

Response to TV4 Kalla Facta's Programme on Investments and Villagizations Programme in Ethiopia

Swedish TV4 Kalla facta documentary misses the facts about Investments and Villagizations in Ethiopia, biased by Advocacy groups

The allegations by Human Rights Watch, Oakland Institute are not new to Ethiopian people, these are based on unfounded information. We categorically reject all the allegations that have been made by Human Rights Watch, Oakland Institute and TV4 Kalla facta documentary aired on Tuesday night (November 11). Those allegations (Human Rights Watch, Oakland Institute) have stunned from a continuous dogmatic ideological stands that those Institutes have with Ethiopian Government. They hardly recognise the progress that have been achieved both on political, social and economic areas in Ethiopia.

- The government strongly believes that the main aim of its endeavors to achieve food security primarily through providing intensive support to the millions of rural households.
- Not only the government focused on providing the necessary support and leadership to small holders, but it has a clear policy that no smallholding farmers will be dispossessed of their land for the purpose of foreign investors intending to engage in commercial farming. There is absolutely no farmer displaced from his land for any such purpose.
- The Government has repeatedly announced that it is prepared to allocate up to 5 million hectares of land for agricultural investment. So far 300,000 hectares have been leased out to investors who have already begun to implement their projects. The country's land which is suitable for agriculture amounts to more than 74 million hectares of these nearly less than 15 million hectares have been cultivated.
- The majority of these lands mentioned at TV4 Kalla facta programme (AMIBARA Business Groups, Omo valley Agro -Industry plc and Saudi Star

Agricultural Development) are found in sparsely populated regions of the country where the risk of displacing local populations for agricultural investment purpose is far too negligible at worst. The areas being allocated for this purpose are totally inaccessible in terms not only of infrastructural development, but also areas which have hardly been inhabited by people.

- The plots of land granted for large-scale investments were unoccupied plots with a relatively lower fertility and productivity in sparsely populated areas. It has to be clear that if the developments do involve displacement of some households, it has been carried out with the full consent of those involved. Therefore, Ethiopia's resettlement programme operates on a voluntary basis.
- Leases for land granted for large-scale investment are not "incredibly cheap" though the amounts involved have been carefully calculated to encourage rather than discourage investment. The length and size of the investment allowed is similarly intended to encourage developments. The Government's key purpose is not, of course, to make money from the lease but to ensure the value of the longer term development. It strongly believes that these investments will contribute immensely to providing subsidiary agricultural production to help ensure the country's food security as well as create significant additional job opportunities for local communities in deprived areas. Therefore, Ethiopia's resettlement programme is for the betterment of the livelihood.
- As has been repeatedly noted by Donors and NGOs, the agricultural investment schemes have nothing to do with the villagization schemes which are designed to improve the situation of villages in impoverished areas, to provide better land with improved access to water or irrigation, and to ensure access to services and new and expanded infrastructure. Donors, UN organisations and civil society confirm that the resettlement programme has radically improved livelihoods and that human rights have not been violated in the course of the programme's implementation.

- The prime objectives of villagization programme are to help farmers increase yields and provide them with better access to social services, which can all be better delivered in a community setting, along with improved seeds and farming techniques. And it has been successful in bringing schools, healthcare, clean water supplies and roads to communities in rural areas, enabling them to benefit from the structural transformation that is taking place across the whole country.
- Pro-poor development strategies have brought about remarkable results, both economically and socially, to the extent that Ethiopia is one of few developing countries that will achieve most, if not all, of the Millennium Development Goals. The resettlement programme has helped make this progress possible. Ethiopia has registered a double digit economic growth for the last ten years and is one of the ten fastest growing country in the world with very low GNI.

These were not made clear in the documentary, it missed all those facts

- Therefore in all fairness, the talk about people being displaced for the purpose of investment is unfounded at best and even deliberately contrived at worst.

Advocacy groups, such as Human Rights Watch, Oakland Institute continuously engage in fault-finding missions. We appeal to responsible media not to be part of a campaign to tarnish the image of a country that is engaged in a protracted but ultimately successful struggle to eradicate poverty and build a thriving economy.

We call upon them to discharge their responsibility in accordance with internationally recognised media ethics.

N.B:- Even if we have not been requested by TV4 kalla fakta programme regarding their documentary before or after they released it, we send them our response by email kalla.fakta@tv4.se. If tv4 believes in delivering a balanced information to the public, it will air our response to the public as well.

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13 November 2014