community, there are many possibilities for the existing community and their environment to share both the positive and the negative aftermaths of population relocation programs.¹⁷² The aftermaths of the *Därg* government population relocation program was intensive in Gambella region. In addition to getting control of famine-proneness of the people in the northern and in some areas of the southern regions of the country, the *Därg*'s policy of resettlement and villagization program in the region aimed at converting predominantly subsistence farming system into planned and state-owned agricultural practices in the settlement areas. Therefore, scattered villages were regrouped into artificial modern villages in order to promote socio-cultural, political and economic developments.¹⁷³

However, the processes of implementing the program didn't take into account the existing socio-cultural and economic contexts of the settlement areas; the program was only implemented to enforce the state's socio-cultural, economic and political objectives. Thus, the outcomes of this

¹⁶⁹Richard E. Matland, "Synthesizing the Implementation Literature: The Ambiguity-Conflict Model of Policy Implementation", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, Vol. 5, No.2 (April 1995), p. 1946.

¹⁷⁰Gebre Yntiso, "Differential Reestablishment of Voluntary and Involuntary Migrants: the Case of Metekel Settlers in Ethiopia", *In African Study Monographs*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Kyoto University, 2002), pp. 31-46.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²*Ibid.*

¹⁷³Mecklenburg, p.5.

state-sponsored population relocation were odd. Alexander Mecklenburg elucidates the condition in a brief manner. According to his elucidation:

...villages could rather be seen as work camps than social institutions. The government imposed work routine and strict control of food supplies... the selection of village sites was mainly guided by strategic considerations, rather than by the availability of natural resource. The farmers had to walk long distances for water access, forcing them to alienate their grazing grounds... ¹⁷⁴

As stated in the preceding paragraphs, Gambella region in general and Anywaa localities of Abobo *Woräda* in particular were the major target area for all inclusive government-sponsored population resettlement and villagization scheme during the *Därg* government since 1983/4 and followed by considerable socio-cultural, political and economic aftermaths particularly in the study *Woräda*, Abobo. ¹⁷⁵

Many studies have been carried out concerning the social impacts of resettlement in Ethiopia. As these studies, population relocation schemes can disintegrate the social institutions of both the host community and the settler households and impoverish their livelihood resources. Social institutions and organizations that bind the community web of relationships along several lines in the origin such as neighborhood, kinship, religious beliefs, workmate and land exchange bond friendship, etc. can be disintegrated in the process of population relocation. ¹⁷⁶

According to my key primary sources, the socio-political, psychological and economic cost of population relocation program has been unavoidably high and in some cases irreversible. Therefore, any population relocation scheme is the basic cause for the socio-cultural, psychological stress and high mortality and morbidity related problems around the world. In addition to the socio-cultural aspects, involuntary resettlement has a tremendous impact on the economic aspects; it causes for the destruction of the arable lands, and social-support networks leaving in small and medium families. Environmental degradation including loss of grazing lands

¹⁷⁴*Ibid*, p.12.

¹⁷⁵Zemenu, p. 67; Informants: Charles, Adugna and Thatha.

¹⁷⁶Berhanu Geneti, "The Impact of Resettlement on Woodland Vegetation: the Case of Chewaka Resettlement Area, Southwestern Ethiopia" (A.A.U, 2007), p.18; Moti Jaleta, "Impact of Resettlement on the Livelihood, Food Security and Natural Resource Utilization in Ethiopia", Dry lands Coordination Group, Report No. 65, V.10 (Oslo,2011),p.7.

and sources of drinking water is also associated with population resettlement and villagization scheme.¹⁷⁷

In addition to the above writers, Berhanu Geneti elucidates the outcomes of population relocation programs. According to his outlook, "...resettlement and villagization programs can cause many socio-cultural impacts, especially if the ethnic and cultural composition of the resettlers is heterogeneous..."¹⁷⁸

The present features of the Abobo *Woräda* raises optimism of this Berhanu Geneti's argumentative interpretation. Following the 1983/4 *Därg's* resettlement and villagization program, Abobo *Woräda* has become a melting pot of different ethnic groups who came from different highland regions of Ethiopia. As a result the socio-cultural, economic and political aftermaths that occurred among the inhabitants of the *Woräda* were extraordinary and profound; and these changes that took place in this *Woräda* are easily identifiable.¹⁷⁹

According to my secondary sources, population relocation program in Abobo *Woräda* carried out since 1983/4 involved impacts mentioned above. First and foremost, the *Därg's* population relocation scheme disintegrated both the resettlers' and the host communities' social institutions and organizations, which bind their immeasurable-mesh of relations and interactions in diverse. In terms of economic activities, this population relocation scheme disrupted both the resettlers and the host communities' subsistence production systems and impoverished their livelihood. This disruption of cultural and subsistence economic system in return caused different socio-cultural problems among both the host communities and the settler households of the *Woräda*. As a result, indecisions and confusions happened among the settler households until agonizing adaptive adjustments occurred to the new environment of the *Woräda*.¹⁸⁰

With reference to the host communities, the socio-cultural aftermaths of the *Därg* regime population resettlement program in the *Woräda* are immense. Contrasting the other Ethiopians

¹⁷⁷Endalkachew Girma, "Assessing the Impacts of South Sudanese Refugees on the Host Communities of Itang Woreda: A Case Study of Tierkidi Refugee Camp in Gambella Regional State," MA thesis (AAU, Political Science, 2016), pp.52-69; Agba, pp. 50-62.

¹⁷⁸Berhanu, pp.18-19.

¹⁷⁹Kurimoto (2005), p. 6.

¹⁸⁰Informants: Məhərätè, Hailè and Zämānay Ejəgu.

cultures, which are integrated with one another, Anywaa people's cultures are orthodoxly untouched and remain to resist assimilation into conventional Ethiopians culture. However, Ethiopian government, particularly under Col. Mengestu Haile-mariam had tried to implement state-owned grand developmental projects and population resettlement scheme in Abobo *Woräda* to absorb the indigenous culture and occupy the woodland natural resources and fertile lands in the region in general and the *Woräda* in particular. The land of Anywaa people of the Abobo *Woräda* is vast, fertile, and unoccupied. Thus, it has been a core plan of central government to relocate the northern Ethiopian highlanders into what central government called abundant lands.¹⁸¹

In the eve of the resettlement plan, the *Därg* regime induced a lot of cultural changes throughout Anywaa areas. Many cultural values were forced to change without the will of Anywaa people. The government also forced Anywaa off their lands and out of their houses as well. In 1984, the indigenous residents were ordered to evacuate two neighborhoods in Abobo town, Chobo Kir and Ubala. At least 200 *Tukuls* (huts) were demolished in order to build new houses for Soviet specialists sent to work on a dam and irrigation scheme in the contemporary Abobo *Woräda*. The residences were left unattended; even no compensation was made for their demolished properties.¹⁸²

In 1985, all schools in the area were closed so that students and teachers could cutgrass and wood and erect *Tukuls* in the resettlement camps for the settler households. This pronouncement exasperated Anywaa elites. The worse of all was the 1986 mass campaign of military recruitment which forced many students mainly the Anywaa students to joint national army. This had in return caused for the deterioration of the number of the Anywaa graduates from the higher education opportunities. Additionally, it is said that there was confusion among the host communities of the *Woräda* about how to deal with deferent skin-colored settler households with deferent socio-cultural, economic practices, and psychological makeups.¹⁸³

Population relocation program can also bring about break-up of families. The 1980s the *Därg* regime population resettlement and villagization schemes in the *Woräda* had caused many settler families to be wrecked. This is directly related with environmental characteristics of the *Woräda*.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*

¹⁸²*Ibid.*

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

The schemes were carried out in lowland areas where the climate is completely different from their original homelands. As a result, the resettlers experienced difficulties since the new climate is less hospitable that led to excessive mortality due to lowland diseases. They were also suffering from increased control in the resettlement areas to prevent any eventual emission of the settler households.¹⁸⁴

According to my key informants, such kinds of events were common in the *Woräda* under consideration. To get out of these troubles, the settler households tried to get their families back to the original settlements at every opportunity. In consequence, recognizing this high level of demand of the resettlers to return into the original settlement, the government tightened control over the resettlers to save the settlement sites of the study area from complete abandonment. Travelling from one village to another village was only possible through pass letters obtained from village administrative offices.¹⁸⁵

Now let's take a closer look at the situations to make things clear. As stated earlier, the 1983/4 population relocation scheme has taken away the traditional resources of the indigenous or host communities that affected their livelihood. After the implementation of the resettlement program, the indigenous people became incompetent to practice their former subsistence economic activities. This was because the basic sources of their livelihood (that based on shifting cultivation, hunting, fishing, bush-honey collection and on other traditional subsistence economic activities) were appropriated by the government. Similarly, the settler Ethiopian highlanders experienced hardships due to changes in environment and nourishment. They were also subjected to lowland diseases such as malaria and Dracunculiasis (guinea-worm) and sleep-sickness. As a result, since its inception, the population relocation scheme of the *Därg* government in Abobo *Woräda* claimed the lives of many settler households.¹⁸⁶

The *Därg* government tried to implement its socialist state policy of 'collectivization' in the *Woräda*. However, the endeavor of the government in implementing its policy in the areas where there was a large number of indigenous ethnic groups caused serious resentments. Thus, as we have revealed in the previous chapters, the influential Anywaa elites tried to respond to this new

¹⁸⁴Berhanu, pp. 18-19.

¹⁸⁵Informants: Mulatu Jämbär, Fatima, Ansha, and Tigist Ayälä.

¹⁸⁶*Ibid.*

socio-economic policy and the population relocation schemes in various ways. Although, in some cases harmonious relationships were formed with host communities, in many areas resettlers faced hostile relations with indigenous inhabitants. Ojot Miru reported that the host community particularly the youth started to develop negative attitudes as they view resettlers as contestants over the use of natural resources of the *Woräda*.¹⁸⁷

The government to enforce the socialist state socio-cultural, political and economic policy took more intense measures and sadistically abolished indigenous ethnic groups' cultural practices associated with their identity discourse through its modernist project by confiscating traditional emblem of power of the people of the *Woräda* under study. A variety of indigenous cultural practices and institutions were banned on the ground that they were assumed as anti-government socio-cultural policies. Specially following the implementation of the resettlement program of the period, a new form of social organizations were imposed on the indigenous ethnic groups of the *Woräda* at expense of the existing traditional experiences; peasant associations, women's and youth associations replaced traditional socio-cultural institutions. These institutions were more exploitative; each member of these associations obliged to pay exaggerated taxes on the land that the indigenous people assumed as their own traditional hereditary property.¹⁸⁸

In the meantime, the selection of the *Woräda* as the main center of the population resettlement program brought considerable opportunities for both the settler households and the host communities. The government to implement the socialist state policies in the area and to maintain the settlement areas, the transportation infrastructures was greatly improved. Networks of all weathered roads were built, connecting the resettlement sites with the administrative center of the *Woräda*, Abobo town; and with the other urban centers of the region, such as Gambella and Pinyudo. This infrastructural development in return facilitated the socio-cultural interactions basically among the indigenous communities of the *Woräda*; between Anywaa and Mäjäng.¹⁸⁹

The *Därg* government established many state owned agricultural extension projects and other public service centers like schools and health care centers. In these socio-economic organizations many individuals of the indigenous ethnic groups were employed. Generally speaking the local

¹⁸⁷Ojot, pp.133-137.

¹⁸⁸Mecklenburg, p.11; Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä and Adugna.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid*; See also Figure, 2.

people welcomed the development of infrastructures and public service centers, appreciating the fact that they were enjoying more opportunities than ever before.¹⁹⁰

However, as mentioned above, there were also high levels of resentment among the host ethnic groups. This resentment emanated from high rates of taxation and the alienation of their ancestral lands by state-owned projects like: resettlement programs and agricultural extension projects. Therefore, some of the resented Anywaa elites reacted against the government's policy by establishing different militant groups in different neighboring countries. Anywaa dissidents in Khartoum organized the GLF (Gambella Liberation Front) around 1980, which was renamed as the GPLM (Gambella Peoples' Liberation Movement) in 1985. With support from other anti-*Därg* regime organizations based in Sudan, they began launching small-scale military operations against the government and the highlander settler households especially in the study *Woräda*. Their paramilitary operations made the situations in many parts of the *Woräda* (especially in Ukunna Kijang rural locale) more difficult as the indigenous people of the area were collectively regarded as anti-highlander settler households and government. The government to maintain 'peace and order' took excessive measures against the indigenous people in the *Woräda* in general and in Ukunna Kijang rural locale in particular. Thus, later it created social unrest among the indigenous people; a large number of the local people of this area (specially the elites) forced to flee into different countries like: Sudan, Kenya, Uganda and United States of America.¹⁹¹

The effect is not directed only to the host communities, rather the whole communities of the *Woräda* in one way or another is at odds with the problems of the 1983/4 resettlement and villagization program of the *Därg* regime. Certainly the highlander settler households in Gambella in general and Abobo *Woräda* of Anywaa zone in particular suffered more than other settler households who were resettled in other regions of the country. First of all, as was mentioned in the above consecutive paragraphs, the natural weather conditions of the lowland areas of the region are radically different to their original settlements. For the settler highlanders, the weather condition of the settlement areas in the region at large was not bearable. Because it is hot and dry, cultivating their staple crops such as: Tef, Ensät, Barley and other serials was impossible, and they had to rely instead on cotton, maize, rice, and potato and casaba cultivation. Consequently,

¹⁹⁰*Ibid*; Informants: Mäläsä, Adugna and Yəmär; See also Figure, 2 and 3.

¹⁹¹Yonas, pp.271-275; Informants: Abäbä, Däräsä, Thatha, and Adugna.

according to my key informants, these new changes created social confusion among the highlander settler households in the study area.¹⁹²

As was mentioned in the preceding chapters, although, some of the settler households remain and become well-stabled in the resettlement sites, substantial incidences of returnees have been reported in the *Woräda*; this is in one way or another related with the natural and human made problems in the resettlement areas. It is said that the resettlement sites were about to be completely empty basically following the 1991 political unrest of the country. It was also indicated that some highlander settler households want to operate in both places (in their current resettlement sites and their original areas) by leaving some family members behind. Consequently, this condition later on paved the way for the coming of additional Ethiopian highlanders into this area for the same opportunity.¹⁹³

Following the implementation of the 1983/4 resettlement and villagization program, large numbers of people from the different parts of the country voyaged into the *Woräda* for various reasons. Thus, this spontaneous population voyage caused last long socio-cultural and political impact in the *Woräda*.¹⁹⁴

In general, the *Därg* population resettlement and villagization program gradually paved the way for the current unspontaneous population movement from the different parts of the country to the *Woräda*. It is becoming one of the challenges for the administration of the Abobo *Woräda*. According to my primary sources, the population of the settlers in the *Woräda* was increasing from time to time due to unplanned exodus of settlers. These new arrivals demanded extra land for their livelihood, needed additional social services and infrastructures which were beyond the capacity of the *Woräda* administration to hospitalize since it was not planned. If this unplanned or spontaneous population resettlement to the *Woräda* continues, the consequence will result sever socio-cultural, political and economic problems; it will result in deforestation, unnecessary resource competition with the host communities and leads to inter-ethnic conflict in the study *Woräda*.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹²Informants: Mäläsä, Adugna, Yəmär, and Amarä.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴Bisrat, p.74.

¹⁹⁵*Ibid.*

3.1.2. Economic Aftermath

Since the time of Emperor Menelik II up to the contemporary government of the country, Gambella Regional State and its surroundings were regarded as the main center of economic values for the growing economy of the country.¹⁹⁶

The economic history of the study area is highly related with territorial expansion of the imperial regimes of the country since 1896 up to 1907. As discussed before, throughout this time Emperor Menelik II expanded the political grounds of Ethiopian empire into southern and western regions of the country abandoned in the seventeenth century and into areas never before under its traditional imperial rule.¹⁹⁷

According to my primary sources, following this traditional territorial expansion of the Ethiopian empire, the contemporary Gambella Regional State and its peoples became part of the then Ethiopian empire in the beginning of the 20th century. This southward territorial expansion of the central government of the country invited a number of foreign powers to give considerable attention to the Ethiopian region.¹⁹⁸

The opening of the Djibouti-Addis Ababa rail way enabled the French government to establish a firm bilateral economic relation with Ethiopian government. However, for the British government, the creeping of the French government into the Ethiopian region was not something that can be intimidated simply; because these nations were antagonistic nations in Europe during the First World War, and thereafter global political dynamics. Therefore, the British government didn't want to see another strong rival European nation (especially French government) in the region. Then for the establishment of the Gambella trading post in 1904 was meant to be a brilliant British countermove to avert the virtual commercial hegemony in Ethiopia that the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway seemed to promise the French government.¹⁹⁹

Hence, the British government made series socio-economic agreements with Ethiopian government of the time. According to Ojot Miru explication, on 15 May 1902, after complicated

¹⁹⁶Informants: Mäläsä, Mulugèta Endalamaw, Məhərätè, and Ajulu Ojulu.

¹⁹⁷G.Marcus, p.104; Bahru (1987), pp.75-94.

¹⁹⁸Bahru (1987), pp. 75-94.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid*, p.75.

and prolonged negotiations, Emperor Menelik II signed the Anglo-Ethiopian agreement that established his western frontier with the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. This bilateral agreement and the establishment of the Gambella trading port on Opeeno River proved to be an important success for both the British and the Ethiopian empire. At the peak of its commercial accomplishment, from 1920s to 1930s, it served as important trading waterway for international trade of the two powers, British (vanquisher of Sudanese) and Ethiopia. Since then Gambella town in particular and its surrounding Anywaa localities in general became the main center of international and local economic activities and the main settlement area for the highlander Ethiopians.²⁰⁰

As was stated in the preceding consecutive chapters, intensive population inflection into the study area has a lengthy history; it dates back to the imperial eras of the country. Ojot Miru attests this explanation; according to his argument, the Anywaa localities have a long history of receiving resettlers from the highland regions of the country. The Ethiopian highlanders resettled in this study area through both spontaneous and unspontaneous approaches.²⁰¹

The first official resettlement program in Gambella was in 1979 when the indigenous ethnic groups were dispossessed from the bank of the Opeeno River in order to make way for irrigated commercial agriculture. Then the government brought in resettlers from the highland parts of Ethiopia to farms those irrigation schemes. However, as was attested by different writers, most of the settler highlanders in the region were resettled by the *Därg* regime in 1983/4 and 1985. These resettlers were from the famine-prone areas of the northern and southern regions of Ethiopia.²⁰²

In the history of the population relocation scheme of the country, resettlement and villagization programs were designed to address political, social and economic problems. One of the Ethiopian governments' long-term goals in actively engaging in the politically and economically exorbitant population resettlement program seems to be to transform ephemeral forms of livelihood into settled forms of cultivation, after a thorough social reengineering. This would mean that local people would benefit from increased productivity and improved social service delivery.²⁰³

²⁰⁰Ojot, pp.116-119; *Ibid*, pp.75-76.

²⁰¹*Ibid*.

²⁰²*Ibid*; Ethiopian Mapping Authority, p.26.

²⁰³Fana Gebresenbet, "Governing the Horn of Africa's Lowlands: Land Investments and Villagization in Gambella, Ethiopia, *Africa program brief*, No.9 (Wilson Center, 2014), pp.4-5.

Therefore, to meet with these goals, the *Därg* government launched an extensive population relocation programs in Gambella region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular. As indicated earlier, the terrain of the *Woräda* can be mostly characterized by vast flat landscape and slightly plateau to the east. This *Woräda* is rich in water resources; it is the source of the famous rivers and lakes. The major water bodies in this *Woräda* include river Kir, Alwero and Lake Alwero (artificial). Besides, the *Woräda* have two agro-climatic zones: *Woynadäga* and *Kolla*. These agro-climatic zones of the *Woräda* cover 10 and 90 percent respectively. Accordingly, the mean annual minimum and maximum temperature of the *Woräda* ranges between 18° C and 39° C respectively. In this area the temperature experiences very hot during the months of February and March and it reaches to 45-47° c. The average annual rainfall ranges between 900-920 mm and the main rainy season in the *Woräda* is from mid-April to October. Consequently, its natural resources and weather conditions then made the *Woräda* conducive to grow different types of cash crops as well as to implement population resettlement schemes.²⁰⁴

Therefore, the attractive environment and the abundant natural resources of the Abobo *Woräda* made it a better choice to execute an extensive population relocation programs even up until very recent time. In the study *Woräda* the total number of the settler households that were resettled by the *Därg* government said to be more than 15,000.²⁰⁵

To accommodate this much number of the settler households the *Därg* government accomplished preliminary works in the study *Woräda*. A number of primary schools and health care centers were built throughout the *Woräda*, even in areas so remote that the teachers and the health professionals had to walk for days to reach them. The capacity of secondary schools was also extended. Totally during the time of the *Därg* government more than eight elementary and one secondary schools were constructed in the different areas of the *Woräda*. In these schools and through the adult education programs, socialist and nationalist ideologies were propagated at the grassroots level.²⁰⁶

Apart from the educational facilities, the *Därg* government gave considerable concern for agricultural developments in the *Woräda*. A number of development projects were also begun during the time of the *Därg* regime, as the regime regarded the study *Woräda*, with its rich water

²⁰⁴Bogale, p.68; See also Figure, 1.

²⁰⁵Informants: Mäläsä, Charles, Mulugëta, Məhərätè, and Ajulu Oulu.

²⁰⁶Informants: Gatuluak, Ambëssa, Omod Obuti, and Egəgayähu; See also Figure, 3.

resources and sparsely-populated settlement pattern, as an ideal condition for agricultural development. These projects included: a state farm for cultivating cotton, mechanized agricultural schemes using modernized tractors, a dam construction and irrigation projects coordinated by a number of Cuba, USSR, and other socialist European countries experts.²⁰⁷

As it suddenly became more populous for the reason that of the resettlement program, the *Woräda* became the main center of economic activities, then and there urbanization dramatically accelerated. Smaller towns in the area, such as Abobo, also expanded as settler households, government employees and many businessmen arrived and settled in down. Additionally, many settlement sites in Ukunna Kijang (eastern Abobo town) and in Chobo (western Abobo town) rural locales began characterizing urban-like features.²⁰⁸

However, unlike to the developments took place in other resettlement sites of the *Woräda*, the progresses of Abobo town was so fastest. In other words, the 1983/4 population relocation program brought magnificent changes in Abobo town; it transformed from an unimportant village level into growing small town in a short period of time.²⁰⁹ The following table illustrates the total demographic features of the Abobo town.

Table: 4. The Total Demographic Features of the Abobo town

Sex			Types of social organization	
Males	Females	Both Sex (total)	Number of households	Number of housing units
595	627	1222	315	310

Source: 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia; Results for Gambella, VI, p.15.

According to my key primary sources, before the execution of the 1983/4 population resettlement program in the *Woräda* under study, the population size of this town was hardly any. Nevertheless, after the implementation of the *Därg* population resettlement program this town became so overcrowded. According to the 1994 national population and housing census of Ethiopia, the total

²⁰⁷*Ibid*; See also Figure, 1.

²⁰⁸Informants: Ambèssa, Mulugèta, Məhərätè, and Ajulu Oulu.

²⁰⁹*Ibid*.

population of the Abobo town shares more than the nine percent out of the total population of the study *Woräda*. Abobo town and its surroundings had been merely rewards for different public servants like primary school teachers, health officers and policemen; however, soon developed into small growing urban center after 1984. In this small town there were small kiosks, butcheries, tea and coffee shops, bars and restaurants, and hotels of brick-walled and corrugated iron roofs. Additionally, the development of transportation and communication systems, various government-owned agricultural development projects (like Mängəsət Ersha established in 1986), and an increasing number of workers from the highland regions of the country all contributed to these economic developments in the study *Woräda*.²¹⁰ Even though, it was totally monitored by the central government, during the *Därg* government the trade network was expanded deep into the interior part of the region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular. Of course, the courses of trading activities were not limited to domestic exchanges rather the business line has also sunk into the neighboring countries. Basically the trading relation was so strong with modern Republic of South Sudan.²¹¹

Although, the majority of settler households remained in downright poverty, many became successful small traders, selling goods to Sudanese refugees, settler households, the indigenous ethnic groups, and to any other section of the community of the contemporary Abobo *Woräda*. Some of the resettlers were successful enough to become the owners of shops, hotels, bars, restaurants and cattle flocks, and hence suppliers of fresh beef and milk in the study area and in the surrounding urban centers of the region including Gambella town.²¹²

Even though, most of the business chasers of the *Woräda* were the highlanders, the indigenous ethnic groups like Anywaa and Mäjäng also rapidly involved in this flourishing market and circulating cash economic activities.²¹³

The economic activities in Abobo *Woräda* like: taxation, education, transportation, and the newly introduced practice of paying bride wealth in cash, all contributed to the need for cash among the indigenous ethnic groups in particular. But they did not produce commodities for sale. Instead,

²¹⁰1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia; *Results for Gambella*, V.I, p.15; Informants: Ambèssa, Omod Obuti, Məhərätè, and Aläbachäw.

²¹¹Informants: Getachäw, Ambèssa, Charles, and Gatuluak.

²¹²Informants: Omer Ibrahim, Gatuluak, Ambèssa, Omod Obuti, and Egəgayähu.

²¹³Informants: Omod Obuti, Məhərätè, Ambèssa, and Mulatu.

their agricultural productivity declined as they began to buy maize and other food crops; and because the young men, the main labor force, left the villages to go to main urban centers, the war fronts conscripted into the national forces, and slaving for gold and other precious minerals in the specific place called *Lunga*.²¹⁴

In other words the implementation of population relocation programs in this *Woräda* in one way or another contributed for the augmentation of the total annual income and improvement of the taxation system of the *Woräda*. As resemblance to other parts of the country, Abobo *Woräda* had experienced administrative changes that took place following the implementation of the state-sponsored population relocation program since 1983/4. Regarding taxation and financial administrative system of the *Woräda*, all local administrative physiqués were used as broker of income collection from the local business men and commonalities and to send it to the central government under the after looking of the central government supervisors up to the inauguration of federal form of government in the country in 1991.²¹⁵

The *Woräda* financial officer, whose office was established in the political administrative center, was responsible in encouraging ways and mechanisms for the prompt collection of taxes from any farming companies, the fishery enterprises established in the village called *Gädäb* and from any other business chasers. Preparing financial statement for the income and disbursement of the *Woräda* was also its duty. In addition to the *Woräda*'s financial officer, the *Woräda* administrators at large were responsible to collect the prefixed amount of taxes from their respective administrative areas.²¹⁶ After the implementation of the *Därg* resettlement and villagization program the economic activities of this *Woräda* revived to some extent. According to my key informants, this economic revival emanated from the implementation of both state-owned and private socio-economic projects.²¹⁷

In the resettlement rural locales of the *Woräda* under study, previously the Anywaa and Mäjang people which were mainly dependent on hunting, gathering, beekeeping and nurturing of livestock used to rely on the vegetation of the area as a main source of their livelihood; because the *Därg*

²¹⁴Informants: Asrat, Thatha, Ajulu Oulu, and Gatuluak.

²¹⁵Informants: Ambëssa, Omod Obuti, Gatuluak, Däräsä, and Ajulu Oulu.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*

²¹⁷Informants: Omod Obuti, Wolacho, Gatuluak, Asrat, and Mäläsä.

government constructed many irrigation projects throughout the *Woräda*. Apart from its economic virtues, as was said in the preceding paragraphs, this resettlement program had caused immense problems in the *Woräda*; the majority of the woodland resources species which was the economic foundation for those native ethnic groups was lost due to the gradual over population of the area starting from 1983/4 resettlement and villagization program of the government.²¹⁸ Moreover, as a result of these state-sponsored population relocation programs undertaken in the area and the loss of flora, the wild life species, which inhabited the area, have also migrated and disappeared as the result of obliteration of their natural surroundings.²¹⁹

By and large, economically, the host communities were primarily hunters and gatherers until very recently. They practice shifting cultivation to grow small amount of staple crops. They believe that their traditional land use system has had negligible impact on the forests, and the current large-scale deforestation is associated with the arrival of resettlers from the highland areas of the country since the last four decades.²²⁰

Even though, the *Därg* resettlement and villagization program discouraged traditional agricultural activities among the native ethnic groups, at *Woräda* level, however, this state-sponsored resettlement and villagization program boosted crop farming, animal husbandry, and fishing activities. According to my primary sources, this was because of annual rate of cropland expansion between 1972 and 2007. During the specified period the total rate of cropland expansion was 1855.3 ha per year or 0.49 percent. Thus, this was the major breakthrough in the economic history of the Abobo *Woräda*.²²¹

Though, the *Därg* government accomplished these and other admirable economic activities in the *Woräda*, there were some faintness. This state-sponsored resettlement program was criticized for its large socio-cultural and environmental impacts involved during its implementation. Planners could not take into consideration of the other side effects of the resettlement on environmental, socio-cultural sceneries of the area. As a result, there were deforestation, overexploitation of forest resources (e.g. fuel wood, timber and non-timber resources), unusual expansion of agricultural

²¹⁸Zemenu, pp.64-65; Informants: Däsalägn, Omod Obuti, and Aläbachäw.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*

²²⁰*Ibid.*

²²¹Zemenu, p.72.

lands into the frontline of forest cover and grazing lands. In terms of the social interaction also, this state-sponsored population relocation program in the *Woräda* had caused lesser conflicts between resettlers and host ethnic groups over the exploitation of the natural resources and on the other issues. So these ethnic based conflicts seriously undermined the economic developments of the region in general and the *Woräda* in particular even until recent years.²²²

Generally, the population resettlement schemes in Ethiopia at large, which lack socio-economic and environmental considerations in the planning and implementation phases have concentrated on the lowland regions like Gambella where settler households have uncontrolled access to the woodland natural resources. Thus, resettlement scheme was the main pushing factor for increased frequency and magnitude of environmental degradation in Abobo *Woräda*. Before 1983/4 a few indigenous people in sparsely populated settlements occupied the area. However, between 1983/4 and 1986, a great number of people from different parts of the country resettled throughout the region. But this large scale mass influx of highlanders into the region is still ongoing spontaneously; the main recipient of these highlanders is, therefore, the study *Woräda*.²²³

The impact of the resettlement was more than 140,000 hectares, woodland was cleared and large-scale farming activities increased in the region in order to meet the needs of the resettled population. However, no study has specifically examined the impacts of resettlement program on the woodland resource utilization in Abobo *Woräda* where significant numbers of households are resettled. Therefore, the research was also designed to examine how resettlement affects the woodland resources or environment in Abobo *Woräda* of Gambella Peoples Regional State.²²⁴

3.1.3. Environmental Aftermath

The three important actors in any population resettlement process are the resettlers, host population and the physical environment. According to Alula Pankhurst and Melisachew Fentie, these three actors are victims of incompetently designed and poorly planned resettlement and villagization schemes. Therefore, the success and failure of resettlement programs depend on how the resettlers can adapt to their new environment, the degree all inclusive interaction they build with the host community and the pace at which they become self-sufficient. In poorly designed and executed

²²²*Ibid*, pp. 72-73; Mecklenburg, p.12.

²²³*Ibid*; Informants: Däsalägn, Omod Obuti and Aläbachäw.

²²⁴*Ibid*.

population resettlement programs, the resettlers will undergo psychological, social and physiological stress. Similarly, the host population will also be forced to share the stress, and in both cases the environmental damage will in one way or another be demonstrated. According to my primary and secondary sources, this is so true in Ethiopia in general and the study *Woräda* in particular.²²⁵

The natural environment in Gambella Regional State is currently suffering very seriously and wide spread damage; since this is the case, species of plants and wild animals including complete ecosystems is disappearing at an alarming rate.²²⁶

According to my key informants, this environmental ache was because of the resettlement scheme that was executed without adequate planning and preparation, and consent of both the settler households and the host communities of the settler recipient areas of the region about the program. As was said before, Abobo *Woräda* was the main destination area of the settler households in the region basically since 1983/4.²²⁷

The native people of the *Woräda* were primarily hunters and gatherers until very recently. They practice shifting cultivation to grow small amount of staple crops. They believe that their traditional land use system has had negligible impacts on the forests, and large-scale deforestation is associated with the arrival of resettlers from the highland areas of the country during the last four decades. This explanation is, therefore, attested by different essayists. For instance, according to Zemenu, following the implementation of the resettlement program, crop production and animal husbandry expanded throughout the study *Woräda*. This was because the settler households, to expand their belongings of farmlands, exceedingly extracted the woodland natural resources. Consequently, the annual rate of cropland expansion between 1983/4 and 2007 in the *Woräda* surpassed 0.49 percent or 1855.3 hectares per a year.²²⁸

²²⁵Alula Pankhurst, "Contextualizing Migration, Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia," *In People, Space and the State, Migration Resettlement and Displacement in Ethiopia* (Addis Ababa, 2003), pp. 1-31; Melisachew, p.14.

²²⁶Abraham Berta, "Vegetation Composition and Deforestation Impact in Gambella National Park, Ethiopia", *Journal of Energy and Natural Resources*, V.5, No.3 (2016), pp. 30-36.

²²⁷Informants: Egəgayähu, Ariat, Asrat, and Abäbä.

²²⁸Zemenu, p.72.

As was discussed in the previous sub-contents, the basic economic source of the Abobo *Woräda* is the land that can be mostly characterized by woodland natural resources and vast flat landscape. Numerically, the *Woräda* covers a total area of 361324.58. km². Before the execution of the resettlement scheme of the 1983/4, more than ninety percent of the face of the *Woräda* was considerably covered by the natural woodland resources. The woodland natural resources of the *Woräda* can be classified as: forestland, woodland, grassland, wetland, farmland, bare land, and water body.²²⁹

Before 1983, a few indigenous people in sparsely settlement pattern occupied the study *Woräda*. These people had ecofriendly socio-economic practices. However, between 1983/4 and 2000, a large number of people from different highland areas of the country were resettled in the *Woräda*. Therefore, to satisfy their basic needs, these settler households highly engaged in overexploiting the natural woodland resources. In addition to the settler households, in the study *Woräda* there were different state-owned farming establishments. These farming establishments to gain a large tract of arable land and to expand their belongings ruthlessly distracted the woodland natural resources.²³⁰

Due to the above reasons, between 1983/4-2000 the total area of wetland, bare land, and farmland and water bodies increased to 4129.5 ha, 331.1 ha, 41968.0 ha and 1635.5 ha respectively. On the other hand, forestland, woodland, and grassland showed decrease amounted to 16361.83ha, 6736.26 ha and 24965.93 ha respectively. Especially in 1996 the wetland resources of the *Woräda* highly expanded. This is because according to my key informants, the construction of the Alwero dam accelerated the wetland natural resource utilization in the *Woräda*.²³¹

Therefore, this natural resources depletion pronounced with the existence of settler households, following the increase in population and their dependence on forest resources in the study area. Large cleared and burned vegetation areas by resettlers and farming establishments to be used for agriculture are common observable phenomena in Abobo resettlement areas. Thus, the natural

²²⁹*Ibid*, pp.64-65.

²³⁰Bogale, p.67; Zemenu, pp.64-65; Informants: Mulugèta and Aläbachäw.

²³¹Informants: Egəgayähu and Abäbä; *Ibid*.

vegetation cover of the study area especially, forestland, woodland, and grassland are shrinking from time to time.²³²

Figure: 4. *One of the Deforested Plots of Lands in the Study Woräda.*



Source: - (Photo by the researcher. March, 13-7-2019)
Fired land for expansion of agricultural field in Chobo rural resettlement locale).

As the above photo makes obvious, the implementation of the 1983/4 population resettlement program have caused and being causing deforestation and environmental degradation in the Abobo *Woräda*. Because this population resettlement scheme was followed by farmland expansion, implementation of development projects, high demand of firewood and house construction.²³³

As was described in the above consequent paragraphs, the major livelihood sources of the people of the *Woräda* were woodland natural resources. These natural resources have a variety of importance. They provide raw materials for housing and they are traditional sources of firewood. Despite of all these importance, these natural resources are miss-treated and exploited unwisely. The coming of the large number of settler households into the *Woräda* was followed by increasing

²³²Informants: Egəgayähu, Ariat and Mohammad; See also Figure, 4.

²³³*Ibid.*

demands for woodland natural resources and rising of deforestation throughout the *Woräda*. In general, the major environmental problems in the study area, which are resulted from forest cover loss such as increased land degradation, soil-erosion and flooding as well as deterioration of biodiversity, are discussed here under in the following paragraphs.²³⁴

3.1.3.1. Land Degradation with Sever Soil Erosion

The term land degradation is a process which resulted in a radical change and in the complete breakdown of soil structure and destruction of vegetation cover. Furthermore, it is a process which results an absolute change of the complete characteristics of the land due to the loss of minerals and disappearance of the organic substances.²³⁵ The *Därg* population resettlement program had caused nefarious soil degradation in Gambella region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular. In the *Woräda* there is a wide spread of soil erosion or land degradation. According to my informants, this environmental degradation has, therefore, emanated from the cumulative effect of resettlers economic activities. This in return has caused a great effect on the sources of livelihood of the entire people of the area. This is because of the fact that most of the people depended heavily on their natural resource base; almost all of the people of the study area are subsistence oriented farmers; this form of farming activity is, therefore, the main contributing factor for the prevailing land degradation in the *Woräda*.²³⁶

3.1.3.1.1. Decline of Biodiversity

Deforestation in return brings about the loss of biodiversity both flora and fauna. A number of animal and plant species are being threated owing to the increasing pressure of the population of this *Woräda*. For instance, according to my informants, before the implementation of the *Därg* population resettlement program and the deterioration of the forest cover of the *Woräda*, there was a large number of wild animal species such as tiger, lion, monkey, giraffe etc. But at present-day the number of these endemic animals hardly diminished. Decline of wild life was associated with subsequent decline of vegetation cover of the study *Woräda*. Thus, the implementation of the *Därg*

²³⁴Bisrat, pp.34-37.

²³⁵Melisachew, pp.9-12.

²³⁶Informants: Egəgayähu, Ariat and Däsälägn.

government population resettlement program and its consequent environmental aftermaths are threatening both forest bared floras and fauna species in the study area.²³⁷

3.1.3.1.2. Reduction in Productivity

Subsistence farming activity was the major economic activity in which the community in the study area was being employed for their livelihood. According to my key informants, the majority of the community in the study area was being highly depended on such form of farming activity. As was described in the above preceding paragraphs, this form of economic system with the alarming population growth accelerated soil erosion and land degradation in the study *Woräda*. Hence, this loss of natural resource in return caused deterioration of agricultural productivity in the *Woräda* under study.²³⁸

3.1.4. Political Aftermath

Since the time of the imperial governments up to the introduction of a new constitution in 1995, the peripheral regions of the country were marginalized; of course during the time of emperor Haile-Selassie I, the central government tried to expand some types of public service facilities.²³⁹

Given the historical relegation of the peripheral regions during the imperial period and largely failed integration efforts by the *Därg* regime, the introduction of ethnic federalism with a new constitution created a new political space and institutional design to encourage the peripheral regions' local empowerment.²⁴⁰

During the imperial era, the socio-cultural, political and economic relegation was nefarious. However, after the end of the imperial administration there was some progress in the politics of the country. Following the 1974 revolution, the central government of the country began giving considerable concern to the peripheral regions of country, especially to the contemporary Gambella region. The *Därg* government implemented a number of state-sponsored projects in the region. Since 1983/4 the central government implemented a wide range of population resettlement and villagization schemes in this region in general and Abobo *Woräda* of Anywaa zone in

²³⁷*Ibid.*

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹Ojot, p. 264; See also Appendix, G and Appendix, I.

²⁴⁰Ojot, p. 264.

particular. Accordingly, as stated earlier, the government resettled more than 18000 households from Tigray, Amhara, Kāmbata, and Hadya to unoccupied fertile and aquatic areas of the study *Worāda* along the Opeeno, Kir, Thatha, and Alwero river basins. However, the number of the resettlers gradually decreased due to several reasons. But, whatever it was, during this time, the highlander resettlers dominated the socio-cultural, economic and political activities of the *Worāda* under study. According to the 1994 population and housing censuses of Ethiopia, the total number of the resettled population of the *Worāda* is estimated to be more than 6981 individuals. Consequently, this numerical preeminence of the settler households then enabled the settler ethnic groups to dominate the overall activities of the study *Worāda* up until very recent time.²⁴¹ Above all, this state-sponsored and trans-regional population relocation program then brought considerable demographic changes in the study area. According to the following table, the people of the study *Worāda* are categorized into two groups based on ethnic and social backgrounds.²⁴²

Table: 5. Numerical Data Analysis on the Major Ethnic Groups of the Study *Worāda*

Ethnic Groups		Statistical Analyses		
		Sex		
		Male	Female	Total Number
Native Ethnic Groups	Anywaa	3021	3134	6155
	Mājāngər (Mājāng)	400	437	837
	Total	3421	3571	6992
Settler Households	Amhara	947	809	1756
	Hadya	434	388	822
	Kāmbata	1465	1343	2808

²⁴¹Regasa, pp.208-209.

²⁴²*Ibid*; See also Table, 5.

	Alaba	17	15	32
	Tämbaro	113	111	222
	Oromo	555	327	882
	Worgi [Burgi]	—	1	1
	Maräko	2	2	4
	Others	269	183	452
	Total	3802	3179	6981
The total number of the people of the <i>Woräda</i>		7223	6750	13973

Source: The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia Result for Gambella Region, V.1, Statistical Report, p. 35.

According to the information of the above table, now a day the total number of the population of the *Woräda* is more than 13973 individuals. As stated in the preceding paragraphs, out of this total number of the population, the share of the settler households exceeds more than 50 present. And so this indicates that how much the *Därg* resettlement and villagization program completely changed the demographic characteristics or features of the study *Woräda*. In addition to the demographic impact, the state-sponsored population relocation program of the *Därg* regime has caused sways on the post resettlement period political administration system of the Abobo *Woräda*. As clearly stated in chapter two, following the downfall of the *Därg* government and the adoption of a new constitution in 1995 the old socio-political and economic structures of the country completely changed. This new constitution clearly declared Ethiopia to be federal state and recognized nine territorial entities constructed mainly along ethnic lines as the member of EFDR.²⁴³

²⁴³Ojot, p.85; The 1994 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: *Result for Gambella Region, V.1, statistical report, p. 35*

Gambella Peoples' National Regional State is one of the nine ethnic based regional states in Ethiopia formed under the post 1991 political and administrative reconfiguration of the country. The promotion of the previous Gambella district of the Illubabor province to an autonomous regional state became one of the most prominent political steps ever taken by successive Ethiopian regimes to empower peripheral regions and integrate minorities into the mainstream of Ethiopian political entity. Securing the political rights of each ethnic group of the region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular that are created by autonomy arrangement of post 1991 period is crucial to the long term success of Ethiopian federal system of government.²⁴⁴

The advancement of Gambella into an autonomous regional state enabled both the resettlers (non-indigenous) and the native (indigenous) ethnic groups of the study *Woräda* to participate in all areas of the government administration system.²⁴⁵

In accordance of Ethiopian amended electoral law of proclamation No.532/2007 guarantee all nations, nationalities and peoples of Ethiopia have the right to elect their best representatives in all levels of administration. Additionally, the right to elect political representatives postulated under FDRE and GPNRS constitution as democratic right provisions on article 38(b) and article 39(b) respectively. Accordingly, the right to participate in the administrative structures of the *Woräda* under study is practically applied without any difference or identifying the people of non-indigenous from the indigenous people.²⁴⁶

Political participation is one among other types of participation and has greater relation with society and counted a long life within the development of political science. Establishing legal framework for political representation is a vital element for coexistence and political participation. Legal framework is an instrument which used to settle peaceful political competition among political candidates to exercise their government powers as representatives of the people. This is

²⁴⁴Moti Mosisa, "Contested Notions and Practices of Development and Resettlement in Ethiopia: Evidence from Resettlement Sites in Gambella National Regional State", *Journal for Studies in Management and Planning*, V. 01, No. 11 (Dilla University, 2016), P.35

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p.697; Eshetu Alebachew, "Participation of Non-Indigenous People's In Gambella Region Particularly in Gambella City, Abobo, Godere, Lare and Itang Special Woredas" (MA thesis, Addis Ababa, Federal Studies 2017), pp.52-55.

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*

because, legal framework enable to provide effective and inclusion of citizen representative in building democracy and democratic system of government.²⁴⁷

In democratic governance system, political representation is a component of political participation which through mobilizing a large number of people to obtain their best candidates to make decision on the behalf of them.²⁴⁸

As stated in the above paragraphs, the regional constitution and Ethiopian amended electoral law provided each resettled ethnic group of the study *Woräda* a relaxed legal framework in order to elect their representatives to the administration council of the *Woräda* under study. In other words, every settler ethnic groups are guaranteed to decide who is going to be their representative through election.²⁴⁹ In Abobo *Woräda*, individuals from either of the ethnic groups have the right to join as a member of ruling party and he/she has full right to elect who will be the best representative in the administrative council. According to my informants, the seats of the administrative council of the *Woräda* are appropriated by both the representatives of the resettlers and the indigenous ethnic groups. This explanation is, therefore, attested by different primary sources.²⁵⁰ The following table illustrates how much the administration of the *Woräda* is enthusiastic to accommodate the representatives of the settler ethnic groups into the systems of the administration. It also depicts the levels of participation of both settlers and the indigenous ethnic groups in the council of the study *Woräda*.

²⁴⁷Eshetu, pp. 13-75.

²⁴⁸*Ibid*, p.35.

²⁴⁹Moti Mosisa (2016), p.697; Eshetu, pp.52-55.

²⁵⁰Informants: Mäläsä, Wolacho and Mohammad.

Table: 6. Ethnic Composition in the Abobo Woräda Executive Council

Nome of the <i>Woräda</i>	Ethnic Groups		Seats	Total
Abobo <i>Woräda</i> Administrative Council.	Indigenous	Anywaa	14	14
		Mäjang	2	2
	Settler households	Amhara (Wollo)	1	1
		Kämbata	1	1
		Hadiya	1	1
		Tigrawai	1	1
		Others	1	1
	Total		21	21

Source: *The Study Woräda's Administrative Council Data Organization Office Graph/Chart of (2018)*

According to the above table, each settler ethnic group was allowed to be represented in the administrative council of the study *Woräda*. Through their representatives, the settler ethnic groups are participating actively and they are engaged in establishing good governance administration system throughout the *Woräda*. The representatives of each ethnic group are accountable to the people who empowered them to represent in the administrative council of the *Woräda*.²⁵¹

As stated in the above paragraphs, the administrative body of Gambella Regional State in general and the study *Woräda* in particular implemented a system of accommodating the non-indigenous ethnic groups in the administration councils. However, as stated in the above table, the accommodating system of this *Woräda* is too weak. This is because the accommodation system applied in giving less number of representatives to the non-indigenous ethnic groups; out of the 21 seats of the Abobo *Woräda* executive council around the 76.1 percent is appropriated by the

²⁵¹The Study *Woräda's* Administrative Council Data Organization Office Graph/Chart of (2018).

indigenous ethnic groups; while the rest 24 percent is possessed by the representatives of the settler ethnic groups.²⁵²

Additionally, according to my key informants, non-indigenous ethnic groups or resettlers are not recognized through meaningful institutional representativeness in the administrative council of the *Woräda* with inclusiveness political participation in general; rather they are participated in, considering them as filling the vacuum of political maintenance of the region at large. However, in this *Woräda* the non-indigenous people are fully exercising their political rights at their village administrations that are established in different rural locales.²⁵³ Generally, as was stated in the preceding paragraphs, after the inauguration of a new constitution in 1995, the regions are organized into nine constituent units which create the distinction in grouping the indigenous and non-indigenous people of Ethiopia.²⁵⁴

Non-ingenious people in the study *Woräda* referred to as a tan-skinned people who moved from their original place of residence to different parts of the region which was undertaken by the *Därg* government, due to resettlement program and drought or famine of 1983/4; while indigenous peoples are those people obtained legal and political legitimacy, since the emergence of federal system which empowered them to be the owner of the given territories in which they inhabited. On the other hand, even though, the people of the *Woräda* are categorized into two groups, based on social and ethnical backgrounds, the right to participate in the administrative structures of the *Woräda* is practically applied without identifying the people of non-indigenous from the indigenous people.²⁵⁵

²⁵²*Ibid.*

²⁵³Informants: Ansha, Wolacho and Mohammad; See also Table, 6.

²⁵⁴Eshetu, pp.52-55.

²⁵⁵*Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

4. INTRA-REGIONAL VILLAGIZATION IN ABOBO WORÄDA SINCE 2000

4.1. The Need for the Villagization Program

At the time when EPRDF was fighting against the *Därg* regime, it was a strong opponent of population resettlement and villagization scheme. However, after the political arena was appropriated by its leaders, a gradual shift of attitude occurred during the 1990s such that intra-regional population relocation scheme not only comes to be seen as conceivable but it is a necessary and even as an essential component of a rural development and poverty eradication policies particularly to assure food security within a short period of time and minimum cost at the national level.²⁵⁶

During this time population relocation program of the government was implemented based on the intra-regional approach and well of resettlers. Voluntary villagization program is one of the most important food security strategies of the Federal Government of Ethiopia under the general coordination of the Ministry of Rural Development. The government-sponsored program of rural villagization scheme has been under way since the beginning of 2000, following the drought that occurred at the end of 1999. The government intended to resettle more than 2.2 million people in the period of 2000-2006 from the chronically food insecure rural areas to more fertile and rainfall copious agricultural areas.²⁵⁷

At the beginning of the 2000, the Ethiopian government formulated a plan to relocate a large number of people in its lowland regions of Benishangul-Gumuz, Ethiopian-Somali region, Afar and Gambella. Contrary to that of the previous population relocation programs of Ethiopian government, the population relocation program of this time was conceived to be intra-regional. As we have stated in the preceding paragraphs, this population relocation plan envisaged moving more than two million people basically in the above four regions of the country.²⁵⁸ The objectives of these new population relocation programs differ from region to region. In the pastoralist regions

²⁵⁶Melisachew, p.18.

²⁵⁷*Ibid.*

²⁵⁸Ojot, p. 265; Moti Mosisa, “Politics of Development and Resettlement in Ethiopia: Is it Villagization or Land grabbing? The Case of Gambella Regional State”, (MA thesis, AAU, Political Science, 2014), p. 39.

like: Ethiopian Somali region and Afar, the objectives are primarily to resettle people in less arid areas along the basins of Awash and Wabè-Shäbälle rivers, while in the Benishangul-Gumuz and the Gambella regions, the objectives are to get control of food insecurity problems and to improve social service provisions like: schools, health care centers, electrification, veterinary centers, road networks and the like.²⁵⁹

However, in Gambella region, apart from providing adequate public service facilities to the local people and to get control of food insecurity problems, the federal government has another principal objective behind the implementation of the population relocation scheme since the beginning of 2000. During this time Gambella region in general and Anywaa-occupied areas in particular were the primary concern areas of the central government of Ethiopia. This was due to the fact that in this area more than 1.2 million hectares of land are available for large-scale farming companies. In Anywaa zone of the region, the current government implemented an ambitious population relocation program in order to make way for agricultural investors to have unlimited access to large tract of land; the government is leasing out and grabbing huge land for both foreign and local agricultural companies. Therefore, this condition in return helped the farming companies so as to influx into the study area steadily.²⁶⁰

The following table illustrates how much the introduction of population relocation program helped the farming companies to overwhelm the Anywaa occupied areas basically after the villagization program ended in 2010. According to the data, the Anywaa zone is the main recipient of farming companies. Look the table:

²⁵⁹*Ibid*, pp.265-265; Anita, p.353; Alula Pankhurst, (1992), p.15.

²⁶⁰Moti Mosisa, (2014), p. 39; Azeb W. Degife and Wolfram Mauser, “Socio-economic and Environmental Impacts of Large-Scale Agricultural Investment in Gambella Region, Ethiopia”, *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, vol. 14, No. 4(University of Munich, 2017), pp. 183-197; See also Appendix, C.

Table: 7. Profile of Commercial Agriculture Investments in the Gambella Peoples National Regional State

The destination areas of the companies		Land leased per <i>Woräda</i> .			
Zones	<i>Worädas</i>	Total	Mean	Median (Average)	Number of Investors
Anywaa	Gambella Zuria	77,505.6	527.25	590.00	147
	Abobo	69,590.0	828.45	500	84
	Dima	30,725.0	960.16	1,000	32
	Gog	65,470.0	1,522.56	1,000	43
Nuer	Laré	5,900.0	590.00	450	10
<i>Majang</i>	Godäre & Mängäshə	13,412.1	1,219.28	600	11

Source:- Fana Gebresenbet, “Land Acquisitions, the Politics of Dispossession, and State-Remaking in Gambella, Western Ethiopia”, Journal of Africa Spectrum, V. 51, No.1 (2016), p.13.

As was discussed in the preceding chapters, among the *Worädas* of the Anywaa zone of Gambella Regional State, the existence of the abundant natural resources and the large tract of arable land made the Abobo *Woräda* the most important receiver of both local and foreign farming companies. Consequently, the existence of these farming companies in a large number insisted considerable population influxes from all directions of the highland areas of the country in general and the study region in particular into the study *Woräda* for the sake of labor opportunity.²⁶¹

Therefore, according to my primary sources, in order to make way for agricultural investors to have unlimited access to large tract of land and to provide improved socio-economic facilities to the local community easily, the regional government and the Abobo *Woräda* administration jointly executed widespread population regrouping programs throughout the study *Woräda*. In other

²⁶¹*Ibid*; Tegegne Gebre-Egziaber and Abrham Gebreselassie Gebreyes, “Assessment on the Implementation of Woreda Decentralization in Gambella People’s National Regional State, Ethiopia: the case of Abobo and Lare Woredas”, *Studia Mundi-Economica*, Vol. 1, No. 1(2014), p.7; See also Appendix, A and B.

words, the study *Woräda* administration was fully responsible for coordinating the population regrouping program with the regional government. Consequently, the implementation of an extensive state-sponsored population regrouping programs throughout the study *Woräda* basically since 2000, paved the way for the coming of the farming companies in an increasing manner. In Abobo *Woräda* there are different local and foreign farming companies. For example among the foreign farming companies established in the *Woräda*, the company which is known as Saudi Star Agricultural Development (SSAD), Plc. [Mängəst Ersha] is the most important. The study *Woräda* leased more than 10,000 hectares tract of irrigable and rain-based land to SSAD in 2002. Since then, this foreign farming company executed extensive farming activities by using both precipitation and rivers.²⁶²

Figure: 5. Irrigation Canals of Saudi Star Farms in Abobo Woräda



Source: *Human Rights Watch, Forced Displacement and “Villagization” in Ethiopia’s Gambella Region (United States of America, 2012), p.57.*

“Irrigation canals of Saudi Star farms. Several small villages used to exist at this location and were moved to make way for Saudi Star’s 10,000 hectare farm development”

²⁶²*Ibid*; See also Figure, 5.

In addition to SSAD Plc., there is a number of local farming companies established in Abobo *Woräda* at the same time. Among these local farming companies, Agirimik Ethiopia, Abobo Ersha Ləmat, and Bazin Ersha Ləmat are the most important among others.²⁶³

In general, as we will see in the approaching sub-contents, the coming of these and the same farming companies caused extensive socio-cultural, economic, and political changes in the settlement rural locales or sites of the *Woräda* under study.²⁶⁴

4.2. Sites of the Villagization Program and the Participation of the People

Unlike in the other regions of the country, the EPRDF's villagization program in Gambella region was in order to pave the way to have unlimited access to large tract of land for investment by regrouping the destitute people into a clustered villages, and to improve the public service facilities of the region under study.²⁶⁵ Among the *Worädas* found in the Anywaa zone of Gambella Regional State, Abobo *Woräda* is one of the *Worädas* that has a number of serious problems of public service facilities, basically the eastern and southeastern escarpment and some pocket areas along the drainage systems of Opeeno, Alwero and Kir rivers.²⁶⁶

As we have identified it in chapter two, currently there are a total of seventeen administrative subunits or *Käbäles* in the study *Woräda*. In 2000 the regional administration nominated the *Woräda* for various development involvements and villagization program as part of Regional Food Security and Development Program (RFSDP). This was because according to my primary and secondary sources, most of the administrative sub-units or *Käbäles* of the *Woräda* were under problems of food insecurity and poor infrastructural and public service facilities development in the region. In addition to this, the *Woräda* is endowed with abundant natural resources that are essential so as to carry out extensive developmental projects.²⁶⁷

As a result, the regional and the *Woräda* administrations jointly accomplished considerable developmental works in the various areas of the study *Woräda* where there are a large number of

²⁶³*Ibid.*

²⁶⁴*Ibid.*

²⁶⁵Mihret Jember, "Resettlement, Household Vulnerability, Livelihood Adaptation and Opportunities in Ethiopia: A Case Study of the Metema Resettlement Area," (M.Sc. Thesis, University of Cape Town, 2010), p.45.

²⁶⁶Informants: Alämnäsh Worku, Zämānay Ejəgu and Achan Ojulu.

²⁶⁷Zinabu Endalfer, "Villagization in Contemporary Ethiopia: The Experience of Gambella Region, Anywaa Zone, From Human Rights Perspective" (MA thesis, Addis Ababa University, Political Science, 2014), pp.31-32.

both the highlander settler households and the native ethnic groups. As this *Woräda* is endowed with abundant woodland natural resources, the government's effort to get control of public service facilities and food insecurity problems was somehow fruitful.²⁶⁸

The *Woräda* administration was able to villagize a large number of households, and constructed some necessary infrastructures and public service facilities like: veterinary services, schools, health care centers, purified water supplying centers, food warehouses, and all-weather roads in the various villagization sites of the *Woräda* under consideration. Most of the state-run villagization programs of the study *Woräda* are basically implemented in five rural areas, now a day formally known as *Käbäles*.²⁶⁹

Since 2000, in Abobo *Woräda*, an extensive population regrouping programs were executed. The rural areas like Doy (Terchiru), Chobo Kir, Lumtak, Pukèdi and Tänyə are the most important villagization sites. In these rural areas the *Woräda* administration carried out a considerable population regrouping schemes. These rural villages have their own administrative structures. The administrative bodies of the villages provide essential governmental services to the dwellers. For example, the *Käbäle* administration is the unit which governs all socio-cultural, economic and political affairs among the villagers. It is the one to allocate land, to distribute supplies, to enact and enforce laws and orders. Compared to the situations in their home areas, the villagers are under much closer government scrutiny with regard to their day to day activities in the current residential villages.²⁷⁰

Geographically, the villagization sites are located mainly along the drainage system of the Opeeno, Alwero and Kir rivers, and are situated in the 35 kilometers radius from the administrative center of the *Woräda*, Abobo town. Abobo is at 45 km from Gambella town, the regional administrative center. In the settlement villages the main ethnic group is Anywaa, with minor representation of Mäjang, and other smaller ethnic groups in their nearby villages. The major religious affiliation is Catholic Christianity.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸Informants: Abäbä and Däräsä; Gambella Peoples National Regional State, "Villagization and Resettlement Program Report," (2013), pp.4-7 and (2003-2005), pp.3-6.

²⁶⁹Informants: Omod Obuti, Achan and Said Mohammad,

²⁷⁰Informants: Ochan Ochala, Achan, Ambèssa, and Athow Omod.

²⁷¹Informants: Däsälagn and Ojulu Ojulu; Bogale Teferi, p.68.

When we look at the process of regrouping the settler households in these five rural administrative *Käbäles*, during the recruitment progression, the *Woräda* administration did use neither force nor coercion to villagize the scattered communities along the aquatic areas of the study *Woräda*. Since the administration of the *Woräda* has undertaken some preliminary works, it has easily gained positive responses from the settler households in the progresses of the villagization program.²⁷²

In addition to the preliminary works, the attractive promises of the government paved the way for the harmonious recruitment process of the settlers in peaceful manner. However, according to my key informants, the settler households didn't get the area at the levels of their expectation and the government's promise.²⁷³

For example in December 2000 villagers were told they were to be relocated from their existing homes to the village of Doy (Terchiru); then, the study *Woräda* administrators transported them from different rural areas into this new rural area. However, the villagers didn't get the new area at the levels of their expectation and the government's promises. In my field observation, some of my informants raised so many issues about their original and the current rural village areas, as well as the relief support of the *Woräda* administration. The following rewording is taken from my informants:

...in our previous location the environment is proportionally conducive for our families; we have had more sources of livelihood for the last 15 years, and the conditions are the same now. However, in a new village, Doy, it is difficult to gain at list food provision. The *Woräda* administrators said as there will be lots of water, sources of honey, wild animals for hunting, and backyard for vegetables. Furthermore, peasants said the administrators will provide relief food up until we can produce our own, but they never keep their promise...²⁷⁴

One of the government's commitments to the residents of new villages was to provide food assistance for between six to eight months until the transition had been made to a more sedentary form of agriculture in place of shifting cultivation or agro-pastoralism. In addition, communities

²⁷²Informants: Omod Obuti and Asrat; Abobo *Woräda* Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau Archive, Folder No 12, File No. A/20. "Annual Report of 2010" (Abobo, 12 August, 2010), p.5.

²⁷³*Ibid*; Informants: Athow and Ajulu Olwoch.

²⁷⁴Informants: Okew Obang, Peter Oboya and Kwowber Ochalla.

were promised training in the necessary farming techniques as well as input provision like seeds, farming equipment etc. However, according to my primary and secondary sources, the promises of the government were not fully fulfilled.²⁷⁵

The implementation of the villagization program suffered from different problems. The villages in the settler household recipient areas suffered from inadequate inputs, unsound planning, poorly observed criteria, hurried and hasty possibility studies and inefficient village administration. In terms of preparation, conscription and implementation process, the recent villagization program in the above five rural population villagization areas is quite similar to the previous government-sponsored resettlement and villagization programs of the *Därg* government in the study *Woräda*.²⁷⁶

Additionally, there were serious limitations of financial, material and logistical resources at all levels, which unsurprisingly constrained the proper implementation of the program. Most basic public services, such as schools, health care centers, veterinary services and electricity were poor in quality and entirely missing in some villages like Lumtak and Tänyə. In these rural villagization areas, the villagized people, therefore, found themselves in a worse situation than before they moved, in some respects. Leaving of the villagers at the initial stage of the population regrouping program was also intensified by the insufficiency of governmental support.²⁷⁷

Generally all these consequences seem attributable to improper planning and inadequate funding on the parts of both the federal and the regional governments. As we have said in the preceding sub-titles, the villagization program in the study *Woräda* was implemented simply in order to make way for farming companies and investors to have unlimited access to large tract of arable land throughout the *Woräda*.²⁷⁸

4.2.1. The Livelihood Sources of the Villagized Households

In the low land areas like that of the Abobo *Woräda* of Gambella region, land (which is known as in Anywaa language *Ngom*) is the principal source of livelihood. This is corroborated by the fact

²⁷⁵Informants: Okew, Peter and Kwowber; Human Rights Watch, (2012), p.41.

²⁷⁶Abobo *Woräda* Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau Archive, Folder N_o 12, File N_o. A/20. “*Annual Report of 2010*” (Abobo, 12 August, 2010), p.5; Informants: Mäläsä and Charles.

²⁷⁷Informants: Achan, Omod Obuti, Said, and Ajulu Olwoch.

²⁷⁸*Ibid*; Moti Mosisa, (2014), p. 39.

that nearly all of my key informants consider the land as the main source of livelihood in the study *Woräda*. After the implementation of the villagization program since 2000, the villagized households became much dependent on the land and woodland resources, rather supplementing their lives with another means of income. Because according to my secondary sources, in the village areas of the *Woräda* there is a large tract of unoccupied and fertile land for subsistence and traditional farming practices.²⁷⁹

In addition to my informants, in my field observation in the above five *Käbäles* (villages) I was able to realize that the villagized community are living in an area where the size of owned and nurtured land is very larger than to what they had before they come to the current residents namely Doy (Terchiru), Chobo Kir, Lumtak, Pukèdi and Tänyə. In other words, most of the villagized communities had access to very small land which was also less fertile to produce their balancing diets like: rice, cornflakes, potato and cassava (which is locally known as *Bafura*) before the execution of the population regrouping program; however, in the new villages the community have unlimited access to arable land and other woodland resources. Therefore, the main sources of livelihood of the settler households in their original place were intensive farming activities. Moreover, it was limited around the homesteads and the aquatic areas which in turn adversely affected the agricultural productivity to get control of food insecurity problems of the study area at large. Additionally, the conditions forced the people in general to live in more populated and rigorous rural areas. But, now a day, the settlers are enjoying unlimited access to fertile land and other woodland natural resources in their new village areas. Moreover, the area is not drought prone as it was in the original area, and as a result, the settlers are benefited to improve their food security to some extent.²⁸⁰

On the other hand, the implementation of the 2000 villagization program reduced population pressure, and improved the agricultural productivities of the original rural areas. Among the original rural locales that are known as Atuwo, Dibong and Ukunna Kijang are the most important among others. As we have discussed it in the above preceding chapters, these original residential areas are basically located along the aquatic areas of the study *Woräda*. Formerly, these areas were

²⁷⁹Informants: Achan, Ochan, Zämānay, and Mäläsä.

²⁸⁰*Ibid.*

very populous, and their natural resource was highly depleted. These conditions in return caused for a nefarious food insecurity problem among the dweller households of these rural locales.²⁸¹

As we will see in the coming subtopics, unlike in the original settlement areas, the outcomes of the recent population villagization program in the settler recipient rural locales of the *Woräda* are very severing. It completely changed the demographic features of the new areas; they became more populous. According to my key informants, before the implementation of the program, these areas were almost void or uninhabited.²⁸² The 2007 population and housing census of Ethiopia analyzed the demographic characteristics of the above five settler recipient rural locales of the Abobo *Woräda* as follows:

Table: 8. *The Total Demographic Features of the 2000 Villagization Areas of the Abobo Woräda*

Geographical Areas	The total number of the resettled people in the settlement villages of the study <i>Woräda</i> .			The total number of the settlers of each village in percent
	Males	Females	Total	
Doy (Terchiru),	54	60	114	3.64
Lumtak,	70	76	146	4.66
Chobo Kir	722	781	1503	48.01
Pukèdi (Pekedu)	212	251	463	15
Tänyə	431	473	904	29
Total	1489	1641	3130	100
Percentile	47.6	52.43	100	100

Source: *The 2007 Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia: Result for Gambella Region, V. 1, Statistical Report, p. 246.*

²⁸¹Informants: Mäläsä, Ariat, Asrat, and Däsälägn.

²⁸²Informants: Ajulu Olwoch, Peter and Thatha.

This analytical data shows that how much the recent population villagization program changed the demographic features of the settler recipient rural locales of the Abobo *Woräda*. According to the 2007 analytical report of the Central Statistics Agency, the total number of the villagized population in Abobo *Woräda* exceeds more than 3130 family heads. In other words, the aggregate number of the villagized family heads of the above five villagization rural locales shares 45 percent out of the total population of the study *Woräda*. In general, the coming of large number of settler family heads into the present rural settlement areas caused considerable environmental, socio-cultural and political consequences or aftermaths.

4.3. Aftermaths of the Intra-Regional Villagization Program

As we have noted in the preceding chapters, in the processes of implementing population relocation schemes, what are always thought are the aftermath. According to my primary sources, the aftermath of any population relocation programs could be regrouped into three major categories: environmental, socio-cultural and economic aftermath.²⁸³

4.3.1. Environmental Aftermath

Our country, Ethiopia, already has more than its fair share of environmental problems in the form of periodical droughts, land degradation, biodiversity loss, harmful and household wastes, air pollution and general environmental vulnerability due to climate variability. One of the biggest environmental threats facing the country is the alarming rate of deforestation.²⁸⁴

As stated in the introduction section of this chapter, the current villagization program of Gambella region in the study *Woräda* was primarily to get control of food insecurity, infrastructure, and public service facilities problems. In addition to these, the implementation of the program was in order to give way for the tax paying indigenous and foreign farming companies and investors to have unlimited access to large tract of arable land. Therefore, since 2000, at the heartlands of the study *Woräda* the government carried out an extensive leasing of large tract of land to farming companies, and population relocation programs side by side.²⁸⁵

²⁸³Kassahun (2003), pp.2-7.

²⁸⁴Ojot, p. 272.

²⁸⁵*Ibid*; Informants: Aläbachäw, Mulugëta, Mäläsä, and Məhərätè; See also Figure, 4 and Appendix, C.

The combined effects of the villagization program and the large-scale leasing of large tract of land to the farming companies had caused tremendous impacts on the environmental resource bases of the study *Woräda* particularly on woodlands that are the most important sources of livelihood even at a regional level. Thus, the natural vegetation or plant species and wild animal mammon of the region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular are presently under very serious and extensive destruction. Because of the above reasons, the woodland areas of the study *Woräda* is decreasing fast as trees are excessively being cut for settlement, commercial farming, shifting cultivation of villagized peasants, housing and firewood.²⁸⁶

The aquatic areas along the banks of the Kir and Opeeno rivers were rich with diversified plant species including the *Acaciavictoriae*, *Arundo donax*, *shänkora'agäda* (*Saccharum officinalis*), *Pennisetum petiolare*, and *Eichhornia crassipes*. In addition to these, the following table illustrates the plant species of the *Woräda* under study.²⁸⁷

Table: 9. Vernacular Names of Plant Species in Abobo Woräda

No	DHA. ANYWAA NAMES	AMHARIC NAMES	SCIENTIFIC NAMES
1	<i>Abuwo</i>	<i>Qimbo</i>	<i>Calotropis procera</i>
2	<i>Adew</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>
3	<i>Adidewi</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Baphia abyssinica</i>
4	<i>Adiiquala leach</i>	<i>Merenz</i>	<i>Strychnos innocua</i>
5	<i>Adiquala</i>	<i>Ekuku</i>	<i>Oncoba spinosa</i>
6	<i>Adu</i>	<i>Injori</i>	<i>Morus mesozygia</i>
7	<i>Adudeeguoy</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Baphia abyssinica</i>
8	<i>Alaro</i>	<i>Cheba</i>	<i>Acacia nilotica</i>
9	<i>Alwaru</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Lonchocarpus laxiflorus</i>
10	<i>Arim</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Lannea welwitschii</i>
11	<i>Byby</i>	<i>Kinin</i>	<i>Azadirachta indica</i>
12	<i>Dowa</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Gardenia ternifolia</i>

²⁸⁶*Ibid.*

²⁸⁷Bogale Teferi, p.68.

13	<i>Downg</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Gardenia ternifolia</i>
14	<i>Ja</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Kigelia africana (K.aethiopum, K.pinnata)</i>
15	<i>Jemma</i>	<i>Moke</i>	<i>Erythroxylum fischeri</i>
16	<i>Jemmoh</i>	<i>Moke</i>	<i>Erythroxylum fischeri</i>
17	<i>Kijang</i>	<i>Abera</i>	<i>Lepidotrichilia volkensii</i>
18	<i>Lang</i>	<i>Qurqura</i>	<i>Ziziphus spina-christi</i>
19	<i>Lemun</i>	<i>Lomi</i>	<i>Citrus aurantifolia</i>
20	<i>Lemunat</i>	<i>Birtukan</i>	<i>Citrus sinensis</i>
21	<i>Lero</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Lonchocarpus laxiflorus</i>
22	<i>Alwaro</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Lonchocarpus laxiflorus</i>
23	<i>Lero</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Celtis toka</i>
24	<i>Lero</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Ziziphus pubescens</i>
25	<i>Liu</i>	<i>Dokma</i>	<i>Strychnos spinosa</i>
26	<i>Mogno</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i>
27	<i>Olam</i>	<i>Shola</i>	<i>Ficus sur (F. capensis)</i>
28	<i>Opero</i>	<i>Kesem</i>	<i>Olyra latifolia</i>
29	<i>Orowyyee.</i>	<i>Ayeh</i>	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i>
30	<i>Pok</i>	<i>Baguri</i>	<i>Terminalia laxiflora</i>
31	<i>Pok</i>	<i>Qontir</i>	<i>Entada abyssinica</i>
32	<i>Reed</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i>
33	<i>Tenga</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Antiaris toxicaria</i>
34	<i>Tungwo</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Antiaris toxicaria</i>
35	<i>Toow</i>	<i>Bedeno</i>	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i>
36	<i>Uchek</i>	<i>Injori</i>	<i>Morus mesozygia</i>
37	<i>Udua</i>	<i>Zembaba</i>	<i>Borassus aethiopum</i>
38	<i>Ulweado</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Lonchocarpus laxiflorus</i>
39	<i>Ungwoyo</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i>
40	<i>Urao</i>	<i>Etse Menabele</i>	<i>Securidaca longipedunculata</i>
41	<i>Urao</i>	<i>Etse</i>	<i>Steganotaenia araliacea</i>
42	<i>Uriemo</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Sterculia Africana</i>

43	<i>Urogu</i>	<i>Wanza</i>	<i>Cordia Africana</i>
44	<i>Wed</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa (Butyrospermum niloticum)</i>
45	<i>Worgaye</i>	<i>NN</i>	<i>Blighia unijugata</i>

Source: Tesemma Bekele, *Useful trees of Ethiopia: identification, propagation and management in 17 agro ecological zones (Nairobi, 2007), p.552.*

Despite, the study *Woräda* was endowed with these types of trees, shrubs, and other woodland plant species, now a day these natural resources are under a serious destruction. This is, therefore, because of carrying out of maladapted villagization program and a large-scale expansion of commercial mechanized farming activities. The *Woräda* launched extensive land leasing to both local and foreign farming companies. So, these commercial agriculturalist companies ruthlessly distracted the above Woodland plant species in order to expand their land belongings throughout the *Woräda*.²⁸⁸

In addition to the plant species mammon, throughout the dense forest areas of the study *Woräda*, there was a large number of mammal and reptile animal species. Among the animal species: African elephant, African buffalo, giraffe, hippopotamus, white-eared bush pig, common warthog, bushbuck, waterbuck, spotted hyena, cheetah, leopard, lion, monkey, olive baboon, reedbuck, and roan antelope are the most important. However, the execution of the population villagization programs, and instigating a high level of land grabbing had caused the destruction of indigenous plant species and mass exodus of the wild animals into the neighboring countries.²⁸⁹

Consequently, the problems listed above have made it difficult to live in the study *Woräda*. More particularly, the impact of the environmental change is severing for the indigenous people of the study *Wöräda*. This is because of the local environment and the native ethnic groups were the two sides of a coin for a long period of time. According to my primary sources, ever since the original community settled on the study sites, its lifestyle has been based on the natural resources and the surrounding environment. Understandably, the sources of livelihoods of the native ethnic groups depend up on shifting cultivation, in addition with accompanying traditional economic practices

²⁸⁸*Ibid*

²⁸⁹*Ibid*; Tesemma Bekele, *Useful trees of Ethiopia: identification, propagation and management in 17 agro ecological zones (Nairobi, 2007), p.552; See also Figure, 4 and 6.*

such as hunting and gathering. In one way or in the other, these economic activities are directly associated with the surrounding environment or bionetwork.²⁹⁰

Awkwardly, the destruction of forests in the study area to carrying out commercial mechanized farming activities and implement the villagization program had brought adverse impact on the livelihood sources or strategies of the native ethnic groups and the ecological features of the *Woräda* under study.²⁹¹

Generally, due to the effects of the villagized households, and commercial private and state-farms existing in the study area, the natural vegetation covers particularly the forest, woodland and grassland resources are dwindling in an increasing rate since the inauguration of the intra-regional population regrouping schemes in the study *Woräda* in 2000.²⁹²

Figure: 6. A Course of Deforestation and Housing System in Doy Rural Locale of Abobo *Woräda*



Source: - (Photo taken by the researcher. December, 4-18-4-2018)

“A new village with land for maize cleared by hand by villagers, a housing system in the villagization area called Doy, nearby area of Ukunna Kijang rural locale”

²⁹⁰*Ibid.*

²⁹¹*Ibid.*

²⁹²Informants: Aläbachäw, Mulugëta, Mäläsä, and Məhärätë; *Ibid*; See also Figure, 4 and 6.

4.3.2. Socio-cultural Aftermath

Apart from the environmental impacts, the population villagization program caused socio-cultural aftermath among the villagized households and the people of the Abobo *Woräda* at large. The villagization program in this *Woräda* was implemented without considering the psychological makeup, socio-cultural, and economic backgrounds of the people. A number of households were simply transported deep into the forests and woodland areas, and forced to start their lives starting from the scratch at the rural villagization sites.²⁹³

As we have seen in the preceding paragraphs, the program at its inception was designed in order to give way for taxpaying agricultural companies to have unlimited access to cultivable arable lands. Therefore, the executers of the program have been simply tensed much on providing large tract of land for investors rather on providing the villagized households with improved public service facilities. Of course, as we will see in the following subtitle of this chapter, the administrators of the *Woräda* tried to provide some public service facilities in and around the rural villagization sites of the *Woräda* under study.²⁹⁴

Therefore, in the study *Woräda* farming investment and villagization program are the principal causes of deforestation and degeneration of environmental mammon; and deforestation by itself challenged the traditional well-beings of the Anywaa people in particular. Because the livelihood strategy of the Anywaa people of the *Woräda* is highly dependent up on the natural resource bases of the study *Woräda*.²⁹⁵

In addition to that of loses of ecosystem of the *Woräda*, deforestation caused severe socio-cultural aftermath against the peoples of the study area. Although, the socio-cultural impacts of the villagization program are on the local community as a whole; on the native ethnic groups, however, the problems are worse. According to my primary sources, the impacts are reprehensible on the indigenous ethnic groups. Forests and woodlands are quite important to the socio-cultural and economic practices of the indigenous communities. They use forest products for firewood, food, medicines, and for any other day to day socio-cultural practices. In terms of food security,

²⁹³Informants: Ojulu Ojulu, Ajulu Oulu, Omod Agwa Omod, and Mäläsä.

²⁹⁴*Ibid.*

²⁹⁵*Ibid.*

forests have been the major source of food supplies for most of the indigenous communities of this *Woräda*. For example, for the Anywaa people, forests are crucial during periods of food scarcity. In certain areas, even during a good harvest season, the Anywaa collect roots and fruits from their nearby forests to vary their diet. However, deforestation in the region as a whole and the study *Woräda* in particular is already causing irremediable socio-cultural reimbursements to the indigenous communities of the study area. The Anywaa people are forced to abandon the tradition of concerning the forest areas as a source of spiritual power. This is because, now a day the forest coverage of the *Woräda* is decreasing in an increasing rate.²⁹⁶

Currently, the population of the *Woräda* at large is also vexed about the impacts of farming investors and villagized households on their cultural identity and values. For example, for the Anywaa people, forests are not just flocks of trees. Forests carry spiritual meanings that are involved from the Anywaa identity and ancestral heritage.²⁹⁷

This is manifested in the Anywaa traditional religion in which certain forests are seen to be sacred. Not only do people refrain from cutting trees in these forests, but also walking through these forests with shoes and inappropriate wears is seen as inviting a blasphemy upon one's own fate. Certain trees are well-regarded by the Anywaa people because they are believed to be the dwelling places of ancestral spirits, and local chiefs are buried under these trees. That is why in Anywaa traditional religion every forest belongs to a certain village and both the village and the forest carry the same name. Therefore, according to Ojot, the ongoing destruction of the Anywaa forests that is followed by the coming of farming companies and implementation of the maladapted villagization program of 2000 is not only causing damage to the Anywaa people's subsistence economy and environment but also to their emotional and spiritual privacy as a people. Additionally, according to the same writer, because of the above reasons, the people forced to abandon its aged-old socio-cultural discernments about natural forest areas.²⁹⁸

In general, the villagization program, which took place in the study *Woräda*, was designed to provide more land for taxpayer farming companies and investors. Since the beginning of 2000, in the *Woräda* the federal government had sold more than 100,000 hectares of agricultural land to

²⁹⁶Ojot, pp. 272-281.

²⁹⁷*Ibid.*

²⁹⁸*Ibid.*

both local and transcontinental farming companies that export the majority of their production to India, Saudi Arabia, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. Consequently, this mass-sale of land in the *Woräda* have affected the livelihood strategies and increased food insecurity particularly among the indigenous communities of the study *Woräda*. This is because, as we have noted in the above paragraphs, in the study *Woräda* the indigenous ethnic groups' survival and identity are strongly tied to the land and the rivers that run through their vicinities. For instance, recession of riverside agriculture is common and widely practiced by Anywaa people along the Opeeno, Kir and Alwero rivers, particularly cereal crops such as maize, millet, and sorghum crops are cultivated. Nevertheless, as we can see from the following subtitle, the villagization program has helped to bring economic development to the families involved in the program, while the arrival of large agricultural enterprises has led to better development activities in the study *Woräda* as a whole.²⁹⁹

4.3.3. Economic Aftermath

In addition to the socio-cultural aftermath, the Abobo *Woräda* population regrouping or villagization program also has caused substantial economic aftermath upon the villagized households. The paramount economic impact of the villagization program was emanated from the inharmoniousness of the new settler recipient areas to the traditional form of economic activities, shifting cultivation. The Anywaa people traditional economic practice is basically vested upon the shifting cultivation system. However, according to my informants, the new rural village areas are not convenience to exercise the aged-old economic practices of this people. This is because the new settler recipient areas of the *Woräda* are surrounded with a number of private and state-owned farming companies or enterprises. Consequently, the conditions prevented the villagized peasants from undertaking their traditional form of economic activities spontaneously. Therefore, the villagers obliged to accustom a new form of economic activity which is basically established based on sedentary form of farming system.³⁰⁰

While the villagization program has had a confrontational impact on the native people of the *Woräda* as a whole, community member of the villagization program have been able to achieve

²⁹⁹Bogale Teferi, p.68; Azeb W. Degife, pp. 183-197; Informants: Ojulu Ojulu, Ajulu Oulu and Omod Agwa Omod.

³⁰⁰Informants: Kwowber, Omod Aballa and Okew.

incredible economic growth in their localities. According to my informants, the villagization program of Abobo *Woräda* was an important instrument to promote the economic security of the villagized households of the *Woräda*, who were sufferers of underprivileged infrastructure provisions, and natural adversities such as food insecurity problems. Because population villagization program brought plenty access to irrigable farmlands and some of necessary public service facilities for the villagized households along the right and left banks of the Opeeno, Alwero and Kir rivers and their tributaries.³⁰¹

The population regrouping programs of 2000 acquainted Gambella region in general and the study *Woräda* in particular. Noticeably, the Anywaa-occupied areas of the region are renowned in their large tract of farmlands and abundant woodland natural resources. Due to absence of all-weathered road networks, these natural treasures were not successfully exploited until very recent time. Additionally, since Abobo *Woräda* lays in arid and escarpments of the Opeeno, Alwero and Kir rivers' drainage systems, Dracunculiasis (guinea worm disease), sleep sleekness, and other lowland diseases instigated greater problems for the peoples who settled throughout the *Woräda* under study. Therefore, the villagization programs had brought bounteous opportunities by acquainting for further investment and the natural wealth of the *Woräda* were started to be wisely exploited for the development of the Abobo *Woräda*.³⁰²

Before the execution of the population villagization programs, one of the major problems in the study *Woräda* was absence of adequate infrastructures. Since the region was the center of inter-ethnic clashes for a long period of time, the area had a little access to health care centers, veterinary clinics, thoroughfares, schools, and other essential infrastructures and public service facilities. However, the execution of population regrouping programs in the given *Woräda* brought some progresses in this respect. This is because, to satisfy the needs of the villagized households, the administrators of the *Woräda* tried to expand essential infrastructures basically throughout the settler recipient rural locales.³⁰³

In general, as discussed in the preceding subtitles of this chapter, in order to make way for agricultural investors to have unlimited access to large tract of land, the regional administration in

³⁰¹Informants: Said, Ochan, Omod Obuti, and Alämnäsh Worku.

³⁰²*Ibid.*

³⁰³*Ibid*; See also Appendix, K.

general and the Abobo *Woräda* administration in particular, implemented widespread population regrouping programs throughout the study *Woräda*. Consequently, the implementation of the villagization program initiated both foreign and local agricultural companies to rush into the *Woräda* for investment. According to my primary sources, the coming of these farming companies, therefore, stimulated economic progresses throughout the study *Woräda*.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴Fana Gebresenbet, “Land Acquisitions, the Politics of Dispossession, and State-Remaking in Gambella, Western Ethiopia”, *Journal of Africa Spectrum*, V. 51, No1 (2016), p.13.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the history of resettlement and villagization in Abobo *Woräda* (district) of Gambella region from 1983/4 to 2000. Based on this time framework, the study revealed the factors that pushed forward the Ethiopian political figures to implement government-sponsored population relocation schemes and their consequences in Gambella region in general and Abobo *Woräda* in particular.

Ethiopians have a long history of moving from environmentally fragile or degraded regions to more secure areas. The overpopulated and environmentally degraded northern and north-central highlands of the country have been major sources of resettlers since the 1958. These people have drifted toward, or been encouraged to resettle in the wet, fertile, and relatively underutilized highlands and lowlands in the southern, southwestern, and northwestern parts of the country. As it was analyzed throughout the whole chapters of the study, among the southwest areas of the country, Abobo *Woräda* was the main center of population relocation schemes basically since 1983/4.

For several reasons including lack of planning, random selection of resettlement sites, and forced resettlement; the government-sponsored population relocation schemes that were implemented from 1983/4-2000 in Abobo *Woräda* have failed to meet their objectives. As a result, severe deforestation and environmental degradation, and inter-ethnic conflicts (between the host communities and the settler ethnic groups) have occurred in the resettlement areas. However, unlike the inter-ethnic conflicts, the environmental impacts of the government-sponsored population relocation schemes in the study *Woräda* are nefarious. The series of resettlement programs implemented in the study area increased the pressure on forest resources by forcing smallholder farmers and agricultural companies to intensify and expand their agricultural activities. Moreover, the traditional livelihood systems practiced by the indigenous people were largely replaced by the more intensive cereal farming practices of the Ethiopian highlander settlers. It is clear that the original low-productive indigenous farming system could never have fed the current population of the area, so a transition to a new farming system was necessary.

However, the introduced farming system, based on oxen plowing, is not sustainable, because it is not adapted to the area with tropical rains and results in severe land degradation and a decrease in

the fertility of the land. This decrease in fertility forces the population to clear new land for arable farming, resulting in accelerated deforestation.

The findings from this study have population resettlement and villagization methods-related implications at regional level. First, population relocation schemes should be planned, well ahead and in close consultation with different stakeholders at different levels to ensure harmonious interaction between the resettlers and the host communities, and sustainable use of natural resources with minimum environmental impacts. The implementation of resettlement and villagization schemes should be closely monitored and regularly reconsidered to minimize the potential socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts that resettlers bring to the resettlement areas. Second, it is important to invest both time and resources in raising local awareness levels regarding the value of conserving woodland natural resources and to provide resettlers with region-centric training programs for sustainable farming system. Additionally, Educational activities should be complemented by the drafting, implementation, and enforcement of regulations to protect common pool resources like the forests in the study area. Third, the dependency of the local people on the remaining forest resources should be minimized by identifying and facilitating alternative livelihood strategies. Finally, the local government of the *Woräda* should have to work hard to establish intact relationship between the settler households and the host communities at large.

GLOSSARY

Abaawura	Family head
Ato	A civil title given to ordinary people, equivalent to Mr
Awraja	Imperial era zone Sub-province; county
Bafura	Cassava in Dh.Anywaa
Därg	Committee Military junta led Ethiopia, 1974-1991
Dha.Anywaa	Anywaa people's language
Gədəb	Dam
Käbälès	Administrative units of sub-cities or rural areas
Kolla	Arid
Mändär	Village
Mändär Məsəräta	Villagization
Ngom	Land in Dh.Anywaa
Säfära	Resettlement
Tukuls	Huts in Dh.Anywaa
Woräda	District administrative structure between Käbälè and zone
Woynadäga	Temperate
Woyzäro	A civil title given to ordinary people, equivalent to mistress

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LIST OF ORAL INFORMANTS

No	Ranks & Names of Informants	Sex	Age	Interview		Remarks
				Place of Interview	Date of Interview	
1	Abäbä Gäsäsä (Ato)	M	40	Abobo Town	6/3/2019	Born in one of settler-families in the <i>Woräda</i> and currently works in Abobo Secondary and preparatory school as a teacher.
2	Achan Ojulu (Woyzäro)	F	39	Abobo Town	29/3/2019	Employee in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> bureau of capacity building.
3	Abdu Taräkägn (Inspector)	M	40	Abobo Town	5/4/2019	He is a son of one of settler households and now a day Police officer in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> .
4	Adugna Abära (Ato)	M	52	Abobo Town	18/4/2019	Formerly mason when “Gädöb” dam was being constructed. But now a day he is a teacher in Abobo Primary and Secondary School.
5	Aläbachäw Akalu (Ato)	M	67	Abobo Town	22/3/2019	Former worker in Anywaa zone government communication Bureau.
6	Alämnäsh Ezəq’el (Woyzäro)	F	70	Gambella Town	22/4/2019	One of the sufferers of the 17 November, 2003 attacks in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> .
7	Alämnäsh Worku (Woyzäro)	F	49	Gambella Town	29/1/2019	Employee in Gambella Regional State agricultural and rural development bureau.
8	Alämu Səntayähu (Ato)	M	49	Gambella Town	20/4/2019	Public communication officer in Gambella
9	Amarä Alämayähu (Ato)	M	74	Abobo Town	11/2/2019	Head of a settler household in village in Abobo town.
10	Ambəssa Mäkonän (Ato)	M	42	Gambella Town	6/1/2019	Employee in Gambella Zuria <i>Woräda</i> Bureau of capacity building.

11	Ansha Mohammad (Woyzäro)	F	39	Chobo Village 14	11/6/2019	Representative of the Wollo Settlers in Village /Käbälè 14 administrative office
12	Ajulu Olwoch (Woyzäro)	F	70	Lumtak Village	5/4/2019	Tenant in Lumtak Village of Abobo <i>Woräda</i> .
13	Ajulu Ojulu (Woyzäro)	F	53	Gambella Town	11/6/2019	Employee in bureau of Gambella National Park.
14	Ariat Ojulu (Woyzäro)	F	53	Abobo Town	11/6/2019	Officer in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau.
15	Asrat Alämayähu (Ato)	M	55	Gambella Town	5/6/2019	Former employee in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau.
16	Athow Omod (Woyzäro)	F	82	Chobo Kir Village	5/9/2019	Tenant in Chobo Kir Village
17	Charles Opek (Ato)	M	60	Abobo Town	18/4/2019	History teacher in Abobo Primary and Secondary School.
18	Däsalägn Däresa (Ato)	M	52	Abobo Town	18/6/2019	MA in geography; and geography teacher in Abobo Senior secondary Scholl.
19	Däräs Ali (Ato)	M	41	Abobo Town	5/6/2019	Born in one of settler-families in the <i>Woräda</i> and currently works in Abobo Secondary and preparatory school as a teacher.
20	Egägayähu Yəhuniè (Woyzäro)	F	58	Gambella Town	5/6/2019	Officer in Gambella Zuria <i>Woräda</i> Agricultural and Rural Development Bureau.
21	Endähafti G/Şadiq (Woyzäro)	F	71	Chobo Village 13	12/6/2019	A head of one of settler families in Chobo Village 14
22	Esubaläw Məhrät (Ato)	M	82	Chobo Village 9	17/5/2019	A head of one of settler families in Chobo Village 9 rural locale.
23	Fatima Ismael (Woyzäro)	F	52	Chobo Village 7	11/6/2019	Head of a settler household in village 7.
24	Gatuluak Pol (Ato)	M	68	Funydo Town	6/5/2019	Former in Gambella Regional State money and economic development Bureau.

25	Getachäw Bäkälä (Ato)	M	69	Gambella Town	12/6/2019	Former tractor operator in the Abobo agricultural organization.
26	Hailè Gamo (Ato)	M	82	Abobo Town	16/6/2019	Former laborer in the Alwero dam project; now a day trader in Abobo Town.
27	Kasäch Mäkonän (Woyzäro)	F	76	Gambella Town	4/4/2019	A head of one of settler households in Gambella town
28	Kwowber Ochalla (Woyzäro)	F	64	Doy Village	18/6/2019	Peasant in Doy rural village area.
29	Mäläsä Rägasa (Ato)	M	60	Abobo Town	22/5/2019	Public communication officer in Anywaa zone of Gambella
30	Mäskäräm Ersino (Woyzäro)	F	80	Chobo Village 11	5/5/2019	A head of one of settler families in Chobo Village 11.
31	Məhərätè Endalamaw (Woyzäro)	F	60	Gambella Town	11/6/2019	Employee in Gambella region Bureau of Public Communication.
32	Mohammad Yəmār (Ato)	M	72	Chobo Village 14	11/6/2019	A head of a settler household in village 14.
33	Mulatu Jämbär (Ato)	M	73	Chobo Village 13	21/6/2019	Peasant in Chobo Village 13 of Abobo <i>Woräda</i> .
34	Mulugèta Endalamaw (Ato)	M	65	Gambella Town	11/6/2019	Former employee in Gambella region agriculture and rural development bureau.
35	Obang Didumo (Ato)	M	69	Gambella Town	18/4/2019	Works in Gambella Zuria <i>Woräda</i> Cultural and Tourism Bureau.
36	Ochan Ochala (Ato)	M	50	Abobo Town	29/8/2019	Former Doy <i>Käbälé</i> administrator.
37	Ojulu Agwa (Ato)	M	67	Gambella Town	20/6/2019	Former employee in Gambella Regional State communication bureau.
38	Ojulu Ojulu (Ato)	M	58	Gambella Town	18/4/2019	Works in Gambella town administration Cultural and Tourism Bureau.

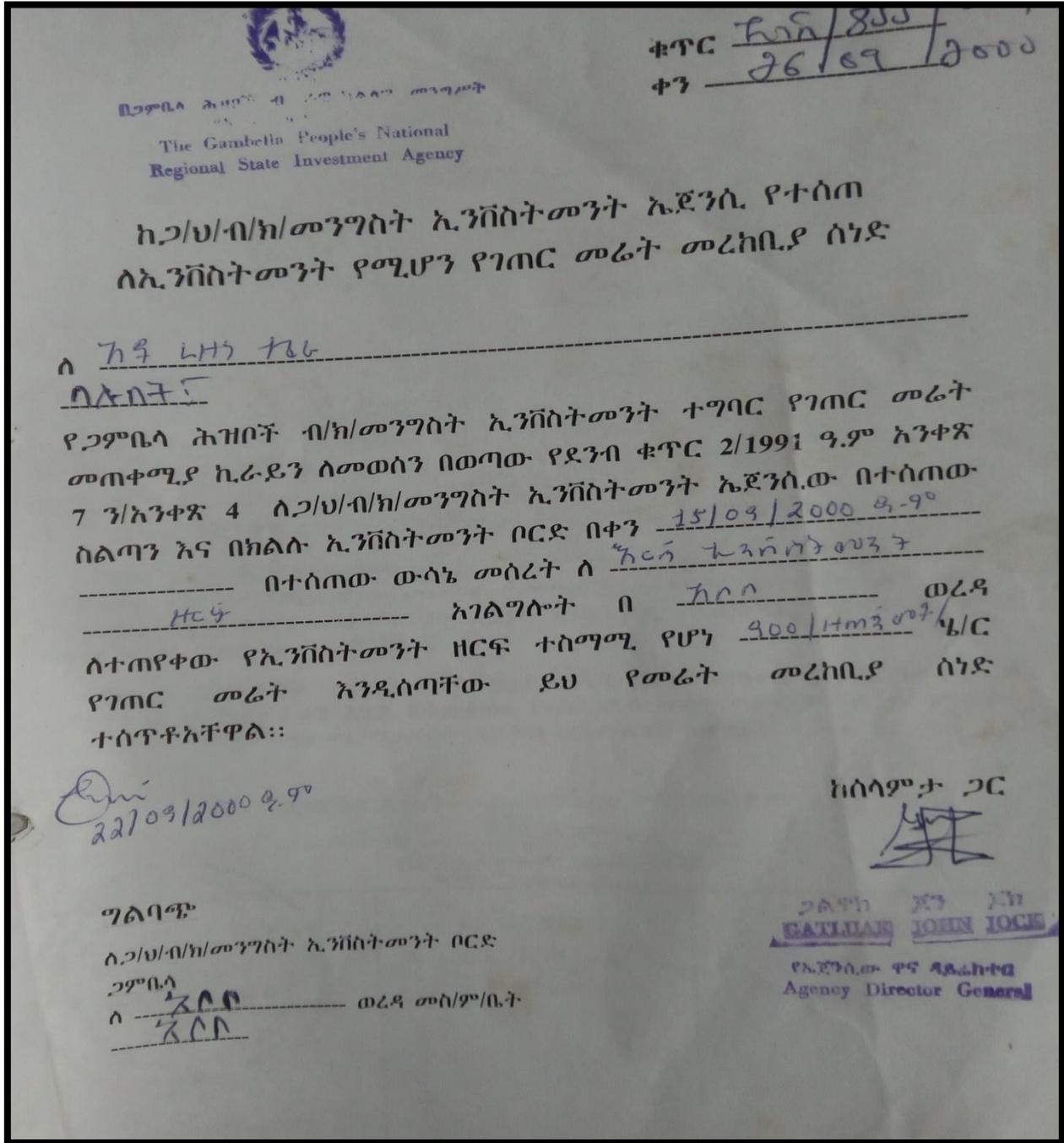
39	Okew Obang (<i>Ato</i>)	M	66	Doy Village	18/6/2019	Peasant in Doy rural village area.
40	Omer Ibrahim (<i>Ato</i>)	M	83	Chobo Village 11	5/5/2019	A head of one of settler families in Chobo Village 11.
41	Omod Aballa (<i>Ato</i>)	M	43	Doy (Terchiru)	5/9/2019	Tenant in Doy (Terchiru).
42	Omod Agwa Omod (<i>Ato</i>)	M	45	Abobo Town	11/6/2019	Employee in Anywaa zone cultural and tourism bureau.
43	Omod Obuti (<i>Ato</i>)	M	52	Abobo Town	6/7/2019	Currently administrator of the study <i>Woräda</i> .
44	Peter Oboya (<i>Ato</i>)	M	73	Doy Village	18/3/2019	Peasant in Doy rural village area.
45	Ruqəya Hassan (<i>Woyzäro</i>)	F	59	Gambella Town	21/6/2019	A head of one of Wollo settler families in Gambella Zuriya <i>Woräda</i> .
46	Sa'eda Zäinu (<i>Woyzäro</i>)	F	69	Chobo Village 12	5/5/2019	A head of one of settler families in Chobo Village 12.
47	Said Mohammad (<i>Ato</i>)	M	69	Gambella Town	29/8/2019	Former employee in Gambella region economic development bureau.
48	Sänayət Alaməräw (<i>Woyzäro</i>)	F	67	Gambella Town	22/6/2019	One of the sufferers of the GPLM raiding attempts in Ukunna rural settlement locale.
49	Shəshai Nəgusu (<i>Woyzäro</i>)	M	76	Abobo Town	17/5/2019	Former laborer in Mängəst Ersha; now a day trader.
50	Tariku Chämäda (<i>Ato</i>)	M	37	Gambella Town	18/4/2019	Instructor on Gambella TVT Collage.
51	Thatha Adiheng (<i>Ato</i>)	M	73	Ukunna Kijang	20/6/2019	A head of one of farmer native families in Ukunna rural locale.
52	Tigist Ayälä (<i>Woyzäro</i>)	F	39	Abobo Town	23/1/2019	Employee in Abobo <i>Woräda</i> Capacity Building Bureau.

53	Wolacho Wonwalo (Ato)	M	76	Gambella Town	22/6/2019	Former representative of the settler Kāmbata community in Abobo <i>Worāda</i> administration council.
54	Wondāmu Rāgasa (Ato)	M	45	Chobo Village 14	20/6/2019	A teacher in Chobo Village 14 full cycle school.
55	Yāmār Adām (Ato)	M	77	Abobo Town	20/6/2019	Former representative of the Wollo [Amhara] settlers in the council of the <i>Worāda</i> .
56	Zāmānay Ejəgu (Woyzāro)	F	61	Gambella Town	19/7/2019	Employee in Gambella Zuriea <i>Worāda</i> Economic development bureau.

LIST OF APPENDICES

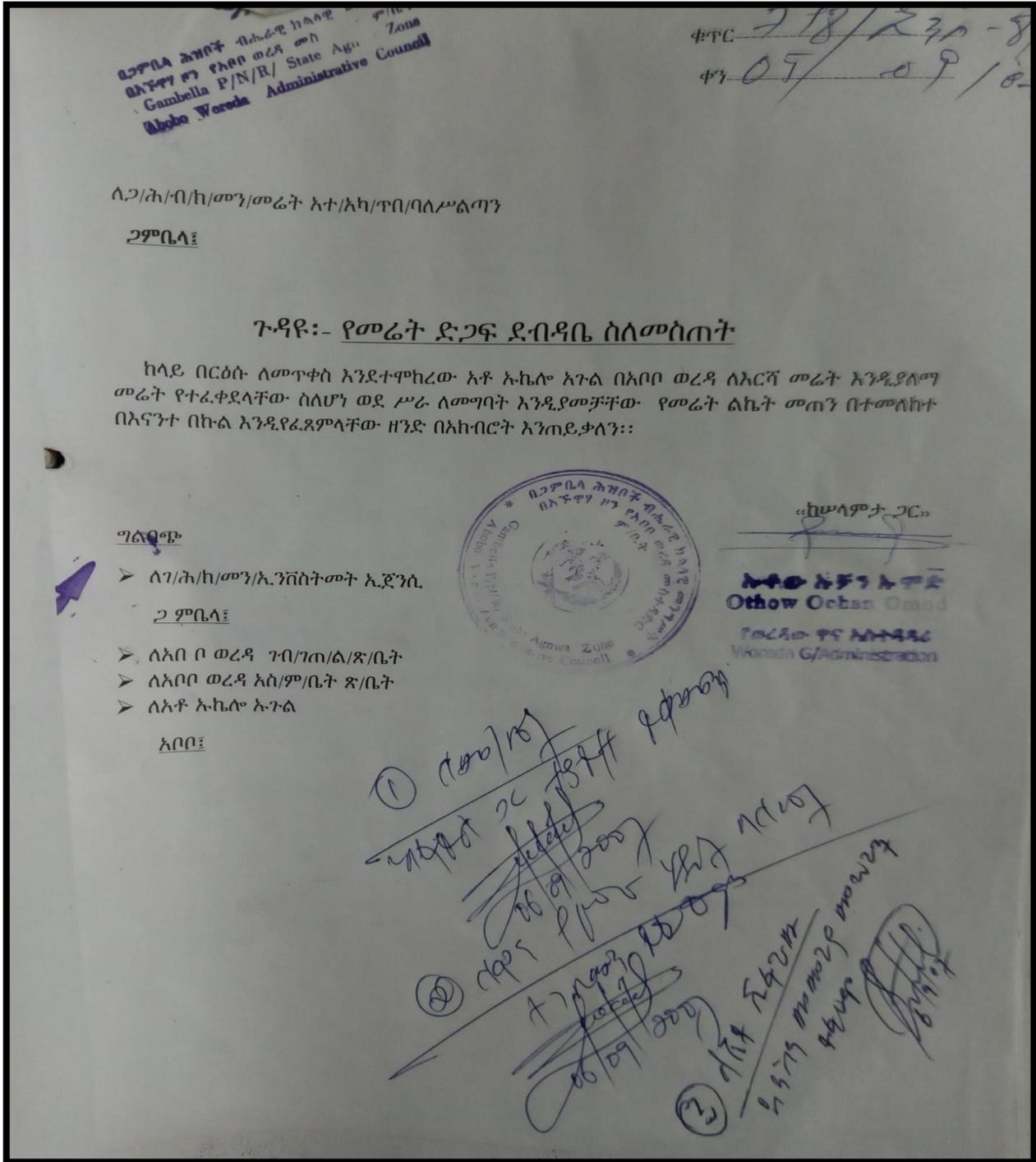
Appendix: A

A letter from the Gambella Regional State Investment Bureau to Abobo Woräda on 3, June, 2008 G.C about providing farm land to the investor known as Ato Rüzänä Täfära



Appendix: B

A letter from the Gambella Regional State Investment Bureau to Abobo *Woräda* on 13, May, 2008
G.C about providing farm land to the investor known as Ato Okelo Agul



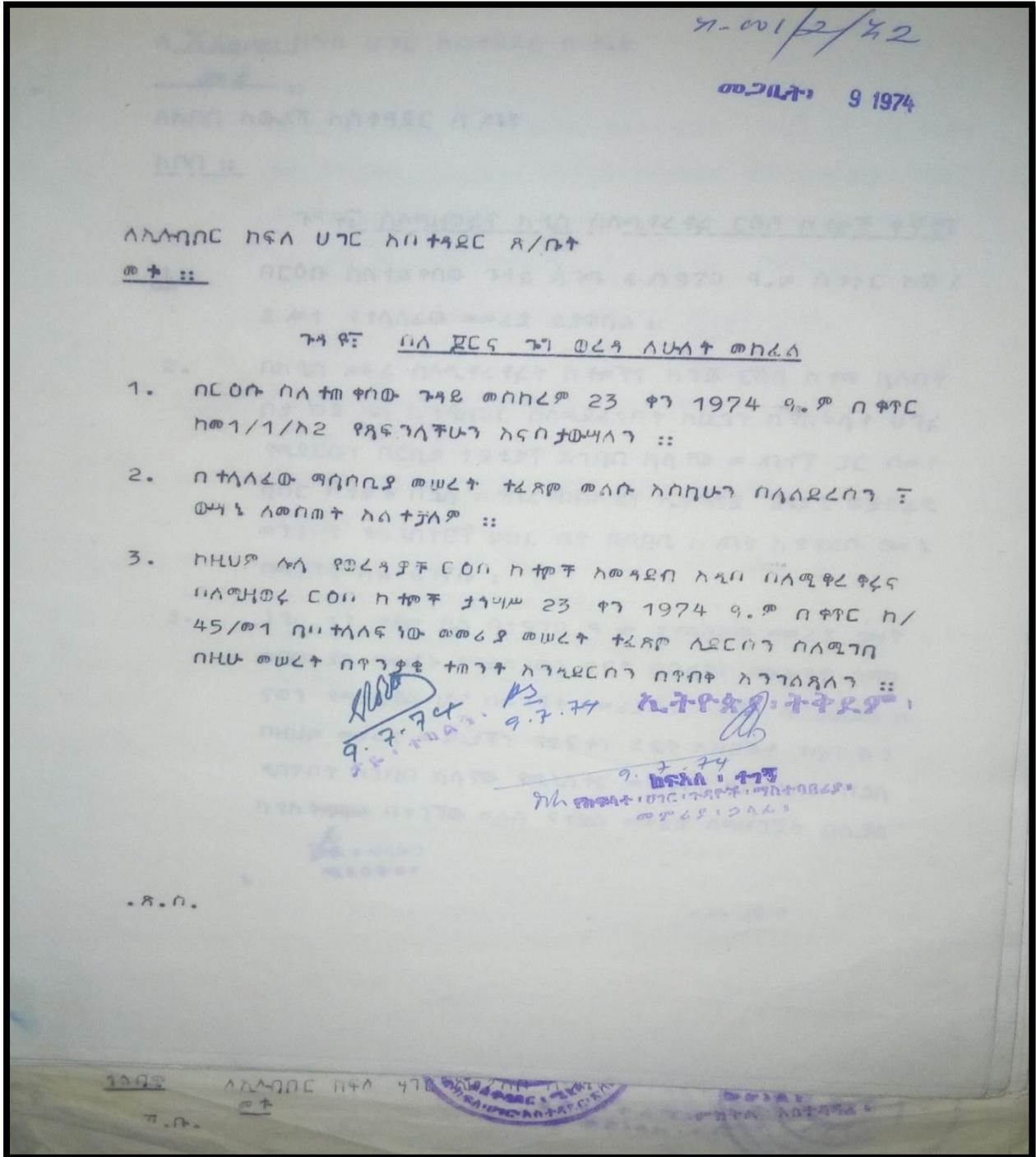
Appendix: C

A map showing the size of land owned by the farming company known as D.BR.E General Trading P.L.C in Abobo *Worüda*



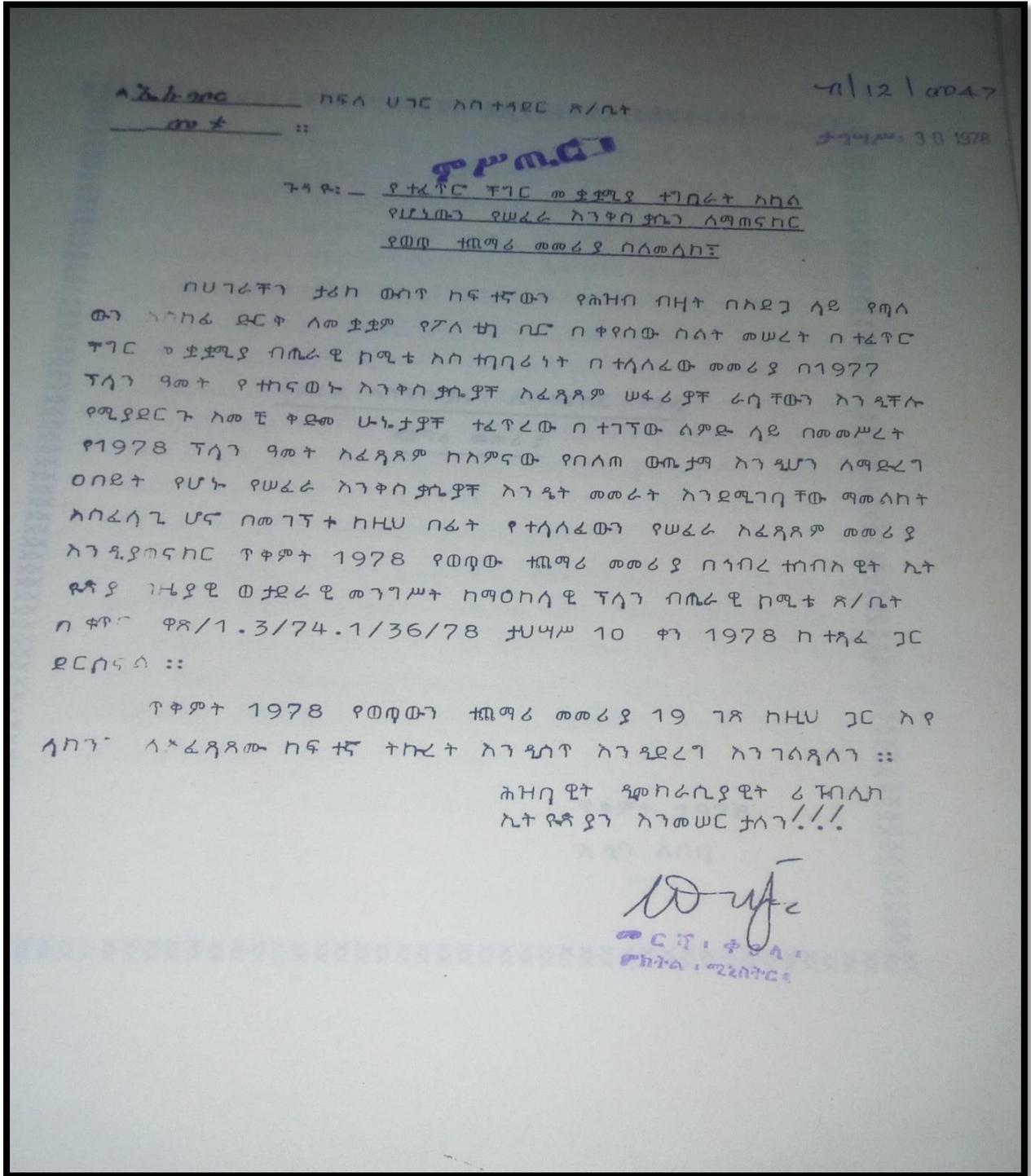
Appendix: D

A letter from the governor of Gog district to the governor of Illubabor governorate general on 18, March, 1982 G.C about the disintegration of the Gog district into two parts



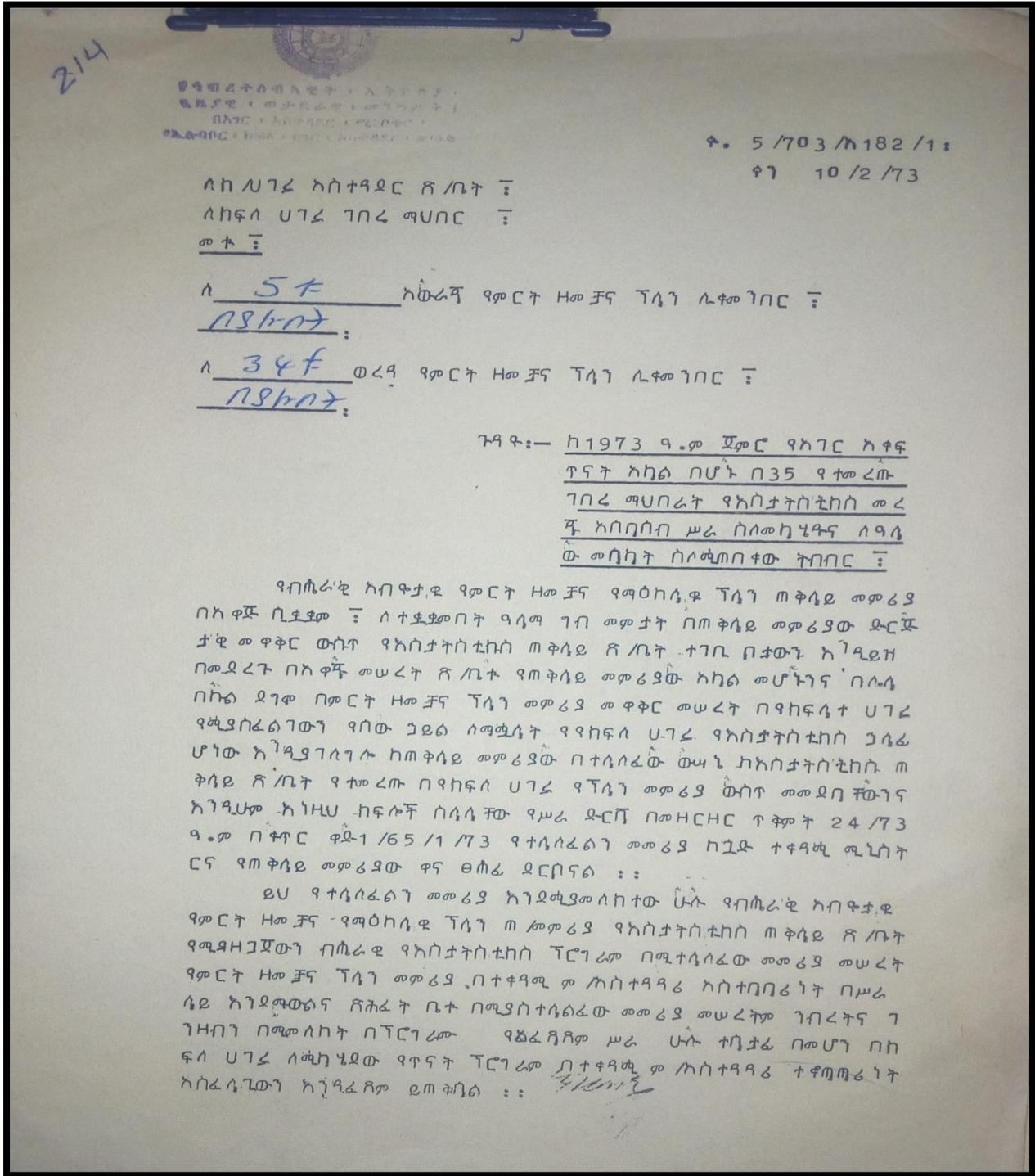
Appendix: E

A letter from the central government urges the governor of Illubabor governorate general to provide essential assistance to resettlers in Gambella.



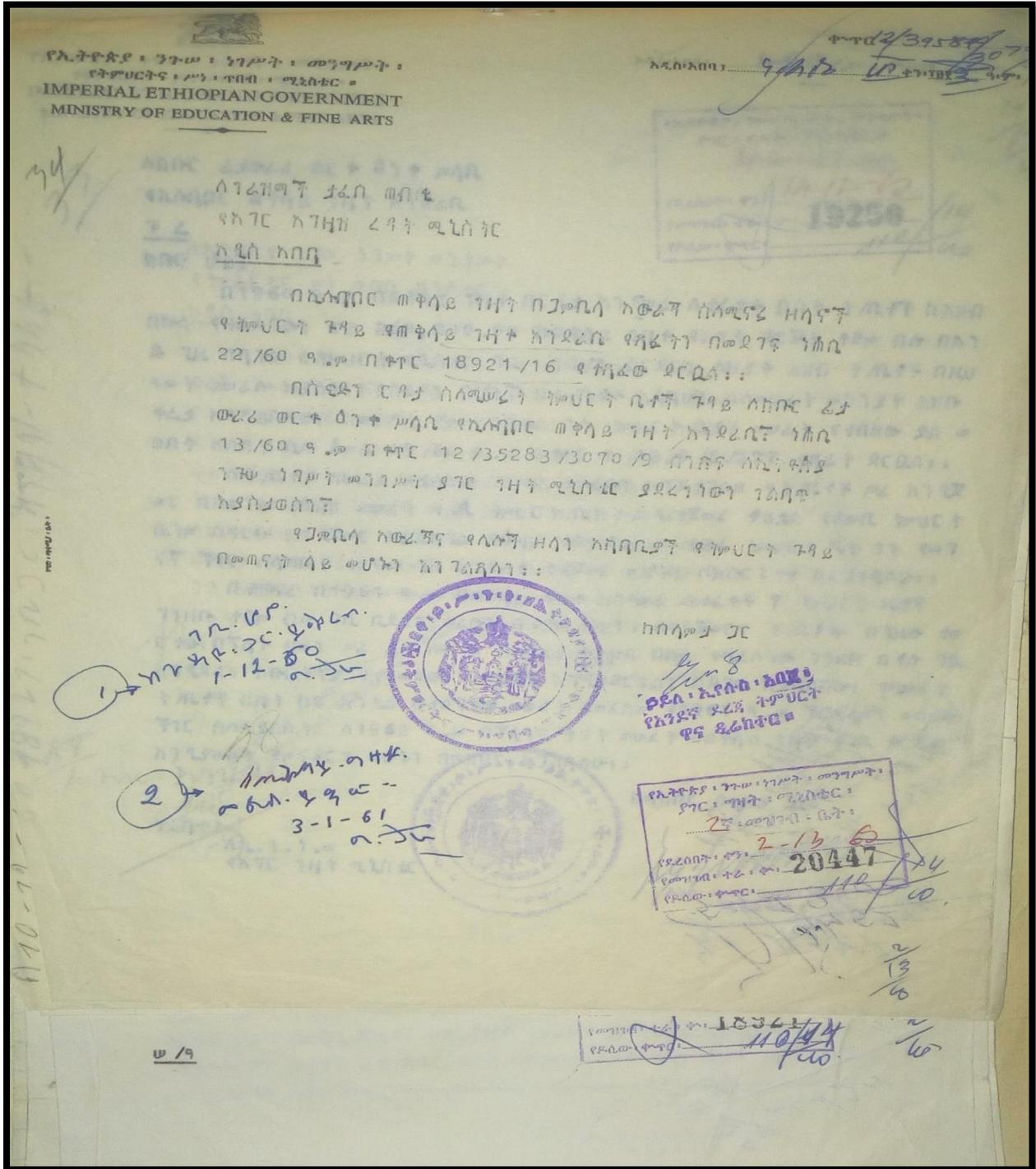
Appendix: F

A letter from the central government of Ethiopia urges the governor of Illubabor governorate general to undertake all inclusive statistical work throughout the governorate.



Appendix: G

A letter from the central government urging the governor of Illubabor governorate general to expand public service facilities throughout Gambella in general and Abobo Worüda in particular.



DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this Thesis is my work and that all source Materials used for the thesis have been original acknowledged. It hasn't been also submitted at any institution, any other award.

NAME

ALEHEGN HABTAMU

SIGNATURE:
