DFID/USAID Investigation Recordings South Omo, Ethiopia

January 24th, 2012

Translation and transcription by Will Hurd

This transcript has been edited to take out the reiterations of the translators and to protect identities.

Transcript of an audio recording of a DFID/USAID trip to a Mursi village, South Omo, near Hailewuha. One USAID representative and one USAID intern present, two members of DFID present, one translator, and approximately 30-40 Mursi. Total recording time 114:50. The groups were divided up into men and women, to allow the women to speak unhindered. This first session with the women was not recorded through error. The second session with the men was recorded.

DFID representative 1: What I want to first say is about the interaction with the government, whether they have been here, what happened?

Mursi KB: They talked with the people of Hailewuha. They talked about a thing that would dig up water for the cattle. But they were lying. They are taking our land. They went back to Hana and then they came back and cleared the bush going south. [Speaking to the translator] that's what I told you before. This has been our ancestors' land, our fathers' land, for ages. You can see the cooking stones from their time at the Omo River and here… [Other Mursi present tell him to talk about schools]. If the foreigners want to give our children schooling, they should come, come quickly. That road - you can definitely see it - has been cleared and goes to the Omo River. Take that road into the villages. Then the old people can just stay in the village [with schools for the young, leading to the young later working]. When these foreigners go back to their place, they should come back quickly. If my land is taken, I'm going to die fighting for it. When it gets to the rainy season and one man loses his temper [i.e. fights with the government and starts a conflict] where shall we go?

We are hungry now. Our land has been taken. We've had to abandon our cultivation sites on the Omo River on the orders of the government. They are telling us we should buy the type of cattle herded by the Borana people. But when the sun is hot these cattle may die - then where will we get milk? When the land is hot and there is no grass for the cattle we move - we Mursi are people who move and look for water. We usually move to the Omo [when there is no water in the plains] - but when the Omo is taken from us where shall we go?

This dry land here is the place where David Turton was. He went to Malankuri and then moved to London [i.e. Bekuroi, a bit down the road from here, which was re-named London because Turton came from there]. If this land is to be inherited by anyone, it should be David Turton. As

far as I'm concerned, if someone tries to just take it from me, I'll die fighting for it - then they can take it.

Mursi SB: Mursi KB said, "If people just come and try to take our land, we will die fighting for it and then they can take it. The land should be first inherited by David Turton. Turton came a long time ago when there were no highlanders here. He came and lived with the Mursi for a long time, and stayed with them. If someone is going to take over Mursiland it should be Turton."

Mursi KB: His son was born in Mursi; we call his son "Born in Mursiland." That's how it is. That's what I have to say.

Mursi KB: When these people [USAID/DFID] come here are they going to bring us things that make our lives better? Help us. Then we will like you. We will understand each other - the foreigners who carry large amounts of money. Our land can be saved.

Mursi GB: Mursi KB said, "My land is being taken away, these people [USAID/DFID] should come and help us. Help us now and we can be saved. We and these people [USAID/DFID] will become friends." That's what he said.

Mursi KB: So we can heal. We've been speared by the government and these people [USAID/DFID] should go in the middle and help. They can be the mediators, the referees. Then we will say we were just helped by the mediators.

DFID representative 1: Well, we will try hard to be the referee. It's not easy. Don't want to make a promise that's not possible, it's hard to. If it was easy we would simply (snap our fingers? inaudible) and it would be done. We're trying hard. Can you ask if, related to that, if they want to talk to government, do they want to have conversations with government?

Mursi KB: We want to talk to them. This is my land isn't it? If they say they are going to come and plant here, will their crops grow? Will they grow to the sky? The crops will be beat by the sun and die where they are planted. In my land the sun is hot; the sugarcane will be killed by the sun. They [USAID/DFID] should help us.

DFID representative 1: Do they want dialogue with the government to ask about what the government is doing here, what their plans are, and be able to try and influence those plans - try and have an open conversation with them about it?

Mursi KB: Yes, I want to talk with them. I don't want this sugarcane. It is my land isn't it? Is it just going to become sugarcane? If we eat sugarcane can we live from that?

DFID representative 1: Do they see any opportunity in talking to … (inaudible) … apart from just leaving us alone, there's…

USAID representative 1: I'm wondering if it is similar to the women, would they [the men] like to have the schools and health [centers] here. Would that help?

USAID intern: A question with that is … (inaudible many people talking, asked to repeat). How do they see working together (inaudible) with a program to dig for water?

Mursi SB: Mursi KB said: "The government never came here, and we didn't get to discuss about the sugarcane with them. They just went to the bush, without talking to us, and looked at all the land then drove in their trucks and started clearing. We really hate that they did this." That is what Mursi KB said now tell this to those [USAID/DFID] people.

Mursi KB: Maybe if we could talk with the government, we could weigh these plans and we could agree on things. Maybe that would be good. They just came to take our land by force. There is no way to discuss plans when they act like that.

DFID representative 1: Can you ask them about that, certainly, whether the government talk [to the Mursi] with the police there or whether it is just officials in an open dialogue, or whether it's not straight with military and police and intimidation?

Unidentified Mursi 1: There is no one here that met with the government. Our people didn't go to Hana [local government seat in Bodi area].

Mursi SB: Not very many people were brought to those meetings by the government. Only a few went.

Unidentified Mursi 1: Only two or so went and they talked far away in Hana. Only two or so people spoke about this with the government. We the many didn't have a voice. We stayed in our land.

Translator: Mursi SB, did you hear the words of the government? When you went and talked with them, were the meetings good, how were they? If you told the government something did they listen to you or not listen?

Mursi SB: If we talked with the government?

Translator: Did the government listen to you when you went and met with them? If you said we want this, we want that, what did the government say?

Mursi SB: When I went to meet with the government and help my people, we talked about the sugarcane plantations. The government said they want the Mursi to go and be in the resettlement sites, that place will have schools and will have a clinic. They said the cattle should be in a separate place, to keep them in a separate place, and the kids will go to school. For men that have wives - their wives will cultivate and will be given a farming plot. That is what the government said. What the Mursi don't like is that the government doesn't come here and meet with the people. "We should meet about this, we should meet about that," the Mursi say. "Then we will

know if it is good or bad." But the government doesn't discuss their plans with the Mursi. The government only talks amongst itself in Hana, in Jinka, in Awassa and in Addis Ababa, then they come to get started on their plans. That is what the Mursi don't like. If the government first came and met with the Mursi about these issues, then after the government met to make decisions, that would be good. The Mursi people really want to meet. What they really hate is the way the government is doing things now. [Sentence removed to protect identity.] Now the government is not coming and talking to us. They are making all their decisions in their own places and they are just coming and going ahead with their plans. The people of this land, here around us, haven't heard much from the government. They are saying, "Maybe the government is going to take the land, maybe the government is going to shoot us. Maybe they are going to collect us all and shoot us." That is what the people are afraid of.

USAID intern: Hailewuha, is that closer than Hana to here?

Translator: Yes, Hailewuha is very close. Hana is very far.

USAID intern: I remember driving through it, I didn't know if Hana was just on the other side.

Translator: It's maybe another 50 kilometers from Hailewuha.

USAID intern: So, the women mentioned earlier that the community had spoken with government in Hailewuha. Were they invited to come or did they know before or after or did that group go somewhere else?

Translator: So you said the women were in …

USAID intern: The women had said that there were discussions between government and another group that was closer, in Hailewuha. I was wondering if this village was invited to go or they found out afterwards or if that …

Mursi SB: Some Mursi went to the meeting in Hana and when they came back they didn't say anything about it. If they say anything people don't like it. The government took people from Hailewuha to meet with government officials in Hana and when these Mursi came back if they had told other Mursi, these Mursi wouldn't want to hear about it. "When you went you probably met just about your things, you want money. We, the many, don't like this. The meeting should come here to our village. Are we not going to discuss these things correctly? The highlanders are going to take you somewhere else and you will be paid a lot of money. Why are you taking our land and giving it to the government," the Mursi say. The Mursi don't like this.

Translator: They [USAID/DFID] said was there a meeting in Hailewuha or not?

Mursi SB: I didn't hear of one. Maybe there was.

Mursi GB: There was a meeting. A meeting came.

Translator: If there was a meeting did you hear of it? Did they tell you to come and participate?

Mursi SB: They didn't call us.

Mursi GB and other Mursi: They didn't call us. They just talked in Hailewuha and when things went bad at the meeting, then we Mursi called a big meeting to talk about this amongst ourselves.

USAID representative 1: So, if they wanted the schools here, would they stay here then or how would moving around impact on having schools?

Mursi GB: That is certainly something to discuss. We have been in this land a long time. Before, the highlanders were in their place, the government's place. The foreigners were in their place, we never saw foreigners before. Then when we saw a foreigner it was first David Turton. "What is that white thing we said, a termite or what?" Now things have changed. When foreigners come we know about them, the kids yell "foreigner, foreigner" and run to them. We see them as people just like us. Now we only want to know about how our land can become good. We don't want bad things. We have had hunger a long time. There was death, people died. There was no food. In the recent past things became better. If we ask the government for grain, they give it to us to eat. Where does this grain come from? Ask them.

USAID representative 1: It is hard to know without … we'd have to look into it and see, it could be government grain, it could be some of our food assistance or food security programs. It could be coming from the joint government program that's the safety net. It's hard to know because there are different sources of grain.

DFID representative 1: There is a good chance it could be government.

USAID representative 1: There's a good chance it could be government, because they do provide grain. But we have food security programs here too.

Mursi GB: Okay, now if hunger comes, grain comes. We eat it. The severe hunger is gone. Now if hunger comes, we talk to the highlanders and they go and talk to the government. They are given grain. The highlanders keep most of it for themselves [i.e. take parts of the shipments meant for the Mursi]. There are many wives in Mursi. Mursi RA [for example] has many wives. If we only get two bags and that's it, we won't be full. I saw many things and know about them. What we want to ask of you is to bring stuff, money, and give it to us directly so we can buy things ourselves [i.e. so it isn't taken before it reaches the Mursi]. The government is very greedy.

USAID representative 1: So where was the disconnect, was it World Food Program in what they delivered or, because they would usually have a partner that is distributing it so where would they … did they check it and find out?

Translator: They [WFP] seemed quite concerned then, what they did was they then made an inquiry with some people in Awassa, then we never heard back about what the results of that inquiry was.

USAID representative 1: So when was that?

Mursi discuss how long ago it was.

Translator: They say it was two years ago.

USAID representative 1: So, if you do hear about stuff like that it is good for us to know so that we can check in make sure there is integrity in the system.

DFID representative 1: Can you ask is there a humanitarian situation here? So, are people hungry?

Mursi GB: Now, things are tough in our land. We want good things to come. When the people met the government, the government said, "Don't like the foreigners, forget about what they have to say. Come over onto the side of the government. The foreigners are small like dik-diks. I am an elephant." That is what they said. When they say that, what do the foreigners think of that?

Translator: That person [USAID representative1] is saying you are people that move…

Mursi GB: I'll talk about that. We are people of cattle. Our livelihood, since a long, long time ago, was cattle. They are our money. They move and search for grass. If the grass is gone in one place, they move and search for more grass and water. We stay with the cattle and when the rains come, we move back to the village. We want to have a better village. If we had water here in the village, the cattle wouldn't have to move. They would stay here a long time, and when the grass was finished, we would tell the boys to move, to go out to Ma Golonya, go to have the cattle graze there with the wildlife. The cattle will graze there and then they will come back during the rainy season. We, the older people, will stay here and our kids will go to school. If we are always moving, chased away by lack of water, it is a problem. We want to stay in the villages and the old people, they can rest; the blind people, they can rest. If we have to move with the blind people, we carry them if they are young. If they are old, they are led by one end of a stick, held by another person. It is a problem. Now in Hailewuha they have a small water system and the old people stay around there. They take some water from the water container and give it to the people. In my land I light fires to burn the tall grass, so there will be new grass when the rains come. We really want schooling. The only problem is thirst. It is a big problem. Those people that have come [USAID/DFID], they are government. If they want to say, "We are going to help these people that live in the forest and they will have good lives," tell us this and we will hear it. When they go, we will watch for them, if they don't come again we will say why aren't they

coming? They aren't going to help us? It is like what the people that want to take our land said [i.e. the government said they were going to help us and then didn't].

DFID representative 2: That's quite an important thing that they can see some positives to sedentarization, to an extent, and that's probably quite a change in their whole lifestyle, which would mean a permanent village, but still with some pastoralist migration and the key to that, for them, is water.

Translator: You see that happening in Hailewuha. Hailewuha is a relatively big Mursi village and it's a permanent settlement, and there is the division of some kids going to school and some kids are going out with the cattle and they have had wells dug there which makes it possible to have a permanent village. You see the people from Hailewuha going out and clearing the gardens, the men, the wives, these kinds of things, they're going out and clearing. They are moving with the cattle when they need grass. They don't have restrictions on that. That seems to work for them pretty well.

DFID representative 1: So if the resettlement village is being designed in that way, is there any hope for them to avoid conflict and avoid all the bad stuff, in order to have their voice heard so they were listened to so that there could be found a solution so they got some of the things they wanted, water, education, a little bit more sedentary that the violence could be avoided?

Translator (to DFID representative 2): There was some question; you had a question that got lost there too. What did you say?

DFID representative 2: Humanitarian assistance. We can come back to the humanitarian assistance, it was about are people hungry right now? It's a hard question because for it to be a humanitarian situation, in terms of being hungry (inaudible) food insecure.

Mursi GB (in response to DFID representative 1's question): The things I really don't like are these sugarcane plantations. With the sugarcane plantations they are cutting down all the forest. The forest belongs to the buffalo, elephants, lions, leopards, and hyenas; it is where they live. The wildlife is coming out of the forest and coming here. Will they not eat us? The forest is their village and that is where they always live. They used to come, just a few of them in the night and when the day came they ran to the forest to be back in their home.

If all the forest is cut down, and they put in sugarcane, I will send my cattle out into the plains; I don't want to tie them up to a tree at the resettlement site. If the cattle go and eat the government sugarcane will they not complain, do you think they will just be quiet? The government is lying, they are tricking us. That is what we are saying. If the foreigners have come here and they like my village and they say they will help us, we'll let them help us, now in Hailewuha, the place on the Mara River that is the place they originally called Hailewuha. They picked up from there and moved the village to the town you now see as Hailewuha. If these people [USAID,DFID] want to

see a good place with a lot of water, it is at the Mara River, they should build a settlement site there and children could go to school. In this place here, there is no water.

Mursi SB: Many highlanders are going to come to Mursi land.

Mursi GB: Going to the Omo River, to the resettlement site. The Mursi people don't want that.

Mursi SB: If the highlanders come and cut down all the forest and plant sugarcane at the Omo, ten years later, no trees will be there. The place will become hot and it will be only dust. Our land will become worthless. When they work on it, and have done all they want, and then move away, our land will have become bad. It won't be cool anymore. It will have become hot. If there are no trees our land will be lost. It will become hot like fire. If we cut down the trees here in this village, would we stay here? If all the trees were cut down and gone the land would be only dust. Our land would be worthless. Maybe they will only work for a few years, then when they are finished doing their thing, they will leave.

Mursi GB: Now the government is clearing all the land in the Bodi area and they will go all the way to Ariholi [in southern Mursi land]. If they clear all the land to Ariholi, to Gongolobibi, all the way to Chirmani [all in southern Mursi land] there is going to be nothing good about that. Now these people [USAID/DFID] are coming because of this issue? They are coming to talk about this issue with us. Will they then talk to the Ethiopian government? Will the government listen to them? If they are dik-diks and the government is an elephant as the government says, will the government listen to them?

USAID representative 1: Maybe not.

DFID representative 1: We don't know if they definitely will, but they do listen to us sometimes.

Mursi GB: If you see a dik-dik, is it big? It is very small. If the dik-dik sees an elephant will it be brave enough to talk to it? If these people [USAID/DFID] have come to talk about these things, what we have to say is this: we don't want the sugarcane. The people called the Afar, now they have big problems, the Gambella [i.e. Anuak and Nuer from Gambella area] now have big problems [i.e. from plantations and resettlement]. The plans that the government did before in other areas, we saw what happened. We have seen the problems in these plans. It has become bad, if they are going to come and do the same in our land, what are we to do?

Mursi GB: Is this plan good? It's really bad. Do they [USAID/DFID] hear this?

DIFD representative 1: Yeah.

Mursi GB: What we want is schooling, a school house to be built, and problems with hunger to be gone. The foreigners should give us money and then we can buy grain for ourselves. That's what I have to say.

Mursi SB: The foreigners give money to the Ethiopian government don't they? Then the government buys grain and gives it to the Mursi don't they? Mursi GB is saying the foreigner should just bring the money and give it to the Mursi directly.

Unidentified Mursi 2: And this man [one of the DFID representatives]. He should just bring us money on his person. The government doesn't give us real help. This man [one of the DFID representatives] should just bring it on his person. We can each get some of the money and go find grain to buy. Then we could buy it ourselves.

Mursi GB: They [USAID/DFID] are bringing the ideas of their governments. They are government. They should build a school and we can start teaching people.

DFID representative 1: You can explain that we only have so much that we can give and we are working in the whole country and it would be impossible for us to give it to everyone. We don't have a system to do that here. We only have a small number of people here. We can't go everywhere, we don't have a system. So, the only way is to help work with the government and by doing so we want to help them to do it well. It would be great if we could just come (inaudible) it's not logistically possible for us.

USAID representative 1: So, I guess we should ask them something similar to the women. Is there anything they specifically wanted us to know or they want to tell us?

Unidentified Mursi 3 (to the Translator): Did you bring these people? They came with you? Did they just come to look at us and see us with their eyes or should we talk to them?

Translator: They want to hear about the resettlement sites and the sugarcane plantations.

Unidentified Mursi 3: They want to hear about the resettlement site for the schools or what resettlement site? The places where the vehicles are going that is being cut down? Now, if the forest is cut down and we go to stay in the resettlement sites and if they are telling us that our cattle will be taken and should disappear altogether and we are to buy the cattle of the Borana - did we or our ancestors ever have the Borana cattle grazing here in the plains? No. When we are here and we have made fences, it is for our cattle that were left to us by our ancestors. They are our money. To us, they are like your money is to you. Now the government has brought its big muscle, its big force, and says that it will take our cattle and take our land. Now, if you go to the Omo River, go to Kuduma, and Alaka cultivation sites along the Omo River will you see any Mursi there? We have left it and are staying here in the plains being hit by the sun. The people were beat away by the government that brought its force. If we go to that place at the Omo that has our ancestors' firestones, you can see the firestones of our ancestors' there. We debated whether or not we should plant sorghum at the Omo. "Let's leave it; we will die here in the plains." the Mursi decided. We Mursi don't have many guns; we don't have grenades to throw at them. We don't have a way to fight them. We just herd our cattle. We just have hoes for

cultivating. The government was helped by the foreigners. The government knew how to write, they learned many things, and then they came and treated us badly.

Translator: What did you just say?

Unidentified Mursi 3: I don't know how to read or write. I am like a deaf person that can't understand. I only herd cattle. I only carry a hoe. The government has brought its force here and now we have big problems. The government is very strong - how are we going to chase it away? Why is it coming to our village! We don't want this. A long time ago, but not too long ago, it was only Mursi here. We didn't hear or know anything about the rest of the world. Our many ancestors have died and left us this land. The Ethiopian government people that cleared the land, when they came here in their vehicles and they stopped here, they carried their guns like this, they carried their guns like that, they carried their guns like this [i.e. in a threatening manner]. We just stayed quiet. If we hadn't heard anything about why they were coming, before they came, then there is no way to reason with them [i.e. armed as they were.] You foreigners can talk with the highland soldiers. You both can read and write. The highlanders, those people that came from some other place and are staying in our land, you can talk with them. [Note: the vast majority of Mursi can't speak Amharic.] If these people [USAID/DFID] have come, that haven't been here before, they are guests aren't they? They can be the mediators that help me, and the highlanders can leave here and go back and stay in their own land, and I can stay here in my own land. We with [USAID/DFID] can discuss plans about schools, dealing with hunger, and water development.

DFID representative 1: Do the Mursi consider it could be more complicated that with populations growing and the need to feed all of Ethiopia and all these other things that are actually happening in the wider Ethiopia that there may be some genuine need, for people to be fed everywhere, as long as they [the Mursi] are also, their lives are improving too?

DFID representative 1: I think he asked a question, why are they [highland Ethiopians] coming here? The simple answer would be that there's not enough room elsewhere in the country. He asked can we help and be the referee. And I think we should try, I'm not sure refereeing is what we would do, but talk to the government and try and council them. But I also think it would be disingenuous for us to say, and we'll tell them, not to build the sugarcane, because I think things are going to change. The question is can it change in a way that allows the Mursi to carry on, living in some way which is true to their culture, and they get water and school? But things will change.

Translator: Will you say your question again?

DFID representative 1: Things will change. There is a wider Ethiopia going on with 80 million people in it. Who, as the ladies were saying, are not wealthy either. And the government is, in a positive light, trying to find a way to feed and generate jobs for those people. Now, all those wider things may impact on the Mursi, but they could also try and be a dialogue where the Mursi

get the things that they would like. Better education, maintain their way to living, to as much as possible, with sharing of some of that land, benefitting from tourism, seeing their incomes raised, having health clinics, and whether they're aware of that and could see that's why perhaps the government is doing it, they're doing it, perhaps things aren't going well with the rapes and beatings, those things are things that are universally unacceptable. There are these wider quite legitimate questions about how Ethiopia does grow and does manage to bring growth and jobs and food and services and trade to all of Ethiopia and I just wonder if the Mursi are having a recognition, a cognizance of that or are wanting to engage to understand that and find out why these people [government] are motivated to do these things?

Unidentified Mursi 3: I am asking these foreigners [i.e. I hear what he is asking, but I have something to ask them], if the government says you are a dik-dik and the government is an elephant and you are not strong and the government steps on you and squashes what you have to say, we hear this. The Ethiopian government comes and takes up all our land and give us violence, and they rape our wives, the people of Bongo in Mursi area and also in the Bodi. If they give us violence and we are killed off then the highlanders can take over the land. It will be taken over by the people who can read and write. To me, this is my land, the Mursi land, our ancestor's land. The highlanders, now if they are very many and their land is small is there no town in Hana? Could they not come to Hailewuha and make a town there? Can they not live on that hill and teach our children? Then we can mix together and live together. If they come with their bulldozers and plow peoples' villages and clear all the land, how is that good?

Translator: What did you say about there being a town in Hailewuha and highlanders should go build there, what did you say?

Unidentified Mursi 3: If in the highlanders' land, there have become too many people, they should come and build a village in Hana and build one here in Hailewuha; the kids could be taught school in those places. We can mix together and stay together. Our hills are good and we can live together peacefully. Then the kids would have schooling. There is one foreigner in Hana and if more come to stay there that would be good. When the government comes with bulldozers and they plow everything, they are giving us violence.

DFID representative 1: Well I think, I mean, this question its obviously we agree that it's unacceptable, beatings and rapes and lack of consultation and proper compensation, to discuss plans, is something we will raise. I totally agree with him and would raise very strongly with the government as the wrong way to do this. It just simply is wrong. It simply is wrong. Obviously, we totally agree and it's worrying to hear about those things. I don't know whether it's worth continuing a conversation about that, there is a complicated side to this, which is about, and what we're interested in is that tension between legitimate desires of government to grow and develop and how it is delivered and whether people like the Mursi are not benefitting from it, or being marginalized by it, and that's a legitimate question and a difficult one. And that's all about consultation and proper discussing, how the Mursi could benefit from things, because the

government is not going to close down its plantations, they're going to turn around and say no. But it's the way in which they're delivered that the Mursi may be able to benefit from it. But I don't know whether you feel that it would upset people to continue on that line of conversation. But as (DFID representative 2) was saying, we don't want to be here saying, yeah, we can go back and say to them stop your plantations and they'll say yes, okay, fine, because you think we should we will, because that won't happen.

USAID representative 1: Yeah, I don't think we should raise expectations that we can do more then what we can.

Unidentified Mursi 4 (to the Translator): We Mursi have come to trust you. We work with you. David Turton, our elder, he has become old, now he doesn't come. Now you have inherited the position, the boy, you are the son, a helper of ours. We will work with you. You will find the good way for us. This man [DFID representative 1] he can become the powerful man. You are tired, and we the people here are tired. The Ethiopian government should come and light us all on fire.

USAID representative 1: Maybe we should wrap up. Well should we say that we hope it doesn't come to that, but if they have any questions for us, is there anything else?

Unidentified Mursi 4: Yes, these people that have come [USAID/DFID] they should say what they have to say and I can hear from them. What I have to say is what I told you before; when the government came to here they brought us only bad things. Many vehicles came driving through our area when we were sitting in the shade in Hailewuha. When they got out of the vehicles they were carrying their guns up in a threatening manner. How can we talk with these people? They went all over the place, and they took the wives of the Bodi - and raped them, raped them, raped them, raped them. Then they came and they raped our wives, here. A little while ago in Bodi, the vehicles ran over a pregnant woman. A truck ran over a wife that had a child in her stomach. They died. The Bodi they shot at the truck. There was a lot of shooting and the soldiers that were stationed in Hailewuha went there. The soldiers were shooting, shooting, shooting, shooting, shooting, then they went to a place called Shigitan in Bodi area. We told the soldiers to stay there, now there are no soldiers in our place. The other day, more soldiers came for war. You foreigners have become less powerful in this situation.

USAID representative 1: I'm getting to where I'm not feeling very well, seriously, can we wrap up?

Unidentified Mursi 4: If these people [USAID/DFID] have come, help us, find a way forward for my village, my people, and we can be in peace.

USAID representative 1: No, I don't want to be rude, but I think we've been here five hours … (inaudible).

Unidentified Mursi 4: About the cattle: the government takes the forest, the forest that has hyenas, buffalo, and is the place where wildlife breeds and they cut down all the forest and the hyenas come and they are eating the cattle away from the village, in the daytime. Here, the hyenas used to only eat cattle at night. If the hyenas are eating cattle in the day, they are going to chase us out of our village. If we have to move somewhere else there is not going to be grass there. What are the cattle to do?

Translator: What did you just say about the cattle and the grass?

Unidentified Mursi 4: Cattle. The government is cutting down all the forest and the hyenas are now eating the cattle in the daytime. The buffalo are coming here. Their place, their village, the forest, is being cut down. Now the Ethiopian government is saying they are going to collect us all and put us in a resettlement site in the forest. We are going to have to stay there. What are the cattle going to eat there? They are our cattle, which we live from. They are our ancestor's cattle which we live from. If we stay out there in the forest, what are they going to eat? [He names varieties of collectable berries]. The *moizo* are here in the plains. The dates are here in the plains. The *gumunoit* are here in the plains. The *gabi* are here in the plains. Over there in the forest near the river, what are we going to eat?

DFID representative 1: Okay, well, how do you see this is possible to thank everyone and to say that we are going to take the things that they say really seriously, and that we do listen and have heard some of the really shocking things that have happened and we'll take those things forward and speak to the government about those things, raise those strong concerns and hope that this is part of trying to make sure these things don't happen and that in the future dialogue, there is proper dialogue with the Mursi about the government's plans?

Mursi GB: If the highlanders go to Bodi and they go to the Mara River in the Mursi area, they go and stay there, why do they cut everything down? It is better if they just cut some. If they just cut some that would be okay. Why do they cut everything down? We want to preserve our wildlife … (identity protected). If they cut everything down, how are we going to protect our wildlife? The government is tricking people; they are saying it is a forest where no one lives. If we went to that area right now, we would find the people called the Kwegu. They are the owners of that place. There are people there. Why is the government lying? The news about the Bodi and the government shooting at each other, the news about people being run over by cars, they [USAID/DFID] heard this. Did they not hear it? Now, if we were to go a certain Bodi man's village, we could arrive this evening, you would see a man with a hurt leg in his hut - see it with your eyes.

Unidentified Mursi 5: The one hit by the pickup truck?

Mursi GB: The one hit by the pickup truck.

Translator: What do you guys want to do?

USAID representative 1: Yeah, I thought we were going to go to another site yet.

Translator (to Mursi): These people want to go. They are going to go to Bodi area. They want to hear what the Bodi have to say. They heard a lot of news here. They are saying, "Let's go to Bodi and hear what they have to say." In Hana. Maybe they will go to see the resettlement site and the place where all has been cut down and is totally clear. They want to return to Jinka in the evening and sleep there. They have a long way to go. They say what you have said here is very important, now we are going to go to Gura [a village in Bodi area] and talk to the Bodi.

Translator (to USAID/DFID): I just was telling them that you guys want to leave, go to Bodi area.

Unidentified Mursi 6: Our land. In Kuduma, a cultivation site on the Omo River, when it was the planting months we had to stay in the grasslands [i.e. because the government told us to]. It is the time of planting. Sorghum would grow if we could plant it. Now what are we going to do if we had to leave that place and are being beat by the sun here? It will be death. We will die in this grassland. Because I have no grain, it will be like death. We are waiting for death. We are only waiting for death. This land is being plowed by the government. If the land is cleared clean it is death. I will die. In our land, we will die. Some Bodi have already died. There are people in Jinka that were run over by trucks. I will also be going to Jinka [i.e. it's likely I will be hit by a truck too]. It will only be death. My stomach hurts with emotion. We have left planting our sorghum and are staying up here on the hill away from the river, it will be death. I am only waiting for death if I am staying up in the hills. There is no food anywhere else that we can expect to come because we have had no crops and have no grain stores, the only things we have to put in our stomachs comes from our cattle. If the sun is hot like this, and we milk our cows, they won't give us any milk. There is only enough for the calves. Now, we are only waiting for death. That's what I have to say.

Translator (to USAID/DFID): They'd be happy to talk to you about this for a couple days.

DFID representative 1: Well we'd like to talk but… (inaudible)

Translator (To Mursi): Okay good. You came here to talk with us and we heard it. Maybe you want to go and work and plant. And those that aren't planting can talk in the shade. These people [USAID/DFID] have heard what you had to say and are now going to go to Bodi, to Gura.

End of meeting 99:32.

(The last 15:18 of the audio recording are inaudible or unimportant. It is in the translator's pocket while moving around.)

Transcription of an audio recording of a USAID/DFID interview with the Bodi, near Gura, South Omo. Approximately 20 Bodi women and men, two Mursi (one was translating), a USAID representative and USAID intern, two representatives of DFID and one translator were present. A double translation was used for the meeting, from Bodi to Mursi and from Mursi to English.

Audio recording 19:12 minutes in length.

(This is a partial recording of the end part of this meeting. The tape recorder was not turned on for the first part of the meeting through error. The first part was a discussion of the rapes in Hana and about meetings between the government and the Bodi. DIFD representative 2 had asked the Bodi if when meetings about the plantations were held, was there military present, and if the Bodi felt free to speak? One Bodi man answered that there was so much military present at the meeting he was at in Gura that "*kokumno nga kowano*," they couldn't count them all. He said they did not feel free to express themselves, because if they said anything the government didn't like, they knew that the military would "*kartina ko inye,"* they would have to answer to the military.)

DFID representative 2: … How much of their land, I don't think they think in percentages, but [maybe] half their land, has already been cleared?

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said that they have cut down some. But over a large area they are building roads. The place they have actually cleared now is small. Over a large area they are making roads and they are going to start clearing those areas soon.

DFID representative 2: Has that affected the way they can do their livelihoods, the little bit that's been cleared already?

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said it hasn't. The government is clearing in between of Bodi cultivation sites, a big place in the forest, the Bodi cultivation, the government they haven't cleared yet. He said that now the government is planting like that and when it finishes planting its sugarcane it will go and clear another plantation. The place that they have already cleared, they are clearing like this, clearing like this (shows with his hands).

Translator: The crops that people planted at the Omo River did the bulldozers clear those away?

Discussion amongst the group with unidentified Bodi 1 (through translator): He said that the cultivation sites of the Bodi of Hana have been cleared out by the government, but this hasn't happened in Gura yet. They will clear it later. They are clearing out the trees with the peoples' bee hives in them near Hana. The Bodi gardens near Hana have been cleared out and are gone; the trees with their bee hives have been felled and are gone.

DFID representative 2: I have one more. Last question is about hunger, so it's kind of related, but people here do they have enough to eat? And if not, is that because of the government's activity?

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said they have food that they grew to eat [in the Gura area.] There is grain growing at the Omo River. Some of it is green, some of it is ripening, and some is in the grain stores.

DFID representative 2: Some people aren't hungry?

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): There is no hunger.

DFID representative 2: Do they have any questions for us?

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): This man used to live in the Usso area. In that place one was able to grow a lot of grain. There was always a lot of grain from the rainy season. If one cleared the bush and planted, the grain would grow, like it does in Makki of the Mursi area. There was no hunger. Now, the government went in there and chased them away, so he has come here, but this place is not so good. It is dry. He's come here and had to leave that place. He says that the foreigners are good, if the Bodi live together with foreigners - that is good. The Mursi of Makki, the mission village, are eating food in their place and going to school in that place. They are staying there without problems. The government has thrown him out of his place and he doesn't know what to do. His former place is behind that mountain. He says they are going to give it to someone else, to be cultivated by a plantation investor. They are going to clear it and turn it into a plantation site, the place where this man used to live.

USAID representative 1: So did they have any questions for us?

Translator: He said, I don't have anything really to ask you guys, sorry.

USAID representative 1: Just thank them very much.

DFID representative 2: We'd really like to stay and ask more questions, there is so much to learn, but our time is a bit tight. We've best move on.

DFID representative 1: Anything we've obviously missed …

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said, "You have heard what we have had to say, now we want to hear from you guys. We want to hear from the foreigners. We don't have any more to say."

DFID representative 2: We've come to South Omo to learn. What we have heard so far has been very concerning to us. We do not agree with the way the government has been developing these sugar plantations. And the way it has been working, with or lack of working with, the communities that are already living here. We can't change everything, and it's not going to all go away, these plantations are likely to happen, but the government can do a lot better than it has been doing. So, for both of our governments we will talk to the Ethiopian government when we get back to Addis and raise our concerns. We will need to try and find out more information and

information seems to be one of the biggest problems, exactly what the government is planning and how they have consulted with local communities.

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said, “That is very good.” He said, “Go and talk to the government, and whether what they government has to say is good, or bad, come back and tell us what was said. Maybe we don’t have enough power and the government will come by force and put us in the mud over there [i.e. the resettlement site on the Omo River] and we will have big problems over there.”

Unidentified Bodi man 1 (through translator): He said, “If the foreigners come and stay close to us we would give them a lot of kids to go to school. Now, if you [USAID/DFID] stayed close, our kids should go to school at your schools.”

DFID representative 2: We should talk about it on the way back and thank them very much.

Unidentified Bodi woman 2 (through translator): This woman is saying, “We Bodi and Mursi, we go to cultivate on that mountain. That place has a tree that we eat from. We dig up the roots and they give it to the children if there is hunger in the land. Now if we take our children to the resettlement site over there, there will be none of this plant. We will later be hungry. There are some women that have lost their husbands and they don’t have any families. The mountain land is good. That woman will make beer and people will clear her garden for her. When they light the cleared bush on fire, she can go and plant there. If they are to go into the resettlement site it will be a problem for these people. We will not go into the resettlement site! We hate it forever. I will die here,” that is what she is saying.

Translator (to Bodi): These people [USAID/DFID] are saying, the time is gone and they are going back to Jinka. That should be it. Let’s say our goodbyes. They heard what you had to say… (inaudible).

END